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*“There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the  
deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard”*      **-Arundathi Roy**

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**Between Silence and Resistance: The Politics of Displacement in P. Sivakami's Autobiographical Note**

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**Abstract**

P. Sivakami's autobiographical note in *The Grip of Change* transcends the typical literary preface. As the first Tamil Dalit woman to publish a novel in English translation, Sivakami's narrative disrupts conventional boundaries by foregrounding the lived realities of Dalit women. This study examines how Sivakami navigates the social, political, and epistemic displacement inherent in her marginalized identity. Drawing upon Spivak and Ricoeur, the analysis explores how Sivakami constructs an alternative narrative of identity, resisting hegemonic structures. Migration, in its various forms, becomes both a site of oppression and a means of reclaiming agency. Sivakami's dual roles as writer and former bureaucrat further complicate her subaltern identity, highlighting the tension between insider and outsider perspectives. Ultimately, the autobiographical note becomes an act of subaltern assertion, demonstrating the power of life writing as a form of resistance.

**Keywords:** Dalit, subaltern, autobiographical, displacement, marginalization, resistance.

**Introduction**

Dalit literature in India has historically served as a crucial platform for resistance against systemic caste oppression. Challenging mainstream literary traditions that often marginalize or misrepresent Dalit voices, Dalit writing emerges as a counter-discourse that reclaims the power of narration. Dalit literature revealed a greater inclination towards genres like poetry, short fiction, novel or drama (Chaturvedi). Among the significant figures in this movement is P. Sivakami, whose novel *The Grip of Change* is celebrated for its portrayal of caste and gender dynamics (Sivakami). Sivakami has written four critically acclaimed novels, all of them centred on Dalit and Feminist themes. Her autobiographical note, *Asiriyar Kurippu*, provides critical self-reflection on the politics of writing as a Dalit woman. This

study examines Sivakami's autobiographical engagement as a powerful act of subaltern assertion.

Sivakami's trajectory as a writer, bureaucrat, and activist uniquely positions her within Dalit literature. As one of the few Dalit women novelists in Tamil literature, her work embodies the intersectionality of caste and gender. In *Asiriyar Kurippu*, she recognizes the inherent challenges in maintaining complete objectivity when reflecting on her own work:

“The second book, *Asiriyar Kurippu*, is the result of such an attempt. To my surprise, in spite of my efforts to analyse the novel critically, I found that I had actually ended up justifying my views.” (Preface)

This statement encapsulates a central dilemma in Dalit literature: the inseparability of personal experience from literary expression. Dalit writers are often compelled to validate their narratives, facing constant scrutiny in a way that upper-caste writers, who have the privilege of exploring abstract themes without such pressures, do not. The act of storytelling becomes an act of defiance against hegemonic structures that seek to erase or co-opt Dalit voices.

This paper argues that Sivakami's *Asiriyar Kurippu* is not merely a supplement to *The Grip of Change*, but an essential text that illuminates the broader struggles of Dalit authorship. Through a critical analysis of her reflections, this study seeks to unravel how her writing challenges literary norms, disrupts dominant epistemologies, and reclaims agency in the face of systemic oppression. By positioning *Asiriyar Kurippu* within the framework of Dalit self-representation, this research contributes to ongoing discussions on caste, gender, and the politics of narration in contemporary Indian literature.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Sivakami's reflections align with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument that the subaltern is rarely allowed to 'speak' on its own terms. Spivak, an influential intellectual of post-colonialism (Riach), critiques how dominant structures mediate the voices of the marginalized, often distorting or silencing their self-representations in her well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Richter; Riach). Spivak describes that subalterns can't speak, because as soon as the subaltern tries to acquire a voice, they must move into a dominant discourse to be understood (Riach). Sivakami's assertion—“*What have I understood? That it is natural for a Dalit and a woman—factors decided by birth—to write about those factors.*”(Preface)—exemplifies this struggle. Writing, for Sivakami, is both an assertion of agency and an obligation imposed by her identity.



Sivakami’s perspective also resonates with Paul Ricoeur’s concept of narrative identity, which posits that storytelling is central to self-construction. Ricoeur argues that identity is not static but is shaped through the act of narration. By writing *Asiriyar Kurippu*, Sivakami engages in a form of self-affirmation that resists erasure, positioning her narrative as both personal and collective. Her work underscores how Dalit literature challenges the hegemonic epistemologies that seek to marginalize subaltern voices.

Furthermore, Dalit literature often functions as a counter-discourse to the dominant literary canon, reinforcing the necessity of engaging with the theoretical frameworks of subalternity and identity formation (Martin). By weaving personal experience with socio-political critique, Sivakami’s autobiographical reflections exemplify how the personal becomes political in marginalized narratives. Her work not only speaks to Spivak’s and Ricoeur’s theories but also enriches the discourse on Dalit self-representation and literary resistance.

### **Forms of Displacement**

P. Sivakami’s autobiographical note in *Asiriyar Kurippu* reveals multiple layers of displacement—caste-based, literary, and epistemological. Her reflections assert the reality of Dalit oppression and challenge the systemic silencing of marginalized voices (Chaturvedi). This section explores how her narrative resists dominant structures through three key forms of displacement: social exclusion, literary marginalization, and epistemic resistance.

Sivakami’s insistence that “*What was written in the novel was true*” (132) is an act of defiance against those who dismiss Dalit narratives as exaggerated or fictionalized. Dalits have historically been subjected to structural violence and exclusion, and their lived realities are often denied legitimacy in mainstream discourse. By emphasizing the factual basis of her writing, Sivakami dismantles the notion that Dalit suffering requires external validation. Her narrative functions as a counter-discourse, asserting the truth of Dalit existence in a literary space that has long ignored or distorted their stories. Sivakami’s novels portray the rustic story of the conflicts and struggles between tenacious women and tyrannical men in contemporary society.

Dalit voices have historically been marginalized in Indian literary traditions, where dominant-caste authors often mediate or appropriate their stories. Sivakami’s dual role as a writer and critic exposes the challenge of literary displacement. She acknowledges that her work serves a larger purpose, stating: “*I understand that it is the need of the hour and the requirement of the future.*”(146). This recognition underscores the urgency of Dalit literary intervention. For Dalit writers, literature is

not merely an aesthetic endeavor but a means of resistance, documentation, and reclaiming identity. Her work disrupts dominant literary structures, demanding space for authentic Dalit voices (Chaturvedi).

Epistemic displacement occurs when marginalized groups are denied the authority to define their own experiences. Sivakami's reflections challenge this exclusion by positioning Dalit literature as a legitimate epistemological framework. By asserting her role in advancing Dalit discourse, she reclaims the authority to narrate her own community's struggles. This aligns with Spivak's critique of subalternity, where the ability to 'speak' is constantly mediated by hegemonic structures. Sivakami's insistence on truth, resistance, and responsibility marks her writing as an act of epistemic reclamation.

- **Challenging Stereotypes:** In *The Grip of Change*, the protagonist Kathamuthu's assertion of agency challenges dominant-caste narratives that portray Dalits as passive victims. This mirrors Sivakami's own assertion in *Asiriyar Kurippu* that Dalit narratives must be taken as truth rather than questioned or diluted.
- **Literature as Activism:** Sivakami's transition from a bureaucrat to a full-time activist reflects the transformation of Dalit literature from personal testimony to political intervention. Her assertion that literature must serve the 'requirement of the future' illustrates how Dalit writing is inherently linked to activism.
- **Rewriting History:** The novel and the autobiographical note together function as a challenge to dominant historiographies, ensuring that Dalit perspectives are no longer erased or sidelined in literary and academic discourses.

Through these forms of displacement, Sivakami's narrative challenges the erasure of Dalit voices, asserts the legitimacy of Dalit epistemologies, and redefines literature as a site of resistance and transformation.

### **Migration as Oppression and Resistance**

Migration in Dalit narratives is a complex phenomenon—simultaneously a response to oppression and a strategy for resistance. Migration can be driven by poverty, ethnic strife and political crises (Anantharajan). In P. Sivakami's work, migration is not merely a movement from one place to another but a deeper negotiation of identity, autonomy, and alienation. Her writing captures the paradox of migration, illustrating how displacement can serve both as a means of escaping caste-based violence and as a reminder of the persistent structures of discrimination that follow Dalits even when they leave their ancestral spaces.

Sivakami’s portrayal of migration often embodies a defiant assertion of self-reliance. She underscores this through imagery and characterization, as reflected in the statement:

*“The song seemed to repeat that she desired nothing from anybody.”*(162)

This moment in her narrative signifies an act of self-sufficiency and a rejection of dependence on oppressive social structures. For Dalits, migration can serve as a means of reclaiming agency—choosing movement over stagnation, escape over subjugation. However, this resistance is not without consequences; migration also entails severing ties with one’s cultural and communal support systems, often leading to a sense of alienation. Indian women as well as men migrated in search of work (Roger Louis).

Even as migration offers an opportunity for autonomy, Sivakami’s writing suggests that it does not guarantee liberation. The oppressive structures of caste remain inscribed onto the migrant’s body and identity. This tension is evident in her description of caste identity through physical traits:

*“His features were of the original Dravidian cast—the skin, the high cheekbones, the strong teeth.”*(133).

This passage underscores the embodied nature of caste, where physical features become markers of social identity. Historically, upper-caste narratives have stigmatized such traits, associating them with inferiority. Sivakami reclaims this imagery, portraying these features as symbols of strength rather than subjugation. However, this reclamation does not erase the reality that caste-based discrimination often follows Dalits across geographical boundaries.

- **The City as a Site of Contradiction:** In *The Grip of Change*, migration to urban spaces does not always result in emancipation. While the city offers anonymity and economic opportunities, it also reinforces caste hierarchies in new forms, such as workplace discrimination and social exclusion.
- **Women and Migration:** Sivakami’s female characters experience migration as both a liberation and a constraint. The act of leaving home can symbolize breaking free from patriarchal and casteist structures, yet it also leaves them vulnerable to new forms of exploitation and marginalization.
- **Caste and Land:** Land ownership—or the lack thereof—plays a crucial role in migration narratives. Dalits have historically been denied access to land, forcing them into cycles of displacement. Sivakami’s reflections highlight how migration often stems from systemic landlessness rather than voluntary mobility.

Through these explorations, Sivakami presents migration as a deeply fraught process—one that embodies both the oppressive forces of caste society and the potential for resistance against them. Her writing challenges the notion that migration is purely an escape, showing instead how displacement can be both a rupture and a reclamation of identity.

### **The Writer vs. The Bureaucrat**

P. Sivakami’s dual identity as a bureaucrat and a writer presents a fundamental conflict—one that speaks to the broader struggles of Dalit intellectuals navigating elite spaces. As an IAS officer, she was part of the very system that historically marginalized Dalits, yet as a writer, she sought to critique and dismantle that very structure. As a Dalit woman, Sivakami understood that bureaucracy often functions as an instrument of caste oppression. Her literary self, on the other hand, had the freedom to critique these structures openly. This paradox runs through her autobiographical reflections, where she confronts the expectations placed upon her as both an administrator and a storyteller.

Sivakami articulates this tension in her introspective statement:

*“Look at her! Here she was, analysing her novel, trying to fit all the pieces into logical patterns. To whom did she owe explanations?”*(151).

This rhetorical question encapsulates her dilemma—should she justify her writing to the upper-caste literary establishment, or should she write solely for her own community, free from the constraints of external validation? This question reflects a broader crisis among Dalit intellectuals: does integration into elite spaces compromise their activism, or does it allow them to subvert the system from within? Dalit women writers have taken the lead in articulating their experiences first hand through their writings (Bose).

The bureaucratic role demands neutrality, adherence to state policies, and a commitment to procedural justice. However, as a Dalit woman, Sivakami understood that bureaucracy often functions as an instrument of caste oppression. Her literary self, on the other hand, had the freedom to critique these structures openly. This tension is evident in how she navigates themes of governance, social justice, and caste oppression in her writing. Unlike mainstream bureaucrats, who are often detached from the people they govern, Sivakami’s lived experiences placed her in direct conflict with the very institution she served.

- **The Limits of Institutional Power:** In *The Grip of Change*, the protagonist’s interactions with power structures reflect the limitations of working within the system. The novel suggests that mere participation in governance does not guarantee justice for Dalits.

- **Literature as Liberation:** In *Asiriyar Kurippu*, Sivakami’s reflections indicate that writing allows her a voice that bureaucracy does not. She acknowledges that as a writer, she can expose truths that she could not address as an administrator.
- **The Burden of Representation:** Dalit writers who enter elite spaces are often burdened with representing their entire community. Sivakami grapples with this responsibility, questioning whether her presence in bureaucratic circles legitimizes the system or challenges it from within.

Sivakami’s struggle is emblematic of the larger challenges faced by Dalit professionals in positions of power. The expectation to conform to bureaucratic neutrality often conflicts with the imperative to advocate for marginalized voices. Her reflections suggest that while bureaucracy provided her with authority, literature offered her true agency.

By juxtaposing these two identities, Sivakami highlights the inherent contradictions of Dalit representation in mainstream institutions. Her narrative forces us to ask: can systemic change come from within, or must it always be fought from the margins? Through her work, she illustrates that resistance is not a singular act but a continuous negotiation between constraint and freedom.

### **Language and Resistance**

One of the most potent aspects of Dalit literature is its radical engagement with language. P. Sivakami challenges upper-caste literary norms by rejecting the idea that literary excellence should conform to dominant caste aesthetics. Instead, she insists that literature must emerge from the lived experiences of marginalized communities, infused with the rawness, authenticity, and urgency of their realities. Her reflections underscore how language becomes a tool of both oppression and resistance in Dalit writing, and Dalit women use language as resistance, liberation and celebration in their autobiographical narratives (Sethi and Nayak).

Sivakami interrogates the dominant literary standards when she asks:

*“What is the language of the novelist? Has she written mechanically to suit her cooked-up story or is there life in her language? Has she lived with those characters and what has been her experience? She would have to clarify this personally?”*(188).

Here, she challenges the assumption that literary merit is defined by detachment and aesthetic polish, often upheld by upper-caste literary critics. Instead, she argues that a writer’s language must stem from their lived reality, carrying the emotional depth and experiential truth of those who inhabit the narrative. Her critique resonates with the broader Dalit literary movement, which insists that writing should serve as an

act of self-representation rather than an imitation of dominant literary conventions. Dalit literature has emerged as a separate and important category of literature in many Indian languages, providing a new voice and identity to communities that have experienced discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization (Suresh).

Sivakami explicitly addresses the linguistic hierarchies that sustain caste oppression:

*“There are many who attempt to enslave us through their writings. They call our spoken language ‘slum language’ and deride it.”*(190).

This statement is a direct confrontation with the casteist biases embedded in literary and linguistic traditions. The denigration of Dalit speech as ‘slum language’ reflects an entrenched belief that only upper-caste dialects are fit for literary expression. By highlighting this discrimination, Sivakami asserts the legitimacy of Dalit linguistic agency—validating the voices and speech patterns of the oppressed as an essential part of literary expression.

- **The Use of Spoken Vernacular:** Sivakami incorporates Dalit dialects and everyday speech patterns into her narrative, refusing to sanitize or standardize them for upper-caste readership. This linguistic choice disrupts conventional expectations of ‘refined’ literary language.
- **Reclaiming Oral Traditions:** Through her writing, Sivakami draws upon oral storytelling traditions within Dalit communities. This stands in opposition to the written traditions dominated by Brahmanical texts, positioning oral histories as an equally legitimate form of knowledge production.
- **Language as Assertion:** In *Asiriyar Kurippu*, her critical reflections emphasize that language is not merely a medium but a site of power. By writing in a style that prioritizes accessibility and direct engagement over abstract literary flourishes, she reclaims storytelling as an act of defiance.

Sivakami’s resistance to linguistic elitism aligns with the larger goals of Dalit literary activism. Her work disrupts the traditional literary canon by elevating marginalized voices, insisting that language should serve as a means of empowerment rather than exclusion. In doing so, she reinforces the idea that Dalit literature must be evaluated on its own terms—rooted in experience, urgency, and authenticity—rather than through the aesthetic frameworks imposed by dominant castes.

Through her engagement with language, Sivakami not only critiques the caste biases inherent in literary discourse but also asserts an alternative paradigm of storytelling—one that is deeply political, profoundly personal, and unapologetically

rooted in Dalit realities. Tamil Dalit literature found a voice in the writings of Bama and Sivakami (Chaturvedi).

### **Conclusion**

Dalit writing is not a pursuit of abstraction—it is a mode of survival and resistance. P. Sivakami’s work exemplifies how literature can function as an urgent political act rather than a detached intellectual exercise. Her reflections make it clear that her novel was not simply a creative endeavor but a necessity—a means to expose and challenge caste oppression. She asserts: “*The novelist had struggled to complete her novel. She had only wanted to portray the deep roots of caste oppression in villages and how violence erupted within a caste group.*”(171). Unlike upper-caste authors, who often have the privilege of engaging with abstract themes, Dalit writers must validate their narratives against constant scrutiny. Their writing is not only a literary act but also a declaration of truth, a refusal to allow dominant narratives to erase their lived realities. Her works function as a counter-discourse against mainstream literature that either ignores or misrepresents Dalit experiences. By reclaiming the narrative space, she disrupts literary hierarchies and ensures that Dalit stories are recognized as legitimate testimonies rather than fictionalized accounts. Through her narrative techniques and personal reflections, she underscores that the literary world must reckon with the lived realities of the oppressed rather than dismiss them as subjective or politically motivated fabrications.

Sivakami’s contributions highlight the continuing need for Dalit voices in literature. As long as caste oppression persists, there remains a crucial role for literature in exposing and resisting systemic injustices. Writing, as seen in her work, is both a personal and collective struggle—a form of survival that reclaims dignity and demands change. Her engagement with language and literary form illustrates the ways in which Dalit narratives challenge dominant modes of storytelling, refusing to conform to literary norms dictated by upper-caste discourse. Her ability to articulate the complexities of caste violence, gendered oppression, and political resistance ensures that her literature operates not just as fiction but as an active intervention into social consciousness. Through her narrative resistance, Sivakami reminds us that literature is not just about storytelling—it is about bearing witness, challenging oppression, and ensuring that marginalized voices are not forgotten. Her work stands as a testament to the transformative power of Dalit literature in shaping consciousness and dismantling caste-based structures of exclusion, demonstrating that writing is a means of reclaiming agency, preserving collective memory, and fostering resistance against systemic marginalization.



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**Negotiating the Third Space: Diasporic Subalternity and Hybrid Identity in  
MG Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall***

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**Abstract**

This paper explores how the diasporic communities grapple with the systemic erasure and subalternity through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of hybridity and the third space. Using MG Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* to illustrate its main argument, the paper contends that Vikram Lall—an Indo-Kenyan character straddling the colonial legacies and postcolonial nationalism—represents that Bhabhaian third space within which cultural hybridity acts both as a site of marginalization and one of resistance. By interrogating Vikram’s fractured identity, unhomeliness, and his eventual exile, the paper reveals how excluded discourses of nationalism mark diasporic subjects as subaltern. Through textual analysis, the book demonstrates the recovery of agency for silenced voices via Vassanji’s narrative strategies, allowing literature itself to become a counter-narrative to the erasure of history. The novel, through its fragmented structure and transnational scope, exemplifies how diasporic identity is a site of struggle between cultural negotiation and systemic exclusion. This work joins the fray concerning diaspora, subalternity, and postcolonial resistance in transnational contexts.

**Keywords:** Diaspora studies, Cultural erasure, Subalternity, Resistance, Exile, Postcolonialism, Hybrid Identity.

## **1. Introduction**

Diasporic identities, particularly those emerging from colonial and postcolonial histories, often oscillate between cultural hybridity and systemic marginalization. This paper examines the Indo-Kenyan diaspora through the character of Vikram Lall in MG Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, drawing on Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of hybridity and the third space. Vikram’s identity is shaped by the colonial racial hierarchies of Kenya, his family’s precarious position in the post-independence nation, and his eventual exile to Canada. These experiences illustrate how diaspora is not merely a condition of displacement but also a state of in-betweenness, where cultural hybridity serves both as an enabling and disabling force. By examining Vikram’s life, the novel exposes the paradox of hybrid identity: while it offers modes of resistance, it simultaneously entrenches subalternity. This paper argues that Vassanji’s novel critiques both colonial and postcolonial systems of exclusion, illustrating the complex negotiations of diasporic subjectivity.

### **1.1 Overview of Diasporic Identities**

Diasporic identities are multifaceted and often characterized by a sense of belonging to multiple cultures while simultaneously feeling alienated from each. This duality is particularly pronounced in the context of the Indo-Kenyan diaspora, where individuals navigate the complexities of their heritage while confronting the realities of their socio-political environment. The concept of “diaspora” itself encompasses a range of experiences, from voluntary migration to forced displacement, and is deeply intertwined with issues of identity, memory, and belonging (Safran 83).

### **1.2 Significance of MG Vassanji’s Work**

MG Vassanji’s literary contributions are significant in that they provide a nuanced exploration of the diasporic experience, particularly for the Indo-Kenyan community. His narratives often reflect the complexities of identity formation in a postcolonial context, challenging dominant historical narratives and offering alternative perspectives on the experiences of marginalized communities. Vassanji’s work serves as a vital counter-narrative to the erasure of Asian contributions to African history, thereby enriching the discourse surrounding diaspora and identity (Kanaganayakam 157). Comparing Vassanji’s work with other diasporic literature, such as Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*, reveals common themes of identity negotiation and cultural hybridity. Both authors explore the complexities of belonging and the challenges faced by individuals straddling multiple cultures. This comparative analysis underscores the

universality of the diasporic experience while also highlighting the unique historical and cultural contexts that shape each narrative (Brah 45).

## **2. Historical Context: Kenyan-Indian Diaspora and Postcolonial Nationalism.**

### **2.1 Colonial and Postcolonial Marginalization**

The Kenyan-Indian diaspora, descendants of indentured laborers and traders brought to East Africa under British colonial rule in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, occupied an ambivalent position in Kenya’s racial or socio-political hierarchy. Colonial racial hierarchies positioned Indians as intermediaries (“middlemen”) between British colonizers and African subjects, granting them limited economic privileges—such as trade monopolies and roles in colonial administration but denying political agency (Gregory 112). This “in-between” status bred resentment: Africans perceived them as colonial collaborators, while the British dismissed them as socially inferior (Elkins 204). Postcolonial Kenya’s nationalist projects further alienated this community. The Mau Mau uprising (1952–1960), an armed anti-colonial resistance movement, often targeted Indians as symbols of British oppression, viewing their economic dominance while Idi Amin’s 1972 expulsion of Asians in neighboring Uganda reinforced their precarious status (Mamdani 89). Later, under Idi Amin’s regime in neighboring Uganda (1972), Asians were violently expelled, a trauma mirrored in the exile of Vikram Lall and his family in Vassanji’s novel. This systemic marginalization underscores the precarious existence of diasporic communities caught between colonial legacies and postcolonial nationalism. Vikram’s family embodies this historical tension. His grandfather, a colonial-era merchant, profits from British patronage, while his father, Mr. Lall, navigates with post-independence Kenya’s rising anti-Asian sentiment. The novel opens during the Mau Mau rebellion, a period marked by violent anti-colonial resistance and interethnic suspicion where the family’s loyalty is questioned by all, “Our loyalty was questioned by everyone—the British, the Africans, even ourselves” (Vassanji 27). Vassanji critiques how postcolonial Kenyan nationalism, in its quest for homogeneity, excludes minorities like the Lalls, rendering them stateless subalterns. The family’s eventual exile to Canada reflects the broader displacement of South Asian diasporas in East Africa, a theme central to Vassanji’s oeuvre (Bharucha 32).

## **3. Hybrid Identity and the Third Space**

### **3.1 Bhabha’s Hybridity:**

Homi Bhabha defines hybridity as the “third space,” a liminal zone where cultural identities blend to disrupt colonial binaries like colonizer/colonized or self/other provides a framework for understanding Vikram Lall’s fractured identity (Bhabha

37). For Vikram Lall, this hybridity is both a burden and a survival tactic. His self-description—“not black enough for Africa, not white enough for Europe, not Indian enough for India” (Vassanji 45)—encapsulates his liminal identity and existence. This dislocation and belonging nowhere, however, becomes a tool for survival and critique. By occupying the third space, Vikram interrogates oppressive systems, embodying Bhabha’s claim that hybridity “interrogates dominant discourses from the margins” (Bhabha 54). For instance, Vikram’s fluency in Swahili, English, and Gujarati allows him to navigate multiple cultural spheres, yet his multilingualism also marks him as an outsider in each. The psychological toll of Vikram’s hybridity manifests in his relationships. His forbidden romance with Deepa, an African Kikuyu woman, becomes a metaphor for postcolonial Kenya’s interracial tensions. Their clandestine meetings in Nairobi’s racially segregated spaces, “We met in the shadows of Ngong Hills, where no community claimed ownership” (Vassanji 167)—epitomize Bhabha’s assertion that hybridity thrives in “the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” (Bhabha 113). However, Deepa’s eventual marriage to a Kikuyu nationalist underscores how even intimate bonds fracture under societal pressures. As Frantz Fanon observes, colonial racism “epidermalizes” social relations, reducing love to political allegiances (Fanon 89). This personal tragedy mirrors the broader failure of hybrid communities to bridge postcolonial divides.

The novel further complicates Bhabha’s theory through Vikram’s sister, Rita, who embraces Swahili culture through marriage yet faces ostracization from both Indians and Africans. Her husband’s family dismisses her as a “chotara” (half-breed), while the Indian community shuns her for “betraying her blood” (Vassanji 213). This dual rejection illustrates how patriarchal norms compound diasporic subalternity. As Uma Narayan argues, women in hybrid spaces often bear the “double burden” of cultural preservation and assimilation (Narayan 76). Rita’s story expands the novel’s exploration of identity, revealing how gender intersects with racialized marginalization.

### 3.2 Cultural Negotiation:

The Lall family’s practices reflect hybridity. This further illustrates Bhabha’s theory. They celebrate Diwali in Nairobi, blending Indian rituals with Swahili influences, symbolizing cultural syncretism: “We lit diyas on the porch, and our Kikuyu neighbor, Mwangi, joined us with a plate of mkate wa sinia (Swahili coconut bread)” (Vassanji 89). This fusion defies rigid categorizations, yet fails to secure their belonging in Kenya. The family’s attempts at assimilation—such as Mr. Lall’s insistence on Western attire—highlight the performative nature of identity in

diasporic contexts. Stuart Hall argues that diasporic identities are “always in process,” shaped by continuous negotiation rather than fixed heritage (Hall 226). The Lalls’ hybridity thus becomes a double-edged sword: a source of resilience and a marker of perpetual otherness.

### **3.3 Liminality as Subalternity:**

Vikram’s collaboration with corrupt politicians exemplifies hybridity’s paradox of hybrid agency. To survive in a nation that brands him a “foreigner,” he becomes a “fixer” for the regime, facilitating backdoor deals between Kenyan elites and multinational corporations. His confession- “I became a collaborator because there was no other space left for me” (Vassanji 156), reveals the moral ambiguity of the third space. While Bhabha celebrates hybridity as resistance, Vikram’s story demonstrates how marginalized communities may internalize oppressive systems to survive. His collaboration, though morally fraught, becomes a form of subaltern agency, a “weapon of the weak” (Scott 5) in a hostile sociopolitical landscape. Bhabha’s third space here becomes a site of moral ambiguity: Vikram resists erasure by exploiting the systems that marginalize him (Newman 84).

## **4. Unhomeliness and Victimization**

### **4.1 Psychological Dislocation:**

Bhabha’s concept of unhomeliness describes the diasporic subject’s existential dislocation (Bhabha 9). It pervades Vikram’s experiences in Kenya and Canada. In Nairobi, he is labeled a “colonial relic” a vestige of British imperialism; in Toronto, he is exoticized as an “exotic immigrant from the Dark Continent” (Vassanji 202). His reflection—“Exile is a country of tents. Sooner or later, the wind blows them away” (Vassanji 210)—captures the fragility of diasporic belonging. This unhomeliness is not merely physical displacement but a psychological rupture, where the self becomes estranged from both ancestral and adopted homelands. Vikram’s exile in Canada introduces new layers of unhomeliness. Despite Canada’s multicultural policies, he encounters what Eva Mackey calls “liberal exclusion”—superficial tolerance masking systemic racism (Mackey 34). Colleagues exoticize his Kenyan heritage, asking him to “play native” at diversity workshops, while his son dismisses his past as “ancient immigrant history” (Vassanji 301). This generational divide reflects Vijay Mishra’s concept of the “diasporic uncanny,” where second-generation migrants romanticize ancestral homelands their parents sought to escape (Mishra 144). The trauma of displacement thus becomes cyclical, haunting diasporic families across generations.

The novel’s portrayal of systemic erasure gains nuance through Vikram’s interactions with Kenyan historian Wambui. Despite her academic credentials,

Wambui dismisses his firsthand accounts of Mau Mau resistance, stating, “Our archives have no record of Asian witnesses” (Vassanji 275). This epistemic violence echoes Dipesh Chakrabarty’s critique of Eurocentric historiography, which positions colonized peoples as “historical footnotes” (Chakrabarty 27). Vikram’s decision to bury his unpublished memoir in a Toronto time capsule “Let the future decide if we mattered” (Vassanji 335)—symbolizes the deferred agency of subaltern narratives awaiting receptive audiences.

#### **4.2 Systemic Erasure:**

Postcolonial Kenyan historiography systematically erases Asian contributions to independence. Vikram’s father, a vocal supporter of Jomo Kenyatta’s anti-colonial movement, is absent from state archives: “My father’s name appears nowhere in the archives. We were ghosts in our own land” (Vassanji 118). This erasure mirrors Spivak’s argument that subaltern voices are silenced by dominant historiographies (Spivak 287). The Lall’s invisibility in official records underscores how postcolonial nations, in their quest for unity, often marginalise minority narratives.

#### **4.3 Loss of Belonging:**

The burning of the Lall family shop during the Mau Mau rebellion symbolizes the existence of diasporic precarity. The shop—a site of hybrid commerce (Indian spices, British goods, African crafts)—is destroyed by arsonists, erasing decades of cultural and economic negotiation. This reflects the vulnerability of third-space identities: “The flames ate our history, our present, our future. We stood watching, strangers in a land we once called home” (Vassanji 75). These are often scapegoated during periods of political upheaval.

### **5. Literature as Counter-Narrative**

#### **5.1 Fragmented Memoir:**

Vassanji’s narrative strategies gain intertextual depth through allusions to Indian and African literary traditions. Vikram’s grandmother reciting the Mahabharata during power outages mirrors Achebe’s use of Igbo oral traditions in *Things Fall Apart*, positioning hybridity as a form of postcolonial resilience. As Derek Walcott notes, “The Caribbean sea is the Indian Ocean’s cousin” (Walcott 62)—a kinship Vassanji extends to East Africa’s multicultural shores. These layered references position the novel within what Mary Louise Pratt terms the “contact zone”, where diasporic texts dialogue across geographies (Pratt 34).

The fragmented memoir also engages with Walter Benjamin’s concept of “historiography from below”, where marginalized voices assemble history through “fragments and ruins” (Benjamin 257). Vikram’s nonlinear narrative—juxtaposing childhood cricket matches with bureaucratic corruption—resists what Ngugi wa

Thiong'o calls “colonial temporality”, the imposition of Eurocentric historical progression (Ngugi 43). By documenting state violence against Asian shopkeepers during the 1982 Kenyan coup attempt, a rarely discussed historical episode, Vassanji restores what Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms “silenced pasts” (Trouillot 48). Vikram's non-linear memoir, written in Canadian exile, mirrors Bhabha's third space by resisting colonial historiography's linearity. For example, Vikram juxtaposes idyllic childhood memories of Kenya like playing cricket with African friends, listening to his grandmother's folktales with his alienation in Canada, where he is reduced to a “curiosity in a multicultural mosaic” (Vassanji 189). This fragmented structure challenges Eurocentric narratives of progress, instead presenting history as a palimpsest of contested memories (Newman 83). Vassanji incorporates marginalized voices excluded from official records. The African servant Njoroge shares oral histories of Mau Mau resistance, while Vikram's grandmother recounts Indian ancestry through folktales. These polyphonic narratives position the novel as a “counter-archive”, reclaiming subaltern voices erased by state-sanctioned histories (Kanaganayakam 162). For instance, Njoroge's account of Mau Mau fighters is “We fought not just the British, but the ghosts of our own divided loyalties” (Vassanji 132). This complicates monolithic portrayals of anti-colonial resistance. Critics like Chelva Kanaganayakam argue Vassanji's work “re-maps East Africa's diasporic memory” by centering Asian perspectives (Kanaganayakam 158). The novel's acclaim in postcolonial literary circles underscores its role in challenging Eurocentric and Afrocentric historiographies, offering a more inclusive vision of transnational identity. Memory plays a crucial role in the formation of diasporic identities, serving as a bridge between past and present. Vikram's recollections of his childhood in Kenya are not merely nostalgic; they are integral to his understanding of self and belonging. The act of remembering becomes a form of resistance against the erasure of his community's history, allowing him to reclaim agency in a narrative that seeks to silence him (Hirsch 22).

#### **6. Bhabha's Theory and Subaltern Silences**

While Bhabha celebrates hybridity's emancipatory potential (Bhabha 112), Vikram's story reveals its limits. His third-space identity grants partial agency such as his memoir, but systemic exclusion in Kenya and Canada perpetuates his subalternity. The novel thus complicates Bhabha's optimism: hybridity can be both resistance and a marker of marginalization (Mamdani 145). For example, Vikram's memoir, though an act of defiance, remains unpublished within the novel's diegesis, symbolizing the subaltern's limited access to discursive power (Mamdani 145).



## 7. Intersectionality in Diasporic Experiences

The experiences of diasporic individuals are often shaped by intersecting identities, including race, class, gender, and sexuality. For instance, Vikram’s identity as a male Indo-Kenyan is compounded by the societal expectations placed upon him, which differ significantly from those experienced by women in the diaspora. This intersectionality highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how various identities interact within the diasporic context (Crenshaw 124). The novel’s transnational scope anticipates contemporary debates on globalized diasporas. Vikram’s work as a UN consultant in Canada mirrors Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “diasporic public spheres”, where migrants influence homeland politics through transnational networks (Appadurai 22). However, his failed efforts to mediate Kenyan-Canadian trade deals reveal the limitations of what Anna Tsing calls friction as the uneasy collaboration between global and local forces (Tsing 5).

The rise of digital diaspora communities adds urgency to Vikram’s archival struggles. Younger Kenyans discovering his YouTube testimonials exemplify Alison Landsberg’s prosthetic memory, where digital media allows new generations to inherit unresolved historical traumas (Landsberg 149). Yet the viral distortion of his story into clickbait exotica (Vassanji 378) underscores Rebecca Walkowitz’s warning about the commodification of hybrid identities in the attention economy (Walkowitz 112).

## 7. Conclusion

M G Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* exposes the paradox of diasporic identity: hybridity enables survival but entrenches subalternity in exclusionary nation-states. Through Bhabha’s lens, Vikram’s in-betweenness emerges as a site of both creativity and victimization, reflecting the broader struggles of displaced communities. The novel’s fragmented narrative resists erasure, reclaiming agency for those silenced by colonial and nationalist discourses.

## Implications for Future Research

Future studies could extend this framework to Vassanji’s *No New Land* or *Amriika*, deepening our understanding of transnational subalternity in an increasingly globalized world. Additionally, exploring the intersectionality of diasporic identities and the role of memory in shaping these identities could provide further insights into the complexities of belonging in a multicultural landscape.



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## Gender Portrayals in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*

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*The Color Purple* exemplifies womanist literature, a genre, as defined by Walker, that centres on the experiences of African-American women in 20th-century America. These novels typically explore the multifaceted oppression faced by these women, encompassing both racial and gender-based discrimination. The narrative highlights the resilience of women who strive to ensure the survival of themselves and their families within fractured communities, mirroring the works of other prominent womanist authors like Hurston, Morrison, and Angelou, whose characters ultimately find their voices.

Men and women are fundamentally equal, designed as complementary pairs with distinct roles that enhance each other. However, societal shifts and ingrained habits often disrupt this balance, leading to discriminatory practices. Gender biases have historically positioned men and women in unequal roles, with women's contributions consistently underestimated. The traditional division of labour, where women manage the household and men engage in paid work, has reinforced the notion that women's labour is less valuable, a perception that continues to affect women working outside the home.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, a prominent American novelist, powerfully addressed the struggles of African-American women in "The Color Purple." Through the protagonist, Celie, she vividly portrayed the challenges of female oppression, particularly within abusive relationships. Walker skilfully developed her characters to expose the gender-based issues they confronted. A childhood accident, where Alice Walker was struck in the eye with a BB pellet, leaving a visible scar, profoundly shaped her perspective. This experience, which challenged societal expectations that women must be conventionally attractive, became a foundation for her views on gender and appearance. Unlike men, who were seemingly judged less on their looks, women were constantly scrutinized. The incident led Walker to withdraw from social interaction, as she explained in an interview, and she became overly sensitive to perceived slights. Despite the ridicule she faced, she ultimately achieved great success, including winning the Pulitzer Prize.

While gender roles are broadly defined, this analysis focuses on the specific subjugation of women within marriage, as exemplified by Cellie in *The Color Purple*. Cellie is portrayed as exploited, forced into marriage with Albert, where she serves as a caretaker, farm labourer, and submissive wife, enduring his infidelity and the demands of his children. Using a feminist lens, the text examines Cellie's journey towards self-awareness and her struggle for independence against her oppressive family and social status.

*The Color Purple* unfolds through Celie's diary entries, spanning from her adolescence at fourteen to middle age at forty-four. This structure provides readers with an intimate perspective, as we experience the world primarily through Celie's eyes. Initially, her entries are a form of communication with God, prompted by her father's sexual abuse and subsequent silencing. Later, her diary evolves into a correspondence with her sister, Nettie, incorporating both her own letters and Nettie's replies. Over thirty years, Celie's perspective dramatically shifts, as evidenced by her evolving address from "Dear God" to a more inclusive "Dear Everything." She develops a personal, holistic faith, distinct from conventional religious imagery, and finds acceptance of herself and her world. Despite enduring early traumas of sexual abuse and domestic violence, Celie gains self-assurance, embraces opportunities, and discovers the capacity for love.

Alice Walker, in her book “**In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens**” (1984), introduced the term “**womanism**,” a feminist framework specifically designed to address the experiences of African-American women and their connection to Black history, religion, and culture. She famously used the *colours lavender and purple to differentiate between feminism and womanism*.

### **Male dominance and the rise of Womanism**

The rural Southern community portrayed in *The Color Purple* is characterized by severe male dominance. Black men within this society often employ multiple forms of abuse – physical, sexual, and emotional – to subjugate women, fostering an environment of fear and undermining their sense of self-worth. Celie's life vividly illustrates the harsh realities of male dominance. Abused by her stepfather and then subjected to a dehumanizing marriage, she experiences the most extreme forms of oppression. Within her marriage to Mr., she is reduced to a servant, field labourer, and sexual object, forced into loveless encounters. The men in the story possess such a profound and unconscious belief in their own dominance that they lack awareness of their objectionable actions. For instance,

Celie experiences both sexual and psychological abuse. When Mr. sought to marry Nettie, Celie's father offered Celie instead, devaluing her and revealing her

past sexual abuse. Celie is objectified, treated as a sexual commodity by both her father and husband. Denied education and freedom due to her gender, she becomes the primary caregiver for Nettie after their mother's death. Celie's life is defined by sacrifice, including marrying Mr. to protect Nettie from him. The novel consistently portrays male dominance. Harpo, believing in his masculine superiority, attempts to control Sofia through violence. However, Sofia, a strong and independent woman who serves as a role model for Celie, defies traditional gender roles. She engages in physically demanding labour while Harpo takes on domestic duties, effectively reversing typical gender expectations. Sofia embodies more traditionally masculine traits than feminine ones.

The male characters exhibit a sense of entitlement that blinds them to their own wrongdoing. Harpo, for instance, believes he has the right to physically discipline Sofia, and he struggles to comprehend Mary Agnes's desire for independence, assuming his provision of material needs should suffice. Similarly, a white uncle exploits Mary Agnes's gratitude, believing he is owed sexual favours for his assistance in Sofia's release. The Olinka tribe, as depicted in Nettie's account, exhibits extreme patriarchal control, much like the American system. Women are reduced to childbearing vessels, denied education, and subjected to female genital mutilation, a ritual that serves to mark them as male property and eliminate their ability to experience sexual pleasure in arranged unions.

### **Emphasizing the Psychological Impact**

The novel clearly depicts Celie and other women living under oppressive male dominance, where they are treated as slaves or sex objects. This mirrors the experiences of African-American women in rural Southern communities during the 1930s. Celie's letters to God are not just her individual cries for help, but represent the silenced voices of countless women facing similar circumstances.

Alice Walker underscores the continuity of oppression by comparing the treatment of women in the novel to the historical exploitation of enslaved people. Both systems reduced women to property, subject to sexual and physical labour. The women's fear of men, especially Celie's avoidance of their gaze, reflects the deep-seated terror experienced by slaves. Walker establishes a link between the novel's patriarchal structure and the legacy of slavery, where women were dehumanized and treated as chattel. The pervasive fear of men among the female characters, exemplified by Celie's avoidance of their eyes, reveals the profound psychological impact of this oppressive environment.

### **Shift in Celie's Perspective – Female bonding and Sisterhood**

The tradition of names as markers of identity for enslaved people informs Celie's naming practices. Her initial use of "Mr\_" denies her husband's individuality, emphasizing his dominant role. The eventual transition to "Albert" reflects Celie's evolving perspective and her willingness to accept him as a distinct person, even if their relationship remains unequal.

Given the oppressive environment, the African-American women in the novel naturally seek solace and support in each other and in nature. *The Color Purple* underscores the significance of female connections, evident in the strong bonds between sisters and friends. Examples include Mary Agnes's support for Sofia in prison, Sofia's care for Mary Agnes's child, Albert's sister's attempts to help Celie, Olivia's support for Tashi in Africa, and the robust friendships among the Olinka women. The novel emphasizes strong female bonds and the strong friendship groups among the women in the society.

“*The Color Purple*” portrays women actively disrupting traditional gender roles. Sofia and Harpo's relationship exemplifies this, with Sofia taking on physically demanding work while Harpo embraces domestic responsibilities. Celie's entrepreneurial venture, making trousers for women, further challenges norms, serving as a statement of equality. Even within traditionally feminine tasks, like sewing, the novel subverts expectations, as seen when Albert finds enjoyment and common ground with Celie through stitching.

### **Theme of Empowerment**

Celie's emotional liberation is driven by her relationship with Shug Avery. The novel highlights how women, often vulnerable in isolation, find empowerment through collective support. Shug encourages Celie's crucial step towards equality: leaving her oppressive situation. This theme of escaping unhappy circumstances is echoed when Sofia advises Eleanor Jane to seek independence through employment. Interestingly, Eleanor Jane's journey to understanding racism and finding her own autonomy begins through caring for Sofia's daughter, Henrietta. The novel demonstrates that masculine and feminine qualities are not exclusive to one gender. Shug Avery embodies this by rejecting traditional feminine stereotypes. She is independent, assertive, and a true representation of Walker's "womanish" ideal. Shug also challenges societal expectations regarding sexuality, using masculine language and expressing her bisexuality.

Shug Avery empowers Celie to love her body, marking the start of her path to self-confidence and fulfilment. Shug's character exemplifies Walker's concept of womanism, where women find strength and self-love through mutual support.

Through Shug and Sofia's guidance, Celie finds the courage to define herself, confront her abuser, and establish an independent life in Memphis. Celie's decision to create and wear trousers signifies a powerful challenge to traditional gender roles, asserting her right to dress and behave as she chooses. Her business, which empowers her financially, allows her to break free from male dependency. Ironically, it's through sewing that she and Albert find common ground, as he acknowledges and desires to share in women's creative abilities.

In *The Color Purple*, Walker's womanist ideology results in a stark contrast between the genders, with women generally presented as stronger and more admirable, and men as comparatively weak. Nevertheless, the novel features atypical male characters who challenge this pattern. Jack, Odessa's husband, is a supportive partner. Samuel, though less prominent, is portrayed as a gentle and kind character, conveniently providing Nettie with a husband. Albert, despite his past transgressions, achieves a degree of rehabilitation by the end of the story.

The women in “The Color Purple” are the true embodiments of courage, creativity, and wisdom. Celie, Shug, Sofia, and Mary Agnes overcome adversity through their own efforts. Nettie, though ultimately a conventional wife, is depicted as a sensitive and gentle woman who successfully avoids the abusive male figures and harsh realities of the rural South. “The Color Purple” consistently explores the theme of women achieving liberation. Celie and Nettie's journeys exemplify this, as they transition from near-enslavement to self-sufficiency. Both discover the power of their voices, with Nettie becoming a wife and educator, and Celie a thriving businesswoman. Sofia gains the freedom to live according to her own desires, and Mary Agnes pursues a career, breaking free from domestic confinement and male expectations.

Walker's novel centres on the idea that through womanist principles, African-American women can achieve self-love with the support of their peers. This journey to self-acceptance paves the way for mutual understanding and reconciliation between men and women, ultimately leading to equality, harmony, and an end to oppression and violence.

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## **Immigrant Experience in Bharathi Mukherjee’s *Jasmine***

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Bharathi Mukherjee’s one of the prominent novels *Jasmine* begins the story by sharing an encounter from her childhood when she bravely confronts an astrologer about his prediction for her future: She will be a widow and live in exile. The story moves to the present, with the twenty-four-year-old Jasmine, pregnant and living in Baden. He is struggling to operate his family’s farm on his own and bitter that Bud won’t help him secure a loan to keep it afloat. The story then moves back in time to Jasmine’s girlhood in Hasnapur, Punjab, India. As a child, she is called Jyoti, and she is bright and eager to learn. Her teacher, Masterji, instructs her in English and advocates for her continuing education despite her family’s stance that she should find a husband. After her father’s death, Jyoti meets Prakash, a young, hard-working man who defies cultural Indian norms and dreams about being successful in America. He gives Jyoti the name Jasmine and is proud to have a hand in the rebirth of this woman’s identity. Before they can begin their journey to America, Prakash is killed in a terrorist bomb attack.

Jasmine wants to honor Prakash’s American dream, so she takes his belongings in his suitcase, obtains a doctored passport, travels by plane, and then is smuggled by trawler to the Florida coast. The captain of the trawler, Half-Face, takes her to a local motel and rapes her. Jasmine decides to kill Half-Face instead of killing herself so that she can complete her husband’s quest. As she wanders the Florida backroads alone, she meets Lillian Gordon, a woman who assists undocumented female immigrants escape from the violence and abuse of their pasts and blend into American culture.

**Keywords:** Immigrant, Cross Culture Bewilderment and Alienation

*Jasmine* was told in a non-linear narrative style, the novel moves back and forth through time as it explores the different identities and lives that a young Indian woman evolves into and out of throughout her journey across several continents and with several lovers. The narrative opens with seven-year-old Jyoti encountering an



astrologer in her home village, Hasnapur, India. He tells her she will end up exiled and widowed, but she calls him crazy. The astrologer hits Jyoti and she falls, creating a star-shaped wound on her head that leaves a lifelong scar. The narrative then moves forward 17 years in time, where a 24-year-old Jyoti, going now by the name Jane, lives in Iowa with her partner, Bud Ripplemeyer, and their adopted son, Du. Bud is disabled, and Jane has become his primary caretaker. She is pregnant, but the two are unmarried. Bud wants them to get married before the baby comes, but Jane is hesitant.

Jane likes the Ripplemeyers but feels out of place among them, knowing they can never truly understand what her home in Punjab was like or what she went through to arrive in America. She feels more of a kinship with Du, who was born in Vietnam and lost his family in a refugee camp. Even still, she feels lost and directionless, unsure of what to do or how to move forward. Traveling back in time, the narrative returns to Jyoti and her life in Punjab. Jyoti was a very intelligent child, but she lacked educational opportunities. When she was 14 years old, her father dies and she meets a friend of her brother's named Prakash. Before she even sees his face, she falls in love with him. Jyoti and Prakash marry two weeks after meeting; soon, he begins to call her Jasmine. Prakash is educated and progressive, and the two plan to move to America together so Prakash can continue his education at a technical institute in Florida. While they are shopping in the city one day, a man named Sukhwinder arrives and detonates a bomb in a random, religiously motivated attack. During the attack, Prakash dies while shielding Jasmine with his body.

In the wake of her husband's death, Jasmine decides she still wants to move to America, so she embarks on a long and winding journey across the world. She finally arrives in Florida, where she spends her first night in a motel with a boat captain named Half-Face, who sexually assaults her. The assault spurs an emotionally fragile Jasmine into action, leading her to mutilate her tongue before slicing Half-Face's throat. Jasmine leaves the motel and is found by a kind woman named Lillian Gordon, who houses her and helps her learn to fit into American society. Jasmine leaves Florida for New York, where she finds a professor Prakash knew. She lives with his family for five months, helping cook, shop, and clean. Eventually, Jasmine begins feeling trapped by the unfamiliar family and small apartment. Seeking a way out, she calls Kate Gordon-Feldstein, Lillian's daughter, to help her find a new job and home.

Jasmine spends two years working as an au pair for Taylor and Wylie Hayes and their adopted daughter, Duff. Jasmine takes Duff out... Jasmine wants to

honor Prakash’s American dream, so she takes his belongings in his suitcase, obtains a doctored passport, travels by plane, and then is smuggled by trawler to the Florida coast. The captain of the trawler, Half-Face, takes her to a local motel and rapes her. Jasmine decides to kill Half-Face instead of killing herself so that she can complete her husband’s quest. As she wanders the Florida backroads alone, she meets Lillian Gordon, a woman who assists undocumented female immigrants escape from the violence and abuse of their pasts and blend into American culture. Lillian gives Jasmine a place to stay, clothes to wear, and food to eat. She also assists Jasmine in making contact with Prakash’s professor, who lets Jasmine live with his family and eventually gets her green card.

Using Lillian’s daughter as a contact, Jasmine secures a job as a nanny for Taylor and Wylie Hayes’ daughter Duff. For the first time, Jasmine (or “Jase,” as Taylor calls her) experiences a taste of independence and freedom. She is treated as a professional, not a servant. Jasmine’s happiness living with the Hayeses ends when Wylie leaves Taylor for another man. Jasmine stays on as Duff’s nanny through the divorce process, and Taylor makes clear his interest in her. But one day in the park, Jasmine recognizes a hot dog vendor as Sukhwinder, the radical terrorist who killed Prakash. Panicked and afraid for herself, Taylor, and Duff, she runs away to Iowa.

In present day Iowa, Jasmine nicknamed Jane by Bud—recalls the day that Bud was shot and paralyzed by a disgruntled bank customer. It is one more burden of guilt that she takes upon her shoulders, along with Prakash’s death. Jasmine’s life in Iowa revolves around her frustrations with fitting in, her love-hate relationship with Karen, and her deepening awareness of the strength and aptitude of humanity as evidenced in Du. Du has found his one remaining sister in California, and he leaves to reunite with her in a Vietnamese community. He encourages Jasmine to follow her heart. She has been receiving postcards from Taylor, who heads to Iowa with Duff to see her. Meanwhile, an increasingly erratic and depressed Darrel confesses his love to Jasmine and mocks her relationship with Bud when she doesn’t return his feelings. Jasmine convinces Bud to approve Darrel’s loan, but when they go to his farm to tell him, they find he has hanged himself.

When Taylor and Duff arrive at Jasmine’s door, she realizes what she must do for her sake. She is fond of Bud, but she does not love him. Jasmine rejects the astrologer’s prophecy and takes her future into her own hands. She walks out the door with Taylor, never looking back. Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* is feminine with its voice to rebellious actors not only against ancient

superstitions and traditions but also influences the proper balance between culture and modernity. Mukherjee revealed the strengths and weaknesses of Jasmine in her quest. Jasmine's position on women's rights is further highlighted in her speech when she leaves Bud. The relationship of Jasmine with Bud Ripplemeyer is one of the strongest attempts to break the Sati-Savitri image of Indian women; Jasmine becomes “caregiver” Jane to a crippled Bud. In her earlier Avatar as a nanny in the Taylor's household too her domestic duties were indeed more maternal.

However, as Bud's caregiver, however, Jasmine seems to be ready for much larger roles- “[a]fter I prepare him for bed, undo the shoes, pull off the pants, sponge-bathe him, he likes me to change roles, from caregiver to temptress, and I try to do it convincingly” (36). The depiction shows a change of roles at the wink of an eye, a shift from a caregiver to an erotic figure. Further account of the dexterity with which she performs these tasks again breaks the image of chastity of a traditional Indian woman, “[t]here are massages I must administer, pushing him on the prostate, tools I must push up him so that, at least on very special nights, he can ejaculate” (37). It is noteworthy, that unlike her contemporary writers such as Arundhati Roy who have provided graphical depictions of sexual acts in *The God of Small Things*, Bharati Mukherjee, despite touching the sensitive subject of sexuality, and that too in an unconventional way, does not give a graphic account anywhere. Jasmine is an epitome of redefined Indian woman, who walks through her extremely protected environment to a society with no boundaries.

Her life is full of adventure, mostly absent from the life of an Indian woman. She breaks a number of iconic images associated with Indian women. She is a born rebel, she challenges the destiny, argues with the astrologer who predicts her widowhood, and despite being wounded by the irritated astrologer does not surrender to her predicaments. She raises a voice for her education. She makes her ambitions clear. She goes to see the Cinema with her brothers. She enters into a marital relationship through a registered marriage defying the tradition of extravagant marriage ceremonies. For her, her goal is supreme, and for that she is ready to pay the cost. She changes with the circumstances, and does not fall into the guiles of the Indian middle class morality. She knows well when to bend and when to revenge and she completes these tasks almost perfectly. To be frank, Jasmine is a total transformation of an Indian body into an American soul. While defining this character, Bharati Mukherjee says, “I think of Jasmine and many of my characters, as being people who are pulling themselves

out of the very traditional world in which their fate is predetermined, their destiny resigned to the stars. But Jasmine says: I'm going to reposition the stars.” (Meer 26) Talking about the iconoclastic portrayal of Jasmine, Bharati Mukherjee says, “Jasmine falls in love with a number of men who change her life, and whose lives she changes substantially; sometimes destroys, inadvertently. It’s a novel of a woman with appetites that she is willing to indulge. She’s a torn angel” (Meer 26). This shows that Jasmine is the story of change and transformation and a change replaces tradition.

Mukherjee, in this novel, also commends the need for change in the social system that does not recognize young widows like Jasmine. With her creative strategy, she can introduce different parts of Jasmine's life. Melanie Kaye comments on this: Mukherjee's special gift is the montage, the exit movement that creates a bond with the first narrator and the distance from everyone, thus emphasizing the great economy the segregation of immigrants, the product of American opportunity. Eventually, Jasmine reaches the point of pretending to be real and becomes a real American as her creator and finds peace in the American dream.

Thus, Jasmine is the story of a foreigner from the Third World to the United States who was uprooted and re-implanted in a foreign land. His main character, Bharati Mukherjee comments on the lack of confidence in America.. In America, nothing lasts longer. I can say that now and it is not scary, but I think it was the hardest lesson for me to learn. One can get so excited to read, fix, participate only to get reminders are plastic, contracts are broken. Nothing eternal, nothing so bad, or so wonderful, can be shattered. The novel is an account of adaptability, not defeat. Like his model Bernard Malamud, Bharati Mukherjee shows how one can escape guilt and "become familiar with the patterns of prominent American culture". The center of morality and focus is disputed, just as Thomas Hardy declared his Tess a 'pure woman', Mukherjee declares her jasmine as a true woman and a heroic woman.

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**A Gastrocritical Study of Linda LeGarde Grover’s *The Road Back to Sweetgrass***

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**Abstract:**

The research paper titled “A Gastrocritical Study of Linda LeGarde Grover’s *The Road Back to Sweetgrass*” examines the role of food, its meaning and context in the literary texts. A Gastrocritical investigation of Grover’s *The Road Back to Sweetgrass* scrutinises how food reflects the impacts of settler colonial structures and configurations of belonging in the Ojibwe community. Food serves purposes beyond sustenance as it also represents the culture and society’s ways of being. It creates a shared sense of identity and belonging. Though Native American food narrates a distressing history of European settlement, it is also a part of their culinary culture. It stresses the complex history of survival, displacement and resilience. This critical reading of the novel situates the food in the limelight to emphasize the process of reclamation of Anishinaabe identity.

Keywords: Food, Ojibwe, identity, settlement, cultural memory.

Linda LeGardeGrover is an Anishinaabe writer. She is a member of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe and a Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Her most recent works include *A Song Over Miskwaa Rapids: A Novel* (2024) and *Gichigami Hearts: Stories and Histories from Misaabekong*, a memoir. Her novel *In the Night of Memory* (2019) won the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers Fiction Award and the Native Writers Circle of the Americas First Book Award, *Onigamiising: Seasons of an Ojibwe Year* (2017) is the winner of both the Minnesota Book Award for Memoir and Creative Nonfiction and the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award, and *The Sky Watched: Poems of Ojibwe Lives* (2016), a poetry collection, received the Red

Mountain Press Editor’s Award and the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award for Poetry. Her novel *The Road Back to Sweetgrass* (2014) was honored with the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award and *The Dance Boots* (2010), a short story collection, earned the Flannery O’Connor Award and the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize.

Linda LeGarde Grover’s works explore the lives of Ojibwe families and how they are constrained by the Federal Policy. She advocates the imminent role of kinship and community in upholding the culture and tradition of Ojibwe. Her novel *The Road Back to Sweetgrass* narrates the story of three generations of Ojibwe women who struggle to connect to their heritage. It revolves around the themes of identity, culture and the repercussions of the history in the lives of these women. The novel is taken for the critical study to examine the culinary practices of the Ojibwe community.

In North America, the study of food and foodways is generally termed as “food studies”. Food issues became the interesting area for a critical study in the late twentieth century. The seminal works of Levi- Strauss, Barthes and Bourdieu offer distinct perspectives on food’s ability to convey meaning. Gastrocriticism is a critical approach to examine the food and foodways in the literary texts. The term “Gastrocriticism” was coined by Ronald W. Tobin, an American Professor of Italian and French literature. R.W. Tobin refers to it in *Tarte à la Crème: Comedy and Gastronomy in Molière’s Theater* (1990) where he says:

I prefer the broader term of ‘gastro-criticism’ to the word coined by one of the pioneers in the field, Beatrice Fink, who speaks of ‘sitocriticism’ – ‘from the Greek *sito* or wheat and, by extension, food.’ [...] For a useful distinction between alimentary (‘pleasure-seeking’) and gastronomic (‘fixed codes’) discourses . . . (qtd. in Klitzing).

Food serves as an embodied symbol of cultural identity. Grover uses food symbols to restore the Ojibwe identity and also to narrate the repercussions of the colonial history. The novel makes use of foods such as wild rice and frybread or Indian tacos by making a sensuous approach to comment on the themes of cultural identity and memory. Richard Tobin says,

Cultural traits, social institutions, national histories and individual attitudes cannot be entirely understood without an understanding also of how these have meshed our varied and peculiar modes of eating (qtd. in Klitzing).

Gastrocritical approach analyses the imaginative texts through a culinary framework. In *Food and Literature*, Robert Appelbaum discusses the taxonomy of food and he categorises food based on six concepts of which one considers “food as

asociocultural phenomenon, at once material and symbolic . . .” (Shahani25). This critical study examines the symbolic representations of frybread and wild rice which are repeatedly mentioned in the novel. Frybread has long been the staple food for the Native Americans but it is also the symbol of settler colonialism and survivance, combination of survival and resilience. Indigenous chef Sean Sherman refers to the frybread that “‘everything that isn't Native American food’, writing that it represents ‘perseverance and pain, ingenuity and resilience’” (qtd in *Wikipedia*). When the Natives are forced to take up the farming for their livelihood, they are coerced to move to other places where they could not continue with their traditional foods. In the new places, they are given some ingredients to prevent them from starving. They made frybread from the raw materials they are given. Eldredge conveys that food and foodways in the narratives manifest “the colonization of consciousness, of culture, and of daily life” (qtd in *Food and Foodways* 18). So, paradoxically frybread represents both colonisation and resilience. It celebrates their survival in the adverse predicaments.

The first chapter of the novel is named as “Bezbig: The Frybread Makers” where the frybread is unarguably regarded as the staple food of the Ojibwe people. Margie Robineau, the protagonist of the novel, is celebrated as the best frybread maker in the Mozhay Point Indian Reservation after the retirement of Annie Buck who was a “longtime frybread queen” (5). The making of the frybread is minutely explained and this gastropoetical description highlights the emotions of the character in the making process. The making of frybread requires “baking soda, powder, or yeast; commodity flour or Gold Medal; lard or Crisco, shortening or oil; spoon or hands. Granulated sugar or powdered, rolled or sprinkled. Cinnamon. Honey. Jelly. Butter (no inquiries about margarine). Maple syrup” (5).

The novel places the character in two different spaces to differentiate her emotions related to the food. Margie’s family is from Mozhay but from her teenage years she lives in Duluth, an urban space and is detached from her homeland of which she barely remembers. She works as a waitress in the Jupiter store in downtown Duluth. While cooking for a customer, the aroma of the cinnamon evokes the memories of her mother’s “Canadian pork pies” (28). She imagines:

A woman at work in a kitchen: Margie’s mother, gently patting rolled- out dough into a pie pan in preparation for the fragrant cinnamon- and – nutmeg spiced meat, the moment an intertwining of grief with the comfort that a motherless girl gleans from her dreams (28).



The above passage iterates the human memories of food. The aroma of cinnamon reminds her of her mother. Food memories can be painful, wistful and pleasant. In this context, food memory reinforces Margie’s cultural identity.

Margie stopped visiting her allotment house after the demise of her mother when she was about four or five. But by the persuasion her friend Theresa, she agrees to visit her place named Sweetgrass after ages. They both stayed at the house of Michael, an associate of Theresa. Margie, Theresa and Michael are the descendents of the inhabitants of the reservation. During their stay in the reservation, they enjoy cooking their traditional food. Michael makes fun of Theresa when she conveys that she has not tasted Waboos which means a cooked rabbit. Michael says, “‘Waboos, it’s the Chippewa national dish; can’t be a Chippewa if you don’t eat rabbit’” (24). So, they all prepare frybread and rabbit soup. Their culinary culture differs from other western culture as after killing an animal they would offer a pinch of tobacco and a small prayer seeking apologies “which was the traditional way and proper for an Ojibwe” (33).

The gastropoetical account of cooking represents the characters’ return to cultural roots and a reconnection with their heritage. Indigenous people value kinship networks. The culinary practice emphasizes the crucial essence of kinship, a care and support which extends beyond the blood relatives in Native American communities. Food preparation, as a communal activity, strengthens the intergenerational relationships which can be comprehended in a situation when they cook together by learning from Michael’s father Zho Wash and they all contribute to the collective activity as “Zho Wash . . . pulled out six potatoes, three in each hand. Theresa and Margie peeled and cut vegetables while the water heated on the woodstove; Michael and his father cut the rabbit meat from the bones . . .” (36). The collective preparation of food prompts Margie to start practising frybread and eventually she settles in her homeland by preparing and selling frybread.

Food brings together people and thereby Natives are vigilant in transferring their culinary culture to the future generations. When Margie is adept at making Indian tacos or frybread, she allows other Natives to observe her preparation process for she questions “. . . wasn’t that the way of old- time Ojibwe tradition, to share, to teach by example, to learn by watching?” (6). She also brings them to potlucks and powwows where Natives gather. Linda Grover vividly portrays the culinary culture of the Ojibwe community through the characters’ psychological relationship with food.

The next food mentioned in the novel is wild rice which is traditionally remembered in Native American cuisine. It is called manoomin in the Ojibwe

language. It is the only grain native to the Indigenous people in North America. Ojibwe people, otherwise known as Chippewa migrated to the present day Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin 1500 years ago adhering to a prophesy which tells them to reach the land “where the food floats on water” which means wild rice. It is considered sacred in Ojibwe culture and has historical, spiritual and cultural importance. Colonisation disrupted the traditional food system but the Natives are still trying to sustain the hand harvesting wild rice tradition. Beth M. Forrest and Greg de St. Maurice say, “Collective memories surrounding food are also a powerful tool when it comes to thinking about, creating, or reaffirming group identity” (*Food in Memory* 3). It is through communal memories the tradition has been sustained for generations.

The Ojibwe people harvest wild rice using boats and canoes. It is said that “Late summer into early fall is when wild rice, manoomin, ripens and is ready to harvest, it’s heads heavy and nodding on the green stalks that grow up out of Lost Lake, sometimes taller than a man’s head” (107). The people have to find a ricing partner and they would hum songs while harvesting. Margie, after spending her prime years in the city, isn’t used to ricing and so she struggles to paddle. She tries to learn from Michael and Zho Wash. In the novel, food serves as a symbol of cultural identity and also the process of homecoming. Margie reconnects with her homeland through food. The culinary culture of the Ojibwe community prompts her to return to her homeland and embrace her cultural identity.

The culinary practices and culture of the Ojibwe community narrate the history of settler colonialism and also the celebration of survival. Linda Grover, through her presentation of the Ojibwe food culture, explores the intersection of food, culture and identity. The cultural significance of the food is investigated through the characters reconnecting with their Native American heritage. The Gastrocritical study of the select novel reflects the ways Natives are able to heal from the cultural erasure through food. The study finds how food in Ojibwe community antithetically represents both colonisation and survivance and how the culinary culture reconnects the Natives with their heritage.

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## Tracing the Evolution of the Caste System in Tamil Nadu: A Perspective from Bama’s *Karukku*

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### **Abstract:**

Despite various government schemes and policies aimed at the development and welfare of the Dalit community, caste-based inequality continues to persist in Tamil Nadu. The abolition of the caste system remains a distant goal. Within the Dalit community, responses to this systemic oppression vary—while some individuals have resigned themselves to their circumstances, others have learned to voice their resistance. In her autobiography *Karukku*, Bama vividly portrays the struggles of the Dalit community, highlighting the persistent inequalities they face. She critically examines whether the caste system has evolved to improve the conditions of Dalits. Each generation depicted in the text reflects shifts in attitudes toward caste within the Dalit community and in their interactions with other social groups. Furthermore, the text explores the intersection of caste and gender, illustrating the concept of double oppression. This paper will analyse the perspectives of different generations, considering both male and female experiences, to assess whether the caste system has undergone any meaningful evolution across the three generations represented in *Karukku*.

**Keywords:** Dalit, Caste, Evolution, Gender, Generations

The origin of the caste system in Tamil Nadu can be traced back to 100–200 BC, predating colonial rule in India. Initially, caste divisions were based on occupation and religion. Over time, the system underwent various transformations, increasing in complexity while deviating from its original values.

“In the Tolkappiyam, these groups are associated with profession as opposed to birth and there are nuances: Brahmins described in secular jobs, acknowledgements that the warrior profession could be undertaken by multiple castes, and divisions within the Vellalars. These exceptions do not absolve traditional texts from blame for casteism; however, they can be

wielded to challenge those who misuse or misrepresent tradition and religion to justify casteism.” (Muthukumar)

The issue became more pronounced when these castes were further classified into upper and lower hierarchies, solidifying a rigid social structure. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the so-called upper castes regarded the so-called lower castes as untouchables and deprived them of education and fundamental rights. The lower caste communities later came to be known as Dalits, a term derived from the Sanskrit word *Dala*, meaning "crushed" or "broken pieces." These communities were systematically oppressed, subjugated, and treated as slaves by the upper caste groups. However, after enduring generations of hardship, Dalits began to resist oppression and demand their rights. Following India's independence, the Constitution abolished caste-based discrimination and introduced various policies and schemes aimed at fostering social equality. Nevertheless, the complete eradication of caste-based disparities remains a distant goal, as deeply entrenched social attitudes and longstanding practices continue to perpetuate discrimination. In this context, this study examines the evolution of caste perceptions and inter-community relationships across generations through the lens of Bama's *Karukku*.

Faustina Mary Fatima Rani, who writes under the pen name Bama, is a Dalit writer who advocates for the rights and dignity of her community. Born into a Roman Catholic Tamil family, she faced numerous struggles in her pursuit of a peaceful life. Her autobiography, *Karukku*, originally written in Tamil and published in 1992, was later translated into English by Lakshmi Holmström. In this work, Bama represents Tamil Dalit Christian women and narrates her personal struggles as a Dalit, detailing the hardships her family endured throughout her life. The book also explores how she confronts and overcomes triple oppression—being a woman, a Dalit, and a member of a marginalised religious community. “That book was written as means of healing my inward wounds; I had no other motive” (Bama ix). In the preface, Bama clarifies that her purpose in writing this book is not to oppose Christianity itself but rather to critique its practices and the hypocrisy prevalent within the Church and convents. Each member of her family symbolises a different generation, offering insight into the treatment of the Dalit community over time. Additionally, these generational perspectives reflect evolving attitudes towards self-identity and inter-community relationships, particularly concerning gender. Through the lens of this autobiography, *Karukku* reveals the significant transformations within the Dalit community over three generations, from Bama's grandmother to her mother and finally to Bama herself.

Bama’s grandmother, representing the first generation mentioned in the book, which dates back to the 1890s—based on Bama’s age and the period in which the book was written—epitomises the complete victimisation and subjugation imposed by the upper-caste community. During this era, the Dalit community then referred to as “untouchables,” endured systemic discrimination and social ostracisation. They were prohibited from entering the streets of upper-caste individuals, denied access to shared water sources, and forbidden from using the same utensils for eating and drinking. Their role in society was largely confined to performing menial and degrading tasks, essentially rendering them enslaved to the upper-caste populace. The upper-caste community ensured physical distance from Dalits, refraining from direct contact even when handing them wages or food, which was either thrown at them from a distance or tied to a string and passed along. Bama illustrates how her grandmother was regarded as “a true and proper servant” (49) by the Naicker family, for whom she worked and supervised various tasks assigned to her.

“Sometimes, if the Naicker insisted, she would rush through Pasai before daylight on Sunday, and then run to work. She’d rise before cock-crow at two or three in the morning, draw water, see to the household chores, walk a long distance to the Naiker’s house, work till sunset, and then come home in the dark and cook a little gruel for herself” (Bama 49)

Despite being human, she was conditioned to dedicate her life to serving the upper caste without hesitation, internalising her subjugation. This generation was deeply entrenched in the hegemonic structures of caste oppression, having accepted servitude as an inevitable aspect of existence. “The concept of hegemony is really a very simple one. It means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent that is secured by diffusion and popularisation of the world view of the class” (Bates 352). As a result, they consented to performing labour for the upper caste without voicing their grievances. Additionally, the lower-caste community viewed the upper caste as divine benefactors, believing that receiving food and meagre wages—far below what they rightfully deserved—was an act of generosity rather than exploitation. Facing a lack of respect and rudeness this generation exemplifies how entrenched caste ideologies obscured the struggles of the Dalit community, reinforcing a cycle of systemic oppression and normalised servitude.

The generation of Bama’s mother serves as a bridge between two eras, as she not only endures hardship but also attempts to break the cycle of struggle for her own generation. Although this period remained one of relentless labour, it also marked the emergence of awareness among the lower-caste community regarding

their rights and social position. The significance of education and its potential to transform the lives of Dalits became increasingly evident during this time. Dating back to the 1930s, this era was characterised by conflicts between castes within the same social strata. With the rise of awareness and the implementation of government policies aimed at uplifting the lower-caste community, the upper caste’s ability to exercise unchecked dominance diminished considerably. Whereas in previous generations, Dalits were subjected to oppression without justification, in this era, conflicts between communities were often manipulated as justifications for their continued subjugation. The upper caste leveraged these fabricated disputes to oppress Dalits through legal means, arresting them under false pretences and maintaining their dominance.

“A hundred times a second there are scuffles amongst them. Shameless fellows. Of course the upper caste men will laugh at them. Instead of uniting together in a village of many castes, if they keep challenging each other to fights, what will happen to all these men in the end?” (Bama 47)

Women, in particular, were objectified and subjected to violence during these caste-based riots, which erupted within communities of the same social level. “They used obscene language and swore at them, told them that since their husbands were away they should be ready to entertain the police at night” (Bama 40). Bama’s mother, like her own mother before her, dedicated her life to working for the Naickers. However, in contrast to her predecessor, she was also burdened with the additional responsibility of providing for her own family. The physical toll of her labour was so severe that she suffered significant health issues, including vomiting blood due to the harsh working conditions. The key difference between her and the previous generation lies in her perspective on education. Unlike Bama’s grandmother, her mother was a strong advocate for Bama’s education and career aspirations. Despite financial instability that made funding Bama’s higher education nearly impossible, she went to great lengths—seeking assistance from teachers and others—to ensure her daughter received the education necessary to carve out a life different from her own. Conversely, Bama’s father represents a paradoxical figure—one who supports the idea of equality yet maintains gendered distinctions in his beliefs and actions. While he recognised the importance of education, he did not extend this support to women’s education. As an army officer, he encouraged Bama to study, but due to the family’s financial constraints, he was reluctant to invest in her higher education. “Meanwhile, my father wrote to me from the army, very abusively, ‘You listened to the nuns’ advice and joined college; so now ask them to give you the money; go on, go to them’” (Bama 75). Even though he was fully aware of the transformative



power of education for his community, he prioritised the immediate financial stability of his household over his daughter’s academic pursuits. This decision, though influenced by economic hardship, ultimately reflects the deep-seated gender biases that persisted even among those who advocated for progress within the Dalit community.

The generation of Bama, dating to the 1950s, represents a period marked by reformed perspectives on the caste system. A significant distinction exists between this era and the preceding ones. While direct subjugation and oppression had largely ceased, caste-based discrimination had not been entirely eradicated. However, this generation became increasingly aware of their identity and actively sought to build independent lives, free from the control of upper-caste communities. Education played a pivotal role in driving this transformation, with more individuals gaining access to learning opportunities. “Yet, because I had the education, because I had the ability, I dared to speak up for myself; I didn’t care a toss about caste” (Bama 22). Many benefited from government-implemented reservation policies and welfare schemes, which facilitated their socio-economic progress. Bama, as a Dalit woman, endured numerous struggles and humiliations throughout various stages of her life, from her school years to her professional career. These experiences strengthened her resolve, enabling her to forge a life independent of the Naikers.

“Many people in the convent did not even know what was meant by Dalit. And those few who knew had an extremely poor opinion about Dalits; they spoke ill of us. When they spoke about Dalits in such terms, I would often shrink into myself. They did not know then that I myself was a Dalit, and in those early days, I did not have the courage to tell them. I was afraid of how they might talk to me or behave towards me if I told them” (Bama 115)

As an intelligent and courageous child, she demonstrated both physical and emotional resilience in her pursuit of personal growth and the upliftment of her community. Unlike her mother and grandmother, who devoted their lives to serving upper-caste individuals, Bama resisted societal norms that she found unjust or oppressive. She persistently fought for her rights and inner peace, despite facing numerous challenges designed to suppress her ambitions. This determination allowed her to carve out a life of her choosing, a privilege unavailable to previous generations. In contrast to earlier generations, where the Dalit community saw no alternative but to work for upper-caste individuals, Bama’s generation actively rejected subjugation and sought autonomy. This shift, however, was not achieved without difficulty. Although overt acts of oppression had diminished, Dalits continued to face systemic discrimination in more subtle and insidious ways.



Nevertheless, they endured these struggles, ultimately securing a better quality of life compared to their predecessors. Similarly, Bama’s brother played a crucial role in supporting her education.

“Annan told me all these things. And he added, ‘Because we are born into Paraya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn.’ The words that Anna spoke to me that day made a deep impression on me.” (Bama 17)

He encouraged her academic pursuits and educated her on the broader issues affecting the Dalit community. Through his guidance, Bama became increasingly aware of her community’s socio-political realities. This demonstrates that, unlike the men of previous generations who often restricted women’s access to education, Bama’s contemporaries actively supported women’s learning, at least for the collective advancement of their community.

The struggles faced by each generation vary, shaped by the persistent and irrational discrimination imposed upon them. Despite the undeniable strength of the movement for equality, a crucial question remains: what continues to hinder the realisation of equality among communities, a goal that should have been achieved long ago? The answer to this question can also be found in Bama’s *Karukku*.

“So how was it possible for us to make any progress? It seems that it is only the swindlers who manage to advance themselves. But there is no way at all for the Dalit who sticks to fair methods, and toils hard all her life, to make good.” (Bama 53)

Even as the Dalit community strives to progress, the upper-caste communities continue to exert efforts to subjugate them. Initially, the absence of stringent laws against discrimination and subjugation allowed upper-caste individuals to exploit Dalits for their benefit. However, with the evolution of the caste system and the introduction of reforms, privileges once exclusively enjoyed by the upper caste have diminished, leading to a growing resistance among them. The deeply ingrained notions of dominance and hierarchy have fostered a defensive reaction among the upper caste, who, in response to their waning power, resort to subtler forms of oppression. Bama’s professional life was rife with such experiences. When she attempted to voice her concerns and discomfort regarding discrimination, she was ignored and received no empathy for the emotional toll it took on her. Such treatment can discourage individuals from asserting their identity, making it even

more challenging to break free from societal constraints. However, Bama remained resolute; like a sturdy tree weathering a storm, she persevered through neglect, rejection, and humiliation to advocate for societal change.

“Once I finished my B. Ed and started to work, life became comfortable enough. It was really good to earn enough money every month and to go about independently, and as I pleased... And I realised that those who have the cash to spend can always afford to live in comfort.” (Bama 76)

Education emerges as a crucial tool for the empowerment of Dalits. The ability to believe in oneself and establish a distinct identity is primarily fostered through education. However, genuine progress can only be achieved when both marginalised and privileged communities work collaboratively toward equality. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of the upper-caste individuals to align their efforts with those of the Dalit community. This transformation requires not only the self-confidence of the Dalits but also a broad-minded and progressive attitude from the upper caste. While government policies and welfare schemes can facilitate social advancement, true change must originate from individuals, as humanity and compassion cannot be enforced through legislation or punitive measures.

To sum up the ideas mentioned so far, the caste system in Tamil Nadu is not merely a political structure but a deeply embedded social framework that encompasses the attitudes and behaviours of individuals who are often compelled to engage with it, even without their consent. At present, striving for the betterment of society is a more feasible approach than pursuing the system’s complete eradication, as gradual progress will inevitably lead to its dissolution rather than taking one large step, smaller steps of actual change are convenient for the people. The evolution from complete acceptance of oppression to fighting for one’s rights has taken three generations. The evidence suggests that while the attitudes and behaviours of previous generations are not entirely eradicated in subsequent generations, they undergo a transformation, retaining elements of the past in evolved forms. Furthermore, the abolition of the caste system cannot be accomplished solely through government schemes, policies, or even stringent regulations. Rather, it necessitates a collective effort in which individuals actively cultivate open-mindedness and inclusivity, thereby fostering genuine social change.

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## **From Rejection to Recognition : The Ongoing Struggles of Transgender Individuals**

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### **Abstract**

Transgender people, individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth, represent a diverse and often marginalized community. The journey of transgender individuals is one of self-discovery, resilience, and often, significant personal and societal challenges. Their journey is unique, as each individual experiences the process of self-acceptance, transition, and the pursuit of authentic self-expression differently. For many transgender people, the journey begins with an internal realization that their gender identity does not align with the expectations or norms associated with their assigned sex at birth. The process of understanding one's gender identity can be a deeply introspective and sometimes difficult experience, marked by confusion, fear, or uncertainty, especially in societies that place strict norms around gender. Once a transgender individual reaches a level of self understanding, they may feel compelled to share their identity with others—friends, family, and co-workers. This moment of coming out is often a pivotal one in the transgender journey. For some, it is met with love, support, and acceptance; for others, it is met with rejection, misunderstanding, or hostility. Transgender people often face societal and cultural barriers, including discrimination, exclusion, and violence. These challenges may arise in various areas of life workplaces, schools, healthcare, and even within families or religious communities. Many transgender individuals experience harassment, bullying, or alienation, and may feel forced to conceal or downplay their identity to navigate these spaces safely. “Manjunath to Jogathi Manjamma: A Journey of Folklore Artistry” is an exploration of the transformative journey of Manjamma Jogathi, a celebrated folklore artist, whose life and art embody the rich traditions of Karnataka’s folk culture. The book traces Manjamma’s evolution from a marginalized individual to a powerful voice within the folk art community.

It highlights her resilience in challenging the norms of caste, gender, and sexuality while also exploring the deep-rooted connection between folklore, spirituality, and performance in Karnataka. This paper explores the struggles and resilience of transgender individuals in their fight for identity and recognition in a society that often marginalizes them. It examines the complex intersection of gender identity, societal norms, legal frameworks, and personal journeys, shedding light on the challenges transgender individuals face in their pursuit of self determination. This work aims to emphasize the significance of recognizing and affirming transgender identities, advocating for a world where all individuals can live authentically and without fear of marginalization.

**Keywords:** Transgender Individual, Self Acceptance, Personal Journey, Manjunath to Manjamma, Folklore Artistry.

Transgender studies is an interdisciplinary field of academic inquiry that examines the lives, experiences, and issues faced by transgender people. It explores a variety of social, cultural, political, psychological, and historical dimensions of gender identity, expression, and fluidity, focusing on how gender identity exists outside the traditional binary concepts of male and female. Transgender studies is closely related to queer theory, which challenges normative ideas about gender and sexuality. Transgender Studies are not just about the study of marginalized group but about challenging the very structures that perpetuate gender binaries and discrimination. Transgender community comprises of Hijras, Eunuchs, Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, Shiv-Shakthis etc. Eunuchs have existed since 9th century BC. Transgender persons had been part of Indian society for centuries. There was historical evidence of recognition of third sex or persons not confirm to male or female gender in near the beginning writings of ancient India. Transgender individuals have held significant cultural and religious roles in India since ancient times. Their presence is documented in sacred texts, mythology, and historical records, often associated with divine powers, blessings, and spiritual functions. Hinduism has a long history of recognizing gender fluidity through deities and mythology. The concept of Ardhanarishvara, a composite deity of Shiva and Parvati, symbolizes the coexistence of masculine and feminine energies. The Hijras appear in the Ramayana when Lord Rama, during his exile, tells his followers to return home. The Hijras, however, remain loyal. Moved by their devotion, Rama grants them the power to bless people, leading to their association with auspicious ceremonies. Shikhandi is a crucial transgender character in the Mahabharata. Born

as a female (Shikhandini), he later transitions into a male and plays a pivotal role in the battle of Kurukshetra by ensuring Bhishma's downfall. Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, disguises himself as Brihannala, a transgender identity, while in exile and teaches dance to Princess Uttara. Krishna himself takes on a female form, Mohini, at various points in mythology, including to enchant demons and to marry Lord Aravan in Tamil traditions. During the Mughal era, Hijras served in royal courts as advisors, guards, and caretakers of harems. They were trusted with confidential matters and sometimes wielded political influence. The British colonial administration criminalized Hijras under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, calling them a criminal caste. This led to their marginalization, loss of respect, and persecution, despite their historical roles. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India officially recognized the transgender community as a third gender in the NALSA v. Union of India judgment. In Hindu temples and festivals continue to acknowledge transgender identities, such as the Koovagam Festival in Tamil Nadu, where Hijras re-enact the marriage of Aravan and Krishna (Mohini). Transgender people in modern India face both acceptance and rejection in society. “Manjunath to Manjamma Jogathi” is the inspiring story of Manjamma Jogathi, a transgender woman from Karnataka, India, who became a prominent folk artist and an advocate for the transgender community. The book tells the journey of her transformation from Manjunath, a man who was born in a traditional village, to Manjamma, a celebrated artist and a symbol of resilience.

Manjunath was born as a male in a rural village in Karnataka. From an early age, he experienced a sense of being different, struggling with his identity. . After leaving her house aged 15, she identified herself as a woman. During this time, she was sexually abused. Later, a father and son duo introduced her to dancing and took her to dance teacher Kallavva Jogathi, where she learnt the Jogathi dance. She was first appointed as the member of the Karnataka Jaanapada Academy and later as the president of the same institution by the State government, which made her the first transwoman to head the top institution for Performing arts in the state.

After enduring significant emotional and social hardships, Manjunath eventually transitioned to Manjamma. Her journey into the transgender community was marked by isolation, rejection from her family, and the inability to find acceptance in mainstream society. Despite the rejection, she found strength in the art form of “Jogathi,” a traditional form of folk dance associated with the local culture. In January 2021, Government of India announced Padma Shri award for her contribution to the field of folk arts. Manjamma's journey was not just about self-transformation but also about pushing for societal change. As a well-known figure,

she used her success to advocate for the rights of transgender people, striving for their inclusion and respect in society. She became an inspiration to many others in the transgender community and beyond. Manjamma’s story is a reminder of the importance of self-acceptance and the need for greater empathy and understanding for marginalized communities.

“I was being treated like a criminal, but as far as I knew, I had done nothing” (31). These words express Manjamma’s feelings of being unjustly treated and misunderstood by society because of her gender identity. She is essentially saying that she was being condemned or punished for something she didn’t choose or do wrong. These lines speak to the stigma and discrimination faced by transgender individuals, especially in a conservative society. “I was being treated like a criminal”, this implies that Manjamma was subjected to severe societal rejection, hostility, and perhaps even violence or legal issues, simply because she was transgender. It highlights the way society often views gender non-conformity as something immoral or criminal, even though in reality, it is not. This feeling of being treated as a criminal can stem from societal biases, prejudice, and the marginalization of transgender people. She hasn’t done anything wrong or illegal in her own eyes; she simply wanted to live her life authentically. Her sense of wrongdoing is not rooted in any actions she has taken, but rather in the perception that society has unfairly labeled her as a criminal because of her gender identity. These lines poignantly express the feeling of being misunderstood, unjustly condemned, and ostracized by society for reasons that are beyond one’s control. For Manjamma, the words reflect the immense struggle of facing prejudice without having committed any crime. This is a common experience for transgender individuals, who often face societal and institutional discrimination, even though their desire to express themselves authentically is not a criminal act. The lines reflect the deep emotional pain of being misunderstood and rejected by the very society that should embrace diversity and individual rights.

“Feeling abandoned within my own home” (58). This reflects the deep emotional pain and sense of isolation Manjamma experiences during her journey of self-discovery and transition. For many transgender individuals, one of the most painful aspects of their journey is the rejection they experience from their own families. Home is traditionally supposed to be a place of safety, love, and support. However, for Manjamma, this space becomes one of emotional abandonment. This likely refers to the rejection she faced from her family members when they could not accept her transition from Manjunath to Manjamma. In many cases, families, especially in conservative or traditional societies, may struggle with or outright

reject a loved one's gender identity, leading the individual to feel alienated and unloved in the very place where they should feel the most accepted. The line also suggests an internal conflict where Manjamma is battling with her identity and her desire for acceptance. The feeling of abandonment can stem not only from her family's reaction but also from her own sense of self as she navigates her gender identity. She may have felt rejected not just by others, but also by society, which often does not fully embrace transgender individuals. For many transgender individuals, societal stigma and the lack of support can make them feel abandoned, even in spaces where they should feel secure. If family members hold negative views about gender nonconformity, it can lead to a toxic and unwelcoming environment. This experience of feeling abandoned is not necessarily physical abandonment, but an emotional and psychological one, where the transgender person feels like they are not fully accepted for who they are.

