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CROSSING BOUNDARIES: RECENT ADVANCES IN  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

*Special Issue Editors-in-Chief*  
Dr. S. UDHAYAKUMAR | Dr. J. JOHN SEKAR  
Dr. MANIMANGAI MANI | Dr. KATHIRESAN



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**HOD'S Message**

Dear Members of Academic Community

Greetings!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the BODHI International Conference on the theme "Crossing Boundaries: Recent Advances in English Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies" on behalf of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu. The Motive of this Conference is to enhance and upgrade research development taken by Conference team ensures excellent opportunities for sharing and gaining knowledge and brings out the recent trends, innovative methodologies and developments in the field of English Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies. This international conference not only promotes research culture but initiates organizations to upgrade scope of professional network and collaborative activities. The process involved in the selection of quality papers for publication is highly appreciated and gratitude to all the authors and presenters of this conference.

The efforts taken by the organizing team deserves great endorsement.



## EDITORIAL NOTE

It is with great pleasure that we present this special issue of BODHI Journal on the theme “Crossing Boundaries: Recent Advances in English Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies.” This issue is a compilation of selected papers from the international conference jointly organized by the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Madurai Kamaraj University and BODHI International Journal, an event that brought together scholars, researchers, and practitioners from around the globe to engage in critical discussions on the evolving dimensions of language, literature, and culture.

The conference theme, “Crossing Boundaries,” reflects the dynamic nature of contemporary studies in English language, literature, and cultural studies. In an era of rapid globalization, digital transformations, and socio-political shifts, disciplinary boundaries are increasingly fluid. Scholars are rethinking traditional paradigms, integrating interdisciplinary approaches, and challenging established frameworks to gain deeper insights into linguistic, literary, and cultural phenomena. This special issue seeks to encapsulate the richness of these academic dialogues by showcasing a diverse range of research contributions.

The selected papers in this issue explore various dimensions of boundary-crossing, from theoretical explorations to applied perspectives. Articles on English language studies investigate the intersections of language pedagogy, computational linguistics, sociolinguistics, and translation studies, shedding light on contemporary challenges and innovations. The literature section presents critical enquiries into transnational narratives, postcolonial re-readings, ecocriticism, and digital humanities and reflects the evolving landscape of literary scholarship. Meanwhile, cultural studies contributions engage with identity politics, media discourses, migration narratives, and the global-local interface and emphasizes the transformative power of cultural exchange and negotiation.

This issue is a testament to the intellectual vibrancy and scholarly rigour exhibited at the conference. Each paper selected for publication has undergone a rigorous review process to ensure academic excellence and relevance to the field. We extend our sincere gratitude to all the contributors for their insightful research, the panel of reviewers for their valuable feedback, and the organizing committee for their meticulous efforts in making the conference a success.

As editors, we hope that this special issue serves as a meaningful contribution to ongoing discussions in English language, literature, and cultural studies. We invite readers to engage with these thought-provoking works, which not only highlight recent advancements but also set the stage for future research in the field.

*Editors*

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Academic Excellence in research is sustained by promoting research support for young Scholars. Our Journal on Humanities, Arts and Science of research is motivating all aspects of encounters across disciplines and research fields in a multidisciplinary view, by assembling research groups and consequently projects, supporting publications with this inclination and organizing programmes. Internationalization of research work is the unit seeks to develop its scholarly profile in research through quality of publications. And visibility of research is creating sustainable platforms for research and publication, such as series of books; motivating dissemination of research results for people and society.

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# LANDSCAPE-A SYMBOLIC ABODE OF DIVINITY IN “TINTERN ABBEY”: A GEOPÖETIC ANALYSIS

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## Abstract

*The in-hand research paper is a geopoetic study of “Tintern Abbey”, a nature poem by William Wordsworth which was first published in July 13, 1798 in the collection of poems Lyrical Ballads. Wordsworth, a key figure in the Romantic Movement, frequently explored the intricate relationships between nature and humanity in his poetry. In this research work, we are going to discuss on how Wordsworth transforms the Wye Valley landscape as a sacred, oracular space, evoking the mystical aura of an abode of divinity. The landscape becomes a source of wisdom, guiding the poet toward introspection, self-discovery and spiritual growth. This paper is far more concerned with the interconnectedness and bridging the gap of all things, animate and inanimate undivided with nature in which man is able to witness the presence of divine power in the nature. William Wordsworth employs geopoetic elements to transform the natural landscape into a symbolic abode of divine power to seek guidance, wisdom and spiritual connection. The main purposes of this research work are first, to see how Wordsworth’s poem challenges traditional notions of nature as a static, unchanging entity, instead emphasizing its dynamic and interactive qualities of nature in “Tintern Abbey”, then, to see whether the visualization of nature as an agent is apparent through the use of the power of imagination and geopoetic elements and finally, to try to answer the research question which is to what extent are natural landscapes function as symbolic abode of divinity in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey”?*

**Keywords:** *geopoetics, landscape, interconnectedness, self-discovery, divinity, nature.*

## Introduction

The idea for this research paper was inspired by Wordsworth’s statement made in his “Preface to Lyrical Ballads” in which it can be noticed that he escaped some poetic traditions and brought new perspectives to the English poetry: “... in these Poems I propose to myself to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men.” (p. 11). In his poetic theory, Wordsworth says that the language of poetry should be very near to the human heart; neither so complicated nor so elevated i.e. the pure language of rustic people of rustic setting.

Wordsworth’s vivid description of the Wye valley landscape has the power to create a sense of immersion into the “Thought of more deep seclusion” (Wordsworth, L-7) so as to dive into the sea of introspection and self-discovery and to

transform it into the symbolic abode of divinity where readers are drawn to come and receive solace, insight, enlightenment and wisdom. The landscape is a peace giving geospace, a center and horizon connected “with the quiet of the sky” (L-8) dismantling the separation of physical and abstract elements of heart and spirituality. Scenic beauty of landscape is “Green to the very door” and there “The Hermit sits alone” “under the dark sycamore” (Ls-17,22,10) trees, a serene atmosphere, so as to feel interconnectedness with nature to have “more sublime” thoughts and “blessed mood”. And in return, we are awakened to “become a living soul” to “see into the life of things” with “deep power of joy” (Ls-47,50,49). His point is that landscape internally and externally touches and inspires us all. Primarily we all are born to

love and care for our environment. We can't have a holistic and harmonious life in isolation to the nature. But however, we all, under the influence of materialistic and human socio-economic-political selfishness, tend to forget the point that "human beings are genetically and evolutionarily programmed to connect with nature" (Wolfelt, p. 13). With pride, we have gone away from the nature in pursuit of modernity and dimming the sight of our interconnection with nature; a source of spiritual insight. Now it is the need of hour for us all to go back to the nature to restore our pristine human nature.