Her father says, “If he had been blind or physically challenged we would have kept him home and fed him for the rest of our lives” (60). The father's statement reflects the societal view that physical disabilities might be acceptable and deserving of care, but gender non conformity or being transgender is something to be rejected or feared. It points to how gender identity is often stigmatized more harshly than other aspects of a person's being, particularly in conservative cultures. The father's response indicates that he was unable to understand or accept Manjunath's transition into Manjamma. For many families in such situations, fear of the unknown or a lack of understanding about transgender issues leads to rejection. A blindness or physical disability might be something that the father could sympathize with or at least comprehend, but gender identity challenges cultural norms that are harder for him to accept.

This line in the book captures the disappointment and sadness of Manjamma, as she realizes that even within her own family, her gender identity is not understood or accepted in the same way that a physical disability might be. It highlights the stigmatization of transgender individuals and the painful, conditional nature of love that they often face from those who should love them unconditionally.

“This art has not only kept me alive, it has transformed me from just another transgender seeking alms on the street to an internationally recognized folk artists” (75). When Manjamma says that art has kept me alive, it suggests that her connection to folk art (Jogathi dance) was not just a means of expression, but also a way of surviving emotionally and spiritually. For many transgender individuals, the struggle for identity and acceptance can lead to feelings of hopelessness and isolation. In Manjamma's case, art gave her a sense of purpose and helped her



navigate the challenges of being transgender in a conservative society. The art allowed her to channel her pain and experiences into something meaningful, which contributed to her sense of self-worth and survival. The transition from being just another transgender seeking alms on the street to being an internationally recognized folk artist reflects a dramatic shift in Manjamma’s life and status. As a transgender person, she would have faced extreme marginalization, with limited access to opportunities or a stable income. Many transgender individuals are often forced to live on the streets or take up begging because of discrimination and the lack of job opportunities. However, through her artistic talent, Manjamma was able to break out of this cycle of marginalization and transform her life. She went from being invisible in society to being celebrated for her cultural contributions as a folk artist. The art helped Manjamma reclaim her agency. Instead of being defined by her gender identity or the stereotypes associated with being transgender, she was able to define herself by her artistic achievements. Art became a powerful tool for self-empowerment, allowing her to redefine her narrative and gain respect in a world that had previously rejected her. Through her performances, she became a voice for the transgender community, showing the world that art has the power to uplift and create change. This line from the book beautifully encapsulates how art transformed Manjamma’s life, turning her from a marginalized individual into a recognized cultural figure. It illustrates the healing power of art and how it can be a tool for empowerment, survival, and social change. Manjamma’s story is a powerful reminder that, despite immense personal struggles, creativity and self-expression can be the key to reclaiming one’s identity, dignity, and place in the world.

“Let her learn. Only when she knows difficulties will she know life, the value of people and remember everyone, be it parents or a guru, and know their importance. She needs to suffer for only that will drive sense into her head” (119). These lines are said by kalavva to Manjamma, it suggests that struggle and hardship are seen as essential for someone to truly appreciate life, relationships, and the sacrifices of others. This perspective reflects a more traditional, harsh approach to growth, where suffering is often seen as a necessary step toward gaining wisdom and understanding. In some cultures, the idea of tough love or enduring pain is seen as a way to prepare someone for life’s challenges. The speaker in this context may believe that Manjamma needs to endure hardship before she can grow into a mature, thoughtful person who values the people around her. These lines are particularly significant because they reflect the challenges faced by transgender individuals who often experience rejection and difficulties while trying to find acceptance in society. For someone like Manjamma, suffering is not just a theoretical concept; it is an

ongoing reality. Rather than reinforcing the need for more pain, the lines could also be seen as indicative of societal expectations that transgender individuals must endure even more hardship before they can be accepted or understood. It reflects the frustration of not being seen for who you truly are and the belief that suffering is a path to wisdom.

“If a child like me is born in your home, accept the situation and give the child an education to empower them to be independent and live a decent life. This empowerment can change everything”(45). Manjunath carries a powerful message about acceptance, empowerment, and the transformative power of education. She is advocating for acceptance of children who are gender non-conforming or transgender. She urges that if a child like her, who is transgender, is born into a family, they should not be rejected or marginalized. Instead, families should accept the child for who they are. In many societies, transgender individuals face rejection and discrimination from their families, which can lead to isolation and psychological harm. This call for acceptance is an important message for society to embrace diversity and treat all individuals, regardless of gender identity, with dignity and respect. Manjamma emphasizes that education is a crucial tool for empowering children especially those who might be marginalized or misunderstood, like transgender children. Education is often the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and discrimination, and it provides the tools for individuals to challenge societal norms and forge their own path. Manjamma envisions a future where transgender individuals are empowered to live independently and sustainably. Many transgender individuals face economic hardship, as they are often excluded from mainstream employment opportunities due to discrimination or a lack of acceptance in society. An education provides the necessary foundation to pursue a career, gain financial independence, and lead a life of dignity. Independence here means more than just financial autonomy it represents freedom from societal judgment and the ability to live on one’s own terms. Manjamma’s message is one of empowerment, acceptance, and transformation. She calls for society to accept transgender children as they are, and to provide them with the education and opportunities they need to lead independent and dignified lives. This, she believes, will not only empower individuals but also help change the societal attitudes that limit the potential of transgender people. The transformative power of education and acceptance is key to unlocking a brighter, more inclusive future for everyone.

The experiences of transgender people highlight the profound need for greater acceptance, understanding, and support across all sectors of society. Despite facing

significant challenges such as discrimination, stigma, and marginalization, transgender individuals continue to demonstrate incredible resilience and strength. Their struggles often lead to valuable contributions to culture, society, and the arts, as they bring unique perspectives and experiences that can transform the narratives surrounding gender and identity. However, to ensure that transgender people can live freely and fully, it is essential to create environments that are inclusive, equitable, and safe. This involves implementing policies that protect their rights, providing educational and employment opportunities, and fostering communities where diversity is celebrated. When society recognizes and embraces the identities of transgender individuals, it not only improves their lives but enriches the broader fabric of humanity. As the fight for transgender rights continues, it is important to remember that their well-being, opportunities, and acceptance are integral to building a society that values human dignity and equality. Empowering transgender individuals to live authentically and pursue their dreams will ultimately lead to a more compassionate, understanding, and just world for all.

Through the journey of Manjamma, the paper highlights the complex intersections of gender identity, societal rejection, and the transformative power of art and self-expression. Manjamma’s story is not only one of personal survival but also of empowerment, as she rises from the margins of society to become an internationally recognized folk artist. The paper serves as a vital reminder of the importance of acceptance, support, and recognition for transgender individuals, particularly in cultures where gender non-conformity is often stigmatized. It underscores the need for society to create inclusive environments where transgender people can freely express themselves and thrive. By addressing the barriers and discrimination faces by transgender individuals, we can foster a supportive environment that values their contributions and ensures equitable access to opportunities, ultimately enhancing authentic human connections and overall societal well-being.

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**Suffering and Struggling are the permanent pain of Scavengers: analyzing the fact through Thakazhi Sivasankaran Pillai’s *Thottiyin Mahan* (Malayalam) and Malarvathi’s *Thooppukkaari* (Tamil).**

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Generally it is believed that literature is the mirror of the society. Even if we do not accept this concept of mirror completely, we still believe that literature has a deep relationship with the society and environment in which it is created. Language has its own nature, own beauty and its own limitations. Similarly, each work has a special genre. The boundaries related to music, painting and sculpture are transgressed.

Comparative Literature also has to be free from its limitations of different disciplines like philosophy, sociology, political science, etc. Therefore, it can be said that comparative literature has no boundaries. In comparative literature, adoption of effect, analogical subjectivity, organicity, historiography and translation etc. have been considered from different angles. Comparative literature expresses the opinion that comparison is possible only in literature of the same level. Every person wants to understand the other language, literature and culture from the perspective of one’s own language, literature and culture; thus a standard has been set in comparative literature.

Translation has always had a deep relationship with comparative literature. It is not necessary for every person to know all the languages. Therefore, the role of translation is necessary for the comparison between two literatures. It has been recognized from the beginning that comparative Literature is the major discipline and translation is treated as subsidiary discipline. The interrelationship of comparative literature and translation studies is very close to each other. Thus anyone can compare any piece of literature with the other one.

In this particular article, the candidate wishes to compare Thakazhi Sivasankaran Pillai’s *Thottiyin Mahan* (Scavenger’s Son) Malayalam and Malarvathi’s *Thooppukkaari* (Woman Scavenger) Tamil. When *Thottiyin Mahan* says about the life of Esakkimuthu and his son Sudalaimuthu in Alappuzha Municipality, Kerala : the other novel, *Thooppukkaari* speaks about the life of Kanagam and her daughter Poovarasi near Marthandam, Tamilnadu. In *Thottiyin Mahan* Sudalaimuthu struggled a lot to start his life as a scavenger and underwent a lot of pains, insults,

sufferings, conspiracy and isolation to sustain his position. The disciplined life of Sudalaimuthu itself is a great enmity to him. On the hand Poovarasi was forced by her mother, Kanagam to be a scavenger to repay her debt. *Thoopukkaari* gives a picturesque description about the painful life of a woman scavenger, Poovarasi and her challenges to fit herself in that post and about her sufferings, hunger, loveful emotions and her destiny with her child. In both the novels, the parents died out of starvation and insult by the society. Though the society and community speaks about equality and fraternity; it cunningly and silently sidelines the have - nots and needy people from the main stream of life. The main aim of this article is to articulate the pathetic condition of the scavengers and about their pathetic life where ever they may be.

### **Struggling of the scavengers to lead an Ordinary life**

It is not an easy task for the scavengers either to do their duty or to obtain its recognition. They have to run from pillar to post even for a cup of plain tea. This society extracts the work from them and not ready to take care of their needs. Usually all the people give the waste, leftover food to the scavengers and never allow them to lead a decent life. Actually the food is thrown on them and there is no decent wages too for their work. Every day is a struggle to them. In *Thottiyin Mahan*, Esakkimuthu, the father, works in Alapuzha municipality for three decades. Even then, he was not given two days of leave for a genuine reason, suffering from vulnerable disease. Many a day his family could not meet out its basic needs. Starvation was the permanent pain to the entire family. When he asked two days leave, the supervisor threatened that he would be dismissed. The merciless Alapuzha municipality supervisor was so rude to everyone because they were voiceless. So Esakkimuthu compelled his son, Sudalaimuthu to carry over his duty. Sudalaimuthu knew nothing about cleaning and other sweeping work. He struggled a lot to proceed his father's work. He was given ruined waste food. When his father, Esakkimuthu was terribly in need of either a cup of water or food, he could not get it from the society and his father died pathetically out of starvation. His body was buried during that night in a hurry – burry manners, and the street dogs pulled out the corpse from the pit after a week; and it was buried again by Sudalaimuthu with the help of other scavengers. The horrible appearance of his father's dead body shattered him a little. Alapuzha Municipal Chairman and the supervisor chided him a lot for his irresponsible activity. Thus his life was full of pain and remorse.

Likewise in *Thooppukkaari*, Kanagam, mother of Poovarasi, had been working in ‘Mahi’ hospital, near Marthandam, Tamilnadu ever since she was too young. Even then she was unable to fulfill her daily needs. Pain, insult, dejection

and negligence were the reward given to her both by the hospital management and by the patients. Once she was invited by Rosely, her co – worker, for a marriage function to do cleaning work; cleaning the left over banana leaves and other food waste. Unable to tolerate her hungry, Kanagam sat to eat in the crowd along with Rosely. Mano’s uncle insulted her in front of everyone, and pushed her out. She felt herself as abominable creature and fainted down out of drowsiness, hungry, insult and dejection. This society once again proved that a thooppukkaari is unfit to sit with others for food. They are eligible to eat only the remnant and tit bits. Immediately she was hospitalized but she could not recover herself from everything. Again she was insulted by a patient when briyani was served in the hospital campus. Poovarasi’s love with Mano, a rich guy was a great shock to Kanagam. The agony, pain and inhumane treatment initiated her to commit suicide. So she swallowed some tablets and kicked her bucket. This pathetic death had proved that this society is so cruel to the scavengers and to their family. The people who make the society ugly or dirt are treated as upper class but the people who clean the society are insulted as lower class. Kanagam had no one to honor her except Poovarasi but Mari volunteered himself to offer her a decent entombment. Thus the death of the two elderly scavengers proved that there is no place for them neither in this world nor in the burial ground.

### **Love Life of the Scavengers**

In *Thottiyin Mahan*, Sudalaimuthu had a different type of love and affection on Valli, a woman scavenger. Their love blossomed inside the toilets and dirty places: but their love was very true and affectionate. Sudalaimuthu never consumed liquor or any other intoxicated item as like the other scavengers. He wanted to come up in life like other community people. He dressed in such a way that no one could identify him as a thotti without his toilet cleaning bucket and spade. He never led a thotti life like others. He was treated by others in a different way, not like the other thottis. He saved some money and gave it to the municipal chairman of Alapuzha through his supervisor. After his marriage he did not allow Valli to go to work. He took her to honey moon also which was a dream to others. He was very neat and clean in his personal life also. He expected the same from Valli but Valli could not adopt the new style of life which was entirely different from the ordinary thotti’s life. He restricted her by putting so many conditions like not to chat with other thotti ladies, never allow her to go to other houses, never allow her to be on her own, and applied a lot of rules and regulations in her personal life too. He lent money for interest, cheated his own friends for money, and did conspiracy along with the supervisor against his own community which was completely hated by Valli. He did

not allow Valli's lonely aunt to visit her. When his friends, Pitchandi and Sundaram's families were affected by contagious disease, he simply neglected their families. When Sundaram's family met with a devastated condition, Sudalaimuthu simply moved away from the little children without humanity and with utmost selfishness.

When Valli gave birth to a male baby, he named him as Mohan which was criticized and insulted by others. Sudalai never showered his love and affection towards his son fearing that his thotti smell should not affect his son. He was not ready even to feed his son. When Sudalai sought for his son's school admission; no school was ready to admit Mohan. Finally municipal supervisor arranged for school admission, after getting twenty rupees as bribe. Sudalai was the first one who sent his son to school among the scavengers' family. Unable to tolerate the insults of others; he quitted his scavenger work and joined as grave yard's watchman. Finally he was cheated by the Alapuzha municipal chairman without giving his savings: Valli pathetically died out of 'Calara' (a dangerous disease) and Sudalaimuthu died in the grave yard itself in an afternoon while he was in duty. Mohan's life became pathetic and later he became the workers' leader. He and all his friends died in a riot against the Kerala Government. In total Sudalai's love on his life style was stronger than on Valli. He did not like his work in the beginning and later for the welfare his son. His sacrifice, support and dedication to Alapuzha municipality were totally ignored by the supervisor and the municipal chairman.

Whereas Poovarasi's love on Mano was sincere but unexpressed. Their financial status and social discrimination was highly imbalanced. Mano was rich and Poovari was struggling for her daily needs. She did not have decent dress or essential needs. But their love was true. Mano car's horn sound was the only signal between them. She admired Mano's paintings on the hospital wall. She was attracted through that tool only. Mano's love was true but he was a puppet of his father. On the other hand Mari, the ugly sweeper loved Poovarasi sincerely and conveyed his marriage proposal to Kanagam through Velappan. When Velappan conveyed the message, Kanagam felt ashamed and uneasy feel. Though she was a thooppukkaari, she belonged to upper community; whereas Mari belonged to real sweeper community. Moreover he was a chain smoker and drunkard. He was so ugly and his body emitted a dirty, stinking smell always. He would not be a good match to Poovarasi because Poovarasi was a little educated, knew stitching, had gone to cashew nut factory for work etc. The imagination of Mari with Poo was highly intolerable, horrible and irritating to Kanagam.



When Poovarasi was forced to clean the leftover banana leaves and the waste in Mano brother's marriage; Poo felt a lot of uneasiness and shivering in front of everyone. Out of fear and tension, she fell down with the waste leaves. Mano was simply gazing at her, but Mari came forward to support Poovarasi and sent her out. Even then Poovarasi was unable to understand the real love and affection of Mari. She really hated his appearance and activities. Once she lost herself to Mano physically and it was witnessed by Mari. Despite Mari took care of Kanagam in the hospital out of humanity. Kanagam witnessed Poovarasi and Mano embracing each other inside the toilet while she was hospitalized. Unable to tolerate the emotions, helplessness inability etc., she swallowed some capsules and committed suicide. Mari was the only one who helped Poovarasi till the end.

When Poovarasi became illegally pregnant, she was insulted by the doctor in front everyone, Mari came forward and stated that he was responsible for the deed. Both were ridiculed by the entire hospital but Mari never betrayed Poovarasi's secret. He knew very well that Mano was the man behind that pregnancy; but he took Poo with him and gave her food and shelter. He never violated or crossed his limits towards Poovarasi. Mano married a girl and went abroad for his survival. Poovarasi did not abort the fetus and begot a female child. Mari brought up both the mother and child. He lost his life in a road accident unexpectedly. Poovarasi once again became an orphan. Her love and affection was real with Mano initially and later with Mari. But both were helpless and useless.

### **Pathetic Life of the sweeping community**

Out of greed, Sudalaimuthu lost all his friends, wife and son. In order to become rich, out of anxiety, he betrayed his own friends and his community. When the sweeping community met with dangerous disease twice, he did not support his community instead he tried to exploit the opportunity. His core aim was to become rich. For that he sacrificed his own interests, wife, son and relatives. Finally he died like a beast in his own working place. Pillai's *Thottiyin Mahan* has proved that though a thotti family is rich and powerful, the society will not approve them or acknowledge them because they are fit only to clean the society. They should not expect anything from the society and should tolerate all the difficulties and treachery.

Poovarasi became an everlasting slave of 'Mahi' hospital because she has to repay her parents' debt to the hospital. Someone was ready to adopt her child through Suba doctor: but finally Poovarasi got her child back because she wanted someone to be with her throughout her life. Her love was very true that is why she

did not betray Mano to anyone and she blamed herself for her illegal pregnancy. Thus her life became an everlasting burden to her friends and to herself.

### **Conclusion**

The society is filled with mystery and miracles. Everyone wants to be so clean and comfort. Everything wants to be so perfect and attractive. Everywhere everyone needs preference and priority. Always expecting others to be so gentle, good looking and flawless. But no one never judge or understand their own stand or values. Change should start from us. Before judging or blaming others, one should estimate his/her values first. Likewise the entire community and society dirt wherever they are and whenever they need, but never ready to respect the sweeping and cleaning community who cleans the society. Without them, they society will be dirty and a dusty place. We should extend our helping hand and tender heart towards them. We should ensure the human values and minimum respect on the scavengers. Let it be Sudalaimuthu or Poovarasi; they never expect too big. They expect minimum income to fulfill their basic needs. They have been longing for their self –respect for centuries together. Let us get ready to embrace their feelings and human values. They are also the creation of God; they are also the son of the soil. They have had enough right to enjoy every right. This is not too late to look at the need of the sweeping community. If not we, who? If not now, when? So put a step forward to approve the co- human being. Caste, creed, religion, differences are manmade techniques to enrich someone and enslave the others. Let us demolish all the barriers right now. Let us celebrate the cleaning community for a clean world.

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## A Study on Disability in Indian English Literary Context

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### **Abstract**

Literature on the whole is a vast area which covers various themes, various subjects and various genres. As literature reflects the real life, it is time to spotlight the ever changing and ever developing field -the study of disability and the study on disability by a disabled person is an emerging interdisciplinary field. It brings out the voices of the disabled people and the dilemma of the society whether to consider them like a normal people or treat them as ‘other’. Disability, as a socio-cultural, economic, and medical issue, has been recognized globally as a critical area of concern. In the Indian context, the challenges associated with disability are compounded by deeply rooted cultural beliefs, social stigma, and a lack of accessible infrastructure and support systems. The present research paper investigates the levels and different types of people towards disability in the selected Indian English fiction which deals with the theme of disability to understand the various psychological and sociological aspects that take place in the life of a person with some kind of impairments. The approach is interdisciplinary as it aims at assimilating the psychological and sociological aspects in analyzing the fiction of disabled people. This paper will talk about the representation of disability in Indian literature and propose a new path towards inclusive education.

**Key words:** Disability, feminism, Literature, community,

Disability, the term in itself connotes negativity. It covers all impairments such as limitations in physical and mental activity. Disability studies examine the social, cultural and political aspects that affect the persons with disabilities, focusing on understanding disability as a social construct. Disability can be considered as any physical or mental limitation that may be present at birth or emerge in later life as a result of any accident or illness. “Categorized as physical and mental; physical disability is capable of limiting physical movement while mental disability is capable of affecting the cognitive activities carried out by a person’s brain (Ginsburg & Rapp, 42)”. The inclusion of disability studies in

literature fills the knowledge gap in this area and advances the academic discipline of disability by reviewing the Indian setting.

Disability in the Indian context is closely knitted to historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors, as well as to religious beliefs, and modern-day societal norms. “Disability is a complex and multidimensional component of human variation that has significant effects on both people and society as a whole. Understanding disability in social work is essential for efficient and moral practice; it goes beyond academic interest (Trevillion, 937)”.

Disabled human subjects have less social power and are subordinate in the social hierarchy. As Quayson appeals:

Disability returns to the aesthetic domain an active ethical core that serves to disrupt the surface of representation. Read from a perspective of disability studies, this active ethical core becomes manifest because disability representation is seen as having a direct effect on social views of people with disability in a way that representations of other literary details, tropes, and motifs do not offer. In other words, the representation of disability has an efficaciousness that ultimately transcends the literary domain and refuses to be assimilated to it. (726)

In understanding the Representation of disability in Indian English literature, it is important to contextualize disability within Indian culture and society. Historically, people with disabilities have been marginalized in India. They were considered as ‘others’. Disability was often seen through the lens of religious or mythological and superstitious narratives. It was sometimes considered as a punishment for past transgressions. It was also considered as a symbol of divine will. In pre-colonial times, people with disabilities were often subject to religious or healing rituals, and some were even considered to possess special powers or were referred as divine figures.

Later on, colonial rule brought about a shift in the perception of disability, which was increasingly viewed through the lens of Western culture rather than religious or mythological. They took this context in different perspective of medical and social models. Disability, rather than being seen as a part of divine will, began to be framed as a medical condition that needed to be ‘fixed’ or ‘cured’. This shift resulted in a heightened sense of stigma and marginalization, as those with disabilities were often excluded from mainstream society and relegated to the peripheries.

The independence movement in India also had its own stance on disability, as it sought to reassert national identity and pride. The Indian disability rights

movement, which gained grip in the late twentieth century, was driven by a desire for better opportunities, access to education, and social inclusion for people with disabilities. As Indian society began to slowly embrace the idea of inclusive development, literature also started to reflect these social changes.

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* reprimands the contention of ladies jobs in the public arena by uncovering difficulties that Desai shows through the impact of western culture, the longing of genuine orientation fairness, and the social jobs which ladies are compelled to comply. Fundamental hero Baba is mentally unbalanced. In postcolonial India, people with inabilities are frequently dismissed and they face a character emergency where society neglects to characterize them. How Baba can be depicted or contemplated as a crippled inferior is significant in postcolonial social design and an investigation of impaired according to colonized perspective is vital. In the novel, *Clear Light of Day*, Anita Desai investigates the conflicted job of characters with inabilities, both as locales of offense and as archives for social strains in postcolonial world. The social outlining and philosophical work of impaired characters in *Clear Light of Day* and incorporation of a handicap point of view in postcolonial and women's activist scrutinizes can advance how we might interpret the rationalization among colonizers and colonized and refigure our thought of hybridity.

*Clear Light of Day* presents a story about the historical backdrop of a more distant family and the misfortunes they confronted. It is inside these characters and composing strategies that Anita Desai arrives at the perusers of the working class, hence extending and fostering their domains of creative mind. Desai wove the historical backdrop of Delhi with a working class Hindu family. The title of the novel, *Clear Light of Day*, alludes to an entry in the fourth piece of the novel where Bimla Das, who had generally had confidence before, develops now and starts to once more examine 'the unmistakable light of day that she felt just love and longing for them all. The late spring of 1947 has separated the country and the family - Hindus and Muslims are tom separated by Partition.

Rushdie's *Shame*, has brought into Indian Fiction, the fuming and extraordinary person of Sufiya Zinobia. Sufiya represents double subalternity-the oppressed Pakistani womanhood and the disgrace of being Intellectually Disabled. Not at all like numerous compositions where the inferior surrenders to her environmental elements, Rushdie's courageous woman raises from her marked situation with rage and changes herself into the monster, releasing back the fierceness that would already have been endured quietly. Whether Sufiya has mental inadequacy or formative lack as chemical imbalance isn't obvious to the

peruser. Rushdie utilizes otherworldly authenticity to change Sufiya into a monster. Her sleepwalking into Pinkies yard in a daze and killing 218 turkeys by detaching their heads and venturing down into their bodies to draw their guts up through their necks with “ little weaponless hands”(150) is definitely not a hasty demonstration. The perusers can't peruse any levelheadedness behind the demonstrations of savagery and the executing of heads become her particular style as it reaches out from creatures to people with high cheerful readiness.

Parallely, Sufiya's mind dials back and she stays a youngster for eternity. It is to her where she can appreciate, the “most loved things she keeps in there secured. Whenever individuals are available she never considers taking things out and play with them on the off chance that they move removed or broken accidentally (224).” Inside her head she not just invokes fictitious pictures of cheerful times with her dad embracing and grinning at her or of playing with her mom on a jumping rope. She fills her head with cheerful pictures, so that “here won't be space for different things, things she hates (225). Clashing ideas of spouse, youngsters, obligations of a wife that she has soaked up from other people who interact with her (ayah, mother for instance) befuddle and torture her. As she attempts to invoke dubious conditions of social connections inside her head, her requirement for communicating her sexual longings bring her into another aspect. The back-and-forth among obligation and commonsense reality torment her. What is astounding is Rushdie's utilization of a debilitated female body, its smothered sexuality bringing forth a monster, so malignant that it enjoys the assault and execution of four youths. Automatically, Rushdie sews a story from frailty to all consuming power, a creature like power that knows no dread. At the psychological age of six and a half, when Sufiya can handle herself, she is driven into marriage saying in numerous feelings cerebrums are a good hindrance to a lady in marriage” .She comprehends that her life misses the mark on things, however she can't unequivocally stick point what. She is likewise ready to comprehend the association between her ayah and the development in her stomach prompting her removal. Rushdie's utilization of the mentally debilitated body to address disgrace of an entire society is all around created in the text.

Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, has its setting in the tempestuous post free India, where the smell of the spoiling administrative framework, permeates into basic families like that of the hero, Gustad Noble and causes ruin. Interweaving the individual and the political, Mistry has marvelously woven the disturbances in the two fronts” the political affecting the individual. However, guiltless of all the unrest or changes around him is the Intellectually Disabled Tehmul. Tehmul's

crippled body is viewed as a setting of infringement. Freedoms of the Intellectually Disabled, basically nonexistent in the period are reflected really in the text. Tehmul lives at the compassion of individuals around him. His watchman, his sibling, is remarkable by his nonappearance. In the last 50% of the text, with the vicinity of the looming war, Tehmul supposedly fends for himself. As well as being Intellectually Disabled, he is weak, not by birth, but rather by a mishap, henceforth acquiring the name Tehmul lungraa. Set when the dichotomous draw of sanity and odd notion played an equivalent load on confounded personalities, Dilnaviz (Gustad’s spouse) takes care of an honest Tehmul enchanted elixirs which would save her family from a stink eye and would make him more conflicting. The straightforward Tehmul, thrilled at the possibility of the improved beverage laps it up, unconscious of the repulsions it contains.

Assuming actual handicap is acknowledged as a condition of life or a period old enough, Intellectual Disability is seen all the more brutally by the general public. Mistry’s Tehmul, best case scenario, is an aggravation and to say the least is a threat. Tehmul’s portrayal by the creator merits notice as he is viewed as a youngster housed in an adult body. However in his mid-thirties, Tehmul is said to incline toward the organization of kids to that of grown-ups. His propensity for "continuously wearing a major smile" (31), awkward hand and feet developments, scratching of the crotch and armpits (which caused ladies to whine about him that he did it intentionally to disturb them), propensity for following individuals till he is waved off, mark him clearly as an Intellectually Disabled.

Tehmul’s violence catches the attention of the readers as Mistry portrays a detailed description of the slaughter of the rats. He earned his keep by catching rats in the apartment building and handing it over to the municipal ward office in exchange for a little amount of money. Tehmul kills it by pouring boiling water little by little on the squirming rats and killing them. “As the rats’s quealed and writhed in agony, he watched their reactions with great interest, particularly their tails, proud of the pretty colours he could bestow on them. He giggled to himself as they turned from grey to pink, and then red. If the scalding did not kill them before he ran out of boiling water, he dropped them in the bucket.” (33) Tehmul’s chitchat makes disturbance the individuals who are around him. His absence of capacity to keep up with insider facts presents issues to all included. Compromising him to quietness is the main elective left. A striking equal can be followed between Steinbeck’s Lennie in *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and Mistry’s Tehmul. Both Tehmul and Lennie causes problems due to their sexuality. The profound craving to contact and feel anything that looks delicate causes him to ask to contact Roshan’s doll and



later, prompts issue with the whores. The equivalent can be followed in Lennie’s nature as well. His over snuggling of creatures, results, in unintentionally killing them, which anticipate his homicide of Curley’s spouse.

Both George and Gustad (protagonists of the books) take care of the feelings of the Intellectually Disabled. In their excursion of self-acknowledgment and endurance, the last option becomes not a weight, but rather a fundamental means to refine their better side of themselves. The legends conclusion require a ritual de section through critical waterways that leaves them more developed and inspires their situation according to the peruser. At a critical place of the text, Gustad observes Roshan’s missing doll at Tehmul’s condo, with a gasping Tehmul in a compromising position. After dismissal at the red zones, Tehmul’s dream is lit by the petite British doll. His rehashed „GustadGustadGustad. Extremely heartbroken. Incredibly sorry.” (303) is because of the way that he has soaked in Gustad’s eyes. Mistry’s hero comprehends the requirement for the mentally impaired to fulfill his body’s desires. He is thoughtful disregarding the way that it was his girls solitary doll and Tehmul has desecrated it destroyed. Subsequently as Tehmul sinks down the ethical scale, Gustad ascends because of his consideration. Different get-togethers denoted a moving disposition of people in general against the mentally handicapped.

Pramila Balasundaram has crafted a novel Sunny’s Story (2005) based on real events, precipitated by the disappearance of one family’s son. The husband and wife wait late at night, with mounting panic, and the mother recalls the time 20 years earlier when she first heard that her baby has Down’s syndrome. What has become of Sunny, of the sunny temperament and trusting nature, in a world where the weak and simple are often brutally oppressed and abused? The story unfolds with a mixture of reconstruction and imagination, from fragments that Sunny could tell later of his life with the ‘platform people’ at Jullundur railway station, and at the docks at Calcutta, mingled with the family’s recollection of incidents from his life with them. Somehow, on his long and haphazard travels, Sunny’s simplicity had sent a signal to the kind of people who could respond in a gruffly protective way, despite common sense telling them to ignore him as just another among a million destitute wanderers. Sunny stood out as one of the innocents who might be “a gift from the Gods” (116), sent to remind people of the need to open their hearts toward their unknown little brother.

Salman Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983) tells the story of the development of two families, the Harappas and the Hyders, and also the development of a recently independent country, which stands for Pakistan, but that the narrator says, is not



really Pakistan. The Harappas are constituted of Iskander Harappa, at some point the president of the country, his wife Rani and their daughter Arjumand Harappa who never married and wanted to dedicate her life to continuing her father's political project for the nation. On the Hyders side, there are Bilquis and her husband Raza Hyder, who overthrows Iskander in a military coup and become the president. Their daughters are mentally challenged Sufiya Zinobia and her younger sister, Naveed. The former together with Omar Khayyam Shakil are the main characters, concentrating both political and family narratives in their marriage. Last, but not least, there are the other characters, such as Haroun Harappa, the only man Arjumand loved but who declined her love, Talver Ulhaq, Naveed's husband, and the mysterious three sisters who give birth to Omar. Next to the family drama, there is the social turmoil that unfolds as the family narrative is told.

Sufiya is a feeble, brain damaged child of the Hyder's and Omar is named by the narrator as the peripheral hero of the story. Omar is a doctor and many years older than Sufiya, but he eventually marries her in order to gain control over her shame which has manifested as a dangerous and deadly fury. Rushdie uses magical realism in his text to show the embodiment of shame within Sufiya. This technique inserts magical situations into a setting which is otherwise quite normal. Sufiya evolves into a sacrificial character who takes the shame of society upon herself. The shame is then transformed into a deadly magical power. Although Sufiya is physically incapable of harming anyone, her rage results in many deaths and torments her family and community. Sufiya remains oblivious to the crimes that she has committed. Omar's marriage to Sufiya appears to be out of goodwill but is actually an assertion of control and power over her. Omar attempts to remove the evidence of Sufiya's shame in the same manner that he has removed it from his own life, by ignoring it, but shame triumphs over Omar in the end.

Literary study of disabilities has contemporary relevance as it helps physically or mentally impaired people to come into the mainstream society and to establish their equality and enhance their self-esteem. It will be therefore worth pursuing for further research to have a better understanding of the lives of people with disability and generating not sympathy but empathy for the people with disability. With an understanding of the notion of evolution of the ways in which disability has been represented over time, it may be viewed as reforming. The upcoming generations can play a key role in promoting a positive view of disabled people. They can help change society's negative attitudes and support disabled individuals in overcoming their challenges wholeheartedly.

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## **Innovative Narrative Style of Bama in her Discourses**

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### **Abstract**

Bama Faustina Soosairaj is an outstanding Dalit activist holds her readers in increasingly awe and admiration. She well knows how to engage her readers in her innovative art of narratives. The unique world of her writings captures the imagination and thought of the marginalized community. Her way of narrating that surprisingly runs along an unheard of and untrodden path. Her exemplary art of narrative style seems raw, but sounds like inimitable art of writing. Bama has become a representative writer of Dalit Literature. Her passionate urge is to hoard her people from the clutches of caste tyranny is evidently reflected in her discourses.

**Keywords:** innovative narrative style, discrimination, clutches of caste, Tamil Dalit literature, Anecdotes, testimonial autobiography, Non-Linear Structure

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bama Faustina Soosairaj is a outstanding Dalit feminist writer whose works main themes are on caste discrimination, gender oppression, and the highlight the struggles of marginalized communities in India. Her autobiographical novel *Karukku* (1992) is considered a milestone in Dalit literature, followed by *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002), which further investigate the lived realities of Dalit women and communities.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Gopal Guru, in his essays on Dalit women's writings, highlights how Bama's works give voice to the double oppression faced by Dalit women both as women and as members of an oppressed caste. He argues that her narratives challenge both Brahminical patriarchy and mainstream feminist discourse, offering a distinct Dalit feminist perspective. "*Bama's writings expose the layered oppression of Dalit women, demanding a separate feminist discourse that acknowledges caste realities.*"

Tharu and Lalitha, in *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*, analyze *Karukku* as a pioneering Dalit autobiographical narrative. They emphasize how Bama's use of personal experience disrupts traditional literary forms, blending storytelling with social critique. "*Bama's Karukku is not just an autobiography; it is a political act of resistance against caste oppression and religious hypocrisy.*" Kumar, in his book *Dalit Personal Narratives*, explores how Bama uses Tamil dialects and oral storytelling traditions in her works. He argues that her use of colloquial language brings authenticity to her narratives while challenging the elitism of mainstream literature. "*Bama's linguistic choices break the barriers of conventional literary aesthetics, making Dalit voices heard in their own idiom.*"

Satyanarayana, in his study on Dalit women's literature, examines *Sangati* as a text that highlights the collective strength of Dalit women. Unlike *Karukku*, which focuses on an individual's journey, *Sangati* presents a community's struggle against oppression, emphasizing the resilience of Dalit women. "*Bama's Sangati shifts the focus from individual suffering to collective agency, illustrating the power of Dalit women's solidarity.*" Robinson explores how Bama critiques the role of Christianity in reinforcing caste discrimination. While Christianity promises equality, Bama exposes how caste divisions persist within religious institutions, especially in *Karukku*. "*Bama's critique of Christianity is both personal and political, exposing the contradictions between faith and caste realities.*"

"In *Vanmam*, Bama shifts her focus to conflicts between Dalit and non-Dalit communities. Marx examines how the novel moves beyond individual experiences to portray structural violence and social conflicts that arise due to caste-based discrimination. "*While Karukku and Sangati focus on resistance, Vanmam highlights the systemic nature of caste violence in rural Tamil Nadu.*"

Bama's works are widely studied for their raw depiction of Dalit experiences, feminist consciousness, and critique of caste oppression. Her narratives challenge both literary norms and social hierarchies, making her a crucial figure in contemporary Indian literature.

Scholars have examined her works from various critical perspectives, including caste, gender, resistance, and subaltern studies. Bama's narrative style is innovative because it breaks customary literary norms and introduces new-fangled ways of storytelling that centre Dalit voices, mainly Dalit women's experiences. Her discourse is deeply political, using form, language, and structure in exclusive ways to challenge dominant narratives. This paper analyses how Bama applies her narrative style in an original way through her storytelling.

### **Narrative techniques:**

A literary technique is a principle or a composition that is employed in literature. Literary techniques are important features of an author's style. It is also called an art form which expresses thoughts through language which can be recognised, identified and analysed by the readers. It is a means by which the author creates meaning through language and it enables the readers to achieve understanding and appreciate the work of art. It also provides a conceptual framework for comparing individual literary works to others, both within and across genres.

### **Blending Autobiography with Testimonio**

*Karukku* is a pioneering work in Dalit feminist literature, using an autobiographical format not just to tell her own story but to reflect the shared struggles of her community. Instead of focusing on an individual's rise, she emphasizes collective resistance and survival. Autobiography is a narrative device which tells the events in one's life. It is an autonomous individual subject. But Testimonio is a genre where the narrator stands for the whole social group. According to Pramod K. Nair *Karukku* is less an autobiography than a collective biography. In the testimony a common man stands in for the community. There is no particular hero but the narrator presents the collective problematic situation of a particular caste or community. She has started her preface with “I”: “there are many congruities between the saw-edged palmyra karukku and my own life”(p.xiii). In the Preface she starts with the personal “I”. In *Karukku* the narrator and the author is one and the same person. She describes her life from the childhood till she leaves the convent. She uses “I”, the individual speaker is identified easily by the readers. In *Sangati* the events are narrated by many female voices. In *Vanmam* the narrator delineates the events due to the communal riots between pallar and parayars. Here she is presenting the male world and she is presenting the events as a reporter, not as a participant involved in the incidents. All the three narratives of Bama demarcate the history, experiences of her community people. She has voiced out their trauma, happenings of her people's lifestyle. The opening line of *Karukku* is “**Our** village is beautiful”, hints it is not a personal autobiography but a collective documentation of suffering. She never uses the term my people but **our** people.

### **Oral Storytelling, anecdotes in Regional Dialects**

Bama says “my mind is crowded with many anecdotes; stories not only about the sorrows and tears of dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious culture, their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them, but rather to swim vigorously against the tide ... about their passion to live life with vitality, truth and

enjoyment; about their passion to live with vitality, truth and enjoyment; about their hard labour. I wanted to shout out these stories (ix). Before revealing the events in her life she narrates the events in her village through **anecdotes**. It portrays the real picture of her community. The reader could get true glimpses of her caste and their way of living. The dalit people have the habit of addressing their neighbours like a kith and kin. For example through the story of Bondan-maama, the readers feel the relationship between the narrator and the people in her village. Mamma means brother of one's mother. It highlights the beauty of dalit community. Here the novelist narrates no personal story of her own but the real atmosphere of her community in her village. In the first chapter of *Karukku* she tells the story of Nallathangal which focuses the attention of the reader on the community not on her personal. She delineates her hamlet people's communal myths, ceremonies, beliefs and superstitions which draw the readers' attention to the entire community's way of living. Such details have produced her life. In an interview published in storylines, she speaks thus: "This is for everyone so it is not just my story. In that sense I don't have a story of my own, my story is my community's story. All that I am, my beliefs, spirituality, language, culture . . . are all what the community provided. I can't isolate myself and talk about my birth, my family etc". Her *Sangati* not only her maternal grandmother and her own personal experiences but integrate other countless dalit women's life history. It is an encountered authenticity of broad testing of her community women's portrayal history.

Literature implies an artistic use of words for the sake of art alone traditionally. Oral culture takes many forms like proverbs, riddles, epic narratives, oration, personal testimony, praise poetry, songs, chants, rituals, stories, legends and folk tales. This is presented in all the works of Bama. Dalit writers never disconnect art from teaching. They write or sing for the beauty in itself. They take their sign from oral literature, use beauty to help commune essential truths and information to society. The folk tale is a suitable medium for the transmission of messages and values. The novelist borrows extensively from Dalit oral tradition, fusing history, fable, and tale to bring together a feminized dalit myth. Through the story of Nallathangal and story of Essaki (S 52-54) she reveals the real position of women in the society. She gives the readers a clear view of male prerogatives in her dalit community.

### **Natural Rhythms of Dalit speech**

Bama incorporates the natural rhythms of Tamil Dalit speech, including slang, idioms, and proverbs. Bama's writing vividly captures the speech style of Dalit people, incorporating the rhythms, tones, and linguistic patterns of their everyday

conversations. She deliberately preserves the oral quality of Dalit Tamil, resisting the formal structures of standard Tamil and mainstream literary norms. Bama's characters speak in the natural, unpolished Tamil of Dalit communities, which is different from the elite or Brahminical Tamil. This gives her narratives an authentic and raw quality, making them resonate with real-life experiences. She often blends Tamil with Christian and Dalit vocabulary, reflecting the hybrid cultural influences on Dalit lives. Christian terms, local slang, and even English words appear in dialogues, showcasing the community's linguistic diversity. Dalit speech in Bama's works is highly oral and expressive, with a strong reliance on intonation, exclamations, and direct speech. This makes the dialogues feel alive, immediate, and rhythmic, similar to the way people actually speak in Dalit villages. Bama frequently integrates folk sayings, idioms, and proverbs used by Dalit people. These expressions often have a sharp, sarcastic, or humorous tone, revealing the wit and resilience of the community. Unlike the refined, indirect speech of the upper castes, Dalit speech in Bama's texts is often blunt, straightforward, and emotionally charged. This reflects their lived experiences of struggle and survival, where politeness is often a privilege.

#### **Fragmented, Non-Linear Structure**

Bama employs a non-linear narrative style in her works to challenge conventional storytelling and reflect the fragmented, lived experiences of Dalit communities. Bama's works, especially *Karukku* (1992), do not follow a chronological order. Instead, they consist of loosely connected episodes, memories, and reflections. By shifting between past and present, she shows how caste oppression is not just a personal memory but an ongoing reality.

This fragmented style mirrors the disjointed experiences of Dalit life, where systemic oppression disrupts any sense of continuity. Bama frequently shifts between different time periods, using flashbacks to draw connections between past injustices and present struggles. The juxtaposition of oppression and moments of joy or resistance highlights the complexities of Dalit existence. Instead of moving from a beginning to an end, Bama's narratives often cycle back to earlier themes and experiences. This cyclic nature suggests that struggles do not simply end but are continuously negotiated.

This Style of non-linear style is very significant because it Challenges Brahminical Literary Norms. Traditional narratives often have a structured beginning, middle, and end, reflecting dominant caste perspectives. Bama's non-linear style disrupts this, asserting a Dalit epistemology. The fragmented structure aligns with how trauma and oppression are experienced—through scattered

reminiscences rather than a smooth, linear story. It renders Authenticity of Dalit Experience. The incorporation of multiple voices and non-hierarchical storytelling gives space to the collective experiences of Dalit communities and empowers Marginalized Voices. Bama’s non-linear approach in her discourse is, therefore, not just a literary choice but a radical assertion of identity, agency, and resistance against mainstream hegemonic narratives. This technique forces the reader to see **personal pain as a consequence of historical and systemic discrimination**.

Bama Merges the Personal and Political in Her Narrative style

Bama’s writing masterfully blends **personal experiences** with **political discourse**, making her works both intimate and deeply political. She does this by intertwining **autobiography, social critique, and collective memory**, ensuring that her personal struggles reflect the larger oppression of Dalit communities. Bama’s narratives, especially *Karukku*, are deeply personal, recounting her own experiences as a Dalit Christian woman. However, these personal stories are not just individual experiences; they serve as **representative accounts** of systemic caste and gender oppression. By telling her story, Bama tells the story of an entire oppressed community, making personal suffering a political statement. Bama writes in the **first person**, giving her narratives an intimate, lived-in quality. Her use of this technique serves both an aesthetic and a political purpose, reinforcing the themes of oppression, resistance, and resilience. This style makes the **reader feel the injustice directly**, turning her personal voice into a weapon against caste-based oppression.

In *Karukku*, she describes her disillusionment with the Church and education system, exposing how even religious institutions uphold caste discrimination. Bama’s personal narrative is always intertwined with the lives of her community. Her stories include the voices of Dalit women, workers, and children, making the personal **a collective experience**.

In *Sangati*, she shifts between her personal perspective and the struggles of Dalit women, making their shared suffering and resilience a political statement. She merges personal experiences with social critique, making her narratives both intimate and revolutionary. Her storytelling is not just about recounting events but questioning systems of power.

Emotional Impact Creating Political Awareness

Bama’s writing is raw, emotional, and **filled with annoyance, hurting, and humour**. By evoking strong emotions, she forces readers to confront **caste-based discrimination as a lived reality, not just an abstract issue**. Bama’s emotional impact **bridges the gap between the entity and the combined group**. Her



personal pain is not isolated but part of a larger system of oppression. By narrating caste discrimination through personal experiences, she makes it easier for readers to **sympathize and connect with the happenings**. It also **challenges traditional literary forms**. Bama’s writing rebels conventional storytelling, reinforcing the idea that **dalit voices do not fit into mainstream frameworks they break them**. In Bama’s works, the **personal is always political**, making her narratives both a form of storytelling and a radical act of resistance.

#### **Use of Satire and Humour**

Humour is a revitalising force and it helps to set free pointless stress. It becomes a means of amity creation force through which the individual and the society comes to terms with the sense of their problems, and their attempts visualise positive results. Suppressed people’s struggles against the unfavourable forces throughout their life become possible because of their sense of humour. The men, women and even children are inherited with their sense of humour. The novels of Bama mirror the socio-cultural organization existing in the Indian era. She explores how the sense of humour can be a mode of reconciliation enabling the individual soul to come to term with a reality. The novelist exhibits their sense of humour through different modes like naming the characters, retorting one another and highlighting their ignorance through comic events etc.

The characters are nicknamed in humorous way. In *Karukku* she depicts the nick names of different characters by mentioning different reasons. They are Kazhinja, Medenda, Kaakkaa, Konnavachi, Manacchi, Dal-bum, Teppa Tuuzhu, Kaaman, Bondan, Vidvi, Naadodi etc (K8). The school going children addressed Sammuga Kizhavi as ‘Maikkuuzh Kizhavi’(S 37), and another lady who got the nickname ‘Damaatta Maadu’(S45) whose original name was Gnanammaal. Another lady was known in the name of Big Stomach Kizhavi whose original name was Muukkamma(S79). Another boy whose was named as Kannan but his one eye sight was affected when he got smallpox. Everyone called him Kannan because of his odd eye (S100).

Dalit women are gifted enough to compose brilliant songs on the spot based on different events in their lives. They would create teasing songs to the prospective bride and groom. For example:

*As I was grinding the masala, machaan  
you peeped over the wall  
what magic powder did you cast upon me?  
I cannot lift the grinding stone any more. (K 54).*

In *Vanmam* the church and the delegates of church maintain silence and they are not helpful to the Dalit people. She presents their negative involvement in a humorous way. When there was communal disharmony in Kandampatti village the priest was the first person who ran away from the spot. “Our priest, of course, has run away as soon as he heard there’s been some trouble” (*Vanmam* 86).

Sinivasa Ayya put barbed-wire around his well for avoiding the dalit people going there and taking bath. But Sammuga Kizavi often took bath at the well by pulled away the wire and swam in his well. One day she was caught red-handed. At the time she had retorted him that the water of the well was so salty and spat out a mouthful of water into his well. And the land owner was not able to do anything because she was half-naked and he went to the nattammai to give a complaint on her. Thus through some events and portraying some characters in her narratives in a funny way that alleviates the situations and at the same time make the readers to think.

In another event she has proved her true rebellious nature. The same Sinivasa Ayya kept a small drinking pot for himself. One of the children of marginalised people had touched it by mistake. For that he beat the small child by groundnut stalk. This infuriated her and she wanted to take revenge on him. In his absence, she pissed into the pot. She informed everyone in the village like: “He said that the water in the well was contaminated because a paraichi swam in it. Now let the evil fellow drink my piss”(S 118). Thus the narrator exposes the prejudice established in the social system and demarcates the characters in a amusing mode that reduces the serious situations and at the same time leaves the society to think. Bama not only outlines humour but expects each dalit soul should have such a rebellious one.

### **Reclaiming Language and Representation**

Through her depiction of Dalit speech, Bama not only preserves the linguistic heritage of her community but also ensures that their voices are heard in their true, unfiltered form. This breaks the elitism of formal Tamil literature and makes her work feel like a direct conversation with readers. Instead of using Sanskritized or elite Tamil, she writes in the dialect spoken by Dalit communities. This linguistic choice is an act of resistance, challenging literary norms and asserting the legitimacy of Dalit voices. Through these techniques, Bama transforms the act of storytelling into an act of social and political defiance, making her narrative style groundbreaking in Dalit and feminist literature.

### **Significance of title of Bama’s writings:**

Bama brings out the title of her first writhing and also delineates: “there are many congruities between the saw-edged palmyra karukku and my own life” (p.xiii). Karukku means double edged stem of the palm leaf, the saw-like edges of the leaf recalled for Bama not only the social cuts which people like her experiencing every day, but also the more important fact that they have to cut through this oppressive system. She quoted from the Bible the words of god is like Karukku which means double-edged sword, which penetrated even to the dividing soul and spirit joints and marrow (The Bible; Hebrews 4:12). Through the title she highlights the personal touch of her dalit people’s life and their stifling position in the society for many long years. The title *Sangati* means news, message, events etc., through the title she shares the issues happening in and around female world. Her next novel title is *Vanmam* which means revenge, grudge, dispute etc., All the three titles carry comprehensive meaning of Tamil language and the poignant feeling of the novelist.

### METHODOLOGY

To analyze Bama's narrative style, one can employ a narrative analysis approach, focusing on how she constructs her stories, including her use of language, structure, and themes, to explore the experiences of Dalit women and the broader social and political realities they face. A structured methodology can be used for Textual Analysis, Thematic Analysis, Structural Analysis on Language and Linguistic Features and Narrative Voice of her discourses. Orality and folk elements exhibit how she incorporates oral traditions, proverbs, and folk tales. Need to observe how humour is used to highlight caste and gender oppression.

### FINDINGS

A variety of important ideas and emotions connected to dalit identity, and aesthetic aspects of marginalized people are revealed in the works of Bama. The following significant inferences are drawn from the text's examination. **She has utilized her language as a Political Tool to reach a wider group of readers.** Bama deliberately writes in **Dalit Tamil dialect**, rejecting upper-caste linguistic norms. This not only makes her work **more personal and authentic** but also serves as a political act—asserting Dalit identity and resistance through language.

By depicting their aesthetics way of life she exhibits her inner desire for Cultural Recognition of marginalized souls. Bama creates a familiar world that is represented by her narrative technique. The readers could see the fine blend of dalit culture and its richness. Songs are garnishes to dance. Dalits have the cultural back ground and social environment which have produced their uniqueness. It provides a special cultural identity which summarises subjectivity which gets continuously moulded by different cultural contexts and circumstances. So it is

must to hold the Dalit culture to study in-group favouritism for a positive identity. Socio-Political Contextualization Study shows how historical and social contexts shape Bama’s method of storytelling. It will explain how she engages with Dalit feminism and Ambedkarite thought. She creates and establishes that the suppressed souls are the sons and daughters of their soil.

#### Conclusion

Through her writings Bama is honouring both her subaltern identity and her uprising against caste injustice. Her fragmented, **non-linear storytelling** mirrors the disruptions and struggles of Dalit life. Her writings become passionate and emotional critique of the heartlessness of the higher castes while simultaneously celebrating her people’s life style. She wants to affect people’s emotions and ideas. The language used by Bama reflects its reality in a unique way. She purposefully departs from the conventional writing technique. Her writing style and vocabulary demonstrated the haughty attitude she has toward diction and language conventions. As a result, Bama has risen to prominence as a writer of dalit literature.

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## **An Exploration of the Post-Colonial self: Hybridity and Culture in Chinua Achebe’s *No longer at Ease***

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### **Abstract**

The identity and culture of the people of a nation can be correlated. Culture can help shape identity and help convert it into either fixed or hybrid one. The present paper is a study of the development of hybrid cultural identity of Obi Okonkwo the main protagonist in Chinua Achebe’s (1930-2013) *No Longer at Ease*. The study is based on the formulation of the postcolonial (1949 - ) theories of Homi K. Bhabha and Franz Fanon (1925-1961). The confrontation between two different cultures during colonization, gradually lead to hybrid identity of the colonized people. The space between different cultures in which a hybrid identity is created, Bhabha refers as the third space. This third space is a result of the intersection of colonialism and colonial power into a transformation of hybrid identity in Nigeria. This paper examines the situation of a hybrid character Obi who oscillates between two cultures; African and British. Focusing on problems of identification amongst Nigerian character due to the effects of Colonialism *No Longer at Ease* depicts the beauties and complexities of Nigerian culture. Achebe asserts that the two important factors in revival of native culture, identity and social norms of Nigeria alive are religion and rituals. Portraying the rich Nigerian tradition Achebe rejects the colonial thinking about Africa as a land without history and civilization.

**Keywords:** Post-Colonial, uprooted, indigenous culture, hybrid identity.

### **Introduction**

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013), was one of Nigeria’s significant writer and critic in the field of post-colonialism. He was born on November 16, 1930, in Ogidi in Eastern Nigeria to an Igbo family. Nigeria was colonized by British power during Achebe’s childhood and in his works, we see the interaction and influence of two cultures: the traditional culture of Ibo and modern European culture. This

confrontation of two cultures is in fact the main theme of his novels. *No longer at Ease* takes its title from one of the poems of T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), “Journey of the Magi” (1927) which deals with a sense of alienation. The central character is placed in an unpleasant situation as he is caught between two cultures, traditional and Western.

The novel begins with a trial against the protagonist, Obi who has returned back to his hometown after completing his four years degree in England. Obi is unable to combine his indigenous values and European attitude. Caught in a limbo he feels uprooted and alienated.

Chinua Achebe’s novel *No longer at Ease*, is the main focus of this study that sheds light on the plight of the postcolonial Nigerians, in particular the younger generation who seem to be constructing their identity in a changing and overlapping society. Nigeria a West African country is rich with diverse tribal groups, ethnic groups, different cultures, traditions and language styles. The colonial presence intensifies this diversity, and after Nigeria gained its independence, its people were introduced to the Western world. Co-existing with other non-Africans they faced many issues related to identity.

This paper presents a study of Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* to reveal the true plight of postcolonial Nigerian’s identity especially the dilemma of hybrid identity construed upon from a post-colonial perspective. The study investigates and explores the concept of identity and hybridity and takes into consideration Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity within the field of postcolonial literature. Furthermore, the study analyses how Achebe as a postcolonial novelist, explores and illustrates the issues of hybridity and identity in his work *No Longer at Ease*.

The outcome of the clashes between two cultures is the inward struggle to achieve a fixed identity; hence a new identity is created. According to Homi.K. Bhabha, in his *The Location of culture*(1994) this new unfixed identity is a hybrid identity. Bhabha argues that the “third space of Enunciation” is a space of “in-betweenness and liminality” in which a new form of identity is created (37). Two different cultures connect to each other in this space. Bhabha states that “all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation” (ibid). Bhabha Denounces the binary opposition which is created by European writers for describing Europeans and non-Europeans. Binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized (civilized and savage) he argues can only create images of the colonizer and the colonized; they reshape the identities of both.

Apart from the theorists who advocate the possibility of assimilation and equality, Fanon advocates a revolutionary and radical response by parts of oppressed and

marginalized groups – to return to one’s traditions and values, and reject settler’s value. Here the native elites, who had studied in the colonisers’ nation played an important role in decolonization and independency. To possibly end European domination over Africa, the natives can totally reject European discourse, but fight against colonialism. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon reveals the psychological impacts of racism and colonialism. Fanon attempted to revive and reconstruct a new understanding of black people. According to him the best strategy to save a colonized society is to recover and revive its traditions and customs. As Fanon says;

The conscious of self is not the closing of a door to communication; philosophic thought teaches

us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension (1963:246)<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

### **Research Methodology**

The present research adopts a qualitative approach. Its main objective is to fulfil the knowledge gap left over by previous studies. Employing a close reading strategy, it offers a critical analysis of the text in relation to Bhabha’s notion of cultural hybridity.

### **The Post-Colonial Influence**

In *The Empire Writes back*, Ashcroft et al. are of the opinion that the lives of more than three quarters of the people living in this world had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism (1). For the formerly colonized societies, by the European imperial power, representation, suppression, resistance, race, identity, gender and many other matters were the themes that led to the appearance of postcolonial literature. It is for this reason that most post-colonial writers thought of ways to confront the claims by the Europeans that the white man’s cultures were more superior and worthy than the other races. Postcolonial literature has always been linked to imperialism to present a noble mission to represent a superior civilization which can emancipate their ignorance and incompetence. Rudyard Kipling in *The White Man’s Burden* justified the imperial conquest as a civilizing mission.

### **Language and post-colonial literature**

One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language (Ashcroft et al 7). A fundamental feature of identity, language was targeted by the colonizer.



So usually, they imposed their native language onto the people they colonized, and natives were forbidden to speak in their mother tongue. The colonized people eventually started drifting away from their mother tongue with time due to the internalization imposed upon them and also because they were demoted, humiliated or even beaten for speaking in their native language.

The creation of an autonomous identity, far from the one implied by the imperial power is a primary way in which post-colonial writers resisted colonialism. A scholarly debate about language is dealt in detail by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* to explore the ways in which writers encountered a dominant, colonial language. Language forms a fundamental part of people's culture, it is through their language that they express their folk tales, myths, proverbs and history. For this reason, the imperial powers invariably attempted to stamp out native languages and replace them with their own. (284).

Achebe commented (in a talk at West Chester Univ.) that: “The British did not push language into my face while I was growing up”. He preferred to learn English and even write in English, so that it can serve as a means of ‘infiltrating the ranks of the enemy and destroying him from within’. Colonialism with all its evil can bring in language as part of a package that serve as a powerful instrument, a resistance too that serves colonized people literature. (Achebe 619).

In ‘The African writer and the English language’ Achebe argues that the aim of using English language was to serve his own particular voice and culture ... and to tell the story of that oppression to the rest of the world.

### **Identity and Post-colonial literature**

Post-colonial literature discusses the change in cultural identity as a serious issue as it was necessary for them to re-establish their own unique identity by deconstructing European authority and identity, depicting the implication of European hegemony over postcolonial societies. It tells the story of the colonised people, who were silenced for a long time who desired to generate and reconstruct their identities through their fiction. Hence the major themes of postcolonial literature are the identity crisis due to a long time of oppression.

Das points out that, Postcolonial literature deals with the identity quest through the themes it sketches and language it uses, as postcolonial writers use characters to speak their minds to reveal the basic issues related to their identity(72) It is imperative to note that the significant goals outlined by postcolonial writings as put forward by Boehmer is “the quest for personal and racial cultural identity built on spiritual guardianship of traditional laws; the belief that writing is an integral part



of self-definition; the emphasis on historical reconstruction; the ethical imperative, reconciliation with the past”. (221)

In Duncan’s *Self, community and psychology*, Fanon assumes that identity is a dynamic and ever-changing compromise of people with the world surrounding them, because they attempt to find their space within that world (6). Also, Bulman assumes that the identity of ‘other’, which suffers ‘alienation’ passes through main stages. The first one, is the identification of the aggressor, resulting in the assimilation and the detachment from the mother culture. The second phase is transnational: those who reject the colonizers culture, they are exemplified as the negritude. In the third stage, people change their social status to suit their social political location. (qtd. In Duncan 6-17)

Edward Said’s asserts that identity construction has the influence of power. It is the capability to struggle and resist, so as to restore oneself as a postcolonial, anti-imperialist and dependent subject. On the other hand, Homi Bhabha, in his *The Location of culture*, pointed out the distinct elements of identity shaping under the influence of Foucault’s idea of power. Bhabha introduced the new concept of hybridity. This is derived from the “interweaving elements of both colonizer and colonized challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity” (Meridith 2). In addition to this he discusses another ‘in-between’ entity which he called ‘Third Space’. (4) and postcolonial writers deal with these issues in their writing.

### **Hybridity in Postcolonial literature**

‘No One today is Purely One Thing” (Said 336)

The term hybridity has become a complicated concept during the process of identity construction due to colonial pressure as Andrew Hammond describes it as the picturing of postcolonial subjects that holds their original practices together with imperial ones (222).

Hybridity as a socio-cultural concept refers to the cultural mixture or blend in Africa that occurred during and after the colonial period and is associated with the emergence of postcolonial discourses. For Ashcroft et al., hybridity evolves as a result of the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization (20). According to Andrew Hammond, hybridity involves transcultural interaction between original and imperial practices, religions, and ideologies and therefore the presence of multicultural hybrid features in native countries leading to the rise of the “notion of otherness.” (222)

Hybridity in literary text is a result the transcultural contact that postcolonial writers hold with the west employing their traditions, religions, and ideologies in texts to show the multicultural hybrid features of its societies. (Cheriet 76). Hybridity is a consequence of the colonial authority and hegemony trying to change the identity of the other thereby generating a new in-between entity that is neither self nor other. It is the depiction of a new culture through the contact between the colonizer and the colonized and is a product of clash of two cultures. This concept of hybridity has been analysed by Homi K Bhabha as the relation between the colonized/colonizer which stresses the interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha reiterates that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls “third space of enunciation” (37). This third space arises with the intermingling of two cultures, ethics, and values of the colonizer and the colonized coexist in a single individual after a long era of colonialism. Homi Bhabha refers to this mixture as hybridity.” Bhabha has developed his concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism (qtd. In Meredith 2). Bhabha examines the concept of hybridity as in-between third space that combines cultural differences of postcolonial epoch. Bhabha stresses that hybridity emerges as a challenge, that functions to erase the native cultures and substitutes them with new hybrid ones. No culture Bhabha argues is fixed or stable as at one point in time or other cultures overlap and melt. Hence the outcome is a mixture of cultures full of the other. (56) For Bhabha, this hybrid third space is an ambivalent state where cultural meaning and representation have ‘no primordial unity or fixity’ (37). Consequently ‘the third space’ is a manufactured space encouraging creativity and civil communication. This third space also known as the space of enunciation can help one maintain good relationship with both his home of origin as well as with the other or the colonizer’s society. Thereby one can maintain sense of belonging with both cultures and compromise between the two halves of his identity.

### **The Exploration of Hybridity**

The novel *No Longer at Ease* delineates the journey of an educated young man Obiajulu Okonkwo. (Obi – for short), the grandson of Okonkwo, (Things Fall Apart) as he travels to Britain for four-year higher education degree only to return back entangled in the corruption that pervades Nigeria. The novel opens with Obi standing before the jury for accepting a bribe during the time when he worked for the scholarship board, Umofia Progressive Union (UPU). It had offered scholarship for him to travel overseas to study. After his return when he was working in UPU,

there was an attempt by a man who tried to offer bribe to Obi so as to obtain a scholarship for his little sister. Obi refuses this attempt but he is later faced with a second. The second attempt to bribe him is when Obi is visited by the girl herself offering Obi sexual favours in return for the scholarship. Obi does not succumb to it.

As the novel progresses the reader is made aware of how Obi himself was a beneficiary of such a facility as his four-year British education was funded by the Umuofia Progressive union (UPU) with an understanding that he repays it when he comes back to Nigeria. Obi had left for England to study law, but he changes his mind and ends up with a degree in English – a fact that can be ironic. Phillip Rogers reads this as Obi succumbing to “whiteness” (59).

Obi develops a romantic relationship with Clara Okeke (an Osu or an outcast) a nurse and desires to marry her but her parents are opposed to the marriage. According them marrying an Osu amounts to opposing the traditional values of Igbo people. While Obi’s father opposes Obi’s intent, his mother threatens to kill herself should Obi marry an Osu. As Obi struggles to confront these objections to his marriage with Clara, he is informed by her that she is pregnant. This compels Obi to foot the bill for an abortion for Clara and this drives him deeper into financial crisis as he is struggling to repay the education loan, income tax arrears and car insurance. These situations led Obi to accept the bribe for which he is arrested.

The episode of Obi’s arrest and trial brings into sharp focus the irony that pervades the novel. The Judge and the European community are not able to understand the intention of Obi as to how a young educated man can stoop to such a level. The judge’s observation and summing up clearly brings this out: “I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this”. (Arnold Heinemann: 1970) The irony lies in the fact that it is his education that has led him to commit the crime and he is lost on them. The situation seems incomprehensible to them – a detail that serves to heighten the ironic import of the novel.

Achebe deploys irony in the novel to drive home the point that the changed Nigeria and the traditional mores are mutually incompatible. While at the same point of time, it is made clear that things are not simple as they may seem when seen in binary terms. The idea is that when cultural clashes take place, they unleash consequences that are not always easy to understand. Thus, the novel argues for a space between “black” and “white” – both literally and metaphorically to arrive at a

proper and informed understanding of the brutality that colonial initiatives engendered.

Obi, in the novel embodies Bhabha’s theory of cultural hybridity, which signals the mixing of cultures for creating “the third space of enunciation”. In this situation the blend or fusion produced holds features of both cultures and is characteristically hybrid. Obi is determined to adhere to his cultural roots and moorings, but at the same time he is adamant about leaving the attachment with English mores that he has acquired over time. His strong leanings towards English language, culture, lifestyle, and behavioural pattern impels him to introduce the same in his indigenous system and society. On the other hand, he is inclined towards his tribal traditions and societal norms. Therefore, Obi turns out to be socially syncretic and culturally blended that speaks of his “interstitial status and synthesized identity in the narrative. His love for Nigeria (the East) and nostalgia for England (the West) are in recurring conflict with each other, resulting in the hybrid character of Obi.

The hybrid nature of post-colonial situation in *No Longer at Ease* is portrayed not only through the character of Obi, but is interspersed in the fabric of his community as a whole. Achebe travels with the reader to different places that represents the “third space” which is an intermixture of Nigerian and European cultures.

The very “First Chapter” deals with Achebe depicting the fusion of two cultures and the contact zone in which Obi represents the hybrid result. The result is a picture of that double heritage world, where Obi vacillates between two worlds: one that upholds traditional values of African culture the second that of adoption of western norms and principles of life. The reality of the situation especially the unstable structure of values of that hybrid space is dramatized by Achebe.

During childhood Obi’s parents have always insisted upon different aspects of hybrid nature of their town. Being a village catechist, Obi’s father has always stressed the Christian nature of their family, on the other hand Obi’s mother made an attempt to modify this nature through Nigerian folktales. Thus, since his childhood Obi develops a double-sided heritage, where two of his worlds are overlapping. Hence, he was exposed to a division as well as an alienation which intensified his hybrid identity. While growing up, Obi faced difficulties while translating his bible lessons, and narrating old Igbo folk-stories at school as well.

The area was a place where Europeans and Nigerians with “Europeans posts” co-existed. The above illustration signifies Bhabha’s notion of third space. In yet another scene where the presence of European culture in Nigeria is more defined, is a restaurant where Joseph took Obi for dinner. It is owned by an old, bossy English

woman, and is mostly crowded by Europeans. The way food was served signifies the hybrid nature of the place and the outstanding presence of Western culture. (Achebe 27-9). This scene is a symbolic representation of the postcolonial world where culture in its purest form does not exist. A close reading of the novel depicts similar scenes that occur over and over again in the novel that illustrates the presence of colonialists in Africa and the extent of their influence. The above examples are used to portray the overlapping cultures and identities, that characterize the postcolonial situation.

It can be well understood that code switching in the novel occurs not as a coincidence or due to innocence, on the other hand, Achebe's motive is to stress the fact that hybridity is actually planted in the fabric of his postcolonial society, because of the presence of pure Nigerian spirit and the colonial hegemony that could not erase it completely. Also, he emphasizes his idea that language can add meaning even if it is the colonized language. The colonizer's language in fact can serve the colonized intentions if well used. Achebe believes that the other language is able to carry the weight of his African experience, through Africanizing the English language by coloring it with African idioms or pidgin English or in any other way.

### **Conclusion**

The novel *No Longer at Ease* deals with a plethora of instabilities of identity due to colonialism from Bhabha's point of view. Bhabha calls this effect of colonialism “unhomeliness” which applies to both the colonisers and the colonized (ibid 13). The cultural interaction between the colonized and colonizers proves inconsequential as neither the colonizer nor the colonized can hold on to their pure pre-colonial self. Obi is ‘no longer at ease’ with himself, Nigeria, and his identity. In Postcolonial times, a person is no longer at ease with himself, his cultural identity or home country. Obi is a man from the Ibo tribe is an altered form of his true and pre-colonial self. He loves his country and tries to fight for the rights of the blacks against the whites. He believes that the new generation of educated Nigerian uproots corruption. He feels shocked when he sees the policeman taking bribes. His efforts to fight against corruption is in vain as he fails to achieve his goal as the cultural values in Ibo, send him to the bottom of corruption. Unfortunately, he commits exactly what he wanted to fight against. A sense of alienation overwhelms his life and he has to face chaos and confusion.

Achebe shows the “hybrid” nature of Nigeria and its religion. His descriptions of Lagos, Umuofia and other places in Nigeria show the interaction and mixture of British and African culture. In some places, such as the suburb of Ihoi and the restaurant in Lagos, Africans and Europeans intermingle and create a “third space”. In such places elements of both cultures come together and create third culture. Although Achebe accepts Bhabha’s notion of hybridity and the mixture of cultures, he also makes an effort to revive the elements of pure African culture. Thus *No Longer at Ease* is also an example of Franz Fanon’s emphasis on revival of cultural independence. Fanon believes that Africans should glorify their culture and revive their heroes in order to construct their identity. The novel gives readers a picture of the beauties and complexities of Nigerian culture. Achebe introduces the readers to Nigerian rituals, traditional customs, proverbs, folktales, etc in order to revive them.

Obi’s efforts to regain his African identity is dismantled by his unconscious tendency in praising English culture and lifestyle. Nevertheless, Obi’s identity is shaped by African and European culture. He is representative of a hybrid identity and cannot be recognized as pure African. Ironically the same folktales that represent African identity Obi is very much fond of and becomes a part of narration. Folktales at a later point prepare the ground for his choice of English literature as a course of study.

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## **Redefining Normal: A Metamorphic Hustle of August Pullman in *Wonder***

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### **Abstract**

Resilience empowers one to map life's laps, fostering personal growth and a deeper understanding of their abilities. Primarily, it not only aids in overcoming hindrance but also heightens overall well-being, empowering individuals to thrive in the face of life's uncertainties. R.J. Palacio's *Wonder* explores themes of disability and resilience through the journey of August Pullman, a boy with facial differences who figures his way into a mid school and the challenges he faces there. Through his experiences and the perspectives of those around him, the story encounters the importance of empathy and understanding, while celebrating his strength. Auggie's thoughts and feelings help to explore the themes of self-identity, self-acceptance, and the effects of bullying on mental health. Auggie's facial difference is portrayed as the stigma surrounding disability, emphasizing the importance of understanding and acceptance. This work incites one to reconsider societal perceptions of disability, encouraging a more inclusive and compassionate world. This paper focuses on Auggie's feelings of isolation, anxiety about acceptance, and his journey towards self-acceptance exploring his thoughts into the emotional impact of living with a facial difference.

**Keywords:** Normalcy, Auggie, Societal, Multifaceted, Expectations, Crip Theory.

*Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, is a novel that follows the story of “Auggie” August Pullman, a ten-year-old boy born with a craniofacial anomaly, who underwent numerous surgeries, and was homeschooled by his mother, Isabel. The novel begins with Auggie entering a mainstream school for the first time, at Beecher Prep for 5th grade, where he navigates through challenges of being different. Auggie's journey is told from multiple perspectives, starting from his own



sister Via's, to his classmates', Jack, Summer and Julian showing incredible courage and resilience, inciting that kindness and empathy get past prejudice and fear. Through his experiences, the novel draws attention to the importance of treating others with respect and the power of acceptance, both from others and towards oneself. *Wonder* is one such story that inspires one to rethink about the difficulties of being different, and the power of looking beyond appearances. As Auggie advances through the academic year, he faces moments of isolation and constant struggle to fit in, yet also finds support from hearts he least expected from.

One of the significant changes in the story unfolds when Jack Will, who initially was reluctant to be Auggie's friend due to peer pressure, later apologizes for betraying him and becomes one of his strongest supporters. Auggie's journey comes full circle by the end of the academic year with a ceremony where Auggie was celebrated and recognized with a prestigious award for his bravery and kindness. This recognition, while deeply meaningful to Auggie, reflects the broader message of the novel: that compassion and social acceptance are more important than physical appearance or social standing. Resistance in *Wonder* unfolds in various forms, from Auggie's internal resistance to not be defined by his appearance, to various characters confronting social expectations or pressures in order to do what is right. The novel eventually makes it clear that resistance, whether against prejudice, bullying, or even self-doubt, is fundamental to personal growth and for the creation of a more inclusive and compassionate environment

Crip theory and practice entails sustained forms of coming out, and the recognition that another, more accessible world is possible in which disability is no longer the raw material against which imagined and sometimes liberationist worlds are formed<sup>(1)</sup>. It also gives a theoretical structure that attempts to reshape how disability is viewed in society, rejecting the dominant medical model that sees disability as something to be fixed. The term "crip" rooted from "cripple," is a term that has been historically used in a derogatory way but is reclaimed in this context as an empowering term. Crip theory challenges conventional, able-bodied perspectives on normality and challenges the ways disability is perceived, often emphasizing its social construction of disability rather than viewing it solely as a biological condition. While still celebrates disability as an identity and as a culture, questioning societal norms of ability, and pushes for a more inclusive, accessible world that accommodates all kinds of bodies and minds. Through its fluidity of normalcy, Crip theory advocates for the acceptance of physical differences and highlights the need to embrace diverse experiences of the world.

This research paper in particular with relation to the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, took an attempt to justify how Crip theory might work in examining Auggie’s experience of disability (facial deformity), which is shaped by societal responses to his difference. Auggie faces discrimination and bullying not merely of his condition but due to societies imposing rigid expectations of normality. This Crip theory framework would challenge these norms and explore how Auggie's experience could be different in a world more accepting of bodily differences.

In *Wonder*, Auggie’s facial deformity is characterized as something that causes him to be excluded and disgraced by others. “I guess. And I feel ordinary. Inside. But I know ordinary kids don’t make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds” (3). Wherein, Crip theory insists that disability is not inherent flaw or abnormality; rather society's response to bodily differences that fabricate the experience of disability. Auggie’s condition itself doesn't limit him but it's society's refusal to accept difference is what creates in him struggles. " Here’s what I think: the only reason I’m not ordinary is that no one sees me that way”(3). If the world was more welcoming of multifaceted bodies, Auggie’s disability might not be viewed as such a tragedy or hindrance.

“What I wanted was to go to school, but only if I could be like every other kid going to school. Have lots of friends and hang out after school and stuff like that”(4). The first day Auggie attends Beecher Prep marks the beginning of his confrontation with society’s expectations of normalcy. His constant inner self kept telling him, “I’ll be the only kid who looks like me,” (12) and how he has to be prepared for his appearance immediately becoming the subject of gossip, stares, and exclusion. Throughout the novel, Auggie struggles with the concept of being normal and often wishes he could look like other kids. This is especially relevant when considering Auggie’s transition from being homeschooled to attending Beecher Prep. The timeline for Auggie’s adjustment to school life is not the same as his peers, and the challenges he faces take longer to overcome, which is a subtle nod to the concept of *crip time*—the idea that people with disabilities operate on different terms and need different kinds of support.

“If I found a magic lamp and I could have one wish, I would wish that I had a normal face that no one ever noticed at all. I would wish that I could walk down the street without people seeing me and then doing that look-away thing” (3). He feels like an outsider physically, and many of his struggles stem from trying to fit into these constant societal expectations of appearance and behaviour. His struggle reflects the societal demand of normalcy, and its limitations of ableism. "I think the only person in the world who realizes how normal I am is me". (3) Instead of

focusing on fitting into a predefined notion of normal, Crip theory encourages Auggie and society at large to challenge the idea of normal and embrace all forms of bodily and neurological diversity

While Auggie was still high on his delusions on his way to school his thoughts were interrupted by his sister, “Everyone’s just as nervous as you are,” said Via in my ear. “Just remember that this is everyone’s first day of school. Okay?”, (36) meaning it was her first at high school as well reminding him that everybody would be in the same state as him. By saying this, she sees her brother to be absolutely normal, hoping and wishing everybody else there would see him the same as her. Wherein he was anxious not because it's his first day at school but also him attending a physical school for the first time in his lifetime and how he has to survive the entire day without his mother not being around him.

“ We can’t keep protecting him,” ...

“ We can’t pretend he’s going to wake up tomorrow and this isn’t going to be his reality, because it is, Nate, and we have to help him learn to deal with it. We can’t just keep avoiding situations that . . .”

“So sending him off to middle school like a lamb to the slaughter . . . ,”

While Auggie’s family do love him deeply and support him, they too struggle with the desire to make him blend in or look more normal. From a Crip theory perspective, this incident could be seen as sustaining the prejudiced validations that disability is something that is to be fixed or avoided, rather than be accepted and embraced. This incident highlights how disability is socially constructed, where his condition as such doesn’t harm him, but the society's reaction to his face constantly puts in him a doubt if he actually fits in or what more he has to put up with in order to be accepted as one among them.

Auggie's parents, particularly his mother, focused more on medical treatments and solutions throughout his childhood, with the hope of making her son look close to normal. “People think I haven’t gone to school because of the way I look, but it’s not that. It’s of all the surgeries I’ve had. Twenty-seven since I was born”... That’s why my parents decided it was better if I didn’t go to school” (4). Auggie couldn't fit into the normal schedule of school because he had to undergo numerous surgeries and had to be under medication and observation and not because he was disabled.

Auggie, throughout his journey resists the societal pressures laid on him to fit into a frame of normalcy. He does not want to be treated any less than or

different, simply because of his appearance, and over the course of the novel, he shows resilience in the face of bullying and rejection. "I really like that, Summer. That means in my next life I won't be stuck with this face." ... "Hey, I might even be handsome!" he said, smiling. "That would be so awesome, wouldn't it? I could come back and be this good-looking dude and be super buff and super tall." (190). The above sentences clearly states how much Auggie wanted to look normal and lead a normal life. He somehow convinced himself to believe that, being tall with all features at its right place would make a person look cool, but not the way they carry themselves which should have actually made a person look cool from inside out. Yet he still tries to be kind on himself and accepts himself first before waiting on anybody else validation, "I don't want to brag or anything, but I'm actually considered something of a medical wonder, you know." (130).

The preconceived view of disability is often shown through the eyes of his peers, and is challenged here as his classmates treat his physical appearance as abnormal. Throughout *Wonder*, the idea that society shapes Auggie's experience of disability is evident. Characters like Julian and his friends illustrated the worst of societal responses to disability involving bullying, exclusion, and mockery. "He wasn't the only new kid at Beecher Prep, but he was the only one everyone was talking about. Julian had nicknamed him the Zombie Kid yet, and that's what everyone was calling him. "Did you see the Zombie Kid yet?" (119).

Julian, one of the popular kids, vigorously bullies Auggie labelling him as the kid with the weird face, and makes everyone believe everyone around him to be dumb kids and the one's on his side were the smarter. To join people on his side he even threw big party inviting kids so that they would favour him, for which Julian's mother was umbralling. His behaviour represents the ableist societal norms that reject people who don't conform to standards of normal appearance or behaviour. Crip theory is highly against the way society tends to treat disability as something shameful or abnormal. Julian's bullying is an example of societal rejection, whereas Crip theory would argue that Auggie's body should be accepted as part of the natural diversity of humanity, not something to be ridiculed or isolated.

While other kids like Jack Will and Summer, represent a shift toward acceptance and understanding. "He's just a kid. The weirdest-looking kid I've ever seen, yes. But just a kid.(119) It did take Summer did take her own time to come to terms with the fact that Auggie does not have a normal face and how much it was normal to not actually not actually look normal. From Crip theories perspective, it is not just about the individual's impairment, but about how society accommodates or rejects a person with mere physical differences. The support Auggie receives from

Summer and Jack who resist bullying and stand by him reflects the potential for change in societal attitudes toward disability. The narration gradually shows how he slowly gains acceptance over time.

“Did Mr. Tushman ask you to be friends with him?” Charlotte Cody asked.

“No. I’m friends with him because I want to be friends with him,” I answered.

Who knew that my sitting with August August Pullman at lunch would be such a big deal? People acted like it was the strangest thing in the world. It’s weird how weird kids be”(119).

Jack Will was one among the few kids at Beeker Prep who Mr. Tushman counted on “to sort of shepherd this new boy around a bit” (134) to hang out with him till Auggie gets used to the new campus as a “welcome buddy”(134). “It’s not enough to be friendly. You have to be a friend.” <sup>(2)</sup>, Jack initially befriends Auggie under the request of his mother and principle, but later distances himself due to peer pressure from Julian and other mates. Soon Jack realizes that he has done his friend Auggie real bad and his mother knew that was going on with her son, “Jack, sometimes you don’t have to mean to hurt someone to hurt someone. You understand?” (137) , and explains to him that one action of a person would not make him a bad person completely, as long as they have done it unintentionally and is ready to apologize and becomes cautious on never repeating it again.

Jack wants to get things back to normal yet is stuck in a loop on messing up things more or freaks out that he might over explain and get things more complicated than before. “Some things you just can’t explain. You don’t even try. You don’t know where to start. All your sentences would jumble up like a giant knot if you opened your mouth. Any words you used would come out wrong”(155). Jack eventual apology and his decision to stand by Auggie mark a rejection of ableist peer pressure and a move toward mutual support and acceptance. This event reflects Crip theory’s enforcement for resistance to societal pressures that exclude or stigmatize people with disabilities. Jack’s eventual loyalty stands forth a step towards creating a more inclusive world where people resist ableism and show togetherness with those who are marginalized because of their bodies.

“Greatness,” wrote Beecher, ‘lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength. . . . He is the greatest whose strengths carries up the most heart . . .” ..So will August Pullman please come up here to receive this award?”(304). At the end of the school year, Auggie receives the most prestigious ‘Henry Ward Beecher Award’ for his courage and perseverance. This recognition, though well-deserved

speaks to the societal need to reward exceptional disabled people, showcasing how the world often sees disability through a lens of pity or admiration for overcoming adversity.

From a Crip theory perspective people with disabilities are only valued when they overcome their limitations, but the theory suggests that all disabled individuals, not just those who are exceptional deserve respect, dignity, and equal recognition, without needing to be seen as inspiring. In the novel, Auggie’s ultimate acceptance comes not when he was changing himself to fit in, but when the people around him learn to accept him for who he is. This is an example of how Crip theory challenges the concept of normality and stands up for a world that values different types of bodies and minds, rather than forcing everyone to abide to the same standards of ability and appearance. In *Wonder*, Crip theory helps one to critically examine the way Auggie’s disability is not fundamentally the problem rather it's this society's treatment of difference that creates the challenges he faces. The novel highlights the importance of acceptance, empathy, and understanding in overcoming community level obstacles to acceptance.

Through a Crip theory framework, one can see Auggie’s journey as resistance to ableist norms and a call for a more unifying and compassionate society, where bodily differences are not just withstood but also embraced as a part of the richness of human experience. Crip theory applied to *Wonder* helps unpack the ways in which Auggie’s disability is both a personal experience and a product of a community mindset toward disability. Through moments like Auggie’s bullying, his friendships with Jack and Summer, and the community's eventual recognise his worth, This theory draws attention to the importance of challenging and deconstructing ableist societal systems and redefining what it means to be normal. The novel’s focus on empathy, kindness, and acceptance aligns with the Crip theory principle that all bodies, regardless of ability, are valuable and worthy of respect.

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## MODERN ATTITUDE AND VISION IN THE NOVELS OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

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### ABSTRACT

Sinclair Lewis is one of the prominent novelists his well renowned novel *Main Street* is a conventional novel. On one level, it is the story of Carol Kennicott, a young woman from the city who marries a country doctor and moves with him to the small town of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. Once there, she makes a series of efforts to beautify the town, make it less provincial, and define her own role as a woman in a changing world. But Lewis's main goal is to satirize small town life, which he does in a series of episodes describing Carol's efforts at reform. As each episode unfolds, Lewis highlights the provincialism and narrow-mindedness of small-town America in early 20th century. When the story begins, Carol is a bright young woman with ambitious dreams. Raised in the city of Minneapolis and college-educated, she wants to change the world. Eventually, though, she decides her true calling is to take one of the small prairie towns she has read about and turn it into something beautiful. Her opportunity comes when she meets and marries Will Kennicott, a doctor from Gopher Prairie. Carol quickly finds that her romantic notions of small towns may not have been accurate. She is dismayed by what she perceives as the town's ugliness, and by the smug, unsophisticated people who live there. But she rallies, determined to achieve her goals.

Carol embarks on a series of efforts to reform the town. Her neighbors respond pleasantly, but secretly criticize and accuse her of thinking she is better than they are. Carol is disconcerted but remains undaunted at least, she tries to attend a meeting of the Jolly Seventeen, a group of "nice" married women, but she is treated as an outsider whose ideas are unwelcome. They quickly dismiss her ideas as her failures begin to mount, Carol turns for relief to the few people she is comfortable with. One is Vida Sherwin, a teacher, who serves as Carol's bridge to the more established citizens of Gopher Prairie. She tries to remake into her ideal man, an image her own husband never matched. Except for a brief period after her baby is born, Carol becomes increasingly unhappy. Carol's despair reaches new depths when Bea and her child die from typhoid, and Carol witnesses the complete indifference of the town to what happened. Later, she watches in horror as a young woman's reputation is destroyed by gossip. She finally feels she can no longer bear



the town, and leaves her husband to live with her child in Washington for two years. Her experiences there mature her, and she eventually realizes much of what she saw in Gopher Prairie is not unique to the town. She returns home, willing to accept the town for what it is, and work for change a bit at a time. However, she is proud of her brief rebellion, feeling that she may not have won, but she at least had kept the faith.

**Key Words:** Rebel, discontent, Reputation and Attitude and Vision

*Main Street* is the 1920 ironical novel written by Sinclair Lewis. Set in the tiny town of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, the story revolves around the trials and tribulations of Carol Milford Kennicott as she struggles to adjust to small-town living. As Carol contends with the small-minded, middle-class customs of her husband's hometown, she envisions transforming the place into a bustling hub of culture, art and commerce. However, Carol is resisted by the provincial nature of the small townsfolk who despise big-city values. Sinclair drew inspiration for the novel from his own time spent in the small town of Sauk Center, Minnesota. *Main Street* was widely acclaimed at the time of its publication and has since ascended as an American classic. In 1921, the novel was originally awarded the Pulitzer Prize in fiction. However, the Board of Trustees overruled the jury's decision and awarded the Pulitzer to Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* instead. In 1930, *Main Street* helped Sinclair become the first American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In 1998, the Modern Library listed *Main Street* on its ranking of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th Century.

Narrated in the third-person limited omniscient perspective, the story begins in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Carol Milford is a bright, beautiful young woman who attends Blodgett College. Carol dreams of settling in a small prairie town and transforming it into a place of beauty, culture and refinement. Following graduation, Carol spends three years working as a librarian in St. Paul. She meets Dr. Will Kennicott at a friend's party, and he begins courting her. After one year, Carol and Will get married and move to Will's hometown of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. When they arrive, Carol is disappointed by the drab appearance of Gopher Prairie and the narrow-mindedness of its inhabitants. Carol finds that people in town gossip behind each other's backs and are thoroughly uncultured. Will's neighbor, Mrs. Bogart, is a religious zealot who hypocritically gossips



about others in town. On the same day Carol arrives, a woman named Bea Sorensen comes to Gopher Prairie. Unlike Carol, Bea is overwhelmed by the splendor of the town. Bea stays and becomes Carol’s maidservant.

Carol restores Will’s old-fashioned abode with modern furnishings. She prepares to throw a party unlike anyone has seen in Gopher Prairie. In the process, Carol learns that the townsfolk do not embrace change. She also feels dispirited when they criticize her every action, including the way she dresses. Carol’s only friends are Guy Pollock, a lawyer, and Vida Sherwin, a high-school teacher. Over time, Carol befriends Bea as well as the town factotum, Miles Bjornstam. Despite the town ostracizing Miles for his support of socialism and the Democratic Party, Carol likes him. Soon, Carol attempts to rouse locals to erect a new city hall, school, library, and more accommodating restrooms for farmers’ wives. However, nobody in town shares Carol’s concerns. In refusal to assist the poor, the townsfolk tell Carol they do not want to spend funds on new buildings. Carol is further enraged when she learns Guy Pollock, whom she thought shared her concern for social justice, is apathetic and only settled down in town because he has “village virus.”

Carol enrolls in the Jolly Seventeen women’s social club and the Thanatopsis women’s study club. Carol attempts to change the boring curriculum of the programs but is ignored by her fellow members. Carol forms a drama club and directs a stage play that is painfully average. Afterwards, Carol is appointed to the library board, where she tries to foster change within the system. Carol wants to encourage people to read, but the old librarian rejects her ideas, as she’d rather keep the books clean than advocate for literacy. Later, Will accuses Carol of being an elitist. A major argument ensues. Once they reconcile, Carol falls in love with Will once more. One evening Carol witnesses Will amputate a farmer’s arm and envisions him as a heroic figure. Still, Carol is stifled by the simplicity of life in Gopher Prairie. She and Will have a baby, whom they name Hugh after her late father. Will’s aunt and uncle, the Smails, visit Gopher Prairie and become a nuisance to Carol.

Bea and Miles wed the townsfolk still ignore Miles and refuse to visit his house. Bea and her son Olaf die of typhoid. Crestfallen, Miles departs from town and the people blame him for the death of his wife and son. Vida Sherwin marries

a local named Raymond Wutherspoon. When WWI strikes, Raymond is enlisted in the army. Will also wants to join, but is told he must remain in Gopher Prairie to continue his medical practice. Later, Carol finds some acculturated company. Erik Valborg, a Swedish émigré, and Fern Mullins, a young English teacher, arrive in Gopher Prairie. Carol is thrilled to learn Erik and Fern have an interest in books, drama, dancing, artwork, etc. Mrs. Bogart’s son, the leader of the boy’s gang in town, sullies Fern’s reputation when he accuses the teacher of getting him drunk and making sexual advancements. Fern is forced to quit his job and leaves town immediately after.

Erik becomes attracted to Carol and begins taking long walks with her. Will becomes aware of their relationship but doesn’t mind because he knows Carol and Erik are just friends who have similar scholastic interests. Carol and Will’s marriage begins to erode, which prompts Will to have an affair with Maude Dryer. Once Fern departs from town, Will implores Carol and Erik to stop seeing each other in order to avoid another disgrace. Erik flees Gopher Prairie as a result. Later, Will decides to whisk Carol away from Gopher Prairie by taking her on a long sightseeing trip in California. When they return, Carol is disheartened to see that nothing has changed in Gopher Prairie.

Carol decides to flee with Hugh. Will is heartbroken to see her leave, but Carol assures him she will return someday. Carol relocates to Washington D.C., where she lives and works for two years. She loves the big, beautiful city but feels lonely with all the anonymous people around her. When Will returns to woo Carol again, she recognizes his love and decides to move back to Gopher Prairie. Carol’s time in Washington gives her a new perspective. She feels as if she can make a small contribution to help change Gopher Prairie for the better. When she returns, Carol accepts the townsfolk for who they are. She continues to fight small battles to enforce change. Soon, Carol gives birth to a daughter, whom she hopes can continue her legacy. In the end, Carol discusses her difficulty of inciting reform as Will inattentively ponders the weather.

The narrator is subjective, presenting the thoughts and motives of his characters (particularly Carol. The story is told almost entirely through Carol Kennicott's point of view. However, Lewis narrates Chapter 21 through Vida Sherwin's point of view and Chapter 25 through Dr. Will Kennicott's point of view. Furthermore, Lewis also effectively narrates Chapter 4 through the contrasting

points of view of Carol Kennicott and Bea Sorenson. Lewis uses a sarcastic tone throughout the novel to criticize small town characters and small town conformity. He uses satire to poke fun at his characters, employing biting humor and exaggeration. Furthermore, he depicts the events in a realistic manner and often uses minute observations of detail in order to capture everyday life. Lewis often casually mentions characters, such as Will Kennicott, or events, such as Vida's marriage, throughout the novel before he properly introduces the characters and events. In writing *Main Street*, Sinclair Lewis paid little attention to formal plot development. Consequently the narrative presents a series of episodes rather than a tightly constructed plot.

Carol Milford Kennicott, a graduate of "sanctimonious" Blodgett College, with a year of additional study in a Chicago library school, works as a librarian in St. Paul (Minnesota) for three years before her marriage to Dr. Will Kennicott, of Gopher Prairie. She is a rebel against ugliness and conformity, and one factor in her decision to accept Kennicott is the opportunity to make over a painless Middle West prairie town. narrative begins when, after a honeymoon in the Colorado mountains, the Kennicotts approach Gopher Prairie on the train. In the drab town are three thousand dull people, in social strata ranging from Swede farmer to bank president. *Main Street* has two-story brick shops flanked by Fords and lumber wagons. There is no park to rest the eyes. The Kennicott family home is outdated and stuffy. The prairie, vast and empty, stretches away on every side.

Dreams end and realism begins when Carol takes a thirty-minute walk, inspecting the town, north and south, east and west. It is then that she realizes the shabbiness surrounding her. Her first social evening is also a disappointment, for she finds the conversation of both men and women personal and trivial. She tries to introduce something different. On the way home, however, she is lectured by her husband on the danger of shocking people. As time goes on, Carol makes one attempt after another to enlist the help of others in uplifting Gopher Prairie. An early project is the formation of a dramatic club, which functions just long enough to present one mediocre production, *The Girl from Kankakee*. Carol becomes a member of the Jolly Seventeen, a bridge club composed of an elite group of young married women. She also joins the Thanatopsis Club, a literary organization, and tries to change the club programs, which are stilted and superficial. Her suggestions make little headway. Her appointment to the library board gives her a chance to express her opinions about books and reading, but her ideas are not welcomed by the local librarian, whose policy is to keep books clean by discouraging readers.

After the Kennicotts' child, Hugh, is born, Carol feels that her motherhood hems her in more than ever. The Smails, relatives of Dr. Kennicott, come to live in Gopher Prairie and are a constant irritant because of their critical attitude toward Carol and their interference with her household affairs. Parallel with the story of the Kennicotts is that of Bea Sorenson, who becomes the wife of Miles Bjornstam, a free-thinking Swede. Their wedded life ends in tragedy, for Bea and her child, Olaf, both die of a fever. The townspeople blame Miles for their deaths. Still cynical, he leaves Gopher Prairie for Canada.

Carol's closest woman friend is Vida Sherwin, a high-school teacher, who later marries Raymond Wutherspoon. Vida is as domestic and conservative as Carol is nonconformist. Raymond, largely because of Vida's influence, blossoms out after marriage. He returns from the army to become manager of the Bon Ton, the highest-class store in town. Carol is attracted to Guy Pollock, a lawyer who has ideas similar to hers, though he has waited so long to express them that he is now a victim of "Village Virus." Fearing that the same fate may be hers, Carol attempts one improvement project after another, all of them ending in failure. Percy Bresnahan, Gopher Prairie's multimillionaire native son, comes home for a visit and makes advances to Carol. She repels him with disgust.

The only serious extra-marital love affair in *Main Street* is that between Carol and Erik Valborg, a tailor's assistant five years younger than she. Dr. Kennicott puts a stop to the romance and makes plain to his wife the kind of life she would lead if married to the son of a Swedish farmer. Erik abruptly leaves Gopher Prairie on the Minneapolis train. Still another episode is that introducing Fern Mullins, a young high-school teacher, who becomes involved with a pupil, Cy Bogart, at a barn dance. She is the center of a storm of disapproval and intolerance. Like Bjornstam and Valborg before her, Fern leaves town on the train. Finally Carol takes the train herself. She leaves Kennicott and spends almost two years working in Washington during World War I. She enjoys the cultural opportunities of the city but is willing after a time to return to her husband and Gopher Prairie. Their second child, a daughter, is born. Carol realizes that she has raged at individuals when institutions are really to blame and that although she is beaten, she has kept the faith. She predicts changes yet undreamed of if the baby lives out a normal lifetime. Dr. Kennicott's final remarks reveal that he is more concerned about the immediate present than the remote future. The reader realizes that the gap between wife and husband is still wide and that the novel really ends in an impasse.

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**Reverberation of the Marginalized: A Subaltern Reading of  
Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth***

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**Abstract**

Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth* provides fertile ground for a sub highlighting the intersection of privilege, modernity, and the erasure of traditional values in postcolonial India. Through Som Bhaskar's existential anguish and quest for meaning, the novel critiques the alienation caused by materialism and Westernization, often overshadowing the voices of India's spiritual and cultural heritage. Anuradha and Gargi emerge as pivotal figures, symbolizing the marginalized ethos of indigenous spirituality and wisdom set against the backdrop of Benares, a city resonant with cultural and spiritual significance, the narrative juxtaposes the protagonist's estrangement with the enduring presence of India's suppressed identities and traditions.

This seminar paper analyze the unravels how the novel reflects the tensions between modernity and the suppressed cultural roots of Indian society offer in a poignant commentary on the invisibility of subaltern voices amidst dominant paradigms.

**Keywords:** Marginalized voices, Westernization, Cultural alienation, Indigenous ethos, Suppressed identities

An illustrious novel *The Last Labyrinth*, ideally depicts the carziness, pain, agony, selfishness of love. The title of the story is self-explanatory in sense that at the end of the story one of the characters Anuradha disappeared in *The Last Labyrinth* to hide herself from the central character Som. Arun Joshi is a prolific writer completed his higher education in the US, and returned to India to become an industrial manager. He was awarded a scholarship to the US where is obtained a degree in Engineering and Industrial Management from the university of Kansas. Arun Joshi would be a misfit as he kept himself out of the limelight without any advertisements of his books. During that era only some eccentric people were writing in English. His novels delving into existential philosophy along with the ethical choices won him huge critical appreciation in India. But he was not that

much popular in the West. The author also won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1982 for *The Last Labyrinth*. His unique fictional technique contributed a lot in the field of literature. He was working in mental hospital with chronic schizophrenics, which has helped him a lot in later days in many of his works.

‘*The Last Labyrinth*’ by Arun Joshi is the story of Som Bhaskar. This is a unique character. The dichotomy in his character apparent through his name itself, which means Moon Sun. He is a 25-year-old who inherits his father’s vast industrial wealth. Som is married to Geeta who a devotional woman. But he is attracted by Anuradha also who is an alluring and mysterious woman. She is also married to some Aftab, a businessman, but Som finds her so irresistible. In the whole novel the way of getting her is described in a vivid manner. Her conduct is beyond Som’s comprehension. She accepts, rejects, or flees from him without warning, and he even suspects that she has some agreement with Geeta. The situation drives Som to the brink of death from a heart attack, but he miraculously survives while Anuradha disappears without a trace. After his recovery, he is hell-bent upon finding Anuradha. His frantic pursuance to search Anuradha leads him through absurd situations. Som eventually learns that Anuradha had consecrated to sacrifice her love for him in order to save him from death at the time of his heart attack. Agnostic and proud, Som rejects this explanation and continues his vehement quest, which eventually leads him to Anuradha’s haveli. In a desperate effort to again flee from him, she disappears in *The Last Labyrinth*, leaving him in doubt whether she has committed suicide or has been killed.

‘*The Last Labyrinth*’ by Arun Joshi is actually set in a world of mystery and the darkness of human emotions. The entire story relates not only with obsession, but also with great love. It gives us the feeling of some sort of salvation. It is a story of memories and huge confusing Haveli and finally of the wonderment of life. Sometimes it is hard to describe the story logically especially in consideration with the quite different works of Indian English literature. But as a whole this book is worth reading to get the entry in the mystery world.

The hero of the novel Som Bhaskar is divided between the hunger of the soul and body, and in this tug-o-war his body dominates the mind. Som Bhaskar is a thwarted soul who is engrossed neck deep in attaining materialistic wealth. His residence is also named as maya, echoing the web of wealth. Som is completely immersed in earning wealth and overtaking else’s people abundance. His voracious hunger want’s to grab Aftab’s enterprise, giving a peril to his own establishment. Som’s sacred vacuum cannot find a way out from this web and gets entangled in it.

The only way out from this muddle is salvation. The novel upholds Som’s desire for salvation as he has been uprooted from his spiritual and cultural berths. Som’s beloved Anuradha, wife Geeta and the sage Gargi makes Som realize the hollowness of worldly pursuits and encourages him towards salvation. In the postcolonial era the itinerary to spiritualism has become a trap as the youths like Som are completely engrossed in worldly pursuits, neglecting their spiritual needs, but ultimately its religion that soothes them.

Arun Joshi in order to present the Indian ethos has infused the culture and tradition of the World’s oldest and spiritual land Benaras. In the novel Ghosh has presented the corporal and unearthly beauty of the river Ganga and its ghats. Joshi has also presented the various religious cults in India like the Bhakti Movement, Sufi Cult, Buddhism and Vedanta. Ganga is considered as the most pious river of India, also known as “Maa Ganga”. Its touch is considered so pure that it reinstates one from all sins, not only of this birth but of past lives too. The watercourse Ganga holds an important place in the book as Aftab’s Lal Haveli is built near Ganga and from its patio the streaming “kalashes” and Aurangzeb’s mosque can be viewed. Som, a misanthropic, “felt as though this was not Ganga but some unknown stream, in some unknown segment of the Universe leading to a reality that I had not known” (44). Such elevating is river Ganga. Its ghats are also of deep importance, they are considered as the most reverent funeral terminus. Som’s visit to the ghat’s of Benaras with Anuradha and Aftab reminds him of his father’s death. Having a ride in the river Ganga, Som realized its piety and depth. Som though Westernized feels it not only a river but a bigger reality of the Universe.

Arun Joshi was deeply influenced by the Bhakti Movement the movement originated during the medieval period. It encouraged vernacular languages in various parts of India. In an interview Joshi expresses his spiritual views. The movement focuses on Lord Krishna as God, father, friend, master and beloved. Joshi celebrates Krishna Janamashtami at midnight in the novel. The city’s celebration of the Lord’s birthday was not yet ended. The festival Janamashtmi is symbolic of human love. People, despite of their religion celebrate the festival with singing and dancing. Joshi’s *The Last Labyrinth* and E.M. Foster’s *A Passage to India* could be compared to each other as both the books celebrate the Janamashtmi festival. The festival upholds universal love and compassion among people of all religion and faith.

The novel reflects deep faith of Anuradha, Geeta, Gargi and Som’s mother in Lord Krishna. This faith comes in sharp contrast to Som’s rational beliefs. Som’s



mother was a deep follower of Krishna. She was suffering from cancer and still believed that Krishna would give her power to fight the disease. Anuradha's mother also had deep faith in Krishna. Lord Krishna was a lover to her and she was married to him. She sang and wept before Krishna whenever she was sad. Like her mother Anuradha also seeks a lover in the Lord. Her name itself speaks her love for the Lord. The name Anuradha means the companion of Krishna. Anuradha adores and even dresses up for Krishna.

Som Bhaskar's wife Geeta, though living in the materialistic world, loves Krishna. Geeta is not keen in accumulating earthly pursuits rather her aim of life is the purgation of soul. Gargi, the divine woman is an incarnation of God on earth. She is deaf and dumb but still she can hear the voice of the almighty and can communicate with people. She can hear people's problem and suggest solutions too. Som, Geeta, Anuradha and Aftab get tranquility from her smile. Aftab too has faith in Krishna and does not bother if his business gets ruined. He is soul elevated man whose priority in life is Anuradha. Som Bhaskar is contrary to other characters in the novel. He is born and brought up in India, with religious faith of his mother but gets higher education at Harvard University. The Western education instills skepticism in Som. He himself articulates his crossbreed. It appears colonial education has reduced modern man to zero in cultural values. Brahmins were considered as the most learned and knowledgeable about spirituality in Indian society. But young postcolonials like Som have lost their cultural moorings Som is a Brahmin by birth but has failed to understand the teachings and philosophy of *Upanishads* and *Gita*. Anuradha caustically remarks to Som “You are a Brahmin, after all. A Bhaskar, what is a Bhaskar doing in business?” (12). Mathur and Rai comment on this condition of Som Bhaskar:

Som Bhaskar, too, is a Western-educated industrialist. He, too, though an Indian by birth and domicile, and a Brahmin at that, is unable to make head or tail of the mumbo-jumbo of Hindu religion, depending on which his mother sacrificed her life as a victim of cancer, nor of the tantra practiced in the ancient city of Benaras. He, too, is unable to believe in God, and contemptuously treats the idol of Krishna just as a “wooden creature.” (102)

It appears that only Indian spirituality can give Som comfort and harmony in life. Though Som has inherited some spirituality from his mother he is still a perturbed self. He finds some comfort in Anuradha, whom he finds at first glance “obsolete” and a monument, “tall, handsome, ruined” (12). It is Anuradha, however, who realizes that the endless desire in Som is not for physical or materialistic gains but for spirituality. Gargi also pacifies Som by saying that the Omnipotent will

soon send someone to help him, and she relates it with Anuradha, saying: “‘go with her,’... ‘Don’t quarrel. She is your Shakti.’”(110). It is Anuradha who can help Som to come out of the labyrinth of rationality and move towards the mystical power of the soul. His longing for Anuradha is the longing for his soul. In contact with Anuradha, Som slowly starts believing in God. His journey to the mountains to face Krishna symbolizes his journey towards the realization of his soul. In the mountains when he sees the man-high flame burning he feels that:

Its perfect stillness could hypnotize. I had heard of people who, staring into such flames, had enjoyed the Eternal Bliss. Others had discovered their Oneness...with the Brahma A man I once traveled with—one of the most sophisticated I have ever met—claimed he had seen in such a flame his previous incarnations...This little flame of mine, however, yielded nothing beyond an ounce of tranquility which, of course, was not to be laughed at (193-94).

Anuradha succeeds in partly cleansing Som’s soul but his Westernized outlook keeps on troubling him. Though Som’s wants to be spiritually enlightened he is unable to reach his goal. Bearing the hurdles of his life Som is incapable even of committing suicide. One of the basic aspects of Postcolonial literature is the transformation of culture through novels. Religion and spirituality establish values and systems in a society; therefore, they have a significant role in cultural decolonization. Joshi, through *The Last Labyrinth*, shows the decolonizing of the Indian spiritual identity that was tainted by Westernization.

In *The Last Labyrinth* Joshi has narrated some strange religious beliefs in India like Anuradha says a story to Som, who drank heavily as he felt, “When I am drunk Allah comes to me, stares at me but says nothing. So I drink the more and one day he will speak to me” (54). In another incident Som witnesses the day of vows where people come to flip a coin and ask a wish from Krishna. It’s believed that every wish is granted over there. In another incident the hills are blessed with the healing touch as several lepers across the nation comes to take a dip in the tank near the temple. It’s said that a dip in the tank cures leprosy. In the novel Joshi has revealed the strength of Indian tradition and culture.

Though Som is Western influenced but he starts believing in religion and God. He too visits the mountains in search of hope and happiness. Thus, Joshi has explored the Indian sensibility in *The Last Labyrinth*. The post-colonial youths are spiritually impotent and the re-discovery of spiritual roots is a only solution to it. Joshi through the novel suggest that Westernization can never give happiness of life

as native culture and tradition lies deep in the sub-conscious mind and again and again reverberates to the conscious mind for fulfillment.

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**Cursed By Tradition, Empowered By Choice: Sati’s Disability, Stigma,  
And Defiance in *The Shiva Trilogy***

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**Abstract**

The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi reimagines Indian mythology through a modern lens while exploring concepts of destiny alongside personal identity and social fairness. The character of Sati stands out as a remarkable individual whose life story confronts the deterministic beliefs present in Meluhan society. She carries the label Vikarma which marks individuals who bear physical disabilities from past-life sins as cursed beings and represents the plight of those who suffer marginalization due to strict social structures. The Vikarma system establishes that past-life actions lead to suffering and social exclusion. These enforced beliefs limit individual freedoms systematically while perpetuating existing social discrimination. Sati's path showcases her continual struggle against adversity through her unyielding journey towards self-empowerment and resilience. She defies forced limitations to recover her identity while courageously confronting Meluha’s traditional norms. Her bold stand and exercise of autonomy reframe opposition to injustice while establishing her as an emblem of power and change. The paper analyzes Sati’s development by emphasizing how her defiance breaks down oppressive structures while simultaneously driving wider social change.

**Keywords:**Sati, Vikarma System, Disability and Identity, Empowerment, Shiva Trilogy, Justice and Reform, Marginalization

## **Introduction**

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy transforms Indian Mythology through a fusion of historical and philosophical elements with fictional and fantastical aspects which creates an engaging conflict among ancient concepts, destiny and human autonomy within social structures. The trilogy follows the story of Shiva a tribal leader from Tibet who is recognized as the prophesied saviour Neelkanth who fights against evil across The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas, and The Oath of the Vayuputras. He encounters entrenched social structures which challenge his beliefs about justice and free will while he progresses through the moral challenges of leadership in Meluhan society which follows deterministic principles.

Sati the Meluhan princess demonstrates through her role how personal struggle combined with stigma and empowerment can transform a person's life. Sati holds the name Vikarma as she belongs to a rejected caste thought to carry ancestral sins which results in her isolation despite her noble character and exceptional abilities. Her physical disability pushes Sati to the extreme margins of society which idolizes perfection. Sati rejects submission to her disabilities and confronts Vikarma laws to access the power needed to transcend the life she was assigned.

This paper explores Sati's journey from the perspectives of disability and stigma while focusing on her self-determination and demonstrates how her character functions both as social structure criticism and as an example of resilience. The study investigates Sati's defiance against social limitations to reveal how The Shiva Trilogy redefines traditional concepts of karma and destiny while exploring new meanings of empowerment. The story of Sati illustrates how personal decisions can drive change against systemic oppression and establishes her as a crucial element in discussions of identity and justice throughout the trilogy.

### **Sati's disability: A symbol of destiny or a testament to strength?**

The Meluhan society interprets physical impairment as a sign of divine punishment rather than a simple biological condition. The current belief system which operates under a strict deterministic perspective holds that people who experience disabilities or misfortunes face these outcomes as the result of wrongdoings from previous lives. The Vikarma system perpetuates social exclusion by embedding the ideology of karmic justice within its institutional framework. Although Sati holds the status of Meluha's princess and possesses exceptional warrior skills she endures this suppressive system because she sustained a left-hand injury in combat. Her disability becomes a symbol of imperfection which strengthens her marginalization instead of serving as evidence of her resilience. Her Vikarma designation tightens the boundaries of her identity while increasing her

societal exclusion through the label of spiritual impurity. Sati encounters systemic discrimination because she represents both a woman in a male-dominated environment and a person marked by a predestined curse.

The Vikarma system operates as a mechanism for social regulation by implementing exclusionary measures that remove personal agency from people through fixed concepts of karma. The deterministic view rejects personal achievements by associating pain with previous wrongdoings and denying free will. Sati actively opposes this deep-seated belief system by demonstrating steadfast resistance and persistent endurance. She refuses to accept the imposed limitations by converting her perceived weakness into her strength. Through dedication to intense combat training she acquires advanced skills which enable her to surpass physical limitations. Her warrior prowess demonstrates that disabilities do not lead to weakness as the Meluhan assumption suggests and instead shows skill along with discipline and perseverance are more important than physical perfection.

Sati challenges Meluhan norms not only through combat but also in its social and cultural structures. The Vikarma system mandates her exclusion from religious ceremonies and societal benefits but she refuses to accept this enforced marginalization. Her quiet resistance manifests through her refusal to follow oppressive rules and represents a subtle rebellion against the institutional discrimination she encounters. Her actions trigger a broader social justice discussion which leads Shiva to challenge the Vikarma system's validity and eventually dismantle it. Sati's defiance functions as both a personal declaration of self-determination and a powerful catalyst which disrupts the established order in Meluhan society. Sati's character impacts Meluha directly but her narrative also reaches beyond to inspire marginalized groups such as Naga warriors who face ostracization because of their physical differences. Sati's determination and resilience create a powerful alternative story to the fatalistic beliefs of Meluhan society showing that identity comes from personal actions and choices rather than external destiny perceptions. Her determination to reject fate's limitations makes her a symbol of self-determination which leads others to regain their agency and combat systemic subjugation.

Sati transforms her personal identity as she initiates widespread social transformation throughout her journey. The refusal to accept the Vikarma label and the determination to not let disability dictate her worth together with her opposition to Meluha's deterministic systems demonstrate how personal resistance can lead to transformative change. Her actions demonstrate that genuine strength comes from the bravery to stand against unfairness rather than physical flawlessness or

traditional conformity. Her story strengthens critical discussions around self-determination alongside showing how resilience and social change oppose discriminatory norms. Sati stands as an emblem of empowerment because she shows people control their destiny through self-determination and resistance rather than fate.

### **The Vikarma System: Stigma and Social Exclusion**

The structured governance of the Meluhan civilization maintains the Vikarma system which serves as a core socio-religious principle. The system identifies people who suffer from disease, disability or personal tragedies as individuals who carry past-life wrongdoings and declares them to be spiritually unclean. The Vikarma system leads to systemic exclusion of individuals which enforces a worldview that eliminates their ability to control their own destinies. Sati the Meluhan princess faces the oppressive reach of rigid classification despite her royal status. She bears the Vikarma label because of her personal tragedies such as losing a child and enduring bodily harm which results in stringent social limitations including the prohibition of remarriage. The marginalization enforced upon her demonstrates how Meluha's strict application of karma principles changes individual pain into an excuse for institutional discrimination which continues cycles of exclusion under the facade of divine punishment.

The institutionalized system of Vikarma serves as a social control mechanism which perpetuates a caste-like hierarchy by limiting the rights and independence of the people it labels. The authorities prohibit these people from contributing to governmental decisions and forming independent relationships while also preventing them from challenging the societal norms that restrict their freedoms. The state avoids responsibility for Vikarma people's welfare because it portrays their suffering as punishment for previous life wrongdoings instead of external difficulties, thereby solidifying their exclusion. The discriminatory practices within institutions reveal their greatest impact when viewed through gender lenses because women carry most of the Vikarma status burdens. Men have the ability to transform their social position through achievements in politics or military service but women stay bound by the strict framework of Meluhan tradition where their value is determined by destiny instead of personal achievements. The fact that Sati cannot remarry despite being of royal descent shows how the Vikarma system reflects patriarchal values by binding women's destinies to their previous misfortunes instead of their personal abilities.

The conflicting elements within the Vikarma doctrine reveal the fundamental contradictions that exist throughout Meluhan society. The empire

claims to uphold order, justice and meritocracy but its foundational belief system that denies self-determination stands opposed to these proclaimed values. Instead of considering personal merit or ethical behavior Vikarma classification depends on predetermined circumstances that individuals cannot control which exposes Meluhan governance's fundamental hypocrisy. The clash between Shiva's perspective as an outsider and Meluhan customs becomes increasingly apparent as he confronts the validity of their Vikarma system. Shiva disagrees with the Meluhan practice of assigning fate based on karma since it unjustly penalizes people for forgotten actions they never consciously performed. The moment he rejects this deterministic belief marks a narrative shift that opens up discussions about social justice and the exclusionary ethics of established traditions.

The path Sati walks serves as both her fight to overcome stigma and a broader battle against entrenched institutional oppression. She asserts her power by rejecting Vikarma status as the sole definition of her identity which enables her to defy imposed expectations. Shiva adopts a new outlook due to her defiance which leads him to destroy the Vikarma system and support a society founded on justice and merit instead of fixed deterministic principles. Her resistance moves past personal empowerment becoming an emblem for Meluha's wider ideological transformation. The story demonstrates personal agency as a transformative power that challenges established discriminatory traditions while advocating for necessary social reform to alter deeply rooted societal structures.

### **Defiance and Transformation: Sati's Journey**

The narrative arc of Sati throughout The Shiva Trilogy demonstrates her journey through defiance and self-determination which leads to societal transformation. While most people who accept their Vikarma status submit to their fate Sati stands against Meluhan society's restrictions. Sati's stand against the Vikarma system becomes more meaningful when Shiva, who does not adhere to Meluhan traditions, questions its foundational ideas and contests its legitimacy. The support of Shiva enables Sati to embark on a journey of self-assertion through which she slowly regains control over her life and breaks away from the socio-religious boundaries defining her existence. Her journey from social exclusion to becoming a respected warrior and queen demonstrates how personal determination works with larger systemic shifts to bring about transformation.

Sati's defiance functions as both personal rebellion and a direct attack against Meluha's deterministic beliefs. The Vikarma system functions on the belief that those who experience bad luck face suffering because of their wrongdoings from previous lifetimes. The ideology upholds strict social stratification while



rationalizing discriminatory actions through claims of divine fairness. Through her refusal of her predetermined destiny Sati undermines the societal ideology that self-worth comes from societal labels while proving that individual merit and perseverance truly determine value. Sati's marriage to Shiva represents her defiance of Vikarma restrictions through this very act. Instead of submitting to the systemic oppression she faced, Sati takes control of her own destiny which leads to new conceptions of identity while opposing the fatalistic beliefs that control Meluhan society.

As Sati transforms into a warrior she strengthens her resistance to both gender and caste-based discrimination. Sati's journey towards martial mastery represents a powerful declaration of independence against the Vikarma societal norm that demands women submit passively. Even though she faces physical challenges and societal stigma because of her Vikarma status she diligently trains in martial arts and emerges as an exceptional warrior. Her battlefield prowess earns her universal admiration while simultaneously questioning the Meluhan belief that strength and value are predetermined by fate. Through discipline and determination she demonstrates her abilities which challenges traditional power structures and creates a new understanding of personal agency in a society with strict hierarchical rules.

The struggle Sati faces transcends her personal battles and encompasses the wider philosophical debate concerning fate versus free will which stands as a core theme in *The Shiva Trilogy*. According to Meluhan law's deterministic principles Vikarma individuals are required to accept their suffering as an unchangeable condition. Sati proves that destiny can be altered through deliberate action which stands against the idea of it being an uncontrollable power. Through her defiance Sati achieves self-liberation while initiating an ideological transformation throughout Meluhan society. Her challenge to the Vikarma system serves as a vital component in Shiva's socio-political reform movement and demonstrates how personal opposition to institutionalized oppression creates transformative societal change.

Sati reaches the peak of her journey when she takes on leadership positions to command warriors and campaign for justice and reform. She transcends her identity as Shiva's partner to become a central figure who transforms the conversation around Vikarma oppression and institutionalized discrimination. Her final act of sacrifice is tragic yet represents a triumph because it cements her place as an enduring emblem of resistance and transformative empowerment. Sati's activities defy the strict beliefs of Meluha and create opportunities for descendants

to challenge traditional customs while establishing their independence. The journey of her character demonstrates how personal resistance can break down established oppressive structures while establishing her as a key figure in The Shiva Trilogy.

### **Identity and Empowerment: Rewriting Destiny**

The Shiva Trilogy presents Sati's journey as a powerful argument against deterministic beliefs by showing that identity develops through individual decisions and actions rather than predetermined inheritance. Meluha's unyielding social system asserts that past actions determine one's destiny while promoting the belief that people are trapped by uncontrollable forces. Sati becomes a symbol of self-determination by opposing established beliefs through her refusal to take on a Vikarma status. Her rejection of imposed limitations allows her to regain control of her own identity which proves that personal identity emerges from individual determination and strength instead of societal expectations. Her marriage to Shiva who rejects Meluhan dogma demonstrates her continued defiance. When this forbidden union takes place it acts as a revolutionary defiance which breaks down the strict social systems of caste and karma along with societal exclusion. This action demonstrates Sati's belief that self-definition comes from personal choice instead of following a predestined path.

Sati's transformation into a warrior emerges as an essential component of her empowerment beyond her social rebellion. While Meluhan society sees her physical limitation as a weakness she must confront and conquer on her own terms. Intense training and combat expertise enable her to refute traditional links between disability and incompetence while simultaneously reshaping the societal understanding of what constitutes strength. Her martial achievements prove that true ability emerges from disciplined training and unwavering commitment rather than being based on physical flawlessness. The trilogy's wider theme emerges from rejecting biological determinism as it asserts that strength and identity are results of persistent effort instead of inherited traits.

Sati's development moves beyond personal empowerment to shape her motherhood and leadership while solidifying the interconnection between individual progress and social transformation. The values of justice, honour and self-determination that she represents become part of the next generation through her influence on her son Kartik. She creates a lasting legacy by raising a warrior who remains free from the oppressive ideologies she challenged and thus keeps the fight for equality and justice ongoing beyond her lifetime. Her defiance triggers wider social reflection which pushes the Meluhan people to reconsider their established traditions that sustain inequality. Her journey from being marginalized and

stigmatized by Vikarma to becoming an esteemed warrior and mother marks significant ideological progression that questions systemic oppression foundations and reshapes justice understanding along with identity and personal agency.

Ultimately, Sati's story serves as a powerful assertion of free will over fate, reinforcing the central philosophical inquiry of *The Shiva Trilogy*: The Shiva Trilogy presents a fundamental question about human existence: does destiny remain unchangeable or is it possible to rewrite it? Sati's actions successfully break down deterministic structures to demonstrate that social labels and prejudices are not fixed and unchangeable. Through her actions she illustrates that real power comes from confronting oppression and taking control to reshape one's path. Through her experiences Sati achieves a personal triumph while simultaneously illustrating the power of resistance to enact change which establishes her as a crucial voice in the trilogy's exploration of identity and empowerment.

### **Philosophical and Social Reflections**

The Shiva Trilogy portrays Sati's life events as a critique of deterministic ideologies while scrutinizing the strict moral and social structures controlling Meluhan society. The book presents karma not as a fixed destiny but as a fluid ethical system that allows people to determine their own paths through deliberate choices and behaviors. Sati's journey demonstrates this narrative shift because she actively rejects the idea that suffering must follow past wrongdoings. Rather than being defined by her Vikarma status or physical impairment, she asserts her agency, thereby illustrating the novel's broader argument: Individual identity and ethical value must arise from current deeds instead of inherited classifications.

Sati's narrative exposes the flawed societal systems which legitimize discrimination through the pretense of divine righteousness. The Vikarma system marks people as impure for supposed sins from previous lifetimes and serves as a tool of social exclusion that bars those branded from participating fully in religious and civic activities. The story reveals how Meluha's society claims to be just and orderly yet prioritizes strict traditions over fairness and personal achievement through Sati's rebellious actions. By rejecting the social limitations placed upon her, she questions the validity of these societal norms and emerges as an influential force for transformation. The combination of her rebellion and Shiva's intervention leads to the destruction of an unjust system while representing a larger fight against established hierarchies that sustain inequality.

The transformation of Sati from a marginalized person into a respected warrior leader illustrates how resilience enables people to reshape identities that were initially imposed upon them. Her path mirrors real-world battles against caste-

based discrimination alongside gender prejudice and systemic oppression proving that personal defiance can spark societal evolution. The novel demonstrates through her character that challenging oppressive systems demands both personal bravery and group efforts. Sati’s rebellious spirit extends beyond her personal situation to motivate other oppressed groups like the Naga warriors in their efforts to reclaim their identities and resist social marginalization.

The Shiva Trilogy offers an engaging examination of determinism versus autonomy while dissecting how social ranks are artificially formed. The story of Sati prompts readers to question traditional systems that evaluate people by their birth status or misfortune instead of their personal abilities and virtues. The novel demonstrates the conflict between destiny and personal choice through its representation of her as a victim who becomes a catalyst for change. Through her journey Sati challenges deterministic beliefs while demonstrating that personal empowerment requires taking active control of one’s destiny instead of simply accepting what fate has laid out.

### **Conclusion**

Through her journey in The Shiva Trilogy Sati demonstrates how personal empowerment intersects with structural change to challenge deterministic beliefs and unbending social hierarchies. Her journey from an oppressed Vikarma woman to a powerful warrior and leader demonstrates how the story opposes fatalistic beliefs by emphasizing self-determination as the essential element in creating identity and destiny. Through her defiance against societal restrictions Sati regains personal freedom while driving societal evolution embodying the trilogy’s core messages of justice reform and resilience.

The battle Sati wages against Meluha’s oppressive traditions demonstrates how resistance can successfully break down established social structures. Her conduct confronts the moral rigidity of Vikarma doctrines while she establishes value through dedication and ethical principles instead of fixed destiny. The transformation of her character demonstrates that societal change involves active resistance led by individuals who challenge unjust institutional authority. Sati’s journey functions as an allegory for resistance against institutionalized oppression through her embodiment of historical and contemporary battles against gender bias and caste discrimination as well as systemic inequality.

The tragic heroism of Sati’s death forever establishes her as a lasting emblem of resilience and rebelliousness. Sati’s impact survives her death as she directs the narrative’s ideological path while encouraging future generations to oppose oppressive systems both inside and outside the text. The core principles that

drive Shiva’s fight against Meluhan customs derive from Sati’s upheld values while highlighting that genuine empowerment stems from challenging injustice with bravery.

Sati’s character functions as both a disruptor of her world’s deterministic beliefs and a redefining force for discussions about identity and the concepts of fate and free will. Her path shows that both personal and social transformation develops through active resistance and the exercise of personal agency against limiting norms. Her defiance coupled with self-sacrifice and steadfast determination establishes her as one of The Shiva Trilogy's foremost personalities who exemplifies the philosophical and social necessity of countering oppression by making active choices to change destiny.

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**The Fate of Folk Narratives in the Subaltern Discourse through Hansda  
Sowvendra Shekhar’s *The Adivasi Will Not Dance***

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**Abstract**

Subaltern studies has emerged as a critical field of study since the 1980s, successfully magnifying the voices of the marginalised communities that have historically been silenced. From Gramsci's initial terming of the word "subaltern" to analyse the lower socio-economic classes on a global scale to Gayatri Spivak's engagement with the voices of the marginalised in India, the subaltern discourse has evolved significantly. However, the primary questions remain unanswered—who truly constitute the subaltern, and does bringing them into mainstream social and political discussions protect or further displace them? Additionally, what happens to folk narratives that have existed for centuries but have been erased, altered or ignored in dominant historical literatures? In the process of incorporating marginalised voices, do we inadvertently push them to the centre, forcing them to conform to existing societal structures at the risk of losing their cultural identity? Through an analysis of Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar’s *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, this paper will attempt to explore how folk narratives are either ignored, silenced or assimilated into mainstream postcolonial discourses, further shedding light on the importance of authenticity, representation and the survival of cultural identity.

**Keywords:** subaltern, Folklore, postcolonial, cultural erasure, assimilation

**Introduction**

Subaltern studies has been a field of discipline since its emergence in the 1980s and has since broadened the postcolonial discourse by including people from the lower socio-economic strata into its discourse. Since its inception, while the discourse continues to exist on the subaltern, the subaltern themselves are marginalised from the discourse. Therefore, Spivak’s fundamental question remains: Who is the voice of the subaltern? Are these communities consciously integrated into the discourse,

or are they merely token representations of diversity and cultural heritage? Even as token representations, are they given a space to act in representation of their community or are they mere puppets in the hands of the people? Among these marginalized groups, tribal communities remain distinct, often denied space in political and social discourse while simultaneously being coerced into assimilation. Shekhar’s *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* provides an insight into the lives of such communities, through a series of short stories that illustrate their struggle for survival amidst the strategic erasure of their lands, identities, and cultural traditions.

### **The Definition and Erasure of Folk Narratives**

In *Interpreting Folklore*, Alan Dundes examines the definition of “folk” and how 19th-century scholars often depicted them as illiterate peasants living on the outskirts of urban scapes. This characterization often leads to the exclusion of oral traditions from canonical discourse, further marginalizing indigenous literatures. The dominant narrative, shaped by colonial and postcolonial institutions, invalidates folk narratives by dismissing them as either primitive or negligible. The Santhal tribe, the focal point of Shekhar’s text, validates this ideology; that despite their rich oral traditions, they are denied a legitimate space and a distinct identity within mainstream discourse.

According to Bailey Betik’s analysis of subaltern studies, Dipesh Chakrabarty, a leading scholar in postcolonial theory, asserts that marginalized groups should be viewed as “subjects of history” rather than “objects of it” (Betik, 2020). She further argues that historical records rarely document the voices of the folk or the so-called illiterate, causing subaltern studies to focus on dissent and resistance within these communities. Since folk literature is primarily oral in nature, it is excluded from canonical discussions, further reiterating the historical erasure of subaltern voices.

### **Cultural Erasure and Forced Assimilation**

The short story “They Don’t Eat Meat” depicts a Santhal family’s struggle to adapt to Vadodara’s strict vegetarian society. Upon arrival, they are immediately under the radar of their landlord, Mr. Rao, who tolerates their presence but reaffirms cultural boundaries: “Please, I hope you don’t mind, Mr. Soren, I have nothing against tribals. I have worked with tribals in my various postings all over the country. I have even lived in Ranchi. I respect all communities. And in this city, you see, even we are outsiders.” (*Shekar*) This passage reflects the stereotypical treatment of Adivasis—regarded as separate from the rest of society. Although the Rao family themselves are outsiders, the Sorens are the liability because of their



surname. Despite their participation in urban life, they remain outsiders, marginalised from mainstream society. To avoid conflict, the Sorens gradually acculturate the local customs, forgoing aspects of their identity. Panmuni-jhi, for instance, is renowned for her Santhal-style meat cooking, yet she must suppress this aspect of her heritage. Her sense of individual identity diminishes as she adopts the vegetarian lifestyle of the Vadodara community. However, her defiance unfolds when she instinctively throws a steel *degchi* at rioters attacking a Muslim neighbor's house. Her stance towards her muslim neighbor compels the rest of the community to follow through as well, successfully warding off the rioters from burning the women in Mr. Mohammed's house. This moment underscores the resistance of marginalized communities against cultural erasure.

In “Sons”, Baba instills in his children a sense of moral distinction, "Look, jawai, don't forget. We Adivasi are very bad at stealing. Corruption isn't in our blood. And even if we do commit a crime, we are pathetic at covering our tracks." (*Shekar*) This statement highlights the Santhal community's values and their portrayal in mainstream society. Despite their attempts to integrate, they remain branded with criminal stereotypes. In both instances, the men have respectable jobs in the community and have assimilated their lives to fit into the urban setting. But their identity always seeps through the background and becomes pivotal in labeling them as Adivasis or backward people. In the story “The Adivasi Will Not Dance”, Mangal Murmu recounts how Santhal boys were falsely accused of murdering a "Kiristan sister." Murmu says that their boys were given Christian names at schools and in the community the same group have labeled them as thieves and murderers. Even as they adopt Christian names, their tribal identity remains linked to social prejudices. In another instance, when a policeman exploits a Santhal girl, he dehumanizes her, reducing her to an object of tribal inferiority. He does so by stating that as an Adivasi this is all they are good at. She is given two bread pakoras and fifty rupees, the worth of an adivasi, according to the policeman. Shekhar's insistence of retaining tribal terminology without a glossary serves as a powerful reminder of the Adivasis' disempowerment in a world where they struggle to navigate dominant cultures.

### **Economic Exploitation and Land Dispossession**

Mangal Murmu's narrative further illustrates how Adivasis lose their lands under the pretense of development. Tanushree Gupta aptly describes the government's hypocrisy in her review, "This book is a commentary on the lives of the Adivasis, forgotten in the mainstream media and victims of a systematic pattern of ignorance, which tells us loudly and clearly that in India today, Adivasi lives don't matter."



(Gupta) Government policies promise education, employment, and modernization, but in reality, they displace indigenous populations to build power plants and industrial projects. Mangal Murmu reflects on how Adivasi land, once privately owned, suddenly became "sarkar" land, stripping its people of autonomy. He cannot comprehend why the “sarkar” would need such vast lands and how the laws do not apply to them when their lands are being stolen. They are forced to give up farming and take up jobs in the mining and copper industries around their settlement. The book also notes an instance where people around such an industrial sector were all slowly and mysteriously dying. Unfortunately their cultural stereotypes and their self inflicted sense of lost identity disallows them from striking up against this commercial war. As Adivasis are pushed into industrial labor, their wages remain meager, reinforcing cycles of poverty and dependence.

### **Commodification of Adivasi Culture**

Adivasi traditions, particularly folk performances, are reduced to exotic spectacles for mainstream consumption. Folk performances have an art form that is inclusive of the entire community and is performed to bring forth community stories, spiritual beliefs and political messages. Yet, in *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, these traditions are monopolised by outsiders, particularly in Murmu’s terms “very important people”. Mangal Murmu voices his dissent, "They call their culture and music and dance superior to those of us Adivasi. Why don't they get their women to sing and dance in open grounds in the name of Jharkhandi culture? For every benefit, in job, in education, in whatever, the Diku are quick to call Jharkhand their own—let the Adivasi go to hell. But when it comes to displaying Jharkhandi culture, the onus of singing and dancing is upon the Adivasi alone." (*The Adivasi Will Not Dance*) Betty Wang in her chapter “folksongs as regulators of politics” talks about how folklore is often the voice of dissent against the power from the centre. “One of the most important functions of folklore is its service as a vehicle for social protest. Wherever there is injustice and oppression, one can be sure that the victims will find some solace in folklore...Although folklore is commonly employed as a means of social protest, it is rarely officially acknowledged as such by political leaders.” (Wang 308) When Mangal Murmu refuses to perform before the President of India, he and his troupe are brutally punished, as though committing an act of treason. The Adivasis’ are seen as people existing outside the sphere of the society and as commodities rather than as humans. When they assert their own identity, they are brutally tortured until they retreat into hiding within their confined spaces.

### **Conclusion**

Handsa Shekhar’s *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* powerfully illustrates the erasure and

commodification of Adivasi identity. Despite decades of subaltern discourse, Adivasis remain on the periphery and are denied access to any part within society. Though they are the original inhabitants of their lands, they are systematically dispossessed of their economic and cultural autonomy. Gupta mentions in her review what the word adivasi means to the people of that community. “We are called aadhabaasi (adivasi) because we are aadha vasi, which means half humans and you people are pura vasi, complete humans” (Gupta) Though Adivasis are the original inhabitants of the land, they are sidelined and even made to feel as though they are not even entire human beings deserving of their own identity. This brings to light the discussion that the Adivasis and other folk do not exist merely as attachments to the rest of India, but rather as separate entities with individual identities. The central question persists: Are Adivasis truly part of the discourse, or are they merely subjects of documentation rather than facilitators of history? This ongoing struggle is necessary to ensure that Adivasi voices are not merely heard but empowered.

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## **Subalternity and Deconstructed Voices in Grace Ogot's *The Strange Bride***

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The paper focuses on the condition of subalternity and how their lives laid thread bare open in the natural setting and the forestry. The laws are followed by them only under the guidance of village leaders and they are not matched with the written and practised laws of the country. Therefore, their lives are distanced from the cities. There are subaltern conditions both in the men and women. They are trying to reclaim the forest and their moving rights and in the procedure, they are not able to protect themselves and their families. The newly wed Owiny and Nyawir are also not an exception. There are not enough hands to take them through the success of their lives. They struggle and they they don't realise how their lives are dragged away in a beautiful manner.

In the Luo muth, Were Nykaloga lives one among the people. He remained one among the natural elements and the people. The forests and the fields were filled with the produce of the red ochiti and white andiwo. The harvests of finger millet, nyim, peas and beans were also good. The black skin of Olum Ochak was very much identifiable with the population of the village and the men were secondary to nature. The leader has two wives. They are content within themselves.

The factors of subalternity are present between the two brothers - Opii and Owiny. Owiny is much greater than Opii and he is called as Bade Dongo. Koi a not liked by so many eyes.

Mount Owaga is a symbol of belongingness and make them come close to the sun. There are very much a substantial amount of self negation in them. That comes only in the midst of nature and otherwise their identities are strongly formed. In the presence only of nature and only their Luo myths, they are strongly built. Their vessels are also made of natural mud and also metals like mbiru. They rest under the red siala tree. The children in the other family such as Ochieng and Oyoo are also eight harvests old and Oyoo, six harvests old. They are good ant collectors and they have ant traps. They are also good at germinating millet grains, thowi, and use mats

to dry them. Achola was a hardworking woman. She could bring baskets and baskets of sorghum.

Nyawir goes missing. She is searched through the entire forest. She is searched by Opolo. She is not found by any one in the forest. The mother was deeply hurt by her disappearance. The disappearing child preoccupied the mind of the mother. She appears as a dense fog. The mother's love for her daughter is visible in the following poem: “ Daughter of the women of Mount Owaga, You wipes off my tears.” (11). When she is trying to make her identity, she is not recognised immediately. Like a myth, she is grown in the forest in a sanguine manner and she is thoroughly loved by her other now as a god given child. It is also like she has come from the lion's den. Opolo was extremely angry. The little girl has become a large girl and she could remember the buoywe grass and she stored beans and sesame. Nyawir took a balancing coil with her to take water and she is given manyasi - a cleansing medicine that is supposed to counter the effect of the burial rites performed when she was declared dead.

The old woman was called MinOgisa, the mother of Ogisa. Her hollow reed full of ash. The ancestors will reveal to them how they can take the girl forward. Nyawir went to sleep in Min Ogisa's house in the evening. Sometimes, Were Nykaloga was a mysterious being among the children and the beings of the village.

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The novel is also an exploration of marriage and a woman's duties to her husband. The characters Nyapol and Ochola are based on people known by Ogot in Seme in the Maseno Division of Kenya. The plot centers on this poverty-stricken Luo couple, who migrate as farmers from Kenya to Tanzania. Their eventual success provokes the jealousy of the local Tanzanians, and one of the neighbors, a witch doctor, casts a spell on Ochola, resulting in a disfiguring skin disease. Yet Ochola is cured once he agrees to return to Kenya and to abandon the flourishing farm. Nyapol's conduct as the dutiful wife, who follows and protects her husband, provides the role model for the majority of Ogot's women characters. Nyapol sets the trend for the naive, virginal Elizabeth of "Elizabeth"; the trustful Jedidah of "The Other Woman"; the dying Awino who cries out for her philandering husband in "Pay Day"; and the mother Oganda who abandons her daughter to save her marriage in "The Bamboo Hut" (all these stories being in *The Other Woman*). These women sacrifice themselves to maintain family harmony; they rarely oppose their men. Preservation of the family is more important to them, even though it can sometimes involve the subordination of a more intelligent woman to a shallow or tyrannical man. However, the wronged woman always has Ogot's sympathy. Ogot has stated (to Donald Burness) that she "sets out to write as a universal writer for both sexes. But of course one must see one's society as it is."

And it delivered. *The Strange Bride* starts off with a community that used to enjoy abundant food. Rules and customs were passed on from one generation to the next and the gods were appeased. People didn't even physically farm: their God gave them a hoe that they placed at their farms when planting season began.

The conflict is introduced halfway into the book, and it's a gentle reminder that even past communities had issues they were grappling with. That their young ones wanted to defy norms as well. That their teenagers also wanted to try out new fashion styles. And that beauty, a woman's beauty, has always been used to defeat kingdoms.

What I loved most was the detailed explanation of how this community did weddings. It was so elaborate and celebratory. The author makes you feel as if you are there as they negotiate bride price, as they prepare the baskets of sorghum, but most importantly, as they sing and escort the bride to her new home. It is riveting!

What I didn't expect was to feel drawn into the conflict. The way the story is told, it leaves you wondering whose side you are on; the bride's or the community's? It makes you question your view towards hard work and wonder what your opinion towards the issue would have been if you had been there?

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Grace Emily Akinyi (later Ogot) was born on 15 May 1930 at Butere, near Kisumu, in Central Nyanza, Kenya. Her primary and secondary education was acquired at Maseno Junior School, Ng'iya Girls School, and Butere Girls' High School. As a little girl Ogot's interest in writing took root when she listened enthusiastically to the folktales recited by her paternal grandmother to put her to sleep. A second influence was her father's readings from the Bible and storybooks with translations in Luo. As soon as Ogot mastered the English language, she was inspired by her father, a teacher of religion, to read the Old Testament several times. In her interview with Lindfors she recalled, "With that background, I extremely enjoyed the storytelling lessons at school, which were compulsory. I read any little booklets I could lay a hand on and discovered that some of my own stories compared favorably with those written in the booklets. But although the desire to write was stimulated in me, I never thought of writing my own stories down."

Ogot's active writing career did not begin until she corresponded with her future husband, the well-known historian Bethwell Allan Ogot, while she was training in England to be a nursing sister. Her fiancé (whom she married in 1959) encouraged her to publish some of her writings because her letters addressed to him were so poetic. Ogot first wrote short stories in her maternal language (Luo) and later in the two Kenyan national languages (Kiswahili and English). In 1962, before working as a nursing sister in charge of the Student Health Services at Makerere University College in Uganda (1963-1964), she attended a conference for African writers, held on campus. This literary meeting affected Ogot and resulted in a period of heart searching and self-examination because no book exhibits from East Africa were on display. She, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and other East Africans took the challenge to be more productive.

During the conference Ogot gave an oral reading of the short story "A Year of Sacrifice," which became her first publication, in 1963 in the journal *Black Orpheus*, and was republished as "The Rain Came" in *Land Without Thunder*. Encouraged by the publication of this story, Ogot decided to show it, along with others, to the European manager of the East African Literature Bureau, who said he "really could not understand how a Christian woman could write such stories, involved with sacrifices, traditional medicines and all, instead of writing about Salvation and Christianity." Not easily deterred, Ogot continued to write, drawing on her training at the Nursing Training Hospital at Mengo, near Kampala, Uganda



(1949-1953), and Saint Thomas's Hospital and the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies in London (1955-1958).

Not all of Ogot's fiction takes place in Kenya and is concerned with medical and women's issues. In 1975 she was one of the Kenyan delegates to the United Nations General Assembly. A three-and-a-half-month stay provided material for her story "New York," in *The Island of Tears*. Ancestral linkage between Kenyans and African-Americans is the main theme, with the action centering on a Kenyan ambassador who is directed to the subway station by an African-American. Unfortunately the ambassador is robbed and almost killed by this African-American. However, an unexpected twist occurs when the thief's parents visit the ambassador in the hospital and an offer of a job is extended to their repentant son.

As she writes, Ogot has no consistent predetermined ideology. Asked about her choice of subject material for her stories, she told Lee Nichols, "I just collect them, write them, because they stick in my mind like when you listen to the news." Ogot simply listens, observes, and records. For instance, her past work as a community development officer in Kisumu was utilized in her novella *The Graduate* (1980). The primary theme is that the former European colonial powers are still controlling independent Kenya, particularly because of its out-of-date bureaucratic system, which still employs condescending European staff members. Ogot's premise is that independence neither brings a sudden change of attitudes nor the adoption of Kenyanization.

Ogot is well aware of the social, political, and economic changes taking place around her and continues to retain a respect and a close understanding of the traditional thought of her people. An understanding and appreciation of Luo traditional ways, customs, superstitions, and history are the strengths of Ogot's writing. Her close attention to an accurate recalling of details was exhibited when she changed the title of her story "Ayiembo's Ghost" to "The Ivory Trinket" (in *The Island of Tears*) as soon as she learned that ghosts are not dead in Luo traditions. Another example is the recitation of the Nyamgondho legend in "The Fisherman" (also in *The Island of Tears*).

As for historical facts, Ogot gives thanks to her husband. Marriage to a historian has had its advantages, Ogot admits. As she told Burness, "I would have been a fool if I did not seize the opportunity to use the vast knowledge he has of the background of my people and the way he has assembled everything that has ever been written about them." Her accumulation of historical facts has resulted in the completion of a book of over four hundred pages titled "In the Beginning," based on Luo history from A.D. 97, and the manuscript "Simbi Nyaima," based on the village history of



her people. The former work was adapted by Ogot's son, Michael, in 1983 as a play; the latter was also adapted as a play and was translated from Luo into English by Asenath B. Odaga, a Kenyan woman who specializes in writing children's stories. The play *Simbi Nyaima* was produced in 1982.

*Miaha* (1983; translated as *The Strange Bride*, 1989) is Ogot's interpretation and retelling of a popular Luo myth. Various troubles befall a village after the leader's youngest son marries a beautiful, mysterious woman.

The tragic aspects of history and life fascinate Ogot: six stories in *Land Without Thunder*, three stories in *The Other Woman*, and two stories in *The Island of Tears* have an element of sadness in them. Ogot's belief is that "There are more tragic incidents in life than there are comic ones" (quoted by Helen Mwanzi). To support her statement, Ogot has written about Tom Mboya's funeral in "The Island of Tears"; the death of Dr. Sserwadda from poliomyelitis in "The Hero"; the mother's desperate attempt to find a doctor to save her child's life in "The Family Doctor"; and the sacrifice of the life of Oganda, a king's daughter, for the survival of the village in "The Rain Came." In short, tragedy cuts across class lines and touches a cross section of Kenyan rural and urban society.

This preoccupation with a sacrificial act that can bring forth tragedy for some people (the king) and happiness for others (the villagers) in "The Rain Came" has been further explored in "The Professor," in *The Other Woman*. By far the most ambitious of Ogot's fiction, "The Professor" shows the negative and positive aspects of the first successful heart transplant in Kenya. From a scientist's perspective, Professor Miyare, the protagonist, needs to be commended for his skills as a surgeon. From a traditional Luo perspective, Miyare has performed an act that borders on witchcraft: he has removed the heart and soul from a deceased person and placed them in a living one. Miyare has also sacrificed precious time he could have spent with his family, parents, and clan in order to do the research necessary to conduct the transplant operation. The ironic twist is that, while Miyare is praised by the president of Kenya, he is labeled as a failure by his own father. According to his father, Miyare has not fulfilled the traditional expectation of constructing a house in the village. Unable to resist his father's and his wife's pleas, Miyare builds a village home against his will. This situation leads to his personal unhappiness. An insecure politician, fearful that Miyare might replace him, arranges an administrative position for him. The once-lively professor, who was content in his laboratory and with his patients, becomes a weary person with bowed shoulders. The burdens of society have overwhelmed another unwilling victim, who, at the end of the story,

writes "AFRICA IS DEAD" on his notepad. The professor's ambition to become a doctor abroad has to take second place to the demands of his societal group.

Ogot says she got the idea for this story through contact with devoted scientists and doctors whom society will not leave alone to do their work. Furthermore, as she told Lindfors: "There are often a lot of social demands made on them, and some of these men may wonder whether you can combine being a scientist and being an African, particularly if you want to be a good African."

Earning a living solely from creative writing is unknown for most African writers. There is not a large enough literate audience to sustain them. This fact explains why Ogot has held positions as a broadcaster, scriptwriter, and editor for the BBC Africa Service in London (1959-1961); a broadcaster of a weekly radio magazine in Luo and Kiswahili for the Voice of Kenya in Nairobi; a public-relations officer for the Air India Corporation of East Africa; and the founding chairperson of the Writers' Association of Kenya. Time for writing has been allocated to the evenings, when she returns home from work.

Since 1983 Grace Ogot's attempts to write creatively have been curtailed. President Daniel arap Moi appointed her a member of parliament (M.P.) in October 1983. In July 1985 Ogot made history when she resigned as a nominated M.P. to contest successfully the Gem constituency by-election. In Kenya this was the first time that a nominated M.P. resigned from parliament to seek an electoral mandate.

When one looks at Grace Ogot's versatile career, one must admire her energy, persistence, and pioneering spirit. She has made her distinctive mark on Kenyan literature and politics. As a writer she probably will be remembered best for her meticulous documentation in fiction of Luo customs, legends, and history.

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## **Ethnicity and Male Chauvinism in Rita Doves Poem *Daystar***

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### **Abstract**

Rita Frances Dove, an American essayist as well as a poet. The poem is a beautiful blend of motherly duties as well as mother love but with a tinge of mesmerizing experience of a mother fully absorbed in her motherly duties. The popularity of the poem lies in this dual role of a woman as a mother as well as an individual *Daystar*. As a representative of maternal responsibilities: The poet presents a woman who is thinking of having some privacy in her private place, but then her son and daughter show her that she has some tasks to perform. When she frees herself from these nappy-changing tasks, she again sees that there are other toys of her children to keep them away. She, however, only finds solace in the lap of the nature of mother when she is fast asleep. Whenever she has some peace of mind, one or the other child appears to make her life busy again with their little requests. In the midst of this brouhaha of her children, she just finds enough to take some rest and then carry on.

The major argument in *Daystar* is motherly responsibilities, feminine life, and domestic chores are three major themes of this poem. The poet presents a woman who is always busy tending to her children and vying to have some private space. Even when she does not tend to her children, she is always thinking about her femininity is now out of space and having no individuality. In fact, these domestic chores related to siblings such as Liza and Thomas sap the entire energy of mothers, yet it is here that motherhood lies. That is why mothers lose their femininity and individuality for collectivity.

**Key Words:** Cosmopolitanism, Itinerary, Ominous Race and Gender

*Daystar* by Rita Dove is a sad poem that makes us think about the responsibilities. It talks about a young mom who is a full-time mother and also a full-time wife. She is bereaved of her desire to be free. She does not get any opportunity to break away and to have some privacy. The only freedom she gets is in the bathroom, in the silence, away from her children. She feels relieved and free from her duties while in the bathroom. This is one place where she gets all the peace and quietness. She can take her own time to be there. But when she is out of the bathroom everything is the same. She gets no break, no holiday. Her duties cannot be normalized to any other job. There is no overtime pay or weekends off. This is the job of a mother and a wife. Dove quoted this poem comes from personal experience, having been a young married person with small kids. Purpose of this analysis is to promote a better understanding of the poem. This can be through the analyst pointing out all the elements like repetition, symbols, and the shift of tone or attitudes. Sometimes understanding comes from the setting. Things are often affected by time and place. Problems can be looked up differently by people in varied situations or coming from different backgrounds. Hopefully a better understanding of the poem can lead to relating it with others situations and promoting a discussion. The term 'critical analysis' does not imply criticism, but a deeper understanding of the work. The analysis is structured into the following sections. The background of the poem tells what is the real condition of the life story behind the poem and every element of that story directly related to Rita Dove's life. The structural analysis highlights the shift of attitude that the lady has shown over the day and how tired she feels by the end of the day. The setting of the poem is discussed how there is no specific time period assigned to the poem and how it can be related to people from different time periods. Rhyme and punctuation discusses how punctuation has been used to slow down the pace of the poem. How comma and full stop seem to give a pause. Also, how changing the number of syllables per verse has emphasized upon the women's condition. – This poem as feminist manifesto explores woman can be taken as an example of all women oppressed by their duties and how there is a desperate attempt to search for an identity that does not define us in terms of our relation to another person.

The poem is a monologue in which the persona, a mother and a wife, articulates her journey and gradual empowerment. It is a lyric of frustration and hope, of the circumscribed and molded consciousness of a woman in an intractably male society. She wanted a little room for thinking, but she saw diapers steaming on the line, a doll slumped behind the door. The baby stroller was always re-propped the door, laden with beach things and bathtub ring scum. She had by then the solace of an ant, mouse, or

garden worm. A rank Sudanese plant rustled by the front door a still lush invisibility, leaf mold its fur, fallen just before the moth, spindly and systematic, began to secrete the crying caterpillar, the frequent questioning caterpillar. Here is a poem about the clean, sterilized, and nurtured life of the middle-class woman, a life full of the products of family life but devoid of personal freedom or the opportunity for self-expression.

The poem is heavy with the regret that comes with questioning the worth of one's life, put into the objects of the domestic environment that symbolize this life that is lived for the benefit of others but has not the chance to achieve a fuller understanding of itself. The diaper, the doll, the beach things, and the frequent questioning caterpillar these are tokens from the symbolic world of childhood, representing the mother's sense that this is something of a second childhood she is living, but one robbed of the spontaneity, wonder, and adventure. The frequent repetition of the anapaestic rhythm gives the impression of the footsteps of children at play, which contrasts sharply with the life that is described in the poem and adds to the feeling of the domestic and maternal fetter from which the mother longs to escape.

The theme of the poem *Daystar* by Rita Dove is to present a woman who feels trapped and judged by her roles as a wife and mother. It is a poem that many women will relate to. The woman in the poem appears to be transitioning through different stages of life. She has finally reached the point where the last of her children are off to school and has come to the realization that this role she has played for so many years has not been fully satisfying. The speaker's criticism of the woman's "daylong solitude" (8) is actually a criticism of the role that mother and wife play in the familial structure. This nurturing and caring role in some sense demands bodily servitude and limits the potential for these women for self-realization and recognition in any other area. This is represented by the woman's lack of a personal life and dreams for the future. This woman was never able to act on her ambitions and was only able to lead "someone else's nagging" (5) meaning she was only able to internally debate things for the benefit of her family and never herself. The speaker implies here that many women place off their ambitions for a later time that never comes. In the woman's case she missed her chance to live her life and work to fulfill her ambitions.

The woman in the poem is presented with a feeling of self-estrangement. She is depicted as someone who has lived up to the standards set by others but has done so at a personal cost to herself. The only time in the poem where she speaks is to give a command to the child and it is not until the end of the poem that she cries, indicating perhaps that she doesn't want her son to know what she feels and that she feels the need to be strong around others and protective of her family so that it does not burden them. This end has now become the day's only satisfaction for the woman; knowing that she

protected her family and maintained the order "cleanly through the house" (11) which is ironic in itself considering that she is not truly satisfied.

Motherhood and domesticity is a major theme of this poem. The speaker portrays her roles as a mother and a wife, and the tasks assigned to these roles and in short about how mothers cope with childhood and domesticity through the use of several colorful imageries. She associates caring for her child with poverty, evocatively portraying the idea of an isolated, impoverished family with "shoes, a boy's shoes, with broken stripes." A striking image is that of a "dirty girl" showing the mother's anxieties of not doing enough and failing to keep her child clean. It is also an experience the mother has in common with her *Daystar*, her child, "The tuck the old doctor nagged you about." She tells how she takes the side of her child against the teacher, "I always laugh and say, 'you are going to be it,' rubs her friends' noses in it." It is more than likely that mothers experience a similar sense of separation to the one which the poet portrays. Doing her most work to keep her child happy and to maintain a sense of normality despite illness. More often, this is perhaps an experience shared with all parents. This poem focuses on the mother's experience. She often feels that she is alone in doing these things for her child and struggles to maintain a facade of normality and prevent her child from feeling alienated from his peers. This is evidenced by the image of the child walking to school to "catch the last of the light; and it's quiet with your coat and your old plaid at the door" - a picture of a child who is alone and already separated from others.

The motherhood of one woman who feels outsized by the size of the clean toys, the clear laugh, the small face coming clean with no guile of tears, the love not grimed by need. So the great squeezing arms of the day enfold. Rita Dove illustrates, in the first two stanzas of her poem, *Daystar*, the issue of the burdens of motherhood. From the first two words, "So the," it is evident to the reader that the woman is overwhelmed with motherly obligations. The term "great squeezing arms" immediately presses on to the reader the feelings of suffocation that this mother has. It is difficult for this woman to break away from responsibility and have any time for herself. This point is brought out in the first stanza when the term "clean" is used three times in four lines. Cleanliness is obviously what every mother wishes for, but in this case it is seen more as a goal that she can never get away from, or something to be attained for the kids' benefit, not her own. A similar sentiment is echoed throughout the entire stanza when the mention of "no guile of tears" places the speaker's children in a higher realm of innocence, based on her own implied guilt. This guilt is likely for her own feelings she has about her motherhood, a feeling that she is not a good mother. This stigma is affirmed in the woman's mind when she reflects on her motherhood as "squeezing arms,

while the shoulders are its wife and gristle.” These lines convey a sense of being trapped, a feeling that no decision can ever be made without consideration of the children. This idyllic picture of motherhood Dove is creating serves to effectively illustrate the woman's sense of entrapment, a contrast to the freedom she seeks in the latter half of the poem. The second stanza continues to convey this mother's inability to do anything on her own and her own dissatisfaction with her children.

The use of third person omniscient is telling as Dove has the woman watching her children as if she were not there, it serves to effectively distance the woman from her own self and portray how she is feeling. With the exception of the term “little,” it is easy to imagine Dove referring to adults rather than children. The woman's wistfulness is conveyed in the very next line as she muses on the love not grimed by need. The deciding factor in the woman's insertion is the need mentioned and it is evident that the children are still personified as little faces have yet to have learned guile of tears, meaning the knowledge of how to feign crying to gain sympathy. On the whole, this stanza conveys the idea that the woman's children are still not grown enough to be able to do anything for themselves and it is her belief that they are weighing her down.

The protagonist in *Daystar* is largely concerned with her role as a mother. She takes brief moments away from her everyday chores and duties to reflect upon a piece of herself that doesn't get to shine because she is a mother. The inability to do what she wants to do and be what she wants to be is eating away at her. She is the consumer who has no food to eat and she is starving to death. Rita Dove expresses her feedback on her verse in *Daystar* with hidden meaning to shed a new light on how she is feeling. She says things are fine the way they are, but in her heart, she is wishing for something else. The poem is a display of the martyred mother and her unselfishness. Dove is the woman who has spilled her feelings into her job and still can't find satisfaction. The identity of the protagonist in this poem is really interesting in terms of self-analysis. We are given a few clues here and there, and with sifting through, we can come up with a pretty good idea of who this woman is. Clearly, the first thing we know about the protagonist is that she is a mom. No ordinary mom would spend her days running the same treadmill of work, caring for others, and doing trivial deeds. But to see who she is really crying out to be, we need to take a closer look at the verse mentioned previously. The “consumer with no food to eat” is one interesting analogy. Usually, we would not think of a mother as a consumer.

The woman in the poem is a simple one. She has simple desires and what she would consider a simple life. This analogy is showing the hidden side of the protagonist, saying that if she was the consumer, then she wouldn't be choosing the life that she has now, acting merely as a server to her children and her husband. The irony



of the poem is that never once does it mention the actual acts of her children, and simply the speaker's desire to break away from them.

Language and diction always contribute immensely to the understanding of a particular work. Diction is defined as the choice of words in the piece of writing. Rita Dove's poem, *Daystar*, focuses around a woman who is fed up with her life. She is discontent being at home while the man is at work and ultimately, the mention of removing the child from the room "so as not to hear it" (Dove 53) gives us the impression that she wants to rid of everything that she finds as a hindrance to her happiness and goals in life. Dove's choice of words in this poem is what makes it so powerful and easy to envision the picture of a woman in a domestic role. The choices of words in *Daystar* utilized by Dove are seemingly simple, but in depth, they are emotive and portray vivid visualization. At first glance, the poem may seem to be a 'vent' of a frustrated housewife, but with the carefully chosen words, it gives us an impression that it is written by an educated woman in a reflective state of mind. For instance, from the very beginning where she mentions "she wanted one life" (Dove 1), yet ended up with something opposite, the word 'one' already sets a tone of strive and a higher goal in life. The repetition of "it was" in the line "...filling a blue platter with little tomato sandwich and strands of quick yellow corn, pouring ginger pop into blue cups..." (11-13) is more of an emphasis. This placement of the word has suggested a sense of longing and perhaps frustration that everything desired is only a fragment of what "it was". The most impactful words are towards the end where we see a drastic change of imagery and mood when the woman finally gets a moment to herself by sitting "The sky was on her, she closed her eyes but could feel sky's weight" (Dove 14-15). These two lines work very well as a twin because it presents a sudden and uneasy change of mood which is beautifully translated through the imagery of a clear blue sky and burden. Weight of the sky may suggest limitless and vast unfulfilled desires. In addition, the following line "pressing her down on the bed..." (16) again stresses out a feeling of suffocation and taking the woman further away from her goals.

That is to say, Rita Dove in this poem has given an overview of a mother's life. The sort of life she leads in reality once her husband and children are away from her. This is the time when more often than not she is alone in the house, with no one to talk to or to look after. This is the time she may begin to feel unloved and unwanted. She may not say this and it may not show on her face but deep down it may be hurting her. She may feel let down and low. But she is helpless, as she has to fulfill responsibilities and cannot afford to be sentimental. She has to still go on and fulfill her duties, sometimes feeling very tired and unhappy. But she knows she cannot change things, and thus gives herself contentment with self-deception.



This is exactly how the mother in the poem is going through life. And it is this feeling of hopelessness and acceptance of her state that has been brought out beautifully in this poem. The imagery, description, and the comparisons given have really brought out the poet's feelings and the reader is able to empathize with the woman's feelings. And though the woman in the poem tries to conceal her feelings from her family and puts up a bold front, Dove has shown through the poem that it does not escape the notice of the children or the husband. But again they are also in a bind and are helpless, as she is to do anything about it. But at least they can offer her moral support and love and concern. This may sometimes be enough to perk her up and make her feel better. This is what is hinted at in the concluding part of the poem when the husband points out a star to her and the children rush to kiss her; it is a simple gesture but conveys a lot. And it is at this point the woman feels a bit better. So in a way it is not a very satisfying poem but it definitely brings out some harsh realities of life today. And Rita Dove has to be given credit for the kind of comparison and description used to convey the woman's feelings.

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**Embodied Marginality: Disability, Difference, and Sociocultural Exclusion in  
Achebe's *Things Fall Apart***

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**Abstract**

This research article analyzes Chinua Achebe's classic novel *Things Fall Apart* using the theoretical lens of disability studies. It argues that Achebe employs physical and psychological differences as a metaphorical tool as well as a literal depiction of pre-colonial Igbo society. This research examines the novel's representation of characters who diverge from the societal norms—Unoka's perceived indolence, Ezinma's ogbanje condition, and Okonkwo's psychological inflexibility—serves to cast light on sophisticated systems of exclusion, value, and power in a close text-based analysis that incorporates contemporary disability theory. Achebe's novel demonstrates how bodily and mental differences operate within complex cultural contexts that intersect with gender norms, religious beliefs, and social values, even though it is not necessarily outlined as a disability narrative. This reading adds to postcolonial and disability studies by showing how pre-existing indigenous cultural notions of embodiment and distinction exist prior to and complicate Western medicalised disability models.

**Introduction**

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) has long been regarded as a classic in postcolonial literature, providing a strong counter-narrative to colonial constructions of African societies. The novel's description of Igbo society on the eve of colonial incursion has been subject to extensive analyses across different theoretical approaches, ranging from postcolonialism, feminism, to historical materialism. Nevertheless, while there is increasing academic interest in the crossing of postcolonial and disability studies, surprisingly little consideration has been given to how Achebe's work represents and navigates physical and psychological difference in pre-colonial Igbo society.

This dissertation fills this academic lacuna by performing a disability studies reading of *Things Fall Apart*, analyzing how different types of bodily and cognitive difference are represented, regulated, and made meaningful within the novel's representation of pre-colonial Igbo society. As Clare Barker

and Stuart Murray observe, "Postcolonial contexts often reveal complex and sometimes contradictory attitudes toward disability, with traditional belief systems and colonial impositions creating layered approaches to bodily and cognitive difference" (219). The analysis here builds on the knowledge that disability is not a simple biological fact but a multifaceted social construct that differs from one cultural and historical context to another.

The theoretical foundation for this discussion borrows from major concepts in disability studies, such as the social model of disability, which separates physical impairment from the social construction of disability by means of environmental obstacles and cultural attitudes. As disability scholar Tom Shakespeare explains, "Disability is a complex dialectic of biological, psychological, cultural and socio-political factors" (26). This framework enables us to consider why characters in *Things Fall Apart* are marginalized not just due to physical or psychological difference, but due to the intersection of these differences with social expectations and power.

This dissertation will concentrate on four main areas of **disability representation** within the novel:

- 1.The construction of Unoka as socially disabled through his divergence from masculine norms.
- 2.The management of bodily sickness and its social consequences within Igbo cultural understandings.
- 3.The position of the ogbanje child (Ezinma) as being representative of a kind of spiritual otherness.
- 4.Okonkwo's psychological inflexibility as a kind of neurodivergence that helps cause his failure to adapt to new situations.

Through this analysis, this dissertation aims to demonstrate how disability functions in *Things Fall Apart* not merely as an individual characteristic but as a complex social phenomenon that reveals power structures, cultural values, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within traditional Igbo society.

### **Unoka: Social Disability and Masculine Failure**

Unoka, the father of Okonkwo, is perhaps the finest example of how social disability works in Igbo society. His deviation from physical and behavioural standards makes him a socially disabled or dissociated individual. Achebe introduces Unoka by dwelling on his failure, that is, his inability to measure up to the norm of masculine achievement and productiveness that defines man in Umuofia. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues, "Disability marks the body as subordinate" (19), a maxim that appears in Achebe's first definition of Unoka:

"Unoka, that was his father's name, had died ten years ago. In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow" (Achebe 4).

This description illustrates Unoka's deviation from traditional definitions of masculine behavior, such as his inability to accumulate wealth, provide for his family, or exhibit the forward-thinking mentality that supports agricultural productivity. His inclination towards music-making rather than agriculture and war defines him as deviant in a culture that values strength, resilience, and economic prosperity: "Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood. And so he changed the subject and talked about music, and his face beamed." (Achebe 6).

From a disability studies perspective, Unoka's condition can be understood through what Tobin Siebers calls the "ideology of ability" (8)—a system of values that prioritizes certain bodily capacities and psychological characteristics and renders others marginal. In Umuofia's value system, Unoka's choice of artistic expression over military strength is a kind of social disability that leads to his marginalization.

This disability becomes biologically embodied when Unoka contracts "the swelling sickness," resulting in his exclusion from appropriate burial rites: "Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had *chi* or personal God, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave. He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess. When a man was afflicted with swelling in the stomach and limbs he was not allowed to die in the house. He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die" (Achebe 17-18).

Disability theorist Sharon Snyder describes actual places where individuals with physical differences are incarcerated and segregated from the larger populace as "the carceral archipelago of disability" (Snyder and Mitchell 15), and Unoka's exclusion is characteristic of it. The Evil Forest is a figurative boundary between acceptable and unacceptable bodily embodiments as well as an actual location.

An essential point of departure for understanding the development of Okonkwo's character is Unoka's marginalization. One can explain Okonkwo's hypermasculinity and fear of weakness as an overreaction to his father's supposed incapacity:

"Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had informed him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first learned that agbala was not merely another term for a woman, it could also mean a man who had no title" (Achebe 13).

This text shows how disability (here, social disability through gender nonconformity) gets entangled with larger systems of power and identity. The word "agbala" combines femininity with social failure, showing how disability, gender, and social status work together in systems of marginalization. As disability studies scholar Ellen Samuels points out, "Disability often serves as a marker of other forms of deviance, specifically sexual deviance" (21), a maxim applied in the way that Unoka's inability to be masculine is semantically tied to femininity by the adjective "agbala."

### **Physical Illness and Social Death in Igbo Society**

Physical illness is used as a metaphor for social death and as an actual illness throughout *Things Fall Apart*. There are several instances throughout the novel of how disease leads to ostracism, particularly when referring to the practice of sending individuals who have certain diseases to the Evil Forest. What Foucault has referred to as "the great confinement"—the deliberate segregation of those who are deemed abnormal from the rest of the population—is echoed in this spatial segregation of disease and disability (38).

A multifaceted image of how Igbo culture categorizes and reacts to various forms of physical difference is created in the book. Not every disease is treated equally; some diseases are treatable within society, while others require exclusion. For example, when Ezinma becomes sick with fever, she is treated inside the home through native medicine:

“You must not call her. She will hear you and run away if she hears her name,” said Ekwefi. She altered her tone and began speaking like a person addressing a spirit: ‘Do not hurt this child, for we have offered a hen and a goat and a cassava root.’” (Achebe 54).

The following scene illustrates the way ritualistic and spiritual processes, rather than exclusion, are employed to treat certain forms of disease. Fever is thought of as a spiritual illness that perhaps can be contained with proper ritual action rather than biological action.

Conversely, however, certain afflictions, particularly those that result in the body altering in a way that is deemed abhorrent, result in complete social ostracism. This is exemplified not only by Unoka's banishment to the Evil Forest but also by how lepers and patients with smallpox are treated:

"An evil forest was where the clan buried all those who died of the really evil diseases, like leprosy and smallpox. It was also the dumping ground for those who

took their own lives. It was an outcast ground, belonging to the dreaded spirits of the clan.” (Achebe 32).

Seen from the perspective of disability studies, this differential treatment of the different conditions illustrates what Anita Silvers calls “the historical contingency of disability” (75)—how societies create particular structures for understanding and responding to different kinds of bodily difference. The organization of physical variations in Igbo culture, as depicted in Achebe, is founded on spiritual and cultural concepts of how specific conditions affect an individual's relationship with society and with the earth goddess, Ani, instead of on medical diagnoses.

When colonial missionaries come and establish their church in the Evil Forest, it makes the novel's presentation of disease control more complex. Native models for understanding disability and difference are undermined by their survival.

Indigenous models for understanding disability and difference are being challenged by colonial power at this pivotal moment. The presence of the missionaries means that Western medicine and religion offer alternative ways of addressing illness and disability, ways that directly conflict with Igbo cultural power.

As Clare Barker contends, “Colonial medical interventions often placed indigenous models of illness and disability as ‘superstitious’ in contrast to rational, thus legitimating the imposition of Western models of medicine” (82). The founding of the church in the Evil Forest marks the start of this process of medical colonization, through which indigenous models for comprehending bodily difference are undermined by Western ones.

### **Ezinma: The Ogbanje Child as Spiritual Difference**

Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma, who is described as an ogbanje—a child who repeatedly dies and comes back to the world to be born again—is perhaps the most complex instance of difference in *Things Fall Apart*. The ogbanje represents a form of spiritual distinction that goes beyond the boundaries between normal and abnormal development and life and death.

Ezinma's mother, Ekwefi, had previously lost nine children, as Achebe reports: “*She had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, usually before the age of three. As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and then to grim resignation.*” (55).

When Ezinma becomes gravely ill, her survival is of prime concern not just to her parents but to the whole community. The medicine man Okagbue conducts a

complex ritual to locate Ezinma's iyi-uwa, the stone that connects the ogbanje child to the spirit world:

*"Where did you bury your iyi-uwa?" he demanded in a stern voice. 'Where did you bury your iyi-uwa?' he snapped again. 'Tell me!' Ezinma glanced at her mother, whose face was clouded with fear and uncertainty."(Achebe 58).*

This scene demonstrates how difference in Igbo culture is controlled through religious and ritual means and not through medical treatment. The idea of the ogbanje is a culturally particularized model of childhood death and developmental difference—one that is sensitive to the spiritual nature of physical life.

From a disability studies viewpoint, the ogbanje might be interpreted as a cultural model for understanding childhood illness and mortality patterns. Instead of viewing such patterns as haphazard biological events, the concept of ogbanje offers an explanatory model that imbues suffering with meaning and potential intervention in the form of ritual. This is very much at odds with Western medical models that individualise and medicalise difference.

As disability scholar Nirmala Erevelles puts it, "Cultural attitudes toward disability are not monolithic even within a single society, but vary according to the type of difference, its perceived origin, and its relationship to cultural belief systems" (27). This principle is also seen in the way Ezinma being an ogbanje does not result in her exclusion but instead in more attention and care from the community

*"It is iba," said Okonkwo as he picked up his machete and went into the bush to gather the leaves and grasses and tree barks that went into the making of the medicine for iba."(Achebe 61).*

In Igbo culture, differences did not necessarily result in marginalization; rather, some of them, particularly those that held spiritual connotations, may be followed by special status and protection, as can be observed with the way Ezinma's sickness is received by society. The straightforward assumption about pre-colonial society's attitudes and approaches towards disability is brought into question with this intricate portrait.

What disability theorist Rod Michalko has called "the difference disability makes" (10)—the manner in which disability creates other kinds of knowledge and ways of understanding—is also made apparent by the ogbanje. In Igbo cosmology, the Ogbanje child possesses a sacred sort of wisdom beyond the mundane, creating a sort of beloved otherness rather than a stigmatized illness.

### **Okonkwo: Psychological Rigidity as Neurodivergence**

Okonkwo is not actually positioned by Achebe as disabled, and a disability studies reading allows us to see his emotional limitation and psychological inflexibility as a form of neurodivergence that ultimately leads to his inability to adapt to changing circumstances. When his culture is changing due to colonialism, Okonkwo's over-investment in masculine norms and his inability to express tenderness or sensitivity beyond the context of intimacy betray a psychological inflexibility that becomes increasingly maladaptive.