### Research Methodology

"Tintern Abbey" is a poem that highlights the importance of nature and natural landscape. Focusing on a qualitative approach to, this paper does the content analysis and makes an effort to interpret the poem using nature theory. The paper argues that landscape not only revitalizes the people but also gives inner peace to people unflinchingly who consciously dare to sit, talk and spend time with nature. For them landscape becomes a symbolic abode of divinity, the center of their inner world, a legendary siteladen with natural beauty, rich history and profound cultural significance and an eternal source of uncorrupted feelings and spiritual connection. The usage of images, symbols, and scenes of the poem are the tools to justify the argument. Books related to nature theory and environmental literature have been taken as secondary sources.

### Geopoetic Analysis

#### 1. Landscape as Oracle

The Wye Valley landscape assumes the role of the oracle, offering wisdom, guidance, and insight to the poet. Landscape offers service and role in varied ways such as "a locus of imaginative energy" and "a potent source of intellectual ideas" (McKusick, p. 28). Landscape

is a guiding force to move on in life, a giver "Of unremembered pleasure" (L-32), a lighter of "the heavy and the weary weight Of all this unintelligible world is lightened" (Ls-40,41) beyond our expectation in life to make our life full and lively.

#### 2. Symbolic Topography

The landscape is imbued with symbolic meaning, representing the poet's inner world, emotional state, and spiritual quest. The mountains and hills evoke feelings of sublimity and awe, representing the poet's spiritual and emotional aspirations. The rugged terrain also symbolizes the challenges and obstacles that the poet has faced in his life. The River Wye represents the flow of life, time, and memory, connecting the poet to his past experiences. The river's constant flow also symbolizes the tension between change and constancy in human life. The trees and vegetation represent the cyclical nature of life, growth, and decay. The poem's focus on the natural world's ability to renew and rebirth itself also symbolizes the poet's own emotional and spiritual renewal. The abbey's decay also symbolizes the transformation of human experience over time.

#### 3. Ecological Awareness

Wordsworth's poem promotes ecological awareness, emphasizing the importance of preserving the natural world. The poem highlights the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds, emphasizing the importance of preserving and appreciating the natural world. Wordsworth attributes agency to nature, suggesting that the natural world has the power to shape human experiences and emotions. The poem touches on the idea of ecological balance, emphasizing the importance of preserving the natural world and maintaining a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. The fruit of co-existence with nature is holistic life, celebration of life with all beings and things. As

Wolfelt points out “Green spaces in neighborhoods and communities provide places for people to interact in healthy ways” (p. 19).

## Goepoetic Elements

### 1. Embodied Experience

The poem begins with the speaker’s physical presence in the landscape, emphasizing the interconnectedness of body with environment. The speaker says that “Once again Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, That on a wild secluded scene impress Thoughts of more deep seclusion” (Ls-4-7). Here in connection with the Wye valley landscape, he is deeply impressed with the thoughts filled with inner silence and solitude. He learns to set aside some time of his life to be with mother nature. He can’t imagine a human life that is disconnected from nature. It is because of the embodied experience with environment, he internally felt the presence of nature in him “...in the blood, and felt along the heart; And passing even into my purer mind With tranquil restoration” (Ls-29-32). Therefore, it is proved to maintain that primarily we should be physically in connection with “These beauteous forms” (L-23) of landscape and in return many wonders follow in our life.

### 2. Sensory Perception

Wordsworth employs vivid sensory descriptions to convey the beauty and power of nature, highlighting the role of perception in shaping our experiences. Vivid description of natural world engages the reader’s senses and immerses them in the sensory sensation that runs as blood in the body. As a reader we can feel visual and auditory sensations when we encounter “These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs With a soft murmur.” “...these steep and lofty cliffs,” (Ls-3-5). We are simply drawn by the serenity and splendid beauty of landscape, wishing to spend time in meditation and introspection, as “...where by his fire The Hermit sits alone.” (Ls-21,22) on the carpet of “...these pastoral

farms, Green to the very door;” (Ls-16,17), “Here under this sycamore” (L-10) trees rounded by “...these orchard-tufts,” (L-11) and “These hedge-rows,” (L-15) and escorted by “...vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,” (L-20). In the lines of the poem, we can feel and see both aspects of the impression of landscape; in the presence as well as in the absence of it. Even in the absence of physical landscape, impression of it is unforgettable and indelible.

Through memory we can feel cutaneous sensation, “...sensations sweet,” “...in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din Of towns and cities,” “in hours of weariness,” “Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart; And passing even into my purer mind” (Ls-26-30) to restore tranquility in body and mind of our life. In an interactive atmosphere, not heaviness but we can feel lightness in body and mind as the poet says that “In which the heavy and the weary weight Of all this unintelligible world Is lightened:”. (Ls-40, 41).

**3. Place and Memory-** The poem explores the speaker’s memories of the Wye valley, demonstrating how places can evoke emotions, thoughts and recollections. The poet says that nature’s influences are never “slight” and “trivial” but soft, sweet and splendid. It evokes the emotions of kindness and love.

**Landscape- a Symbolic Abode of Divinity-** In the Wordsworth’s portrayal of Wye valley landscape, we can come across many symbolic geospaces described vividly and gracefully that evoke the mystical aura of symbolic abode of divinity where people wearied of humdrum of daily life desperately living “in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din Of towns and cities” (Ls-26,27), come to draw wisdom and sublime thoughts that lead us to self-discovery and spiritual growth. In the words of Filipova, for Wordsworth and Thoreau, nature is the agent to minimize the fright of the mundane world and they “began to foreground the importance of place in their figurations of

nature as the remedy to and an escape from the vicissitudes of modernity” (p. 1).

The landscape serves as a guide, offering wisdom and insight to the poet. Today in the global aspects of human life, we lay more emphasis on group discussion and team work. But here, is it not a strange scene where “The Hermit sits alone” (L-22)! Is hermit, in anyway, forced by someone or something? Here, can we say that the figure of the hermit indicates, in anyway, to the withdrawal to solipsism? Can we charge the hermit that he “lost the world merely to gain his own immortal soul” (McGann, p. 88). The answer we can give is: the hermit has come to the nature and sits alone to seek guidance and listen the words of wisdom. The hermit has to sit alone because the Wye valley landscape offers insight and guidance “With a soft inland murmur” (L-4) sound in the wild silence of the valley. One should willingly be ready to spend value time in communion with nature. In deep silence “Of sportive wood” (L-16), the silent words of wisdom of nature touch the human heart of flesh to go into deep level of consciousness and understanding of human mind.

As a boy the poet has received guidance from the Wye valley landscape during his first visit. He revisits the Wye valley to seek more guidance after five years: “I have owed to them, In hours of weariness, sensations sweet, felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;” (Ls-27-29). In the opening lines of the poem, we can notice that there is repetition of the word “Five”. Repetition of the word “Five” exhibits; how excited and thrilled the poet is to revisit the Wye valley landscape with his “cheerful faith” (L-136). The poet has complete faith in the nature, so in the light of faith of enlightenment he says “Knowing that Nature never did betray” (L-125), it is going to lead him “Until, the breath of this corporeal frame” (L-44) and to teach him how to transform “The coarser pleasures of my boyish days” (L-75) “into a sober pleasure” (L-142). Thus, it is apt to say that with the help of insightful guidance of the Wye valley landscape,

we learn to live and “to lead From joy to joy:” (Ls-127-128). And here at this level of enlightenment the poet announces that the nature is “The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul Of all my moral being” (Ls-111-113).

The Wye valley landscape is transformed into a sacred site, evoking the mystical aura of a symbolic abode of divinity. The idea that landscape is a sacred place is rooted in various cultural, spiritual and philosophical traditions. Sacred landscapes, such as the Himalayas or Ganges River, are revered in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, often associated with spiritual pilgrimage and self-discovery. In the words of the poet, “For I have learned To look on nature, not as in the hour Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes The still sad music of humanity, Nor harsh nor grating,” (Ls-90-94). The sadness of humanity is not that “harsh” and “grating” when we look on to nature for help. Sadness of humanity subsides in the moments of interconnectedness with nature and emotional resonance rises high in life. Again, Wordsworth shares with the readers about his own insight, deeper level of consciousness and presents the picture of divinity of the Wye valley landscape in the poem in these words:

“And I have felt,

A presence that disturbs me with the joy,  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused;  
...A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all  
thought,  
And rolls through all things.” (Ls-95-98,  
102-104)

Wordsworth maintains that there is a spirit that rolls through all things in nature, evokes feelings of awe, wonder and spiritual connection. Unintelligibility to mind melts into intelligibility in the clear light of something greater, a divine power; the Wye valley landscape: a symbolic abode of divinity.

The poet becomes “A lover of the meadows and the woods And mountains; and of all that we

beholds From this green earth;" (Ls-105-107) when his spiritual consciousness increases. His spiritual consciousness embraces other beings and other things into its wings. Wolfelt points out "Green spaces in neighborhoods and communities provide places for people to interact in healthy ways" (p. 19). Thereafter, the poet accepts that nature is a living entity to interact with, a source of morality, guidance, protection, solace and lofty thought. The poet maintains that nature as sustainer, there is in nature, "...not only with the sense Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts That in this moment there is life and food" (Ls-64-67) in abundance for at all times; past, present and future.

The landscape facilitates a revelatory experience, allowing the poet to access deeper level of consciousness and understanding. In the company of the Wye valley landscape the poet's self-awareness increases to the extent of feeling the presence of it in his own blood and thus his awareness is not like the awareness of "...a blind man's eye" (L-25). In the enraptured relationship with the Wye valley landscape, one can experience the bliss of epiphanic moments; "feelings too Of unremembered pleasures"(Ls-31,32) of life and this deeper level of consciousness and understanding makes the poet "A worshipper of Nature," (L-155).

### Conclusion

In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth employs geopoetic elements such as embodied experience, sensory perception, place and memory, personification etc. to transform the Wye valley landscape into a symbolic abode of divinity, where the poet seeks guidance, wisdom and spiritual connection. The poem's use of geographical imagination, spatial narrative, and environmental imagination creates a rich and complex exploration of the human-nature relationship. The geospace analysis reveals how the landscape functions as a symbolic abode of

divinity, facilitating the poet's spiritual quest and introspection.

Wordsworth spent his childhood life with nature and near to nature and never far away from nature in spirit, so his main interest in his poems is the natural world; he evolutionarily "belongs to the Romantic Movement, which attempted to express feelings and arguments that man's happiness lies in his maintenance of organic links with nature" (Arab, p. 230). The human life can't and should not be devoid of natural surroundings because as Wolfelt points out "Green spaces in neighborhoods and communities provide places for people to interact in healthy ways" (L-19). And thus, "Spending time in nature has been proven to improve our mood, reduce feelings of anger, increase resilience, and even boost self-esteem" (L-18). Therefore, it is the need of hour to go back to the nature and have a sense of connection with the living world around them so that "The dreary intercourse of daily life, Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold Is full of blessings" (Ls-134-137).

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# PERFORMATIVE IDENTITIES: QUEER PERSPECTIVES IN CHRIS ABANI'S GRACELAND

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## Abstract

*Chris Abani's GraceLand offers a nuanced exploration of identity, culture, and self-discovery. Through the lens of the protagonist, Elvis, the novel examines queerness, masculinity, and the struggle for self-definition in the face of societal expectations and personal desires. This paper delves into the intersections of queerness, cultural displacement, and the search for self within GraceLand, situating Elvis's journey within broader discussions of gender, sexuality, and postcolonial identity. Drawing from critical theory and literary analysis, the paper unpacks the complexities of Elvis's identity and his engagement with the metaphorical and literal landscapes of "Graceland."*

**Keywords:** *queer theory, elvis, search for self-identity, toxic masculinity.*

## Introduction

Chris Abani, a Nigerian-American author, first published his book *GraceLand* in 2004. The main character is an adolescent named Elvis who impersonates his well-known namesake and is attempting to escape the ghettos of Lagos, Nigeria. The narrative centres on the harsh surroundings of the biggest city in Nigeria and the attempts of a young man to break free from his dysfunctional family and improve his own life. The numerous illegal jobs Elvis takes with his friend Redemption, a negative influence who has been getting Elvis into trouble since they were young, complicate his quest, though. *GraceLand* was Abani's breakthrough collection, examining themes of poverty, crime, globalization, and the impact of names on a person's fate.

There are two main stories in *GraceLand*: the primary story takes place in Lagos in 1983, while the secondary story takes place in the tiny village of Afpiko from 1972 to 1981. Elvis currently resides in Lagos with his stepmother

Comfort and father Sunday. Elvis no longer has any respect for his father because of his abusive behavior toward his son and his history of alcoholism. Comfort, Elvis' new stepmother, treats him badly and doesn't seem to want him around, but she is devoted to his father in spite of Sunday's numerous shortcomings. Elvis is a skilled dancer and Elvis's impersonator who often performs on the streets because he is desperate to improve his life. When Elvis lived in the tiny village of Afpiko, his life was very different. His mother, Beatrice, was still living at the time. They got along well, and she instilled in him the belief that he could achieve great things. She then developed breast cancer. Felicia, her younger sister, and the rest of her family took care of her. After Beatrice's death, Elvis and Felicia grew close and supported one another during their grief. But the village was also the home of Joseph, Elvis Presley's uncle, a wealthy, cunning, and corrupt man who drove his family from the village to Lagos. Sunday and Elvis had never had a good relationship, but

after Beatrice passed away, things took a turn for the worse. A family was uprooted from their village and relocated to Lagos by a corrupt, cruel, and wealthy leader. Sunday and Elvis had never had a good relationship, but after Beatrice passed away, things took a turn for the worse. Sunday had no one to push him to be a good father and a decent man without his wife. Elvis begins working for Redemption, who has always been a slick talker who can seize any chance. When they attended the same school, he even bribed teachers. Elvis, however, is troubled by his conscience and recalls the things his mother and grandmother told him when they were living. A mysterious, one-eyed man known only as the King of Beggars is also urging him in the direction of virtue. This guy always seems to know what Elvis is up to and shows up when he's needed. He is meant to act as Elvis' conscience, as evidenced by his attempts to assist him. The Colonel, the dishonest and vicious man in charge of security in Lagos, eventually becomes aware of Redemption's illegal actions. A bulldozer hits Sunday at the novel's the end, killing him. Elvis laments his father's passing but has conflicting emotions about it. Blessing, a girl he soon meets, and he connects with her immediately. Elvis is seen in the airport at the end of the novel, with a passport that Redemption gave him. Redemption is his name, he informs the security guard, and he is finally on his way.