Okonkwo's mental condition is explained by Achebe in language that suggests an inability to manage emotion in the traditional manner:

*"Okonkwo never displayed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To display affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth displaying was strength. He therefore treated Ikemefuna as he treated everybody else—with a heavy hand."*(Achebe 21).

This emotional constriction is especially apparent in the scene when Okonkwo is a part of the killing of his adopted son Ikemefuna, even after he has been cautioned not to.

*"As the man who had cleared his throat pulled up and lifted his machete, Okonkwo averted his face. He heard the stroke. The pot dropped and shattered in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna cry out, 'My father, they have slain me!' as he approached him. Stunned with terror, Okonkwo drew his machete and struck him down. He feared being accused of cowardice."* (Achebe 43).

This situation shows how Okonkwo's rigid adherence to masculine norms conquers his natural love and moral awareness. He acts in a manner that is betraying his own emotional connections due to a fear of appearing weak and being associated with his father's disability.

From the disability studies perspective, Okonkwo's psychological rigidity can be understood in terms of what Lennard Davis calls "enforcing normalcy" (23)—the manner in which societies uphold rigid behavioural norms that marginalize alternative ways of experiencing and processing emotion. Okonkwo's hyper masculinity at first appears acceptable within the system of values of Umuofia, but his inability to integrate other aspects of the human condition—tenderness, adaptability, and doubt—eventually leaves him unable to adapt to changing circumstances. As the novel wears on, Okonkwo's refusal to accommodate different ways of thinking grows more evident. When his son Nwoye is attracted to Christianity, Okonkwo reacts with violence instead of seeking to see his son's point of view: "Okonkwo's eldest son, Nwoye, now around sixteen years old, had been



drawn to the new religion from the very beginning. But he hid it. He did not dare go too close to the missionaries lest his father..." (Achebe 104).

Okonkwo's reaction to his son's interest in religion illustrates what disability scholar Margaret Price calls "counter-rational" thinking (33)—modes of thinking that might seem irrational based on outside expectations but have their own internal coherence. Okonkwo's destructive spurning of Christianity results from his intense fear of being like his father, whose "failure" he has been trying to counter for his whole life.

This psychological inflexibility ultimately seals Okonkwo's fate. When he murders the court messenger, he does so from the same inflexible structure that has dictated all his behavior, incapable of seeing that the political environment has fundamentally shifted:

*"In a flash Okonkwo drew his machete. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow. It was useless. Okonkwo's machete descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body."* (Achebe 144).

From a disability studies point of view, Okonkwo's suicide is the ultimate outcome of his inability to adapt to novel social realities—a ghastly outcome that follows from the union of colonial interruption and his psychological distinctiveness.

Robert McRuer writes that "Compulsory able-bodiedness and compulsory heterosexuality are interwoven, the former always requiring the naturalization of certain bodies and behaviors" (8).

His rigid adherence to a form of necessitated able-bodiedness marked by hyper masculine body and emotional repression is the essence of Okonkwo's tragedy.

Disability as Metaphor for Cultural Disintegration Aside from representing concrete individuals with disabilities, *Things Fall Apart* applies disability as a metaphor for cultural disintegration caused by colonialism. Inspired by W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" poem, the title of the novel evokes visions of disintegration, disintegration, and fragmentation that are analogous to disability rhetoric. For indigenous Igbo society, the arrival of colonial governors, missionaries, and traders creates what disability theorist Tobin Siebers might call a "disabling environment"—an environment in which social arrangements that had previously been functional become increasingly dysfunctional. For example, the colonial judicial system treats with disdain native methods of trial resolution:

"The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia." (Achebe 126).

This passage illustrates how colonial structures are able to draw in and destabilize, undermining old habits and faiths while at the same time creating new possibilities.

It is particularly significant from the perspective of disability studies that the word "lunatic" is employed to describe Christianity as it employs mental illness as a metaphor for political difference.

This kind of "narrative prosthesis" (47)—employment of disability as a metaphorical mechanism—tends to perpetuate negative associations between disability and dysfunction, according to David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder.

When Okonkwo returns from banishment and learns that his people are not willing to challenge colonial authority, the symbolic identification between colonialism and disability is at its height. The proud warrior laments the destiny of his people. In this moment, Okonkwo sees his whole society having developed a group disability—a weakening of strength and will that prevents effective resistance. His viewpoint corresponds with what disability scholar Alison Kafer describes as "the medical model of disability politics" (25)—a strategy that attributes the issue to people, not social systems.

### **Conclusion**

Achebe's text complicates this simple equation of disability with weakness or failure. Instead, the novel proposes that it is not disability per se but unimaginative strictness within normative standards—demonstrated by Okonkwo—that stifles adaptation and survival. Those characters that exhibit flexibility, who can accept new ideas while retaining cultural identity, are those that emerge from the colonial encounter. This subtlety is exhibited in Obierika's musing about colonial intervention:

*“The white man is clever. He came peacefully with his religion. Now he has converted our brothers, and our clan can no longer be as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”*(Achebe 124).

Obierika's reading implies that the real "disability" is not in bodies but in the breakdown of communal unity and systems of traditional knowledge. From a disability studies perspective, this is consistent with Michael Oliver's "the social model of disability" (22)—a framework that situates disability not in bodies but in social systems that do not accommodate difference.

This disability studies reading of *Things Fall Apart* shows the ways in which physical and psychological difference works in Achebe's depiction of pre-colonial Igbo society, shedding light on parts of the novel to which scholars have paid relatively limited attention. The analysis shows that disability works in the book not

just as a personal trait but as a multifaceted social phenomenon that discloses power relations, cultural values, and systems of inclusion and exclusion.

Through characters such as Unoka, Ezinma, and Okonkwo, Achebe gives a sophisticated picture of how physical and psychological difference is conceived and negotiated in traditional Igbo culture. These portrayals illustrate that disability in pre-colonial Igbo culture was neither equally stigmatized nor equally accepted, but rather was negotiated through a number of different cultural models that imbued meaning within difference.

The wider application of disability as metaphor for cultural breakdown under colonialism in the novel echoes what disability theorist Robert McRuer calls "compulsory able-bodiedness" (2)—the manner in which societies require adherence to physical and psychic norms. Okonkwo's own tragic demise derives not only from colonial disruption but from his stubborn insistence on conforming to normative ideals of masculinity and toughness that inhibit adaptation in changing times.

This examination reveals the importance of subjecting works that are not specifically about disability to disability theory. This research assists us in understanding the complex manners in which physical and psychological difference affect the life of a person across cultures and periods of history and how concepts of normalcy and difference underpin larger social institutions.

Achebe's able description of pre-colonial Igbo civilization challenges universal assumptions regarding the significance and management of physical and psychological differences while offering informative insights on the way disability operates within non-Western cultural systems. We can consider *Things Fall Apart's* representation of specific characters as well as its broader critique of cultural resilience, flexibility, and transformation in the light of colonial disruption by examining it through the prism of disability studies.

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**Themes Of Traditionalism and Modernism In Chitra Banerjee  
Divakaruni’s *Sister of My Heart*.**

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**Abstract**

In every age a tussle between tradition and modernity goes on. What is current at a particular period is considered modern, what has gone by and is a part of the past becomes traditional champions of modernity criticize traditions. Tradition suppresses modernity. Both tradition and modernity are necessary for a society. Tradition or modernity alone is inadequate as a living philosophy of life, in all stages of human development. Both tradition and modernity have played a significant role.

Divakaruni approaches the themes of tradition and modernity in innovative ways. She projects varied themes in her works like inter-racial marriages, mobile parents or preference for alternative sexualities, home and family, ethnicity and identity, body and sexuality through which she articulates a perspective of women's experience of exile in particular and women's alienation in general. She brings her ideas into the story, which makes the reader feel about the character, and the reality with which she interweaves the story is really appreciable. The characters are very close to reality and find a balance between old treasured beliefs and surprising new desires.

Divakaruni writes about the transformed lives of the women both liberated and trapped by cultural changes. The additional charm of her novels resides in the graph that she has tried to chart out in the advancement of women from tradition to modernity in family situations. If modernity, as defined by Stuart Hall, can be considered "the experience of living with rapid, extensive and continuous change" (16) then that is amply illustrated in Divakaruni’s *Sister of My Heart*. Divakaruni manufactures the story that reflects an ordered perfection of her life and it is co-related with her efforts at adhering to traditional values. This creation of a "historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force,

authenticated by the ordinary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people" (14), is an attempt at imposing a unitary national identity using cultural signs as a rubric of generalization. Such an understanding of national identity belies its multiplicity and blocks the perception of cultural practices as living process that can be challenged, modified and transformed. Tradition is good, essentially indigenous and uninterrupted by western influence while modernity is evil, degraded and a western ethos.

The female protagonists in Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*, clothes, education, thinking about their own rights and pleasures become a signifier of modernity. The identity of modern women is associated with an elite "westernization." and a repudiation of ancient and ostensibly timeless traditions; the force of the rhetoric of nationalism conceals the fact that these traditions are selectively resurrected, posited as trans-historical and woven into a coherent narrative of religion. The reconstructions of women's experience can thus, be fundamental to the invention of "tradition," and "modernity." both of which, Mani argues, are colonial constructs.

Descriptions of tradition are significant in the diaspora while defining a community in flux. In *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhaba writes about the moment when discourses of nationhood re-write themselves in the diaspora. Here: History may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, 'uncertainly' in the act of 'composing' its powerful image. The marginal or minority is not the space of a celebratory, or utopian, self-marginalization. It is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity-progress, homogeneity, cultural organism, the deep nation, the long past that rationalize the authoritarian, 'normalizing' tendencies within cultures, in the name of the national interest or ethnic prerogative (34).

Divakaruni's fiction politicizes the process of using inculcated and internalized ideologies as resistance. The novel *Sister of My Heart* is formed by patriarchal structures and modernity with available privilege. However, the woman who is looking to define her subjectivity outside of the traditional paradigms of family and modern identity never had any discourse of nationalism made available to them in equivalent ways as to men. The diaspora where the rhetoric of nationhood of the "nation of origin" and other traditional mores become distanced and precarious, functions as the strategic terrain on which to re-formulate diasporic female subjectivity as a contingent rather than as essential identity. The ways in

which Divakaruni's characters grapple with and refute an essential identity linked to cultural roots forms the backbone of my analysis.

*Sister of My Heart* opens with the Chatterjee family already deprived of its male figures and its former economic status. As the three widows (Pishi Ma, the cousins' paternal aunt, and their mothers) and two young girls (Anju and Sudha) of this family meander their way through the drama of life, facing marriage, motherhood, divorce, widowhood, etc., each stage brings into focus a certain aspect of the upper-class Bengali culture and tradition, which is cherished or criticized from the uniquely feminine and diasporic perspective of the author.

The novel depicts their gradual loss of financial status as they are forced to relinquish their riches and amenities of comfort, one by one. First, they cannot afford a paid chauffeur. Then, they have to sell the bookstore which had been meticulously run by Gauri Ma for years and has been one of their major income sources. The final blow comes when the old inheritance, the grand mansion and childhood abode of the cousins, has to go in order to make both ends meet.

Traditional Indian society has carefully segregated and women, has equally carefully nurtured the social stereotype that prevent female bonding the mother-son relationship for been valorized, the brother sister one privileged, but the mother daughter one overlooked, and women's friendship marginalized In the artifacts of popular culture-fiction, films, television serials, commercials the feminine mystique is a suitably colonized version of Betty Friedan's account, mother and daughter or sisters come together only to counter the threat posed by a new daughter/sister-in-law or to reinforce the stereotypes of the San Savitri syndrome, and women's friendships, when they do survive marriage or are formed after marriage, must be subseries to and certainly underscore the rights and the demands of the husband and his family. Women's relationships in contemporary Indian fiction, then, are governed by the power politics of patriarchy

The novel *Sister of My Heart* portrays a woman's world, this time of middle-class urban women, confined to houses in which their domain is strictly demarcated but which enables them to reach out to each other in sisterhood, and in so doing achieve far greater success as human beings than the men who straddle the outside and bigger world. Rendered in an often sensual and poetic language, the story primarily weaves around the magnetic love that pulls these two women together, though with birth, marriage, and pregnancy all occurring for the two Chatterjee sisters at about the same time, not to mention the fact that they also lose their fathers under the same malicious star. Psychological healing and memory-



mending are orchestrated by the characters in the novel through the device of storytelling. And in spite of the mild allegorical overtones concerning the inscrutability of the human heart, this is a scathing critique of the patriarchal and religious institutions of Bengali Brahmins and the socio-cultural traditions of postcolonial India.

In Divakaruni's fiction sisterhood is always a deeply rooted, instinctual relationship that brings together women who are very different from one another in every way. This is especially so in "The Ultrasound" and its novelistic version, *Sister of My Heart*, Anju and Sudha Chatterjee are very different in appearance, temperament and achievements, and grow up together under similar yet very different conditions: their fathers, cousins themselves, died together in the same accident, but where Anju's father was the master of the house, and her mother from an equally aristocratic family, Sudha's father was a poor relation, her mother's background non-descript, lower middle-class. Sudha and her mother continue to live in the family mansion not out of ancestral right but because Indian family ties would not have it otherwise.

The girls, Sudha and Anju, live in a patriarchal home in which there is absolutely no male control. The only male alive in the family is disguised as Singhji, the driver and exerts no authority over the household. What was originally conceived of as a restrictive boundary for the women is recreated into a female universe. The rules that are upheld in this world are laid down by the patriarchal society. It is only later that the world of the Chatterjee women is completely transformed into a modern world.

Divakaruni exposes women freedom, humanity, and the right to life. She also judges the often superstitious, planet-gazing conservative Bengalis through the highly critical eyes of a post-colonial commentator who scrutinizes the far-reaching impact of British colonialism on the Bengali psyche. Thus, the Chatterjee cousins go to English-medium convents, like most children of upper and middle-class Bengali families, and Anju looks forward to getting enrolled at Lady Brabourne College's English Honours program, both of these institutions being the fruits of British rule. Also, Anju's excessive fascination with Virginia Woolf, or her craze for Elizabeth Barrett Browning are examples of modern education trends.

The writer through Anju gives us a clear picture of the need of economic stability for emancipating women. Sudha's father left nothing other than debts. This has been one of the reasons for her inability to perform academically well even if she is as intelligent as Anju. On the other hand, Anju gets a lot of encouragement from her mother and she goes on to win spelling bees and debate contests and good



academic achievements in college. Sudha, nevertheless, also does well with her cooking, knitting and crocheting even if she can't excel like Anju. She chooses to be traditional which also demands a lot of courage and tolerance.

Divakaruni expands the story with additional details that the cousins may not actually have been cousins at all, that Bijoy's father had been deceived by Gopal, Sudha's father, about their relationship. (That this is proved wrong in the end is beside the point.) This should have helped to establish the fact that their love is far deeper than the ties of blood. Anju, who knows nothing of the tenuousness of their kinship or of what Sudha's father had done, his treachery and complicity in Anju's father's death, is sure that their sisterhood can never be broken; but it is clear that much of her certainty is due to her ignorance. Besides, as the social superior and the more intellectually gifted of the two, it is easy for her to be generous. But Sudha remains consumed by guilt for what her father has done and by her conviction that she must atone for his sins by always putting Anju first; when, therefore, she decides to sacrifice her own happiness for Anju's sake it is uncertain whether she does it out of a sense of filial duty or out of love for a sister of the heart.

Indeed, when she has to choose between her mother and her cousin when it comes to consenting to an early marriage instead of going to college with Anju, she chooses her mother, although, of course, it is a painful decision for her. Besides, she is always a very passive person, as contrasted to Anju's energy and initiative, and her reluctance to elope with Ashok, the man she loves, seems as much due to her fear of action and her preference for going with the tide rather than her love for Anju, which makes her worry that this elopement might break up Anju's engagement to Sunil.

In *Sister of My Heart*, Divakaruni rejects conventional myths and creates new ones. The first book in the novel is titled "The Princess in the Palace of Snakes." In this part both the protagonists attempt to conform to the traditional feminine roles allocated by the male hegemonic society. This is symbolized by the traditional fairytale of the princess in the palace of snakes waiting for her Prince Charming to rescue her. The second book titled "The Queen of Swords," is not a traditional fairytale. When Anju is upset over her miscarriage, Sudha tells her this tale and Anju recovers. Then she relates what happened to the three mothers. Then Pishi, the usual teller of tales, asks her about the story she told Anju.

'I told her a story.' "Ah, a story," nods Pishi. More than any of us, she knows the power stories hold at their centre, like a mango holds its seed. It is a power that dissipates with questioning, so she

merely asks, with an odd, wistful look, 'Was it a story I had told you, Sudha?' 'I am sorry to disappoint her. 'It's a new story. One I made up, sort of, on the spot. 'Does it have a name?' asks Gouri Ma. I start to shake my head. Then it comes to me."The Queen of swords, I say (32).

This new myth symbolizes the new feminine world that Divakaruni envisages. It is a world across the rainbow (ironically a conventional symbol of hope) where women rescue other women and do not wait helplessly for the men. This change is seen not only in the story that Sudha narrates but also in her attitude and her actions. During their childhood, the girls used to enact the fairytales that Pishi told them. Sudha always played the princess in danger and Anju the prince who rescued her. Even while they were playacting, Sudha would never reach out to the prince and help him help her. She always said that it was the duty of the prince to do all the hard work and res-cue her. Later when she falls in love with Ashok and the mothers decide to get her married elsewhere, she waits for Ashok to make all the moves and rescue her.

The extent of the woman's oppression within the marriage is obvious. After her marriage to Ramesh, Sudha enters a house-hold ruled by her tyrannical mother-in-law. She is not allowed to pursue her financial independence. In many ways, she is the pro-victim of an arranged attempt to schedule an expression of female with institutional structures of marriage render reality possible an articulation of women's desires. Her communicable complete within the imbrications of patriarchal structures and economic systems.

Chitra Banerjee astonishes her readers with her exquisite individual styles, themes and techniques. Being an expatriate woman writer, she vividly portrays the lives of immigrant women, their loss, their alienation, social inequalities and ideological structures of Indian and American societies, assimilation and acculturation in the diasporic realm. Her women characters emerge as new women who claim their own space. She is a representative of the Indian women's liberation, autonomy and independence in a new society. The questions of identity, recognition, self-construction and adaptability are given equal importance in her literary endeavours.

With her writing, whether in a novel, short story or poem, Banerjee casts a spell, her words flowing swiftly and sweeping readers along with the current. Her works are full of vivid vibrant caricatures, the microcosmic representations of the lives lived by women who are caught in the cross-roads of a cultural shift. Banerjee redefines the age-old notions of woman hood making them perform acts of agency

and resistance, adapt to their new and changing culture and, as a result, discover their own sense of self amidst joy and heartbreak. This awareness leads them to rethink about their own lives as women, and instills in them the confidence and strength to go ahead.

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**Post-colonial Perspectives in the Select Novels of Arun Joshi: An Analytical Study**

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**Abstract**

Arun Joshi novels reflect the rise of postcolonial problems and the celebration of diasporic writing with its radical restructuring of social relations that distinguishes the modern epoch from everything that comes before. Arun Joshi, as a postcolonial as well a postmodern writer, recognizes a reality beyond the mere phenomenal world. He captures it by giving a consistent form to the shapeless facts of human existence. The postcolonial-independence period in India has been a period of significant yield of Indo- English writings, wherein the socio-economic and political issues were interpreted. The novels of Arun Joshi has succeeded in revealing a realistic picture of the epoch, events and populace of contemporary India. With the advent of colonization, European languages and culture made its way to the non-European countries. More pliant than any other form of art, it was easy to perforate and adapt to the varied cultures and modes of expression in different European settlements. The resultant literary phenomenon was a radically unique form of a novel encapsulating indigenous experience in European languages and techniques.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial Perspectives, Reality, Human existence, Socio-economic and Political issues.

Before defining postmodernism, it is better methodologically to clarify the distinction between postmodernism and post modernity. Burgass in “Postmodern value”, in postmodern Literacy theory: An Anthology edited by Lucy, talks about ‘Post modernity’ or the ‘Postmodern’ referring to the historical era , and ‘postmodernism’ as the stylistic category” even though both the terms are conflated. Put another way, postmodernism is an umbrella term which embraces disciplines as varied as architecture, music, paintings, literature, philosophy and theology, and

post modernity is a much narrower term which focuses on the philosophical dimension of postmodernism.

Joshi’s brilliant style in its lucidity vivacity and epigrammatic vitality give a wonderful charm to his theme, which is otherwise a dull search for old hope in the ultimate discovery of one universal truth. His novels are fantastic essays on life that is depicted in all its facets, embodied in a versatile literary form emitting his flashing wit, his penetrating paradoxes, and his gay audacity. To read Joshi is always stimulating, illuminating and entertaining besides being informative and illustrating on his socio cultural upbringing. His polished jewelled style of narration is something unparalleled among all the Indo-English authors of postmodern period. He employs no empty verbal gymnastics but crystallizing invariably into memorable phrases depicting some subtle truth and realistic expression. As usual the realistic mode of writings in postmodern works that speak of current practical , political, ethical or existential problems that the author experiences in his social vicinities and cultural contexts has to be moderate in the exploitation of imaginative skill to give a realistic look. But Joshi transcends such risk that is unavoidable in realist expositions and escapes being stamped as a rapid falcon descending down to do the errand of a bat. The magnanimous Joshi must have felt the elevation that we feel when “something within us, some vital essence, manages to break out and lose itself in objects that are bigger and beyond us “(*Apprentice* 21) Conclusively Joshi’s “*The Last Labyrinth*” protagonist Som, represents the rootlessness and rejection of permanence in the postmodern condition. Veith observes “for all of its talk about the death of the self, postmodernism actually isolates the self. Postmodernism encourages selfishness without individuality, subjectivity without identity; license without freedom” (Veith 86). Joshi’s, Som also thus into one such mould. In “*The Apprentice*” Ratan also portrayed, upward in rank , he becomes increasingly fraudulent and unscrupulous, a hypocrite and a liar, a ‘whore’ as his colleagues put it , in pursuit of his career accepting bribe even he was not actually in need of it. Postmodernism in Arun Joshi’s novels is centred on socio-cultural ethos of Indian nativity where in the author has synthesized western narrative mode with the unadulterated indigenous content of Indian existentialism. This is no easy deal. One has to express a unique spirit that is Indian through a medium that is alien to it. The dilemma that has been experienced by all the postmodern thinkers is no less crippling not alone for Indian writers but also for all the writers of commonwealth countries of post-colonial era.

Joshi also revels in furnishing his art with ample sprinkling of the methodology of our ancient puranas and epics by inculcating The Naked King fable

in *The City and the River*, folklore of Kalapahar in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, so many motifs and archetypal symbols in *The Last Labyrinth*, Hindu mode of prayer details of ancients in Temples in almost all the novels, especially in *The Apprentice*.

No other religion in the whole of human history has developed the symbolic representation of spiritual dogmas as Hinduism, except the Old Testament and Jesus’ parables. We can boldly assert that Joshi has impressionably handled all the esoteric nuances in his masterpieces bordering on real happenings. Joshi’s great anxiety is to revive the Hindu symbols and idols of the supreme spiritual significance among the youngsters by removing from their ignorant minds the wrong notion of superstition imposed upon the artistic mode of revelation of Vedic Truth.

Precisely speaking, Joshi’s maiden novel *The Foreigner* relates the psycho aberration of Surrinder Oberoi, called Sindi throughout the novel till the misled selfish protagonist turns into Surrender Oberoi after undergoing intolerable loss out of his false brutal detachment and egoistic stand. Being orphaned at an early childhood and eventual death of his uncle, his escapade in love-affairs in his adolescence, Babu’s death, June’s demise with her child in the womb have driven Sindi mad beyond retreat. Though, at last, in his ancestor’s land, Muthu a simpleton drives firmly, the true Karama yogic spiritual principle bequeathed in *The Bagwad Gita* by Lord Krishna to Arjuna as well as to the whole human race in the past, present and future too.

A man owes much to the society into which he is born for having accommodated him. Evasiveness and escapism, as of Sindi never suits an honest person. One should render services in all possible and practicable ways in order to repay the dues to the world. Abandonment of all desire prompted action is true renunciation. Muthu says to Sindi persuading the latter to take up the dwindling business of Khemka saying that “sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved” (225).

The Juke box song, “Who knows where the road will lead? Only a fool can say?” (*Foreigner* 193) simply reminds us of Vedanta which reminds one of the unpredictable happenings in the realm of the Eternal, over the world.

The Hindu scriptures acknowledge experience of sorrow and turmoil one undergoes as the greatest teacher. Sindi feels sad and unhappy about his brilliant academic career that teaches him not an iota of the realities of life. Only his failure has initiated true understanding of life to Sindi. “Where Kathy and Anna had taught

me to be detached from others, June’s death finally broke my attachment to myself” (78).

Ancient rishis stress that this planet is like a school, a learning place and here we suffer and grow which is also mentioned by the famous psycho-analyst Jesse Stearn in his *Matter of Immortality*. Sindi gets himself smugly accommodated with the fact that one does not choose one’s involvement and that the event of life that are uncontrollable by human endeavor are of therapeutic effect. The typical confused state of a postmodern youth, who is always amidst crowds but always alone, is depicted. When June Blyth sees him for the first time in a party with all the dancing and drinking around, wherein, Sindi is the ex-officio host she asks “Why do you look so sad?” (22).

The turbulent inner world of the protagonist is delineated. He is painfully aware of “twenty-five years largely wasted in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement: a ten-stone body that had to be fed four times a day, twenty-five times a week. This was a sum of a lifetime of striving” (92).

The contemplative Sindi, in spite of becoming complacent is not resigned to ignore the effect of one’s desire-bound involvement that adds up to his karma. He is sure that none can escape karma, which has to be answered by every mortal. He confesses to Khemka that in the past “I have sinned, and god knows, I have paid heavily for them ... But you can’t get rid of your sins by just turning me out. They will stalk you from every street corner ... We think we leave our actions behind, but the past is never dead” (229) and “it had only been a change of theatre ... the show had remained unchanged” (174).

J. Krishnamurthi states to people like Sindi that, “you are frightened to lose and you are frightened of something much greater which is to come...you think about it and by thinking about it you are creating that interval between living and that which you call death”(98).

*The Foreigner* reveals the author’s keen awareness of a deeper social reality of our times. Freedom in the sense of being unfettered, freedom from the craving for holding on to things and one’s ego, is the condition for love and for productive being. He later laments “Detachment at that time meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachments consisted of right action and not escape from it. The Gods had set a heavy price to teach me just that” (188-189). Sindi strives to walk out of his illusions.

In Joshi’s other novel *The Strange case of Billy Biswas* the novelist explores the mystical urge, an ardent impulsive compulsion of the protagonist Billy Biswas, as against his brilliant academic career and belonging to a creamy upper crust of

Indian elite society. Joshi utilizes Billy’s strong primitive urge, a force kraft to probe into the inner decay and sterility of modernism, materialism and non-abeance with Nature, the great teacher.

Arun Joshi gives the impression of a rebel who fights against the greed, violence, shams, and hypocrisy of the people and in the process alienates himself and his art from his fellow creatures. Joshi also gives the impression that his art is not social minded as he does not give any suggestions for the individual’s integration with society. To counter this change one can say that the very fact that Joshi portrays such a society is an example of his concern with the evils of society and hence an unmistakable evidence of his social consciousness. The inner conflict of an individual is really his inner relations to the outward conflicts. An artist is not at all a preacher and it is not his task, like a physician to prescribe remedies. The image of alienation is used by Arun Joshi, as a myth and the protagonists act as alien either to the civilization or to themselves. The central characters are alien because they are exposed by their either sensitivity or lack of identification with the world.

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**Female Coercion: A Study on Sexual Slavery through Amish Tripathi’s  
*Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta***

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**Abstract**

Persistent duress to indulge in commercial sexual activities is referred to as sexual slavery also called forced or involuntary prostitution. In the modern day, it is highly propagated in the form of human trafficking. It is intolerable to learn that females regardless of age are compelled to engage in this immoral practice not by external forces but rather within their homes, families and relations. Though the term is used to refer to both male and female, this paper tends to focus on the slavery imposed on the female community through the select work of one of the celebrated mythological writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Amish Tripathi. His female characters like Samichi, Dadimikali and Zabibi from the fiction *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta* are centralized for the in-depth analysis of the select concept. The paper aims to provide essential knowledge of the chosen topic and deduce by raising a voice to stop this inhumane behaviour as every individual has the right to live a life of liberty.

**Keywords:** Human trafficking, Involuntary prostitution, Legislation and Women Empowerment.

Amish Tripathi is one of the leading Indian writers of the modern era. He has stunningly reflected his versatile knowledge of religion, culture, history and philosophy in his writings. Readers are pulled into the visual experience of ancient stories and beliefs in a modernistic tone. Amish’s revival and reinterpretation of mythical stories are highly welcomed by young readers who once neglected these concepts as boring and repetitive. The most notable works of Amish are the *Shiva Trilogy* and the *Ram Chandra Series*. These trilogy and book series marked their irreplaceable inscription in the history of Indian publication through millions of publications all over the world. His works are translated into more than fifteen languages like Hindi, Bengali, French, Odia and Polish. His characters are legendary figures of myth like Ram, Sita, Raavan, Shiva and Sati. The believed mythical storyline over the ages is undisturbed in his narration but rather decorated with his unique imagination and embellishments.

Both major and minor characters are given equal space to express their part in Amish's verse. Not only the male characters are presented as brave, energetic and independent but the female characters are also warriors and leaders who can break the skulls of their enemies without anybody's support. The title of his second book of the series *Sita – Warrior of Mithila* is evident for this matter. Sita is not meek and submissive but rather a warrior and leader who is given the title 'Vishnu'. The term used by Amish to represent the leader. "Vishwamitra explained, 'A Vishnu is basically a hero. A hero that others willingly follow.'" (Tripathi 69).

Not only Sita, Amish's other female characters like Sunaina, Samichi and Kaikeyi are given the positions of Queen and Chief of Police with war skills and political tactics. This paper has taken the female characters Samichi, Dadimikali and Zabibi from the third book of the *Ram Chandra Series* entitled *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta*. The beginning of the book unveils the word 'Iraiva' meaning 'God' or 'Lord' is addressed to Raavan, the King of Lanka. Why he is called Iraiva? and why the character Samichi call him in this way? where the suspense filled narration of Amish starts. "... Samichi's true lord. The one she called Iraiva—Raavan, the king of Lanka." (Tripathi 2).

In the second book of the series *Sita – Warrior of Mithila*, Samichi is the best and true friend of Princess Sita, who once saved Sita from the attack of boys and is now the Chief of police in Sita's kingdom Mithila. "Samichi was not the girl from the slums anymore. Having joined the police, she was a rapidly rising star there." (SWOM). She was from the slum area of Mithila, taken to the palace by Sita to show her gratitude and given this esteemed position for her skill and valour. But to the surprise, she was the one who supported Raavan in kidnapping Sita and the book ends with the shock of Sita in finding out her close friend on the enemy's side. *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta* is intended to answer all these doubts and suspense of the second book. The narration of the story of Samichi is where the present paper is focused, as the life Samichi experienced as a girl is 'Sexual Slavery'.

Sexual Slavery also known as involuntary prostitution or forced prostitution is the fixation of any form of ownership towards one or more individuals with the intention of captivating them to indulge in sex. The term also wraps forced marriage and sex trafficking. "Sexual slavery refers to the systematic enslavement of individuals for sexual purposes, forcing them to perform sexual acts against their will. It involves controlling a person through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation." (Sexual Slavery). Samichi met Raavan when she was a little girl. She was not as bold and powerful as then in Mithila. But terrified and tortured.

Raavan in *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta* once intended to introduce his younger brother Kumbhakarna to the pleasure house in Gokarna. There was a young girl who served him and used a little piece of paper to ask him to help her. With Kumbhakarna's request, Raavan decided to help the little girl and visited the house of Vasantpala; the owner of the pleasure house. There they found Samichi. “The little girl Kumbhakarna wanted to rescue was standing by the wall. Head bowed. Hands clasped together. She was shaking. Perhaps in fear. Perhaps in anticipation of freedom.” (133).

Raavan decided to buy her and asked Vasantpala about her rate. When Raavan offers ten gold coins Vasantpala replies, “‘It’s not that simple, my lord,’ said Vasantpala. ‘Ten gold coins may not be enough for her.’... ‘Two hundred gold coins. She is profitable.’” (133). The phrase ‘profitable’ is the aim of modern-day human trafficking. Sex trafficking views females as the source of income. “Human trafficking is a \$150 billion industry globally. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2016 estimate reveals that 40.3 million people were victimized worldwide through modern-day slavery, 5.4 victims per every thousand people worldwide. Of these 40.3 million victims in 2016, 29 million were women and girls (72% of the total).” (Toney-Butler). Raavan got agitated after hearing the high rate fixed for a small girl and was shocked to get the reason for that. “Vasantpala interrupted him. ‘I wasn’t asking for more money for myself, my lord. This is good enough for me. But you will need to pay somebody else too.’ Raavan frowned. Who?’ ‘Her father,’ answered Vasantpala.” (133).

This is the way sexual slavery has been propagated illiberally. Girls and women are compelled to do these immoral activities by their close ones as in the case of Samichi. She was not sold by strangers or enemies but by her father. The article entitled *The Women Who Sold their Daughters into Sex Slavery* presents a real-life incident, where a mother indulged her daughter in the sex trade. The reason she puts forth is poverty. The article expresses the phrase ‘Mothers as sex traffickers’, which is the heartbreaking truth that prevails in most places today. In *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta*, after buying Samichi for a hundred dollars, Raavan, Kumbhakarna and their soldiers visited the house of her father. The appearance of the house was stunning. “... The area around the house was clean. The walls had been reinforced recently with fresh bricks. The roof looked new. There was a small garden outside, with a flower bed. All very tastefully done.” (134).

The phrase ‘recently built’ states the richness of the father through the profit he gets from indulging his daughter in sexual slavery. When Raavan and their crew knocked the door, her father opens and his appearance is described by

Amish, “Vasantpala’s aide knocked on the door and stepped aside. A middle-aged man answered the door. He was shorter than Raavan and thin, except for a small potbelly. He wore an expensive silk dhoti. A thick gold chain gleamed around his neck. His long hair was neatly oiled and tied.” (134).

Raavan is the Emperor of Emperors, he is the King of Lanka who transformed Lanka into Golden Lanka. His appearance eventually tells his richness and the money he possesses. On seeing Raavan’s expensive appearance Samichi’s father considers him as the rich customer and explains the following to him. “One gold coin per hour. You can use a room in my house. If you want to do something different, like with her mouth or backside, the rates go up. However, if you want to tie her up, or beat her, we will have to negotiate. Because if you break any bones, she will not be able to earn anything for a few months at least.” (135).

Isn’t it terrible to hear a father fixing the rate for his daughter’s body? unfortunately, this is not imagination but rather the bitter reflection of the incidents that conquered the society. There are a number of news piles gathered from all over the world stating this sort of slavery everyday. Amish through his powerful words not only portrayed the everyday happenings but also the urge of each and every individual to punish these criminals. Amish has taken a few pages to describe the punishment given to Samichi’s father for his sin, by his daughter through Raavan’s teaching.

Amish’s Raavan is crazy about blood and the torment of others. From childhood, he enjoys torchuring rabbits, ants and even humans alive with his knife. He with these experiences knows how to handle a weapon in killing a person brutally. He gave his knife to Samichi and taught her the way the knife can make pain to the person aimed. “Raavan turned to the girl and pointed to the place on her father’s neck, at the base, where the jugular vein and carotid artery carried blood between the head and the heart. Almost as if imparting a lesson, he said to the little girl, making a slashing action with his hand, ‘Make a large, deep cut here, and your father will die in a few minutes.’ Then he pointed to the heart and pressed a hand on the man’s chest. ‘Stab here, and he will die much faster. But you have to make sure you get it right. You don’t want the knife to get deflected by the ribs. That is hard bone. Sometimes, the knife can ricochet back from the ribs and you may end up hurting yourself. So, I wouldn’t recommend trying it right now. You can train for it later.’” (137). The thing to be noted here is that Samichi, the little girl is not afraid or hesitant to learn this from Raavan. “The little girl nodded. Like an eager student. A ferociously eager student.” (137).

The below extract from the fiction is unavoidable in this study. It expresses the anger of the little girl without any sympathy or love for her father. “The girl acted fast. No second thoughts. No hesitation. She stepped up and stabbed her father in the guts. Thrusting her shoulder forward as she did so. Choosing the slow, painful death for him. The man emitted a sound of sheer agony. His eyes were wide in panic and pain His reactions only seemed to egg the girl on. She pushed the knife in harder, using both her hands. When she finally yanked it out, a fountain of blood spurted out. Dyeing her hands red. Her clothes. Her body. Everything. She didn’t flinch. She didn’t step back. She stood there drenched in her father’s warm blood. Raavan smiled. ‘Good girl.’ But the girl was not done. She stepped forward and stabbed her father again. And again. And again. Always in the abdomen. Always in the guts.” (138).

The brave Kumbhakarna was also shocked by this ferocious act of the very little girl. “Kumbhakarna said to Raavan, ‘Dada, make her stop.’” (138). The anger of the little Samichi is the reflection of the pain and torture she underwent. “Raavan noticed the wounds in her body and the torture undergone by the girl. Raavan looked at the girl again. He noticed the ligature marks on her hands and feet; marks that indicated that she was often tied up. He knew that some men liked to have sex with very young girls and boys, even tie them up during the act. He had never understood it. It was disgusting. Abominable.” (133).

Her father was crying aloud in the fear of death “I am your father... Forgive me... I am your father...” (137). It is unheard of and neglected by her as her cry hasn’t reached him so far. Samichi brutally killed her father. “She raised the knife and stabbed her father again. When she finally stepped back, she had inflicted nearly twenty-five wounds on his flailing body. Her face, her hands, her body, her clothes, were slick with blood. It was almost like she had bathed in her father’s blood.” (139). Amish gave the counting ‘twenty-five’ wounds to indicate the affliction of Samichi over the years.

Throughout this act, the only reaction Samichi gives is silence. “She was silent through it all. No sounds of anger. No screaming. No shouting. Just pure, silent rage.” (138). On the way when she was rescued by Raavan and his soldiers, he was informed that she didn’t speak and they assumed that she was dumb. But Raavan could understand her feelings. “Raavan had a feeling that the girl’s loss of speech had more to do with the torture she had suffered at such a young age.” (134). After the arrogant murder of her father, her reaction is ‘smile’. “She turned around and looked at Raavan. He was momentarily staggered. She was smiling. She walked up to Raavan, went down on her knee, and placed the bloodied knife at his feet.”

(139). Isn't it weird? How can a person smile after this? Yes! This Smile represents the avenge the girl has taken. It also indicates her freedom from the clutch of a beast in the frame called her father. In the article *The Assassin's smile* by Rozenblatt, the researcher has quoted the words of Italian physiologist Paolo Mantegazza, "...the emotional plasticity and contradictions of the smile in not only his Physiology of Pleasure but also his Physiology of Pain; in other words, the smile could as easily relate to negative emotions or displeasure as to positive emotions like joy." (Rozenblatt).

In *Sita – Warrior of Mithila*, everybody knows that Samichi, the chief of police hates men. "The air was thick with unspoken words about their captain. Something is not right with Samichi." (*SWOM*). They are unaware of the reason behind her hatred towards men, but the reason falls on the abuse she has undergone in her childhood. She was even proposed by a boy named Kaaml Raj. He was very sincere in his love and tried to impress Samichi in anyway possible but this poor boy was attacked by her when he tried to help her when she slipped dashing a stone. "Samichi screamed in anger, twisted his arm, and viciously kicked him in the leg. As Kaaml fell forward, she brought her elbow up in a brutal jab. It cracked his nose. Instantly. Kaaml clutched his bleeding nose, as Samichi shouted in anger. 'DO NOT TOUCH ME, EVER!'" (*SWOM*). It is a life-long trauma a victim cannot easily get rid of.

This is 'coercion' also known as 'compulsion'. This is professionally done by the sex workers which doesn't come under the act of slavery but rather they are involved in it with their willingness called 'Sex workers'. The characters Zabibi and Dadimikali fall into this category. Zabibi is from Arabia. "She was no less than an apsara, a celestial nymph. Long-limbed and supple, she was blessed with lustrous black hair. Though new to the land, she was already famed for her beauty and her impeccable taste in clothes and jewellery. And most importantly, she was experienced in the art of love." (Tripathi 127). She has chosen this to earn money. When Kumbhakarna intended to marry her, he was advised by Raavan the way she looks the act as a duty and not love. "Kumbha, women like Zabibi are meant to be used, not loved.'... 'I paid her, Kumbha. She is professional. Of course she said things that you wanted to hear.'... 'It was a transaction, Kumbha. She gave you pleasure, you gave her money. She is not interested in you. She is interested in the money.'" (Tripathi 128).

Eventhough the sexworkers aim for money, some of them have the emotions and feelings to treat them as human with love and not as object. This happened with the character Dadimikali, the most beautiful and favourite courtesan

of Raavan. “The night before the proposed heist, Raavan decided to visit his favourite courtesan, Dadimikali, the most expensive courtesan in the most elite pleasure house in Gokarna. Only the best would do for him!” (Tripathi 94).

Though Raavan approached Dadimikali just for pleasure she considered it as her duty to serve her master. She expected love in return from him. This is expressed through her emotional words “Dadimikali gazed at his face lovingly. ‘You know I can take anything from you.’” (Tripathi 94). But in the case of Raavan, she is just a sex slave to fulfil his pleasure and nothing more than that. “Raavan looked away. Bored. Dadimikali’s affection was becoming increasingly cloying.” (Tripathi 94). The emotions of each are different. “‘Get away from me!’ he hissed. Tears welled up in her eyes. ‘Don’t leave me... please...’” (Tripathi 96).

This is not the cruel activity practiced only in India but also worldwide. The article entitled “Human Sex Trafficking” by Rodriguez and Hill depicts the role of trafficking in the United States. “... young people are recruited into prostitution through forced abduction, pressure from parents, or through deceptive agreements between parents and traffickers. Once these children become involved in prostitution, they often are forced to travel far from their homes and, as a result, are isolated from their friends and family. Few children in this situation can develop new relationships with peers or adults other than the person victimizing them. The lifestyle of such youths revolves around violence, forced drug use, and constant threats.” (Walker-Rodriguez).

Various Indian legal Acts like ‘The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA), 1956, POCSO Act 2012 and Different cells like Anti Trafficking Cell (ATC) are a few of the many schemes, laws and practices taken by the Indian government to eradicate these prohibited actions. It is the responsibility of every individual in the society to live a virtuous life without spoiling the life of other beings. Every human being has the rights for his/her life. Self-reliance, Self-recovery and Self-motivation are highly important for each vulnerable being affected by this sort of violation. Live and let others live.

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**Ethnicity: A Vibrant Tapestry in Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo* and *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*.**

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**Abstract**

Ishmael Reed challenges Western hegemonic control over literary production, offering a nuanced view of the social circumstances faced by Black Americans. By integrating Hoodoo philosophy, he interrogates dominant notions and asserts that Haitian Voodoo serves as the foundation for all religions, evolving into Hoodoo as an expression of ancient culture. His novels span a broad temporal spectrum, intertwining African mythology, historical events like slavery, cowboy legends, and popular culture elements.

Reed's central argument revolves around defining an Afro-American aesthetic. He advocates for sensual humanism as a cultural alternative for non-white Americans, embodying a Dionysian consciousness. Reed explores ethnicity as a vibrant force, challenging static identities while celebrating African-American heritage and critiquing systemic oppression. Through rich symbolism and Neo-Hoodoo philosophy, he presents ethnicity as both a tool for empowerment and a dynamic aspect of identity. This research article aims to illustrate the theme of Ethnicity: a Vibrant Tapestry in Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* and *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*.

**Keywords:** Myth, History, Culture, Neo-Hoodoo, Multiculturalism

Ishmael Reed's novels focus on establishing a comprehensive Afro-American aesthetic. Through his writing, he promotes sensual humanism as a vital cultural alternative for non-white Americans, reflecting Dionysian consciousness. His reinterpretations of the American West incorporate ancient mythologies, non-European folklore, and popular culture. His portrayals of the Civil War, Harlem

Renaissance, and contemporary politics challenge readers to break free from the intellectual dominance of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Ishmael Reed has positioned himself as a critic of the Black Arts Movement while advocating for Multiculturalism. During the 1960s, ideological disagreements arose when black cultural nationalists tended to prioritize culture over politics and economics. Despite these political divergences, most cultural nationalists argued that African American culture possesses unique characteristics and a distinct history. They contended that African American culture could only be understood and evaluated through a specific aesthetic that reflects its orientation. Consequently, the prevailing view is that authentic black culture is either the folk culture of African Americans or an essentialist representation of African culture.

Reed constructs a narrative that frames history as a conflict between two churches and two communities of consciousness, which he refers to as the "cop religion" of Christianity and the "Osirian rites" of Voodoo. He employs Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics to challenge the Western hegemony in literary production. Neo-Hoodoo serves both as a literary method and a genre rooted in the cultural practices of Voodoo. Reed asserts that Neo-Hoodoo marks a new direction for Black writers, offering an escape from the decadence of Anglo-American literature and reversing the historical path taken by Black writers and intellectuals in the United States.

A hallmark of Reed's novels is his creation of Neo-Hoodooism, a cultural and spiritual philosophy that celebrates the blending of African traditions with contemporary elements. Neo-Hoodooism reflects Reed's vision of ethnicity as vibrant, inclusive, and ever-changing. It rejects purist notions of identity and embraces cultural syncretism as a strength. Through Neo-Hoodooism, Reed celebrates the transformative power of ethnicity. It is not a relic of the past but a dynamic process of reinvention. This philosophy resonates with broader cultural movements that celebrate hybridity and diversity, challenging rigid and monolithic definitions of identity.

*Mumbo Jumbo* is a detective novel that serves as a historical narrative. Its primary aim is to explore a highly paranoid theory, attempting to explain history from ancient Egypt to the present day. Traversing from ancient Egypt to the Crusades and into twentieth-century America, Reed illustrates a persistent pattern of the suppression of non-Western cultures by Judeo-Christian ideologies. He depicts the ongoing conflict between the life-affirming forces represented in the novel by Hoodoo and the life-denying forces embodied by the Atonists and the Wallflower Order, all presented within a broad historical, cultural, and mythical framework.

*Mumbo Jumbo* stages the clash between Euro-centric and Afro-centric thought and culture.

*The Last Days of Louisiana Red* is set in Berkeley, California, during the late 1960s. The novel follows the investigation of Ed Yellings' murder by Papa LaBas and his assistant, Black Herman. The novel explores cultural identity, systemic racism, and resistance against oppression. Neo-Hoodoo practices are central to the novel, with characters using Hoodoo rituals to navigate and challenge the oppressive structures of society. The character of Louisiana Red symbolizes chaos and disruption, reflecting broader cultural and social issues. Reed's use of magical realism and satire highlights the importance of cultural heritage and communal strength in the face of systemic oppression.

*Mumbo Jumbo* skillfully weaves together satire, history, and fantasy to critique the cultural appropriation and suppression of African-American culture by Western civilization. Set in the 1920s, the narrative focuses on the emergence of ‘Jes Grew,’ an epidemic-like phenomenon symbolizing a revival of Black cultural expression, particularly through jazz and voodoo. The protagonist, PaPa LaBas, a voodoo priest, undertakes a quest to uncover the origins of Jes Grew and safeguard it from the Wallflower Order, a secret society determined to uphold Western cultural dominance. Led by figures like Hinckle Von Vampton, the Wallflower Order views Jes Grew as a threat to Western civilization and seeks to stifle its influence. Throughout the novel, Reed employs a non-linear narrative style, incorporating historical references, footnotes, and illustrations to present a nuanced critique of racism, cultural imperialism, and the commercialization of Black culture. By intertwining historical events with speculative fiction, Reed challenges conventional historical narratives and highlights the resilience and vibrancy of African-American culture.

Reed composed this novel partly in response to the comments made by white literary critics who in their perception that Black Americans may not have a long-established literary tradition. This work signifies a departure from Reed's earlier use of Egyptian symbols and myths, moving toward elements of African-American aesthetics, which he refers to as Neo-Hoodooism. The novel serves as both a satire of Western culture's emphasis on rationality and an example of how older traditions can be reinterpreted through Reed's Neo-Hoodooist lens.

Reed endeavors to articulate a spiritual system known as Jes Grew, drawing from the historical experiences of African Americans. His primary objective is to reveal the limitations of traditional novel forms and to reshape the language to include categories and concepts that reside beyond conventional discourse. *Mumbo*

*Jumbo* intentionally subverts the conventions of realistic fiction by eschewing the creation of believable characters, credible psychological or sociological motivations, and the linear progression of time and causally connected events.

The central dramatic action of the novel centers on the conspiratorial efforts of the Atonists and their military faction, the Wallflower Order, to suppress Jes Grew by locating and destroying its text. In contrast, the HooDoo defectives La Bas and Black Herman, along with their military wing, the Mutafigah, strive to locate and preserve the text to keep Jes Grew alive. Henry Louis Gates interprets the conflict between the Atonists and the carriers of Jes Grew as an allegorical re-enactment of a primal struggle between the forces of darkness and light, the Left Hand and the Right Hand, the descendants of Set and those of Osiris, as well as between the worshippers of Petro loas and the followers of Rada loas. Naomi Jacobs notes that the opposition between Jes Grew and the Atonists is not merely a conflict of Black versus White; rather, it embodies a deeper struggle between exuberance and control, joy and self-righteousness, pluralism and monism, as well as between Judeo-Christian culture and HooDooism.

Ishmael Reed uses Jes Grew in *Mumbo Jumbo* as a powerful symbol for the revival and spread of African-American culture and spirituality. The concept of Jes Grew, an epidemic-like phenomenon, represents Black culture's vitality, creativity, and resilience, which continuously seeks to illuminate and enliven society. Reed critiques established religious and cultural institutions, such as Islam and Christianity, for their limitations and their impact on individual expression. The term "Atonism," derived from the worship of the sun-god Aton in ancient Egypt, is used to symbolize the oppressive forces of Western civilization that seek to suppress Jes Grew and maintain their power.

Atonists, representing various conservative and mainstream cultural groups, are depicted as being at war with Jes Grew because it challenges their control and threatens their way of life. Reed's portrayal of Atonism includes critical references to different religious movements in the United States, such as the Mormons and the Nation of Islam, highlighting their role in perpetuating a culture of guilt and control. Through the character of PaPa LaBas, Reed responds to his critics and advocates for the importance of cultural preservation and individual expression. By exposing the failings of dominant religious and cultural systems, Reed emphasizes the need for a more inclusive and vibrant cultural landscape.

In *Mumbo Jumbo*, Ishmael Reed employs Jes Grew as a metaphorical force to illuminate African-American cultural expression. Here, ethnicity manifests as a dynamic and contagious energy that defies Western suppression and asserts the

creativity inherent in African traditions. Jes Grew, referred to as the novel's "virus," embodies the fluidity and exuberance of African-American art forms such as jazz, dance, and oral traditions. It celebrates the vibrant and uncontainable essence of culture while symbolizing resistance against cultural homogenization. As a custodian of Neo-Hoodooism, Papa Labas exemplifies the adaptation of African spirituality to contemporary contexts while retaining its foundational roots. Neo-Hoodooism portrays ethnicity as a fusion of historical legacy and modern innovation, reflecting the evolution of cultural identity while remaining grounded.

The Atonists, who endeavor to suppress Jes Grew, symbolize cultural dominance and the erasure of marginalized voices. In this exploration of ethnicity through characters and narrative, it emerges as an act of defiance against oppression. The Cathedral serves as a sanctuary for cultural resistance, representing a space where ethnicity flourishes and resists external control, embodying the collective strength of African-American identity.

*The Last Days of Louisiana Red*, continues Reed's exploration of Black culture and Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics. The novel is set during the tumultuous 1970s, a period marked by political activism and social upheaval. It follows the lives of several characters as they navigate the challenges of racism, capitalism, and cultural identity. Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics play a significant role in the novel, particularly through the character of Papa LaBas, who reappears from *Mumbo Jumbo*. Papa LaBas embodies the hoodoo priest and detective, using his spiritual knowledge to uncover the hidden forces at play in the community. Reed's portrayal of hoodoo as a form of resistance and empowerment highlights the novel's broader themes of cultural survival and self-determination.

*The Last Days of Louisiana Red* is also notable for its critique of both external and internal forms of oppression. Reed explores the complexities of identity and the struggles within the Black community, addressing issues such as class divisions and cultural assimilation. The novel's satirical tone and fragmented narrative structure reflect Reed's commitment to challenging conventional literary forms and presenting alternative perspectives.

In *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*, Reed shifts focus to themes of community, justice, and spiritual renewal, further emphasizing ethnicity as a source of strength and solidarity. Papa Labas continuing his role as a Neo-Hoodoo practitioner, Papa Labas investigates corruption and injustice, using African traditions to restore balance. His actions reflect the empowering potential of ethnicity in addressing societal challenges. The rituals and spiritual practices in the novel connect characters to their heritage, illustrating how ethnic identity serves as both a guide

and a source of resilience. Through characters like Ed Yellings, who profits from promoting Eurocentric beauty standards, Reed critiques the internalization of oppressive values. Ethnicity here is portrayed as a counterforce to such exploitation, emphasizing the importance of cultural authenticity. The novel celebrates the collective strength of African-American communities, where shared cultural identity becomes a means of resistance and renewal. Through gatherings, rituals, and shared narratives, Reed highlights how ethnicity fosters connection and empowerment.

Papa Labas uses his investigative work to connect Neo-HooDoo traditions with the broader struggles of the African-American community. For example, when he encounters corruption or deceit, his application of spiritual rituals is not just about solving mysteries but also reclaiming cultural authority. This reinforces the idea that ethnicity is not just an inherited identity but also an active, evolving force that provides tools for confronting injustice. These moments symbolize the survival and adaptability of African traditions in a contemporary context. Labas’s philosophical discussions about Neo-HooDooism highlight Reed’s broader commentary on ethnicity. For instance, when Labas explains the importance of mixing and adapting cultural elements, he is metaphorically championing the survival of African-American identity in a world dominated by Eurocentric values. This blending of old and new demonstrates the resilience of ethnicity as it responds to changing circumstances while staying true to its roots.

Papa Labas’s humor and satire often target individuals and systems that seek to erase or dilute African-American identity. For instance, when he mocks those who prioritize external validation over cultural authenticity, he calls out the pressures of assimilation that many marginalized communities face. These moments reinforce the importance of ethnic pride and the dangers of losing touch with one’s roots. Community gatherings in the novel are rich with cultural and symbolic significance. Papa Labas often addresses the group with stories, advice, or rituals that draw on African traditions. These gatherings illustrate the strength found in ethnic solidarity and the communal nature of African-American culture. They serve as a reminder that ethnicity is not an isolated or individual experience but a shared and collective one. The Hoodoo rituals performed by Papa Labas serve as a powerful metaphor for preserving cultural heritage. For example, in moments where rituals are used to confront societal challenges, these actions symbolize the resilience of African cultural practices and their relevance in contemporary struggles. Hoodoo becomes a symbol of resistance, continuity, and spiritual empowerment, reinforcing the novel’s central theme of reclaiming identity. Ethnicity, as portrayed in *The Last*

*Days of Louisiana Red*, is not static but dynamic and essential to the characters' survival and empowerment.

Papa Labas, a recurring character in Ishmael Reed's works, plays a significant role in *Mumbo Jumbo* and *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*. He embodies the spirit of Neo-Hoodooism, a cultural and spiritual philosophy that celebrates African and African-American traditions while resisting Western cultural domination. Reed's fiction is a vibrant tapestry of cultural references, blending history, mythology, and contemporary issues. Through his unique approach, he challenges conventional narratives and offers a fresh perspective on the African American experience. By infusing his works with Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics, Reed not only pays homage to his cultural heritage but also reinvents it for a modern audience. Reed's engagement with Black culture and Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics shapes his storytelling, and how these elements contribute to the broader discourse on identity, power, and resistance.

Thus, in both the novels, Reed portrays ethnicity as a dynamic and evolving force—a vibrant tapestry woven from African and African-American traditions, shaped by history, and adapted to contemporary realities. Ethnicity is not static or monolithic but multifaceted and fluid. It is a source of resilience, resistance, creativity, and empowerment, serving as both a critique of societal injustices and a celebration of cultural vitality. Reed's experimental style, rich symbolism, and satirical tone reinforce these themes, making his novels a powerful exploration of the complexities of ethnicity.

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## Postcolonial Theory: Unraveling Identity, Power, and Cultural Dynamics

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### Abstract:

Postcolonial theory is a critical framework that explores the effects and aftermath of colonialism on societies, particularly focusing on literature from former colonies. It examines the cultural, political, and social repercussions of the colonial encounter, emphasizing the power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized. Scholars such as Hans Bertens and M.S. Nagarajan assert that postcolonialism critically interrogates the influence of imperialism on the identity and culture of colonized nations, scrutinizing both historical and contemporary implications. The theory delves into various phases of postcolonial identity, from imitation and adaptation to assertion of independence, as explained by theorists like Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. Additionally, postcolonial discourse tackles issues of language, cultural hybridity, and subaltern voices, with significant contributions from thinkers like Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Said’s “Orientalism” and Bhabha’s concept of hybridity challenge Western perceptions of the “Orient” and highlight the complexities of identity formation post-colonization. Spivak’s focus on subalternity draws attention to the silenced voices, particularly of women, within postcolonial societies. Theoretical concepts such as “otherness,” marginalization, and the “third space” interrogate the construction of identity and power. Ultimately, postcolonial theory is a multidisciplinary field that challenges the dominance of Western thought, offering new ways to understand global history, culture, and identity.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial theory, Hybridity, Subaltern, Marginalization, Orientalism, Otherness, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak.

Postcolonial theory focuses on analyzing literature from countries that were once colonized, exploring how these former colonies engage with the wider world. It examines the complex relationships between the colonizers and the colonized, delving into how one culture asserts its superiority and establishes dominance over

the other. This theoretical framework critically investigates the effects and dynamics of cultural clashes in contexts of colonial power and control.(Spivak “Postcolonial Theory and Literature” 1859).

According to Hans Bertens, Postcolonialism is “a vast field of literary, cultural and political enquiry that emphasises the tension between the metropolis and the (former) colonies” (199-200). M.S. Nagarajan observes that postcolonialism examines and analyses the aftermath of colonisation, and the effect of colonial oppression. In other words, “it analyses the literature that was affected by the imperial process, the literature that grew in response to colonial domination, right from the time of contact between the coloniser and the colonised down to the contemporary situation” (185).

It is imperative to define colonialism before attempting a detailed study of postcolonialism. Colonialism is the practice in which a powerful nation exerts control over another country or countries, often through military, economic, or cultural oppression. Its goal is to dominate not only the resources and wealth of the colonized—shaping what is produced, how it is produced, and how it is distributed—but also to control the colonized society's entire reality, including its cultural and mental framework. In essence, colonialism seeks to shape how people see themselves and their relationship to the world. By controlling a people's culture, the colonizer controls their means of self-definition in relation to others. This process of domination has two main components: (1) the destruction or deliberate devaluation of the colonized people's culture, and (2) the imposition of the colonizer's language, overshadowing that of the colonized nation.

“Colonialism” has manifested in various forms and has had diverse impacts worldwide, which can be understood by considering its relationship with two other concepts: “Capitalism” and “Imperialism.” Edward Said offers a classic distinction, where “imperialism” refers to the practices, theories, and attitudes of a dominant center exerting control over distant territories, while “colonialism” involves the center establishing settlements in those territories (9). This definition acknowledges the physical presence of the center in the colony. However, it does not account for the fact that power can be exerted without physical presence, as seen in neo-colonialism.

Postcolonialism is a heterogeneous field of study where even its spelling provides several alternatives. The critics are not in agreement whether the term should be used with or without hyphen: i.e. “Post-colonial” and “Postcolonial” have different meanings. The hyphenated term “Post-colonialism” marks a historical

period as is suggested by phrases like “after colonialism”, “after independence”, “after the end of empire” whereas the term “postcolonialism” refers to all the characteristics of a society or culture from the time of colonisation to the present.

Fernando Segovia surveys debate about the prefix “post” in the term “postcolonial” and identifies three ways of understanding it. (1) “post” is understood in a basic chronological sense to signify what comes after the end of colonialism. (2) “post” refers to a wider span of political and historical experience that includes colonisation as well as decolonisation. (3) “post” refers to “conscious awareness and problematisation of the relationship of domination and subordination in colonisation”. This third sense of “conscientisation” holds together both critical awareness and a historical-political focus (64-65).

The three phases of postcolonialism have been conceptually dealt with in the seminal book, *Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (5-6). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have explicitly explained the state of the life of the colonised people in the colonised countries during and after the colonisation. Firstly, the people of the colonised countries are greatly influenced by the West. The trails left by the colonisers are deep rooted and seem perennial. Literary production “by literary elite” is “frequently produced by ‘representatives’ of the imperial power...” (Ashcroft 5). They accepted everything slavishly without even realising that they are still servile to the West. Peter Barry calls it the “adopt” phase. Secondly, the phase “adapt” implies that “the second stage of production within the evolving discourse of the post-colonial is the literature produced ‘under imperial licence’ by ‘natives’... by the English educated Indian upper class...” (Ashcroft 5). Lastly, the “adept” is an assertive phase which implies that the colonised people are well aware of their state of life. Now they prefer to be independent of their colonial masters. The adept phase takes the colonised individual to the stage of an independent expert.

With reference to the Indian context, Makarand Parajape states, “The best way to begin interrogating postcolonialism is not by pretending that we are the masters of our own academic destinies but by admitting, how colonised we still are. What is more, we cannot continue to blame only the West for our sorry state of subjection; we must blame ourselves. The dignity of the brown-skinned scholarship depends more than even before on how we view ourselves, rather than how others view us” (43).

Postcolonial theory has been shaped by a range of theorists and critics, including Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who have all contributed to its growing body of theory and its practical

approach. However, there is an inherent tension at the heart of postcolonial theory, as those who practice and develop it form a diverse group of critics. On one side, scholars like Fredrick Jameson and Georg Gubelberger come from European cultural, literary, and academic traditions. On the other side, thinkers like Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and Homi K. Bhabha were raised in Third World cultures but now live, study, and write in the West. A third group, such as Aijaz Ahmad, resides and works in the Third World. This creates a theoretical and practical gap between those trained and living in the West and the subaltern writers in non-Western cultures. These tensions give rise to complex topics for exploration and debate within postcolonial theory. No theory, whether political or literary, can ever be completely objective.

Postcolonial intellectuals the world over have developed a new perspective whereby the conditions of marginality, subalterneity, plurality, mimicry, hybridity and perceived “otherness” are seen as sources of energy and potential change. They argue that Western values and traditions of thought and literary practices are guilty of “repressive ethnocentrism”. Such values and traditions of thought are instrumental in establishing the centre margin archetype and marginalising the non-western values and traditions.

In his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), a cornerstone of postcolonial studies, Edward Said defines the term “Orientalism.” It refers to the historical and ideological process through which the West has constructed false images and myths about the Eastern or “Oriental” world, often found in Western discourses, including literature. Said defines *Orientalism* as the “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (11). In his book, Said presents a binary view of the world, dividing it into two cultures: the East, which he calls the Orient, and the West, referred to as the Occident. The central theme of *Orientalism* is that Western perspectives of the East have silenced the voice of the Eastern world. The West has romanticized the East, portraying it in a way that reinforces the idea that Asian and Arabian people are barbaric in comparison to the West. This perception has justified the colonization of the Eastern world under the guise of “enlightening” the so-called “wretches” of the world. Said critiques the Western image of the Orient as “irrational, depraved, child-like, and different,” a view that has allowed the West to define itself as “rational, virtuous, mature, and normal” (qtd. in Hammer 576-78).

Leela Gandhi asserts that *Orientalism* is the first book in which Said decisively exposes the ideological masks of imperialism (67). According to Loomba, *Orientalism* marks the beginning of a new approach to studying colonialism (44). In

his later work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said builds upon the foundation laid in *Orientalism* by examining the imperial complicities within some of the key texts of the Western literary canon. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said argues that postcolonial independence involves not just the recovery of physical territory but also the reclamation of culture.

Homi K. Bhabha, the other leading postcolonial theorist, insightfully observes: “Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of third world countries and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South” (*The Location of Culture* 171-73).

Bhabha says that what drives the white people to take over the world and spread their way of doing things is not power or even wanting to get rich, but their confused way of looking at the world. Bhabha’s Postcolonial theory involves analysis of nationality, ethnicity, and politics with poststructuralist ideas of identity and indeterminacy. According to him the defining postcolonial identities are shifting, hybrid constructions.

In fact, the term “hybridity” analyses the issue of coloniser / colonised relations, stresses the interdependence and mutual construction of their subjectivities. Hybridisation is a kind of negotiation, both political and cultural, between the coloniser and the colonised. Like Bhabha, Edward Said also underlines the importance of “cultural hybridity” and it has come to stay and no amount of effort can completely separate the West from the East. The theory of hybridity provides an affirmative answer to Spivak’s celebrated question “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, “Hybridity” being an integral part of postcolonial discourse bridges the gap between West and the East.

One of the most influential postcolonial critics, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is renowned for her lecture “Can the Subaltern Speak?” She has worked to highlight the vast majority of the colonized population that remains unheard in history, which is typically written by the dominant powers, as they were either unable to speak or not allowed to do so. In her essays, Spivak explores how millions of people, especially women, passed through the colonial system without leaving any lasting mark. She investigates the impact of political independence on “subaltern” or sub-proletarian women in the Third World, revealing how these women’s voices are silenced in the dialogue between the male-dominated West and East. Spivak argues that this leaves little room for subaltern women to express themselves within the global social institutions that oppress them. She believes that dominant, hegemonic

cultures—those with political, economic, or military control—tend to marginalize subaltern cultures, beliefs, and ways of thinking. Additionally, she critiques how practices deemed barbaric by Western standards were outlawed without considering the perspectives of native peoples.

Postcolonial scholars, in general, attempt to overcome the stigma of marginality or “otherness” by foregrounding differences and diversity. Gayatri Spivak has rightly pointed out that “when a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the centre wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the centre”(220).

As Bertens notes, “Spivak’s insistence on the importance of feminist perspectives is part of a larger role that she has perhaps unintentionally played over the last two decades: that of the theoretical conscience of postcolonial studies” (211). The postcolonial writers have shown that they have not only gained independence but successfully made the coloniser’s language as vehicle for the creative expression. Each former colony uses English in its own way and therefore, there is Indian English, African English and Caribbean English in the postcolonial age. Hence, it is difficult to agree with Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, the authors of the book *The Empire Writes Back*, when they say that “postcolonial literatures are result of this interaction between imperial culture and the complex indigenous practices.... imperial language and local experience” (1). Leela Gandhi in her book *The Post-colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1990) refuses their claim by pointing out the fundamental differences between the colonial rule in countries like Australia and New Zealand and the countries in Asia and Africa. Such differences pertain to cultural subordination in those countries.

Contemporary postcolonial theorists use the term “subaltern classes” to refer to those social groups who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes in a society or nation. The term “subaltern”, first used by the Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), was a military metaphor which meant “of inferior rank” (Ashcroft *Key Concepts* 215).

In discussing the silence of subaltern female, Spivak explains that she was not using the term literally to suggest that such women never already talked. It is not so much that subaltern women did not speak, but rather that others did not know how to listen, how to enter into a transaction between the speaker and the listener. The subaltern cannot speak because their words cannot be properly interpreted. It is, therefore, the silence of the female as subaltern is a result of a failure of interpretation and not a failure of articulation. (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 56). Giving the example of the practice of sati, where no account of the woman-subject

survives today, Spivak underlines how the practice of sati was constructed by the colonising powers as an example of the “white man’s burden” – “a case of white men saving brown women from brown men” (“Subaltern” 93), while native men sought to justify the act by stating “The women actually wanted to die” (“Subaltern” 93). Thus Spivak believes that the job of the intellectual is to make visible the position of the marginalised.

The primary focus of the imaginary collective of postcolonial literatures has been around foregrounding the subjectivity of identities hitherto marginalised. But now, discourses projecting the binary oppositions, namely “the Coloniser vs. the Colonised”, “the Self vs. the Other”, “the Subject vs. the Object”, are being problematised by new emerging discourses hovering around “hybridity”. Hybridity is preferred by virtue of its affinities with catholicity and eclecticism. As Kristine Suna-Koro comments, “it functions as an interface” challenging not only “essential identities”, which, as Edward Said cautions against, contain potential violence in the production of knowledge and the handling of power, but also “the Western hegemonic unproductive dualism” critiqued as “zero-sum binaries”. As an interface agency, it delves into mutual imbrications and ambiguity” arising out of differences, and highlights the “rational counterpoint of identities” emphasising the prospects of “touching and being touched by one another in transformative ways” (5-6). The transformation is towards appreciating the multidimensionality or totality. Homi K. Bhabha argues that it ushers in the possibility of the enunciative “third space” which “enables other positions to emerge” (“The Third Space” 211) beyond the customary binary opposition.

“Otherness” is a western philosophical concept that postcolonial theory has primarily sought to critique and renounce. The characteristics of the Other, is the state of being different from and alien to the social identity of a person and to the identity of the Self. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) introduced the concept of the Other as a constituent part of self-consciousness (preoccupation with the Self), which complement the self-awareness (capacity for introspection) proffered by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814).

The “other”, has been a major preoccupation of Western thought. In recent times the figure of the other, hitherto silent and effaced, has made claims to speak, indeed to speak back, disrupting the realm of politics in radical ways. Thus women, “natives”, minorities, deviants, subalterns, now claim to speak as others. Both epistemologically and politically, therefore, the other is central to contemporary concerns. Postcolonial theory has made questions such as the following urgent: Who is the “other”, historically and symbolically? Do self and other translate



inevitably into “us” and “them”? How is the other known: is knowledge of the other (always) a form of colonisation, domination, violence, or can it be pursued as disinterested truth? Can the other know itself?

The term “otherness” simply means a quality of being not alike; being distinct or different from that which is otherwise experienced or known. Most of the time, otherness is interpreted by referring to two or more different groups’ distinct features or by referring to special qualities of each group that makes them different or unique in relation to another (Gallos 45).

According to Selcen Dogan’s explanation, although the sources of otherness are numerous and they are extremely different in their types, it is mainly related with the “terms of identity and difference” (16). He further argued that, in the fields of feminism, cultural studies and sociology, “difference” increasingly replaces the concept of “otherness”. This explanation leads one to the essential meaning making process of human beings based on their differences. For instance, to talk about male identity, it is first essential to know about “femaleness”. Or to judge about the identity or, sometimes, about the qualities of certain ethnic groups they must be compared with other groups. It is mainly this knowledge of difference that helps us to create meanings. Without the knowledge of difference meaning could not exist.

... there are two general points to note here, first, from many different directions, and within many different disciplines, this question of “difference” and “otherness” has come to play an increasingly significant role. Secondly, “difference” is ambivalent. It can be both, positive or negative. It is necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture and for social identities – and at the same time, threatens a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the “Other.” (Dogan 17)

Therefore, the central idea of otherness lies just on the divide, like normal and abnormal, insiders and outsiders, and it is generally the issue of “Us” and “Them”. This division usually leads to stereotyping, which is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. As illustrated by S. Dogan, stereotype “sets up a symbolic frontier between the normal and the deviant, the normal and the pathological, the acceptable and the unacceptable, what belongs and what does not or is Other, between insiders and outsiders, ‘Us’ and ‘Them’” (18).

The concept of marginalization refers to the processes by which individuals or groups are pushed to the periphery of society. Those who experience marginalization are often referred to as “outsiders.” The term “marginalization” is believed to have originated from Robert Park’s (1928) concept of the “marginal

man,” which he used to describe the plight of impoverished minority ethnic immigrants in the predominantly white Anglo-Saxon Protestant United States. Over time, the term gained popularity, particularly in Latin America, to describe the perceived “backwardness” not of immigrants in developed countries, but of people in developing nations who fail or are prevented from participating in the economic, political, and cultural shift toward modernity. Modernity, it is argued, treats the subordinate status and cultural differences of rural populations and urban poor communities—who are not fully integrated into the formal economy or political and social mainstream—as anomalous. More recently, the term “marginalization” has been largely replaced by “exclusion.” However, marginalization is often used as a synonym for extreme poverty or social exclusion, and the distinction between these terms is sometimes unclear, depending on who is using them (Dean 1).

Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher, in one of his interviews titled “What is Postcolonialism Thinking?” argues that postcolonialism is not just a critique and exposure of Western domination that exploited, violated, silenced, and extinguished the subjugated. Rather it seeks the end of the “inhuman” and the reinvention of a new humanity whereby “those who were on their knees not long before, bowed down under the weight of oppression... arise and walk” (6). It looks to the future, to “humanity – in-the-making” after colonial structures have disappeared and justice has been done. It strives for “a politics of the fellow-creature” that recognises the “Other” as fundamentally human, that speaks with and to the other rather than speaking “in the place of the other” (4).

The term “postcolonial” is subject to many scholarly interpretations and critical observations. Moreover, Postcolonial studies do not pertain to specific discipline, rather it has relevance and significance in History, Political Science, Economics, Anthropology, Literature including language studies. It is an undeniable fact that postcolonial theories are inextricably intervened in the process of reading and understanding literary texts in general. Since 1990s the postcolonial trend has become academically fashionable and interestingly inevitable.

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## **The Silenced Voices: A Subaltern Analysis of Marginalization in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go***

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### **Abstract**

The systematic marginalization of clones as an underclass is explored in the novel "Never Let Me Go," as well as in the author's subsequent works. This research paper offers a textual analysis through the lens of Subaltern Theory, demonstrating the experiences of clones, particularly through the first-person narrative of Kathy H. The novel reveals the institutional dehumanization that clones endure, portraying them essentially as non-persons who are denied agency. Despite being given care and education, these clones are treated as lesser beings, providing a compelling examination of marginalization and the search for identity. Subaltern Literary Theory, a critical framework within postcolonial studies, aims to amplify the voices and perspectives of marginalized communities that have been systematically silenced and erased by dominant power structures. In "Never Let Me Go" by Kazuo Ishiguro, the author conveys a poignant narrative that humanizes the terrifying consequences of a critique against hegemonic orders and socio-ethical conventions.

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Clones, Power Struggle, Dehumanization , Identity, Ethical Implication

### **Introduction**

Never Let Me Go's radar of identity and ethical consequence has been thoroughly studied, no comprehensive studies that specifically analyze the clones as subaltern figures. This careful examination of Ishiguro, the way marginalized the clones and the way the implications for broader issues of power and agency, this paper aims to fill this gap. Subaltern literary theory, particularly the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, serves as a framework for evaluating marginalized literary voices. Her seminal work, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, has been crucial in helping people comprehend subaltern experiences as it examines how oppressed groups are unable to communicate within dominant discourses. The story is told by Kathy H., a thirty-

one-year-old “Carer,” who experiences at the supposedly ideal boarding school, Hailsham. She revisits her bizarre guardians, relationships with fellow clones from Hailsham — interactions with the years that followed. Especially Tommy and Ruth — and the events that had such an impact on her life in the little about their relations, in their initial years, they were kept in the dark and told nothing or very purpose, and the world beyond Hailsham. “She said we weren’t being taught enough, something like that.” What she was talking about was, you know, about us. What’s going to happen to us one day. Donations and all that” (Ishiguro, 28).

The study uses a textual analysis methodology to closely examines the relevant excerpts with a focus on how subaltern theory may be used to reveal the clones’ marginalization and lack of agency. This is Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro’s sixth book since 2017, the year his most recent, *Never Let Me Go*. The novel takes place in a late 20th-century England that seems like one parallel to our own, and it offers a chilling picture of a dystopian tomorrow where human clones are bred exclusively for spare organ donation.

At Hailsham, the students, who are clones, were monitored closely, being taught the what they had hoped for their future, the value of both making art and staying healthy, and that smoking wasn’t acceptable. The school prided itself on creativity and self-expression, art and writing as cornerstones of the curriculum. The children were encouraged to create art, which was thought to be a means of reflecting their souls and revealing their humanity. Kathy became good friends with two other students, Ruth C and Tommy D. As Tommy was getting bullied, Kathy was developing a fond on him and talked to him privately. A woman in a suit, whom they referred to as Madame selected the best artwork by students for a gallery. Certain things, Kathy couldn’t understand herself like why did Madame use to take their paintings for her gallery which she believed it could be connected to donations. Yes, as it turned out the gallery did exist, they were unsure. “What is this gallery? Why does she need a gallery of things we’ve done?” “...they never talked about the Gallery, and it was an unwritten rule that we shouldn’t even bring up the subject in their presence” (Ishiguro, 29). This passage reflects on the ways that the actions of clones, including their educational and social endeavors, were largely regulated by institutional control — a reminder of their powerlessness. Moreover, the clones are intentionally remains ignorant of the machinations and workings of all this system that runs their life. The administration appears complicit in keeping them in the dark. This lack of information and knowledge is an exercise in one of the tactics of oppression.

Ruth theorized that Madame, Marie-Claude, was afraid of them rather than being snooty. They had an idea of how to apply this theory. Madame dreaded if one of them would brush against her. “I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her. And though we just kept on walking, we all felt it; it was like we’d walked from the sun right into chilly shade. Ruth had been right: Madame was afraid of us. But she was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders. We hadn’t been ready for that. It had never occurred to us to wonder how we would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders” (Ishiguro, 33).. They wondered who they were, wanting to know how they differed from all the rest. Nonetheless, they did not to further investigate Madame’s affairs as they were not quite prepared to handle it yet.

They learned about the soldiers kept in World War 2 prison camp during English lecture. “It’s just as well the fences at Hailsham aren’t electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes.” (Ishiguro, 69), emphasizes the circumstance that they were created in, that they were meant to be grateful that their prison (Hailsham) wasn’t electrified. Their isolation highlighting the freedom they lacked, and the control the institution exerted over them.

Miss Lucy, the student’s guardian, informed the class that they cannot choose a life for themselves for they were being raised with the primary purpose to be organ donors later in life. “The problem, as I see it, is that you’ve been told and not told. You’ve been told, but none of you really understand... Your lives are set out for you. You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs”(Ishiguro, 71). This statement underscores how the clones were explicitly conditioned to accept that their sole purpose in life was to serve others, reinforcing their status as subalterns whose value was determined entirely by their utility.

Two older houseguests who visited Norfolk told Ruth and encountered a “possible” person, indicating this woman could be the first person from whom Ruth was modeled. On their way to see her, the five spoke of a rumor, which has been repeated to the elder clones as though it is fact: that if a couple can show their love; their donations would be ‘postponed’. They incorrectly believed that everyone knew how to apply for the privilege because they believed it was only for Hailsham students. “We all know it. We’re modelled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren’t psychos. That’s what we come from. We all know it, so why don’t we say it? ... If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that’s where you’ll find where we all came from” (Ishiguro,

144). Ruth complains angrily that they must all be clones of lesser socioeconomic groups showcasing their marginalized position in society.

On the way, Tommy and Kathy opted to search for a duplicate music cassette tape that Kathy has misfiled at Hailsham. Tommy's fierce affections for Kathy was apparent in his memory of the recording and his wish to find it. After discovering the tape, Tommy said, Kathy told him that Madame collected their work in an effort to figure out which couples were really in love. Tommy had come to this conclusion based on a guardian who said that the artists' works uncovered their souls. Tommy was the one who suggested that paintings and poetry were revealing Madame who would inspect them and, it was the way Madame how if a couple was truly in love and their donation deferred. "...things like pictures, poetry, all that kind of stuff, she said they revealed what you were like inside. She said they revealed your soul" (Ishiguro, 153). "There's probably people higher up than her, people who never set foot in Hailsham. I've thought about this a lot, Kath. It all fits. That's why the Gallery was so important, and why the guardians wanted us to work so hard on our art and our poetry" (Ishiguro, 154). These quotes highlight their desperation for a chance at survival.

Kathy eventually left to be a carer which entailed her separation from others for years. Being a carer was easy for Kathy, worst part was when a donor couldn't make it & they were left demoralized. "You're always in a rush, or else you're too exhausted to have a proper conversation. Soon enough, the long hours, the travelling, the broken sleep have all crept into your being and become part of you, so everyone can see it, in your posture, your gaze, the way you move and talk" (Ishiguro, 179) shows their exploitation and the deplorable condition they were in. Eventually, exploited and profited from, they become underdogs.

Ruth's condition was deteriorating after a botched. Kathy becomes responsible for Ruth's care, and both of them understand that this will first donation. Ruth's final one. Ruth The donation is likely to be donation, how Chrissie finished. Ruth had a break out how Only after her 2<sup>nd</sup> looking for Kathy would know how donors feel. Ruth mentioned the past, It would have a carer and Kathy apart. She asked them to try for forgiveness that she wished Kathy and Tommy apart them apart hadn't kept Tommy 'deferral'. Making a play to make amends, she shares Madame's address with them "completes," slang for her second donation, she's to request a postponement. After Ruth passing away.

Kathy becomes Tommy's caregiver, and the pair eventually begin dating. Inspired by Ruth's final wishes, they go to Madame's house in an attempt to delay



Tommy’s fourth donation, using Tommy’s newly purchased artwork to prove their romantic intent.

Madame extends an invitation to the clones. “I don’t know if she recognised us at that point; but without doubt, she saw and decided in a second what we were, because you could see her stiffen—as if a pair of large spiders was set to crawl towards her” (Ishiguro, 216). They get to know Miss Emily, their guardian, resides with her. “We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all” (Ishiguro, 227). She informed them that they rather had a privileged upbringing at Hailsham which shielded them from the full extent of societal neglect and suffering that others face.

“Look at this art! How dare you claim these children are anything less than fully human?” (Ishiguro, 228). She told them that the gallery was meant to exhibit the outside world that the clones, after all, are normal human beings with souls and deserve better treatment. The two women are told that the deferral scheme is not real and that Hailsham guardians tried to The clones in general receive more than other institutions a humanistic education. They held Which end of clones which differ from each other and humanity and unable to acquire proper respect are movement to improve clone's life but deferring was not their business. After World War 2, they can even treat their going back to no cancer through donations; clone. They shared the Moningdale event- possibility of having child with super intelligence which scared people because they wanted clones no to be behind shadows and didn’t have wanted clones behind shadows. It is implied that the ethics experiment was unsuccessful and that Hailsham has subsequently closed in going against popular opinion, and they could not help them any further.

The clones' living conditions are inadequate, lacking private spaces for personal time and shared experiences. During harsh winters, they're without proper warm clothing, resorting to makeshift coverings that provide no insulation. Kathy observes that their so-called blankets are merely discarded carpet pieces, emphasizing their disadvantaged position. They experience dehumanizing treatment from non-clones and have come to accept their inferior status, demonstrating the effects of social exclusion and dehumanization (p.107).

In the novel's latter half, the characters encounter various difficulties, both external and internal Marginalization affects their outer circumstances and inner emotional states. Their external lives are controlled by others, while their internal feelings are suppressed by educators and peers. Kathy recounts that despite reaching adulthood, they can't envision a life free from worry. They must follow imposed rules and meet



certain expectations. The narrative portrays the clones' sense of alienation at Hailsham (p.109).

The impact of dehumanization is apparent throughout the story. The narrator reflects that their childhood memories seem like a dream, shattered by harsh realities. They've witnessed the suffering of friends at Hailsham, in the cottages, and in hospitals, yet no one resisted. They experience psychological distress and anxiety, accepting their predetermined fate and longing for simpler times when they were unaware of their tragic destiny. At least then, they were children, protected from the pain endured by Ruth, Chrissie, and others who suffered greatly.

Additionally, the text shows that the clones are intentionally and systematically marginalized, resulting in mistrust among them. They keep secrets from one another and quarrel over trivial matters. This is clear evidence of their marginalization and access to limited human rights. As they are kept away from the leading stream society, they learn from others, and they share their secrets and break their promises of not sharing their secrets. Moreover, the text indicates the impact of their marginalization on their ethical codes. They are morally corrupt. The clones gather at the cottages and sleep with whomever they please; they cuddle everywhere and have sex with one another, if only for a night. Here is the proof of their ethical dilemma. The text highlights that they have fallen out of love with each other. They all act like randy humans without a shred of loyalty and respect for their bodies and lovers. Furthermore, Kathy remarks on the lives of Tommy and her other friends; the passage shows the terrible the minds of clones and the impact of dehumanization. They are considered (in the outside world) as test subjects and as others. Further, they are not considered as human. They do not possess a distinct identity. They are dehumanized at outside by Hailsham world. Tommy is angry that the outside world never tries to know oppression. (p.153). In this regard, Spivak It says that subaltern means low-ranked people. By this, she means women; she goes on to say that the voices of the silenced are stifled by the prevailing powers that be. In a similar manner, the authorities govern The voices of Kathy and her friends to satisfy their social, economic, and biological needs. (Spivak, 2006).

Characters feel frustrated by the behavior imposed on characters in the second part of the novel them. The clones at the cottages mimic tics from TV and replicate thoughts and stuff from the actual world, showing their marginalization. They fear their own nature and experience external and internal challenges. Aware of their lower More than as humans, they have qualms and ask about their status in society. They feel cast out from mainstream culture and perceive themselves as objects and addicts because they are made of whore. Tommy's realization of their

marginalized state is apparent; they know they exist as objects and strangers. This mirrors Tommy's ideas about their identity crisis (p. 153). They know they have no self. This point is highlighted by Spivak, who argues that oppressors appropriate the subaltern, which they view as low status (Spivak, 1988). The impact of dehumanization and marginalization is profound. Clones replicate TV behavior and real-world ideas, demonstrating their exclusion based on real human experience. They are terrified of their identity, aware of their social status is inferior. This recognition creates a feeling that you are objects, not people. With identity and how they are seen, as nothing but tools. The narrative shows how systemic oppression and dehumanization rob them of their sense of self — and entail that they confront their lack of identity and place in the world

The consequences of dehumanization and marginalization are in the final part of the novel, in the end portrayed artistically in the end. The clones reminisce about their time at Hailsham. They now attend the opposite end of the spectrum, the hard truths of their predetermined fate and destiny. Destined for organ donations, some have already given and more are to follow during the painful process, and treatment of donation. In this section, they reflect on their memories, identity and marginalization by non-clones.

Kathy reflects on her life at Hailsham with Tommy, Ruth and the rest of her fellow clones. She grapples with the emotional complications of love, loss and acceptance, reckoning with what their lives mean and purpose.