*GraceLand* by Chris Abani is a multi-layered narrative of self-discovery that goes beyond a simple coming-of-age tale. It is set against the backdrop of a postcolonial Nigerian society that is battling political oppression, cultural hybridity, and economic instability (Abani, 2004). The protagonist of this story is Elvis, a young man named after the well-known American singer whose quest for self-actualization subverts conventional gender and sexual norms. The book explores the connections between queerness, cultural

displacement, and self-discovery by using *GraceLand* as a metaphor for aspirations of freedom and identity as well as the iconic estate of Elvis Presley. (Mbembe, 2001).

This paper argues that Elvis's life at the connection of Nigerian cultural practices, Western influence, and colonial legacies reveals a queered understanding of selfhood through his relationships and experiences. The study places *GraceLand* within larger discussions about queerness and postcolonial identity by looking at Elvis's fluid identity, his relationship with his father, and his use of performative masculinity. (Butler, 1990).

### **Queerness and Performance in *GraceLand***

Elvis's identity is moulded by a number of literal and symbolic performances. His Elvis Presley impersonations draw attention to the contradiction between his inner self and what society expects of him (Abani, 2004). Because Elvis's adoption of Presley's persona highlights how identity is constructed, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a helpful lens through which to view his actions. Elvis manages his position in a culture that rejects diversity while simultaneously embracing the cultural hybridity that characterizes his life by modelling himself after Presley. (Butler, 1990). Elvis's quest for identity is made more difficult by the novel's portrayal of gender and sexuality. His encounters with characters who challenge conventional masculinity, like Redemption, create opportunities for queerness to manifest in the story (Muñoz, 1999). Because these connections defy strict categorization, Elvis is able to experiment with unconventional forms of intimacy and identity. (Sedgwick, 1990). According to queer theory, identities are fluid, and Elvis personifies this. He struggles to balance these facets of his identity because he is torn between traditional Nigerian values and Western influences.

### **Performativity and Gender**

Elvis Presley's participation in dance competitions and his use of makeup to mimic the singer subvert gender stereotypes and imply a performative conception of identity. This supports the idea put forth by Judith Butler that gender is a performance rather than an intrinsic trait. He challenges the strict, heteronormative masculinity that is expected of him in his surroundings through his artistic and cultural endeavours.

### **Defying normative expectations**

By incorporating aspects of Elvis Presley's persona, Elvis Oke not only interacts with Western cultural icons but also challenges their authority by reinterpreting them from a Nigerian perspective. One way to interpret this act of cultural appropriation and transformation is as a kind of defiance against established cultural hierarchies.

### **Cultural Displacement and the Search for Self**

As a Nigerian boy named after an American icon, Elvis' name itself represents cultural displacement and the conflicts between regional customs and outside influences (Abani, 2004). Homi Bhabha's idea of the "third space," where identity is negotiated through the interaction of colonial and indigenous cultures, is reflected in this cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). Elvis's queerness serves as a metaphor for larger societal concerns about belonging and authenticity in this transitional area. Throughout his journey, Elvis struggles with the pressures of Western ideals and cultural expectations, which frequently manifest as commodified dreams (Epprecht, 2008). The protagonist's search for a cohesive self in the face of conflicting cultural narratives is symbolized by the fictional Graceland, which turns into a place of aspiration and alienation. (Mbembe, 2001).

### **Familial Relationships and Toxic Masculinity**

The toxic masculinity and patriarchal systems are exposed by the tense relationship between Elvis and his father, Sunday (Abani, 2004). Sunday's strict standards and violent inclinations are a reflection of the social forces that suppress Elvis' uniqueness. But by showing how Sunday is a victim of systemic oppression and colonial legacies, the story also challenges these dynamics (Mbembe, 2001). The difficulties in recovering from inherited traumas are highlighted by the cyclical nature of harm. Elvis defies these patriarchal conventions by rejecting his father's ideals and embracing alternative kinship ties, like his relationship with Redemption (Sedgwick, 1990; Muñoz, 1999). These connections give Elvis a route to self-definition based on empathy and solidarity, which serves as a counterpoint to the toxic masculinities that predominate in the novel.

### **Elvis Presley as a Queer icon**

The inclusion of Elvis Presley in the novel functions on several levels:

#### **Cultural Influence**

Elvis Presley's persona carries a component of gender and sexual ambiguity, but he also represents the global reach of Western pop culture. Queer aesthetics find resonance in his flamboyant style, hip gyrations, and defiance of 1950s gender norms.

#### **Postcolonial and Colonial Identity**

Elvis Oke views Presley as a symbol of both the imposition of Western ideals and a desire for escape. His desire to rise above local adversity and his struggle with postcolonial identity are reflected in his identification with Presley.

#### **Queerness as Resistance**

In *GraceLand*, being queer serves as a political and personal act of defiance. Elvis creates a space for self-expression in a culture that polices

difference by defying conventional ideas of masculinity and sexuality (Muñoz, 1999; Epprecht, 2008). His artistic endeavours, which are a way of recovering agency and envisioning different futures, further demonstrate this resistance. (Butler, 1990). Elvis's experiences are placed within the unique sociopolitical context of Nigeria, challenging Western-centric narratives in the novel's depiction of queerness (Epprecht, 2008). By doing this, *GraceLand* highlights the ways that queerness interacts with issues of race, class, and cultural identity, thereby expanding the possibilities for queer representation in postcolonial literature. (Mbembe, 2001).

### Queerness in the Nigerian context:

Abani places Elvis's experiences in a larger critique of Nigerian society, which is dominated by strict standards of class, gender, and sexuality. Elvis's story is a moving examination of what it means to live on the margins, both socially and culturally, because in such a setting, his nonconformity becomes a source of tension.

### Conclusion

Chris Abani's *GraceLand* offers a profound exploration of identity, queerness, and the search for self in a complex postcolonial context. Through the character of Elvis, the novel interrogates the fluidity of identity and the possibilities for resistance within oppressive structures. By situating Elvis's journey within broader theoretical frameworks, this paper demonstrates how *GraceLand* contributes to critical conversations about queerness, culture, and selfhood. Abani places Elvis's experiences in a larger critique of Nigerian society, which is dominated by strict standards of class, gender, and sexuality. Elvis's story is a moving

examination of what it means to live on the margins, both socially and culturally, because in such a setting, his nonconformity becomes a source of conflict. *GraceLand* by Chris Abani is a deep and intricate book with several levels of meaning, including a critique of authority, culture, and identity. Elvis's persona and his relationships with Elvis Presley as a cultural icon offer intriguing topics for debate when viewed through the prism of queer theory. Fixed binary distinctions like male/female or heterosexual/homosexual are questioned by queer theory, which looks at how identities and norms are created. The protagonist of *GraceLand*, Elvis Oke, negotiates his identity in the context of Lagos, Nigeria's cultural upheaval. Queer theoretical analysis can be applied to his complex relationship with Western cultural influences, performativity, and masculinity.

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# CROSS-CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND TRAUMA IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S THE MISTRESS OF SPICES: AN ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY, HEALING, AND CULTURAL CONFLICT IN THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

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## Abstract

*Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Mistress of Spices explores the complexities of the immigrant experience, cultural conflict, and trauma. The protagonist, Tilo, finds herself in the midst of cultural alienation as she navigates her life as an immigrant woman caught between her heritage and her adopted country. The novel introduces magical realism, using spices as metaphors for both emotional burdens and healing, while Tilo's emotional and cultural transformation provides a lens through which the larger immigrant trauma is examined. This paper investigates the themes of identity, cultural dislocation, and the healing process in the context of the diaspora. Through the symbolic use of spices, the novel illustrates the intersection of cultural hybridity and emotional survival. The findings suggest that healing from trauma is possible only when cultural boundaries are transcended and personal identity is integrated with both heritage and new experiences. By analyzing Tilo's psychological journey, this paper sheds light on the possibility of overcoming emotional alienation through self-acceptance, love, and the fusion of different cultural worlds.*

**Keywords:** immigration, cultural dislocation, identity, trauma, magical realism, diaspora, cross-cultural conflict, healing, cultural hybridity, emotional survival, chitra banerjee divakaruni, the mistress of spices, indian diaspora, emotional alienation, identity transformation, gendered trauma, cultural memory.

## Materials and Methods

### Research Approach

This study adopts a literary analysis approach, focusing on *The Mistress of Spices* as a primary text, complemented by postcolonial theory, trauma theory, and cultural studies perspectives. The research investigates the ways in which Divakaruni explores themes of immigration, identity conflict, and trauma through character development, symbolism, and narrative structure.

### Primary Material

*The Mistress of Spices* (1997) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni – This novel serves as the central text for analysis, allowing for a deep dive into the emotional and psychological

experiences of the protagonist, Tilo, and her interactions with other immigrant characters.

### Secondary Materials

Academic journal articles and critical essays focusing on topics such as immigration literature, trauma in literature, identity, and cultural hybridity in postcolonial contexts.

Works by theorists such as Edward Said (*Culture and Imperialism*), Homi K. Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*), Cathy Caruth (*Unclaimed Experience*), and Jacques Derrida (on memory and trauma).

### Methodology

**Close Reading:** This involves a detailed, focused analysis of key passages in the novel, especially

those involving the transformation of Tilo and the symbolic use of spices.

**Thematic Analysis:** Identifying and discussing recurring themes such as cultural alienation, gendered trauma, healing, and emotional survival in the immigrant experience.

**Contextual Approach:** Understanding the socio-cultural implications of the immigrant experience in both the Indian diaspora and the American context, drawing parallels to broader narratives of dislocation and integration.

## Findings and Results

### 1. Cultural Alienation and Trauma

The novel depicts how cultural dislocation leads to emotional fragmentation. Tilo's inner conflict arises from her dual identity: she feels disconnected from both her Indian roots and her adopted American society. This tension is manifest in her psychological state, where the trauma of leaving India is compounded by the difficulties of assimilating into a foreign culture. Through Tilo's experiences, the novel portrays the immigrant's trauma of living between two worlds—neither fully belonging to one nor feeling at peace with the other.

### 2. Magical Realism and Healing

The concept of magical realism plays a significant role in conveying the psychological and cultural aspects of trauma. The spices in the novel serve as metaphors for the complexities of the characters' emotional and psychological states. The spices initially symbolize control over individuals and situations, reflecting Tilo's role as a guardian of tradition and her own emotional suppression. However, as Tilo begins to confront her human desires and emotional wounds, the spices also come to represent emotional healing and freedom, suggesting that cultural preservation can evolve to accommodate emotional liberation.

### 3. Cultural Hybridity and Identity Transformation

The process of cultural hybridity is a central theme in the novel. Tilo's eventual transformation from a rigid, controlled figure to a woman who embraces love and desires symbolizes the broader journey of identity formation in the immigrant experience. The hybrid identity that Tilo develops—melding elements of both Indian and American cultures—represents a path of emotional survival and self-acceptance. This study finds that healing is possible when individuals can synthesize cultural elements from their heritage with those from the adopted society, rather than feeling forced to choose one over the other.

### 4. Gendered Dimensions of Trauma

The novel delves into the gendered aspects of trauma, particularly through Tilo's role as a woman who suppresses her emotions in deference to societal expectations. Tilo's personal trauma is compounded by her role as the Mistress of Spices, where she is not only expected to serve her community but to suppress her desires and emotions. This exploration of gender and identity highlights the additional layer of psychological conflict that women face in both Indian and Western societies, where societal roles impose limitations on personal freedom and emotional expression.

### 5. The Immigrant Collective Experience

The novel presents a broad spectrum of immigrant experiences through the diverse characters that visit Tilo's spice shop, such as Haroun, Lalita, and Geeta's grandfather. Their collective emotional and psychological struggles illuminate how immigration trauma is not just an individual issue but a shared experience. Divakaruni's portrayal of these characters' complex emotions emphasizes the social and collective impact of cultural dislocation, particularly for those who, like Tilo, feel

alienated from their origins and current environment.

## **Interpretation and Discussion**

### **1. Cultural Dislocation and Self-Reinvention**

The paper interprets cultural dislocation as both a source of trauma and an opportunity for self-reinvention. Tilo's emotional and cultural evolution illustrates that healing does not come from rejecting one's heritage or fully assimilating into a new culture. Instead, it arises from embracing both, finding a balance between tradition and modernity, and redefining identity. The hybrid identity that Tilo forms is a symbol of how individuals can overcome the emotional alienation that often comes with migration by choosing to integrate both cultural worlds into a new, empowered self.

### **2. Memory and Healing**

Memory plays a crucial role in both creating and healing trauma. Tilo's memories, particularly her past as Nayan Tara, continue to haunt her, affecting her sense of identity and her role in the spice shop. However, the process of revisiting and integrating these memories—especially in relation to her desire for love and freedom—becomes part of her healing process. This highlights the transformative power of memory, where trauma can be reinterpreted and integrated to allow for emotional recovery.

### **3. The Spices as Metaphors for Cultural and Emotional Healing**

The spices in the novel serve as metaphors for the tensions between preservation and liberation. Initially, the spices symbolize the oppressive control Tilo exerts over her customers and herself. However, as Tilo begins to confront her personal desires and emotional wounds, the spices evolve into symbols of healing and self-expression. This transformation represents how cultural traditions, when adapted and

reinterpreted, can become sources of emotional empowerment rather than control.