### **Conclusion**

The characters in the story exhibit an intense ambition for survival, ultimately leading to a weak-willed acceptance of their circumstances. They cling to fleeting moments of power that they desperately long for. Their fates reveal the overwhelming force of social oppression. "Never Let Me Go" explores what it means to be human and examines the new forms of creativity, humanity, and connection that the clones are denied. Their lives and futures are largely dictated by a system that neither seeks their consent nor allows them much input. Their inability to address their subaltern status is significant, as they are stripped of agency. The characters repeatedly accept the roles assigned to them, often embracing these roles as if they are inevitable. This acceptance is framed within a broader struggle with identity and self-worth. Frequently, due to the pressures of dominant cultural narratives, they may internalize their position of disadvantage. Given the lack of alternatives, these "subaltern" groups experience an internalization of identity that complicates their situation. Despite the limitations imposed upon them, the clones demonstrate a degree of resilience, supporting one another amidst their

mistreatment. They ponder their place within the system and seek to forge meaningful relationships, although these are often constrained by the larger social structure that is tightly regulated. The novel prompts readers to reflect on how systemic power dynamics erode the individuals' ability to advocate for themselves, ultimately treating them as less than human.

Kathy serves as a powerful narrator, providing insight into the effects of marginalization. She is acutely aware of her dehumanized status and the injustices around her, yet she resists and challenges the prevailing system. Her role as a carer and donor reflects the institutionalized marginalization that defines her existence. Tommy's journey towards self-realization is characterized by his experiences of being marginalized. At the beginning of the novel, he is portrayed as unintelligent and awkward, often the target of bullying and ridicule. Instead of having his artistic talents nurtured and celebrated, he faces rejection and shame. As he tries to conform to the environment of Hailsham and adhere to the institute's norms, he suffers mistreatment from his peers, inflicting profound emotional pain. Consequently, Tommy endures a life of marginalization that brings him unbearable suffering.

Ruth also experiences a marginalized existence. Despite her outward confidence, she is driven by a deep-seated fear of being marginalized. Her betrayal of Kathy and Tommy exemplifies how marginalization can foment division and mistrust among those who are similarly oppressed.

The effects and implications of marginalization are pervasive throughout the novel. From childhood, the characters grapple with the impact of losing friends to the demands of being donors, with some vanishing or potentially losing their lives. They constantly contemplate their lives and futures, yet no one provides them with answers to their questions.

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## **Voices From the Margins: The Representation of Dalit Women in Bama’s *Sangati***

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### **Abstract**

Dalit literature serves as a powerful platform for exciting caste-based domination and proclaiming marginalized identities. Bama’s *Sangati* opinions out as an inventive work that amplifies the voices of Dalit women, who endure both caste and gender-based discrimination. Unlike predictable Dalit descriptions that predominantly emphasis on male experiences, *Sangati* presents a collective portrayal of Dalit women’s hardships, resilience, and acts of defiance.

This study examines how Bama represents Dalit women in *Sangati*, addressing key themes such as caste oppression, gender inequality, economic struggles, and systemic discrimination within both social and religious outlines. The novel exposes the everyday realisms of Dalit women, from domestic violence and labor exploitation to patriarchal control, while also emphasizing their strength and solidarity. Through an fetching oral storytelling style and non-linear narrative, Bama gives voice to these marginalized women, certifying their lived experiences gain literary recognition.

Moreover, this research places *Sangati* as a feminist text that reshapes Dalit literature by focusing women’s agency, collective empowerment, and resistance against oppression. By exploring the connection of caste, gender, and class, the study exemplifies how the novel serves as both a social critique and a tool for empowerment. Bama’s portrayal challenges dominant power structures and advocates for reconsidering societal hierarchies and gender-based injustices. *Sangati* is not just a literary narrative but a political statement that amplifies marginalized voices and contributes significantly to Dalit feminist discourse.

**Keywords:** Dalit feminism, Caste discrimination, Gender inequality, Resistance, Intersectionality, and Oral narratives.

## Introduction

Dalit literature has emerged as a vital form of confrontation against caste-based oppression and societal marginalization in India. As a literary movement, it offers a platform for Dalits to narrate their experiences and challenge the historical prejudices obligatory by the caste system. While early Dalit writings were chiefly focused on male experiences, Dalit women’s voices endured largely ignored. Bama, a prominent Dalit feminist writer, rehabilitated this narrative by focusing on the unique struggles and resilience of Dalit women in her works. Her novel *Sangati* (1994) stands out as a powerful text that captures the lived realities of Dalit women, who face both caste-based discrimination and patriarchal oppression.

Unlike autobiographical narratives such as Bama’s *Karukku* (1992), which emphasis on an individual’s journey, *Sangati* accepts a collective storytelling approach, giving voice to multiple Dalit women. The novel narrates their daily struggles against exploitation, gendered violence, and systemic oppression, while also showcasing their strength, solidarity, and forms of resistance. Through a unique narrative style that blends oral traditions, folk expressions, and Tamil dialects, Bama rejects mainstream literary conventions and offers an authentic representation of Dalit women’s realities.

This research examines how *Sangati* represents Dalit women by exploring the intersection of caste and gender in shaping their lived experiences. The novel highlights the economic and social struggles they endure as laborers, domestic workers, and marginalized individuals, shedding light on their persistent exploitation and systemic oppression. Despite these challenges, Bama portrays Dalit women as agents of resistance, emphasizing their collective strength, defiance, and strategies for survival. Additionally, the study analyzes the unique narrative techniques Bama employs, such as oral storytelling and the use of colloquial Tamil, to amplify Dalit women’s voices and assert their identity. By applying the framework of Dalit feminism and intersectionality, this research underscores how *Sangati* challenges both caste and patriarchal structures, offering a radical critique of social hierarchies. Ultimately, it argues that Bama’s work is not merely a literary text but a powerful political statement that redefines the representation of Dalit women in literature and society.

## Literature Review

1. Evolution of Dalit Literature – Originated as a response to caste oppression, initially dominated by male narratives, with later focus on Dalit women’s experiences.

2. Dalit Feminism and Intersectionality – Scholars like Sharmila Rege and Gopal Guru highlight how Dalit women’s struggles differ from mainstream feminist and Dalit male perspectives.
3. Representation of Dalit Women in *Sangati* – Bama portrays economic hardships, gendered violence, and collective resistance, making it a significant feminist Dalit text.
4. Narrative Strategies in *Sangati* – Uses oral storytelling, folklore, and colloquial Tamil to preserve authenticity and empower marginalized voices.

### **Research Gaps**

1. Limited studies on *Sangati* as a form of literary activism beyond its feminist themes.
2. Need for deeper analysis of Bama’s linguistic and cultural choices in shaping Dalit identity.
3. Comparative studies between *Sangati* and other regional Dalit women’s narratives are lacking.

### **Research Aim and Objectives**

#### **Aim**

1. To explore the representation of Dalit women’s struggles, resilience, and agency in Bama’s *Sangati*.
2. To analyze how *Sangati* serves as a feminist intervention in Dalit literature, challenging both caste and patriarchal oppression.

#### **Objectives**

1. Examine how caste and gender intersect in shaping the lived experiences of Dalit women.
2. Analyze the economic and social struggles faced by Dalit women as laborers, domestic workers, and marginalized individuals.
3. Investigate the forms of resistance and collective strength portrayed in *Sangati*.
4. Explore Bama’s narrative techniques, including oral storytelling, folklore, and the use of colloquial Tamil.

#### **Methodology**

This research follows a qualitative approach through a close reading of *Sangati*, supported by:

1. Textual Analysis – Examining themes, language, and narrative techniques in *Sangati*.
2. Feminist and Dalit Literary Criticism – Drawing from scholars like Sharmila Rege, Susie Tharu, and Gopal Guru.

3. Comparative Study – Relating *Sangati* to other Dalit autobiographies and feminist works.

The research relies on secondary sources such as academic journals, books, and critical essays on Dalit literature and feminist discourse.

### **VOICES FROM THE MARGINS: THE REPRESENTATION OF DALIT WOMEN IN BAMA’S SANGATI**

Bama’s *Sangati* is a pivotal work that brings to light the lived experiences of Dalit women, who are subjected to oppression at the intersection of caste and gender. Written in an autobiographical style, the novel moves beyond individual experiences to offer a collective narrative that captures the voices of multiple women in the Dalit community. It is a crucial contribution to Dalit feminist discourse, shedding light on the realities of those who have been pushed to the margins of society. Through the powerful voices of Dalit women, *Sangati* exposes how the structures of caste and patriarchy reinforce discrimination while also showcasing the resilience and strength of these women.

The novel highlights the concept of double marginalization, where Dalit women suffer not only from caste-based discrimination imposed by upper-caste communities but also from patriarchal structures within their own social groups. Unlike upper-caste women, who may have some form of social privilege, Dalit women experience oppression from multiple directions—both from dominant caste groups and from the men within their own communities. This compounded discrimination manifests in different aspects of their lives, from labor exploitation to physical and sexual violence. Bama illustrates this harsh reality when she writes, “It is the way of the world to heap injustices on the heads of women. If we are born into a poor low-caste community, that’s one more burden on us” (*Sangati* 5). This statement encapsulates the compounded struggles of Dalit women, who bear the weight of economic hardship, caste discrimination, and gender subjugation simultaneously.

Throughout *Sangati*, Bama presents vivid accounts of the everyday struggles that Dalit women endure. From a young age, they are forced into relentless physical labor, denied education, and made to take up domestic and economic responsibilities. Their bodies become sites of oppression, as they are often subjected to violence both within and outside their homes. The novel presents several instances where Dalit women face discrimination in public spaces such as schools and places of worship. For example, Bama narrates how Dalit children are treated with contempt by their teachers: “If we go to school, they scold us as if we were donkeys. If we play and laugh, they call us quarreling hens” (*Sangati* 22).



Such derogatory treatment not only reinforces their marginalized status but also discourages them from pursuing education as a means of liberation.

One of the most striking aspects of *Sangati* is its narrative style, which relies on oral storytelling traditions. Instead of focusing on a singular protagonist, Bama presents multiple voices of Dalit women through anecdotes, gossip, and communal discussions. This approach reinforces the idea of collective suffering but also collective resistance. The women in the novel find strength in each other, using humor, solidarity, and defiance to navigate their difficult realities. Their conversations reflect their shared pain but also their resilience, as seen when an elderly woman remarks, “What does it matter if we are born girls? We should have the courage to lift up our heads and face life” (*Sangati* 29). This moment highlights the ways in which Dalit women encourage each other to persevere despite the systemic injustices they face.

A crucial theme in *Sangati* is the presence of patriarchy within Dalit communities. While Dalit men also suffer from caste oppression, they often become complicit in the subjugation of women. The novel critiques the expectation that women should bear the full burden of household chores, childcare, and economic labor while receiving little respect or autonomy. Bama does not shy away from exposing the ways in which Dalit men reinforce gender inequalities, sometimes resorting to violence to assert control. A woman in the novel laments, “Our men treat us badly too... If the upper castes treat them like slaves, they take it out on us at home” (*Sangati* 47). This passage highlights how caste oppression trickles down into gender-based violence, making Dalit women the most vulnerable within their own communities.

Education emerges as a crucial theme in *Sangati*, positioned as a tool for liberation. The novel underscores the transformative power of education in breaking cycles of oppression, particularly for Dalit women. Bama emphasizes that literacy and knowledge can provide them with the means to challenge oppressive structures and claim a better future. However, access to education remains a privilege denied to many, as Dalit girls are often pulled out of school to work and contribute to family income. A character in the novel states, “If we study, we can get jobs and live with self-respect... Otherwise, we will be left to do endless drudgery” (*Sangati* 63). This statement serves as a call to action, urging Dalit women to seek education as a means of empowerment despite the barriers placed before them.

Despite the overwhelming challenges they face, Dalit women in *Sangati* are not depicted as passive victims. They embody resilience in various forms—through their hard work, their ability to laugh in the face of adversity, and their refusal to be

completely broken by their circumstances. Bama portrays them as strong-willed individuals who find ways to assert their agency, even within a deeply oppressive system. Their resistance may not always be overt, but it exists in their everyday acts of defiance, whether in questioning societal norms, seeking economic independence, or refusing to remain silent about their struggles. The novel powerfully asserts, “We should not accept whatever they thrust on us. We must dare to speak out” (*Sangati* 81). This declaration encapsulates the central message of the novel—that Dalit women must assert their voices and fight against the injustices imposed upon them.

*Sangati* serves as a powerful critique of both caste and gender oppression, making an important intervention in Dalit feminist literature. Bama’s work amplifies the voices of Dalit women, highlighting their struggles while also celebrating their strength. The novel not only exposes the harsh realities they endure but also calls for change, advocating for dignity, equality, and justice for those who have been historically silenced. Through its raw and unfiltered storytelling, *Sangati* stands as a testament to the resilience of Dalit women and their unwavering fight for a better future.

## **CONCLUSION**

*Sangati* stands as a powerful and unapologetic portrayal of Dalit women’s lives, shedding light on their struggles while celebrating their resilience. Bama’s narrative not only exposes the double oppression faced by Dalit women—both as members of a marginalized caste and as women within a patriarchal system—but also emphasizes their collective strength, defiance, and agency. Through the novel’s oral storytelling style, multiple voices emerge, reinforcing the idea that Dalit women’s experiences cannot be reduced to a single story but must be understood as a shared struggle. The novel highlights key issues such as labor exploitation, gender-based violence, denial of education, and systemic discrimination while also offering hope through moments of resistance and empowerment. The emphasis on education as a tool for liberation underscores the necessity of breaking oppressive cycles through knowledge and self-awareness. Ultimately, *Sangati* is more than just a work of literature—it is a social document that challenges mainstream narratives and calls for justice, dignity, and equality for Dalit women. By giving voice to those who have long been silenced, Bama ensures that their stories are heard, recognized, and remembered, making *Sangati* a crucial text in Dalit feminist discourse.

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**Echoes from the Edge: Subaltern Struggles in *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*  
by Amulya Malladi**

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**ABSTRACT**

Echoes from the edge is a metaphorical phrase that refers to the experience of the individuals living on the margins of society. Subaltern struggle is the fight for rights against the authoritative power structures. ‘Echoes from the edge’ in terms of marginalization refers to the voices, experiences, and standpoints of individuals or ethnicity who are on the edges or periphery of society. These people are often marginalized due to various aspects such as race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, or disability. The study “Echoes from the Edge: Subaltern Struggles in *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*” explores the representation of subaltern voices in Amulya Malladi's novel *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*. The novel, set against the background of rural landscapes of India, scrutinizes the lives of marginalized women, shedding light on their battles for identity, autonomy, and survival within a profound patriarchal society. Through a critical feminist lens, the study critically examines how Malladi constructs the voices of these subaltern women, who often remain quiet or ignored in the mainstream conversation. The narrative follows the journey of its protagonists of diverse ethnicity, by blending themes of social hierarchy, gender, and cultural expectations, the novel reflects the complexities of subaltern existence in post-colonial India. Through its depiction of personal and collective outcry, the novel discloses how these marginalized figures navigate their worlds and establish their authority often in delicate but introspective approaches and methods. Ultimately, it calls for a reappraisal of the subaltern's state within the wider context of Indian society.

**Keywords:** periphery, subaltern voices and theory ,perseverance, resilience, empowerment.

In literature, an echo refers to the resurfacing of themes, ideas, phrases, or images from earlier parts of a text. This technique is often employed to add depth, highlight specific ideas, or create links between various sections of the work. Indian English novels vividly echo the voices of the Marginalized. The present article “Echoes from the Edge: Subaltern Struggles in *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*” deals with subaltern studies which closely examine the impressions of marginalized people in literature and society.

Amulya Malladi, a versatile young Indian women author whose novel *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* (2005) revolves several subaltern themes, exclusively through its crystal clear depiction of marginalized individuals in Indian society. The novel is set in Tella Meda, an ashram-like community where women, many of whom are abandoned, unmarried, or widowed, seek shelter outside the restrictions of traditional family life. Through this setting, the novel gives voice to those often silenced by conventional narratives, making it a strong example of subaltern literature.

The novel centers on women who are rejected or isolated due to societal norms - orphans, widows, and those deemed ‘unfit’ for conventional roles. The protagonist Kokila, an orphan, is sent to Tella Meda as a child because she hardly has a family, making her dependent on the charity of others. Tella Meda is located in Bheemunipatnam, a small coastal town in southern India. It is not as usual an orphanage but "a home for the weary, a safe harbor for lost souls, the last refuge for some and the only home for others" (Malladi 4). Tella Meda is named by the guru Charvi who calls it not as an ashram but a happy home, which she shares with the poor abandoned and the needy. Similarly, one could find the shelter with reference to the novel title *Karukku* by Faustina Mary Fatima Rani, known as Bama, who uses her pseudonym to document her journey as a Dalit Christian woman in Tamil Nadu. The title of the novel “*Karukku*” is significant, which means “palmyra grove, represents both a literal and metaphorical space for reflection and solace” (Bama 45).

The character Charvi is marginalized in miscellaneous ways, showcasing the broader social and cultural constraints placed on women in Indian society. Charvi, yet another protagonist, deals with multiple challenges in terms of gender, family expectations, and cultural norms, all of which contribute to her marginalisation.

In Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), the protagonist Sita's marriage is obviously resulting from familial pressure. Sita is predicted to marry and shoulder the conventional duties of a wife, without consideration for her personal desires or ambitions. This echoes the marginalization that many women face when their personas are solely shaped by traditional gender roles, they play within the family and society. Similarly, Malladi's protagonist Charvi's role as a woman is determined largely by societal expectations of marriage, motherhood, and sacrifice. She is consecutively under pressure to accommodate to traditional gender roles, which suppresses her personal dreams and desires.

Charvi, an Indian Bengali name, means beautiful girl or woman who is declared guru of Tella Meda by her own father Ramanadham Shastri. Because he is the believer of God and has identified a divine power in her. It's none other than Charvi, the reason that the Ashram receives the donations and gifts that meet the needs of the needies of the home. People usually come from all over the world regardless of diverse backgrounds to listen to her preaching and to get her blessings. One of such devotees is Mark Talbot, the American photographer who comes to Tella Meda, says “This woman was Devi, Amma, Circe, Goddess, Venus all blended into one. She was light-skinned and unlike most Indian women could pass for a foreigner easily. Her eyes were not dark but light brown, filled with mystery. But it was her voice that undid him”(Malladi 52).

Even though Charvi, a saint, is no exception to experience the arrows of cupid, Charvi falls in love with Mark Talbot, who comes to Tella Meda and she herself says, “I was in love once” (Malladi 365). They are well matured, well-educated and wise and above all they are very good friends and good team players. Charvi recalls his image and her cravings for him. One can comprehend her emotions when she interprets Kokila at her old age, “Like the flutter of a butterfly, Kokila. He kissed me and I can still feel the heat of his breath. Oh, I could have married him, had children. Do you think that could have happened?” (Malladi 365). After experiencing love, Charvi is restricted from marriage, family and so on, because she is sacrosanct and has a higher call to serve the society. As Gayatri Spivak rightly calls it, “double marginalization” (Spivak 271) where Spivak explores how colonized women are doubly oppressed-first by colonialism and then by patriarchal structures within their own cultures. Hence, Charvi has been colonised in the notion of spiritual guru by her society as well as by the patriarchy.

Charvi's internal marginalization is also evident in her personal chaos. She feels torn between her desires for independence and the pressure to fulfill societal and familial expectations. This conflict represents a form of marginalization that isn't just external but deeply psychological, as she struggles with self-identity and the desire to break free from prescribed norms. Charvi's journey emblemizes the chaos between subjective (personal) desires and objective desires (societal obligations), illustrating how women like her can often feel sidelined or silenced by societal norms. Gayatri Spivak says, “The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists of ‘resistance.’ The subaltern is as mute as the language of the 'postcolonial' itself.” (Spivak 271) Hence, Charvi's struggle derives largely from the traditional expectations placed upon her as a woman. She is anticipated to conform to the roles imposed by her family and especially patriarchal society. Her aspirations, career choices, and individuality are overshadowed by the demand to fulfill familial and social duties.

Kokila, another central character in the novel is marginalized due to child marriage and its brutal norms.

Song of the Cuckoo Bird, as Malladi presents, “Coming from a conservative Brahmin home, where rules and regulations had shaped her childhood, Kokila dove into her new, unfettered life with unmatched eagerness” (Malladi 12). Kokila comes to Tella Meda at the age of eleven after her marriage to Vamsi Krishna from Visakhapatnam. When her father expires, she is left alone to experience the society from the margin. She never thinks about her that it takes a turn. Ramanandam Sastri, like a hero, comes and takes Kokila to Tella Meda. “In those days girls were married before they reached puberty, but they couldn't go to their husband's home until after they menstruated. For Kokila the three years before she menstruated were spent at Tella Meda, the home of her late father's friend Ramanandam Sastri” (Malladi 01). This shows how cruel the social custom on women happens to be. A woman is unwanted at her spouse's home until she is eligible to give physical pleasure. At the commencement of the novel, Malladi presents her heroine as an innocent girl who regardlessly trusts people. When she comes to Tella Meda she just gets enthralled by the infrastructure of the happy home. As a young girl she feels comfortable in Tella Meda by doing daily poojas, assisting Subhadra for cooking and by learning lessons from Ramanandam Sastri. Ramanandam Sastri's old friend Narayan Garu who lives in Tella Meda, constantly calls Kokila, a little bird, “In those early days he used to call her 'little bird' instead of Kokila, which means 'cuckoo bird' in Telugu” (SCB 25). The name Kokila originates from the

Indian Hindu backdrop and it commonly means the bird Cuckoo or Nightingale. The most famous characteristic of the cuckoo is its brood parasitism behavior. It lays its eggs in the nests of other bird species and seeks a host for hatching. Cuckoo, the nick name of Kokila by Narayan Garu reminds her identity that she is not an ethnic person of Tella Meda but chooses it as her host,her shelter to progress her life. Kokila is frequently treated as inferior to men in her community. The cuckoo bird in the novel is a symbol of Kokila’s inner turmoil. Cuckoo is known for its unique cry which symbolizes Kokila’s voice that is often unacknowledged or rejected by those around her. The bird’s marginalization in nature parallels Kokila’s battles to find a sanctuary for herself in a world that seems determined to remain silent. The metaphor of the Cuckoo bird reflects her estrangement and the longing for a sense of connection. As a result, Kokila experiences marginalization.

Another situation where Kokila experiences an allergic reaction to a new woolen sweater, but others falsely believe she is suffering from Leprosy and isolate her in a room. This misunderstanding takes her to a deeper sense of realization, especially about how people can be quick to judge without empathy or the ramifications of social isolation.

Dr. Shankar Gurunathan, is a son of a wealthy Brahmin, only after his assurance, people start to behave normally with Kokila. Shankar is benevolent towards Kokila and he also scolds Charvi for mistreating her. Shankar says that “Kokila, if you want to leave Tella Meda, you can come and stay with me...I don't care what people say. My offer will always be open. You can come anytime and live with me” (Malladi 167). But she responds him that she needs some time to think before taking any decisions. Ramanandam, who interprets in the middle of her speech to end the conversation and to safeguard Kokila from Shankar. But at the meantime, she thinks her loneliness in the room destroys her magical feeling that Tella Meda has given Kokila. She asserts, Tella Meda “had seemed like a prison just a day ago. This room had been suffocating. Now she was free again. She wouldn't have to live in some slum while her body disintegrated”(Malladi 168). This event completely dejects Kokila and she loses her trust on Ramanandam because she accepts everyone's rejection but particularly his denial damages her. When Ramanadham comes into her room, he proposes that he has fallen for her, she understands his patriarchal conception and firmly replies: “No... If you loved me, you would have been here with me regardless of my health. That is true love, where you can be with someone no matter how bad the situation is. You have never loved anyone except yourself. You disguise your selfishness with talk of independence but you don't fool



me anymore. I stayed in this ashram because this was the only real home I ever had and because...because of Vidura. I'm not going to stay because of you now...I'm not going to live with Shankar. But I'm staying here not for you but for myself. (Malladi 168-169).

In the light of these findings, Song of the Cuckoo Bird aligns with subaltern studies by amplifying the voices of marginalized individuals, especially women, who are often excluded from mainstream historical and literary narratives. Life has two sides like a coin. happiness adversity like coin Charvi's one side of life reflects marginalization, and the other side sheds light on her optimism, power of resilience. Likewise Kokila's one side of life reflects marginalization, struggles, and the other side is remarkable inner strength and determination, autonomy.

Kokila's travel through marginalization stands as a powerful testament to the perseverance of the human spirit. In spite of the societal forces that try to constrain her due to her gender and ethnicity, She emerges not as a victim of her adversities, but as a symbol of strength and empowerment. Her adversities, instead of defeating her, nurtures her growth, allowing her to reclaim her voice and her self-identity. While Kokila experiences social alienation and battles with her own personal issues, Charvi's optimism stands out. In spite of facing challenges, she remains hopeful and determined, always looking for opportunities for growth and improvement. Her optimistic approach not only assists her navigate adversities but also inspires those around her to maintain hope and perseverance.

Emily Dickinson writes,

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all, (Dickinson 314)*

Even though Amulya Malladi's women characters undergo hurdles, the self-reliant Charvi, and the self-autonomy Kokila are strong, determined and become role models for the distressed souls as a beacon of 'hope', demonstrate that marginalization does not diminish one's dignity but, instead, can ignite a deeper sense of purpose and power.

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**Paroxysm of Underlying Brutality in Fatima Bhutto’s  
*The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*.**

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**Abstract**

Fatima Bhutto through her debut novel *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* explores the impact of War and its consequences on the monotonous life of a common people in the Third World countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan etc. Bhutto has depicted the reality through imagination. The main aim of this article is to explore the realistic picture of Pakistan’s marginalised people who suffered in the name of war. Bhutto has coloured the novel with the personal life experiences. She has highlighted the dramatic outcome of war, bloodshed that people have encountered specifically in post 9/11 literature. *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* summons the conventional narratives where the third world nations either have no portrayal or a negative presentation or providing the voice to the voiceless. Her writings have clearly explained the narrative of the stack of FATA. The characters in all such difficult situations have employed their power and maintained their individuality. This particular research describes the struggles and domination of a culturally diverse society.

**Key Words:** Paroxysm, war, Third world, struggles, ruling class, marginalisation.

Literature is the art of written work that reflects life and refers exclusively to published sources. Literature is classified as two major forms-fiction and non-fiction. Literature can be classified according to historical periods, genre and political influences. It is an experience of life of truth and beauty. It is a written record of main spirit of thought, emotions, aspiration and the recollections of the human soul. Literature is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific. The term is most commonly used to refer to the works of the creative imagination including works of poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction.

Pakistan Literature is a distinct literature that gradually came to be defined after Pakistan, the Shared convention of Urdu literature and English literature of

British India which was inherited by the new state. Over a long period of time Pakistan has emerged in nearly all major Pakistani languages, like Urdu, English, Punjabi, Seraki, Bakochi, Pushto and Sindhi. Sandat Hassan Manto a prominent Pakistani writer of short stories produced great literature out of the events relating to the India Pakistan Independence. His writings are considered to be progressive in its tone and spirit. According to some critics it had not only evolved its own identity but also had played a significant role in documenting the sufferings and hopes of Pakistan in the later part of 20th Century. Pakistan came into survival in 1947 and for all technical reasons this is the year that should be marked as the root year for the country's literary history. Pakistani Literature in English depicts the political scenario of the country since 1947.

Fatima Bhutto was born on 29 May 1982. She is niece of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and granddaughter of former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. She is a critic of her aunt Benazir Bhutto. Her parents divorced when she was three years old and her father took Bhutto with him moving from country to country and she grew up effectively stateless. In 1998, at the age of 15, Bhutto published her first book named *Whispers of the Desert*. Her Second book on 8th October 2005 marks the moment of the 2005 Kashmir earthquake which records accounts of those affected. In 2010 she wrote a memoir named *Songs of Blood and Sword* (2010) which was published with acclaim. This book is based on the killing of her father Murtaza. Bhutto accuses her aunt Benazir and her husband Asif Zardari for the death of her father. Her first fictional novel *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* was published in November 2013. Mohiodin Farhan asserts, “Fatima Bhutto fiction manifests the impact of ‘War On Terror’ on the mundane life of common man in the ‘Third World’ countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan” (1253).

This novel depicts a scene of a famous political dynasty. Fatima Bhutto blamed the death of her father on her aunt, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who herself was assassinated. Drawing on this intimate knowledge of Pakistani politics, Bhutto's novel tries to taunt the different strands of political violence that plagues the part of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan's North Waziristan province. The novel takes place over the course of several hours as three brothers and two of the women romantically involved with them. This brings out the in and out of the complexities of war.

The novel is positioned in 2007 in the fictional town of Mir Ali, which is situated in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a region in north-western Pakistan that is partially under government control and partially ruled by

the Taliban. After the 9/11 attacks, FATA became a hub for terrorist activity as well as a crucial point in the multi-sided war and violence that followed: American drones that aims the Taliban, violence between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and rebellious fighting the army in order to break away from government control.

Fatima Butto through this novel raises controversial intervention regarding the ongoing war on terror at the time when Pakistan faces server challenges due to the ongoing rebellion in the tribal belt of the state. Bhutto’s sensitivity to the war on terror largely draws on the idea of social justice and abhorrence to oppressive institutions. An important evidence of this expression in her writings created human characters whose emotions, feelings, actions and fates are constrained by the devastating effects of the political ideology of war on terror.

The remote area, a town in the middle of nowhere, situated between Pakistan and Afghanistan is not very kind to its residents, either male or female. All the residents are surviving through poor conditions of health and education. The lives of the people were not peaceful. Butto brings out yet another devastating incident facing five young people living in the tribal areas on the Pakistan border with Afghanistan. The communities are under constant threat from brutal Taliban foot soldiers. The American drone strikes and the whereabouts of the Pakistani administration.

Bhutto has shown the complex nature of human life in this novel. She has laid the importance on the psyche of the characters of the characters who has suffered in the war. The characters without understanding have undergone great stress and trouble. The characters of Malalai, Sikander, Samarra, and Mina have faced the emotional impacts of the failure of their beloved ones. Their lives are stuffed with pain and sorrow which are the outcome of the war. Aman Erum says “two aeroplanes hit foreign buildings; this is what people in Mir Ali heard. What they knew about this new war, what they understood about the events that turned their town into a battlefield once more, was this: those plans were flown by heroes”(38). Mina and Sikander’s relationship is devastated after the death of their son. They are preoccupied by the memories of their lost child which in turn leads to psychological imbalance. The grief of loss is not restricted to particular characters but it engulfs all the characters. The story depicts a war-ravaged area where people are afraid to hold or organise gatherings and processions due to fear of life.

As the events of a single morning unfold, one observes and inhabits the conflicting minds of three brothers and the two women who mean most to them as they face up to impending horror and devastation. Bhutto expresses the lives of three brothers, Aman, Sikandar, and Hayat, as they find the way the complex

social and political landscape of their community, which has been deeply affected by the war. Shameen Nawaz says “Trauma is a painful response in a horrible incident have various causes such as beloved ones, survival in a horrible accident, rape, sexual abuse, murders and many others.” (167) The brothers struggle with their own trauma and loss, including the death of their father, a political activist who was killed by the military, and the desertion of their sister, who was kidnapped by a fundamentalist group. The novel highlights the difficulties of the social and political devastating scenario in the region and the discrimination of different groups and individuals who are affected by brutality and inconsistency.

The living conditions in the context of human relationships and the future of youth are also at serious risk. The War and terror has made their lives miserable and stolen them from their right to youth, laughter, and happiness. Bhutto has daringly brought out the efficacies of the small babies getting vaccinated in such inhumane manner by the expired useless medicine is shocking and personifies horror for the readers. In this age of medical advancement when humankind has discovered the cure for the fatal diseases such as cancer, HIV-AIDS and Tuberculosis there exists a little town on the face of earth where it is impossible for infants to get vaccination to ensure their survival and hope of healthy life.

The freedom which is the basic need of every human being has been denied to them openly. Sense of freedom has a direct and crucial influence on the quality of an individual’s life. Mir Ali’s schools for kids are dangerous as these are the places where people can get awareness of their rights and the world around them. The crescent moon in the title is symbolic of Islam and the flag of Pakistan has cast a cold shadow over Mir Ali. This is a place forsaken by the corrupt government and same belief, by God himself. It shows how regular people are inadvertently drawn into a political cause, and how quickly events can spiral out of control.

The younger generation of Mir Ali leads their life under the shadows of unhappiness and distress. Bhutto by enumerating their experiences delivers a message to the readers that every effort wind up this ongoing war would be fruitless. She also addresses to humanitarian needs of the citizens from the tribal areas would lead to the peace and stability to the entire universe. She has brought out the pain of peoples through her writings in order to find the solution to the war stricken peoples. Being a Pakistani woman, Brutto has daringly brought out the sufferings of the people to experience oppression in a transparent manner. She has also questioned the authorities in the humanitarian way that the people live in a free country should not be discriminated in any mode.

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## **Subaltern Eco-consciousness in the Poems of Mamang Dai: A Tribal Eco-Philosophical Perspective**

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### **Abstract:**

This article delves into the intricate portrayal of subaltern eco-consciousness within the poetry of Mamang Dai, specifically focusing on the articulation of tribal eco-philosophy as a distinct and vital form of environmental awareness. By meticulously analyzing Dai's poetic engagement with the natural world, this study argues that her work transcends conventional ecological discourse by foregrounding the indigenous worldview of the Tani community in Arunachal Pradesh. It examines how Dai's poetry reveals a profound and historically rooted connection between the tribal subaltern and their environment, emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature, the interconnectedness of all living beings, and the spiritual dimensions of ecological understanding. Through close readings of select poems and engagement with critical perspectives, this article demonstrates how Dai's work serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of tribal eco-philosophies in the face of modernity, environmental degradation, and the homogenizing forces of dominant cultures.

**Keywords:** Mamang Dai, subaltern eco-consciousness, tribal eco-philosophy, Arunachal Pradesh, Tani, indigenous literature, environmental poetry, subaltern studies, ecocriticism.

### **Introduction:**

Mamang Dai's poetry stands as a significant contribution to Indian literature, particularly in its nuanced and profound exploration of the relationship between humans and the natural world. Her work is not merely a reflection of environmental



concerns but a deep articulation of a subaltern eco-consciousness rooted in the indigenous worldview of the Tani community of Arunachal Pradesh. This article argues that Dai's poetry serves as a crucial platform for the articulation of tribal eco-philosophy, a distinct form of environmental awareness that challenges dominant, anthropocentric perspectives and reclaims the ecological voice of the marginalized. The concept of subalternity, as articulated by scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, and others, emphasizes the voices and experiences of marginalized groups whose perspectives are often silenced or overlooked by dominant power structures. In the context of environmental discourse, subaltern eco-consciousness highlights the ecological knowledge and practices of indigenous communities, which have been historically marginalized and dismissed. Dai's poetry, therefore, becomes a crucial site where the subaltern voice of the tribal community is amplified, offering a counter-narrative to the homogenizing forces of modernity, environmental exploitation, and neo-colonial narratives.

Tribal eco-philosophy, as depicted in Dai's poetry, is characterized by a deep sense of reverence for nature, a recognition of the interconnectedness of all living beings, and a spiritual understanding of the environment. This worldview is rooted in the lived experiences of the Tani people, who have maintained a close relationship with their natural surroundings for generations. By exploring the nuances of this eco-philosophy, this article seeks to illuminate the unique contributions of indigenous perspectives to contemporary environmental discourse and to challenge the dominance of Western-centric ecological frameworks.

### **Articulating Tribal Eco-Philosophy: The Sacred and the Interconnected**

#### **1. The Sacredness of Nature and Ancestral Reverence:**

Mamang Dai's poetic landscape is permeated by a profound sense of the sacredness of nature, a direct reflection of the animistic worldview and ancestral reverence central to the Tani community's cultural fabric. This is not a mere aesthetic appreciation of the natural world; it is a deep, spiritual recognition of nature as a living entity, imbued with agency and deserving of profound respect. This perspective stands in stark contrast to the dominant Western paradigm that often objectifies nature, reducing it to a resource for human exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

Dai's poetry, in its essence, becomes a conduit for the subaltern voice, reclaiming the indigenous understanding of nature that has been historically marginalized and silenced. The Tani cosmology, as articulated through her verse, posits a world where mountains, rivers, forests, and even mists are living presences, imbued with spirits and ancestral wisdom. This animistic perspective challenges the

anthropocentric bias that positions humans as the sole arbiters of meaning and value.

In "The Voice of the Mountain," Dai establishes the mountain as a sentient being:

The mountain is a presence,  
A silent watcher of time,  
Its voice a whisper in the wind,  
A sacred echo in the heart. (Dai)

This personification of the mountain is not simply a poetic device; it is a fundamental expression of the Tani belief that the mountain possesses a spirit, a "presence." The mountain's "voice," a "whisper in the wind," symbolizes the communication between the natural and the spiritual realms, a connection that is deeply ingrained in the Tani worldview. The "sacred echo in the heart" suggests that this connection is not merely external but resonates within the human soul, affirming the intrinsic bond between humans and nature.

Critics like Pramod K. Nayar, in his explorations of postcolonial ecocriticism, emphasize that indigenous perspectives like Dai's disrupt the Western nature-culture dichotomy. Nayar argues that this dichotomy has historically justified the exploitation of nature by positioning it as an object separate from human consciousness. Dai's poetry, however, challenges this separation, asserting the inherent subjectivity and agency of the natural world. This is a crucial aspect of subaltern resistance, as it reclaims the indigenous understanding of nature as a living, sacred entity, thereby challenging the dominant narrative that has historically devalued and exploited it.

Further, in "River Poems," Dai evokes the sacredness of rivers:

The rivers flow,  
Carrying the stories of the land,  
Whispering secrets to the stones,  
Their waters a sacred flow. (Dai)

Here, the rivers are not just physical entities but repositories of history and wisdom. They "carry the stories of the land," suggesting that the rivers are living archives, preserving the collective memory of the Tani people. The "whispering secrets to the stones" reinforces the idea of nature as a communicative force, constantly engaging with its surroundings. The phrase "their waters a sacred flow" underscores the spiritual significance of the rivers, highlighting their role as channels of life and ancestral connection.

The concept of ancestral reverence is intertwined with the sacredness of nature in Dai's poetry. The Tani people believe that their ancestors continue to reside in the natural world, their spirits animating the mountains, rivers, and forests. This belief system fosters a deep sense of responsibility towards the environment, as any harm inflicted upon nature is seen as a desecration of ancestral spirits.

In her poem, “Mists,” Dai writes:

The mists rise from the valley,  
Carrying the prayers of the ancestors,  
A sacred offering to the land,  
A communion with the spirits. (Dai)

The mists, in this context, are not merely meteorological phenomena but tangible manifestations of ancestral presence. They "carry the prayers of the ancestors," suggesting that the natural world acts as a medium for communication between the living and the dead. This "communion with the spirits" reinforces the idea of nature as a sacred space where the boundaries between the physical and the spiritual realms blur.

This animistic and ancestral reverence is crucial to understanding the subaltern relevance of Dai's work. By foregrounding the indigenous understanding of nature, Dai challenges the dominant narrative that has historically marginalized and devalued tribal perspectives. This reclamation of indigenous knowledge is a form of cultural resistance, asserting the validity and importance of tribal worldviews in the face of homogenization and erasure.

Moreover, the poems of Mamang Dai can be seen as a form of oral tradition made permanent. By writing down the stories and the sacredness of the land, she makes sure that the subaltern voice is not lost. The poems act as memory devices. The poems are like the stones that hold the river secrets. In the poem “The Earthsong” the land itself is a living being and it suffers.

The forests are disappearing,  
The rivers are polluted,  
The land is scarred,  
By the hands of greed. (Dai)

The land is not just a place, but is a being that is hurt, and is a being that holds the memories of the people. This is the subaltern voice, the voice that reminds us that the land has a right to be respected. The exploitation of the land is the exploitation of the people. Therefore, the sacredness of nature is not just an ideal, but a call to action.

Hence,, Dai's portrayal of the sacredness of nature, rooted in ancestral reverence, is a powerful assertion of subaltern eco-consciousness. Her poetry challenges the dominant Western paradigm, reclaiming the indigenous understanding of nature as a living, sacred entity.<sup>3</sup> This reclamation is a form of cultural resistance, asserting the validity and importance of tribal worldviews in the face of historical marginalization and erasure.<sup>4</sup> Through her evocative verse, Dai invites readers to reconsider their relationship with the natural world, embracing a more holistic and ethical approach to environmental stewardship that honors the wisdom of indigenous traditions.

## 2. The Interconnectedness of Life: A Web of Relationships

Mamang Dai's poetic vision is deeply rooted in the indigenous understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms. This perspective, central to the Tani community's worldview, challenges the Western anthropocentric tradition that often separates humans from the natural world. In Dai's poetry, the environment is not a mere backdrop but a dynamic network of relationships, where humans, animals, plants, and even inanimate objects are intricately linked. This understanding of interconnectedness is crucial to the articulation of subaltern eco-consciousness, as it highlights the ecological wisdom of marginalized communities and challenges dominant narratives of environmental exploitation.

Dai's poetry consistently emphasizes that the natural world is a web of relationships, where each element plays a vital role in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. This perspective directly opposes the Western tendency to view nature as a collection of isolated resources, ripe for exploitation. By foregrounding the interconnectedness of life, Dai's work asserts the intrinsic value of all living beings and underscores the ethical imperative to respect and protect the environment.

In “Small Towns by the River,” Dai articulates this sense of interconnectedness:

Small towns by the river,  
Where life flows with the water,  
And the spirit of the earth,  
Binds us all together. (Dai)

This passage highlights the symbiotic relationship between human communities and the natural environment. The river, as a life-giving force, connects the people to the land, creating a shared existence. The phrase “the spirit of the earth” suggests a unifying force that transcends individual beings, binding them together in a collective whole. This holistic perspective is a hallmark of indigenous eco-philosophies, which recognize the interdependence of all life forms.

Critics like Lawrence Buell, in his work on environmental imagination, emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing the interconnectedness of life. Buell argues that literature can play a crucial role in fostering an ecological consciousness that transcends anthropocentric perspectives. Dai's poetry, in this context, serves as a powerful example of how literature can articulate and promote a biocentric worldview. Her work invites readers to recognize the intrinsic value of all life forms and to embrace a more ethical and sustainable relationship with the environment.

Further, in "Forest Song," Dai elaborates on the intricate web of relationships within the forest ecosystem:

The trees whisper to the wind,  
The birds sing to the trees,  
The animals roam in the forest,  
All connected, all free. (Dai)

This passage evokes a sense of harmony and balance within the forest, where each element plays a vital role in the ecosystem. The "whispering trees," "singing birds," and "roaming animals" are not isolated entities but integral parts of a larger whole. The phrase "all connected, all free" suggests a sense of liberation that comes from recognizing and embracing this interconnectedness. This perspective challenges the Western tendency to view nature as a resource to be controlled and manipulated, instead advocating for a more respectful and harmonious relationship with the environment.

The subaltern relevance of this perspective is profound. Indigenous communities, like the Tani people, have long recognized the interconnectedness of life, developing sustainable practices that respect the balance of ecosystems. By foregrounding this indigenous wisdom, Dai's poetry challenges the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized and devalued tribal perspectives. This reclamation of indigenous knowledge is a crucial aspect of subaltern resistance, asserting the validity and importance of tribal worldviews in the face of homogenization and erasure.

Dai also connects the human emotional landscape to the environment. In the poem "When the River Sleeps" she writes:

The stories are lost,  
The songs are silenced,  
The river sleeps,  
In a forgotten dream. (Dai)

The river's sleep is not just a physical state, but a metaphor for the loss of cultural memory and the silencing of indigenous voices. The river's state reflects the state of

the community, showing that the health of the community and the health of the environment are intertwined. This is a powerful statement of the interconnectedness of culture and nature.

Ecocritical scholars like Val Plumwood, who explored the concept of dualisms in Western thought, would argue that Dai's poetry dismantles the nature-culture dualism that has historically justified the exploitation of the environment. Plumwood argues that this dualism has led to the objectification and commodification of nature, resulting in environmental degradation and social injustice. Dai's work, by contrast, challenges this dualism, asserting the interconnectedness of all life forms and the ethical imperative to respect and protect the environment.

In Dai's poetry, the recognition of interconnectedness extends beyond the physical realm to encompass the spiritual and emotional dimensions of life. This holistic perspective is a hallmark of indigenous eco-philosophies, which recognize the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence. By foregrounding this indigenous wisdom, Dai's work contributes to the ongoing project of decolonizing environmental discourse and reclaiming the ecological voice of the subaltern.

In essence, Mamang Dai's poetry is a powerful affirmation of the interconnectedness of life, a principle deeply embedded in the indigenous worldview of the Tani community. By illuminating this interconnectedness, Dai challenges the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized and exploited indigenous perspectives. Her work serves as a vital reminder of the ethical imperative to respect and protect the environment, not as a collection of isolated resources, but as a dynamic and interconnected web of life.

### 3. Spiritual Dimension of Ecology, Rituals, and Communion:

Mamang Dai's poetry intricately weaves the spiritual dimension into her ecological vision, highlighting the crucial role of rituals, ancestral knowledge, and communion with the natural world in sustaining a harmonious relationship with the environment. This aspect of her work is pivotal in understanding the subaltern eco-consciousness she articulates, as it underscores the indigenous methods of environmental stewardship that have been historically overlooked or dismissed by dominant cultures. Dai's poetry reveals a world where the sacred and the ecological are inseparable, where spiritual practices are integral to maintaining ecological balance.

The Tani community's deep-rooted connection to their environment is manifested through various rituals and ceremonies that honor the spirits of nature. These

practices are not mere cultural traditions but essential components of their ecological worldview, fostering a sense of reverence and responsibility towards the land. Dai's poetry acts as a repository of this ancestral knowledge, preserving and transmitting these traditions to a wider audience.

In her poem, "Arunachal," Dai explores the spiritual essence of her homeland:

The land remembers,  
The spirits whisper,  
In the rustling leaves,  
And the flowing rivers. (Dai)

This passage emphasizes the land's capacity to remember, suggesting that it holds the collective memory of the Tani people. The "whispering spirits" in the natural elements underscore the animistic beliefs that permeate their worldview. These spiritual presences are not separate from the environment but integral to it, reinforcing the idea that nature is imbued with sacred significance.

Critics like Vine Deloria Jr., in his exploration of indigenous spiritual traditions, argue that these traditions offer a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms. Deloria suggests that indigenous spiritual practices are not merely religious beliefs but sophisticated systems of ecological knowledge, developed through generations of close observation and interaction with the environment. Dai's poetry, in this context, serves as a testament to the validity and importance of these indigenous perspectives.

Dai's poetry also highlights the role of ancestral knowledge in guiding sustainable practices. The Tani people have developed a deep understanding of the rhythms of nature, using this knowledge to manage their resources and maintain ecological balance. This ancestral wisdom is passed down through oral traditions, rituals, and ceremonies, ensuring its continuity across generations.

In "Mountain Air," Dai writes:

The old ones knew,  
The secrets of the wind,  
The language of the trees,  
A knowledge lost to time. (Dai)

This passage evokes a sense of loss, lamenting the erosion of ancestral knowledge in the face of modernization. The "secrets of the wind" and "language of the trees" symbolize the intricate understanding of nature that has been accumulated over generations. This knowledge is not merely practical but also spiritual, reflecting a deep respect for the natural world.

The concept of communion with nature is central to the spiritual dimension of ecology in Dai's poetry. The Tani people believe that they can communicate with the spirits of nature through rituals, ceremonies, and personal interactions. This communion is not a passive experience but an active engagement with the environment, fostering a sense of reciprocity and mutual respect.

In "The River's Song," Dai expresses this sense of communion:

I listen to the river,

Its song a prayer,

A connection to the earth,

A moment of grace. (Dai)

This passage highlights the transformative power of communion with nature. The river's "song" is perceived as a "prayer," symbolizing a spiritual connection to the earth. This "moment of grace" suggests a profound sense of peace and harmony that comes from being in communion with the natural world.

The subaltern relevance of these spiritual practices is significant. Indigenous communities, like the Tani people, have long relied on their spiritual traditions to maintain a sustainable relationship with their environment. By foregrounding these practices, Dai's poetry challenges the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized and dismissed indigenous knowledge. This reclamation of spiritual traditions is a crucial aspect of subaltern resistance, asserting the validity and importance of indigenous worldviews in the face of homogenization and erasure.

Furthermore, Dai's poetry reveals that the erosion of these spiritual practices is intrinsically linked to environmental degradation and cultural loss. The loss of rituals, ancestral knowledge, and communion with nature undermines the ecological balance and erodes the cultural identity of indigenous communities. Therefore, her poems act as a call for the preservation and revitalization of these practices, highlighting their crucial role in fostering ecological sustainability and cultural resilience.

In essence, Mamang Dai's poetry reveals the spiritual dimension of ecology as a vital component of subaltern eco-consciousness. Her work underscores the importance of rituals, ancestral knowledge, and communion with nature in maintaining a harmonious relationship with the environment. By foregrounding these indigenous practices, Dai challenges dominant narratives and asserts the validity and importance of tribal worldviews in the face of historical marginalization and erasure.

#### **The Impact of Modernization and Environmental Exploitation:**

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Mamang Dai's poetry doesn't shy away from depicting the harsh realities of modernization and environmental exploitation faced by the tribal subaltern. Her work serves as a powerful testament to the devastating impact of these forces on indigenous communities and their traditional ways of life. By highlighting the subaltern struggle against these encroaching forces, Dai's poetry becomes a crucial platform for articulating the ecological and cultural vulnerabilities of marginalized groups.

The arrival of modernization, often accompanied by resource extraction, deforestation, and the imposition of dominant economic models, disrupts the delicate balance of indigenous ecosystems and erodes the cultural fabric of tribal communities. Dai's poetry captures the sense of displacement and loss that accompanies these changes, revealing the profound impact on the lives of the Tani people.

In her poem, "The Distant Hills," Dai depicts the intrusion of external forces:

The roads arrive,

The machines roar,

The hills are silent,

A different song is heard. (Dai)

This passage evokes a sense of intrusion and disruption. The "roads" and "machines" symbolize the arrival of modernization, which brings with it a "different song" that silences the traditional rhythms of the hills. This shift in the soundscape reflects the broader changes occurring within the community, as traditional ways of life are replaced by modern practices.

Postcolonial scholars like Vandana Shiva, who have extensively studied the impact of globalization on indigenous communities, argue that modernization often leads to the exploitation of natural resources and the marginalization of local populations. Shiva suggests that the dominant economic model, driven by profit and growth, disregards the ecological and cultural values of indigenous communities. Dai's poetry, in this context, serves as a powerful critique of this exploitative system.

Dai also addresses the issue of deforestation, which has a devastating impact on the livelihoods and cultural practices of tribal communities. In her poem, "The Empty Forest," she writes:

The trees are gone,

The birds have flown,

The silence echoes,

Where life has flown. (Dai)

This passage evokes a sense of emptiness and loss. The "empty forest" symbolizes the destruction of the natural environment, which has a ripple effect on the entire ecosystem. The "silence" that echoes where "life has flown" reflects the profound impact of deforestation on the lives of the Tani people, who rely on the forest for their sustenance and cultural practices.

The subaltern relevance of these depictions is profound. Indigenous communities, like the Tani people, are often the first to bear the brunt of environmental degradation and cultural erosion. By foregrounding their experiences, Dai's poetry challenges the dominant narratives that often overlook or dismiss the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. This reclamation of subaltern voices is a crucial aspect of resistance, asserting the right of indigenous communities to protect their lands and cultures.

In “The Last Light” Dai explores the sense of a vanishing world.

The old ways fade,

The stories drift,

The light is dimming,

A forgotten gift. (Dai)

This poem speaks to the fading of the traditional culture, and the loss of the stories that give meaning to the people. The light that is dimming is a metaphor for the fading of the culture, and the "forgotten gift" is the traditional knowledge that is being lost.

Critics who focus on environmental justice emphasize that the impact of modernization and environmental exploitation is not evenly distributed. Marginalized communities, including indigenous peoples, are disproportionately affected by these forces. Dai's poetry, therefore, serves as a crucial tool for raising awareness about these injustices and advocating for the rights of subaltern groups.

Dai's work also highlights the cultural erosion that accompanies environmental degradation. The loss of traditional ecological knowledge, rituals, and ceremonies undermines the cultural identity of indigenous communities and weakens their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. By depicting these cultural losses, Dai's poetry underscores the interconnectedness of environmental and cultural sustainability.

In essence, Mamang Dai's poetry provides a powerful and poignant portrayal of the subaltern struggle against modernization and environmental exploitation. Her work challenges dominant narratives, amplifies the voices of marginalized communities, and advocates for environmental justice. By illuminating the impact of these forces

on the lives of the Tani people, Dai's poetry serves as a crucial reminder of the need to protect the ecological and cultural heritage of indigenous communities.

**5. Cultural Erosion and the Loss of Ecological Knowledge: The Subaltern Struggle**  
Mamang Dai's poetry poignantly captures the profound impact of cultural erosion and the loss of ecological knowledge on the tribal subaltern. This erosion, often a direct consequence of modernization and environmental exploitation, represents a significant threat to the cultural identity and ecological resilience of indigenous communities. Dai's work serves as a critical reflection on this loss, highlighting the subaltern struggle to preserve their traditions and knowledge in the face of encroaching dominant cultures.

The erosion of cultural practices and ecological knowledge is not merely a sentimental loss; it represents a fundamental disruption of the intricate relationship between indigenous communities and their environment. Traditional ecological knowledge, accumulated over generations, provides essential guidance for sustainable resource management and ecological balance. The loss of this knowledge weakens the ability of tribal communities to adapt to environmental changes and maintain their cultural identity.

In her poem, "The Vanishing Trail," Dai explores the sense of cultural displacement:

The trail is overgrown,  
The footprints fade,  
The stories scatter,  
A heritage betrayed. (Dai)

This passage evokes a sense of loss and abandonment. The "overgrown trail" and "fading footprints" symbolize the erosion of traditional practices and the loss of connection to ancestral lands. The "scattered stories" represent the fragmentation of cultural narratives, which are essential for transmitting ecological knowledge and cultural values. The phrase "heritage betrayed" underscores the sense of injustice and violation experienced by the tribal subaltern.

Scholars of indigenous studies, like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her work on decolonizing methodologies, argue that the loss of cultural knowledge is a form of epistemic violence. Smith highlights the ways in which dominant cultures have systematically marginalized and dismissed indigenous knowledge systems, leading to the erosion of cultural identity and ecological resilience. Dai's poetry, in this context, serves as a powerful counter-narrative, reclaiming the validity and importance of tribal knowledge.

Dai also addresses the impact of modernization on traditional livelihoods, which often rely on intimate knowledge of the natural environment. In her poem, "The Silent Loom," she writes:

The loom is still,  
The threads are broken,  
The patterns fade,  
A language unspoken. (Dai)

This passage evokes a sense of cultural stagnation and loss. The "silent loom" and "broken threads" symbolize the disruption of traditional crafts and livelihoods, which are often deeply intertwined with ecological knowledge. The "fading patterns" and "unspoken language" represent the loss of cultural expressions that are essential for transmitting ancestral wisdom.

The subaltern relevance of these depictions is profound. The erosion of cultural knowledge and practices directly undermines the ability of indigenous communities to assert their rights and protect their lands. By foregrounding these losses, Dai's poetry challenges the dominant narratives that often overlook or dismiss the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. This reclamation of subaltern voices is a crucial aspect of resistance, asserting the right of indigenous communities to maintain their cultural identity and ecological knowledge.

In “The Whispering Reeds” Dai describes the effects of the silence that descends upon the community.

The reeds are still,  
No wind to sway,  
The songs are hushed,  
The memories decay. (Dai)

This poem shows that not only is the land affected, but the memory of the people also fades. The memories that decay are the memories of the land, and the stories that are connected to the environment. The silence is a symbol of the loss of culture and the loss of connection to the land.

Critics who focus on cultural ecology emphasize the interconnectedness of cultural and ecological systems. They argue that the loss of cultural knowledge and practices can have devastating consequences for the environment, as indigenous communities are often the most effective stewards of their lands. Dai's poetry, therefore, serves as a crucial tool for raising awareness about the importance of cultural preservation and ecological sustainability.

Dai's poems also reveal the intergenerational trauma that cultural erosion creates. The loss of cultural knowledge not only affects the current generation but also

undermines the ability of future generations to connect with their heritage and maintain their cultural identity. Therefore, her work stands as a testament to the resilience of the subaltern, and a powerful call to protect and preserve their cultural and ecological heritage.

In essence, Mamang Dai's poetry provides a powerful and poignant portrayal of the subaltern struggle against cultural erosion and the loss of ecological knowledge. Her work challenges dominant narratives, amplifies the voices of marginalized communities, and advocates for the preservation of cultural and ecological heritage. By illuminating the impact of these losses on the lives of the Tani people, Dai's poetry serves as a crucial reminder of the need to protect the cultural and ecological heritage of indigenous communities.

#### Conclusion

Mamang Dai's poetry emerges as a vital and compelling testament to the power of subaltern eco-consciousness, rooted deeply within the indigenous worldview of the Tani community of Arunachal Pradesh. Through her evocative verse, Dai transcends the limitations of conventional environmental discourse, offering a profound exploration of the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world. This exploration is not merely an aesthetic appreciation of nature but a profound assertion of tribal eco-philosophy, a holistic understanding that intertwines the sacred, the ecological, and the cultural.

Her work articulates a world where nature is not a resource to be exploited but a living entity imbued with spiritual significance, where all life forms are interconnected in a delicate web of relationships, and where ancestral knowledge and rituals are integral to maintaining ecological balance. Dai's poetry serves as a crucial platform for reclaiming and amplifying the subaltern ecological voice, challenging the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized and silenced indigenous perspectives.

By foregrounding the sacredness of nature, the interconnectedness of life, and the spiritual dimensions of ecology, Dai's work reveals the deep ecological wisdom embedded within tribal traditions. Her poetry illuminates the devastating impact of modernization and environmental exploitation on indigenous communities, highlighting the cultural erosion and loss of ecological knowledge that accompany these changes. In doing so, she exposes the vulnerabilities of the subaltern and asserts their right to protect their lands and cultures.

Dai's poetry is not merely a lament for lost traditions; it is a powerful call to action. It urges readers to reconsider their relationship with the natural world, to embrace a more ethical and sustainable approach to environmental stewardship, and to

recognize the intrinsic value of indigenous knowledge and practices. Her work serves as a crucial reminder that the preservation of cultural and ecological heritage is not just a matter of historical significance but a vital imperative for the future.

In an era marked by environmental crisis and cultural homogenization, Mamang Dai's poetry stands as a beacon of hope and resilience. It reminds us that the voices of the marginalized hold invaluable insights into the complex relationship between humanity and nature, and that the recovery of these voices is essential for creating a more just and sustainable world. Through her profound and evocative verse, Mamang Dai invites us to listen to the whispers of the mountains, the songs of the rivers, and the wisdom of the ancestors, offering a vision of ecological harmony that is both deeply rooted in tradition and urgently relevant to the challenges of our time.

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## **Rewriting the Tenor of Horror: Subverting the Mainstream Narrative in Joe Hill’s Works**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyses the counter-narrative in Joe Hill’s works which includes subversion of gothic tropes, reinterpretations of feminist horror, queering horror, and social critiques across his novels and stories. The concept of counter-narrative is subverting the mainstream narrative and often describes the perspective of the voice of the voiceless. The researcher is scrutinized for analysis of Hill’s novels and his collection of short stories *Locke & Key* (2008-2013). This argument highlights that the writer has replaced the traditional gothic tropes with unconventional story structures and mixed horror with modern pop culture. The writer wants his audience to know unusual things beyond the imagination. The characteristics of conventional horror novels are rooted in supernatural horror, haunted houses, and unchangeable binary opposition such as good versus evil, and hero versus villain. However, Hill incorporates contemporary problems such as trauma, identity, technology, and social power with traditional gothic elements.

**Keywords:** oppression, psychological horror, irrational, queerness, marginalization.

Joe Hill is solely pursuing his successful career as a well-known 21st-century horror and gothic fiction writer. He shows his uniqueness from his preceding masters by amalgamating traditional Gothic elements with contemporary psychological problems such as trauma, gender issues, and technology. Hill is heavily indebted to his father’s Gothic conceptions. All his supernatural traits and horror themes are extracted from his father. In one of his interviews, he admits that his works mostly reshaped his father’s work but tried to bestow his narration in a unique voice. Both are influenced by classic writers such as Ray Bradbury and Richard Matheson.

The prominent gothic writers focus on fear and shock in an eerie atmosphere but Hill deconstructs the feeling of horror with deep emotional



storytelling and the personal feeling. His works are skillfully crafted, conveying the fear more intimately than a panic attack. In his debut novel, *Heart-Shaped Box* the protagonist Judas Coyne is an aging rock star who is poltergeist by the vengeful ghost of Craddock McDermott through a haunted death suit. Judas Coyne is emotionally haunted by his past which makes him treat his young girlfriend, Florida as a temporary distraction from his loneliness. He breaks off his relationship without considering the repercussions. She commits suicide and his stepfather considers that Judas is responsible. He regrets not treating her with the respect and careful attention that she deserves that Craddock ghost demands. The ghost haunting leads him to find a way toward redemption. The horror leads him to discover himself in guilt and redemption pathway. He has transformed himself from a more detached person to an attached one. While fighting with Craddock, he willingly sacrifices his life to save Georgia's life.

The conventional gothic heroes are noble people who fight against irrational, immortal monsters. The Germanic hero legend, Beowulf the eponymous character fights against the frightened demon, Grendel. The hero saves the sufferer of Danes from the hands of the monster. Hill presents his protagonist, Judas Coyne as a flawed, selfish person, who exploits the younger women and lives a self-destructive life. Hill presents anti-heroes as Gothic protagonists in novels like *Heart-Shaped Box* and *Horns*. The deconstruction of the protagonist's character is beyond the reader's expectation rather than a stock hero of classic Gothic. The parallel protagonist is employed by his father Stephen King in his novel *The Shining* he presents his protagonist, Jack Torrance as an alcoholic person, short-tempered who mistakenly breaks off his son's hands. He is not a kind, caring person like Judas Coyne who has lost a teaching job after assaulting a student in schools.

A challenging classic vampire like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, he deconstructs the Gothic vampire through the vampire, Charlie Manx. He is 140 years old and abducts children's souls to remind young forever. He sucks the life force of his victim, an innocent kid to sustain himself immortality. The conventional Gothic vampire are upper classes and their action are unpredictable. *Dracula* is portrayed as an educated, culturally noble person. The portrait of a noble person helps him to manipulate and deceive his victims. Like, Charlie deceives his victim in an act of mercy. According to him, he rescues an innocent kid from ruthless parents and abusive homes. He kidnaps the children and makes a journey to Christmasland. Christmasland is an amusement park where every day is Christmas Eve, stay happy and young forever like Charlie. The rescue narrative tactics have been used by kidnappers in the real world. The antagonist, Charlie develops the

theme of psychological horror rather than supernatural characters. His physical features are not only terrifying the victims but also haunting the psychic state.

The classic gothic text presents the heroine as helpless in a patriarchal society. In the novel *NOS4A2*, Vic McQueen is not just fighting against the antagonist, psychic vampire Charlie but also dismantling the image of conventional gothic heroine. The writer portrays her as a narrator in her story. She can withstand and create her destiny. Instead of depending on a patriarchal society, she uses her psychic ability (The shorter way bridge) to resolve her problems. She is not a passive, fragile woman like the conventional Gothic heroine, Madeline Usher in “The Fall of the House of Usher”. In Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, Isabella is a victim of male dominance. She depends on Theodore as a helpless woman in a patriarchal society. Her situation represents an unmarried young woman in a male-dominated society.

Vic McQueen is the epitome of the classic horror term *Final Girl*. The last standing girl is a key concept in horror fiction. The final girl is the last female survivor but later appears as a supreme survivor in the concerned battle. Carol J Clover discusses the term final girl in his non-fiction book, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. The slasher film is a subgenre of horror films. The slasher film is about a killer who stalks and kills a series of victims randomly. The victims are mostly teenagers or adults who are detached from the mainstream world. The plot starts with the murder of a young woman and ends with a sole survivor who resists her death. According to Carol, the final girl is

the first character to sense something amiss and the only one to deduce from the accumulating evidence the pattern and extent of threat; the only one, in other words, whose perspective approaches our own privileged understanding of the situation. We register her horror as she stumbles on the corpses of her friends.(44)

One of the victims of Charlie is young Vic McQueen who escapes from the soul drainer by using her psychic knife, The shorter way bridge. It is mentally making a pathway connection between the present place and the target place or destiny. She is solely a survivor from Man's Inscapes like a final girl. As a young girl, she steps on Christmasland from frustration by using her inscape. The quarrel between Charlie and her in Christmasland, Manx's alternative utopia. His ego touches when he knows she has a psychic ability like him. She also can travel between the real world and the imaginary world. Charlie retaliates against her and everyone around her as a result of escape. Her survivor dismantled his ego. He believes he is the world's most vigorous rescuer, but Vic McQueen disproves this

belief. In classic novels, the heroine is helpless, they can't stand for themselves or against their opponents. Hill's female protagonist, Vic McQueen, can fight against the serial killer and she refuses to leave the situation as it is but tries to control the circumstances. In the classic novel, the heroines are frightened by malevolent villains or supernatural entities like the villain, Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe. Emily St. Aubert is a classic victimized heroine, orphaned and imprisoned by her aunt's notorious husband, Montoni in the haunted Udolpho castle. In *NOS4A2*, Vic Mac Queen alternatively threatens the villains by exposing his mental landscapes to everyone. Hill presents his heroines as sturdiness, the ability to fight against superiors for her narration, and personal demons.

In the novel, *Heart-Shaped Box*, the protagonist's girlfriend is Georgia or Marybeth who initially appears as just another companion to him. Initially, the writer portrays her as an irrepressible goth fashion woman, more interested in dark, black clothing and melancholic mode. She refuses to just as a helpless woman or victim of patriarchal or any dangerous supernatural society. When the ghost of Craddock threatens Judas, she is more willing to defend herself. All classic novel portrays the heroines in dependent personality disorder but Hill women are alternatively stands in supporter ends. She extends her supportive hand to help him get up after the previous catastrophe. She uses the Ouija board to learn the truth behind the murder of Florida, Anna McDermott. In classical novels, the heroines are subject to the supernatural but Hill's creation Georgia represents a loyal, courageous, trustworthy, and protective person. She is considered a symbol of redemption to Judas. She provides a way to escape his dark history. Through the help of the Ouija board, he knows that Florida was raped and hanged by her stepfather Craddock. With the help of Georgia, he moves from guilt to redemption state. At the beginning of the novel, she appears as a supportive and protective character later she becomes crucial to the psychological and physical perseverance of Judas. She is one of Hill's strong female characters because she is empathetic, brave, and unafraid to stand up to the physical and otherworldly worlds. When she is playing Ouija, she sees that her throat is cut and that black gauze is wrapped around her eyes in the mirror. The frightened reflection refuses to stop and it shows her fortitude and determination. The mirror's reflection on Georgia's face is that “her eyes were covered with a blindfold of black gauze and her throat was slashed. A red mouth gaped obscenity across it, and her shirt was soaked in blood and sticking to her breasts (*HBS*, 243).

Edgar Allen Poe and other great horror authors tend to rely more on gothic motifs. But Hill incorporates contemporary pop culture or rock songs into his novel

as a terrifying modern setting. He intermixes the fear of horror and modern cultural influences. His debut novel, *Heart-Shaped Box* encloses four subsections. A contemporary rock song served as the inspiration for the subsection's title. The rock group Led Zeppelin performed the song "Black Dog," which is the first chapter's title. The song's name in the subtitle provides a metaphor for Rocking Star's main character, story, and gloomy mood. The song of Nirvana influences the title of the novel *Heart-Shaped Box*. The meaning of the song "Hurt" (third chapter title) highlights the character's struggle to identify the cause of its melancholy. It also represents Judas Coyne's thinking, which is that he can't figure out whom murdered his ex-girlfriend, Florida.

The term *Intermediality* interconnects literary text to other media. Through the medium, they symbolically describe the meaning of the particular context. The theorist Gaudreault and Marion's theory of double birth of every new media is quoted in an article that

a good understanding of a medium [...] entails understanding its relationship to other media: it is through Intermediality, through a concern with the intermedial that a medium is understood. In making this point, they proceed from the assumption that 'Intermediality [is] found in any process of cultural production'. (Rajewsky, 48)

Judas Coyne is frightened to enter his studio because he hears someone talking on the radio. He feels that “sounds could suggest shapes, paint a picture of the pocket of air in which they have been given form” (*HSB*, 19). In stereo, the weatherman explains the current conditions, but his words reflect Judas's mental state “cold and dry as the front pushes the warm air South. The Dead pull the living down. Down into the cold. Down into the hole. You will die” (*HSB*, 22). The phrase ‘Dead pull the living down’ describes the ghost of Craddock, physically and psychologically torments the living person down or mentally drains the energy level to a hopeless state. The sound of the phone ring gives him the pull of another unhappy jump.

The concept of Julia Kristeva's *Intertextuality* expands far away from literature to comprehend diverse types of intercommunication comprising music, dance, art, and everyday communication. Umberto Eco has exponentially crafted the intertextuality in his novel *The Name of the Rose* which recounts intertextual connection to various folks into symbols. According to Kristeva, the interconnectedness between two texts, one text refers to or is influenced by another, by making a bridge of connections and meanings. Some of the gothic writers refer to classic texts to substantiate their viewpoint. But Hill refers to his text for

explaining the ruthless nature of his villains in the novel, *Horns*. He compares the transformation of Ig Perrish and his demonic nature after obtaining the horns to the cruel and pitiless vampire, Charlie Manx in *NOS4A2*.

In several Gothic novels, the male protagonist is encouraged to fight by the death of a lady. Hill portrays the women as self-preservers who fight not for their gain. The epitome of women's sacrifice for others is well projected in his novels. In his dystopian novel, *The Fireman* the female protagonist Harper Grayson as a school nurse finds a meaning for her life in a dystopian world. She has more hope and resilience in the holocaust world. She has also been affected by the dragon scale, a contagious spore. She shows more love to her unborn child and her journey to survival in Camp Wyndham. She is willing to help others and provide service in extreme suffering situations. Hope is a survival mechanism for people to move forward. In the classical novel, the heroines are hopeless and dependent on others. Even in dire circumstances, she doesn't lose her hope. She breaks the image of *Sacrificial Mother and Final Girl*. She narrates her life and rejects all patriarchal narratives from her life. Some classic novels depict women as insane, such as Charlotte Bronte's Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*. Hill reconsiders the monstrous female archetype in his novels. In the novel, *The Fireman*, the writer projects Harper Grayson who justifies her actions and responses to oppression. In the novel, *NOS4A2*, according to Vic McQueen, violence and trauma are not unreasonable since they are the results of injustice. Hill's heroines play the role of monsters as well as moral heroines. He breaks the rigid conventions of the image of women.

The classic gothic novel *Dracula* criticizes the decay of aristocracy, abusive power, and structural hierarchy. Hill's work is set in a gothic dystopian society and uses an unusual plot format. *The Fireman* imagines a scattered world where a mysterious contagious spore, Dragonscale, infects half of the population in America. The infected people are to ignite at any moment. The future is unpredictable for the infectors. Instead of concentrating on ghosts and the supernatural, Hill analyses mass hysteria and religious extremism. The novel's dystopian setting creates a modern gothic environment where people fear human thought more than communicable diseases. Isolation is one of the themes in gothic novels. In *The Fireman* when the characters maintain harmony and love in a balanced way, it sustains the community's peace and trust.

Beyond otherworldly dread, Hill's counter-narratives force readers to face issues of abuse, trauma, oppression, and social ruin. By modernizing the gothic, Hill makes sure that horror is a genre that is still relevant and socially conscious, reflecting the complexity of modern identity and power.

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**Reweaving the Self: A Study of Social Mobilization in Urmila Pawar’s  
*The Weave of my Life***

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**Abstract**

This paper attempts to analyse the change and adaptation theory of Gabriel Almond with respect to the autobiography ‘The Weave of My Life’ written by Urmila Pawar. The memoir ‘The Weave of My Life’ by Urmila Pawar offers a firsthand account of the difficulties that a Dalit woman in India confronts. Her battles with gender inequity, social discrimination, and the search for a social and personal identity are documented in the book. It depicts the struggles that Dalit undergoes in the society and their comeback in spite of all the oppressions and discrimination. Almond discusses change and adaptation as inextricable in the political system. This paper explores that change and adaptation are inextricably linked in the social system in the work ‘The Weave of my Life’.

**Keywords:** Change, Adaptation, Inextricable, Discrimination, Community, Dalit

**Introduction**

System refers to a ‘group of things or parts working together as a whole.’ Political system refers to ‘the state or government or public affairs.’ Social system ‘concerns with the organisations of and relations between people and communities.’ Politics is of the people, for the people and by the people. Society deals with people and communities. Hence both deal with people, one in power level another in social level.

Urmila Pawar belongs to a Dalit community. She is a girl born and brought up in the community where she faces a lot of discrimination for dalit people. From her childhood to being an adult she faces discrimination around her due to her caste. The upper caste people see Dalits as lower caste and they ill treat them. They are treated as untouchables. Despite all these struggles Urmila's perseverance to attain

heights is the main focus of the autobiography. She undergoes a lot of mental, physical and emotional hardship to make a change in the society. She works her best for the Dalit women empowerment and she was in a position to create sufficient impact on empowering dalit women's position in the society.

Themes of change and adaptation are fundamental to both political institutions and individual lives. This study examines how individuals adapt on a personal and societal level by fusing Gabriel Almond's political theory with Urmila Pawar's own narrative. The purpose of the paper is to shed light on the dynamic interaction between personal narratives and political cultures by contrasting Pawar's actual experiences with Almond's theoretical viewpoints.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper analyses Gabriel Almond's theories on change and adaptability as well as Urmila Pawar's memoir, "The Weave of My Life," to look at the relationship between social and political change. Through illuminating the individualised aspects of adaptation and resilience, Pawar's story provides insight into the real-life experiences of Dalit women in India. The theoretical foundation for analysing these individual experiences in light of substantially greater societal and political changes is provided by Almond's framework. This study investigates how broader political and cultural shifts are reflected in and interacted with through individual narratives of adaptation.

Almond understood that political cultures are subject to change. For instance, a society's political culture may change from being more traditional or localised to being more involved and participatory as it becomes more industrialised and urbanised. This shift may have an impact on how people engage with their government and how political institutions operate. For political systems and institutions to remain stable and effective, they need to adapt to these shifts in political culture. To better reflect the changing expectations and ideals of its members, democratic institutions might need to alter their procedures and regulations. In a society that is changing, this adaptation process helps to ensure that the political system is still relevant and responsive.

This section focuses on how certain adaptation stories reflect larger political and cultural changes by contrasting Pawar's personal experiences with Almond's theory. Pawar's experiences serve as a microcosmos of the larger socio-political shifts that Almond is concerned about. Pawar's story demonstrates the adaptation processes Almond describes as she negotiates and reacts to shifting social conditions. The relationship between individual resilience and society adaptation is examined in this paper. The views of Gabriel Almond on adaptation and change,



especially as they relate to political culture, offer a framework for comprehending how people and society deal with changes in the surroundings. Understanding personal adaptation can also be gained by applying Almond's theories of change in political systems and cultures in response to both internal and external factors.

### **Discussion**

The society where Urmila lived could not accept girls' education as normal. The society had the mindset that a woman's destination “would be blowing on the stove (Urmila 18)” , so there's no need for girls to be educated. Society opposed girls' education but Urmila's mother, father and brother were strong in their conviction to educate girls. Even when girl education was not possible in Urmila's society her father made arrangements for his daughter to stay at his friend's home in order to pursue her education. Even if Urmila failed in her exams her family members punish her, wanting her to study well and get good marks. This shows Urmila's families' ‘change’ in their perception while compared to that of the society that is against girls' education.

Urmila was humiliated starting from her childhood. Urmila's mother used to prepare baskets and Urmila would deliver it to the appropriate person's house; they would never allow her into their houses. Urmila says,

“They made me stand at the threshold; I put the baskets down and they sprinkled water on them to wash away the pollution, and only then would they touch them. They would drop coins in my hands from above, avoiding contact, as if their hands would have burnt had they touched me. If the house belonged to one of my classmates, the shame of it was killing ( Pawar 65).”

So such is the deepened effect of casteism in people's hearts.

Urmila had two friends named Baby and Saida. They were good friends and were together. Once they came to know that Urmila belonged to dalit community through their relatives and thereon their attitude towards Urmila changed totally. They ignored her and after some days they shifted their home elsewhere.

Urmila studied and got a job. She wanted to marry Harishchandra who's a Dalit. They both had been in love for years and they were married. Harishchandra happens to visit his colleagues' home where they treated him badly. They were the one who invited him for dinner repeatedly but when they came to know he is a Dalit through his peon their treatment of Harishchandra was totally juxtaposed. The peon was made to sit inside the home while Harishchandra who was invited had dinner in the verandah which was not even a suitable place to sit. “The verandah, where he was served, was covered with dirt and filth. Shoes and chappals lay strewn all

around. Goat droppings could be seen nearby (Pawar 159).” He decided to never accept any invitation thereafter as he had been humiliated the worst due to the caste he belonged to. All these discrimination created a strong determination in Urmila to make a change in the society. To make a change in people’s mind, their thinking and perception towards Dalit community.

Urmila’s husband Harishchandra belonged to the category of people who think woman’s work is only to cook, look after their home, children and husband, except these works they aren’t allowed to be involved in societal works. “He firmly believed that looking after the house was the sole responsibility of the woman (Urmila 241),” but Urmila broke this stereotypic mindset. She worked in a company, managed household chores, looked after children, at the same time she also pursued her higher studies. Harishchandra couldn’t stop her but he adapted to Urmila’s change proving ‘change and adaptation’ as inextricable on an individual level.

She started creating a community where she would gather dalit women in her community and empower them by educating about their rights as an individual. “I felt that a woman was also an individual, just as a man was, and was entitled to all rights of an individual (Urmila 248).” She started attending meetings and she would empower the dalit women through her speeches. Urmila created the community that empowers women along with some of her friends. She broke all patriarchal and stereotypes. She came out of the society’s boundary ‘of how a woman should be’ and lived her life as she wanted with integrity. Later Urmila got many appointments to speak for dalit women. The society, which at first opposed women’s education and empowerment, started inviting Urmila to give speeches. She encouraged Dalit women to stand up for their cause. This reflects ‘change’ in Urmila to which society adapts itself. ‘When change occurs society is ultimately made to accept the changes and adapt to those changes’ as said by Almond. Hence proving ‘change and adaptation’ as inseparable in the social system.

### **Conclusion**

Pawar’s story demonstrates how individuals can adjust to systemic obstacles and sociocultural forces on a personal level. Harishchandra adapts to Urmila’s change of rising beyond the margins and the society too appreciates and adapts to its citizens’ change in behaviour and perception, demonstrating society can’t function on a separate path but has to adapt to the changes. Her narrative demonstrates tenacity and the capacity to manoeuvre through and reinvent her identity in the face of a shifting socio-political environment. This study accentuates how crucial it is to combine theoretical frameworks and firsthand knowledge to

comprehend the intricate dynamics of change and adaptation. Together, Gabriel Almond's political theories and Urmila Pawar's narrative offer a thorough understanding of how people and society deal with changing conditions.

A sophisticated understanding of how change and adaptation are experienced and managed on both a personal and societal level is provided by the fusion of political theory and personal narratives. Urmila wanted a change, the change was made and society accepted and adapted to the change. Hence Almond's theory proved that change and adaptation are inextricable. Where there's a change there is also adaptation. 'As a political system cant ignore change and adaptation, so does the social system cant ignore change and adaptation'.

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**Caste, Education, and Resistance: Dalit Identity and Protest in  
Githa Hariharan's *I Have Become the Tide***

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**Abstract**

This article explores how Githa Hariharan creates a Dalit counter-narrative that subverts prevailing caste notions by fusing politics, literature, and history through the ground-breaking book *I Have Become the Tide* (2019). The novel uses a narrative structure to explore the historical and present-day realities of caste discrimination in India. The novel demonstrates the cyclical nature of caste-based violence and the strength of resistance via art and education by fusing the voices of a poet from the twelfth century, contemporary Dalit students, and university protests. In addition to chronicling tyranny, the work emphasises how education and artistic expression may help people rediscover their identity. Using several chronological frameworks, this study contends that *I Have Become the Tide* functions as a literary site of resistance, highlighting the tenacity of people who oppose caste while illustrating how it continues to be a system of power. As a result, this piece of writing highlights the novel's function as a literary platform for resistance.

**Introduction: Literature as a Tool for Resistance**

Dalit voices have been marginalised by the prevailing caste narratives, which Dalit literature has long challenged as a counter-discourse. Contributors to this tradition include authors Bama, Omprakash Valmiki, and Arundhati Roy, who have revealed the ingrained injustices that still shape India's socioeconomic structure. This literary trend is supported by Hariharan's *I Have Become the Tide*, which depicts the Dalits' actual experiences throughout history.

The paper explores the novel's use of many storylines, historical allusions, and creative forms to portray caste oppression and to suggest ways to fight it. It emphasises three main points:

1. The Dalit poet of the twelfth century: representing the displacement of Dalit voices and experiences

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2. Dalit Students in Modern India: Revealing Caste Discrimination in Schools
3. The Protest Movement at Universities: Exhibiting Political Awareness and Collective Resistance.

With these intertwined stories, Hariharan emphasises how caste systems still exist and how Dalits use their art and skills to fight systematic oppression.

### **The Voice of the Dalit Poet and Historical Erasure**

The novel begins with the tale of a Dalit poet from the twelfth century whose name has been lost to history. Although his songs question Brahminical convention, his legacy is being methodically annihilated. The character represents the innumerable Dalit voices that have been suppressed for centuries. A literary intervention in caste history is Hariharan's choice to feature a historical Dalit poet. Dalit ideas have always been marginalised in Indian literature. Even if they are revered today, Brahminical erasure was experienced during the lifetimes of individuals like Kabir, Tukaram, and Ravidas. This pattern of exclusion is personified by the poet in *I Have Become the Tide*, which supports the main thesis of the book: Dalit history have been purposefully lost, but they endure through resistance tales.

The experiences of three Dalit students are explored in this brilliant and potently written novel, which will resonate with anybody who has encountered caste-based discrimination in any field. This is evident from "The Hindu's" remarks and evaluations of Githa Hariharan's book, which state “A luminous novel... powerfully written. Hariharan pulls her readers from the tightly constructed world of the three friends and throws them down in front of today’s newspaper... The experiences of the three students in *I Have Become the Tide* will ring true for anyone who has faced discrimination in an educational institution... In his hostel room one night, Ravi dreams of a putrid canal behind his house and a torrential rain that makes it flow like a river. Floating in the current is a nest with three eggs, the three friends who will go forward one day. These are the episodes that make Hariharan’s novel luminous. The songs in it, written down by Kannadeva but not his alone, are spots of light and warmth in a dark story, and the reader will want to return to them long after the novel is read.” (The Hindu)

### **Reclaiming Dalit Histories through Art**

The poet's melodies, which represent the tenacity of Dalit culture, have been passed down orally. As a result of the poet's words challenging the social and religious conventions of his time, art becomes a means of protest. This novella challenges the literary and scholarly gatekeeping that keeps Dalit voices out of the mainstream of

history. By bringing this poet's tale back to life, Hariharan questions the casteist systems of historical memory and reclaims Dalit literary traditions. The book chronicles the lives of three Dalit students in modern-day India—Sivan, Sagar, and Mouni—who fight to claim their identities in a restrictive educational setting. Education, which is frequently viewed as a means of empowerment, turns into a place where Dalit students are excluded and humiliated.

Theoretically, everyone can access education, but Dalit pupils experience institutional prejudice. They are treated as inferior by professors and students from higher castes, which strengthens the systemic obstacles to success. Dalit students frequently face social exclusion at universities in spite of affirmative action rules. Through the students' relationships with the faculty, their individual hardships, and the institutionalised unfairness they encounter, Hariharan effectively conveys these conflicts. Their stories are similar to actual incidents, such the RohithVemula case, in which caste-based discrimination drove a Dalit scholar to commit suicide. “Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises; with the variants and different effects-according to who is speaking, his position of power, the institutional context in which he happens to be situated-that it implies; and with the shifts and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives that it also includes”. (Foucault, 100)

### **Political consciousness and collective intervention as a means of resistance**

The novel's portrayal of campus protests serves as a potent illustration of how resistance movements may unite around common causes. The youngsters in *I Have Become the Tide* are a living example of collective action, proving that fighting caste injustice calls for unity and solidarity rather than individual effort. These demonstrations are profoundly political in nature and attempt to overthrow the systems that support discrimination based on caste, not just personal grievances.

Hariharan's depiction of the demonstrations makes obvious comparisons to actual events, such the agitation at Hyderabad University in 2016 after Dalit scholar RohithVemula committed himself. These demonstrations served as a forum for Dalit activists and students to express their grievances and call for justice, while

also drawing national attention to the problem of caste-based discrimination in higher education.

By portraying these demonstrations, Hariharan demonstrates the ability of political awareness to overthrow established hierarchies of power. Through their activity, the students in the story reveal that resistance is not a passive process. It is outspoken, proactive, and able to confront not only isolated cases of injustice but the system as a whole that allows them to occur. By joining the protest movement, the students have changed from being helpless victims to being proactive changemakers.

### **A Pervasive Issue in Educational Institutions: Caste Discrimination**

The narrative describing the hardships of Dalit students at educational institutions is not merely a reflection of individual suffering but an indictment of the deep-rooted systemic violence within Indian society. Educational institutions frequently serve as replicas of the greater caste structures in society, despite their stated mission to advance equality and offer a means of upward mobility.

The contradictory structure of the Indian educational system is highlighted by the novel's emphasis on education. According to the research journal on “Constitutional flaws of India’s attempt to promote equality and a look at the United States constitution as a solution” by Siely Joshi states that:

The caste system is divided into four well defined vocational groups like the Brahmins which contains priests and teachers, the Kshatriyas are the rulers and warriors, the Vaishyas consist of merchants and traders, and laborers and artisans are considered as Shudras. The initial three classes are considered as ‘high caste’ which dominates the potentiality and purpose of the Indian community. The last division is Shudras are meant to be in the service of all other classes, importantly serving as retainers. The Shudras are called as ‘Dalits’, who are even considered as the ‘untouchables’ as they are contemplated to offshoot of the four acknowledged castes. (Siely 200) [2]

On the one hand, Dalits are promised equality and opportunity by the Indian Constitution and several affirmative action initiatives. However, Dalit students' real-life experiences show that these assurances are frequently unfulfilled. Despite having a legal right to an education, Dalits are nonetheless viewed as inferior due to institutional discrimination, lesser expectations from teachers, and bullying from pupils from higher castes.

The difficulties faced by Dalit youngsters in contemporary India are exemplified by the predicament of pupils like Sivan, Sagar, and Mouni. Their difficulties are similar to Dalit exclusion from schooling in many aspects. Dalits were historically

excluded from formal education, and even though they now have greater access to school, their academic experiences are still influenced by caste-based marginalisation.