### **4. Love and Transcending Cultural Boundaries**

Tilo's love for Raven represents a transcending of the cultural and emotional boundaries that define her life. Her journey to accept and embrace her love for him is symbolic of the larger immigrant experience, where identity is fluid and continuously shaped by personal experiences. This relationship challenges the cultural codes that have defined Tilo's role in society and suggests that emotional healing can be achieved through self-acceptance and the embracing of love.

## **Conclusion**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* offers a complex exploration of the emotional and psychological impacts of cultural dislocation and trauma. Through Tilo's evolution from a controlled, isolated figure to a woman who embraces both her cultural roots and human desires, the novel provides a nuanced view of the immigrant experience. The symbolic use of spices, the themes of cultural hybridity, and the importance of love and self-acceptance underscore the idea that healing from trauma is possible through integration rather than isolation. The novel suggests that overcoming the alienation and emotional trauma of immigration requires both a deep engagement with one's cultural roots and the freedom to evolve beyond them. This paper concludes that emotional survival and growth in the immigrant experience lie in finding a balance between the old and the new, between heritage and self-reinvention.

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## FROM DRAUPADI TO SITA: MYTH AND DIASPORA IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S FICTION

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### Abstract

*Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a distinguished diasporic writer, masterfully intertwines the immigrant experience with the profound narratives of Indian mythology and epics. In her celebrated novels, *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments*, she reimagines the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana through the perspectives of Draupadi and Sita, respectively, offering fresh insights into their lives and struggles. These retellings humanize mythological figures and reflect themes of identity, resilience, and cultural dislocation central to the diasporic experience. By integrating epic narratives, Divakaruni provides a cultural anchor for diasporic identities while addressing universal questions of belonging, morality, and self-discovery. This paper explores how her novels create a dialogic space where ancient tales illuminate contemporary challenges, offering diasporic readers a bridge between the past and the present. The study underscores how Divakaruni's fusion of epic storytelling and diasporic themes transcends cultural boundaries, creating a profound and transformative literary tapestry.*

**Keywords:** myth, identity, dislocation, resilience and diasporic experience

### Introduction

Diaspora and myth are deeply intertwined themes in English literature, reflecting the cultural dislocation and the enduring narratives that shape collective identities. The concept of diaspora, referring to the dispersion of people from their homeland, often invokes themes of nostalgia, alienation, and the search for identity. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Devakarunai discover the complex emotions of being part of a diasporic community, revealing the tension between assimilation into a new culture and preserving ancestral traditions. On the other hand, Myth, serves as a bridge that connects these dispersed identities to their roots. Myths, whether classical or cultural, offer a framework for understanding the world and a sense of belonging, even in unfamiliar settings. "The diasporic author's dilemma is the sense of perpetual loss caused by a homeland that has been left behind, but this

sense of loss is also a gift, for from this loss arises the ability to create" (Biswas 119).

Postcolonial literature frequently reimagines classical myths to articulate the experiences of displaced communities. The use of myth in diaspora literature often bridges the gap between the past and the present, serving as a repository of collective memory and a tool for negotiating identity in a multicultural world. Indian Writers like Salman Rushdie and Chitra Banerjee Devakarunaidraw upon mythological allusions to deepen the narrative, emphasizing how cultural myths survive and evolve through migration. Therefore, the amalgamation of diaspora and myth in English literature emphasizes the endurance of cultural stories, showcasing how they evolve and survive despite geographic and cultural disintegration. Homi Bhabha states, "Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye." (1). He stresses that national and cultural identities rely

on shared myths, collective memories, and imaginative interpretations that allow people to create a sense of belonging and purpose. Bhabha accentuates the role of imagination and interpretation in understanding the essence of both nations and narratives.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a distinguished diasporic writer, masterfully intertwines the immigrant experience with the profound narratives of Indian mythology and epics. In her celebrated novels, *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments*, she reimagines the epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* through the perspectives of Draupadi and Sita, respectively, offering fresh insights into their lives and struggles. These retellings humanize mythological figures and reflect themes of identity, resilience, and cultural dislocation central to the diasporic experience. By integrating epic narratives, Divakaruni provides a cultural anchor for diasporic identities while addressing universal questions of belonging, morality, and self-discovery. This paper explores how her novels create a dialogic space where ancient tales illuminate contemporary challenges, offering diasporic readers a bridge between the past and the present. The study underscores how Divakaruni's fusion of epic storytelling and diasporic themes transcends cultural boundaries, creating a profound and transformative literary tapestry.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a distinguished Indian-American author renowned for her exceptional ability to intertwine diasporic experiences with mythological narratives. Born on July 29, 1956, in Kolkata, India, she migrated to the United States for higher education, earning her Master's degree from Wright State University and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Her dual identity as an immigrant and a deeply rooted Indian has shaped her literary voice, which often explores the intersections of tradition, displacement, and the search for identity in a multicultural world.

As a diasporic writer, Divakaruni masterfully captures the complexities of immigration, cultural assimilation, and the emotional tug-of-war between the homeland and the adopted country. Her characters often grapple with the challenges of preserving their Indian heritage while adapting to Western norms, reflecting her own experiences and those of many in the Indian diaspora. Books like *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams* delve deeply into the immigrant psyche, portraying the struggles and resilience of diasporic women as they navigate love, loss, and cultural dislocation. Mythology is another cornerstone of Divakaruni's work. She reimagines ancient Indian myths to give them contemporary relevance, offering fresh perspectives on timeless tales. Her celebrated novel *The Palace of Illusions* retells the epic *Mahabharata* through the eyes of Draupadi, highlighting the agency and inner turmoil of a woman who has often been overshadowed in traditional renditions. Similarly, in *The Forest of Enchantments*, she reinterprets the *Ramayana* from Sita's perspective, challenging patriarchal narratives and giving voice to a character traditionally seen as submissive. By recontextualizing these myths, Divakaruni bridges the past and present, making them accessible to a global audience while preserving their cultural essence.

Divakaruni's works transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, resonating with readers worldwide. Her ability to blend the universality of human emotions with the specificity of Indian culture and mythology positions her as a significant voice in contemporary literature. Whether exploring themes of identity, exile, or empowerment, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni continues to enrich the literary landscape by weaving together the threads of diaspora and myth into captivating, transformative narratives.

In "The Palace of Illusions," Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reimagines the *Mahabharata* through the eyes of Panchaali (Draupadi), offering a

nuanced exploration of identity, migration, and assimilation. Panchaali's journey from her father's palace to her marriage into the Pandava family signifies a profound shift in her personal and social identity. This transition challenges her to adapt to new familial structures and societal expectations, reflecting the broader human experience of navigating complex cultural landscapes. Divakaruni's portrayal underscores the intricate process of identity formation amid displacement and the quest for belonging.