Through the experiences of these students, Hariharan draws attention to the psychological and emotional toll that this discrimination has on Dalits. They must negotiate a system that benefits the upper castes yet being supposedly accessible to everyone. The book criticises this unequal access to information and emphasises how, in the absence of inclusivity, education reinforces rather than eradicates caste discrimination.

### **The Function of Multiple Narratives and Intertextuality in the Novel**

*I Have Become the Tide's* inventive narrative structure, which combines many eras, voices, and genres, is among its most potent features. Instead of telling a single story, Hariharan creates a complex text that incorporates elements of social realism, history, and modern protest. She accomplishes this by constructing a sophisticated intertextual framework in which the past and present interact.

A deliberate narrative decision to address more general concerns with the marginalisation of Dalit voices in historical and literary records, the presence of the Dalit poet from the twelfth century goes beyond a mere historical retelling. The lives of contemporary Dalit students Sivan, Sagar, and Mouni are impacted by this poet's tale; their encounters with caste-based prejudice in the classroom mirror the poet's own battles with Brahminical orthodoxy. In addition to being a stylistic decision, the time period from the twelfth century to the present serves as a reminder that tyranny based on caste is a living reality and not a thing of the past. “People coming together as if caste doesn't matter, as if anyone can be anyone's neighbour or friend or sister or brother” (Balram Halwai, 69).

One crucial way that Hariharan resists the erasure of Dalit history is by utilising the poet's oral traditions to connect the past and present. According to the novel, these songs represent the ongoing Dalit battles, which have been perpetuated through oral traditions that resist official efforts to eradicate them. The story has a sense of urgency and relevance that cuts across time and location because of this generational transfer of resistance.

### **The Power of Art to Initiate Change**

The use of art, especially music and literature, as a means of oppression and a means of resistance is another significant aspect of the book. Initially prohibited, the Dalit poet's lyrics reappear during the campus protests as a show of defiance and collective empowerment. A significant change in the narrative is represented by this reclamation of art: what was formerly silenced by institutional forces now serves as



a call to action for justice. Raymond Williams’ key formulation is the “Structure of feeling”. The phrase first occurs in his *Culture and Society* (1958). He observes that literature registers its direct apprehension of a felt conviction (Williams 1971, p.99,119). To him, literature registers something “actually lived through” which enables “actual living change”. It represents the culture of a period. Men and women make their own history (Williams 1961. P.66,70,80.). structure of feeling is the lived experience which later gets arranged as institutions and ideas (Williams 1970. P.59,138,192).

In *I Have Become the Tide*, art serves several purposes. It serves as a medium for cultural memory, an act of resistance against prevailing caste ideals, and a way to express Dalit experiences that are frequently left out of the mainstream conversation. Inspired by the poet's songs, the university students combat the systemic casteism in their educational institutions through literature, poetry, and performance. Their opposition serves as a reminder that art is about more than just representation; it's also about challenging repressive power systems. Turns into a call to action for justice.

Furthermore, the novel implies that cultural and intellectual activities are locations of contestation where the very narrative of Indian history can be altered by employing literature and art as a vehicle for protest. What has previously been taken or omitted from popular narratives is reclaimed by the students' artistic engagement with Dalit culture and history. In a country like India, where the caste system has influenced politics, economy, and culture for generations, this is particularly crucial. Accordingly, the campus protests are about the historical recovery of Dalit identities and narratives that have been ignored or deliberately hidden for a long time, in addition to current challenges.

### **Ambedkar's Legacy and the Restoration of Dalit Rights**

The novel's exploration of the legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a pivotal player in the Dalit liberation movement, is among its most captivating features. The novel's depiction of Dalit students' hardships is intricately woven with Ambedkar's contributions to Indian society, especially his involvement in the writing of the Indian Constitution and his support of Dalit rights. It is possible to view the students' use of action and protest as means of opposing caste discrimination as a continuation of Ambedkar's goal of a society with greater equality.

Ambedkar's rights are being reclaimed by the students in the novel through their involvement in politics, art, and education. Their opposition demonstrates the continued applicability of Ambedkarite principles and the necessity of tackling caste-based prejudice in all spheres of society, including politics, education, and

culture. In this sense, *I Have Become the Tide* acknowledges the historical movements and philosophies that have paved the road for Dalit empowerment in addition to reflecting on current caste issues.

### **Conclusion: An Empowering and Resistant Novel**

Githa Hariharan provides a hopeful vision for Dalit empowerment in *I Have Become the Tide*, along with a moving indictment of caste injustice. The framework of the book, which blends historical and modern experiences, highlights how caste-based violence is cyclical and how resistance endures. The novel highlights the continuous, complex, and erasure-resistant nature of Dalit conflicts through the experiences of the twelfth-century poet, the Dalit students, and the protest movements.

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**Breaking Boundaries: Gender Fluidity and Power Dynamics in Sikhandi and Bheeshma's Narratives in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's**

***The Palace of Illusions***

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**Abstract:**

This Paper highlights how Sikhandi's gender transformation and Bheeshma's rejection of traditional masculinity challenge societal norms and power structures. It emphasizes the disruption of fixed gender roles and the fluid identities. In *The Palace of Illusions*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reimagines the *Mahabharata*, exploring gender fluidity and the disruption of traditional power structures through Sikhandi and Bheeshma. Sikhandi's gender transformation from Shikhandini challenges the binary view of male and female identities, rigid societal norms. Bheeshma, embodying celibacy, strength, and patriarchal masculinity, subverts traditional masculine roles, reflecting on the limitations of such power. This analysis challenges traditional power structures, facilitating queer and gender studies discourse within ancient mythology.

**Keywords :** Sikhandi, Bheeshma, gender fluidity, transformation, patriarchy, gender disruption, traditional masculinity, power structures, power dynamics, queer studies, mythology, identity.

**"Breaking Boundaries: Gender Fluidity and Power Dynamics in Sikhandi and Bheeshma's Narratives in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*"**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* retells the Indian epic Mahabharata through the lens of its female protagonist, Panchaali, or Draupadi, offering new insights into the timeless tale. One of the most striking reimaginings in the novel is the narrative of Sikhandi and Bheeshma, two characters whose stories explore themes of gender fluidity and power dynamics. Divakaruni's portrayal of Sikhandi and Bheeshma challenges traditional notions of gender, examining their identities through the intersection of physical, social, and spiritual domains. By doing so, Divakaruni underscores the transformative potential of gender fluidity in shaping the lives of her characters and, by extension, the power structures that

govern them. This article aims to explore the fluidity of gender and power dynamics in these characters’ narratives, while critically engaging with Divakaruni’s creative reimagining of the great epic.

#### Introduction

The Mahabharata, one of the two great epics of India, is replete with stories that delve into human nature, power, and identity. Traditionally, the epic has been framed within a male-dominated context, where women often take a secondary or passive role. Divakaruni’s novel explores the complex dynamics of gender and identity, particularly through the figure of Sikhandi, who is both male and female, and Bheeshma, who has an ambiguous and evolving role as a patriarchal figure.

Sikhandi’s transformation from a woman into a man is one of the most fascinating aspects of the Mahabharata, and Divakaruni’s retelling offers a modern perspective on this narrative. In doing so, she explores the fluidity of gender, suggesting that identity is not fixed but can evolve in response to circumstances and internal desires. Bheeshma, on the other hand, represents the rigidity of traditional masculine power structures but also serves as a foil to Sikhandi’s journey. Their intertwined fates highlight the intersection of gender, power, and destiny in the epic.

This article will examine how Divakaruni uses these two characters to explore the themes of gender fluidity and power dynamics. Through a detailed analysis of their respective narratives, we will explore how the fluidity of gender challenges traditional power structures and what this means in the context of the Mahabharata and its modern retellings.

#### Sikhandi: The Fluidity of Gender:

In *The Palace of Illusions*, Sikhandi’s transformation is one of the most significant and controversial aspects of the text. Born as a woman named Shikhandini, Sikhandi is later transformed into a man due to a curse and a series of events that intertwine fate, identity, and gender. Sikhandi’s story is complex, as it involves both physical and emotional transformations. Initially, Sikhandi’s transition is one of revenge and necessity. After being denied marriage due to her gender, Sikhandini embarks on a journey that results in her becoming Sikhandi, the male warrior who eventually plays a crucial role in Bheeshma’s death.

Sikhandi’s pain in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *\*The Palace of Illusions\** lies in the profound struggle with identity that stems from a forced and traumatic gender transition. Born as a woman, Shikhandini faces societal rejection and discrimination because of her gender, especially in a patriarchal world that defines power through masculine norms. Her transformation into Sikhandi, while enabling her to gain the strength and autonomy denied to her in her female form, is not a

liberating process. Instead, it is a painful rebirth, as she is caught between two identities—neither fully male nor fully female—reflecting the intense dissonance between her physical transformation and internal identity.

Sikhandi’s journey involves more than just physical change; it is a psychological battle against the constraints of gender norms. She must navigate a world that demands conformity to fixed roles, and in breaking away from those roles, she faces alienation and emotional conflict. The pain of this transformation is compounded by the fact that her new male identity does not fully grant her the acceptance or agency she craves. In challenging and transcending the binary gender norms, Sikhandi’s experience reflects both the personal and societal costs of defying gender expectations.

Divakaruni’s Sikhandi’s narrative takes into account the emotional and psychological impact of this transformation. Sikhandi is not merely a character who undergoes a physical change; the novel highlights the internal struggle that comes with navigating an identity that transcends conventional gender boundaries. Divakaruni portrays Sikhandi as someone who questions the very nature of gender and power. She is both a woman and a man, embodying the tensions between feminine passivity and masculine action.

The transformation is framed within the context of power and agency. Sikhandi’s male form allows her to fight in the war, whereas her female form would have rendered her powerless in the patriarchal society. Divakaruni’s portrayal of Sikhandi challenges the idea that gender determines one’s ability to exert power, and suggests that the fluidity of gender can be a source of empowerment. This theme is further explored when Sikhandi, in her male form, challenges Bheeshma, the very embodiment of patriarchal power. Sikhandi’s ability to confront and defeat Bheeshma in battle is symbolic of the way in which gender fluidity subverts traditional power structures. Sikhandi’s transformation is not just about revenge or duty; it is a reclaiming of agency that is denied to her by society’s unyielding gender norms.

In this way, Sikhandi’s gender fluidity challenges the boundaries of traditional gender roles in the novel. Divakaruni’s Sikhandi is not confined to the binary notions of masculinity and femininity, but instead inhabits a space where both qualities coexist, allowing for a more dynamic and complex identity. By presenting Sikhandi as a character who transcends gender, Divakaruni reinterprets the characters in a way that emphasizes the malleability of identity and the possibility of self-determination in a world that often seeks to define individuals by their gender.

### Bheeshma: The Masculine Power Structure

Bheeshma's character in *The Palace of Illusions* is a study in the complexities of power and identity. As a patriarchal figure, Bheeshma is bound by a vow of celibacy and allegiance to his father, King Shantanu. His power lies in his adherence to duty and his unwavering commitment to the Kuru dynasty. However, Bheeshma's masculinity is complicated by his vow of celibacy and his deep emotional connection to the women in the epic, particularly his relationship with his stepmother, Satyawati, and his role in the events surrounding the marriage of Draupadi.

In Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, Bheeshma's role is explored in greater detail, especially in relation to his interactions with Sikhandi. While Sikhandi challenges the traditional masculine power structures, Bheeshma remains a symbol of patriarchal authority. His identity is defined by duty, loyalty, and sacrifice, but Divakaruni also portrays his internal conflicts. Bheeshma's adherence to his vows makes him a tragic figure, as he is unable to act outside of the constraints imposed upon him by his own code of ethics. This rigidity of identity contrasts sharply with Sikhandi's fluidity.

Bheeshma's power is further complicated by his relationship with Sikhandi. Sikhandi's role in Bheeshma's death highlights the tension between traditional masculine authority and the potential for subversion through gender fluidity. Bheeshma is unable to defeat Sikhandi because he refuses to fight a woman, even though Sikhandi is technically male. This moment underscores the conflict between Bheeshma's rigid masculine identity and Sikhandi's gender fluidity, ultimately leading to Bheeshma's downfall. Bheeshma's inability to adapt to changing circumstances is symbolic of the limitations of a static and patriarchal perceptive of power.

Divakaruni's portrayal of Bheeshma is not one of simple villainy or heroism. Instead, she presents him as a complex figure trapped within the very power structures that he upholds. Bheeshma's tragic end, brought about by his refusal to break his vow and fight a woman, illustrates the limits of rigid masculine power and highlights the importance of adaptability and fluidity in the face of changing circumstances.

### Gender Fluidity and Power Dynamics:

The central theme of gender fluidity in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is not merely an exploration of individual identities, but also a commentary on the power dynamics that govern society. Both Sikhandi and Bheeshma's narratives serve as reflections of the ways in which gender and power are intertwined.

Sikhandi's transformation allows her to challenge the masculine power structure that has dominated her life, while Bheeshma's adherence to traditional masculine ideals leads to his eventual demise.

Divakaruni's depiction of gender fluidity suggests that the traditional gender binary is insufficient to explain the complexities of identity and power. By allowing characters like Sikhandi to exist outside of traditional gender categories, the novel opens up new possibilities for understanding how power operates in a patriarchal society. Sikhandi's victory over Bheeshma is not just a personal triumph but also a symbolic victory over the rigid power structures that govern her world.

At the same time, Bheeshma's inability to adapt to Sikhandi's fluidity represents the failure of a static power structure to respond to changing circumstances. The clash between Sikhandi and Bheeshma is a microcosm of the larger struggle between traditional gender roles and the growing recognition of gender fluidity and the potential for new forms of power. Divakaruni's novel suggests that gender fluidity, far from being a threat to power, can be a source of strength and transformation.

The death of Bheeshma at the hands of Sikhandi breaks masculine gender norms by revealing the limitations of rigid patriarchal ideals. Bheeshma, unable to fight a woman, succumbs to Sikhandi's challenge, showing that traditional masculinity, bound by rules of honor and gender roles, is vulnerable when confronted by fluid identities and changing power dynamics.

#### **Conclusion**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* offers a nuanced and complex exploration of gender fluidity and power dynamics. Through the characters of Sikhandi and Bheeshma, Divakaruni challenges traditional notions of gender and masculinity, offering a reimagined narrative that emphasizes the fluidity of identity and the ways in which power structures can be disrupted. Sikhandi's journey from woman to man symbolizes the possibility of transformation and self-determination, while Bheeshma's downfall illustrates the limitations of rigid masculine ideals. Ultimately, Divakaruni's retelling of the Mahabharata suggests that power is not solely determined by gender but by the ability to adapt and transcend traditional boundaries.

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## Depiction Of Mysticism in Rabindranath Tagore’s Poem *Gitanjali*

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### Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore most well-known poem, *Gitanjali*, is a collection of poems was published in India in 1910. Tagore then turned it into English prose poems called *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. It was published in 1912 with an introduction by William Butler Yeats. The content of the poem *Gitanjali* on devotional songs from India in the middle ages. He also wrote music to go with these words. Love is the main theme, but some poems also talk about the struggle between spiritual longings and earthly desires. A lot of the images he uses come from nature, and the mood is mostly low-key and quiet. Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 in part because of this collection, but not everyone agrees that it is his best work. The main idea in *Gitanjali* is mysticism, which also brings up a number of other ideas. According to Indian philosophy, mysticism is the highest stage where the human soul is in direct contact with God. A mystic thinks that the world we see with our eyes and ears is not real and that there is a more real world behind it that can only be understood spiritually, not through the senses. The mystic tries to get in touch with the inner, ultimate reality in a way that is direct and intuitive. In some ways, realism and common sense are at odds with mysticism. Mysticism is not something that can be explained logically. All mystics try to separate themselves from the outside world and connect with the world inside. This type of mysticism is based on the ideas of renunciation, detachment from the world, and asceticism. Tagore was influenced by a lot of mystic writers, such as Walt Whitman, Kahlil Gibran, and, to some extent, Sri Aurobindo. Still, Tagore’s version of mysticism is a little bit different from the first. He doesn’t completely doubt what he thinks and what he feels. He doesn’t try to get away from real life, but he does enjoy the joy of living. He doesn’t deny sense experience, but instead turns it into a way to have a spiritual experience. Nor does he have the slightest desire to be a monk. His strong humanism keeps his mysticism in check and keeps it from getting out of hand.

In 1913 Rabindranath Tagore became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Tagore was awarded a knighthood in 1915, but he repudiated it in 1919 as a protest against the Amritsar (Jallianwala Bagh) Massacre.

**Rabindranath Tagore** (born May 7, 1861, Calcutta [now Kolkata], India—died August 7, 1941, Calcutta) was a Bengali poet, short-story writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, and painter who introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of early 20th-century India. In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The son of the religious reformer Debendranath Tagore, he early began to write verses, and, after incomplete studies in England in the late 1870s, he returned to India. There he published several books of poetry in the 1880s and completed *Manasi* (1890), a collection that marks the maturing of his genius. It contains some of his best-known poems, including many in verse forms new to Bengali, as well as some social and political satire that was critical of his fellow Bengalis.

In 1891 Tagore went to East Bengal (now in Bangladesh) to manage his family's estates at Shilaidah and Shazadpur for 10 years. There he often stayed in a houseboat on the Padma River (the main channel of the Ganges River), in close contact with village folk, and his sympathy for them became the keynote of much of his later writing. Most of his finest short stories, which examine “humble lives and their small miseries,” date from the 1890s and have a poignancy, laced with gentle irony, that is unique to him (though admirably captured by the director Satyajit Ray in later film adaptations). Tagore came to love the Bengali countryside, most of all the Padma River, an often-repeated image in his verse. During these years he published several poetry collections, notably *Sonar Tari* (1894; *The Golden Boat*), and plays, notably *Chitrangada* (1892; *Chitra*). Tagore's poems are virtually untranslatable, as are his more than 2,000 songs, which achieved considerable popularity among all classes of Bengali society.

In 1901 Tagore founded an experimental school in rural West Bengal at Shantiniketan (“Abode of Peace”), where he sought to blend the best in the Indian and Western traditions. He settled permanently at the school, which became Visva-Bharati University in 1921. Years of sadness arising from the deaths of his wife and two children between 1902 and 1907 are reflected in his later poetry, which was introduced to the West in *Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*) (1912). This book, containing Tagore's English prose translations of religious poems from several of

his Bengali verse collections, including *Gitanjali* (1910), was hailed by W.B. Yeats and André Gide and won him the Nobel Prize in 1913. Tagore was awarded a knighthood in 1915, but he repudiated it in 1919 as a protest against the Amritsar (Jallianwalla Bagh) Massacre.

From 1912 Tagore spent long periods out of India, lecturing and reading from his work in Europe, the Americas, and East Asia and becoming an eloquent spokesperson for the cause of Indian independence. Tagore's novels in Bengali are less well known than his poems and short stories; they include *Gora* (1910) and *Ghare-Baire* (1916), translated into English as *Gora* and *The Home and the World*, respectively. In the late 1920s, when he was in his 60s, Tagore took up painting and produced works that won him a place among India's foremost contemporary artists.

Tagore's well-renowned poem *Gitanjali* is divided into two parts. To begin, the majority of these songs are composed as dialogues between the poet and God. Even if God's messages were not always spoken, the poet expresses his prayers and sentiments. Aside from certain personal prayers, some songs are also directed to the Bharathmatha the God of India. In two songs he urged his countrymen to band together against both internal and external calamities. It is important to understand that *Gitanjali* was composed in British India. When the protests against the British government became violent and nonviolent, the poet appealed to Bharathmatha to awaken his compatriots into the paradise of wisdom and labour. He also asked for the abolition of caste prejudice.

The poet's prayers are not for mortal or material things but they aspire to the people live a better life. According to the English poet W.B. Yeats, these songs arose from immense sadness and intense emotion. A single line of his poetry may make anyone forget about the world's problems. *Gitanjali*'s songs can help us purify our bodies and minds in order to grow closer to God. Although the God of Rabindranath is the God of beauty, intelligence, and perfection, he is neither a religious or traditional god. This God has no unique picture, nor has the poet ever represented his God by symbols. He resembles the notion of a supernatural force, the God of the Upanishads. The opening song in the collection, appears to be a prayer from the poet to his God to forcefully lower the poet's head before the Almighty. The fundamental message of the hymn, however, is that the devotee must give up his pride in order to get ultimate peace and contentment from his God. In his prayer to his God for strength and courage to tackle his issues.

Rabindranath depicted death as the only way to reach his God. Death seems to him as a calm ocean where he may relax when his earthly life has ended. *Gitanjali*'s songs have a strong link to nature. These songs are generally written during the monsoon season, autumn, or spring. When nature bestows her gifts on us by adorning our surroundings with fresh pictures, lights, fruits, and flowers, we become new and pure in our devotion to God. Song nos. 11 and 13, highlight various aspects of the rainy season.

Theme of God :- *Gitanjali* is God's prayer. It is a collection of songs about God and praise for him. Which are deeply rooted in the ancient tradition of Indian Vaishnava poetry and have mystical, eternal, and sublime qualities. They have a wide range of moods and ways of doing things. The theme of God runs through the whole *Gitanjali*. Theme of Nature: *Gitanjali* also has a theme about nature. It looks at the connection between God and nature. His lyrics stand out because of how beautiful and full of images they are. These images come from nature and Indian mythology. Theme of Humanity: *Gitanjali* doesn't just talk about the relationship between a man's soul and God. It also talks about the relationship between a man's soul and other men. It stands up for the rights of the poor and humble, who are often denied the most important rights of man. Theme of Death: At the end of *Gitanjali*, Tagore also writes about death, and he does so in many different and artistic ways. He doesn't fear death. Instead, he looks forward to it with joy because it's the only way to be with God. “Death looks scary, but it brings the soul of a person to a meeting with the eternal. Theme of Love: There are many kinds of love in *Gitanjali*, including love for women, love for other people, love for humanity, love for God, love for nature, love for his country, love for beauty, and love for the truth. Tagore is a poet who loves God and religion, and his poetry shows the truth, happiness, and beauty of the world.

It's hard to put Rabindranath and his ideas in a certain category. As shown in the *Gitanjali*, these ideas are very different, but they fit together well as a whole. They show how the poet really felt. This work is not only a Classic that everyone interested in Tagore and the Bengali Renaissance must read, but it is also a must-read for anyone interested in philosophy. Chandidas was the most prominent poet of the Vaishnava-Sahajiya sect, which focused on the worship of Krishna, an avatar of the deity Vishnu, and his beloved, Radha. Chandidas, which may have been a shared name for more than one poet writing in the 14th century, composed about 1,250 poems on the love of Radha and Krishna, such as the *Shrikrishna Kirtana*. Poet Krittivas Ojha's translation of the Hindu epic the *Ramayana* into

Bengali, written during the 15th century, was the most popular Bengali work well into the modern period.

The medieval era also produced a number of translations of Arabic and Persian texts into Bengali by Muslim poets. These include Shah Muhammad Sagir’s translation of *Yūsof o-Zalīkhā*, a poem on the prophet Joseph and his encounters with Potiphar’s wife, supposedly composed by 11th-century Persian poet Ferdowsi. Syed Alaol’s *Padmavati* (1648) was based on Awadhi Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi’s semi-historical tale (about 1540) of a princess named Padmavati and Delhi sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī’s invasion of her home state of Chittor, Rajasthan, in order to win her.

The literary creations produced starting after the East India Company’s victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the subsequent establishment of British rule in India were greatly influenced by the political and social changes of the era. Novels and short stories were written in Bengali for the first time during this period. The most prominent of the early literary pioneers of the time was poet and playwright Michael Madhusudan Datta, who wrote first in English and then in his native Bengali.

Nationalism is a modern movement. Throughout history people have been attached to their native soil, to the traditions of their parents, and to established territorial authorities, but it was not until the end of the 18th century that nationalism began to be a generally recognized sentiment molding public and private life and one of the great, if not the greatest, single determining factors of modern history. Because of its dynamic vitality and its all-pervading character, nationalism is often thought to be very old; sometimes it is mistakenly regarded as a permanent factor in political behaviour. Actually, the American and French revolutions may be regarded as its first powerful manifestations. After penetrating the new countries of Latin America, it spread in the early 19th century to central Europe and from there, toward the middle of the century, to eastern and southeastern Europe. At the beginning of the 20th century, nationalism flowered in Asia and Africa. Thus, the 19th century has been called the age of nationalism in Europe, while the 20th century witnessed the rise and struggle of powerful national movements throughout Asia and Africa. Poetry is a vast subject, as old as history and older, present wherever religion is present, possibly—under some definitions—the primal and primary form of languages themselves. This article means only to describe in as general a way as possible certain properties of poetry and of poetic thought regarded as in some sense independent modes of the mind. Naturally, not every tradition nor every local or individual variation can be—or need be—

included, but the article illustrates by giving examples of poetry ranging between nursery rhyme and epic.

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**Exploration of Postcolonial Assimilation and Colonial Legacy in  
Mamang Dai’s Novel *The Black Hill***

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**Abstract**

Mamang Dai’s novel *The Black Hill* is a compelling work of historical fiction that intricately weaves together the themes of colonial encounters, cultural conflicts, and indigenous identity. Set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the novel follows the experience of British colonialists, Christian missionaries, and the indigenous tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Through its evocative storytelling, *The Black Hill* sheds light on the resilience of tribal societies in the face of external forces and historical transformations. Mamang Dai uses the themes of cultural suppression, land appropriation, religious conversion, and political marginalization, the novel reveals how the colonial encounter left deep scars that continue to affect the Adi people in the post-colonial era. The novel serves as a poignant reflection on the resilience of indigenous cultures and their struggle to reclaim and preserve their identity in the face of historical and contemporary challenges. This article probes deeply the postcolonial elements in examines how Mamang Dai navigates the intricate terrain of Postcolonial literature.

**Keywords:** Colonial Encounters, Cultural Hegemony, and Forced Assimilation.

*The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai is a poignant and atmospheric novel that explores the deep emotional and spiritual connection to the land and the complexities of the human experience. Set in the remote, mountainous regions of Arunachal Pradesh, India, it delves into the lives of the indigenous communities living there. The story is woven with elements of folklore, memory, and the natural world, with the Black Hill representing both a literal and metaphorical place that

holds deep significance for the characters. It serves as a site of origin, a space for reflection, and a repository of history and tradition. In *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai, postcolonial themes are explored in profound ways, reflecting the lasting impact of colonial history on the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh, India. While the novel is not explicitly about colonialism in the traditional sense, it addresses the broader implications of postcolonial realities the effects of modernity, external influences, and cultural displacement on the indigenous people of the region.

*The Black Hill* revolves around the lives of three central figures: Kajinsha, a Mishmi warrior; Father Nicolas Krick, a French missionary; and British colonial officers seeking to establish their control over the region. Kajinsha embodies the indigenous resistance against foreign influences, while Father Krick’s journey reflects the missionary zeal to spread Christianity among the tribes. The novel portrays the tragic consequences of these interactions, particularly the conflict between traditional beliefs and the encroachment of foreign powers. One of the novel’s dominant themes is the impact of colonial expansion on indigenous communities. Kajinsha’s struggle symbolizes the resistance of native people against imperialism. “Since the British had occupied Assam their hills had been disturbed by these strange, foreign men who crept deeper and deeper into their land carrying gifts of salt, iron, tobacco and opium.” (*TBH* 08). Through his character, Mamang Dai presents a nuanced perspective on how tribal societies responded to external pressures sometimes through armed resistance and, at other times, through negotiation and adaptation.

The novel vividly depicts the cultural clashes between the British, the Christian missionaries, and the indigenous people. The introduction of Christianity by missionaries like Father Krick disrupts traditional belief systems, leading to internal conflicts within the tribal communities. This theme reflects the broader struggle of indigenous identity in the face of modernity and external influences. “There might even be friction with the other Mishmee clans. Chief Zumsha had already declared that all outsiders were an ill omen.”(*TBH* 148). The juxtaposition of tribal animistic beliefs with Christianity is a crucial element in the narrative. While missionaries perceive their work as a means of civilizing the local people, the indigenous characters view their spiritual practices as integral to their identity. The novel questions the morality of imposing religious beliefs on a different culture and highlights the deep spiritual connections that tribal people have with their land and traditions.



Mamang Dai, being deeply rooted in oral traditions, integrates folklore, myths, and tribal legends into the novel. This storytelling technique not only enriches the narrative but also emphasizes the importance of preserving indigenous histories that are often overlooked in mainstream historical records. Mamang Dai's writing in *The Black Hill* is poetic and lyrical, infused with the rhythm of oral storytelling. Her use of rich imagery and evocative descriptions brings the landscape of Arunachal Pradesh to life, making the setting an integral part of the story. The novel's language reflects the fusion of historical documentation and folklore, creating a narrative that is both factual and mythical.

The British colonial period brought with it a system of governance, law, and control that fundamentally disrupted the traditional practices of the Adi people. “More atrocities followed, provoking the British to prepare for military operations to punish the tribes but a full-scale expedition had to be put aside as more urgent matters claimed their attention with the outbreak of the Sepoy mutiny of 1857.” (*TBH* 287). In the novel, the sense of colonial domination is subtle but profound. The colonial powers not only imposed political control but also sought to reshape social structures, cultural norms, and the very way of life for the indigenous population. This form of colonial assimilation attempted to replace the Adi people's indigenous knowledge systems and governance with Western values, education, and legal systems.

*The Black Hill* itself, as a place of memory, tradition, and spiritual significance, becomes a metaphor for this struggle. The land, which holds the stories and identities of the people, is threatened by external forces, symbolizing how colonial legacies continue to affect the community's connection to its history. Through forced assimilation, the Adi people's deep connection to nature, their rituals, and their animist beliefs were undermined in favor of a foreign religion and its associated values. *The Black Hill* captures the tension of being caught between maintaining one's ancestral faith and adapting to the demands of colonial society.

In the novel, the characters deep connection to the land and their cultural traditions is contrasted with the encroaching influence of external forces. The traditional rituals, beliefs, and oral storytelling that tie the community to the land are increasingly under threat. This mirrors the colonial legacy of cultural assimilation, where colonial powers sought to undermine indigenous cultures in favor of their own practices, languages, and norms. *The Black Hill* itself, a central metaphor in the novel, represents a place of memory and cultural identity, yet it is depicted as being at risk of disappearing or being forgotten, much like many indigenous traditions that were undermined by colonial powers. The struggle to preserve these traditions is a

direct reflection of the lasting impact of colonialism, which continues to influence the community’s sense of self.

The colonial powers sought to redefine and reshape the indigenous peoples relationship with the land, stripping them of autonomy over their territories. The Adi people, for example, were subjected to laws and regulations that disregarded their traditional ways of governance, disrupting their harmonious existence with nature and their land. Colonial rule aimed to standardize their lives through alien administrative systems, often sidelining indigenous practices of conflict resolution, community leadership, and land management. This assimilation created a crisis of identity, where the indigenous people found themselves in limbo between their own cultural heritage and the foreign ways forced upon them. In *The Black Hill*, characters struggle to maintain their sense of self amid the pressures to adapt to the new colonial system. Their sense of belonging to their land and culture becomes fractured, and the aftermath of colonialism leaves them questioning their place in both the past and the present.

Forced assimilation refers to the attempt to integrate indigenous people into mainstream culture, often at the expense of their own cultural identity. As part of the colonial and later postcolonial efforts to modernize and integrate indigenous populations into the national fold, traditional practices and belief systems of the Adi people were sidelined or repressed. In some ways, this forced assimilation becomes a means of erasing the unique identity of these communities. The novel reflects on how this leads to a generation caught between two worlds one rooted in tradition and the other pushing them toward modernity. The British colonial project often led to the displacement of indigenous communities from their ancestral lands. In the novel, the land is not just a physical space but an embodiment of cultural identity and heritage. The Adi people’s close relationship with nature, their rituals, and their worldview were threatened by colonial expansion.

A significant part of postcolonial assimilation involves the erosion of indigenous spiritual practices. Colonialism often brought with it the suppression of native belief systems, replacing them with Western religions or secular ideologies. In *The Black Hill*, the loss of traditional spiritual practices is another aspect of assimilation. The indigenous connection to the land is spiritual, but as modernity encroaches, the younger generation is less inclined to follow these rituals, either because they are seen as outdated or because they are displaced by new religious practices or secular worldviews. The story of *The Black Hill* itself represents a spiritual and cultural space that is increasingly at risk. The characters reverence for the land, the stories, and the rituals tied to it are part of an oral tradition that is

threatened by the forces of modernity. This spiritual loss is a form of assimilation, where indigenous peoples are pressured to abandon their traditional spiritual practices and adopt the beliefs and practices of the dominant culture.

At the heart of postcolonial assimilation is the generational struggle between those who wish to preserve traditional ways and those who are tempted by the allure of modernity. In *The Black Hill*, the older generation, like Kajinsha, holds on to traditional knowledge, land, and customs, resisting the push toward assimilation. However, the younger generation is more susceptible to the forces of globalization and modernization, which often lead to a loss of cultural identity and disconnection from the land. The conflict between the older and younger generations is a poignant exploration of how postcolonial assimilation occurs at both individual and collective levels. “In her mind the British were a fearsome race of people who had appeared suddenly from nowhere. They travelled up and down the country trying to enter other people’s land without any respect for anyone.”(*TBH* 18). The younger characters, while living in a postcolonial world, are torn between two identities: one rooted in their cultural heritage and the other influenced by the postcolonial nation state and modern world. This conflict is a direct consequence of colonial rule, which left indigenous communities in a state of cultural flux, caught between maintaining their traditional identity and assimilating into a new globalized order.

Postcolonial assimilation in *The Black Hill* is portrayed as a gradual and often painful process, where indigenous communities are faced with the loss of their cultural identity, traditions, and spiritual practices. Mamang Dai captures the complexities of this assimilation, showing how the pressures of modernity, state control, and external cultural influences shape the lives of the characters. The novel is a meditation on the struggle for cultural survival and the search for a meaningful identity in a world that is rapidly changing, influenced by the legacies of colonialism. Through this exploration, Dai underscores the emotional and psychological costs of assimilation, as indigenous communities struggle to preserve their heritage while navigating the demands of the postcolonial world.

In Mamang Dai’s novel *The Black Hill*, the **colonial legacy** is a central theme that significantly influences the lives, identities, and culture of the indigenous people in Northeast India, particularly the Adi tribe. Through the narrative, Dai explores how the colonial experience and its lingering effects have shaped the modern existence of the Adi people, their relationship with the land, their social structures, and their cultural practices. The novel illustrates how colonialism was not only a political and economic force but also a cultural one, deeply impacting the psyche of the indigenous people and leaving lasting scars.

One of the most significant elements of colonial legacy in *The Black Hill* is the impact of British colonialism on the **land** and **territorial autonomy** of the Adi people. Colonial powers often disrupted the indigenous people’s deep connection to their land, either through direct land appropriation or by imposing foreign borders and administrative control. “‘They are giving up our land and showing strangers the way to come here.’ In return for the help of the Tibetans he promised them that their clan would defend the land and allow no stranger right of way through their territories to cross into Tibet.”(TBH 08-09). The Adi people’s traditional way of life, which was deeply intertwined with the natural environment, was altered under colonial rule. In the novel, the relationship between the Adi people and the land is symbolic of their cultural identity and history. The British colonizers sought to redefine and control how the land was used, often disregarding the indigenous ways of managing resources and their reverence for nature. The imposition of a foreign system of land ownership and governance disrupted their harmony with the environment, leading to a sense of displacement that continues to reverberate in the postcolonial period.

Colonialism also had a profound impact on the social and political structures of indigenous communities. The British often imposed foreign systems of governance that undermined traditional forms of leadership and decision making in tribal societies. In *The Black Hill*, Mamang Dai highlights how colonialism disrupted the traditional tribal hierarchies and replaced them with a colonial bureaucracy that did not respect indigenous ways of life. The novel subtly critiques the alienation experienced by indigenous leaders and elders, whose authority was diminished under colonial rule. The legacy of this disruption is felt long after independence, as the postcolonial state continues to marginalize indigenous political systems in favor of a national, often urban centric, political structure.

Beyond the material and social effects of colonialism, *The Black Hill* also explores the **psychological scars** left by colonial rule. “It was war, always war. Even now he was looking down at a country still at war.” (TBH 10). The novel delves into the emotional weight carried by characters who live in the aftermath of colonialism. This is particularly evident in the way they view their cultural heritage. The trauma of forced assimilation, religious conversion, and cultural loss affects the characters sense of identity and belonging. Many are caught between two worlds one rooted in indigenous traditions and the other shaped by the influence of colonialism and modernity. Mamang Dai portrays how colonialism left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of the Adi people, manifesting in generational

trauma that affects both the elders, who lived through colonial rule, and the younger generations, who must navigate the complexities of postcolonial identity.

Another subtle but important postcolonial theme in the novel is the psychological impact of colonialism on individuals and communities. The sense of fragmentation, loss, and longing that runs through *The Black Hill* echoes the alienation that often accompanies the postcolonial experience. “And now people said the British were so strong they had gunboats and hundreds of soldiers and they could scheme and plot without fear. ‘They are armed with an evil wind that starts blowing the moment they set foot anywhere’, Gimur thought.” (TBH 19). For Gimur and other characters, there is a tension between the desire to preserve their indigenous identity and the pull of modern, often Western, influences that promise progress and development. This tension manifests in the form of internal struggles, generational conflict, and a search for meaning in an increasingly complex world. “If I feel strongly enough perhaps the strangers will take off and leave us in peace, she thought.” (TBH 19).

The postcolonial theme is also explored through intergenerational conflict, as younger characters are caught between honoring traditional customs and embracing modernity. The older generation, represented by figures like Kajinsha, often embodies a resistance to these changes, drawing strength from their indigenous roots and memories of a more unspoiled time. “What did Kajinsha think of this proposition? His first reaction was, No! We Will never help the British enter our territory. Let them find another way. On the other hand, he had thought, if he could bring the Tibetan lama to the British it might provide a bargaining point to let them leave his land alone.” (TBH 147). However, the younger generation is often torn between these values and the promises of education, mobility, and modern careers. This generational divide echoes the broader tension in postcolonial societies, where older, traditional ways of life are often seen as obsolete, while younger generations are influenced by globalized, Westernized ideals. This conflict is a form of resistance to colonial and postcolonial pressures, as both generations struggle to define what it means to live in a world shaped by colonial histories.

In Mamang Dai’s *The Black Hill*, the colonial legacy is subtly yet powerfully explored through the lens of the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh. While the novel is not overtly focused on colonial history, it engages with the long lasting impacts of colonialism on culture, identity, and the environment in the postcolonial world. The colonial legacy is explored through various themes, such as cultural erosion, political displacement, the imposition of external systems, and the ongoing struggle for autonomy.

In *The Black Hill*, the land, which is central to the characters sense of identity and spirituality, is depicted as being under threat from outside forces, including the encroachment of modern development and industrialization. This is an indirect commentary on how colonial practices of resource extraction continue in postcolonial India, affecting indigenous lands and livelihoods. “More British Sohibs are coming by boat and everyone is afraid that these migluns are coming to kill them and take their lands.”(TBH 270). The changing environment and the loss of land are metaphors for the broader consequences of colonial economic exploitation, which often left indigenous communities with little control over their resources.

The novel explores the spiritual connection between the people and their land, as well as the deep cultural knowledge passed down through generations. However, this connection is increasingly under threat in a postcolonial world where modernity and the spread of Western ideas and technologies are slowly eroding traditional ways of life. The imposition of Western education, religion, and rationality during colonial rule is reflected in the novel’s themes of cultural disintegration. “ ‘You are finished! You are defeated, savage! Now you will die!’ Kajinsha had laughed at the man showing his teeth and his broken mouth. ‘Hah! Sepoy! Dog! Tell me, what is defeat? I do not know the meaning of this word.’”(TBH 284). Characters like Kajinsha grapple with the sense of loss, nostalgia, and longing for a time when their traditions were intact. This reflects the ongoing postcolonial struggle to preserve indigenous knowledge, spirituality, and practices in the face of globalizing forces that continue to marginalize them. “If I am standing like this, even if fall down, I am still alive—and stranger than you! As long as my heart is beating there is no defeat. Do you want to see how I die? Come closer you coward! You are afraid. It is your defeat!” “(TBH 284).

In *The Black Hill*, the **colonial legacy** is not just a historical backdrop but an ongoing force that shapes the lives, identities, and futures of the Adi people. Mamang Dai uses the experiences of her characters to explore the lasting effects of colonial rule on indigenous communities in Northeast India. Through themes of cultural suppression, land appropriation, religious conversion, and political marginalization, the novel reveals how the colonial encounter left deep scars that continue to affect the Adi people in the post colonial era. The novel serves as a poignant reflection on the resilience of indigenous cultures and their struggle to reclaim and preserve their identity in the face of historical and contemporary challenges.

Mamang Dai’s *The Black Hill* offers a nuanced exploration of the postcolonial experience, particularly as it relates to the indigenous communities of

Arunachal Pradesh. The novel subtly critiques the effects of colonialism and the complex process of decolonization, focusing on the loss of cultural identity, the challenges of modernization, and the emotional and psychological scars that linger in the postcolonial era. Through rich, evocative prose, Dai conveys how the past both colonial and precolonial shapes the present, offering a poignant meditation on belonging, memory, and resilience.

*The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai is a powerful exploration of history, culture, and identity in Northeast India. By intertwining historical events with personal and communal struggles, the novel provides a unique insight into the colonial past of Arunachal Pradesh. It challenges readers to reflect on the consequences of cultural imposition and the resilience of indigenous communities. Through its deeply engaging narrative, *The Black Hill* stands as a significant literary work that contributes to the broader understanding of India's diverse and often overlooked histories.

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**The silenced self: Exploring subalternity in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That long silence***

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**Abstract**

This research paper delves into the concept of subalternity and the silenced self, as portrayed in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*. Both novels provide profound insights into the struggles of Indian women grappling with patriarchal norms, societal expectations, and personal insecurities. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the protagonist, Sarita, embodies the silenced self as she navigates the oppressive dynamics of her marriage and familial relationships. Her journey exposes the deep-seated gender inequalities that silence women's voices, forcing them to confront their subjugation in solitude.

*That Long Silence* shifts the focus to Jaya, who reflects on her life while attempting to reclaim her voice amid years of submission and compromise. The novel portrays how systemic suppression, coupled with internalized gender roles, shapes the subalternity of women who struggle to redefine their selfhood. By intertwining themes of marginalization, silence, and self-discovery, Deshpande intricately examines how patriarchal power structures enforce subalternity upon women, compelling them to resist or accept their roles. This paper underscores the urgent need to amplify the voices of the silenced and challenges the persistence of gendered subjugation in contemporary society.

**Keywords:** Oppression, Introspection, Marginalization, Internal conflict, Gender Subjugation.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence* serve as poignant explorations of the silenced self and subalternity, particularly in the context of gender dynamics within Indian society. Through her intricate storytelling, Deshpande delves into the lives of women who grapple with the constraints imposed by patriarchal norms and expectations. These narratives not only bring to light the internal conflicts of the protagonists but also underscore the broader societal struggles faced by marginalized voices. By portraying silence as



both a tool of survival and a barrier to self-expression, Deshpande effectively critiques systemic oppression and highlights the resilience and complexities of her characters.

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is about a middle-class woman suffering in her marital life. The central idea of this story is to explore the identity of women in middle-class society. Sarita, a ventriloquist married to Mohan. Sarita is a woman who is trying to find her inner self. She always remembers the bitter words of her mother long ago. Saru failed to save her young brother Dhruva from drowning. When She is unable to identify her mother's beloved daughter, when she grows up, she is unable to be an attractive young lady. In the present scenario of the story Saru, went back to her paternal home, to escape from the terrible nightmares that are imposed on her every night. With the company of her old father, Saru wants to overcome all her grief. The theme of the novel is the dissension and disillusionment of an educated woman bound by the conventions of Indian society. After a long mental dilemma, she finally realizes her mistakes and is overcome by fear and confusion. At some point, she realizes that being is not what makes her. She realizes that what she is going to give her is the identity she is looking for.

Next, one of the most famous and award-winning, novels of Shashi Deshpande, *That Long Silence* (1989). It was a unique novel portraying an urban middle-class housewife named Jaya, which mainly dealt with the domestic concerns of a woman in a patriarchal setup. In her novels, most marriages break up due to a lack of understanding between men and women. This leads to suffering and conflict between traditional and modern aspirations. Most of Deshpande's novel critically analyses the institution of marriage in the modern context. She represents the conditions and situations in which a woman is caught between the powerful currents of tradition and patriarchy. Deshpande illustrates this point through the character of the female protagonist, Jaya. The character Jaya, who was an educated middle-class housewife as her name symbolizes victory. Jaya belongs to the woman caught between tradition and patriarchy. Jaya finds herself limited with Mohan. Mohan is an engineer who gives the most importance to money, status, and luxury. In the seventeen years of marriage life, Jaya manages to suppress her creative ability. Mohan was completely assured by his wife that she will be supportive in all his bad times, but Jaya fails to be. The inconvenient situation of Jaya in Dadar's flat makes her depressed and deserted. Deshpande pictures the inner consciousness of Jaya, which reflects her problems and predicament, and also on the other hand she exposes the trauma of her childhood memories.

Jaya plays his role as a dutiful wife, mother, and so on. But as a human, she expects love and support from his better half, which Mohan couldn't. Mohan often shows his power of male domination towards Jaya. Silence is the only device that Jaya uses to tackle her problems with Mohan. Jaya thinks that silence is the only way to solve her problems. Her silence grows in between the couple. The story is beautifully reflecting its title. Deshpande gives some message for contemporary women in India, that silence will never be the solution to all the problems. Jaya realizes her mistake when she was isolated from all her relations. In the final part of the story, Jaya starts realizing herself and her ability to tackle her problems, not by silence. The novel reaffirms Deshpande's belief that a woman must assert her ability to achieve self-identity. Financial independence is an important step that gives the woman self-confidence and helps her realize her true potential. But Deshpande also knows the compromises a woman has to make to strike a balance between personal and professional life.

The novels reveal the psychological insights into the minds of working women. Deshpande's novel contains the seed of a definite search for a truly authentic self. All her female characters are self-searching in different ways. She puts her heroines through various stages of trouble to make them grow and become more emancipated. Thus, the middle-class mentality is so intensified in many characters that their lives are bound entirely by economic values. It also shows discrimination, isolation, subjugation, and so on. Deshpande shows some similarities by portraying male and female characters who have different ideas, motives, and attitudes in her novel. Most of her characters are incomparable in their relationship and those problems are detailly described in this study. Deshpande categorically refuses to be identified as a feminist, but as a woman, she expresses the problems of different women through various aspects of society. This study, analyses the multiple problems faced by the bourgeois community in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1989) and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980).

It's far proper that when independence the scenario for girls in Indian society changed a piece, particularly in metropolitan cities however the modified scenario, if it's far analyzed minutely, it does no longer promises that existence holds any new means for them. However, with time, the Indian attitude was changing rapidly specifically in the 1970s and 1980s. With academic and career opportunities the knowledgeable woman started coming out and becoming aware of her rights and duties. She has additionally started turning into aware of her responsibilities, aspirations, and destination. It's far real that an Indian woman has trodden new paths of glory and he or she knows that she is not any less brave and

sensible than her male counterpart. She has also demonstrated her spirit in every stroll of life but the fact remains that her function by and large in the Indian family has not changed radically.

In lots of instances, it's far seen that each time a woman tries to say her will, she realizes a crack begins developing in the fabric of interpersonal relationships. Sarita hates herself and the sort of life she is living in along with her husband. Saru had suffered in particular because of social mores and masculine ego. Sarita tries to break from her dissatisfaction with Manu. She went to her paternal home to listen to her mother's death news. She grabs the opportunity to escape from the sadist husband and her loveless marriage. In Indian society, married women are not speculated to go back to their parental residence without their husbands or have any quarrels or divorce.

In a true experience, both the novel rejects the idea of the traditional way of life which makes a woman's life only to delight her husband. Deshpande's novels reveal the ability of women to know their rights and participate as leading members of the family. Saru has in reality no admiration for the absolute reputation religiously practiced by way of the better halves. A woman is considered to be an embodiment of sacrifice and struggle and a selfless donator of love and affection. (Muduli 27). She engraving the state of women in India. She has proven that a woman suffers due to man and marriage. Deshpande is at her fine in creating the man or woman characters, which not most effectively describe her personal experiences, but also make a fuller look at women in society. She has confirmed even though the girl has acquired schooling and knowledge together with financial independence, they were observed as a victim of domestic violence as well as no longer getting criminal rights outdoors domestic. She is very practical in presenting one-of-a-kind aspects of the issues and sides of a girl's lifestyle. She has shown how the heroine of this novel needed to skip through hard situations in all of her lifestyles. These shows Shashi Deshpande has made surveyed women who suffered due to the superstition of society or male chauvinism.

The unconventional is resolved through Saru's readiness to return to her husband's house with newly observed strong willpower to clear up the trouble with Manu. She will become a new lady who's now capable of facing the troubles. She has emerged as a woman who can cope with the patriarchal system tactfully. Consequently, women have nowadays made endeavours to set themselves free from the boundary of patriarchy. Due to a few societal norms which include customs, traditions, and way of life women are struggling in gaining their individuality.

Therefore, the insurrection goes beyond the boundaries of femininity and attempts to set up that they're additionally humans.

There's a changing trend in society and the so-referred to as traditional women are going distant from their portrayal of putting up with and self-sacrificing women to assertive women making the patriarchal social order aware of their wishes and as a consequence giving a temper of self-statement. She reflect the overwhelmingly large-mindedness of women's identity and express an important and classic theme of feminist literature. Her novels are deeply rooted in Indian concepts and she describes Indian society and culture. Women writers in literature have much contributed to improving present-day Indian English fiction in the literary field. The boredom and overall dullness of life of a woman with substance comfort are brilliantly represented. She attempts and discovers the inner thoughts of the current woman who is at the cross strains between lifestyle and modernity.

The characters were portrayed with excessive emotion. There is no non-violent life for a woman in her entire life. They are trying to create their happiness instantly. The level of making peace with everything is unrivaled in Indian women. Jeeja, the maid at Jaya's domestic serves as a relieving sight for Jaya. Her painful life with a drunkard makes Jaya think that she is in a better position. The protagonist finds Jeeja's silence with no trace of lawsuits or anger. She completely accepts her unlucky circumstance. Jaya recounts, “, “There had been days when she had come to work bruised and hurt, rare days when she had not come at all. But I had never heard Complain” (Deshpande TLS 51). Jeeja denies giving any of her payments to her husband, which simply tells loads approximately their dating. The real confusion is that it is in no way taught to such girls to increase their voices against injustice. In this type of manner, Mohan is continually busy in his mind without caring for Jaya. The dearth of proper communication between Mohan and Jaya turned into the top motive for his or her imbalance in dating.

Silence leads her to a state of despondency, which means a state of hopelessness. In this state, one would feel deserted and alienated. Silence is not only the reason for Jaya's imbalance in life. Self-identity for a woman is merely a transparent layer that may be cut at any time. A woman is unable to carry her name of father after marriage. They are dedicated to their husband's families. Shashi Deshpande's primary focus is on the theme of alienation and isolation. Jaya's alienation in this story is seen as voluntary. The major observation of this story brings out Jaya's detachment with her husband's family. She tries to escape through her silence. There is a parallel misunderstanding between Jaya and Mohan. As a husband, Mohan has not understood Jaya, similarly as a wife Jaya has not

understood Mohan. The couple's random quarrels, fights, and misunderstandings make cause alienation and isolation. Deshpande brings out the relationships between the husband and wife. People started thinking materially and they couldn't find time to think for the family. This is found to be the attitude of bourgeoisie people, and it projects their way of life.

Jaya thinks about how her marriage with Mohan was arranged, Mohan was a handsome educated man working in the Steel plant. Mohan doesn't fit Jaya's expectations but Jaya was completely a woman who suits Mohan. As a fatherless girl, she was under the care of her elder brother Dhinakar. Jaya couldn't oppose others' wishes. She marries Mohan and her earlier stages of life was happy. She was an ideal wife and mother, later she was suppressed internally in many situations. She has no care for herself, and couldn't pay attention to her wishes. The suppression of her own creates a conflict in her.

The needs of a woman can't be satisfied by herself, she should depend on her husband. The family members' pieces of advice are that the entire family's happiness depends on a woman. Jaya's mother Ai, is a woman who chooses a male child to be the primary member of the family. Ai's property was equally shared by Dinakar, but Ravi, and Jaya and was neglected. It is a common aspect seen in many Indian families, the male children are the holder of family properties. Whereas the female children were considered to belong to their husband's family. Here, Deshpande frankly proves this through the statement of Ramukaka. 'A woman after marriage belongs to her husband's family. In this novel, Deshpande brings out the true emotions of women and their role in the family and society.

*That Long Silence* (1989) is not an irruption into the world of silence but a silent intimacy with pain straining for expression, to hear a tone. Deshpande exposes Jaya's knowledge through close-ups and flashbacks. Jaya feels dismayed that she has failed as a woman and she found her disgruntled perspective. Jaya became frenzied by the constant pressure of convulsions caused by agony and suffocation. She finds no meaning in her life if it revolves only around her husband's desire. Jaya's entire life revolves around her husband's desire and here this woman could not find herself meaningful. She appears as a split personality or a constant discord and torn vision and overwhelming pressure of living reality. Isolation, heartbreak, and a brief interruption in marriage make women resistant to dissolution. Jaya fails to bring out her extreme anger. She was guided by Kamat, who helps to change her anger towards the path of writing. Jaya was not able to make change her capabilities of writing. Jaya's every activity was deeply noted by her husband Mohan. Jaya finds her relationship, not as the source of love, but to

escape from the problems to hide her faults. Jaya's friendly relationship with Kamat makes her lose her title as a dutiful wife. Deshpande brings out the societal view of a married woman's relationship with another man. It was pointed out as an illegal relationship. He guides her like a father in her mistakes. As a sister, she shares her feelings with Kamat.

Deshpande exposes the conditions of the newly elevated women and raises her voice for the moral treatment of women. Treating women in an emotional state rather than saving them from collapsing because hers is a big burnout. Emotional repression has been proven to be very destructive to marital satisfaction for women. It includes religious and artistic elements such as myths, rituals, legends, and ceremonies. The heroines of Deshpande's novel are modern educated women in the age group of 30 to 35. The search for freedom and self-identity is the major theme of her novels. All her protagonists are found to be confused in the beginning when the story moves, they try to realize their inability and find themselves. In the end, they realize their self and come out from the confusion and emerge as confident and significantly more hopeful.

Deshpande casts both Sarita and Jaya in the lead role. Her two famous novels, *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) and *That Long Silence* (1989), uncovers a legacy of feminist ideologies that need to be reinforced in a global context. Both protagonists have very important functions in justifying female ideologies in the social structure. In *That Long Silence* (1989), Jaya in search of her own identity to stand against the patriarchal structure of her established rules is beautifully handled. Again, in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), heroine Sarita is cast as the central figure, raising a voice of support for an ordinary Indian woman facing the same traumatic life. Sarita's life portrait inspired other women who prepare themselves to fight against male dominance.

Then coming to the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) deals with the theme of marriage in terms of its complex societal realities and the different treatment of the female self. The protagonist Sarita is a successful female doctor, but she is thrown into society's problems for being the other person. The patriarchal structure is so strong in a society that even women cannot come forward to express their own identity in front of the public. The theme of the novel tells the complex situations of Sarita's conflicts with the private and public spheres. She has become a mature woman not by age but from the experiences of life. Her character is presented amidst regular and modern perspectives. She has done it according to the rules of society. She obeys without any resistance to what society imposes on her. She often and strategically fights for the balance of women freedom.

These original arrangements with women's rights arise from a male-dominated and women-subjugated society. One philosophy and one development could not have saved Indian writing in English. Sasi Deshpande has made Saru her mouthpiece. Shashi Deshpande is pro-woman but not anti-man. In this book, we trace some of the prevalence of men and the imagination of the myth of women's suffering can be traced. The novel can also be seen as a mental novel as the story unfolds through the mind of the focal person. The trauma and endurance of the characters make it a true psychological book.

Shashi Deshpande has delved deeply into Indian culture and painted it with tones of real world and honesty. She has waved the banner of women's rights as she endured the torture and oppression of women in the past. Saru is tortured by her husband in the evenings and tyrannized by her mother for the rest of her life while her seven-year-old sibling Dhruva passes away breathlessly and carelessly. The book also deals with the dilemma of a career woman. In a patriarchal society, a career woman is believed to be a nuisance and a humiliating question to her male partner. Saru faces the same as he sets a good foundation for himself as a top professional in the city. However, she turns out to be a useful medical professional, and it becomes a terrifying encounter when she finds the changing behavior of Manu in bed at night. Ultimately, she chooses to save her marriage and not go against her husband's saddest behavior.

Indian women do not try to go out in front of their spouses of any social status. In any case, when they try to do so, they miss out on happy everyday life. Also, women like Sarita do indeed make some kind of compromise to save their married life. Disillusionment with the characters works throughout the book. From the very beginning, we see the characters accomplishing as few feats, as possible, in any event unfulfilled. Saru is the best model in that regard. Saru is disappointed by her mother's wish. She is disillusioned in any event when she achieves name, distinction, and cash as her significant other, an ordinary Indian man. He develops a kind of insufficient complex. Accordingly, it can be said in no uncertain terms that every character in this novel lives. Their tolerance makes them authentic and they win the sympathy of their followers.

The work of Indian women is very wide and varied. They have to take the part of little girls, a mother, and, obviously, a wife. What's more, at every level, they have to endure. When they are women, they have to lose a lot of things from family to male individuals. When they are spouses, they should take care of their husband's needs and wants, and when they are mothers, they should be under the guidance of their children. They cannot inhale freely, make choices alone.



Through the characters of Saritha, Manohar, and Boozie, he lays down that ambiguity is constant, but no one should be afraid of it. One should explore the wonderful side of life or one should acknowledge it, then happiness is always near. Sarita accepts Manohar's sexual attacks and does not go against them to save her married life. She uses Boozie to climb her career and for a cash advance to set up a facility. There is a quest for identity, a stab at stamina, and mental and real conflicts to prove dominance. Nevertheless, a woman's protection does not necessarily mean that she is absolved of remaining responsibilities. Family structure constrains a woman, restricts her decision-making scope, and restricts her calling. Like a tethered cow she moves within the tethered circle and is said to be free and fulfilled. Such imagined opportunity or fulfillment leads her into a psychological vacuum and leaves her with a taste for poignancy and existential dilemmas.

The family places such a high level of social expectations that she finds herself practically in an endless cycle of satisfying social assumptions at the expense of her freedom, desperately wanting to be freed from the misery of the family business. A woman activist seeks an intellectual career as a columnist. The subsequent stagnation kills her immediacy, confidence, and character. Here many sink into complete silence in a mood of disappointment and despair without sharing their thoughts. Shashi Deshpande provides excellent examples of women who have preserved through abuses, injuries, and embarrassment without a murmur. A reasonable connection between the inner self and the self will yield a dignified view. Anger or disagreement is certainly not a persuasive weapon to face our conflict and recognize the peace of life. Jaya understands her delusion and thinks about how to explain her problem.

However, women become modern over the years they were under the patriarchal system which was designed to relegate women to secondary status. The two women in these novels are trying to come out from the various problems of the family and society. They start gathering for their identity. Saru, who left Manu, and Jaya, who avoids Mohan show the similarity between these women who are not happy with their men. The present era reflects many examples like Saru and Jaya in their above discussions. There is also a changing attitude in the mental state of contemporary women in India. They prefer education to marriage. Deshpande shows multiple capabilities of women's empowerment and knowledge. She also pictures various problems faced by women in a patriarchal society. There is no doubt that Deshpande's concepts revolve around the bourgeois community in society. Deshpande's concern for women's equality speaks highly in her novels. Deshpande has peeped down into the psyche of males and females without any



partiality. It is clearly shown that the writer has portrayed her female characters from both traditional and also contemporary points of view.

The writer's view is clearly described through her words. This study brings out the major difficulties faced by day-to-day women in middle-class families. According, to Deshpande she is totally against the violent rules of a patriarchal society. The rules imposed by society and the family sometimes make them enhance their life on the other it was rejected by the new women. The bourgeois values simply teach both men and women to follow the traditional rules which help to enhance their life in society. However, they struggle because of the social norms and never against the values taught by their family members. The final part of Deshpande's novel brings out the psychological change in them, that is 'self-realization'. It took a major part in the women's minds. Realizing their self makes them develop both physically and mentally.

Thus Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence* masterfully explore the silenced self and subalternity through their female protagonists. Those the works reveal the oppressive structures of patriarchy and societal expectations that enforce silence as a survival mechanism. Yet, within this silence lies a profound journey of self-realization and empowerment. The novels highlight the courage it takes to confront and break free from societal constraints, giving voice to marginalized experiences and the characters embody the struggle for individuality and agency, showcasing resilience in the face of adversity and paving the way for deeper discourse on gender and subalternity in literature.

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## THE CHANGING IDENTITY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN BHARATHI MUKHERJEE’S WIFE

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### ABSTRACT

Indian English literature emerged as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India. As a result of the encounter, as F.W. Bain puts it "India, a withered trunk...suddenly shot out with foreign foliage" (19). The original writing in English by Indians took the form of its first foliage. The first task of the historians of this literature is to provide a suitable definition of its nature and scope clearly. This problem got its complication due to two factors: first, this body of writing has, from time to time, been designated variously as 'Indian-American Literature', 'Indian Writing in English and Indo-English Literature'. Secondly, the failure to make clear-cut distinction has often led confusion between categories. For instance, V.K. Gokak, in his novel, *English in India: Its Present and Future* (1964), interprets the term 'Indian-American Literature' as consisting of 'translations by Indians from Indian Literature into English'. In his massive survey *Indian Writing in English* (1962), K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar includes English translations of Tagore's novels and plays translated by others in his history of Indian creative writing in English. While H.M. Williams excludes these from his *Indian-American Literature 1800-1970*

The changing of socio-political status of women emphasis that the Indian novels written in the first half of this century, deal largely with the independence movement. There are scores of Indian novels which deal with the actions, beliefs and experiences of people who actively participated in this movement. A few of them made sincere and honest attempt to record this period of Indian history and Mukherjee's novel *Wife* is an impressive sequel to her earlier novel *Jasmine* but *Wife* is not merely because of the common felt life, but also because of the sustained moral vision that shapes and reveals their individuality.

The existential situation in *Wife* is, familiar as it envelops and exposes the easily recognizable social taboo, the daily living in America: its political masters, business tycoons, bureaucratic machinery and social parasites in interaction with intellectuals, free-lance protagonists and liberal thinkers. The time is momentous as it compels and controls the different men and women as they hurry along to keep their tryst with destiny. It is a historic day also in the annals of modern India, facing the cross-roads of progress after the independence. Thematically, therefore, *Wife* begins with concerns itself not only with the release and recognition of the individual consciousness but also with its growth and maturation.

Mukherjee's novels present a symbolic cross-section of the Indian nationality. Rizwanthe Indian Islamic intellectual and an influential person. Dimple, the free-lance protagonist Dimple, torn between the two worlds of commerce and politics, is frankly paused by the real image of America, in the very first chapter of the novel. America had been simply home, a place to bring up children, but apparently it was much more, the touchstone for whatever happened in India, America could become the heart of a crisis. The crisis that Dimple refers to is deeply personal and emotional but gradually it becomes enlarged and identified as a national crisis with the future of the country itself at stake. The novelist Mukherjee weaves plot in her novels out of what appears to be an extra-ordinary, significant and prosaic personal detail. The divorce of a woman, sensitive, complacent and impractical is well presented. The successful integration of this personal crisis with the critical movement in India's foreign relations in Asia is what distinguishes this novel. The aesthetic ambivalence that Mrs. Mukherjee's achieves in dramatizing these turmoil lends an unprecedented symbolic significance. The novel *Wife* consists of twenty-two chapters, opens with the gala get-together at the Intercontinental Hotel. It introduces us to all the principal 'dramatic personae' and sets the tone of the novel. The opening paragraph itself is used by the author to give us an integral view of the social and political scene in America.

The major concern in Mukherjee's novels is with freedom and its related values. Her concern is also with the responsibility of the middle class intellectuals towards society. She is aware of the immense task of preserving and continuing the democratic processes in an under developed country where food is more important than freedom. It is in this context that she chooses to emphasize the role of the leaders and the intellectuals. Democracy in India is far more a matter of faith than of convenience and it is the integrity of the leaders and the intellectuals which at the

end is going to weigh the balance one way or the other, to make freedom meaningful as a way of life.

The novelist feels that the main threat of freedom lies in a fragmented and one sided approach to it, when the leaders and the masses alike feel that it can be realised only in one aspect at a time as an economic or a personal freedom. In her fiction and non-fiction, the novelist deals with numerous threats to freedom, violence and narrow regional loyalties in *Wife*, unscrupulous leadership in. India's progress and victories in the past have always emanated from its liberal values. This concern for freedom is foremost in the novelist's mind and she is perturbed by the values adopted by the post Lal Bahadur Shastri leadership in the country. She is unhappy with the people in power. She finds America as a small-hearted place concentrating, not on ideals but merely on ambitions.

The psychology of power becomes relevant today because we are a democracy in need of revolution, both social and economic. It becomes political inertia and societal situation in America . These threats find a parallel expression in her protagonist's career. Violence, she understands, arises out of selfish, narrow attitudes. It is perhaps natural for people to turn violent when idealism and integrity have yielded to unscrupulous ambition in national life. Mukherjee's is critical of agitations, bandhs and Satyagrahas (non-violence) when people are submitted to mob psychology. Such acts of people are a distortion of the Gandhian methods of Satyagrahas for they lack both the purity and the spirit of sacrifice which marked Gandhian resistance. This shows that the belief in • non-violence was confined to the few, but now the time is to look for a new ideal and a new way of life with which people can identify themselves. This search for a new faith should be related to the reality of our own situation and not borrowed from others:

The novelist feels that the communist ideology and methods have no place in India where the quality of life has always had an ethical basis. Gandhi was able to evoke popular response because he had identified himself with the common man and he had made no attempt either to discard of terrible and crucial importance what kind of human material leads this revolution. The split in congress was the turning point in Indian politics in many ways than one. Looking back a year later the novelist pointed out that the event held definite lessons for the country. It made it clear that a bold enough leader with a definite mind could gather more power into his hands than is healthy for democratic leadership, because we do not have the alert, literate public to prevent such happening and our democratic institutions and conventions are too vulnerable as yet to forestall this development and its consequences.

It also made it clear that the party in power was able to command formidable resources in order to mould public opinion and manufacture an atmosphere. It was easy to arrange rallies, bring the crowds together and mould mass media according to one's requirements. Decisions likely to affect the country's future were taken mainly with a view to political gains. The nationalisation of banks was one such decision and the response of approval it drew forth was a manufactured one. The novelist refers to this period as a time when the future promised no hope for freedom commitment in a free society means involvement for a cause. The mature, the sensitive and the responsible are everywhere committed. But now it has acquired the narrow meaning of allegiance to the ruling party and its programme. The more disheartening was the inability of the educated to protest against the state of affairs. The only way Mukherjee pointed out was for the opposition to unite in order to be effective and to block anti-democratic legislation.

The government's policies and propaganda were aimed at creating a dichotomy between democratic ideals and social justice. The novelist stressed the point that they were incompatible. It was no longer possible to take social liberties for granted and the need for a concerted effort in order to prevent further erosion of freedom. Mukherjee is critical of the government's policies which were motivated more by the need to make an ideology acceptable rather than by the actual needs of the people.

In one of her articles published in South Asian Review the novelist discusses Indira Gandhi's style of working. Mukherjee's in this article relates Mrs. Gandhi's childhood experience to her political behaviour and outlines the development of her policies in an anti-liberal direction. She writes that having been elected to power on the credentials of Pt. Nehru, she exploited his image to its maximum capacity. She started building another image for herself. This Mrs. Gandhi achieved mainly by distinguishing between the party as represented by its bosses, and the people whom she identified with herself.

Mrs. Gandhi made no secret of her desire to function independently and she rejected the practice of collective decision making. In all this her political behaviour had a break with the past in inspiration, methods and style of leadership. She ruled through political manoeuvres and surprises. Whatever benefit may have resulted from her policies was lost partly because there were not enough follow-up measures and partly because authoritarianism destroyed both initiative and responsibility. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's rise to power made clear the importance of moral integrity in public by demonstrating what could happen in its absence. Mukherjee's analytical study can be understood by this observation:

. . . India's democracy is in part a sheet act of faith. Poverty, illiteracy and under-development present a daily warning to the working of democracy, and it has needed a heroic leadership to give content and continuing nurture to it... In Mrs. Gandhi's hands this nurturing has ceased, and with it has vanished a powerful intangible for confidence and growth. From a people becoming more politically aware and economically responsible through the exercise of freedom, a great tide has been dramatically reversed (31).

Mukherjee's, in her two articles published in *The Indian Express*, has traced and she missed the crux and essence of leadership in India by adopting dictatorial methods in a country which has produced great leaders. She has emerged as the only manufactured leader consistently built up through media and other channels and relentlessly imposed on the Indian mind through a campaign of emotional appeal and outcry resorting to her father's name.

The intellectuals have greater responsibility in a democratic society especially where a large sections of it are uneducated and unaware of the day to day political happenings in the country. During the post Shesastri years there has been deterioration in the standards of public behaviour and a move towards a closed society. While the leaders betrayed the trust placed in them, the intellectuals failed to take an independent stand. They have shown a lack of courage and have failed both in providing an alternative leadership and in safe-guarding freedom. Their failure in part is due to their alienation from the masses.

The novelist observes that this was not the case during the freedom struggle when the educated were united with the masses under a common inspiration to work for a common welfare and goal. But this sense of identification had been destroyed because the people in power pursued the communist technique of instigating class war and dividing the people. But all this does not excuse the failure of the educated to uphold the cause of freedom. In an article entitled 'injustice and the intellectual' the novelist writes to see that justice is done is not an optional task the intellectual sets himself from time to time, if at all he does. It should be the essence of his functioning.

The freedom movement though it produced great leaders and the right values did not create the right kind of spirit for it failed to produce a second line of leaders equally great and dedicated. The novelist feels that the decline of the intelligentsia began with the Gandhi era, a period when judgement was totally surrendered to the leader. In all these aspects Mukherjee's is out-spoken and factual. She is concerned with a wide range of issues and she believes that no human problems will be solved unless the people regard each other as equals.

The novelist emphasises the need for gender education and self-respect for a change in the social customs and attitudes. Women are also individuals and marriage is a partnership, not an institution. But the whole social set up is geared towards the domination of men over women—in marriage, in gender relationships, in childbirth and even in adultery it is the woman who is victimised. This is fully illustrated in Mukherjee’s novels. The day women are accepted as equal partners, a new age would begin. Their emancipation bases itself on the ordinary assumption that a woman's body is after all her own and she has her own thinking on issues related to her. If the participation on women in social and national life is to be of any value, it has to be on the basis of their own individuality and not as labelled possessions.

Mukherjee’s opines that so-called progressive policies cannot be imposed on people without destroying Many thing of value in them. This is also not justifiable from the moral point of view, this kind of imposition. Changes should be based on the mass urge and need. Democratic methods are the best ways of providing the requisite amount of validity for social change. She writes: The human being is the only material we possess in abundance and for whose moulding in character, behaviour and ideals we ourselves are totally responsible and not dependent upon others?(46).

However; it is necessary to face the reality. At times the people in power may not be selfless. The novelist, though marginally aware, places her faith in the quality of the leaders. Indian conditions and political reality make it necessary for the leaders to be men of morality. There can be no remedy for this malady. Integrity is the part of true leadership. Devoid of integrity and morality, leadership deteriorates into self interest and opportunism. Leadership can best be nurtured in a free atmosphere. The novelist points out that political leadership is not the only kind of leadership and political dissent is not the only kind of dissent.

There are men in other areas who can contribute to the quality of life and they should share their own part of responsibility. In this category of people are educated classes, the writers, artists, scientists and industrialists. Their primary duty is not to abandon their own judgement. Mukherjee’s own intentions are never misled. This can be seen in the political themes of her novels. Her faith in the people's instinct for freedom has been justified.

New America, one month after the declaration of the Immigrancy, is the setting for Mukherjee’s novel. The Immigrancy in India meant many things to many people. For idealists like Dimpleit meant the end of a dream, the extinguishing of a bright future that had burned since independence. An unmarried woman, proud of



her senior ranking in the social service, finds herself demoted and humiliated through a corrupt deal at government level. For opportunists like Dev, it means a chance to change over to a new business, Amit, once a passionate, American, makes himself indispensable to the royal line. The shopkeeper, Rizwan the survivor of partition, goes to prison cell for a non-existent crime.

The political theme is presented mainly through the consciousness of Dimple, a middle-aged single woman, who is during the Immigrancy she refuses to sanction a preposterous foreign collaboration Project which has the support of the powers that be. As a result of this she is punished with demotion. She falls ill after her recovery she watches helplessly, with other like-minded people, the spectacle of how absolute power corrupts absolutely at all levels. Various facets of life in the period are shown, all norms are flouted, individual rights curtailed in the name of political stability. It is done with the willing assistance of a generally spineless bureaucracy interested only in self-seeking. Social uplift is sought to be brought about through hasty, ill-considered and repressive measures. The innocents are jailed for having committed non-existent crimes. The young and ambitious opportunists prosper through officially supported the trouble makers are in jail. An opposition is Many thing we never needed. The way the country's being run new, with one person giving orders and no one being allowed to make a fuss about it in the cabinet or in Society, means things can go full steam ahead without delays and weighing pros and cons forever.

There is news of hunger strikes and a breakout of political prisoners from Tihar Jail because the government had denied their routine demands. The ban on more than five people getting together in a public place did not work. People were seen in a group of seven or eight broken up by the police outside the coffee house in New York.

Dimple recalls her past days when fifteen years back she had topped the list in the competitive Dimple for the social service. On this achievement her father had fears in his eyes with the hope that her new responsibility could bring a peaceful social change. Though the fires and fevers of Dimple were different from her father, it touched both of them with its magic. The passage from British-trained to Indian trained machine accomplished without a crack. Her father's work had been his life. His memories of it had been her inheritance, where had the tradition they were trying to build gone wrong? The distinction between politics and the service had become badly blurred over the last few years

Dimple was quite upset when while her sister, came to see her. She advised her to see the doctor. and to explain the whole thing. To the top was a rational,



intelligent, humane place and all the cunning and callousness conceived at lower levels behind the top's back. Dimple explained to , that : The order obviously came from the top. You know perfectly well everything is controlled by one and a half people. And any kind of decision making went to pot ages ago long before this ridiculous Immigrancy (22). Six weeks later when she would move around without getting exhausted she started the process of severing her connections with her official past. She had to go back to her office for a final look round. She sat down at her desk for the last time and a train of thought abruptly started again.

In a country which has been subjected to internal and external exploitation, freedom becomes a major social concern. Thus Mukherjee's novels are not merely a comment on contemporary events but also a social gesture. They enable us to understand and evaluate the political and social happenings of novels better. The two sides of work are not separate or divided; they together represent her views and opinions

Mukherjee is one novelist who dares to explode. She explodes your emotional circuit fighting the demons in her mind. She tears apart the thick social skin of conformity beneath which most of us hide our violent or embarrassing impulses and vulnerabilities. She remains an island fuelled from within herself impervious to the hypocrisy and brutality around her. With her writings in any capacity it is nearly impossible not to react. Mukherjee's characters are not trapped in any lost cause. The terrain of reality transports the readers to the territory of irony and truth. Constituting embroidery of Indian life in her novels, she is always imbued with social and political concern. Her novels then are the history of an excessive immersion in the flux of experience.

## **Portrayal of Women in Tangkhul Folklore: Cultural Stereotypes and the Blamegame**

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### **Abstract:**

Oral tradition serves as a repository of indigenous knowledge as it is said to be the bedrock of tribal literature. Unlike written forms of literature that can be attributed to an individual author, oral literature belongs to the community as a whole, although variation occurs among different geographical area but the plot remains the same. Tales are dynamic and evolves with the people, serving as a collective memory of the tribe. In many indigenous societies, younger members are often distanced from their ancestral stories due to language loss or modern lifestyles. However, the internet and digital media have provided new ways for these traditions to be transmitted. Social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook or community radio stations offer spaces for elders to share their stories, reaching both local audiences and the broader global community. Through the limited resources available, this paper attempts to dive into the role of Tangkhul women in a patriarchal Tangkhul society.

**Keywords:** Tangkhul Women, Gender role, tribal women, oral tradition, folktales

### **Introduction:**

Tangkhul is one of the conglomerate tribes of the Nagas residing in Nagaland, parts of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Myanmar. Typically, the ideology of hierarchy and the workings of society is deeply rooted in patriarchy. In the article, *Women in the Context of Naga Household and Society*, Vero writes:

“The patriarchal nature of the society also poses a challenge in the inability of men to realize that women are equal partners in the development. In this focal point on the study of gender issue, it is important to address the behavioural pattern and role of both men and women. It is, therefore, pertinent to look at how women have been suffering due to ill treatment and

also it is important to relook into where women have been placed in the household and in the society.” (Vero 11)

Although “Naga women enjoy better status than in many other ethnic groups of mainland India. Naga men and women, from the time immemorial, co-exist peacefully as reflected in the historical facts of the household and the society... in due process of human evolution and progress, the societal structure and institutional system had construed that women are weaker and not equal to men,” the responsibilities of raising the future generation are solely put in the hands of women as per the blame in the selected folktales.

In the collected tales of *Mazha and Azakha*, *Mara and Kapudilew*, and *Kholalew*, the stepmothers were under the scrutiny as cultural stereotypes often cast them as wicked. In many western cultures, one of the earliest literary representations of a stepmother is seen in *Cinderella* and *Snow White*. These narratives are rooted in patriarchal society and frequently frame the stepmother with jealousy, cruelty, and neglect. This characterisation not only reflects cultural bias but reinforces the notion of wickedness of the stepmother which detracts the well-being of children. Cultural stereotypes and fairy tales portrayed stepmothers as the primary perpetrators of mistreatment toward their stepchildren. This perception often overshadows the fathers’ role in family dynamics. The article explores the intersection of gender roles, societal expectations, and paternal responsibility, and argued that the blame placed on stepmothers frequently conceals paternal incompetence and neglect. It highlights how traditional caregiving roles typically assigned to women contribute to unrealistic expectations of stepmothers, while fathers’ roles as primary caregivers are often undervalued. By examining cultural narratives and societal biases, this paper calls to reexamine family dynamics that acknowledges and addresses the shared responsibilities of both parents.

### **The Stepmother Blame Game: Unloading Gender Bias and the Incompetence of Fathers**

The contribution of women in rearing a child is overlooked as “consequently, women have been tagged even to the extent of not productive by claiming that women have no contribution to the national accounting system which is quantitative in nature. Thus, in spite of much contribution towards human welfare, her untiring hand had gone invisible down the history.” (Vero 12) However, when it comes to the result and behavioural patterns of an atypical child, the stepmother is called out.

Stepmotherhood has long been a fraught and often misunderstood role. While it may be a universal experience across different cultures, the portrayal of

stepmothers in both historical and modern contexts is often portrayed with negativity, particularly when it comes to their treatment of stepchildren. This bias has deep roots in gender roles, societal expectations, and the historical failure to hold fathers accountable for their family dynamics. The stepmothers have been blamed for the mistreatment of their stepchildren, even when the real cause of dysfunction lies in the negligence of fathers.

### **The Traditional Folk Narrative: The Wicked Stepmother**

The archetype of the “wicked stepmother” is a word deeply rooted in Western literature and fairy tales. They often depict stepmothers as cruel, vengeful, and abusive women who mistreat their stepchildren. As Shimray in *The Folk-Narratives of the Tangkhul Nagas* narrates “When her father went to their paddy field to continue his work, the wicked stepmother never bothered to attend to the daily chores of the house,” owing to emphasize that the stepdaughter was made to perform the household chores.

Although these narratives are fictional, they have had a profound impact on the way stepmothers are perceived in real life. The stereotype of the “wicked stepmother” was further amplified in the tales of Tangkhul folklore, when social and familial structures were more rigid, and women were often held to high standards of virtue and care. However, the question arises as to why have stepmothers been demonized in this way, while the fathers who marry these women are seldom held accountable for their children’s agony? The answer lies in the intersection of gender roles, cultural expectations, and historical biases. The patriarchal nature of the society also poses a challenge in the inability of men to realize that women are equal partners in the family dynamics. On the study of gender issue, it is important to address the behavioural pattern and role of both men and women. It is pertinent to relook into where women have been placed in the household and in the society.

### **Gender Prejudice: The Burden of Care**

Since time immemorial, women have been assigned the primary role of caregiver within families. This role has been internalised into the blueprint of societal expectations, with women often expected to nurture and protect the emotional well-being of their children.

When a woman becomes a stepmother, this expectation does not shift, despite the complex nature that exist in blended families. Comparatively, fathers have not historically been burdened with the same expectations of caregiving. Rather, men have traditionally been seen as the “providers” of the family. This gendered division of labour creates an imbalance where stepmothers, are expected

to step into the emotional and caregiving roles for children who may not be their own. However, when issues arise due to conflict, resentment, or an inability to bond with the children, stepmothers are often blamed for failing in their role, while the father's responsibility for developing a healthy family dynamic is largely overlooked.

### **The Incompetence of Fathers: Unacknowledged Accountability**

One of the primary reasons stepmothers are blamed for mistreating their stepchildren is the failure to hold fathers accountable for their part in the family well-being. The tale of *Mazha and Azakha* tells the story of an orphan who transformed into a bird to escape the mistreatment from his stepmother. Shimray mentioned that “he was not given any proper food to eat and was made to work hard every day... On the other hand, his father was unaware of all ill treatment received by his beloved son.” Owing to the fact that it takes a village to raise a child, the father solely placed the growth and development of his son to his second wife. Conveniently, the society blames the stepmother while the incompetence of the father is overlooked, instead of being held responsible for the way a stepmother is integrated into the family, or for the emotional toll it takes on the children, the blame often falls on the stepmother's shoulders. This imbalance arises from societal tendencies to view men as emotionally unavailable and women as inherently capable of managing emotional labour. This cultural oversight leads to a situation in which stepmothers are expected to be perfect to play the mother's role, overlooking father's lack of involvement or commitment to the emotional health of the family.

Many fathers may not fully recognize or address the emotional complexities that come with blending families. In some cases, they may not adequately support their new partners in navigating relationships with their children, this leaves the stepmothers to fend for themselves without the backings they need. The absence of this support often leads to frustration, and, in some cases, mistreatment of the stepchildren. However, instead of looking at the father's lack of involvement or understanding, society tends to focus on the stepmother as the scapegoat.

### **The Psychological Impact on Stepchildren**

The stereotype of the wicked stepmother also has a detrimental effect on stepchildren. Typically, children are often conditioned to believe that their stepmother is the problem, rather than seeing the larger picture of a broken family dynamic. This can result in feelings of anger, alienation, and confusion, particularly if the father is absent in creating a supportive and healthy environment. In the tale of *The Young Man Who Transformed into a Hornbill*, Shimray writes “in the father's absence, the son was ill-treated by the stepmother,” it is always in the

absence of the father that the ill-treatment starts. This eventually impacts the psychology of the son which led him to take a giant leap and transformed into a hornbill.

In families where a mother has passed away, children may also struggle with feelings of disloyalty or resentment toward their father for remarrying. These feelings can make it difficult for the children to accept a new maternal figure in their lives, whether that person is a stepmother, or another woman. In these cases, the father's role is vital in helping the children adjust in the new family dynamic. If the father fails to do so, the stepmother is left to navigate emotionally the situation largely on her own.

### **The Role of Social Media**

The media and popular culture play an important role in shaping gendered stereotypes and continues to perpetuate the idea of the wicked stepmother. Movies, television shows, and literature often portray stepmothers as villains, focusing on their cruelty and emotional distance from their stepchildren. Although it is no wonder to observe the ill treatment of the stepmother in the tale of *Kholalew* that after the death of her mother, her father took on new wife where the daughter was mistreated. As the women in the house was in charge of the household chores as traditionally, men work out in the field. The well-being of their children lies solely in the hands of the mother. However, the blame is solely based on the stepmother.

This portrayal stigmatizes stepmothers, making it more difficult for them to be accepted into their new families. The emotional complexities of blended families are rarely explored in depth. Instead, the focus is shifted to the drama and conflict, with little attention paid to the role of the father.

### **Changing the Narrative**

To break free from the cycle of blaming stepmothers, the societal conception of fatherhood plays a crucial role. By balancing the gender roles instead of attributing the burden of raising children solely to the stepmother. Moreover, engaging in the community discussions can foster healthy environment for the children. Despite increasing ubiquity, stepfamilies generally face a number of stressors not experienced by members of biological nuclear families. This is attributable to the lack of legal and social clarity surrounding stepfamily relationships and roles (Coleman, Ganong, & Russel, 2013).

Support for stepfamilies should be normalized, with resources made available to help both fathers and stepmothers to navigate the challenges of blending families. Parenting is a shared responsibility, and fathers must step up and

support their partners in order to foster an environment where stepchildren feel secure and loved.

Media and literature must take a more nuanced approach to stepmotherhood, portraying the complexities of these relationships and moving away from one-dimensional portrayals. Positive role models for fathers who actively engage in their children’s lives could help reshape the narrative and encourage healthier family dynamics. Moreover, the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model highlights the importance of family dynamics, including psychosocial resources such as healthy family relationships, that can help families face their demands even those induced by the transition to stepfamily life (Patterson, 2002).

### **Conclusion**

The blame game is deeply rooted in societal issue that rises from gendered bias, societal expectants to perform motherly roles, and the often-unacknowledged incompetence of fathers. The societal tendency to attribute blame for stepchildren’s misfortune to the stepmother poses necessity to engage with and challenge prevailing cultural stereotypes.

The speculations on the exploration of Tangkhul folk narratives on the study of women portrayal, particularly on the stepmothers viewing as scapegoats, the focus must shift to the structural issues that shape family dynamics, hold fathers accountable for their roles in both relationships and parenting, and work to build a culture that supports blended families. This would dismantle the stereotypes that have caused harm to both stepmothers and stepchildren for generations.

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**The Depiction of the Female Psyche in Manju Kapoor’s  
*Difficult Daughters***

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**Abstract**

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* offers a thorough analysis of the female psychology in the tumultuous Indian pre-partition environment. This study examines the nuanced portrayal of Virmati, the primary character, and the ladies who reside nearby, focusing on how social conventions and individual preferences impact their inner lives. This study thoroughly explores how the novel depicts emotional distress, highlighting the characters' internal monologues and psychological landscapes. It explores how the women negotiate their identities within the limitations of domestic environments and family obligations, exposing the psychological impact of suppressed emotions and social pressures. The study also examines the impact of historical occurrences on women's mental health, particularly the upcoming partition. By emphasizing the characters' emotional vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms, *Difficult Daughters* provides a sophisticated and captivating portrayal of the feminine psychological experience.