While "The Palace of Illusions" primarily focuses on Panchaali's internal struggles, Divakaruni's broader body of work delves deeply into themes of migration and assimilation. Her characters often grapple with the challenges of acculturation, striving to balance the preservation of their cultural heritage with the demands of adapting to new environments.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* vividly portrays the theme of identity through Panchaali's introspective narrative. Her identity is deeply tied to her gender and the societal constraints placed upon her as a woman in a patriarchal world. Panchaali reflects on this struggle, stating, "Was my desire to control my destiny, to stand equal to the men I loved, unreasonable?" This line encapsulates her quest to forge an identity beyond the roles imposed on her—daughter, wife, and queen. Her migration from her father's palace to her husband's home and later to exile marks not just a physical journey but an emotional and psychological evolution, as she learns to reconcile her aspirations with the realities of her circumstances.

The theme of migration and assimilation is intricately linked to Panchaali's experience of displacement. When the Pandavas build their grand palace in Indraprastha, Panchaali describes it as "a place both mine and not mine." This statement reflects the duality of her experience, where assimilation into her new

environment comes with a sense of alienation. The palace, while a symbol of her status and influence, is also a reminder of the sacrifices and adjustments she must endure. Through such nuanced portrayals, Divakaruni illuminates the complex interplay between personal identity and the broader socio-political forces shaping one's life, offering a timeless commentary on the human condition.

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, the protagonist Panchaali reflects on her desire for autonomy in a patriarchal society, questioning, "Was my desire to control my destiny, to stand equal to the men I loved, unreasonable?" This introspection highlights her struggle to assert her identity beyond traditional gender roles. Additionally, upon moving into the palace at Indraprastha, she observes, "It was a place both mine and not mine," capturing her sense of displacement and the complexities of assimilation into new environments. These quotes illustrate Panchaali's internal conflicts as she navigates her evolving identity amidst societal expectations and physical relocations. Her journey underscores the broader themes of self-discovery and the challenges inherent in balancing personal desires with external obligations.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* is a retelling of the ancient Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, through the perspective of Sita, one of its central characters. The novel explores themes of diaspora and myth by reimagining Sita's story, blending timeless mythology with the modern complexities of identity, belonging, and displacement. For diasporic readers, this reinterpretation serves as both a reclamation of cultural heritage and a critical revisitation of conventional and established narratives, sustaining a sense of connection to their roots while addressing universal struggles for autonomy and self-narrative.

Diaspora, as a theme, resonates subtly in the novel as Sita herself experiences physical and emotional displacements. Her journey from her idyllic life in Mithila to the forests of exile, and later to Valmiki's hermitage, mirrors the sense of uprootedness that characterizes the diasporic condition. Sita's yearning for her homeland is evident when she says, "My heart sped up when I heard that beloved name. could we, by some strange twist of fate, have doubled back unknowingly towards my father's kingdom" (128). Her struggles to maintain her sense of self while being confined by societal expectations and patriarchal norms parallel the internal conflicts faced by diasporic individuals, who often grapple with the dualities of cultural assimilation and preservation.

Myth, on the other hand, is central to Divakaruni's narrative, not as a static repository of tradition but as a dynamic medium for reinterpretation. By placing Sita's voice at the forefront, Divakaruni challenges conventional depictions of female characters in mythology. This approach invites diasporic and non-diasporic readers alike to engage critically with inherited stories, encouraging a dialogue between past and present. In doing so, *The Forest of Enchantments* becomes a bridge between mythological traditions and contemporary realities, highlighting the enduring power of stories to shape and reshape identities across time and space.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments* both center around reimagining Indian epics—*The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, respectively—from the perspectives of their female protagonists, Draupadi and Sita. Both novels explore the search for identity and the impact of displacement on their characters, intertwining these themes with the struggle for female rights. Draupadi in *The Palace of Illusions* grapples with her identity as a queen, a wife shared among five husbands, and a woman

defined by her relationships with men. Her displacement, both literal and emotional, begins with her marriage and culminates in the exile she endures during the Kurukshetra War. Similarly, Sita in *The Forest of Enchantments* faces an identity crisis as she navigates the roles of a devoted wife, a daughter of the Earth, and a woman silenced by patriarchal expectations. Sita's mother's words define the role of married women within a patriarchal society as follows, "We come into the world alone, and we leave it alone. And in between, too if it is destined, we'll be done. ... what you can't change, you must endure" (54). Her exile in the forest and eventual abandonment echo both physical and emotional displacements, underscoring the sacrifices demanded of women in male-dominated narratives.

Both novels delve deeply into the theme of female rights by questioning the agency of their protagonists within their respective epic frameworks. Draupadi's fiery resolve and her insistence on questioning societal norms make her a symbol of resistance, even as she struggles to assert her autonomy in a world that constantly seeks to confine her. Sita, on the other hand, offers a quieter yet equally powerful resistance by asserting her moral strength and challenging the righteousness of societal expectations. In their search for identity and justice, both women highlight the limitations imposed on them by tradition while carving spaces for their voices to be heard. Divakaruni's works thus serve as powerful feminist reinterpretations of ancient myths, shedding light on the enduring struggles of women for identity, autonomy, and equality.

In conclusion, *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments* are profound explorations of identity, displacement, and female rights, offering a fresh lens through which to view ancient epics. Draupadi's journey in *The Palace of Illusions* showcases a fierce, questioning spirit that refuses to be silenced despite the constraints of her time, while Sita's

narrative in *The Forest of Enchantments* presents a quieter yet equally defiant assertion of dignity and self-worth. Both women's experiences highlight the universality of struggles faced by women across eras, bridging the gap between mythological frameworks and contemporary feminist discourse. Both novels create rich, interactive spaces where Draupadi and Sita's voices resonate with modern sensibilities while staying rooted in their mythological origins.

Through their nuanced portrayals of Draupadi and Sita, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni not only reclaims the voices of these iconic women but also invites readers to reflect on the timelessness of their struggles. The novels emphasize the need to reclaim agency, challenge patriarchal norms, and forge identities beyond societal expectations. By doing so, they offer a

reinterpretation of myths and a call for ongoing dialogue about women's roles in history, literature, and society.

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# CULTURAL REFLECTIONS AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN ANITA NAIR'S LADIES COUPE

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## Abstract

*The study explores the cultural nuances and gender perspectives in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe. Set in a patriarchal Indian society, the novel portrays the struggles and aspirations of women through six unique narratives. The research examines how the novel challenges traditional gender roles and cultural expectations, offering a deeper understanding of women's agency, identity, and empowerment. Using feminist and cultural criticism, this paper analyzes how Nair intertwines personal stories with larger societal issues. This research highlights the transformative potential of women's solidarity and self-realization as depicted in the novel.*

**Keywords:** anita nair, ladies coupe, gender perspectives, cultural reflections, feminism, patriarchy, women's empowerment.

## Materials and Methods

### Materials

#### 1. Primary Text:

Nair, Anita. Ladies Coupe. Penguin Books, 2001.