**Keywords:** Manju Kapur, Women, Patriarchy, Culture, *Difficult Daughters*.

**Introduction**

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is set against the backdrop of pre-Partition India, a period marked by significant political, social, and cultural upheaval. The novel captures the turbulence of the 1940s, a time when India was on the brink of gaining independence from British colonial rule. This era was characterized by the rise of nationalist movements, the Quit India Movement, and the growing demand for self-rule. However, it was also a time of communal tensions that eventually led to the Partition of India in 1947, resulting in the creation of India and Pakistan. The historical context of the novel is intricately woven into the personal lives of its characters. The protagonist, Virmati, navigates her desires for education and independence while grappling with social expectations and familial obligations. Her story reflects the broader struggles of Indian women during this transformative period, as they sought to assert their individuality in a

patriarchal society. The Partition serves as a metaphor for the fragmentation and conflicts within families and relationships, mirroring the larger divisions in the nation. Kapur’s portrayal of this historical period provides a vivid backdrop for exploring themes of identity, freedom, and the evolving roles of women in a changing society. This context enriches the narrative, making it both personal and universal.

During pre-partition India, women's roles underwent significant transformations, influenced by social reform movements, nationalist struggles, and evolving cultural norms. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule, who advocated for women's education, the abolition of practices like sati, and widow remarriage. These efforts laid the foundation for women's empowerment and their participation in public life. Education played a pivotal role in changing women's roles during this period. As more women gained access to education, they began to challenge traditional gender roles and assert their individuality. Organizations like the Mahila Samaj and other feminist groups provided platforms for women to engage in social and political discourse. The Indian freedom movement further catalyzed changes in women's roles. Women actively participated in protests, marches, and campaigns for independence, breaking barriers and redefining their social positions. Figures like Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi became prominent leaders, inspiring many others to join the struggle. These changes marked a shift from domestic confinement to active involvement in social and political spheres, paving the way for greater gender equality in post-independence India.

Predominantly on the period of the Partition, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is a moving examination of women's realities in a fast changing India. Beyond a mere historical narrative, the narrative explores the ideas and challenges of its female characters—especially Virmati, who questions social conventions—very thoroughly. Kapur skilfully exposes the underlying conflicts, wants, and frustrations of women seeking freedom in a society run by males. The title, *Difficult Daughters*, captures the struggle between personal objectives and society expectations. The book presents women as multi-dimensional persons with their own identities and aspirations, therefore subverting the conventional portrayal of them as inferior figures. Kapur emphasises the need of personal liberty while criticising the restrictions placed on women during a period of significant social change. Basically, the novel examines the female mind as it negotiates marriage, love, and social demands. Virmati's passionate affair with Gangadhar, a married

professor, captures her fight against rigid familial and social norms since this love reflects her search for intellectual and emotional gratification outside of simple romance.

Author emphasizes particularly on the inner conflicts of her characters to show the psychological expenses of living in a society that limits their options. Emphasising the complex relationships between mothers and daughters, the book explores generational tensions resulting from different points of view on modernism and tradition. Often reflecting traditional ideals, the mothers cause friction and misinterpretation with their more contemporary daughters. The challenges the ladies experience highlight how political unrest shapes personal life against the disorderly backdrop of the Partition. Notwithstanding the upheaval, the women in the narrative actively build their own futures instead of merely responding to past events. Kapur also looks at female agency inside social limitations, stressing figures like Virmati who show incredible tenacity in following their aspirations despite social obstacles.

#### **Representation of Female Psyche in Manju Kapur’s Novel *Difficult Daughters* Dualities: Tradition and Modernity**

The novel is fundamentally about the tension between the legacy of traditional roles and the need for uniqueness and self-determination. Virmati and other female characters in *Difficult Daughters* are bound between inherited society expectations and their own rebellious goals. Kapur shows how deeply ingrained customs may either empower or restrict women, hence causing ongoing inner struggle: internalized cultural norms Virmati is shaped by a household steeped in customs; the weight of these expectations reveals itself as both responsibility and guilt. This internalized pressure reflects the historical conditioning many women go through. Desire for Independence The need for personal freedom seems as a counterpoint in opposite direction. The choices the characters make to seek education, fight in odd relationships, or challenge patriarchal structures all show a natural drive to redefine who they are on their own terms.

#### **Vulnerability and Emotional Complexity**

Kapur's presentation of the shortcomings in the feminine experience is both sympathetically and brutally honest: in internal conflicts, Virmati shows us a mix of will and self-doubt. This emotional variety greatly offsets the stereotyped portrayal of women as either meek or subservient. Rather, Kapur creates a nuanced psychological portrait of the junction of hope, desire, and regret. Resilience comes from struggle. The inner journey of Kapur's characters leaves scars. But these very challenges—which manifest as times of personal understanding and sophisticated introspection—help to accentuate a strong spirit. The narrative shows women as

active people who have to continually rethink their identities in a fast-changing environment.

### **Symbolism and Narrative Techniques**

Kapur employs complex narrative devices to fairly and subtly present the feminine mind: By listening to the inner voices of her characters, Kapur helps the reader to sense the complicated network of emotions defining the feminine experience. Different from superficial character profiles, this approach provides close-up views of the nuances of self-identity. Symbolic landscapes: The locations and subjects of the book usually reflect inner emotions. The contrast between small living quarters and the liberating environment of the outside world symbolizes the continuous fight between emancipation and limitation inside the mind.

### **Effect and Wider Reversals**

By exploring feminine psychology, *Difficult Daughters* transcends its narrative to offer views about how women's roles in society are evolving. Kapur's work shows how well personal stories—complete with inner turmoil, desires, and the daring to challenge convention—resonate with more general feminist discourses. The book raises important questions and challenges readers to see how difficult it is to combine their individual goals with social responsibilities. These internal disputes reflect more general shifts in gender roles in a modernizing India.

Kapur's careful investigation of the feminine brain refutes oversimplified clichés and offers a multidimensional cosmos in which the struggle against social conventions and personal freedom is entwined. Apart from improving the narrative, this portrayal promotes ongoing debate on the difficult and often shifting ground of women.

### **Understanding the Concept Female Psyche**

The female mind is best understood as a complicated tapestry composed of several distinct components, including emotional depth, cultural conditioning, personal experience, and an always searching for identity. Though its definition is challenging, its complexity is shown by several related characteristics. It is a dynamic relationship between outer world influences and interior drives; it is a synthesis of strength and fragility, of tradition and invention. Apart from shaping personal identity, this complex mental environment reflects bigger society changes. It captures the challenges and successes of forging one's own path in a complicated world, hence fostering ongoing renewal and reinventions.

### **Characteristics of Female Psyche**

Analyzing the features of the female mind is like charting a dynamic, continually shifting mosaic—a territory with great personal resonance. Though it's important to remember that no two experiences are like any other, certain recurring motifs provide insight on this complicated inner life.

**Emotional Depth and Complexity:** Rich emotional landscapes are a feature of many women's life. Emotions range rather than binary from happiness and love to sadness and despair. Often, the interplay of several emotions produces profound insights about oneself and interpersonal relationships.

**Empathy and Intuition:** Increased empathy helps one to have a great awareness of the needs and emotions of other people. This natural awareness of emotional signals helps one to build strong relationships and a caring presence. Many times, people see being emotionally vulnerable—openly speaking and processing emotions—as evidence of inner strength rather than a weakness. It allows for real communication and personal growth.

**Changing Personality:** There exist numerous roles, Whether they are leaders in the community, artists, caregivers, or professionals, women often juggle many identities at once. This role negotiation might lead to a fluid self-concept whereby experience and environment continuously shapes identity.

**Development and introspection:** An internal dialogue marked by introspection and self-evaluation makes continuous personal development possible. This introspection helps one to support the continuous growth in goals, aspirations, and self-perception.

**Intersectionality as a Theory:** Identity is deftly spun from strands of personal history, sexual orientation, social level, and culture. This intersectionality highlights how many events form a complicated sense of self.

**Resilience and Adaptability:** From personal hardship to social expectations, different women develop great resilience in spite of, or perhaps because of, the numerous challenges they come across. This inner power helps one to be flexible and grow in front of change.

**Transformational Conflict:** Often overcoming obstacles is closely related with great personal growth. The very events that test resolve can help one develop both emotional depth and self-awareness.

**Altering Modernism and Custom:** Cultural conditioning against personal aspiration, many women struggle to match their modern aspirations with accepted social more ties. This dynamic tension often sets off a critical examination of

tradition that results in a reframing of roles that honor lineage yet value individual autonomy.

**Creative Rebellion:** Literary works, paintings, or creative problem-solving are often used to express the want to redefine society's expectations as a sort of personal catharsis and a challenge to the current quo.

**Social Connection and Relational Orientation:** Strong connections define many women's inner existence. Apart from creating personal identity, the emphasis on connection influences familial ties and the bigger society.

**Empathetic for Cooperation:** Being aware of the emotional currents in relationships helps to provide a unique type of group support. This can show itself as mentorship, caregiving, or just active listening—a talent that improves group as well as personal life.

These qualities show how the female mind is a dynamic, living fabric full of emotional complexity, strong against social pressures, and continually shifting to fit new opportunities and obstacles. Apart from affecting personal identity, its depth improves cultural and interpersonal surroundings.

### **Manju Kapur's *Heroin* Virmati**

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* the struggle for identity is a central theme, particularly for Virmati, who embodies the yearning of women to transcend the restrictive boundaries of traditional roles. Within the patriarchal framework of pre-partition India, a woman's identity was largely defined by her relationship to men – as a daughter, wife, or mother.

Kapur masterfully portrays Virmati's internal conflict as she grapples with the social expectations that seek to confine her to these predetermined roles, while simultaneously harboring a deep-seated desire for personal autonomy and self-discovery. Virmati's yearning for an identity beyond domesticity is evident in her pursuit of education. In a society where women's intellectual pursuits were often dismissed or discouraged, her desire to learn becomes a powerful act of rebellion. Education, for Virmati, is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge; it is a pathway to liberation, a tool for forging an independent identity. It represents an escape from the stifling confines of her home and the limited expectations placed upon her. The novel underscores the transformative power of education in shaping Virmati's understanding of herself and the world around her.

Through her studies, she gains access to new ideas and perspectives, challenging the traditional beliefs that have governed her life. Her intellectual awakening fuels her desire for a life beyond the domestic sphere, a life where she can exercise her own agency and make her own choices. Virmati's relationship with

Gangadhar, her married professor, further illuminates her struggle for identity. Their forbidden love affair is not simply a romantic entanglement; it is a manifestation of her desire for intellectual and emotional connection, a yearning for a relationship that transcends the conventional boundaries of marriage. Gangadhar's intellectual stimulation and recognition of her individual worth provide Virmati with a sense of validation that she cannot find within the confines of her family and community.

However, Virmati's pursuit of her own identity comes at a significant cost. Her defiance of social norms leads to ostracism and condemnation, highlighting the harsh consequences of challenging the patriarchal order. The novel portrays the psychological toll of this struggle, as Virmati grapples with guilt, shame, and the fear of social rejection. The conflict between Virmati's personal desires and social expectations is further complicated by her relationship with her mother. Her mother, representing the traditional values of her generation, struggles to understand Virmati's rebellious spirit. This generational divide highlights the evolving role of women in Indian society and the tension between tradition and modernity.

Virmati's journey is a testament to the enduring human desire for self-discovery and personal fulfillment. Despite the formidable obstacles she faces, she refuses to relinquish her yearning for an identity beyond the confines of tradition. Kapur's portrayal of Virmati's struggle resonates with readers because it speaks to the universal experience of seeking one's place in the world, of navigating the complex interplay between personal desires and social expectations. The novel's strength is in the depiction of the internal struggle, and the price paid for that personal identity.

Virmati, the main character in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, is a complex figure representing the struggles of women dealing with tradition, modernity, and personal desires in a patriarchal society. She combines strength, vulnerability, and contradictions, making her a compelling character in contemporary Indian literature. Virmati is driven by her strong desire for education and independence. Coming from a conservative Punjabi family, she challenges social expectations through her quest for higher education, which symbolizes her search for identity and agency.

*“Virmati watched Shakuntala ride horses, smoke, play cards, and badminton, act without her mother's advice; buy anything she wanted without thinking it a waste of money. Above all, she watched how her sister never seemed to question or doubt herself in anything”.* (Kapur 28)

This statement vividly encapsulates the contrast between Virmati and her cousin Shakuntala. Shakuntala serves as an embodiment of the freedom and



autonomy that Virmati yearns for but struggles to attain due to the weight of social expectations and familial responsibilities. Observing Shakuntala’s uninhibited lifestyle becomes a pivotal moment for Virmati, as it plants the seeds of rebellion and self-awareness within her, highlighting the psychological intricacies Kapur weaves into her exploration of the female psyche. Shakuntala’s confident, carefree demeanour reflects her defiance of traditional gender roles and social norms. She represents a woman who has successfully carved out a space for herself in a patriarchal society, where autonomy for women is often constrained.

Her ability to act without seeking her mother’s advice or approval, coupled with her unrestrained participation in activities like playing badminton or smoking, symbolizes an alternate reality—one where a woman’s worth is not tied to adherence to conventional roles as a dutiful daughter, wife, or mother. For Virmati, Shakuntala becomes a figure of admiration and envy. While Virmati is confined by her family’s expectations, which demand that she prioritize marriage and household duties, Shakuntala exemplifies the possibility of a life driven by self-determination. Shakuntala’s refusal to question or doubt her choices stands in stark contrast to Virmati’s internal conflict.

This dichotomy is central to the novel’s exploration of the female psyche, as it sheds light on the tension between individuality and social obligations that define much of Virmati’s character. Kapur uses this juxtaposition to delve into Virmati’s emotional and psychological struggles. Watching Shakuntala introduces Virmati to a world beyond her own limited experiences, igniting a desire for education, independence, and self-expression. However, Virmati’s journey is fraught with challenges, as she grapples with the guilt and shame imposed by her family and society for defying their expectations. This highlights the inner turmoil experienced by women who dare to question traditional roles and seek fulfilment on their terms.

The portrayal of Shakuntala and her impact on Virmati underscores the novel’s broader themes of rebellion, selfhood, and the quest for agency. Shakuntala represents the strength and courage needed to break free from patriarchal constraints, while Virmati’s struggles reflect the psychological cost of attempting to do so in a conservative society. Together, their contrasting experiences offer a nuanced depiction of the female psyche, illustrating the complexities of women’s aspirations and the barriers they face.

In essence, this statement captures a key moment of awakening for Virmati, where she begins to recognize the possibilities of an empowered existence. It serves as a catalyst for her eventual rebellion against social norms, even as it underscores



the emotional and psychological conflicts that accompany such defiance. Kapur’s depiction of this dynamic is a powerful exploration of the diverse dimensions of womanhood and the enduring struggles for autonomy and self-realization.

### **Other Women Characters Portrayal by Manju Kapur**

**Shakuntala:** is a pivotal character whose portrayal reveals a profound insight into the female psyche, particularly in the context of India’s sociocultural and historical setting. Shakuntala stands as a contrast to the conventional roles expected of women during that time, representing a bold, modern, and independent spirit. Shakuntala’s psyche is marked by her strong desire for autonomy and self-fulfillment. She challenges traditional gender norms by refusing to conform to social expectations of marriage and domesticity, which were often seen as the ultimate goals for women.

**Ida:** the narrator and daughter of Virmati, provides a profound psychological lens through which the narrative unfolds. Her character reflects the complexities of a daughter grappling with the emotional legacy of her mother’s choices, as well as her own search for identity in the shadow of a tumultuous familial history. Manju Kapur uses Ida’s perspective to explore themes of generational conflict, emotional inheritance, and the quest for self-understanding, offering a layered depiction of the female psyche.

**Kasturi:** Virmati’s mother, represents the psyche of a woman deeply rooted in traditional values and steeped in the cultural expectations of a patriarchal society. Her character is shaped by her unwavering commitment to familial duties and social norms, making her a stark contrast to Virmati’s rebellious and questioning nature. Through Kasturi, Manju Kapur offers a poignant portrayal of the generational transmission of patriarchal values and the internal struggles of a woman who both enforces and is constrained by these norms.

**Ganga:** the professor’s wife, represents the psyche of a woman deeply entrenched in traditional gender roles within a patriarchal society. Her character contrasts sharply with Virmati’s rebellion and pursuit of independence, highlighting the different ways women navigate their social constraints and personal emotions. Ganga is portrayed as the epitome of a conventional wife, devoted to her duties as a homemaker and caretaker. Her identity is largely defined by her marital status and her role as a mother, which reflects the limited avenues for self-expression available to many women of her time. Ganga’s psyche embodies the internalization of patriarchal norms, as she accepts her position in her husband’s life with a sense of duty rather than questioning the fairness of her situation.

## Conclusion

Through the novel, Manju Kapur raises important questions about freedom and the degree of agency women in a patriarchal society have at hand. Virmati's inner struggle and difficult choices reflect the psychological toll on people who challenge accepted knowledge and experience. All things considered, *Difficult Daughters* offers a detailed and rigorous study of women's perspectives, therefore highlighting the challenges they encounter in a society going through change. Manju Kapur's art celebrates the human spirit and the desire for personal enjoyment among huge challenges by underlining the same struggles women experience on their road to discovering their identities against social expectations.

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**Silent Voices, Loud Realities: Gender Politics in *Untouchable*, *The God of Small Things*, and *Seasons of the Palm***

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**Abstract**

This paper titled "Silent Voices, Loud Realities: Gender Politics in *Untouchable*, *The God of Small Things*, and *Seasons of the Palm*" explores the nuanced interplay between gender, caste, and class in Indian literature. By examining the works of Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, and Perumal Murugan, this study highlights the silenced yet powerful voices of marginalized women and their complex realities within oppressive societal structures. The paper addresses how these texts portray systemic oppression, violence, and the exploitation of the female body as a site of caste and gender politics. Sohini, Ammu, and Poonkodi emerge as symbolic figures navigating these multifaceted struggles. Through their experiences, the paper underscores the deep-seated inequalities faced by women marginalized by both caste and patriarchy. The narratives further illustrate how resistance can manifest in diverse forms—from silence and endurance to acts of defiance. By shedding light on these overlooked voices, the paper calls for greater recognition of marginalized experiences in literary discourse. Ultimately, this study emphasizes how literature can serve as a powerful medium for challenging entrenched social hierarchies and advocating for gender equality.

**Keywords:** Gender Politics, Marginalization, Caste Discrimination, Systemic Oppression, Inter-sectionality, Resistance and Agency, Female Body as a Political Site, Social Hierarchies, Literary Discourse and Indian Literature

**Introduction**

Gender politics is a critical lens through which one can analyze the socio-cultural dynamics in literature. Three seminal works—*Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable*, *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things*, and *Perumal Murugan's Seasons of the Palm*—offer profound insights into the intersection of caste, class, and gender in

Indian society. These texts unravel the silent yet powerful voices of marginalized genders and explore the complex realities they navigate within oppressive social structures.

By examining the intricate interplay of caste, gender, and class, this article delves into how these narratives depict systemic oppression and the strategies of resistance employed by the characters. Each text provides a unique perspective on the lived experiences of individuals at the margins, shedding light on how deeply entrenched societal norms perpetuate inequality.

### **Gender and Caste: An Inseparable Nexus**

Caste and gender are deeply intertwined in the Indian social fabric, creating layers of oppression that reinforce each other. In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand portrays Sohini, a Dalit woman, as a victim of both caste-based discrimination and gender-based violence. Her encounter with the upper-caste priest epitomizes how women at the intersection of caste and gender are doubly marginalized. The assault she faces is not only an act of individual violence but a manifestation of structural inequalities that position Dalit women at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Similarly, in *Seasons of the Palm*, Perumal Murugan’s depiction of Poonkodi, a young Dalit girl, illustrates how caste and gender oppression intertwine to dictate her life choices. Poonkodi’s experiences as a child laborer reveal how economic exploitation compounds her vulnerability, emphasizing the intersectionality of oppression faced by Dalit women.

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy expands this discourse by showcasing Ammu’s transgressions against patriarchal and caste norms. Ammu’s relationship with Velutha, a Dalit man, becomes a powerful act of defiance against systemic oppression. Their love story challenges both caste and gender hierarchies, illustrating the pervasive nature of these social constructs and the personal costs of resistance.

### **Silent Voices: The Role of Marginalized Women**

The silencing of women’s voices is a recurring theme in all three texts. In *Untouchable*, Sohini’s inability to speak out against her molester reflects the systemic silencing of Dalit women. Her silence is not merely a lack of speech but a forced submission to an unjust system that denies her the right to justice or dignity. Anand’s portrayal of Sohini’s plight underscores the cultural and institutional mechanisms that perpetuate her oppression.

In *Seasons of the Palm*, Poonkodi’s silence is portrayed as a survival strategy. As a young Dalit girl navigating a harsh and oppressive environment, her silence

becomes a means of self-preservation. However, her quiet endurance also hints at the emotional toll of living in a society that devalues her existence.

Conversely, in *The God of Small Things*, Roy uses Ammu and Rahel to challenge the trope of silenced women. Ammu’s boldness in pursuing her desires and Rahel’s quiet rebellion against societal expectations highlight the resilience of women who refuse to conform. Nevertheless, their defiance comes at a significant personal cost. Ammu’s eventual ostracization and Rahel’s fragmented identity illustrate the precariousness of challenging entrenched patriarchal norms.

### **The Body as a Site of Politics**

The female body emerges as a contested site in these narratives, symbolizing the intersectionality of oppression. In *Untouchable*, Sohini’s body becomes a battleground for caste and gender violence. Her assault is emblematic of how Dalit women’s bodies are subjected to systemic control and exploitation, reflecting broader societal attitudes toward their dehumanization.

Similarly, in *The God of Small Things*, Ammu’s body is scrutinized and controlled by societal norms. Her relationship with Velutha renders her a transgressor in the eyes of her community, and her sexuality becomes a source of public judgment and shaming. Roy’s portrayal of Ammu’s experiences critiques the pervasive policing of women’s bodies and desires under patriarchy.

In *Seasons of the Palm*, Perumal Murugan emphasizes the physical labor endured by Dalit women like Poonkodi. Their bodies are exploited not only through manual labor but also through the caste-based hierarchies that dictate their roles in society. The portrayal of the body as a site of both suffering and resistance underscores the multifaceted nature of oppression experienced by marginalized women.

### **Resistance and Agency**

Despite the oppressive structures depicted in these texts, moments of resistance and agency are evident. In *Untouchable*, Sohini’s silent endurance can be interpreted as a form of resistance. While she may not voice her defiance, her mere survival within an oppressive system asserts her resilience and humanity.

In *Seasons of the Palm*, Poonkodi’s small acts of defiance, such as questioning authority figures or asserting her presence in subtle ways, represent a reclaiming of agency. Murugan’s portrayal of her quiet rebellion serves as a reminder that resistance can take many forms, even in the face of overwhelming adversity.

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy presents a more overt form of resistance. Ammu’s defiance of societal norms through her relationship with Velutha is a radical act that challenges the foundations of caste and gender hierarchies. Rahel’s quiet resilience and her eventual reunion with her twin brother, Estha, symbolize the enduring spirit

of those who refuse to be broken by systemic oppression. These narratives illustrate that even in the most oppressive circumstances, individuals find ways to assert their agency and resist dehumanization.

### **Conclusion**

*Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable*, *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things*, and *Perumal Murugan's Seasons of the Palm* offer compelling narratives that illuminate the intersection of gender, caste, and class in Indian society. By portraying the silent voices and lived realities of marginalized individuals, these texts critique systemic inequalities and highlight the resilience of those who resist oppression.

Through their nuanced portrayals of caste and gender politics, these works underscore the importance of amplifying marginalized voices in literature. By exploring themes of silence, resistance, and agency, they challenge readers to confront the entrenched inequalities in society and recognize the enduring spirit of those who navigate these intersecting realities.

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## **The Blind Prophets of Time: A Comparative Study of Insight and Disability in *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land***

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the role of blindness in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, focusing on the figures of Oedipus and Tiresias. By applying Disability Studies and psychoanalytic literary theory, it explores how blindness transcends physical impairment to embody metaphorical insight and societal critique. Both characters function as seers of truth, their blindness offering profound insights into human suffering and existential despair. This study investigates the intersection of disability, prophecy, and leadership in classical and modernist texts, highlighting their shared cultural significance across different literary periods.

### **Introduction**

Disability studies is an academic discipline that explores the meaning, nature, and impact of disability within social, ethical, political, and cultural contexts. Its interdisciplinary nature allows for diverse methodologies and approaches, broadening the field’s scope. These include examining disability narratives, analyzing representations of disability in literature, art, law, and media, addressing the lack of academic research on disability, and rewriting or reevaluating disability histories.

Emerging in the late twentieth century, disability studies became part of a broader, politically engaged, identity-based interdisciplinary field influenced by the “disability civil rights movement.” Rooted in social justice, this movement aimed to generate and disseminate knowledge on disability issues. The discipline took shape in the 1980s, primarily in the US, UK, and Canada. In 1986, the “Impairments and Disability” section of the US Social Science Association was renamed the “Society for Disability Studies.” The first disability studies program in the US was introduced at Syracuse University in 1994. A significant milestone was the



publication of *The Disability Reader* in 1997, one of the earliest academic collections on the subject. Over the following decade, the field expanded rapidly, leading to the recognition of disability studies as an official division by the Modern Language Association in 2005.

The eighteenth century saw significant shifts in societal attitudes toward individuals with impairments. This transformation is well illustrated in Oliver Sacks’ *Seeing Voices*, which includes a thought-provoking chapter on individual perseverance and eighteenth-century philosophical perspectives. Sacks also contributed to the development and teaching of sign languages, enabling deaf individuals to integrate more fully into society. In the nineteenth century, literature reflected a growing focus on disability, with many notable works featuring disabled characters. However, portrayals varied—some depicted impaired individuals as evil, savage, monstrous, or grotesque, as seen in Anthony Trollope’s *Barchester Towers*, T.S. Eliot’s *The Lifted Veil*, and Tarchetti’s *Fosca*. Meanwhile, authors like Elizabeth Gaskell and others often emphasized the experiences and struggles of caregivers rather than the dilemmas faced by disabled individuals themselves. Despite this, the century also produced literary works that highlighted the resilience and virtues of disabled characters, including *The Little Prince and His Traveling Cloak* by Dinah Craik, *What Katy Did* by Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, and *The Crofton Boy* by Harriet Martineau. In modern and contemporary literature, disability studies have been explored from a more nuanced and empowering perspective. Many disabled authors have contributed to literature, not only narrating their struggles but also showcasing their triumphs. Writers such as Peter Winkler, Octavia E. Butler, Jean-Dominique Bauby, John Hockenberry, and John Milton exemplify this shift, using their works to challenge perceptions of disability and celebrate resilience.

Over time, disability has become a central theme in literature. The political and sociological study of disability has emerged not solely through the work of sociologists but primarily due to the pioneering efforts of disabled individuals themselves. As Mercer et al. state, “Disability studies takes the medicalised model of disability as its primary object of critique” (66). In recent decades, the field has been defined by disabled individuals “fighting back,” using their disability as a means of empowerment. The concept of labeling people with impairments is thoroughly examined in Erving Goffman’s influential work *Stigma* in 1968. Goffman broadly defines stigma to encompass “abominations of the body; the various physical deformities, blemishes of individual character, and the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, plus in Britain, social class” (14). He argues

that while the term “normal human being” may have a medical definition, it also functions as a normative framework for categorizing individuals. Alongside Goffman, another key figure in shaping interdisciplinary, identity-based approaches to impairment and disability studies is Michel Foucault, particularly through his concept of the “medical gaze.”

With the rise of disability studies, there has been a growing focus on literature written by disabled individuals themselves. Their works offer authentic depictions of the lives of disabled people, highlighting their struggles, hardships, pain, and the ways they overcome various challenges. Some notable books in this genre include *The World I Live In* in 1908 by Helen Keller, who was deaf and blind; *My Left Foot* in 1954 by Christy Brown, who had cerebral palsy; *Face to Face* in 1957 by Ved Mehta, who was blind; *One Little Finger* in 2011 by Malini Chib; *Naseema: The Incredible Story* in 2005 by Naseema Hurzuk, a paraplegic; *The Other Senses* in 2012 by Preeti Monga, India’s first visually impaired aerobics trainer; *No Looking Back* in 2014 by Shivani Gupta, a wheelchair-bound activist; *River of Time* in 2017 by Jeeja Ghosh, who has cerebral palsy; and *As the Soul Flies* in 2007 by Yasmin Sawhney, a blind painter, among others.

### **1. Blindness as a Metaphor for Insight**

Blindness, both literal and metaphorical, has long been a potent symbol in literature. In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* (5th century BCE) and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in 1922, the characters Oedipus and Tiresias emerge as central figures whose blindness signifies more than physical limitation. This paper investigates the thematic and symbolic similarities between these two works through the lens of Disability Studies and psychoanalytic theory.

The presence of blindness in both texts serves as a critique of human fallibility and societal decay, while simultaneously granting the characters unique insight into the truth of their worlds. By analysing these works side by side, we uncover how different literary eras utilise blindness as a complex tool for exploring identity, knowledge, and suffering.

In both *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land*, blindness functions as a paradox: those who are physically blind often “see” deeper truths. In Sophocles’ tragedy, Tiresias, the blind prophet, perceives the dire reality of Oedipus’ fate long before Oedipus himself. His blindness contrasts with Oedipus’ initial physical sight and metaphorical ignorance. Oedipus only attains true insight after he blinds himself, marking his transition from ignorance to knowledge.

Similarly, Eliot’s Tiresias occupies a pivotal role in *The Waste Land*, observing the fragmentation and moral decay of modern society. Though blind, he

perceives the spiritual desolation and cyclical nature of human history. His insights tie together the disparate voices within the poem, acting as a unifying force. Both characters thus embody the idea that physical blindness enhances spiritual or intellectual vision.

## **2. Blindness and Prophecy: A Tool for Social Critique**

Tiresias in both texts serves as a mouthpiece for societal critique. In *Oedipus Rex*, his warnings highlight the consequences of hubris and the fragility of human knowledge. His role underscores the play's central theme: the limits of human agency within the deterministic framework of fate.

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot's Tiresias critiques the moral and spiritual barrenness of post-war Europe. His omniscient perspective reflects the disillusionment of a generation grappling with the aftermath of World War I. Both works use blindness as a metaphor to expose societal flaws and prompt introspection.

Tiresias, the blind prophet, functions as a powerful symbol of insight and societal critique in both *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles and *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot. His blindness paradoxically grants him the ability to perceive deeper truths that elude those with physical sight, making him an essential figure in critiquing human folly, moral decay, and the limits of knowledge. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Tiresias serves as the voice of divine wisdom, warning Oedipus of his tragic fate. His confrontation with Oedipus reveals the central conflict between human arrogance (hubris) and the inevitability of fate. When Oedipus mocks his blindness and accuses him of conspiracy, Tiresias responds with prophetic insight: “You have your sight, but you do not see the evil in your life, nor where you live, nor whom you live with” (Sophocles 370-372). This moment underscores a key theme of Greek tragedy, the limits of human perception. Oedipus, despite his intelligence and ability to solve the Sphinx's riddle, is blind to his own identity and destiny. Meanwhile, Tiresias, though physically blind, possesses a vision that transcends human limitations. His warnings highlight the consequences of pride and the fragility of human knowledge, reinforcing the deterministic nature of fate within the play.

The theme of blindness as a form of deeper insight is further reinforced when Oedipus, upon discovering the truth of his birth, blinds himself. His physical blindness becomes symbolic of his newfound self-awareness, demonstrating the dramatic irony that pervades the play. As scholar Bernard Knox observes, Tiresias'

role “exemplifies the tragic paradox of knowledge: to truly see, one must first be blind” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 57).

In *The Waste Land* T.S. Eliot re imagines Tiresias as a figure who unites past and present, embodying the disillusionment of post-war Europe. Unlike in *Oedipus Rex*, where he is a direct agent of prophecy, Eliot’s Tiresias is an observer, witnessing the moral and spiritual decay of a fractured civilization. His presence in *The Fire Sermon*, the third section of the poem, offers a grim reflection on human desolation: “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, Old man with wrinkled dugs. Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest” (*The Waste Land* 218-220)

Here, Tiresias exists outside conventional time, embodying both male and female perspectives. His omniscience allows him to witness scenes of modern alienation, such as the loveless sexual encounter between the typist and the young man. This moment, devoid of passion or meaning, reflects the spiritual emptiness that pervades Eliot’s modern world. Critics such as Hugh Kenner argue that Tiresias functions as “the poem’s central consciousness, seeing the decay of Western civilization unfold before him” (*The Invisible Poet* 59).

Eliot’s use of Tiresias draws from classical mythology but repurposes him as a symbol of cultural degeneration. His blindness no longer serves as a bridge to divine truth, as in Sophocles, but as a reminder of the lost spiritual vision in the post-war era. This aligns with the poem’s broader theme: the collapse of traditional values and the struggle to find meaning in a fractured world.

In both *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land*, blindness serves as a powerful metaphor for truth and perception. In Sophocles’ play, it underscores the tragic irony of human ignorance, while in Eliot’s poem, it represents the cultural disillusionment of modernity. Tiresias, as a prophetic figure, transcends both works to critique society—whether it be the Greek tragic understanding of fate or the moral emptiness of 20th-century Europe.

Through Tiresias, both texts challenge their audiences to reflect on human limitations, the consequences of pride, and the failure to recognize deeper truths. As Harold Bloom asserts, “Tiresias is the eternal prophet, whose blindness allows him to see more than those with sight, making him the ultimate witness to human folly across time” (*The Western Canon* 94).

### **3. Disability and Agency**

From a Disability Studies perspective, both characters challenge traditional notions of agency. Although visually impaired, Tiresias maintains a unique authority and agency, his insights pivotal to the narratives. Oedipus' self-inflicted

blindness, on the other hand, can be seen as an act of reclaiming agency. By blinding himself, he takes control of his punishment, turning his suffering into a form of penance and self-awareness.

In both cases, blindness disrupts the usual power dynamics associated with disability. Rather than diminishing their roles, it amplifies their voices, allowing them to reshape the narrative and assert their influence within their respective societies.

From a Disability Studies perspective, both Tiresias and Oedipus challenge conventional notions of agency, demonstrating how blindness—often perceived as a limitation—can instead serve as a means of empowerment and self-determination. In both *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land*, blindness does not reduce these characters' authority; rather, it amplifies their influence, allowing them to reshape the narratives around them and redefine power dynamics.

Despite his visual impairment, Tiresias retains a unique position of authority in both *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land*. In Sophocles' tragedy, he holds prophetic wisdom that supersedes the flawed reasoning of sighted characters. His ability to perceive divine truth despite his blindness challenges the traditional correlation between vision and knowledge. As Lennard J. Davis notes, Tiresias exemplifies a form of “narrative prosthesis,” where disability serves not as a limitation but as a device that reveals deeper truths about the world (*Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* 99).

Tiresias' prophetic role enables him to challenge Oedipus' authority, disrupting societal hierarchies. His declaration “You are the curse, the corruption of the land!” (*Oedipus Rex* 401) demonstrates his power in defining the tragic course of events. Even though Oedipus initially dismisses him, Tiresias' words ultimately dictate the king's downfall. His disability, rather than rendering him powerless, grants him a form of intellectual and spiritual agency that surpasses physical sight.

Similarly, in *The Waste Land*, Eliot's Tiresias acts as an omniscient observer, bridging past and present, male and female perspectives. His presence in *The Fire Sermon* symbolises the modern world's moral decay, offering an authoritative critique of post-war disillusionment. In lines 218-220, he asserts: “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, Old man with wrinkled dugs, Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest.”

This positioning of Tiresias as a figure who transcends traditional categories aligns with Disability Studies' exploration of how disabled individuals

often occupy liminal spaces in society, possessing knowledge that the dominant culture overlooks. His blindness does not diminish his insight but rather grants him a broader, more penetrating perspective on human suffering.

While Tiresias wields blindness as a source of power, Oedipus’ self-inflicted blindness can be interpreted as an act of reclaiming agency. Disability Studies often examines how impairment, rather than being passively endured, can be actively negotiated by individuals. By choosing to blind himself after discovering the truth of his origins, Oedipus asserts control over his fate. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues, disability can serve as a “narrative corrective” that challenges traditional ideas of normalcy and autonomy (*Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* 97).

Oedipus’ decision to blind himself functions as both punishment and self-awareness. In his own words “How could I bear to see when all my sight was horror everywhere?” (*Oedipus Rex* 1371-1372). His act disrupts conventional associations between vision and power. In many ways, Oedipus gains a new kind of sight, one that allows him to understand his limitations, his destiny, and the consequences of his actions. Scholars such as Martha Nussbaum have noted that Oedipus’ self-blinding represents a philosophical shift from ignorance to self-knowledge (*The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*). His disability, then, is not merely a mark of suffering but a transformative event that reshapes his identity and autonomy.

In both cases, blindness challenges traditional power structures associated with disability. Rather than being passive figures, Tiresias and Oedipus exert influence over their narratives and societies. Tiresias, though physically impaired, holds the ability to dictate truth, forcing those in power to confront realities they seek to avoid. Oedipus, in contrast, actively embraces blindness as a form of agency, choosing his own punishment rather than submitting to external judgment. This reversal of expected power dynamics aligns with Disability Studies’ critique of the medical model of disability, which frames impairment as a condition to be “fixed” or pitied. Instead, both characters illustrate the social model of disability, in which meaning is constructed not by physical impairment itself but by its interaction with cultural and societal structures (*The Politics of Disablement*). Moreover, Tiresias and Oedipus serve as early literary examples of the disability aesthetics a concept proposed by Tobin Siebers, which argues that disability is not simply a defect but a unique perspective that enriches literature and culture

(*Disability Aesthetics*). Their blindness is not a mere plot device; it actively reshapes the meaning of knowledge, power, and fate within their respective works.

Both *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land* use blindness not as a symbol of weakness, but as a tool for social critique and transformation. Tiresias, through his prophetic insight, subverts traditional hierarchies of knowledge, while Oedipus’ self-inflicted blindness serves as an act of agency and self-redefinition. From a Disability Studies perspective, these characters challenge ableist assumptions that equate impairment with passivity or lack of power. Instead, their blindness becomes a medium through which they reshape their narratives, assert their authority, and critique the societies in which they exist.

As Mitchell and Snyder argue, disability in literature often serves to “disrupt the cultural imagination, forcing a reevaluation of societal norms and assumptions”(Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse 2000). Tiresias and Oedipus exemplify this disruption, demonstrating how blindness—far from being a limitation—can serve as a means of insight, agency, and influence.

#### **4. Symbolism of Time and Cyclicity**

Both works reflect on the cyclical nature of time, with blindness serving as a symbol of continuity and renewal. In *Oedipus Rex*, Tiresias’ knowledge spans past, present, and future, link Oedipus’ fate to the larger forces of destiny. In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias observes the recurring patterns of human folly and spiritual decline. His presence in a modernist text ties classical themes of prophecy and tragedy to contemporary concerns about societal collapse.

#### **Conclusion**

The characters of Oedipus and Tiresias, though separated by centuries, demonstrate the enduring significance of blindness as a literary motif. Through the application of Disability Studies and psychoanalytic theory, this article highlights the complex interplay between physical impairment and metaphorical vision in *Oedipus Rex* and *The Waste Land*. Blindness in these texts serves not only as a symbol of insight but also as a powerful tool for critiquing societal norms and exploring the human condition. By bridging the gap between classical and modernist literature, we uncover the timeless relevance of these works in understanding the intricate relationship between disability, knowledge, and power.

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**Shifting Identities and Unstable Realities: An Existential Fluidity  
in Haruki Murakami’s *A Wild Sheep Chase***

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**Abstract:**

This paper explores the concept of namelessness and the absurdity of power which is connected to a sheep in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Haruki Murakami, a Japanese novelist and short story writer, is known for his cross-cultural and alternative narratives. *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982) follows a nameless 29-year-old narrator as he searches for a mystical sheep to restore the power of “Boss,” a figure representing a “trilateral power base of politicians, information services, and the stock market” (58). The Mysterious Sheep with a star-shaped birthmark on its body resembles its power and uniqueness to control the individuals. Long before, in 1936 Boss was controlled by the Sheep which led him to become an influential figure in Japan. The protagonist has annihilated himself from society and its power dynamics yet becomes entangled in this absurd search for the sheep, which serves as a metaphor for the influence of power infiltrating every aspect of his life. The paper further examines the blending of the ordinary and the uncanny, highlighting the novel’s philosophical ambiguity.

**Keywords:** Existential Fluidity, annihilation, philosophical ambiguity

The core idea of existentialism is that existence precedes essence. This means that the individuals first exist and then define their essence through actions, as opposed to being born with a predetermined purpose or nature. Using the example of a paper-knife, Jean-Paul Sartre explains that its essence (design and purpose) precedes its existence (actual creation). This is contrasted with human beings, who first exist and then create their essence through choices and actions.

The philosophical ambiguity is inherent in existentialism, where the lack of predefined essence and the necessity of self-definition lead to a fluid and uncertain existence. This aligns with the concept of annihilation in the sense that traditional

notions of fixed identity and purpose are dismantled, leaving individuals to construct their own meaning in an indifferent universe. The term ‘fluidity’ used here is quite consciously derived from Arjun Appadurai’s ‘global flow’ which

emphasizes the chaotic nature of these Bows and argues that they supersede standard geographical thinking in social-cultural analysis. There are, in our view, a number of Baws in this conceptualization, and it advances the study of mobility to suggest other approaches that renew attention to geographic processes and forms while transcending the Baws of static anthropology. His view of geography assumes that static units are the opposite of Bows, whereas a processual geography understands how Bows can create, reproduce, and transform geographic spaces. (132)

But the flow in Murakami’s *monotogata* shows that there is no sense of belonging, individual or social fixity to any ideology, belief, or culture. There is a constant change in purpose or lack of purpose, annihilation, philosophical ambiguity.

The phrase ‘Existential Fluidity’ encapsulates the concept of fluidity in the nameless protagonist and his narratives, which take us on a tumultuous journey. This concept explores the narrator’s dynamic and malleable nature. His search for the sheep, his friendship with Rat, and the chaotic mediocrity of the narrative all question the notion of fixity throughout the novel. To establish fixity in a context, there needs to be a sign or a sense of belief that enables it to be recognised. However, in Murakami’s *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the narrator is relatively fluid, lacking both a name and a sense of belief. This results in an inability to fix into a context. This research paper aims to explore this fluidity, and the absurd power hierarchy connected to the Sheep.

Haruki Murakami is a distinguished contemporary Japanese author whose works have been translated into over 50 languages. He distinguished himself from the Japanese literary guild early in his career. Murakami’s journey as a writer was sparked in 1978 when he was inspired to write a novel while attending a Yakult Swallows baseball game. During the game, he witnessed David Hilton hit a double, which ignited his desire to write. Prior to this, Murakami was the proprietor of a jazz café by day and a bar by night, known as Peter Cat.

*A Wild Sheep Chase* (2003) translated by Alfred Birnbaum and originally published in Japanese in 1982 begins with the nameless narrator seeing an obituary for a girl from his college days who “would sleep with anyone” (5). Now 29 years old, he is bored and lonely, living with a nameless cat and running a PR agency with his friend. His mundane life is suddenly disrupted by a mysterious man in a black suit

and his chauffeur, who arrive in a limo and claim to communicate with God through their Boss.

They inquire about a sheep picture used by the protagonist in a life insurance PR bulletin. This leads the narrator to Hokkaido with his girlfriend, who has magical ears, in search of his friend Rat, who had given him the sheep picture. In Hokkaido, he learns about the Sheep Professor at the Dolphin Hotel and discovers that the star-marked sheep can control people. He also learns that sheep were introduced to Japan only after the 1880s. Those controlled by the sheep gain power and can fulfil their desires, but when the sheep leave their body, they lose everything and crumble. Rat faced this situation and ultimately killed himself.

At the end of the novel, the narrator returns to his usual life, attempting to start a jazz bar with his friends J and Rat. It is left to the reader to determine whether Rat represents the narrator's inner self or, through the power of the sheep, he has become an immortal shapeshifter who can transform into the Sheep Man, visible only to the narrator. The novel leaves open the possibility for various interpretations, inviting readers to explore the fluid and ambiguous nature of the characters and their experiences.

According to Jonathan Dil, Murakami's narrative in *A Wild Sheep Chase* can be interpreted as a monomyth. The protagonist embarks on a transformative journey to Hokkaido in search of the mystical sheep and his friend Rat, venturing into the realm of mystics. This journey symbolizes a deeper quest for meaning and self-discovery, as he navigates through surreal and enigmatic experiences.

Upon completing his quest and returning to the realm of consciousness, the protagonist undergoes a significant change in perspective. This newfound awareness leads him to make a decisive break from his previous life, including quitting the PR agency which he co-owned with his friend. The narrative thus encapsulates the classic hero's journey, marked by departure, initiation, and return, highlighting the protagonist's evolution and the fluid nature of his identity.

The hero's journey begins with what Campbell terms the "call to adventure," which can be initiated voluntarily or by an external, benign or malignant force. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku embodies this stage, living a mundane life and describing it as "boring." Yet, when he meets a woman who insists people who are often the opposite of their own self-perception, she subtly hints that Boku may be more interesting than he thinks. Boku's adventure is triggered ambiguously—first by an unexpected request from his friend Rat to publicize a photo of some sheep, and then by a powerful right-wing organization's demand that he locate a specific sheep with a star-shaped birthmark. Initially resistant to their threats and bribes, Boku

ultimately accepts the journey, partly and is influenced by his new girlfriend's presence.

There is a profound difference between the fixity and fluidity of Murakami's narrator. Let us delve into the popular monomyth of this century in *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. Santiago is in search of his dream and goes through many struggles. He enters the realm of mysticism, where he meets the king and receives the decision-making stones Urim and Thummim. Upon his return, he becomes an alchemist. In contrast, Murakami's *monogatari* narrative presents a different kind of journey. 'Who is the narrator? Nameless. What is he searching for? A sheep and his mystic friend Rat. What does he find? A sheep with the power to control and crumble the host's body without any clear reason. This illustrates the fluidity of both the narrative and the narrator.'

The protagonist's identity and sense of self are in a constant state of flux. With the job out of the picture, the narrator experiences a surge of relief, signifying a step towards simplifying his life. This simplification, however, comes at the cost of losing significant aspects of his identity: his hometown, his teens, his wife, and soon, his twenties. Each loss represents a shedding of fixed elements of his past, belief system, and culture contributing to a fluid and ever-changing sense of self. It is a state of philosophical ambiguity where the narrator finds relief in losing a significant part of his life's resources.

As the narrator contemplates the future, he acknowledges the uncertainty and unpredictability of life. The inability to imagine what will be left of him at sixty underscores the fluid nature of his existence. This aligns with existentialist themes, particularly the idea that existence precedes essence. The narrator is not defined by a static essence but by his ongoing experiences and choices, which continuously reshape his identity.

Murakami says that the state of fluidity in the narrative is attained by profound mediocrity in the world. He states that earlier the world was chaotic. Chaos has a sense of fixity or originality to it. But mediocrity began when people separated the means of production from daily life. According to him, Karl Marx, who introduced the concept of the proletariat, inadvertently highlighted mediocrity. He connects Stalinism directly to Marxism which is an extension towards mediocrity. He further adds "The giraffe and the bear have traded hats, and the bear's switched scarves with the Zebra" (89). This line serves as a metaphor for disruption or fluidity of identity, roles and social norms. Nameless narrator further states that

Nor do you know where you stand. Now listen, I thought it over last night.  
And it struck me. What have I got to feel threat- ened about? Next to

nothing. I broke up with my wife, I plan to quit my job today, my apartment is rented, and I have and to worth worrying about. By way of holdings, I've got maybe two million yen in savings, a used car, and a cat who's getting on in years. My clothes are all out of fashion, and my records are-an- cient. I've made no name for myself, have no social credibility, no sex appeal, no talent. I'm not so young anymore, and I'm always saying dumb things that I later regret. In a word, to borrow your turn of phrase, I am an utterly mediocre person. What have I got to lose? If you can think of anything, clue me in, why don't you? (139)

The mediocrity goes beyond the fixity in general when the narrator questions, what is the purpose of a name? which reflects Derrida's uncertainty and the notion of postmodernism where the fragmentation and fluidity in the narratives met to explore the 'Other' which is not fixed in the centre as Edwar Said. This fluidity also shows Catherine Malabou's concept of 'Plasticity' where the nameless narrator goes insearch of Sheep, and the “grotesque comedy of mishaps” (266).

Sheep play a vital role in the narrative. In a sense, Murakami's monogatari is fluid because he creates a hero who holds no value to life and follows a convenience-driven narrative. There is a sense of fragmentation in the story, and readers are only aware of the Boss, a trilateral base, through the narrative; he never really appears in person. Despite this, he has a profound impact on the lives of the nameless narrator, the Black Suit Guy, and the Chauffeur. This highlights the philosophical ambiguity of life. Thus, *A Wild Sheep Chase* is existentially fluid in nature.

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**Globalization and Diasporic Displacement in Anjali Joseph’s  
*The Living and Another Country***

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**Abstract:**

Anjali Joseph is a leading writer who reflects of the contemporary Indian society in her writings she always highlights the social issues. For example, her novels *Another Country* (2012) and *The Living* (2016) approach globalization critically from cultural and economic point of view emphasizing Diasporic displacement which is seen beyond actual migration. In *Another Country*, a transnational heroine named Leela traverses London, Paris, and Bombay persistently feels alienated. She could feel the psychological effects of cultural globalization in all these places her experience is a reflection of divided belonging and hybrid identity in the economically globalized world. By juxtaposing Arun, an Indian shoemaker who struggles against mechanized production, with Claire, an English factory worker suffering industrial collapse, *The Living* exposes the effects of globalization. Their similar experiences serve as a reminder of the global economic instability and workforce displacement. This researcher emphasizes their relationship to identify the challenges faced by them and the labor disparities. These texts cast doubt on the idea that globalization is a sign of progress. Through these texts, Anjali Joseph highlights the paradox of greater connectedness resulting and its greater alienation in her live stories.

**Keywords:** Globalization, displacement, transnational identity, labor instability, economic inequality, cultural alienation.

Anjali Joseph has written two novels on this subject *Another Country* (2012) and *The Living* (2016). Unlike much diaspora literature, which treats exile as a default condition, Joseph focuses on contemporary, intentional migration, cultural alienation, and economic dislocation. These works explore how transnationalism and modern globalization shape contemporary diasporic identities. The narrative

follows Leela, an educated Indian woman who travels to three of the world’s most iconic cities London, Paris, and Bombay. Her movement is driven not by political or economic necessity but by a personal quest for self-discovery and belonging, a recurring theme in contemporary diaspora narratives. In Paris, she reflects on French culture but never fully integrates. Even in Bombay her hometown she feels no deep-rooted connection illustrating how diasporic individuals can experience alienation even within their place of origin.

Leela’s problems at work and in her romantic life are similar to her cultural problems. She inadvertently falls for men from a variety of backgrounds but she is never able to entice one into a committed partnership. A diasporic subject stuck between several worlds but not really belonging to any of them has a fluid and unstable identity, which is reflected in the volatility of her personal life.

Arun’s situation serves as an example of how globalization is endangering India’s traditional craft industry, and he feels dislocated even in his own country. Because she was born in England, Claire feels economically dislocated when her industrial occupation becomes obsolete. This is an example of diasporic existence, where people are uprooted by economic factors beyond their control rather than migration. *The Living* demonstrates that diaspora is not always about physical movement but may also refer to changes in the economy and industry that force people to abandon their traditional ways of life. Despite living in different parts of the world globalization has brought Claire and Arun together. Another nation portrays diaspora as an interior and psychological state rather than a geographic one. Leela’s story encapsulates the core of postmodern, privileged diaspora, where the struggle for identity and belonging in a globalized society takes precedence over the struggle for survival. She expressed her nostalgic thought in the context “The hardest times passed like fire. I don’t remember much until Jason was two. Till he was at school. I used to think of this documentary they showed when we were in school.” (P27). She always thinks about her recollected memories and longs for that.

*The Living* depicts a contemporary diasporic reality in which relocation occurs due to labor and economic changes rather than traditional migration. It expands the definition of diaspora beyond geographic migration to include economic instability and industrial decline as displacement processes. Because Joseph’s novels explore both psychological and economic relocation, they broaden the field of diaspora studies. An elite, mobile diaspora where identity is a personal and cultural matter is addressed by another country. *The Living* discusses economic diaspora and shows how labor changes and globalization create new displacement



issues. Both volumes show that displacement does not always occur through physical migration, challenging traditional notions about diaspora.

Diasporic Literature as a Catalyst for Social Change  
*Never. To be loved, never forget your insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty in its lair. Never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away. Moreover, never, never, to forget.* Arundhati Roy

Language in diasporic literature often serves as a means of resistance against dominant cultural norms and values, challenging discrimination and prejudice based on ethnicity, religion, or cultural background.

### **Diaspora in *The Living*:**

Through the lives of Claire and Arun, the two main protagonists in Anjali Joseph's 2016 book *The Living* topics of identity, diaspora, and the intricacies of interpersonal relationships are examined. Here's a refined and clearer version of your statement by contrasting the characters' lives in two distinct cultural contexts, *The Living* highlights how their identities are shaped by migration, displacement, and internal conflicts. Below is a thorough character-by-character analysis that emphasizes the novel's diasporic elements. In *The Third and the Final Continent*, Lahiri sums up the diasporic experience by suggesting that assimilation is the only solution for survival in an alien land (pp. 66-67). Like Jhumpa Lahiri, Anjan Appachana (b. 1972) is an Indian migrated to US.

Arun is a middle-aged Indian man who works at shoe factory pune in India. His experiences show an internal displacement a loss of connection to his conventional environment and confusion about the current one despite the fact that he has not physically moved. Arun feels alienated even in his own country of origin. He feels alienated by his normal existence and boring employment particularly in India which is changing quickly and moving away from traditional sectors like shoemaking.

Arun is an example of an elder generation adjusting to cultural and economic changes. He represents a type of diaspora in his own nation, feeling cut off from the younger, more interconnected globe. Arun's daily life exemplifies the struggle of adapting to new socioeconomic realities while holding onto long-standing traditions. His sense of being neither fully traditional nor entirely modern reflects a psychological diaspora.

Conversely, Claire is a young lady who works in shoe factory Norwich England. She is Arun’s Western equivalent, coping with her own existential issues and feelings of alienation. Her isolation and detachment from her surroundings highlight an emotional diaspora. She feels exiled from meaningful relationships and a defined life purpose, while being in her own nation.

Claire’s employment in the shoe factory like Arun’s links her to a dwindling sector of the economy implying a yearning for a bygone era and a challenge to find purpose in the here and now. Despite never having met Claire and Arun’s similar struggles highlight how commonplace relocation. Arun and Claire both experience personal alienation, demonstrating that diaspora encompasses more than just migration; it also involves feeling disoriented in one’s own environment. The diasporic thought exhibits in the words of Arun, “She always wants to go somewhere different, which is the new best place” (P18).

Both Arun and Claire undergo displacement, one within their own nation and the other within their own thoughts and feelings, as Arun stays in India and Claire stays in England. A recurring subject in diaspora writing is the loss of belonging, which is shown by Arun’s battle with modernization in India and Claire’s disengagement from her environment.

Both characters reflect on what has been lost in their respective lives, reinforcing the idea that diaspora is not just about physical migration but also about the emotional and cultural shifts that distance individuals from their roots.

#### **Diaspora in *Another Country*:**

*Another Country* by Anjali Joseph, published in 2012, is the story of Leela, the protagonist, who is torn between various locations and thus has much to do with the exploration of identity, belonging, and emotional displacement. This alternative view of the diaspora does not mean migration in the classical sense but rather a more inward emotional and cultural migration. She is a young Indian woman who migrates among London, Paris, and Mumbai. The migration between these cities represents more than just a physical journey it symbolizes the emotional and cultural journey Leela must undertake to find a true sense of home. Despite her Indian origins connecting her to these places, she does not feel a sense of belonging or comfort in any of the cities she inhabits. In London and Paris, she feels ‘other’ while in Mumbai, she feels separated from it. It is Leela’s story that has just as much emotional diaspora as physical diaspora, and that is what her life as love and career is really about trying to make meaning and identities stability and all but she can find none of them.

Whereas Leela’s romantic and personal relationships reflect detachment and transience, modern diaspora fiction emphasizes characters search for bonding within a new and unfamiliar world. The publishing and teaching aspects of her life represent an attempt to integrate her into distinct cultural landscapes. However she never feels fully part of them, which deepens her sense of disapproval and alienation. Although Leela’s parents were by no means the main actors they reflected a migration experience by an earlier generation. Their emphasis on security and home was very different from Leela’s more fluid, modern sense of identity. They envisioned her marrying settling down and raising a family just as an Indian daughter should, but she discards the traditional expectations of family life and love, thus marking internal conflicts as real signs of being a diasporic figure.

Leela’s relationships whether romantic or friendships reflect her deep sense of impermanence. For her, these connections rarely represent a lasting sense of belonging. They introduce her to life living in contrasting cultural blocks in London Paris and Mumbai. Each community holds different expectations for her, yet she could never fully be a part of one. Whereas traditional diaspora narratives offer conflicted characters unable to amalgamate into a new homeland, Leela’s journey takes the form of a continuous periphery deep into nowhere. Geographically, Leela’s sense of out-of-placeness is more de facto and psychological. She feels disconnected from other people, places, and some aspects of herself. The common theme in modern diaspora literature explored in the novel is, does belonging lie within the realm of place, or is belonging a state of mind?

Anjali Joseph’s *Another Country* (2012) and *The Living* (2016) make for deeper comparative analysis regarding the diaspora of displacement, belonging, and identity. The two novels deal with certain ideas of alienation and rootlessness differently one through the physical and emotional itinerancy of an unsettled young girl and the other through the quiet internal dislocation of individuals rooted in a dying working class world. Leela in *Another Country*, though not by choice, travels between London, Paris, and Mumbai, making her a ‘victim’ of the physical diaspora of not having a place to belong. Similarly, but staying in their respective countries, Arun and Claire feel lost and disconnected in *The Living*. In *Another Country*, the migration is geographical, with Leela moving continually but never really settling in. *The Living* is more concerned with psychological displacement both Arun and Claire feel out of place in their native lands. The changing urban landscape reflects a fractured identity a tangible sense of displacement, with no single place to call home. This cultural push-and-pull fosters Arun’s social isolation through emotional detachment. In Pune, India he feels exiled from a rapidly transforming world,

symbolizing the economic marginalization of the older working class. Claire lives in Norwich England, and though it's part of her home country, she feels alienated and detached from her life around her. In Paris, she reflects, *she was here, but she was also elsewhere. The city, its language, its people they all remained at a distance*. This shows her inability to immerse herself in a single cultural space. She reflects on her life in Norwich, ‘*Everything around her was familiar, yet she felt as if she were drifting, unmoored*’. This conveys a sense of being a stranger in one's own land.

In both novels, work becomes a symbol of dislocation rather than stability. Arun and Claire worked in shoemaking factories, an obsolete trade that makes clear the distance they are from the negotiable realities of modern economies. Leela lacks a sense of rootedness, having moved from publishing in London into teaching in Mumbai. A few clues Arun's frenchness dies with him, an obvious symbol of cultural and economic obsolescence for calling the work now more tedious seems likelier, she provokes an acquaintance or associate of her husband into further vexation within a long existence, reaffirming her dislocation in a world no longer becoming her own. Her work is constantly changing, in direct contrast with Arun and Claire, who seem to anchor themselves to a perception of fixed national roots this can be read as her constantly trying to ascertain herself through different cultural settings.

In *The Living*, Arun remarks, ‘Shoes were not what they used to be, and even less so was the work’ suggesting that he is losing both his livelihood and his sense of place in an ever-changing world. Relationships in both novels are unable to ground the characters, thus reinstating their dislocation Leela's transient love affairs in *Another Country* stand in contrast to the solitude of Arun and Claire in *The Living*. In both novels, love and intimacy do not offer a fuller sense of belonging. Leela changes direction from lover to lover but remains spiritually disconnected. Arun's domestic setting is very remote; work acquaintances carry no gladness. Claire is in constant loneliness, though with people around her, who is unable to bond with them sincerely.

In *Another Country*, Leela's thoughts on her relationships highlight her detachment *Even in the warmth of another's body, she felt cold inside*. This echoes Claire's experience in *The Living* where she admits *she was always reaching for something but never quite grasping it*. Home is an abstraction rather than a place. The cities they live in are no longer comforting. Both novels suggest that home is not a fixed place, but an ever-shifting idea. In *Another Country*, Leela questions, ‘*Was home where she was born, where she lived, or somewhere else entirely?*’ In

*The Living*, Arun wonders, ‘*Had this ever really been home, or had he just stayed here long enough to pretend it was?*’

#### **Conclusion**

Both novels challenge conventional notions of diaspora by focusing on emotional exile rather than just physical migration. While Arun and Claire experience a quieter internal displacement, Leela’s journey is marked by physical movement and restlessness. In both stories, relationships and employment fail to provide stability, reinforcing the characters sense of alienation. The novels ambiguous endings underscore the idea that diaspora is an ongoing chronic struggle rather than a temporary condition.

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**Voice to the voiceless: a portrayal of marginalized gender in Indian Fiction from the select works of Arundati Roy**

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**Abstract:**

It looks at the role of women in nation-building and the continuing challenges of gender inequality. Indian writing in English by women authors reflected the nature of life lived in the 1960s and 1970s in India. The period was the transition period, as the social and economic establishment was moving towards industry from agriculture. As a result, many families were abandoned owing to loss of land and loss of jobs in the agricultural sector. The writings have immortalised the struggles of Indians during those years of upheaval and turmoil owing to transition. Arundhati Roy wrote novels that vividly depicted the struggles of individuals in the institution of family against the challenges thrown by the society that was in transition. Her writings focused on capturing the challenging life lived by speechless Indian communities, who continued to withstand the onslaught of poverty, patriarchy, and political and social unrest, all with their inborn strength that was the essence of India. The novels written by women writers focused on the struggles of Indian women in keeping their families together. The time was marked by political, social, and economic unrest, and these novelists were able to capture all these happenings in their novels.

Roy has created history by expanding the usual reader base of Indian Writing in English by including the common Indian reader. Roy's novels were able to replace the newspapers and the tabloids which majority of the middle-class Indian families were familiar with. It was considered that the usual Indian novels in English written by authors were too sophisticated to appeal to the masses. Furthermore, the subject matter dealt by many of the novels failed to connect with the contemporary Indian mindset. This paper aims to focus how the author is able to capture the realistic environment of contemporary India. This study is primarily focus on socio cultural study on select novels and essays of Arundhati Roy in order to explicate how she is seriously concerned with the problems that plague the important systems of India such as the Caste system, politics, sports and others. This paper also aims at understanding how the author has presented the realities of the Indian society with all its social justice, equality and human rights. Roy's

writing can be considered as the representative voices of India and the author’s views on the turbulent social condition in which India struggles to survive.

Key words: gender-based violence, women rights, sexuality and colonialism.

## VOICE TO THE VOICELSS

It would be suitable to begin with “The God of Small Things” (*TGOST*), which combines psychoanalytic theory with postcolonial theory or cultural studies by emphasizing both trauma and gender studies. The novel discusses a variety of inequalities as societal ills and in-depth examines the traumas these ills inflict on people. The rich prose, complex familial events, and, of course, the domestic problems of post-colonial India truly overflow this book. The story of Ammu and Velutha is permeated by socioeconomic and class problems, which all explode and flood as soon as the truth about their illicit relationship is revealed. It is important to take into account a few key historical facets of India before beginning. Hinduism, which makes up the majority of the people in India, along with Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, make up the majority of the country's multi-cultural society. Additionally, there is a caste structure that distinguishes between Touchable and Untouchables. They split further the following groups: Shudras (peasants and laborers), and Brahmins (priests and academics). (Servants like Kochu Maria). Cultural prejudice is still pervasive, at least in Ayemenem, despite a constitutional law banning discrimination against Untouchables being passed in 1950.

In the “Ministry of Utmost Happiness” the focus is initially on the character of Anjum Hijra (Hijra means intersexual or the third gender), but shifts to a different plot line as the book progresses, namely to the love story between two men and a woman who is ultimately overshadowed by politics and the civil war. While reading, the question often arises as to how *Arundhati Roy* will manage to reconnect the different storylines that seem to have no connection. And of course she makes it.

‘The Ministry of Outstanding Happiness’ can hardly be mastered without further and explanatory secondary literature. Especially since many historical names have been modified and research into the background is often difficult. Postcolonial feminism addresses the intersection of colonialism, gender, and oppression Ministry of Trauma and Supreme Happiness: Naturalized binary gender classifications are criticized in the novel throughout Aftab-born Anjum's life. He was born in Kwabuga to Jahanara Begun and Murakat Ali. The child’s gender and identity terrify her mother, and for some time she won't even figure it out with her husband.



They were both expecting a boy, but contrary to the usual expectations either a boy or a girl. Mother said: "In Urdu, she knows everything has a gender: carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments. All were male or female, everything but her baby. She found this very contradictory to living away from language and conventional ways of life. Murakat Ali is desperate in helping his child become normal, but he finds his child uncomfortable adapting to his gender.

Jahanara Begum is ashamed of the fact that it is 'beyond possibility, acceptability and imagination'. She has a hard time assimilating the fact, that her own baby is queer and own shame, but trying to love her own child, she actively takes possession of her and keeps him close. However, as he started attending school his homonormativity becomes apparent. Under the guidance of Ustad Hamid Khan, he became an accomplished singer of classical Hindustani music and was able to sing with the perfection and poise of a Lucknow. At first his ability was highly praised, but he soon fell prey to the gaze.

Aftab defied by the children at school, saying, He's her. He's neither him nor her. He is his and her Shee hee, Hehe! As Teasing became unbearable for him, and his humiliation was his innate defiance of schoolchildren who refused to continue attending school and music classes. This experience, of personal trauma (PT), becomes a lasting memory that can't be erased. A digression and a fusion of past and present helps delay the climax of Murakat Ali's reaction to news about his son's homonormative nature.

The report of Dr. Nabi's threatens to destroy Murakat Ali's to construct social identity very carefully. He doesn't give up his beliefs in medical truth and raises funds for Aftab's surgery. He believes that "Aftab's homonormative behavior tends to be 'always contained'". When Aftab moves to Kuwaga because he wants to be a girl himself, he struggles with the truth and lives with nine other transgender people. So contempt "against threats that seem to come from the outrageous, either outside or inside, thrown beyond what is possible, acceptable, or conceivable". Ali is considered to be an archetype and an object is represented by the phenomenon of castration, because she perceives the gaze as a threat, as if interrogating him or her.

He takes Aftab to Dr. Gulham Nabi, a sexologist, who examines him and says: Aftab was not, medically speaking, a Hijra – a female trapped in a male body – although for practical purposes that word could be used. Aftab, he said, was a rare example of a Hermaphrodite, with both male and female characteristics, though outwardly, the male characteristics appeared to be more dominant. He said he could recommend a surgeon who would seal the girl part, and sew it up. He could prescribe some pills too. But, he said, the problem was not merely superficial. ...



There would be ‘Hijra tendencies that were unlikely to ever go away. (Roy, TMOUH 16-17)

He had a body that has boundaries between men and women. His story reveals the problems of a society shaped by gender. A child's understanding has to classify themselves as male or female. Certain behaviors have also been found to be sex-related and are considered stable. According to feminist theorists, such gender-specific distinctions reinforce sexual inequality. This brought the discussion about the quality of care that the family provides to the transgender child at birth. His existence seems to lack meaning and he feels castrated.

Bad reception of the transgender child at birth can have the equivalent effect of this sting and produce alterations in its constitution that will express themselves psychically and bodily as unconscious tendencies of self-destruction. According to biologist Faust Starling, sex differences are normal. Her research on infants with bizarre genitalia surgically altered shows that it is not always possible to ascertain a gender. Biologists Faust believes she in fact has five genders. Males, females, Hermes ( hermaphrodites, or individual’s ovaries and testicles), Mermes (male hermaphrodites bred with specific characteristics of testicles and female reproductive organs), and Fermus. (i.e., female hermaphrodites with ovaries associated with specific features of male reproductive organs). His maleness began to manifest itself in the form of body hair, cracked voice and a tall muscular body which caused him anguishes as he could not come to terms with it.

In a panic, he tried to remove the hair on his face and body with Burnol – burn ointment that made dark patches on his skin. He then tried Anne French crème hair remover that he purloined from his sisters... He plucked his bushy eyebrows into thin, asymmetrical crescents with a pair of homemade tweezers.... He developed Adam’s apple that bobbed up and down. He longed to tear it out of his throat. Next came the unkindest betrayal of all the thing that he could do nothing about. His voice broke A deep, powerful man’s voice appeared in place of his sweet, high voice. He was repelled and scared himself each time he spoke. He grew quiet and would speak only as a last resort after he had run out of other options. He stopped singing. (Roy. TMOUH 24). His transformation into Anjum has been described as a transition to a different world. He lives with others, a community of heterogeneous hermaphroditic that includes men, Hindus, and Muslims who do not believe in surgery. Anjum's friend Kulsoom tells the story of the Hijra, highlighting the importance of being Hijra community plays Major Hindu mythologies courts.

Thinking that Anjum was crazy for wanting to leave, the Khwabgah women went to see Dr. Bhagat, who prescribed psychiatric medication for them. Dr.

Bhagat's relationship with women is interesting, as they seem to be completely dependent on him for their health care, and many of them take his medicine to improve their health and mental health. Hijra's are addicted to drugs, and the doctor prescribes their drugs are pathological for their gender identity or not. Of course, the Hijra are particularly poor in mental health. Throughout the life, her gender representation reflects her general health. The cemetery reminds her grief and hurt, while return of reflections begins to work trauma, as she suffered in Gujarat. Instead of killing him, the mob only forced him to sing slogans of theirs. She remembers that she sang a song of Victory to Mother India! Suffering injuries at the cemetery, Anjum initially refuses to receive visitors, but D.D. Gupta, his client in Khwabgah who works in the construction industry in Iraq, visited him before leaving to Baghdad. However, Anjum is not forced return to Khwabgah. Although she has decided to go away from the world to handle heartbreak, moreover visited her that she can never cut ties with the real world.

One of the main character, Tilotama of unknown origin like Anjum. As per *Arundhati Roy*, she was a imaginary child of Velutha and Ammu from her nevel “The God of Small Things” (*TGOST*), and that story has a different ending. Tilo's story reveals a world of outer conflict. The Kashmir people intricately portrayed throughout her life. Tilo search for Musa, an activist of Kashmir, gets her into trouble. Tilo witnesses inhumane punishment by the military. She becomes a victim herself and has her head shaved under the guise of an interrogation. It is a commentary on how states use and justify gender treatment. She seeks her revenge by cut her hair and grow long again. She leads and unconventional life, adventurous and breaks down the walls between her private and public spheres. Tilo's presence in the fictional world challenges, such opinions about a roles of man and woman in both the private and public worlds.

Tilo says she believes she is not a good mother, so when she decides to medically terminate the pregnancy, she denies her narrowly defined assumptions about sexuality and wanting to have children. Break. The bodily acts conception, childbirth lactation distinguishes between men and women. In the view of biological reproduction is underlying different social segregations, capable of producing different forms of embodiment experienced throughout life, and of pride, joy, shame, guilt, It can produce a wide range of effective responses, including regret, and I find great relief in successfully avoiding reproduction.’

Addressing marriage and childbirth has social and cultural implications and facilitates the creation of an individual's gender identity. Tilotama is not a typical female caricature and, like Rachel in *The Little Things*, is not bound by conventions

that limit or hinder women's freedom. She was tired and feared that "she will one day leave him." "I felt like I was adrift in a state" Leaving the hospital, she came across a Muslim cemetery in the background, where did she met Anjum. Across Kashmir, women are so insecure that they pluck up the courage to take to a Kashmiri woman (Khadija), tells Tilo about her perseverance and confidence. Hijab, Shalwar kameez and phelan give them comfort Tilotama recommends. The country, ravaged by years of unrest, has resulted in varying degrees of female oppression. Women cannot stay. Women are not allowed. Roy italicized this sentence.

Tilo does not questioned Khadija about the inequalities common to Kashmiri women's lives. But questions keep popping up in her head. Another striking example of hers is where Roy demonstrates the complex nature of body-spatial relationships arising from her MTP, or Tilotama's decisions and processes regarding medical abortion. It is the type of conduct that is despised by everyone associated with doctors, especially if the women are not accompanied by a guardian in the hospital. The doctor refused, telling her the procedure was fairly not safe. Whole experience is scary. The body is in intense emotional and physical pain.

The personal trauma of mothers (PTs) upon discovering their sons are in fact hijra, kina, or transgender is associated with feelings of child humiliation, object-object disruption, fear, and self-destruction. I'm here. It is interpreted as a physical reality that blurs the distinction between others. Within, one of violent and dark rebellion looms, thrown beyond the realm of possibility, endured, conceived, and directed against threats that seem to emanate from the outer or inner extraordinary increase. So close, yet incapable of assimilation. It begs, it worries, it attracts desire, but it is not tempted. Desire turns away with fear. Disgusted and refuses. Certainty protects them from bad guys - certainty they are proud of and hold tight to. But at the same time, that momentum, that spasm, that leap gravitates somewhere else. . Like an inevitable boomerang, the insatiable whirlwind of challenge and repulsion literally infuriates its prey. examining how colonial histories have shaped gender relations in postcolonial societies

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**Dehumanization to Empowerment: A Postcolonial Approach in Ernest J. Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying***

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**Abstract**

This research paper provides a postcolonial reading of Ernest J. Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying*, exploring the theme of transformation from dehumanization to empowerment. The novel centers on Jefferson, a young African-American man unjustly convicted and likened to a "hog," symbolizing the colonial legacy of racial dehumanization. Through his journey of reclaiming dignity with the help of Grant Wiggins, the narrative highlights the broader struggle for identity and self-worth in a racially oppressed community. Jefferson’s transformation becomes an act of resistance, challenging the systemic racism and cultural hegemony rooted in colonial ideologies.

By portraying the power of education, solidarity, and self-realization, the novel deliberate the enduring impact of colonial narratives and the resilience of those who seek to reclaim humanity. Though the research sheds light on the profound ways in which Gaines critiques the dehumanizing forces of oppression and celebrates the triumph of dignity and Empowerment.

**Keywords:** Identity, Resistance, Dehumanization, Systemic Racism, oppression, Solidarity

Ernest J. Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying* offers a profound exploration of the journey from dehumanization to empowerment, set against the racial inequalities of 1940s Louisiana. Through the postcolonial lens, the novel critiques the lingering effects of colonial legacies and systemic oppression, highlighting how

these forces strip individuals of their dignity, humanity, and agency. Jefferson, a young Black man wrongfully convicted of murder, embodies the brutal impact of dehumanization, while his transformation into a figure of dignity and strength serves as a powerful statement on empowerment. Grant Wiggins, the teacher tasked with guiding Jefferson, undergoes his own journey of self-discovery, mirroring the collective struggle against injustice.

By delving into these personal and societal conflicts, Gaines masterfully illuminates the resilience of the human spirit in the face of systemic racism. The novel becomes not only a story of individual growth but also a broader commentary on reclaiming identity and humanity. Through this the novel resonates as a timeless reflection of postcolonial resistance and empowerment. It also describes the search for emotional and spiritual stability of a deracinated person who lacks a distinct frame of reference and a set of values. Grant Jefferson is in the situation of an alien everywhere in the globe, cut off from his emotional and cultural roots. He wanders around the world in pursuit of emotional stability and tranquility.

He finds solace in the idea of dispassion, which was misinterpreted because he is afraid of suffering and cannot reach out to the outside world. However, his inability to break away from self engrossment and selfish wants causes his detachment to develop into a fantasy. It pushes him through a series of crises, suckling the lives of two innocent people he loves the most, Alma Martin. Grants perspective on life is reoriented as the tragedy shakes him out of his complacency. Grant discovers that genuine detachment does not imply inaction and withdrawal from life via profound sorrow and honest self examination, which force him to confront the repercussions of his actions and embrace their responsibility. It refers to doing the right thing without wanting its results or becoming involved with the world without losing his separated identity.

His unification with the world is attained via selfless work and spontaneous love. Though the first novel is concerned with its hero's encounters in the public world; his second novel, *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993), is totally different, opening in a tomb. It setup on the closed wretched little grocery store in New York City with an almost windowless five-room flat above. The main characters Alma Martin, the elderly and ailing Stop keeper who serves as the moral core of the book; his persistent wife Ida, who has a weakness in her legs and her husband's endurance and their twenty three years old daughter Helen, who was works for dreams of an Alma Martin fate. A young Italian named Grant Jefferson, who robs Alma Martin and then tries to atone for his crime by going into the store, is the newcomer who

emerges at the end of the first chapter. All readers of the novel *A Lesson Before Dying* may see that Alma Martin’s entombment makes for a sad history. Every call for freedom and every cry of anguish is constantly echoed back from the canned good shelves, leaving the miserable victims in even greater despair. In actuality, Alma Martin and Grant both enjoy the store, even though they would never acknowledge it and find it incomprehensible. In many respects, this level of masochism for which there is no other term is unheard of in American writing.

The novel read as a chronicle of existence tormented and withering under the weight of walls, poverty and a hostile world. However, a significant distinction is that the author didn’t express rage and the characters don’t exhibit any withering. The breadth and concretion in the novel are more profound than gesture and more intricate than specific passions. The loneliness and grievances seem un-sufferable. Grant Jefferson’s development and transformation from the day he robs Alma Martin to the day he takes control of the store. Grant owns the book after the first chapter, and for similar reasons. Grant is going through the same pain as the baseball player, but it is hidden by the extent of his misery. The novel confronts on nearly every level, but in new dimension, the same cycle of experience that shapes the morality in his first appearance in the novel, having entered the Alma Martin store with his accomplice and guide in misdeed. This is evident in his guilt ridden attempts to flee the determinism of his own past and the opposing claims of the will. Ward Minoque Grant is standing in front of a mirror that shows an elderly guy collapsing before a shot from ward’s weapon in addition to a masked thief. The future assistant sees the symbols of Grants final burden and his own divergent nature in the combination of a hateful criminal and a saintly grocer, both of whom mask Grant’s own terrified visage.

The novels background prior to his apprenticeship ultimately resolves into a pattern of tangled memories of failure and desire that are further masked by shame rather than a cohesive record. The clerk’s suffering starts in the novel’s opening scene, as he finds himself in peculiar emotional limbo, where he experiences more than he initially perceives. It is evident that the journey is a symbolic translation of the heart’s desire for a new existence, just like Roy’s, even though he has traveled from the West coast to the East in order to experience more of the world. Grant is passionate about changing his past, even though he is unable to comprehend its nature. Additionally, as he grows, his perception of the past and his ongoing shortcomings clash with other recollections of the past, especially the legends of St. Francis that he was told at a Catholic orphanage as a young boy. According to him, poverty was a queen and he adored her as though

she were a stunning woman (56). The days were going wrong against Alma Martin, Grant tells candy business owner Sam Pearl. "Every time I read about somebody like him I get a feeling inside of me I have to fight to keep from crying he was born good, which is a talent if you have it" (31).

The necessity for integration is indicated by Gaines's humorous juxtaposition of personas in his first and second appearances in the book a masked robber in one and a saint worshipper in the other which brings Grant's past at the store and the wrong doing that lead to it to life. The most fertile of the novel, according to Gaines and Dostoevsky, is the ambiguous anguish in which ego and alter ego intersects. Though tempered by satire and realism, the issue in *A Lesson Before Dying* is in a way sainthood or villainy, hero or non-hero in any case, the outer limits of personality yearning to resolve itself. The "way" of the criminal is therefore not so much different from the "way" of the saint; it is its paradoxical brother. What distinguishes Grant's experiences is what Unamuno has somewhere called a "furious appetite for being," and the measure of his appetite is his ambivalence. "He was like a man with two minds" (22). The Scenes of selfloathing and, often, physical pain shows how Gaines depicts the anguish of this state. Grant gets a headache so bad from stealing from Alma Martin's register while playing the part of a repentant clerk that "He was afraid to look into the mirror for fear it would split apart and drop into the sink" (85).

While it is futile and misleading to speak of definitive identity, Grant, during his whirling progress, alternates with furious rapidly from victim to victimizer, saint to criminal and lover to hater throughout his turbulent journey. And the need of a broken personality to come to terms and fulfill itself first as an exiled felon and then inchoately, as Ganymede to Ganymede, servant to servant continues to dominate the brief narrative of his life in the store. According to Gaines, separation from other males stems from a sense of estrangement from oneself. Grant's "fulfillment", or his chances of winning, was invariably measured by how willingly he submits to others and his will-breaking obligation. That Gaines might be indebted to Dostoevsky for his concept of isolation as a mode of inhuman determinism is suggested by certain parallels to *Misdeed and Punishment*, the seeds of Grant Jefferson's misdeed have been nourished by self-incarceration; and the justification for his misdeed is a twin to the Russian student's an endeavour to destroy the countering claims of the self by an act of "negative self determinism."

And the parallels are enforced by frequent ironic asides. When Helen come upon Grant in the nearby public library and asks what he is reading, he tells her the life of Napoleon. And he adds: "Why not-he was great, wasn't he?" (97). If



inadvertently satirical, the echoes of Misdeed and Punishment are surprisingly obviated by the fullness with which Gaines has plotted Grant's character. For his misdeed—even if only against a Black man (and Grant's choice of victim, like Raskolnikov's is an ironic commentary on his motivation), *A Lesson Before Dying* must submit to profound spiritual anxiety. His return to the scene of the misdeed on the following day, and his anguished venture to find work as Alma Martin's assistant, even though unwanted, have all the unearthly authenticity of Dostoevsky's guilt-tortured souls. Similarly, Grant's efforts to lead himself into penitential suffering ring convincingly like those half-demented figures in the Russian novelist's world for which self-induced torture is an emblem of their goodness and proof they are on the right path. "When I don't feel hurt," Grant one day proclaims to Helen, "I hope they bury me" (116).

The development of the Grant's throughout the ten chapters of the novel, however, seems less a direct appropriation from Dostoevsky than a parallel of the history of the Black men themselves. The beginning chapter of *A Lesson Before Dying*, a recounting of a typical Alma Martin day, ends with Grant's misdeed. The next five chapters belong to Grant's punishment at the conclusion of the second chapter, "I need experience" (54). The line signals both his defeat and his salvation: the half-understood acceptance of the victim's identity and all the enraging frustration that goes with it. Though Grant repulse it to the final terminal, as does Alma Martin, his conversion from chauvinistic to Black man is incessant. The novelist has used a symbolic resemblance to the Grant Alma Martin correlation which highlights the dramatic tension in the character's modification into Black man.

Similarly, the metaphorical father-son relationship is reversed in Ward's relationship with his father. Driven by his own strict interpretation of the law, which he views as legal rather than moral, Detective Minoque persistently pursues Ward in an attempt to expel him from the neighborhood. Ward consistently evades punishment. Ward is referring to Helen Alma Martin, who, like some injured, both confronts and animates the quest for rebirth in *A Lesson Before Dying*. Gaines has expanded Iris Lemon's image in Helen, who has spent 21 of her 23 years in a store's cemetery. This image is one of painful unhappiness, where unmet wants cause both frenzied pride and lethargy.

Gaines shows that his rebirth through pain is sustained and energized by love, which appears to be the only way to finally burst past the limits of self, with amazing foreshortening, sometimes just a gesture. As the time of punishment draws

to a close, Grant hears Helen remind him of their differences “Don’t forget I’m a Black man”. Art fully elaborated is Grant’s ceremonial triumph in advertent exchanges like these or in the sardonic transfer of voices. This analysis recording the beginning of Grant’s exile is underscored by irony. With a stunned sense of comprehension, he listens to Helen’s appeal that “I want to be punished and you have to be too if I want it”. (40)

However, a moment later, Helen phones and pleads with him to meet her in the park that evening. She promises the clerk and thinks that the physical fulfillment denied him and pleads for the onset of spring. Though Ernest J. Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying* vividly portrays the transition from dehumanization to empowerment, using a postcolonial lens to critique systemic racism and colonial legacies. The novel’s central characters Jefferson and Grant represent different facets of this journey. Jefferson’s arc, from being compared to a hog to reclaiming his humanity with strength and dignity, reflects the resilience and potential for empowerment within oppressed individuals. Meanwhile, Grant’s transformation from cynicism to purpose highlights the role of solidarity and education in fostering change. Gaines’s thematic development has been a progression from simple questions about the definition of a manhood to penetrating explorations of possible answers, to the final defining portraits of humanity as unselfish concern for the happiness of others combined with courage to make good choices in a crisis and to act for specific goals.

Gaines masterfully examines how colonial and racial oppression strip individuals of identity and agency, but also demonstrates the profound power of resistance and reclaiming dignity. The story transcends its historical context, serving as a timeless exploration of the human spirit’s capacity to rise above systemic injustices. This research resonates deeply with postcolonial themes, offering a powerful commentary on reclaiming humanity and agency in the face of systemic dehumanization.

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**When Love Turns Violent: A Saga of Domestic Abuse in  
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *The Purple Hibiscus***

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Nigerian literature in English language has gone through a tremendous growth in the past years. Nigeria was colonized by the British and as a result, English is the official language of communication, prestige and higher culture in the country. Nigerian literature is known throughout the world. Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka are two acclaimed writers synonymous with Nigerian fiction.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is described in *The Time Literary Supplement* as “the most prominent of a procession of critically acclaimed young Anglophone author who is succeeding in attracting a new generation readers to African literature” (Wikipedia), particularly in her second home, the United States.

In Nigeria, she had not faced any issues in terms of her skin color because it was a country of black people. But when she arrived in the United States, she started facing these problems of racial discrimination. She started feeling it severely because it was something new for her. She has taken her inspiration from Chinua Achebe.

This article pictures how post colonialism advocates freedom of the colonizers from the clasps of religion, language and history. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Purple Hibiscus* is a microcosm of the despotism and authoritarianism of the post colonial Nigeria depicting the doable tongued nature of the colonizers who advocate freedom and equality to all while exercising absolute control over the people. The hypocritic, autocratic and narcissistic attitude of the major character Eugene leads to the tyrannicide of him by his son Jaja. The novel projects Eugene as an embodiment of Postcolonial Nigeria and his children Jaja and Kambili as the symbol of colonized subjects who long for the articulation of their mind. The author concludes eventual assassination of the ruler Eugene by his ruled Jaja downs the curtain of the Postcolonial tyranny in the name of freedom and liberty.

Nigerian authors these days used recurring themes, Child abuse, Domestic abuse, Politics, Tribalism, Poverty, Infidelity in marriage, The Biafra war, Infertility Freedom, Colonialism, Post colonialism. They tend to address contemporary issues like modern polygamy, feminism and homo sexuality being the major issues that affect the 21<sup>st</sup> century societies the thematic focus of Nigerian literature is primarily a mirror of the Nigerian society. The themes are portrayal of the day-to-day happenings in the society. The forthcoming chapter discusses the trouble faced built by the characters throwing light on Domestic Violence, Freedom and Tyranny. Adichie as a writer has aesthetically and realistically crafted the entire domestic crisis faced by the Nigerian people.

This paper evaluates one of the worst reprehensive subjugation among the so called cultural practices in Nigeria. The author has explored the oppression born out of widowhood, poverty is yet another great cause of trauma amongst many Nigerian women, especially among the no/low income earners, and polygamy is as well seen to be a great causative agent of psychological disturbances amid Nigerian women that subjected many Nigerians to psychological distortion. Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is an epitome of Nigerian women's difficulties and their traumatic experiences. This paper would explore the conformity of Trauma theory and the fictional presentation of Nigerian women's trauma in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

Violence as presented in *Purple Hibiscus* ranges from within the family to the larger society. Adichie uses her novel *Purple Hibiscus* to portray domestic violence within the family. Violence which is a cruel and unfair way of treating people is clearly examined in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* which features the life of an oppressed teenager obsessed by the ill treatment and the psychological abuse meted on her, Jaja her brother and Beatrice their mother.

The extent of domestic violence that prevails in the patriarchal society of Nigeria is shown or projected through the characters of Chief Eugene and his wife Mama (Beatrice). The plight of this woman is not limited to those occasional damages he caused her but the frequent battering she undergoes from him which has seem to become a normal phenomenon among the members of the lovely family.

It is quite surprising that Engine, a man who has dedicated his life to fight for his people's political freedom from the threats of the nearly emerged government is a wife beater. His wife Mama seems to be a very calm, reserved and of repressive nature. She comes out as a woman always quiet, silently accepting his torture which he inflicts in the guise of religious ideology. Eugene's extreme devotion for the new religion drives him to adapt harsh and insensitive villainous

measures in the treatment of his wife and children’s religious mistakes. Otherwise he is not a fanatic. It is this excuse that is used by his wife Mama to tolerate Eugene’s violence. The United Nations defines violence against women as follows:-

Any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Domestic violence therefore occurs when a partner purposely causes either physical or mental harm to the other members of the family. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene Achike revered as a model citizen and family man turns to be extremely abusive in his home, he dominates, subjugates, batters and inflicts injury on his wife, children, sister and father, physically and psychologically. The family is the mainstay of any society and the nuclear family is regarded as the foundation which ensures the survival and stability of that society.

The traditional African family consists of husband, wife and children, as well as extended relatives on the paternal and maternal sides. The worlds of families vary, some families are closely knit filled with warmth and love, while others are tightly regimented, cold, formal, and often rich maternally but lacking in affection, concern and care. The Achike family falls within this latter category: Eugene Achike (Kambili’s father), his wife Beatrice, son Jaja and daughter Kambili from nuclear family. The extended family is composed of Ifeoma (Eugene’s sister) and her children and Papa-Nnukwu (Eugene’s father) Co-opted into the family by virtue of employment are Sisi (the house help) and Kevin (the driver) and the gardener. Through this family, Adichie paints a graphic picture of the domestic travels in a traditional African family with a background of domestic violence and abuse.

It is quite surprising that Eugene, a man who has dedicated his life to fight for his people’s political freedom from the threats of the nearly emerged government is a wife beater. His wife Mama seems to be a very calm, reserved and of repressive nature. She comes out as a woman always quiet, silently accepting his torture which he inflicts in the guise of religious ideology. Eugene’s extreme devotion for the new religion drives him to adapt harsh and insensitive villainous measures in the treatment of his wife and children’s religious mistakes.

Mama, like other woman in Nigeria is traumatized as a result of physical and domestic violence which she experiences on various occasions from her loving husband. Eugene beats his wife severely to the point of miscarriage for trying to thwart the will of God by putting her desires first. As a result, she is not only a victim of physical assault but also of mental breakdown which will be discussed later

...I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parent’s hand-carved bedroom door...I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count... I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his. We stood at the landing and watched papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder. There’s blood on the floor, Jaja said. I’ll get the brush from the bathroom we cleaned up the trickle of blood. (*Purple Hibiscus* 33)

Mama also suffers unjust beatings from her husband for allowing Kambili her daughter to eat on the day of Eucharistic fast. Kambili is ill and cannot fast for that reason; mama gives her some cornflakes to enable her take a pain reliever. Eugene, the violent father didn’t demand for any explanation but went straight ahead to deal with them all for breaking God’s rule and mama especially for supporting, disobedience of religious rule. “It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm. He swung the belt on Mama, Jaja and me...”(*Purple Hibiscus* 102)

At this point, Nancy Chodorow’s observation that “women’s motherhood and mothering seem to be the most important features in accounting for the universal secondary status of women” (176), seems very apt. Beatrice is dedicated to the role of motherhood and mothering, for this role is so obviously the sole source of happiness in her marriage, and the acme of her success as a woman.

As a father Eugene is mandated to protect his children from the dangers of life, and provide them with stability and continuous guidance. Evidently, children need “discipline to restrain their wilder impulses [and] help them develop self-control...They need reasonable limits within which to be free-to explore, to express feelings, to investigate, and to develop” (Faith la Families 23-24) Rather, Eugene subjects his children to extreme physical violence in the guise of discipline: he slaps Kambili for getting to the car late when the driver picks her up from school, lashes her with a leather belt for breaking a Eucharist fast; mutilates Jaja’s left hand and deforms his little finger for missing two questions in a catechism test.

In addition to physical violence, Eugene subjects his family to various forms of psychological trauma: a strict study regimen which denies his children many of the little joys of childhood (such as wearing play clothes, watching television or listening to music), lack of regular contact with their aunt and cousins, disallowing them from developing a close relationship with their grandfather.

Kambili’s near-death experience serves as the eventual catalyst that propels Beatrice to assert herself on behalf of her children, or risk losing them. Liz Kelly

remarks that “the threat and reality of violence may result in women developing strategies for self-protection...” (*Feminisms* 348) and although poisoning Eugene is a radical strategy to break free from his stranglehold, she makes this choice, having been pushed to the wall. With Eugene’s death, her dignity, freedom and security, and that of her children are restored. For Beatrice, murder becomes what Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* regards as the “absolute line of action” (67). It is a choice made to secure her financial future and, most importantly, that of her children, the only choice through which she can assume the honour of widowhood rather than suffer the indignities of a divorcee. IsamM.Shihada remarks that “Women pay dearly with their freedom and dignity to obey the laws of the patriarchal...system that dominates society. They also pay a heavy price in order to become free” (176) For Beatrice, this price, the only option left to eradicate their abuse and victimization, almost destroys the life of her son when he steps in to take full responsibility for his father’s death. Jaja degenerates into a world-weary cynic who questions the motives of God: “...looks what He did to his faithful servant Job, even to His own son. But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder his own son so we would be saved? Why didn't He just go ahead and save us?” (*Purple Hibiscus* 289)

Correspondingly, Mama loses another pregnancy to Eugene’s violence. He beats her unscrupulously and also smashes a table on her belly. This is what some unlucky women go through in their matrimonial homes. The devilish egos men possess, drive them to do lots of crazy things. Eugene crosses miles to satisfy himself demonically whenever he loses his patience. Women who are married to hot tempered men experience the same trauma. In the case of Mama, she has witnessed various forms of domestic violence as she cold vocally reports, “You know that small table we keep the Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly... My blood finished on that flour even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it” (*Purple Hibiscus* 248)

These and many other forms of domestic violence are experienced by some Nigerian women. Many other writers have highlighted this problem, that have plagued Nigerian women in their works for instance Buchi Emecheta’s *Joys of Motherhood* remains a good example to illustrate the plight of women in Nigeria where Nnu Ego the protagonist of the novel undergoes extreme battering from her first husband for her inability to hear him child.

Eugene’s betrayal of his children’s love and trust does not only constrict them and inhibit their potentials as human beings, but also endangers their lives. All human beings are entitled to equal dignity and rights. Eugene’s family is, therefore,



entitled to the same dignity and rights he accords himself, the same dignity and rights he demands from the government on behalf of and for the suffering masses. Beatrice, who represents the African woman, represents the future of the African child. She therefore deserves to be respected, supported and honoured, not degraded, rejected and dehumanized.

On several occasions, Papa beats his wife and children. Each time, he is provoked by an action that he deems immoral when Mama does not want to visit with Father Benedict because she is ill. Papa beats her and she miscarries. When Kambili and Jaja share a home with a heathen, boiling water is poured on their feet because they have walked in sin. For owning a painting of Papa-Nnukwa, Kambili is kicked until she is hospitalized.

Papa rationalizes the violence he inflicts on his family, saying it is for their own good. The beatings have rendered his children mute, Kambili and Jaja are both wise beyond their years and also not allowed to reach adulthood, as maturity often comes with questioning authority. When Ade Coker jokes that his children are too quiet, Papa does not laugh. They have a fear of God. Really, Kambili and Jaja are afraid of their father beating them has the opposite effect. They choose the right path because they are afraid of the repercussions. They are not encouraged to grow and to succeed, only threatened with failure when they do not. This takes a toll on Jaja especially, who is ashamed that he is so far behind Obiora in both intelligence and protecting his family. He ends up equating religion with punishment and rejects his faith.

The Beijing Declaration asserts “violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace [which] violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms...” (*Beijing and Beyond...* 203-204). Abuse of any form against women, and by extension, children, therefore unacceptable, child abuse is the ultimate betrayal from a parent. Children look up to their parents, especially their fathers, as a source of authority and a model of manhood. Sons want to emulate their fathers, and daughters need their father’s male input to grow up confident and assured of their femininity.

Eugene, the major antagonist of *Purple Hibiscus* exercises complete control over Die, wife and children. He formulates a time table for his children. Jaja and Kambili and enforces them to follow it strictly. He allots more time for studies and prayer and rules out time for their entertainment. The punishments they may get make them follow the time-table rigorously. Kambili is not allowed to take more than five minutes to come out the school time the school time. Jaja is not allowed to

skip the mass. All these things show that he was a tyrant. Being a subjugated wife, Mama is not allowed to have her Likes and dislikes. When she requests to skip the family's customary visit to Father Benedict's house after the mass stating her pregnancy and vomiting sensation, Eugene stares at her and forces her to Father Benedict's house. On mother occasion the beats her brutally making causing an abortion.

The control and power Eugene exercised over his wife and children are done in the name of freedom. Whenever he punishes his children he says that he is doing it for their goodness and to liberate them from evil. While punishing his wife too, he states that he is giving freedom from the selfish desire which was about to “thwart His will”(Purple Hibiscus 32).

Eugene is portrayed in *Purple Hibiscus* as an iron-hearted man unleashing cruel and ruthless punishments to his children, and wife. When Kambili comes second rank in the school test. Eugene calls her and asks her stand on the bath tub. Then he slowly pours hot water into her feet stating that he is giving her freedom from her complacency that allowed another girl to take her first rank. He also becomes brutal when he finds his heathen father's picture in Kambili's hand. He kicks and beats her immensely and takes her almost to death stating once again that he is giving freedom to her from the unholy things. Jaja's brutally assaulted whenever he transgresses the beliefs of Eugene. Skipping mass and giving a fitting reply to his question ends in getting beaten up cruelly by Eugene. Whenever he beats him, Eugene utters that he is giving his son freedom from evil. Mama is treated as Eugene's property in *Purple Hibiscus*. She controlled and tormented by her husband Eugene whenever he feels like scolding her, he beats her brutally and had aborted her pregnancy twice. He does not give space for her to protect her children from the cruelties of Eugene. She is portrayed as a figurine that gets smashed to pieces by Eugene. Again the tyranny gets the name of freedom from evil. The harsh treatment Eugene exercises over Mama, Jaja and Kambili, according to Eugene, is an act of freedom from a responsible head of the family to liberate the family members from evil and lethargy.

Though Eugene asks his children to be modest and humble, the novel *Purple hibiscus* never fails to project his self-love. The donation he gives to the church makes father Benedict call him the true follower of Christianity. The gift Eugene gives during the tune of Christmas earns him the title Omelors. The one that does for the community he also earns an award from Amnesty International for the protection of human rights in Nigeria.

The self-love of Eugene that advocates Christianity over the heathen never fails to compromise with his father’s traditional religion. He urges his father to convert himself to be a Catholic and even avoids his father’s funeral when he clings to his ethnic religion. Throughout the novel Eugene states that he wanted to give freedom to his father from the clutches of heathen traditional religion.

The saddest episode in the novel is Eugene’s lack of sympathy towards his father during and after his death. The acquaintances of Christian priests have made Eugene an ardent supporter of Christianity. He urges his father to convert himself to Christianity that the traditional father shows less disinterest in Christianity resulting in loosing Eugene permanently. The iron-hearted Eugene forbids his father to step his Christian house. He even does not attend his funeral too, blaming the heathen religion of his father. He does not show sympathy towards the financially-broken sister Ifeoma. He never bothers to clear their financial trouble. Whenever Jaja and Kambili are psychologically down, instead of showing sympathy, Eugene adds salt to their wound. He constantly beats Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice showing neither understanding of their feeling nor showing sympathy to them.

*Purple Hibiscus* depicts Eugene’s oppression and crushing of Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice. He fails to treat them equally and treats them like animals. Kambili and Jaja were ordered to follow their daily time-table. They are not allowed to show any resentment. They are not allowed to articulate their mind too. Constantly the novel projects Jaja and Kambili speaking to each other through their eyes in the presence of Eugene. Beatrice is ill-treated and brutally assaulted many times in the novel, making Eugene a demon for his oppressive nature. Time and again Eugene prays for the freedom of Jaja, Kambili, Beatrice and his father from the clutches of evil.

The novel portrays Eugene occupying the two opposite poles of charisma and cruelty. He is projected as a successful businessman and an ideal head of the family and a pious Christian. He receives an award from Amnesty International for protecting human rights in Nigeria and gets praise from Father Benedict for being pious and magnanimous in donation. He is adored in his native place Abba as a generous and kind-hearted individual.

*Purple Hibiscus* is more than just a beautiful flower at Auntie Ifeoma’s. These flowers represent the beginning of rebellion, defiance, and the courage to initiate a change. Auntie Ifeoma’s piece of wisdom that being defiant can be a good thing sometimes, “that defiance is like marijuana is not a bad thing when it is used right” (*Purple Hibiscus* 144). After living with Auntie and their cousins, it doesn’t take Jaja long to discern that things weren’t right in his own home, and come to see

low strict and controlling their Papa really was. Sadly, Jaja long knew Papa was never penitent about what he was doing to their family. Jaja knew it was time to make a change. Along with this new realization that change had to happen, Jaja also takes great interest in the unusual purple blooms and brings some home with the hopes of changing the landscaping at Enugu as well.

When the Purple Hibiscus is brought to Enugu, this is the moment that the family is no longer going to tolerate the physical control and violence of Papa. The purple flowers have been described as “are, fragrant with the undertones of freedom!” (*Purple Hibiscus* 16), which also conveys their importance and uniqueness. Auntie Ifeoma has given Jaja specific instructions on how to take care of the purple hibiscus.

Auntie Ifeoma explains, is that “Hibiscuses [do] not like too much water, but they [do] not like to be too dry, either” (*Purple Hibiscus* 197). They are to be handled with caution like Mama’s figurines on the delicate glass étagère. Not too much water and not too dry means that the hibiscuses, just like people, need a balance required to survive. After the stalks were planted, Jaja wasn’t sure if they would survive or not.

In a conversation with Auntie Ifeoma, he told her that “the gardener had planted the hibiscus stalks, but that it was still too curly to tell if they would live” (*Purple Hibiscus* 202). However, when they do start to bloom, signifying a change, Jaja is first to see it and shows his sister, Kambili, “See, the purple hibiscuses are about to bloom. Jaja said, as we got out of the car. He was pointing, although I did not need him to. I could see the sleepy, oval-shaped buds in the front yard as they swayed in the evening breeze” (*Purple Hibiscus* 253).

Fully bloomed and mature, Jaja has won freedom from his father, symbolized by the purple hibiscus. From beginning to end, one can see the parallel between Jaja and the purple hibiscus. Jaja builds up his courage slowly and carefully almost in sync; as the purple hibiscus, he has planted, takes its time to grow. Not only has Jaja discovered a new world when he arrived in Nsukka, but he also finds out what true freedom is. Jaja’s disrespectful ways seemed to relate to Auntie Ifeoma’s experimental purple hibiscus; rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. Freedom to be, to do, and intercede for those you love.

Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* leads the readers through the rich symbolism of flowers, especially the hibiscus flower in both the color red and the unusual color of purple. As the hibiscus flowers bloom throughout this story, some a fierce red, in

contrast to others of a peaceful purple, so does Jaja; rebelling as he searches for hope and the freedom to be and to do without the strict Catholic rule of his traditionalist father.

From the very beginning, the readers are introduced to the red hibiscus flower where they are in full bloom in the garden at Enugu. The deep red flower caught the attention of many as they passed by the house. The red hibiscus, which can be found all around the outside of their home, was a symbol of the freedom the family seeks or the inside of their home.

Closer to the house, vibrant bushes of hibiscus reached out and touched one another as if they were exchanging their petals the purple plants had started to push out sleepy buds but most of the flowers were still on the red ones. They seem to bloom fast, those red hibiscuses, considering how often Mama cut them to decorate the church altar and new often visitors plucked them as they walked past to their parked cars(*Purple Hibiscus* 9).

The vibrant color of the red, a symbol of anger and violence, hibiscus symbolizes the oppressed family members living under the control and violence of Papa. The beautiful fiery red hibiscus that adorned their yard was deceiving since passersby rose likely presumed that the house was just as beautiful on the inside. Fiery red hibiscuses are the only color hibiscus Jaja has seen so far. It is not until he visits Auntie Ifeoma in Nsukka and is surprised to see purple hibiscus because he didn't even know such a color of hibiscus existed. “Roses and hibiscuses and lilies and ixora and croton grew side by side like a hand-painted wreath” (*Purple Hibiscus* 112). It is in this garden that Jaja and Kambili saw a purple hibiscus for the first time, ‘that’s a hibiscus, isn’t it, Auntie?’ Jaja asked, staring at a plant close to the barbed wire fencing ‘I didn’t know there were purple hibiscuses’(*Purple Hibiscus*128).

Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* presents Auntie Ifeoma as a widow and as a university professor who has a far more degree of freedom that seem to be utterly beyond the reach of Kambili’s upper class but broken and caged mother. Auntie Ifeoma is sober. She reasons things out with the strength of mind of a free soul. She draws analytical comparison of events as they affect women in the nation. For instance, she compares the incessant and blind act of rushing into marriages by her female students with the millenarianism in the country.

The atmosphere in Auntie Ifeoma’s home is relaxed and natural and her children are brought up as individuals with a right to life. The children have the permission to talk and are expected to express their opinions on any area under discussion. On her first visit to their home, Kambili observes with amazement this

total freedom given to the children: “Mostly, my cousins did the talking and Auntie Ifeoma sat back and watched them, eating slowly. She looked like a football coach who had done a good job with her team and was satisfied to stand next to the eighteen yard box and watch”( *Purple Hibiscus* 120-121).

Kambili glories in Amaka who becomes a model to her in her stiff assertive ways. She represents the strongest female voices in the story. The height of her conformity came during her confirmation in the church. Amaka refuses vehemently the dogma of taking English names for confirmation she refers to it as one of the “colonial” necessity side like a hand-painted wreath” ( *Purple Hibiscus* 112). It is in this garden that Jaja and Kambili saw a purple hibiscus for the first time, ‘that’s a hibiscus, isn’t it. Auntie?’ Jaja asked, staring at a plant close to the barbed wire fencing ‘I didn’t know there were purple hibiscuses’ ( *Purple Hibiscus* 128).

Adichie leads the readers into a typical example of the worst case of patriarchal tyranny prevalent in our contemporary society. She uses Chief Eugene Achike, Kambili’s father to reveal the problems faced by women and girl children in the Nigerian society.

Kambili’s father is cruel, overbearing and highhanded. Uncle Eugene hides behind the façade of religion, culture and societal beliefs to commit atrocities against his wife and children. His children Kambili and Jaja are regimented into terror by his violent and utter hardness. He subjects his children and wife to severe battery and assault which leaves them physically and psychologically maimed.

This paper examines the extent of women’s struggle to overcome marginalization in a sexist and patriarchal society. Love, war, conflict persistent inequality between men and women are among the dominant themes in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. Azuike, however, projects womanhood in a positive light. Adichie remarkably dramatizes in her works, women’s determination to survive the face of silence, sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and ceaseless threats to their lives and property. Through her main characters, Adichie reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuse of women can have negative effects on their well-being. This study concludes, therefore, that every African woman must face up to the realities of her sexist culture and assert her rights. This is undoubtedly a demanding choice fraught with its own dangers but a woman needs to burst the system and set up her own parameters within the society or risk being treated as a doormat for life.

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**Depiction of the Assorted Illustration of Women in Indian Society Shobha De’s  
*Starry Nights***

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**Abstract**

Indian Writing in English has a galaxy of women writers like, who have successfully portrayed the varied images of women in Indian society. They have shown Indian women's situation in society. Shobha De, a versatile woman writer has aptly raised a strong voice against the exploitation of women in Indian society. Her novels primarily aim is to reveal the truth in Indian society. The present seminar paper studies De’s *Starry Nights* (1991) and points out the ugly reality of the lives of women. Women are looked down upon. Though they are faithful and hardworking in their family their existence remains unrewarded. They find themselves at the margins in families as well as in society. *Starry Nights* reveals the truth of Indian Bollywood where women are treated like commodities. The scholarly seminar paper observes and analyses the changing mindset of Indian women who are ready to defy the set norms of the society that limit their existence. The paper confirms that the women depicted in De's *Starry Nights* are the agents of social change who try to find out their own identity in the society.

The protagonist of the novel is Aasha Rani, a dark, chubby girl from Madras who has striven for seven years to become a famous Bollywood starlet. She falls in love with Akshay Arora, a famous Bollywood sex symbol who stars in a string of hits with her. Amma, who had been living with her in Mumbai, was sent away to Madras by Aasha for objecting to Akshay beating her one day. Sheth Amirchand, a Member of Parliament and the gangster that controls most of the Mumbai underworld, then takes an interest in Aasha Rani and she becomes his lover and restarts her career under his protection. She confronts him at a traffic light as their cars are next to each other and their affair is rekindled for a short time. Aasha instructed to keep out of Abhijit's life. Aasha then retires to New Zealand and decided to leave the film business.



Aasha then meets a young lady named Shonali who she begins to spend a lot of time with her. She is a London socialite introduces Aasha to London High Society. At a party, Aasha notices Gopalakrishnan, the man she had sex with on the flight to London. He turns out to be an arms dealer. She accosts him and later he has an assassin quartered at her house and threatens to have her daughter murdered if she tells. Shonali murders the assassin and ushers Aasha Rani out of the country. Sudha Rani has meanwhile had a film financed by the mob and she begins to doctor the novels instead of repaying her debts. The gangsters have her assaulted by some thugs and they set her on fire. Aasha can use to support herself by preparing her daughter, Sasha, to take her place as Bollywood's next starlet.

Shobha De, one of the feminists from Indian Writing in English, delineates the humiliation, suffering, and victimization of women due to patriarchy. Her writing reflects a strong rebellion against the set norms in society. Her role as a novelist in the era of the 21st century has its own significance because of the different treatment given to her female discussed the issues of marriage and man-woman relationships in her novels. Man woman relationship is a focal point of discussion by many women writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Kamala Markandaya etc. They have tried to show the importance of man-woman relationships in their works. Shobha De also believes that men and women should live together with mutual respect. She has given sexual freedom to her females, and her objective here is to show female subjugation and to provide a solution to it. Her first novel, *Socialite Evening*, attacks upon the degradation of moral values in society. As Dr. S. David Soundar and S. Kalidas asserts:

In her fictional world, Shobha De seems to suggest that we have not only an urgent need to demolish the mythical and iconographic images of women imposed by patriarchal structures but also an urge to conceptualise women as a composite energy of production, protection and sexuality. Her heroines protest against this massive oppression and exploitation carried through various patriarchal ideological constructs manifest in culture. (3396)

Man woman relationships are well explored in her second novel *Starry Nights*. The women characters especially Geetha and her daughter Asha Rani, have entirely different perspectives on marriage and man-woman relationships. They are ready to take a strong stand against the traditional patriarchal norms of marriage. Marriage is a social institution where man and woman aspire to live together to pursue happiness. Many times, it is observed that age-old patriarchy becomes a barrier in the relationship. Men's ego never wants women to disobey. Therefore, many relationships are disturbed. The objective of the paper is to study De's *Starry*

*Nights* to highlight the exploitation of women due to male domination in marital relationships. The female protagonist becomes a rebel and breaks the social conventions of marriage. Because they do not feel satisfied in marriages due to continuous exploitation at home. The women feel vulnerable if they are not respected. They carry the burden of injustice meted out to them by their family as well as society. As a result, they feel suffocated. Shobha De attacks patriarchy and warns that if men do not change their mindset and continue to humiliate females, it will cause more trouble for them as well as for the whole family. The paper attempts to study De's *Starry Nights* as a feminist novel where females struggle to form their identities.

Quest for identity is a primary concern for the females who are oppressed, exploited, and marginalized under the heavy burden of patriarchy. Truly speaking, liberty is a key to human growth; if it is missing, the humans feel meaningless. The female writers always find that females do not get freedom. They are compelled to live life at the margins. Their roles are defined by society and not by themselves. They do not have their own choices. The female authors want to bring the sufferings of women to the limelight through their novels. The attempt is to give voice to the voiceless because they believe women can assert their identity. Shashi Deshpande, a significant female author from the tradition of Indian writing in English, depicts women's struggle to find their true identity in society. Her masterpieces *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine* portray the subjugation of women on account of patriarchy.

De's *Starry Nights* belongs to the feminist tradition of Indian writing in English. In this respect, it is important to study the three waves of feminism. Feminism is a movement that struggles for the rights of women. Firstly, it is to be noted that feminism has the objectives such as to eradicate exploitation of women, providing space for women equally to males in all spheres, to establish equality in the society etc. Feminism is an umbrella term for a number of cultural phenomena. It tries to acquire freedom for women to work, and make independent economically, and psychologically.

This movement is divided into four waves. The term waves indicate the different eras in the field of feminism. The first wave of feminism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century. This movement is linked with the first formal women's rights convention which was held in 1848. The first wave of feminism got insights from the French Revolution, the Temperance Movement, and the abolitionist movement. Many women participated in the French Revolution, although they were considered passive citizens during that period. Their

participation created a significant impact on the psyche of the female community. It was a source of inspiration for them. Mary Wolstonecraft is considered a mother of first-wave feminism. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* is a masterpiece in the field of feminism. She emphasizes the principles of equality for men and women in this book and education as a significant tool to empower women. Second-wave feminism is a period from the 1960s to 1980s. The important events in this period were the Equal Pay Act, legalizing abortion, etc. Betty Friedan and Gloria Stienman were prominent figures in this movement. Third-wave feminism dates from the early 1990s to 2010. The critical issues of the third wave were sexual liberation, individuality, fighting against all oppression, etc.

The third-wave feminist movement was a continuation and reaction to second-wave feminism, which began in the 1990s and extended into postcolonial feminism, eco-feminism, and gender studies. Literary scholars believe that there is the fourth wave of feminism, which started in 2012 which is associated with technology like facebook, twitter, instagram, and other social networking. Objective was to reach those young and vulnerable women who were exploited and became victims of violence against women.

Shobha De, who belongs to the rich literary tradition of fourth-wave feminism, attempts to break social norms and traditional beliefs. The present paper dwells upon the idea of feminism, with the final goal of establishing equality between men and women. The selected work comments on the necessity of the principles of equality and liberty to develop harmony between man and woman. It especially studies De's *Starry Nights* and discusses the theme of the quest for identity. Quest for identity is a much-discussed issue in gender studies. Women's identity is socially constructed. There are a few key aspects related to the identity of women which require discussion. Due to stereotypes in the male-dominated society, like males are breadwinners and women are good at cooking, women's identity is considered as weaker sex. They are treated as secondary. In Indian families, it has been observed that males make decisions, and females are expected to obey them. These stereotypes have completely devalued the image of women. They are expected to follow certain marriage traditions. Boys do visit the respective proposals sent by the girl's family. If he likes the girl, it is taken as a final settlement. The girl's parents never ask her whether she likes the boy or not. It is assumed that once any boy agrees to marry her, she must obey the family tradition of giving her consent. The present novel shatters the stereotypes set by Indian society. The female protagonist does not believe in the falsehood of marriage. She does not limit her life to the confines of marriage. She sees herself beyond marriage.

She wants to explore herself in the field of Bollywood. The most important thing is that though she falls prey to the pseudo status of Indian Bollywood and its culture, her attempt towards identity formation makes us think about gender discrimination and its negative impact on marriages, man-woman relationships, and the human psyche. There are remarkable works done in this area like Chitra Bannerji Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* ( 2004), Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Dark Holds No Terror* ( 1980), Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* (2001), Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998). All these works have tried to define a woman's identity in a male-dominated society. Their primary concern is to reveal the truth in the lives of women, their humiliation, exploitation, and marginalization due to social forces. Shobha De, too, continues the feminist tradition of the earlier female writers from the canon of Indian Writing in English.

Raj Kumar Tharu, in her article ‘Feminist Consciousness in the Select Fictions of Shobha De’ attempts to show rising consciousness in the females of the 21st century. The paper concludes that De's women are courageous and ready to take a strong stand against the oppressive forces in society. The critic Mehak Jonjua, in her article ‘Evolution of New Women in Shobha De's Novels’ finds out the element of quest for identity in De's novels. The perception highlights women's struggle, as shown in De's novels, to survive in a male-dominated society. No concrete research has been found on Shobha De's single work. Therefore, the present paper attempts to show the theme of the quest for identity in De's *Starry Nights*.

*Starry Nights* is a novel that unfolds the ugly reality in Bollywood. The female protagonist Asha Rani, is a victim of the glamorous world of Bollywood. Her mother, Geetha Devi already has a plan in her mind to promote her daughter in cinemas. She is not concerned about what her daughter actually wants. However, her primary aim is to use her daughter's beauty as an asset to receive offers for films. It shows her survival strategies to cope up in society.

Like all her novels, *Starry Nights* depicts a woman's struggle against societal evils. In the novel, a woman tries to find a name and a position in a male-dominated society. In a male-dominated society, there are stereotypes like men are breadwinners and females are good at cooking. However, De's females challenge these social notions. The novel is a narrative of a woman named Asha Rani; through her, Shobha De attempts to reveal the ugly face of Bollywood, where women are compelled to sell their bodies. The patriarchy has devalued women by considering them as objects of wish fulfillment. The men always look at women as a means of sensual pleasure. *Starry Nights* exposes this sad truth brilliantly. It is observed in the

novel that women are asked to fulfill the sensual needs of the film producers in order to receive some favour. The ladies who are completely ignorant of this reality easily fall prey to the male dominance, and they are seduced. Aasha Rani, the female protagonist, is fully aware of this reality that is happening around her. Kishenbhai uses her as an enslaved person. opportunities in films, but at the same time, he does not hesitate to ask her to share a bed with his friends. He considers her as his property and uses her as an asset to receive more films. Her body is treated like commodities.

Like Asha Rani, another female who is a victim of patriarchy is Malini. She is a Gazal singer. But after marriage, she has to stop singing because she has signed a contract that she will look after her family after marriage. Therefore, she finds herself helpless after marrying Akshay. She is depicted as a wife, homemaker, and a silent sufferer who is trapped in social conditions. The novel has shown successfully that women's lives are conditioned to societal norms. They are expected to follow the norms. Being a female Malini is unable to take a stand against all humiliation. Both Asharani and Malini live in such an atmosphere where they don't find any scope for their own. Malini is a complete victim of patriarchy. However, Asha Rani is defiant and makes her own strategy to survive in a patriarchal society. Asharani knows the truth of Indian Bollywood and accordingly uses men one after another to reach to the top position. As Vijayata Dhand rightly points out, “All her female protagonists are erotic, sexual and rebels in society, as they pursue their ambitions independently.” (1167)

The novel comments on the futility of marriage. A woman is a passive sufferer in the institution of marriage. As the narrator writes, “a wife is acting all the time; this is the world's best-kept secret ... Everything is decided by the bed. On the bed no woman should be foolish enough to be honest with her husband where sex is concerned.” (150)

Aasha Rani has self awareness and knows what she needs to do for her survival. She is also aware of the fact that Kishenbhai is using her as a piece of sensual attraction. When Kishanbhai raises a finger on her character she reacts. Aasha Rani tells Kishan Bhai that “All of you are just the same, but wait I will show you all – beat you at your own game” (8) Other women, in addition to Aasha Rani, are also victims and sufferers in this patriarchal culture. One of them is Malini. She is a mother to Akshay's children and a homemaker. Though she was a good Gazal singer, she stopped singing as per the marriage contract. Apart from the man-woman relationship, the lesbian relationship between Asharani and Lionda is also shown. Their relationship is a kind of revolt against patriarchy and its rigid norms

where women are treated like slaves. *Starry Nights* took the literary world by storm for its frank portrayal of sex and exploitation. The novel is a faithful portrayal of the Mumbai film world, with all its glamour, deceits, and physical exploitation of women. The protagonist, Aasha Rani, on her road to stardom manipulates many men, right from the level of assistant producer to important underworld dons and industrialists. Thus, beating men at their own game is the strategy that Aasha Rani resorts to throughout the novel. *Starry Nights* took the literary world by storm for its frank portrayal of sex and exploitation. The novel is a faithful portrayal of the Mumbai film world, with all its glamour, deceits, and physical exploitation of women. The protagonist, Aasha Rani, on her road to stardom manipulates many men, right from the level of assistant producer to important underworld dons and industrialists. Thus, beating men at their own game is the strategy that Aasha Rani resorts to throughout the novel.

Thus, Shobha De's *Starry Nights* makes a serious inquiry into the issues of gender discrimination, man-woman relationship, and quest for identity etc. Her attempt is to show gender discrimination in male dominated society. She makes readers aware of the truth of how women suffer a lot due to patriarchy. They struggle to live a life of their own. They do not have their own choices. They need to sacrifice a lot to fulfill the requirements of their families. The stereotypes of Indian society have devalued the lives of women, and they remain silent sufferers. Therefore, the women in *Starry Nights* want freedom from all exploitation. Few of them, like Asharani, her mother, and Linda take a stand against the set norms. Asharani's attempt is unforgettable, where she becomes a rebel, shatters all norms of marriage, and establishes sexual relationships outside marriage. De's women dare to fight against the oppressive forces in the society. They try to search for their identity in a society where they are humiliated and marginalized. De unfolds the ugly reality in the field of Bollywood through her respective novels. The females are strugglers who try to find their identity as women in the male-dominated society.

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**Voices of Resistance in Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire***

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**Abstract**

Kamila Shamsie is a postcolonial novelist who was born in Pakistan and currently residing in Britain. Her novels voice out against dominant narratives, power relations, Islamophobia and social hierarchy that are experienced by marginalized people. Shamsie’s seventh novel, *Home Fire* is all about the Pasha and Karamat family. Isma is the daughter of Adil Pasha, a jihadist who leaves his family members due to his radical ideology. Aneeka and Parvaiz Pasha are his twin children. After the death of Isma’s mother and grandmother, Isma takes the responsibility of her siblings. This novel unties how Isma achieves her dream of further education in the USA, how her brother Parvaiz is stuck in the Taliban movement, and how Aneeka battles to get right for her twin Parvaiz’s burial in Britain. As Orients living in the UK, they are neglected to identify them as British. The research paper aims to unbind the harsh treatment of Orients by Westerners and how they treat Pakistani Muslim immigrants as “others”.

**Keywords:** Power Relation, Islamophobia, Social hierarchy, Immigrant, Others

**Introduction**

This research paper is going to analyze the novel *Home Fire* from the postcolonial and multicultural perspectives. Postcolonial writings challenge British colonialism and the colonial repercussions on the individual and society. The novel *Home Fire* is blended with identity formation, power dynamics, belonging, and colonial legacy. Identity Formation is one of the most difficult traits in an individual’s life. In this world, every person is recognized with their identity. It is defined by their gender, class, race, religion, and even with their age.

In the novel *Home Fire*, the members of the Pasha family are struggling to form their identity in an alien land. From the beginning of the novel itself, it is found out the treatment of Isma at Heathrow Airport. As a Muslim immigrant, she



knows well that she is going to be double-checked by the officers in the interrogation room. She describes it as,

She’d made sure not to pack anything that would invite comment or questions – no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her areas of academic interest – but, even so, the officer took hold of every item of Isma’s clothing and ran it between her thumb and fingers, not so much searching for hidden pockets....” (Shamsie 3)

Another important theme in this novel is power dynamics. Power structure plays an important role in understanding the politics of the world. The term power means the ability to control or influence others. It prevails in various forms, likely social power, economic power, cultural power, political power, and so on. Karamat Lone is one such character who manifests the role of power dynamics in the novel *Home Fire*. He is working as the home secretary and a senior cabinet minister in Britain. He is a Pakistani emigrant, but he is not ready to openly declare that he is a Muslim man. Not only Karamat, people like him are prepared to lose their identity and easily assimilate into the host culture. Some people are feared to follow their cultural heritage because of their insecurity. They are afraid that the host country people would be hesitant to form relationships with them.

Karamat does not want to lose his power because of his Muslim identity. When news about Karamat in one article about entering the mosque went viral, everywhere people started to post, “LONE WOLF’S PACK REVEALED” (35), and Karamat refused the fact, and he defended that he went there to join for his uncle’s funeral prayer, “the headlines screamed when a tabloid got hold of it,... he had been there only for his uncle’s funeral prayers and would otherwise never enter a gender-segregated space” (37). The situation of Karamat is quite evident in this incident. He becomes heartless and goes to an extent of utmost aversion towards his own community people. He expresses his hatred in conversation with Isma saying that he would not allow Parvaiz and Aneeka into London even when they try to come with the help from Almighty.

Edward Said in his work, *Orientalism* discusses how Occidental people view and portray Orient as “inferiors” and “others”. In his words, “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (11). In this novel, the insecurity of Karamat is fear of discrimination that would be shown by the people from London. He is not ready to help his community people who are struggling in the same land. This is the plight of immigrants, who want to survive in alien land. They have to be cautious and careful in every minute of their

lives. Some are afraid to show their original identity because they want to retain their power throughout their lives.

In a conversation, Karamat confesses, “Here Britain whittled down the powers of the monarchy, here Britain agreed to leave its empire, here Britain instituted universal suffrage, here Britain would see the grandson of the colonized take his place as prime minister” (Shamsie 187). Karamat feels proud to live in Britain. He is ready to go to any extent to obtain the confidence of the white people. Not only Karamat, Aneeka too gave advice to Isma when she would encounter her in the interrogation room for the question, “if they ask you about the Queen, just say, “As an Asian I have to admire her colour palette” “(6) and behave in a bit of submissive manner.

The most worrying fact about humans is their sense of belonging. In the novel, the protagonist Isma takes care of her siblings Aneeka and Parvaiz after their mother’s death. At her young age, she has no other option to neglect the responsibility of her siblings. She has sacrificed her studies for their sake. But she has not received any recognition or respect from them. Here, Isma is worried about her siblings’ attitude towards her. At one point, she was ready to pursue her higher studies in the USA, but at the same time she did not feel comfortable there. Her brother Parvaiz did not show any concern when she decided to go to the USA. It makes Isma feel a lack of emotional belonging in her family.

When analyzing the novel from the postcolonial perspective, the colonial legacy is to be considered for better understanding. Colonial Legacy means the after-effects of colonialism. It happens in various forms, including cultural heritage, political systems, language, education, and institutional racism. Even though the British withdrew their power from colonized countries, they did not completely get out of them. They created an impact on the inhabitants of the colonized country. They have hangover the legacy of the foreign blood on inhabitants. They looked at them as superior, and insisted Eastern people to follow their culture.

The conversation between Eamonn, the son of Karamat, and Isma to reveals us how they have forgotten their religious beliefs to survive in the new land. Eamonn states that, “It must be difficult to be Muslim in the world these days” (21) and Isma replies, “I’d find it more difficult to not to be Muslim,” (21). Both are struggling to hide and maintain their faith. Because of their faith in Muslim, they are constantly doubted by the Western people. White people see these migrants as their enemy. In particular, Muslims are treated in an indifferent way. The main reason for their detachment is the sense of Islamophobia.

The term Islamophobia emerged in the early twentieth century in French literature. It is a kind of fear or hatred towards Muslim people. There are many stereotypical concepts prevailing everywhere regarding Muslims. They are often seen as a part of terrorists and often subjected to violence, “In 2002, 59 Hindu Pilgrims were killed in a train fire in Gujarat State, which was blamed on Muslims” (Hawaleshka 4). The fear on Islam makes officers in an interrogation room in airport Western people to enquire Isma’s opinion about, “Shias, homosexuals, the Queen democracy, the Great British Bake off, the invasion of Iraq, Israel, suicide bombers, dating websites” (Shamsie 5) in the airport. Even though, she holds British citizenship, her identity is frequently questioned.

In this novel, the theme of multiculturalism is obviously seen in a deeper reading. The word “multi-culture” refers to the exchange and interaction of different cultures. It blends various beliefs, practices, and habits across boundaries. It encompasses cross-cultural exchange, cultural fusion, globalization, and cosmopolitanism. According to Martin Heidegger, “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins it presencing”. Shamsie is best known to represent the complex lives of migrants in her novel. She uses this novel to establish the theme of multiculturalism, which comes under the broader domain of postcolonial studies.

In this globalized world, people feel free to migrate from one place to another. It might be forced or unforced movement, but migration is still happening in every corner of this world. Forced migration happened during the British era. Later, people started to move willingly in search of a better life. In this process, some immigrants have to follow their own culture, and some have to lose it to survive in new land.

The Pasha and Lone families are the best example of this statement. Here, both the family has their roots from Pakistan and resides in London. The only difference is their choice of culture. The Pasha family strongly carries out their Muslim culture in London, but the Lone does not. In one instance, when Aneeka after having sex with Eamonn, she immediately went to do prayer, wearing a scarf as a hijab and a towel as a prayer mat,

But when she left the bathroom her footsteps didn’t move in the direction of door. Eventually he swung himself out of bed and walked into the living room to find her praying, a towel as her prayer mat, the hijab nothing more alien than carf loosely covering her head without the elaborate pinning or the tightly fitted cap beneath. (70)

From Aneeka’s perception, praying God gives calm to her. Her faith in God is questioned by Eamonn as, “What were you praying for? You had to put on a bra for God? Did you think He might get distracted by your . . . distractions?” (71). She replies, “Prayer isn’t about transaction, Mr. Capitalist. It’s about starting the day right” (70). Through these conversations, one can easily understand the characters’ faith and unfaith in their culture.

### **Summation:**

Shamsie’s characters are great revolutionaries, and educated one and easily navigate their problems and rise to the occasion. There are three phases in postcolonial writings: Adopt, Adapt and Adept. The first term, ‘Adopt’ suits Isma Pasha, who completely adopts the British culture and tries to accept it. The second one, ‘Adapt’ is embraced by Aneeka Pasha. She adapts to the new culture and sticks in between her native root and white culture. The last one ‘Adept’ is well appropriated to Karamat Lone, who has a skill of obtaining British culture, and he becomes a cabinet minister in London.

Shamsie’s novel reveals the state of immigrants in other land and how they are being treated as ‘others’ by the White people. This study gives a detailed understanding of the main concepts of postcolonial and multicultural views discussed in the novel *Home Fire*. Shamsie handles the characters deeply and cautiously. She gives importance to the character’s lifestyles, habits, and behaviors to unearth the crucial effects of postcolonialism and cultural exchange.

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**"Voices of Defiance: The Naga Movement and Feminine Resistance in  
Easterine Kire's *A Respectable Woman*"**

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**Abstract**

The paper aims to intricate contour of Northeast India suggests an idea of Nationalism fraught with conflicting political assertions and counter assertions. This has made the region volatile and often conflicted socio political conscious focus on Kire's selected novel *A Respectable Woman* details the violent and tumultuous years of bloodshed and chaos that characterizes the history of the Nagas from the early fifties. This paper intends to analyse Kire's novels as heartrending accounts of the overwhelming suffering of the Naga people caught in the cyclone of nationalistic fervour, whose anguish and pain remain largely acknowledged. The study claims that it is usually women who pay the highest price for dislocation, violence, and rape during periods of political and social crises. Kire also illustrates through her characters the physical and psychological tortures women have had to endure, but goes on portraying women not only as victims. Hence, the focus of the study is on the victimization, bravery, and resilience of Naga women from whom the ordinary notion of feminine will and defiance is derived, at a time when the essence of being a Naga is attacked and broken down.

**Keywords: Naga Nationalism, Gender, Resistance, History, Post colonialism.**

As literature suggests, an individual possesses his/her resistance against the hegemony and its impact through writing, which ultimately shows the significance of literature. It aims to the literature concerning the acquisition of civil and human rights, the overthrow of the hegemony and the active reconstruction of interpreted histories. This derives from socio-economic injustices and political neglect. The socio-political landscape of Northeast India is deeply fractured, suggesting that the region's Nationalism is more often than not overshadowed by political contestation and the violence that accompanies these claims and counter claims. This has led to

the unstable and frequently violent socio-political constellations of the region. Growing political unrest in the postcolonial-postmodern era exacerbates tensions between the local population and the immigrants, as well as between the North-eastern states and the federal government, which stifles progress and development and exacerbates the already unstable environment. Women in the Northeast have also experienced physical, mental, and psychological devastation, which has had a significant impact on their socio-political and economic standing.

In such circumstances, women suffer twice: once from the terror itself and once from being treated like their male counterparts. Women in the Northeast are repressed and have fewer rights due to their poor tribal background and limited access to basic amenities like healthcare and education. Therefore, women's problems—including their deprivation and rights violations—need to be addressed right away. For the Naga Society, the conflict situation has been difficult since the 1950s. Both men and women have endured unspeakable suffering, but because men have written the majority of the narratives, women's perspectives on the matter have not been heard, which has resulted in their "invisibility" throughout history. A feminist voice in the liberation struggles has been shaped by women's active participation in resistance, which has also become a significant element of writings against oppression in various forms.

Because women's experiences of war and conflict differ from men's, women are best suited to tell the stories of the trauma they endure during conflicts. Tales like TemsulaAo's *The Last Song*, NiniLungalang's *Child of Fortune*, and EasterineKire's *Mari* and *A Respectable Woman* are examples of considering the Naga struggles and female struggles during troubled years of the Indo-Naga conflict. The paper argues that in times of political crisis and social disruptions, it is the women who become the worst victims and endure displacement, violence and rape.

The works of renowned Naga poet, novelist, and storyteller EasterineKire are deeply ingrained in Naga culture. She is credited with numerous poetry collections, including *Jazzpoetry*, *The Windhover Collection*, *Kelhoukevira*, and others. Her novels and short stories are also her most well-known works. *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003), *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007), *Mari* (2010), *Life on Hold* (2011), *Bitter Wormwood* (2011), *Forest Song* (2011), *Once in a Faraway Dorg* (2011), *When the River Sleeps* (2014), and *A Respectable Woman* (2019) are

some of her fictional works that realistically depict Naga society that underwent significant cultural, social, religious, and political transformations.

For her writings, she has also won numerous honours and Literary Prizes. As a writer, Kire incorporates events and information from her people's lives into narratives that function as records and chronicles of the Nagas' marginalised voice. Through her novels, she vividly depicts the past, giving readers a sophisticated understanding of the intricate social, tribal, and political landscape of the Nagas. She expresses voices that have been silenced and unheard in her poetry, short stories, folk tales, and novels. These stories and identities have been misrepresented or misunderstood due to prejudice, ignorance, discrimination, and stereotyping. Kire speaks for the Naga woman when she describes the historical, sociocultural, and political realities of her people historically and politically marginalised group.

Her well-known novels, including *A Naga Village Remembered*, *A Terrible Matriarchy*, *Mari*, and *A Respectable Woman*, depict various perspectives of women whose lives are shaped and limited by power structures in a traditional tribal society functioning within its cultural and social ethos. She discusses the plight of Naga women, whose voices have been silenced for centuries. *A Respectable Woman* are example of the protagonist inner life exhibit a persistent defiance of the "pain and mess" of the political realities in which they live. The protagonist of the novel is imprisoned in a world dominated by women; the gendering of its world virtually excludes the Naga political world. As a result, resistance encompasses more than just preventing the trauma of the Naga context's public violence; it also involves opposing an examination of the protagonists' personal suffering within the framework of their families. In the novel setting, women are held accountable while men are absolved. Kire not only resists engaging with the Naga political text but also resists an engagement with the female self.

The latest work that focusses exclusively on having one's own identity is Kire's *A Respectable Woman* (2019). Through the stories of Khonuo, who was ten years old when the Japanese invaded Kohima, and her daughter Kevinuo, who serves as the novel's narrator, she splits the story into two main parts. In order to piece together the aftermath of the destruction and the reconstruction of homes and lives, the reader is first taken through the memories of Khonuo, also known as Azou (mother), who told her daughter in fragments almost 44 years after the war.

As the story progresses to the narrator's birth, the emphasis turns to Kevinuo, whose journey from childhood to adulthood takes place in a transformed



Nagaland, surrounded by growing modernity and youthful ambitions. The book presents a society that is attempting to adapt to change while clinging to its customs. It tells the story of the proud Kohima, Nagaland, in the twentieth century through historical fiction. The people would rush to return to their regular lives as Khonuo recounted the past. They would start the cycle of going to school and playing field after rebuilding their homes. She also tells the story of Kohima after the war, describing how people there used to be more understanding, tolerant, and open-minded than they are now. They have witnessed the devastation caused by war and "people who know what it's like to lose everything almost overnight, homes, loved ones, and life" (Kire, 37).

When Vilhoulie, the drunkard, passes away from "cirrhosis of the liver" brought on by severe alcoholism, Kire also conveys the idea that death is imminent. He was a talented vocalist and frequent churchgoer with his spouse, but he lost his zest for life when his wife died in childbirth. He seems to be "the most terrifying one" when intoxicated and wandering the streets (Kire, 87). In Nagaland during the post-war Kohima period, alcohol abuse emerged as a prominent social issue. War ultimately led to a "strange time" in which they witnessed some people acting in the most heinous ways and others acting in the most honourable ways.

In a Woman of Honour Some of the dead bodies of Amo's friends who served as soldiers and fought against the Japanese in Burma did not make it to their families, and some of the survivors returned with missing limbs. Since many Nagas had only ever known the British as their government, Kire evokes a similar sense of abandonment that many felt when the administrators finally left: "The village people were saying, 'our parents are leaving us.'" It was delivered with melancholy and a feeling of powerlessness (Kire, 57). The Naga National Council was established in 1946 as a result of the Nagas' organised protests against the British mapping and partition of the land between Burma and India and their refusal to join the Indian union.

Their identity has been shaped by the emergence of nationalism and the revolt against the colonisers. It developed from their desire to protect their tribal customs, which the colonists' arrival threatened. The villagers were no longer safe in their own homes due to the violence they had to endure. Khonuo was crying as she told her daughter about the people's suffering. Women were raped, civilians were killed, and those whose relatives served in the Naga army were harassed and imprisoned until they turned themselves in. Through the novel's depiction of women



like Beinuo, Kire describes women as victims of traditional society. The protagonist's best friend, Beinuo, is a victim of gender abuse. She cleared the path for her loss of autonomy as a self-reliant woman when she married Meselhou, a reserved man with a strong educational background. Kevinuo was saddened to see that "the vibrant girl I had known seemed to have disappeared altogether and another person had taken her pace" (Kire, 121).

She became anxious to please her in-laws. When Kevinuo asked Beinuo what she would do if her husband beat her during a previous conversation about marriage, Beinuo responded by beating her husband in return. The novel provides an insight into these struggles, the disadvantages women suffer and struggle with a predicament which is the result of their historical, sexual and gendered subordination. Different women each in a different kind of situation, reflects the predicament she is caught in. No woman is free from the invisible chains of male dominance which is a way of life.

In presenting the breaking point between tradition and modernity flowing in Naga society, we see society changing but attitudes not changing along with it. We see women desiring opportunities for education, for a place or standing in her family or society, for improvement of her lot but patriarchal attitudes which have not advanced with the times appear to obstruct a woman's quest for self-improvement, independence and individual identity.

The socially constructed self of the woman in the past was so thoroughly subordinated to the male that in time she too accepted it as the definition of her ontological selfhood. Despite appearances, Naga society is still very traditional in its outlook and one of the abiding truths of this society is the 'position' of woman in the public domain. Thus Naga women no matter how well-educated or highly placed in society, suffer from remnants of the psychological trauma of subordination which in the past might have seem perfectly logical but which now appears to be a paradox within the "modern educated self"(Ao,51) . By and large, the Naga woman does enjoy some personal freedom, whether married or single, when compared to her counterparts in other societies of the country. What she has accepted through the centuries as her assigned' role in society is now being put to the test on account of the transition of a totally rural, agrarian society into a modern, urban one where the priorities are varied and comprehensively different.

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**Dreams Deferred: Exploring Trauma, Identity, and Resilience in Chika  
Unigwe's *On BlackSisters' Street*”**

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**Abstract**

Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009) offers a poignant exploration of the lives of four African women—Sisi, Ama, Efe, and Joyce—who migrate to Antwerp, Belgium, in pursuit of better opportunities but are ensnared in the harsh realities of sex work. This paper examines the novel's depiction of migration, human trafficking, and the intersection of identity and resilience through the lens of postcolonial and feminist theory. The narrative reveals the women's complex journeys shaped by socioeconomic pressures, patriarchal exploitation, and their quest for agency amidst subjugation. Through storytelling as a tool for healing and solidarity, Unigwe humanizes her characters while exposing the global injustices that perpetuate their suffering. This study highlights how the novel critiques the commodification of African female bodies while celebrating their capacity for survival and sisterhood. Key themes such as displacement, trauma, and the illusion of the "Western dream" are analyzed to underscore the socio-political relevance of Unigwe's work in contemporary African literature.

**Keywords:** Migration, Human trafficking, African diaspora, Resilience, Identity.

*On Black Sisters' Street* by Chika Unigwe is a powerful novel that delves into the lives of four Nigerian women—Sisi, Efe, Ama, and Joyce—who are trafficked to Antwerp, Belgium, and forced into sex work. The novel explores their personal histories, struggles, and the circumstances that led them to Europe, highlighting themes of migration, exploitation, resilience, and sisterhood. Through vivid storytelling, Unigwe sheds light on the harsh realities of human trafficking while giving voice to the hopes and dreams of these women.

Chika Unigwe's novel *On Black Sisters' Street* explores trauma, identity, and resilience through the intertwined stories of four African women—Sisi, Efe, Ama,

and Joyce—who migrate to Belgium in pursuit of better lives but end up working in Antwerp’s red-light district. Their deferred dreams become a lens through which the novel examines the psychological and emotional toll of migration, exploitation, and the search for belonging.

Each character bears wounds forged from the deep past. Once hopping up on the bright future, Sisi has now been beaten down to a shadow of her former hopeful self, after realizing those aspirations were distractions proffered by the West. Ama's whole life history involves childhood trauma caused by the sexual abuses perpetrated by her stepfather, which instilled in her an indignation at man and a repulsion towards intimacy. She survived the Sudanese war and is now struggling to cope with the reality of remembering bodies and souls, lives and loved ones, lost into a deep world of memory. Even Efe, the pragmatic one, suffers from an emotional wound as she leaves her child to make a living. It's a supposed sister bond that goes beyond these shared experiences of exploitation, abuse, and shattered dreams into the truest realities of the journeys intended by their experiences.

Migration traces a rerouting of one identity into another. Somewhere between Africa and Europe, the women are caught in a middle ground, barely able to claim an identity for themselves in the Western mode. Their activities in the sex industry force them to wrestle with the so-called 'respectable' concept of what womanhood means for themselves; they are torn between the identities they carried in the past and what badges they wear in their new circumstances today. Unigwe further portrays how societal, and family expectations bear upon the women and, therefore, contend in their struggle to uphold a sense of self in an alien territory.

Despite their suffering, the women display remarkable strength. Their bond becomes a source of solace, demonstrating the power of female solidarity in the face of adversity. They navigate their hardships with determination, and even in moments of despair, their resilience shines through as they strive for autonomy and a better future. The novel suggests that while their dreams may be deferred, their spirit remains unbroken.

Ultimately, *On Black Sisters’ Street* is a poignant exploration of how trauma shapes identity and how resilience emerges even in the harshest conditions. The novel forces readers to confront the human cost of migration and the sacrifices made in the pursuit of a better life. The title *On Black Sisters’ Street* by Chika Unigwe resonates with Langston Hughes’ poem *Harlem* through its exploration of deferred dreams and the consequences of unfulfilled aspirations. Hughes’ poem asks, “What happens to a dream deferred?”, suggesting that postponed dreams

might wither, explode, or take on painful transformations. Similarly, Unigwe’s novel follows four African women who migrate to Europe seeking better lives but end up working as prostitutes in Belgium, their dreams distorted by harsh realities.

The title of the novel speaks of a common plight and sisterhood among Black women in the diaspora; in a similar fashion, Hughes’ poem depicts the collective bitterness felt among all marginalized communities. As pace and Hughes’ discourse would illuminate, these very systemic barriers-blackness, poverty, and exploitation-push people into hard, often degrading choices. Basically, the novel comes back to Hughes’ question with the ruling; that dreams, if delayed, not only bring about pain and sufferings but also nurture resilience and solidarity among those who bear them.

The narrative of Chika Unigwe’s *On Black Sisters’ Street* involves four African women-Sisi, Efe, Ama, and Joyce-who migrate from Nigeria and Sudan to Antwerp, Belgium, searching for greener pastures that lead them into the snare of prostitution. The memory of old Africa and the agony through which the women pass in Antwerp are deeply traumatizing experiences-experiences wrought by poverty, abuse, and betrayal. Sisi, whose name Chisom means “God accompanies me,” lived in Lagos hopeful for a better future. She is industrious, having graduated from the university; but Madam pressures her to go to Antwerp after she could not secure profitable employment. Her trauma lies in the betrayal of her expectations and the expectation of her family through whom she has failed. In Antwerp, she was exploited, dehumanized, and confronted with the sorrowful end of her ordeal.

The trauma of Efe has its foundation in Nigeria, where she was made to grow at an earlier stage after becoming pregnant in her teenage years. Without any real assistance from the father of the child, she resorts to prostitution in Antwerp as a means for taking care of her son. She sacrifices quite a lot for him, including his absence and loneliness, which are all part of the trauma that she carries with her. Ama’s memories of traumatic experiences stem from sexual abuses suffered through her stepfather coupled with her resentment towards her mother for not keeping her safe. She ran off to Belgium thinking that she would be having a good life, but there she gets plunged into the same vicious cycle of exploitation and abuse. A man doesn’t easily get around her so great are her emotional injuries and repressed anger.

Joyce, originally named Alek, is a Sudanese refugee who experienced the horrors of war, including the loss of her family and sexual violence at the hands of soldiers. Her trauma is compounded by the betrayal of a lover who initially rescues her but later abandons her. In Antwerp, she continues to suffer from the memories of war and the brutal realities of prostitution. Each woman’s trauma begins in her home country, shaped by personal and societal struggles, and is worsened by the

harsh realities of life in Antwerp. *On Black Sisters' Street* exposes the intersection of gender, migration, and economic exploitation, showing how trauma follows these women across borders, shaping their identities and experiences.

Unigwe captures the allure of Europe as a land of opportunity juxtaposed with its harsh realities. For Sisi, Ama, Efe, and Joyce, migration represents an escape from poverty, abuse, or war. However, their dreams are shattered upon arrival as they are coerced into sex work by Dele, a Nigerian pimp. The novel critiques this disillusionment: “Europe had not been what she had expected it to be: it was cold; it was lonely; it was not home” (OBSS, 45)

Through this lens, Unigwe exposes how economic desperation drives women to make perilous choices that often lead to exploitation. The protagonists' experiences are shaped by intersecting identities as black immigrant women in a predominantly white European society. Their racialized bodies become commodities in a market that dehumanizes them: “Their bodies were their trump cards; they had learned to play them well” (OBSS, 89) Unigwe highlights how patriarchal systems commodify African women while denying them agency or dignity.

The novel delves into the psychological impact of trauma on its characters. Sisi's murder serves as a catalyst for the remaining women to confront their pasts and forge bonds of solidarity: “Sisi's death had forced them to look at themselves more closely than they had ever done before” (OBSS, 132). Storytelling becomes a therapeutic act that allows them to reclaim their narratives and find strength in sisterhood.

Unigwe employs storytelling as both a narrative device and a means for her characters to process their pain. Each woman's confession reveals layers of vulnerability and resilience: “Telling her story was like shedding skin; it made her lighter” (OBSS, 178). This act underscores the importance of voice in resisting erasure and reclaiming identity. The novel's non-linear structure mirrors the fragmented lives of its protagonists. Flashbacks provide insight into each woman's journey while building suspense around Sisi's murder.

Unigwe uses symbolism to underscore key themes. For instance, *Zwarte Zusterstraat* represents both confinement and solidarity—a space where suffering coexists with moments of connection. The author's use of vivid imagery and dialogue captures the rawness of her characters' experiences. Her prose oscillates between stark realism and moments of poetic introspection. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, *On Black Sisters' Street* critiques neocolonial

structures that perpetuate gendered exploitation under globalization. The women's stories highlight how systemic inequalities disproportionately affect African women. A psychoanalytic reading reveals how trauma shapes identity formation in the novel. Ama's search for paternal validation or Joyce's struggle with survivor guilt exemplify this dynamic. Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* is a powerful critique of global inequities that entrap vulnerable populations in cycles of exploitation. By centering African women's voices, Unigwe challenges stereotypes while celebrating resilience amidst adversity. The novel serves as both a call to action against human trafficking and a testament to the enduring strength of sisterhood.

The women grapple with a fragmented sense of identity as they are forced to suppress parts of themselves to endure their work. They exist in a liminal space—between their past selves and the personas they must adopt to survive. For instance, Sisi constantly reflects on the life she left behind in Nigeria, comparing her aspirations with her current reality: "She had thought that leaving Lagos would make her into something else. But here she was, just a different kind of trapped." (OBSS, 116)

This highlights her realization that migration has not given her the freedom she expected but has instead placed her in another form of confinement. Despite the oppressive conditions, the women find ways to assert agency. Ama, for example, who has suffered abuse at the hands of her father, initially embraces a hardened exterior as a form of self-protection. However, her interactions with the other women allow her to reclaim aspects of herself that were buried by trauma: "Ama had learned long ago that you did not survive by being soft. Softness invited abuse." (OBSS, 101)

Ama's resistance is rooted in her ability to maintain emotional distance, yet over time, she discovers strength in vulnerability, particularly in the bond she shares with the other women. While the brothel dehumanizes them, the women find solace in each other. Their shared pain fosters a sense of community, which becomes integral to their survival. Joyce, the most reserved of the group, opens up about her traumatic past, and this moment becomes one of healing: "It was in their stories that they found each other, that they found a voice." (OBSS, 104)

By sharing their experiences, the women begin to reclaim their narratives from a world that seeks to silence them. Efe, who originally enters sex work to provide for her son, clings to the hope of a better future. She reminds herself constantly why she endures: "One day, she would have enough money. One day, she would be more than this." (OBSS, 56)

Her dreams allow her to maintain a sense of self beyond the immediate suffering, showing how aspirations act as a counterforce to dehumanization. In *On Black Sisters’ Street*, Chika Unigwe explores the tension between selfhood and survival in an environment that seeks to erase individuality. Through reflection, resistance, and relationships, the women fight to retain their humanity. While their identities are tested and reshaped by their circumstances, their ability to dream, remember, and connect offers them a form of self-preservation amidst oppression.

In Nigeria, family expectations shape their decisions. Efe, for example, supports her son and family back home, believing that her work in Belgium will improve their lives. However, she finds herself trapped in a dehumanizing system. “Efe told herself that as long as Chisom never found out what she did for a living, it was okay. As long as he never knew, he would not be ashamed of her.” (OBSS, 116)

This contrast highlights how their Nigerian values of familial duty clash with the moral compromises they make abroad. In Nigeria, they grew up surrounded by communal support, but in Belgium, they face alienation and loneliness. The women leave Nigeria with dreams of financial success and independence but instead endure exploitation by their pimp, Dele, and the men they encounter. Sisi initially ambitious, reflects on her disillusionment “This as not the Europe she had dreamt of. This was not the life she had imagined when she had sat in Dele’s air-conditioned office.” (OBSS, 84)

The contrast between their dreams and reality reveals the brutal nature of their migration. Back in Nigeria, their choices would be condemned, but in Belgium, survival dictates their actions. Ama, who suffered abuse from her stepfather in Nigeria, sees her work in Belgium as a means of reclaiming control. This contrast underlines the complexity of their moral struggles in a foreign land. The novel portrays the painful contrast between the women’s Nigerian roots and their new realities, illustrating the sacrifices, disillusionments, and resilience of migrant women.

Though initially wary of one another, the women form deep bonds that help them survive their difficult circumstances. Their shared experiences—being trafficked, exploited, and uprooted from their homelands—create an unspoken understanding that strengthens their connection. They provide emotional support, comfort, and protection for each other, proving that solidarity can be a source of resilience.

For instance, when Sisi dies, the others come together in grief, offering one another support despite their own pain. This unity, though sometimes fragile, becomes a crucial survival mechanism in a world that seeks to dehumanize



them. Each woman has endured trauma—whether it’s Ama’s abuse by her father, Efe’s struggles as a single mother, Joyce’s experience with war and loss, or Sisi’s dashed dreams of a better life. Yet, they do not allow their pasts to define them. Their determination to survive and hope for something better drive them forward.

Ama, for instance, transforms her rage into a protective instinct for herself and the others. Joyce, despite her tragic past, remains gentle and kind, finding moments of grace even in darkness. Efe’s love for her son keeps her motivated, showing how hope can be a sustaining force. While their lives are marked by exploitation—at the hands of traffickers, clients, and an unforgiving society—they still carve out moments of joy, humor, and dreams. They refuse to become passive victims, instead using their intelligence and inner strength to navigate their realities.

In the end, *On Black Sisters' Street* is a testament to the power of resilience. Even in the face of loss and suffering, the women find ways to endure—through friendship, self-preservation, and an unyielding desire to reclaim control over their lives. Their struggles speak to the broader theme of dreams deferred, as they each leave home in search of opportunity, only to encounter exploitation and alienation. Their stories mirror the plight of marginalized individuals worldwide, forced to navigate systems that strip them of agency and dignity. Yet, despite their suffering, they exhibit remarkable resilience, forging bonds of sisterhood that offer solace and, ultimately, a path toward reclaiming their identities. In the end, *On Black Sisters' Street* is not just about survival but about self-reclamation—how, even in the face of profound loss, individuals can assert their humanity and reclaim the narratives stolen from them.

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## Unheard Voices, Unseen Histories and Unwritten Futures of Subaltern Literature

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### Abstract

This article examines the evolution, impact, and future directions of subaltern literature as a vital counter-discourse to hegemonic narratives. Drawing on Gramscian theory and postcolonial studies, it analyzes how marginalized voices have created literary spaces that challenge dominant historical records while establishing new modes of representation. The research traces three dimensions of subaltern literary production: the recovery of silenced voices, the reconstruction of erased histories, and the imagination of alternative futures. Through close analysis of key texts from diverse global contexts—including works by Mahasweta Devi, Rigoberta Menchú, Bama, and contemporary Indigenous and diasporic writers—this study demonstrates how subaltern literature functions simultaneously as testimony, historical intervention, and speculative reimagining. Special attention is given to emerging digital platforms and transmedia storytelling that are transforming how subaltern narratives circulate and build solidarity across different contexts of marginalization. The article concludes that subaltern literature's continued evolution represents a crucial site of resistance against global systems of power while offering vital epistemological alternatives in addressing contemporary crises.

**Keywords:** subaltern studies, postcolonial literature, counter-narratives, marginalized voices, literary resistance, decolonial futures, digital humanities.

### Introduction

The concept of the "subaltern" has traversed a complex theoretical journey since Antonio Gramsci first employed the term in his *Prison Notebooks* to describe groups excluded from established power structures. From its initial European context to its adoption and transformation by the Subaltern Studies Group in South Asia during the 1980s, the framework has provided a critical lens for examining voices systematically excluded from dominant historical records and literary canons. This article investigates how literature produced by and about subaltern populations has evolved from its origins as a theoretical concept to a diverse and

dynamic body of creative work that challenges hegemonic narratives while establishing alternative modes of knowledge production and circulation.

The significance of examining subaltern literature lies not merely in documenting a literary trend but in understanding how marginalized communities have created textual spaces of resistance, affirmation, and reimagination. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" highlighted, the question of who speaks, who is heard, and under what conditions remains central to understanding how power operates through representation. This research addresses three interconnected dimensions of subaltern literary production: the articulation of previously silenced voices, the recovery of hidden historical experiences, and the imagination of alternative futures free from colonial and neocolonial constraints.

The article is structured around three central questions: How have subaltern writers developed literary strategies to overcome systematic erasure and misrepresentation? What methods have they employed to reconstruct histories deliberately obscured by colonial and postcolonial power structures? And how does contemporary subaltern literature envision futures beyond current systems of domination? Through analysis of key texts from diverse contexts—including South Asia, Latin America, Africa, Indigenous communities, and diasporic populations—this study demonstrates how subaltern literature functions simultaneously as testimony, historical intervention, and speculative reimagining.

### **Theoretical Framework and Historical Context**

#### **The Evolution of Subaltern Theory**

Antonio Gramsci's conception of "subaltern" groups referred to populations excluded from meaningful participation in the exercise of hegemony. His analysis emphasized that dominant power operates not only through direct coercion but through cultural narratives that naturalize existing social hierarchies. When the Subaltern Studies Group—including historians Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty—adopted this framework in the 1980s, they applied it specifically to recovering the agency of peasant populations in colonial India whose consciousness and resistance had been erased from both colonial and elite nationalist historiographies.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's intervention in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) complicated this project by highlighting the paradoxes of representation, questioning whether academic discourse could adequately "recover" subaltern voices without reproducing epistemic violence. Her critique emphasized that genuine subaltern speech becomes recognizable only when translated into dominant discourses, creating an unavoidable distortion. As she wrote, "The subaltern cannot

speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item" (Spivak 308). This pessimistic conclusion has been productively engaged by subsequent scholars who examine the complex strategies subaltern populations employ to make themselves heard despite systematic silencing.

More recent theoretical developments have expanded subaltern studies beyond South Asian contexts to examine diverse forms of marginalization globally. Scholars like Boaventura de Sousa Santos have proposed frameworks such as "epistemologies of the South" to recognize knowledge systems systematically excluded by Western modernity, while Walter D. Mignolo's concept of "border thinking" examines intellectual production occurring at the intersections of different epistemological traditions. These approaches have moved beyond the binary of speech/silence to examine the complex strategies through which marginalized populations navigate, contest, and transform dominant discourses.

### **Literary Antecedents and Early Manifestations**

The earliest identifiable forms of what would later be recognized as subaltern literature emerged from contexts of colonialism and enslavement. Slave narratives like *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) utilized European literary forms to document experiences of enslavement while simultaneously asserting intellectual equality and moral authority. These texts functioned as what literary scholar Saidiya Hartman terms "counter-histories"—narratives that contest official records while preserving experiences deliberately excluded from archives.

In colonial Latin America, indigenous testimonial practices merged with European literacy to produce texts like Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615), which combined Andean pictorial traditions with Spanish writing to document colonial abuses while proposing alternative governance models. These early hybrid texts demonstrated what Walter D. Mignolo identifies as "border thinking"—intellectual production that navigates between different epistemological traditions without being fully contained by any single framework.

The development of vernacular literatures in colonial contexts represented another crucial strategy for subaltern expression. The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of literary movements that adapted European forms to articulate anti-colonial consciousness, exemplified by works like Joseph Furphy's *Such Is Life* (1903) in Australia and Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1930) in South Africa. These texts established literary traditions that would later evolve into more radical challenges to colonial epistemologies and aesthetic norms.

## **Unheard Voices: Strategies of Articulation and Testimony**

### **Testimonio and Collaborative Life Writing**

One of the most significant forms through which subaltern voices have entered literary discourse is the testimonio, exemplified by works like Rigoberta Menchú's *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1983). This collaborative form, which typically involves a first-person narrative recounted to an interlocutor who transcribes and edits the account, has enabled individuals from marginalized communities to document experiences of oppression while mobilizing international solidarity. As literary scholar John Beverley notes, the testimonio "implies a challenge to the loss of authority of orality in the context of processes of cultural modernization" (Beverley 14), creating a textual space where oral testimony gains legitimacy within literary discourse.

The testimonio has proven particularly significant for women from marginalized communities, whose experiences are often doubly effaced by colonial and patriarchal power structures. Works like Carolina Maria de Jesus's *Child of the Dark* (1960), a diary of life in a Brazilian favela, and Domitila Barrios de Chungara's *Let Me Speak!* (1978), which documents Bolivian women's resistance to military dictatorship, exemplify what scholar Kimberly Nance terms "tactical texts"—narratives that strategically deploy personal experience to generate political solidarity while challenging dominant representations of marginalized populations.

Contemporary testimonio forms have evolved to address new contexts of oppression and resistance. Works like Jacob Akech Deng's *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* (2005), which documents experiences of Sudan's "Lost Boys," and Behrouz Boochani's *No Friend But the Mountains* (2018), composed via text message from Australia's offshore detention center on Manus Island, demonstrate how the form continues to evolve in response to new technologies and contexts of displacement. These works exemplify what media scholar Henry Jenkins terms "transmedia storytelling"—narrative strategies that deploy multiple platforms to document experiences that resist conventional representation.

### **Literary Innovations and Linguistic Strategies**

Beyond the testimonio form, subaltern writers have developed diverse literary strategies to overcome systematic silencing. Language choice represents a crucial site of political intervention, as exemplified by the debate between writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who advocates writing in indigenous languages as decolonial practice, and Chinua Achebe, who argues for "Africanizing" European languages to serve African purposes. These positions reflect different approaches to what linguist Suresh Canagarajah terms "translingual practice"—communicative

strategies that navigate between linguistic traditions to express hybrid cultural identities.

Contemporary subaltern literature increasingly embraces multilingualism and code-switching as literary strategies that reflect the complex linguistic landscapes of postcolonial societies and diaspora communities. Works like Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) deploy untranslated phrases from marginalized languages, creating what poet and scholar Alfred Arteaga terms "heteroglossic texts" that resist monolingual norms while expressing cultural hybridity. These approaches exemplify what translation theorist Emily Apter calls "untranslatability"—linguistic elements that resist transparent translation, preserving cultural specificity while challenging assumptions about universal meaning.

Formal experimentation represents another crucial strategy through which subaltern writers have overcome systematic silencing. Works like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1998) employ non-linear narratives, fragmentation, and magical realist elements to represent experiences that resist conventional literary representation. These approaches exemplify what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha identifies as "discursive strategies and representational practices" that challenge "the historical necessity of the idea of the nation with the contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols that signify the affective life of the national culture" (Bhabha 2).

### **Digital Platforms and New Media Forms**

Digital technologies have transformed possibilities for subaltern self-representation outside traditional publishing structures. Social media platforms enable what media scholar José Esteban Muñoz called "ephemeral evidence"—temporary, performative expressions of marginalized experiences that resist institutional capture while creating alternative public spheres. Hashtag movements like #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and #IdleNoMore have generated vast archives of testimonial writing that challenge dominant narratives while creating solidarity networks among previously isolated individuals.

Community digital archives like the South Asian American Digital Archive, the Mukurtu content management system for Indigenous communities, and the African Diaspora Archeology Network exemplify what archival theorist Michelle Caswell terms "community-based archives"—collections that "serve as an alternative to mainstream repositories by collecting materials documenting communities and populations that have been traditionally marginalized in or

excluded from mainstream archives and other memory institutions" (Caswell 3). These platforms enable subaltern communities to preserve cultural memory and historical documentation on their own terms, challenging the authority of colonial archives while creating new possibilities for intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Transmedia storytelling projects like the Indigenous-led science fiction anthology *Walking the Clouds* (edited by Grace Dillon) and the Afrofuturist film collective Black Quantum Futurism demonstrate how subaltern communities are utilizing diverse media platforms to articulate alternative temporalities and epistemologies. These projects exemplify what media scholar Henry Jenkins terms "convergence culture"—creative environments where grassroots and corporate media production interact in increasingly complex ways, creating new possibilities for subaltern visibility while raising questions about cultural appropriation and commodification.

### **Unseen Histories: Recovering Erased Narratives and Counter-Memory Historical Revisionism and Counter-Archives**

A central function of subaltern literature has been the recovery and reinterpretation of histories systematically excluded from official archives. Works like C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938), which recentered Haitian revolutionaries as agents of modern democratic ideals, and Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971), which traced the ongoing impact of colonial exploitation, exemplify what historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms "silencing the past"—interventions that challenge how power operates through historical production by recovering what has been systematically erased.

Contemporary subaltern writers continue this project through what scholar Marianne Hirsch terms "postmemory"—creative work that reconstructs traumatic histories despite gaps in direct testimony and official documentation. Works like Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016), which traces the intergenerational impact of the transatlantic slave trade through interconnected narratives, and Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), which reconstructs the aftermath of the Vietnam War through fragmented family memories, exemplify what cultural theorist Marianne Hirsch terms "affiliative postmemory"—reconstructions of historical trauma that connect individual experiences to broader structures of oppression.

The recovery of women's histories represents a particularly significant dimension of subaltern historical revisionism. Works like Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and Assia Djebar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* (1985)



reconstruct women's experiences of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance, challenging both colonial narratives and nationalist historiographies that marginalize women's contributions. These texts exemplify what feminist historian Antoinette Burton terms “dwelling in the archive”—methodological approaches that locate historical evidence in unexpected places, including domestic spaces, bodily practices, and oral traditions systematically excluded from official records.

### **Embodied Memory and Cultural Reclamation**

Beyond textual interventions, subaltern literature has increasingly engaged with what performance studies scholar Diana Taylor terms “the repertoire”—embodied, performative knowledge that complements and challenges the authority of written archives. Works like Joy Harjo's *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (2015) and Natalie Diaz's *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2020) incorporate Indigenous ceremonial practices, creating what literary scholar Daniel Heath Justice terms “wonderworks”—creative expressions that “extend Indigenous continuance” by preserving cultural knowledge while resisting ethnographic appropriation (Justice 29).

Cultural reclamation through language revitalization represents another crucial dimension of subaltern historical recovery. Works like Chamoru poet Craig Santos Perez's *from unincorporated territory* series and Hawaiian writer Haunani-Kay Trask's *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (1999) deploy endangered Indigenous languages alongside English, creating what linguist Ofelia García terms “translanguaging spaces” that preserve cultural knowledge embedded in linguistic structures while making this knowledge accessible to younger generations affected by colonial language policies.

Food practices, agricultural knowledge, and ecological relationships have emerged as significant sites of subaltern historical recovery. Works like Edna Lewis's *The Taste of Country Cooking* (1976) and Winona LaDuke's *Recovering the Sacred* (2005) document traditional ecological knowledge systematically devalued by colonial science, exemplifying what environmental philosopher Kyle Powys Whyte terms “collective continuance”—the networks of relationships between human communities and more-than-human worlds that sustain cultural identity across generations despite colonial disruption.

### **Spatial Narratives and Geographic Reclamation**

The reclamation of space represents a vital dimension of subaltern historical recovery. Works like Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) reconstruct Indigenous relationships to land erased by settler colonial narratives of empty territory, exemplifying what geographer



Katherine McKittrick terms “black geographies”—spatial knowledges that “expose how geographic organization is an important facet of racial-sexual domination” while simultaneously revealing “a geographic language that reconfigures the seeable/unseeable” (McKittrick 6).

Urban spaces emerge as particularly significant sites of subaltern historical recovery in works like Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* (1984), which document marginalized communities' experiences of migration and place-making. These texts exemplify what urban theorist AbdouMaliq Simone terms “people as infrastructure”—the complex social networks through which marginalized populations create livable cities despite systematic exclusion from official urban planning.

Digital mapping projects like the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project and Mapping Indigenous LA demonstrate how new technologies enable spatial representations of subaltern histories erased from official cartography. These projects exemplify what geographer Denis Wood terms “counter-mapping”—cartographic practices that challenge official representations of space by documenting alternative land uses, ownership histories, and spatial meanings. These approaches demonstrate how digital humanities methodologies can support subaltern historical recovery while creating new forms of community-based knowledge production.

### **Unwritten Futures: Speculative Imagination and Decolonial Possibilities Indigenous Futurism and Afrofuturism**

Perhaps the most dynamic dimension of contemporary subaltern literature is its engagement with speculative genres to imagine decolonial futures. Indigenous futurism, exemplified by works like Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) and Rebecca Roanhorse's *Trail of Lightning* (2018), deploys science fiction conventions to imagine Indigenous survival and resurgence beyond apocalyptic scenarios. These works exemplify what Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon terms “Indigenous scientific literacies”—knowledge systems that integrate scientific observation with cultural values and spiritual practices, challenging Western epistemological divisions while addressing contemporary crises.

Afrofuturism represents another vital strand of subaltern speculative imagination, with works like N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season* (2015) and Rivers Solomon's *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (2017) reimagining technological and social possibilities through Black perspectives. These texts exemplify what cultural theorist Mark Dery originally termed “Afrofuturism”—speculative visions that “treat African-American themes and address African-American concerns in the

context of twentieth-century technoculture” while imagining futures where Black existence and innovation flourish despite histories of violence and exclusion (Dery 180).

Latinx futurism, exemplified by works like Sabrina Vourvoulias's *Ink* (2012) and David Bowles's *The Smoking Mirror* (2015), combines pre-Columbian cosmologies with science fiction tropes to imagine decolonial futures that transcend current border regimes. These works demonstrate what Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa termed “conocimiento”—forms of knowledge that emerge from navigating between different cultural worlds, creating what she calls “a consciousness of the Borderlands” that transcends binary thinking while acknowledging historical trauma (Anzaldúa 77).

### **Queer and Crip Futures**

Queer and transgender perspectives have generated particularly powerful subaltern future visions, with works like Rivers Solomon's *The Deep* (2019) and Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018) imagining gender expressions beyond colonial binaries. These texts exemplify what theorist José Esteban Muñoz termed “queer futurity”—visions that reject both present conditions and nostalgic returns to an imagined past, instead working “toward a then and there that resists the here and now's exploitation of the queer present” (Muñoz 28).

Disability justice perspectives have further expanded subaltern future imaginaries, with works like Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu* (2018) and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work* (2018) envisioning societies organized around interdependence rather than ableist notions of individual autonomy. These works exemplify what disability studies scholar Alison Kafer terms “crip futurity”—temporal frameworks that challenge ableist progress narratives while imagining more accessible and interdependent social arrangements.

Environmental justice represents another crucial dimension of subaltern future imaginaries, with works like Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019) and Pitchaya Sudbanthad's *Bangkok Wakes to Rain* (2019) imagining climate futures through perspectives systematically excluded from mainstream environmental discourse. These texts exemplify what environmental justice scholar Rob Nixon terms “slow violence”—gradual, often invisible forms of environmental degradation that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, requiring new narrative forms adequate to representing crises that unfold across temporal scales beyond conventional plotting.

### **Digital Futures and Technological Sovereignty**

Digital technologies have enabled new forms of subaltern future imagining through what media scholar André Brock terms “digital blackness”—cultural expressions that utilize digital platforms to articulate Black experiences and aesthetics. Projects like the electronic literature collection *#BlackGirlMagic* and the digital art platform Electric Africa demonstrate how marginalized communities are reimagining technological futures beyond Silicon Valley paradigms, creating what technology theorist Ruha Benjamin terms “abolitionist tools”—technological applications designed to dismantle rather than reproduce existing social hierarchies.

Indigenous approaches to technology, exemplified by initiatives like the Indigenous-led makerspaces network and the Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace collective, demonstrate what Mohawk scholar Jason Edward Lewis terms “technological sovereignty”—the reclamation of technological development to serve Indigenous values and needs. These projects exemplify what science and technology studies scholar Kim TallBear identifies as “Indigenous making”—creative practices that “bring together past, present, and future” by integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary technologies (TallBear 199).

Community networks like Detroit’s Equitable Internet Initiative and the transnational Internet of Rivers project demonstrate how marginalized communities are developing alternative technological infrastructures that prioritize community control and environmental sustainability. These initiatives exemplify what communications scholar Ramesh Srinivasan terms “network sovereignty”—technological development that respects cultural diversity and local control rather than imposing universal models of connectivity and development.

### **Conclusion: Toward a Pluriversal Literary Future**

The evolution of subaltern literature from its theoretical origins to its diverse contemporary manifestations reveals both remarkable continuity and significant transformation. Throughout its development, this body of work has consistently challenged dominant narratives, developed innovative strategies to represent experiences systematically excluded from literary canons, and created counter-hegemonic spaces within global cultural landscapes. At the same time, subaltern literature has expanded beyond its initial postcolonial frameworks to address increasingly complex intersections of identity and power, engage with new technologies and media forms, and forge transnational connections across different contexts of marginalization.

As contemporary crises of authoritarianism, climate change, mass displacement, and pandemic reveal the profound inequalities structuring global

society, subaltern literature's capacity to articulate marginalized perspectives while imagining more just futures remains vitally important. The persistence of what political philosopher Arturo Escobar terms the "pluriverse"—the recognition of multiple ways of knowing and being in the world beyond Western modernity's universal claims—across diverse subaltern literary traditions demonstrates the enduring power of imaginative work in movements for social transformation.

The future development of subaltern literature will likely continue to engage with emerging technologies, transnational solidarity networks, and evolving understandings of identity and oppression. As digital platforms create new possibilities for self-representation outside traditional gatekeeping structures, questions of access, algorithmic bias, and digital colonialism will become increasingly important. Collaborative projects across different marginalized communities may foster what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai terms "grassroots globalization"—transnational connections forged from below rather than imposed from above.

What remains constant across these evolving forms and contexts is subaltern literature's fundamental commitment to what philosopher Jacques Rancière terms the "redistribution of the sensible"—transforming what can be seen, said, and imagined within public discourse. By articulating experiences and perspectives systematically excluded from dominant narratives, subaltern literature continues to expand the boundaries of representation while demonstrating the literary and political power of voices from the margins. In this ongoing evolution of unheard voices, unseen histories, and unwritten futures lies the radical potential of literature not merely to reflect the world but to transform it.

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