#### 2. Secondary Sources:

- Critical essays on Anita Nair's works.
- Books and articles on feminist theory, gender studies, and cultural criticism.
- Contextual references to Indian society, traditions, and patriarchy.

## Methods

- Qualitative Analysis:
- Close reading of the text to identify themes of gender inequality, cultural norms, and empowerment.
- Comparative analysis of the six protagonists' stories to understand shared and unique experiences.
- Theoretical Frameworks:
- Feminist literary theory to analyze how the text subverts patriarchal structures.

- Cultural criticism to study the intersection of individual struggles and societal expectations.
- Textual Analysis:
- Examining language, symbols, and narrative techniques used to portray women's struggles and resilience.

## Findings and Results

### Cultural Reflections in Ladies Coupe

In Ladies Coupe, Nair provides a vivid portrayal of Indian society, reflecting its cultural landscape through the lives of her diverse female characters. The novel's central theme revolves around the journey of Akhila, who sets out on a train journey from Chennai to Kanyakumari, seeking solace and introspection. As she shares the compartment with five other women, the train becomes a microcosm of Indian culture, with each woman representing different socio-economic backgrounds, generational perspectives, and regional identities.

Through these characters, Nair paints a comprehensive picture of the societal expectations and constraints placed on women in India. The notion of tradition, particularly regarding the role of women in the family, is

prevalent throughout the novel. Akhila's internal struggle is symbolic of the larger societal pressures faced by women—caught between the pull of family duties and the desire for personal fulfillment. Her personal story mirrors the cultural context of India, where women are often expected to put family and societal reputation before their own needs and ambitions.

Moreover, the cultural setting of the train journey itself provides a powerful metaphor for movement—both physical and emotional. The train's journey from the bustling city of Chennai to the southernmost tip of India, Kanyakumari, symbolizes the potential for transformation and self-discovery. Akhila's escape from her familial obligations into the company of women from different walks of life offers a chance for reflection on the cultural conditioning women undergo. Through Akhila's experience, Nair critiques how cultural values both restrict and define women's roles in society.

### **Gender Perspectives in Ladies Coupe**

At the heart of *Ladies Coupe* lies a critical examination of gender relations in contemporary Indian society. Through Akhila and the five women she meets on the train—Janaki, Sheela, Marikolanthu, Prabha, and the mysterious Kuttimani—Nair explores the multifaceted roles of women and the oppressive systems that govern their lives. Each woman's story represents a different facet of womanhood, from the obedient wife to the independent, self-assertive woman. These narratives collectively highlight the diversity of experiences women face, influenced by class, age, education, and personal choice.

Akhila, the protagonist, represents the voice of a middle-aged, single woman who has spent her life sacrificing her needs for the sake of family and social expectations. Her decision to embark on this journey marks the beginning of her search for a sense of self beyond her defined roles as daughter and caretaker. Akhila's

narrative challenges the conventional belief that a woman's fulfillment comes solely from her roles in the family. She yearns for freedom and personal expression, themes that resonate with the novel's exploration of the cultural limitations placed on women.

In contrast, Janaki, a widowed grandmother, embodies traditional values, but her story also reveals the quiet strength of women who have endured the trials of life without ever questioning their role in the household. Marikolanthu, a tribal woman, offers a perspective from a marginalized community, showing how class and caste intersect with gender to complicate a woman's struggle for autonomy. Through these diverse characters, Nair underscores the complex nature of gender roles in Indian society.

The narrative reveals how patriarchy manifests not just in overt forms of oppression but also in subtler societal expectations. Women are expected to be caretakers, nurturers, and obedient wives, and the women in *Ladies Coupé* grapple with these expectations in various ways. Nair critiques the patriarchal assumption that women are meant to live for others, prioritizing familial and social roles over personal fulfillment.

### **Tradition, Modernity, and Female Autonomy**

One of the key tensions in *Ladies Coupe* is the conflict between tradition and modernity, particularly in terms of gender roles. Nair presents a critique of traditional gender expectations while also showcasing the transformative potential of self-realization and personal autonomy. Akhila's search for selfhood is indicative of the shift many women in modern India experience: the desire to break free from the confines of tradition while dealing with the consequences of such a rebellion.

Akhila's initial sense of guilt and hesitation before making her journey reveals how ingrained societal expectations are. For most of

her life, she has been conditioned to suppress her desires and focus on the needs of her family. However, her interactions with the other women on the train help her break through the barriers of self-doubt and societal judgment. These women, despite their varied experiences, are united in their shared understanding of the limitations imposed on women and their collective desire for more freedom.

While Akhila's struggle is personal, it mirrors the larger generational shift in India, where women are beginning to question the patriarchal structures that have historically defined their roles. Nair illustrates that the conflict between tradition and modernity is not simply about rejecting tradition, but about finding a balance that allows for personal growth and independence. Through Akhila's transformation, the novel suggests that true empowerment for women comes from reconciling the demands of tradition with the desire for self-autonomy.

### **Female Solidarity and Empowerment**

A major theme in *Ladies Coupe* is the power of female solidarity. As the women share their stories in the confined space of the train compartment, a sense of sisterhood develops that allows them to open up and confront their respective struggles. This solidarity is essential in the novel, as it highlights how women, despite their differences, can provide each other with emotional support and understanding.

The narrative structure of *Ladies Coupe*—a series of interconnected stories shared among women—emphasizes the importance of these bonds. The women's openness and empathy for one another offer a stark contrast to the isolation often felt by women in patriarchal societies. Through the dialogues and shared experiences, the novel conveys that women's empowerment is not only individual but collective. This idea of shared struggle and mutual support is central to the feminist undertones of the novel, showing

how women can reclaim agency when they stand together.

While the novel emphasizes the importance of female solidarity, it also underscores the personal nature of empowerment. Each woman's journey towards self-realization is unique, shaped by her own experiences, choices, and challenges. Nair suggests that true empowerment comes not from a singular definition of what a woman should be, but from the freedom to define oneself on one's own terms.

### **Conclusion**

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* is a powerful critique of gender inequality and cultural oppression in Indian society. Through the diverse stories of six women, the novel underscores the resilience of women in the face of patriarchal constraints. It advocates for self-discovery, independence, and the importance of female solidarity. Nair's narrative not only challenges societal norms but also offers a hopeful vision of empowerment. This research emphasizes the relevance of Nair's work in contemporary discussions on feminism and cultural change.

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION IN THE WORKS OF KIRAN DESAI

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## Abstract

*Kiran Desai's works intricately explore the themes of cultural heritage and preservation, often juxtaposing them with the forces of globalization, migration, and modernity. Through her novels, particularly *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Desai portrays the struggles of individuals and communities to retain their cultural identity while navigating the challenges of change and displacement. This paper examines how Desai represents cultural heritage as a dynamic yet fragile entity, emphasizing its significance in shaping identity and fostering a sense of belonging. By analyzing her characters and settings, the study underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage amidst the pressures of modernity and globalization.*

**Keywords:** *kiran desai, cultural heritage, preservation, globalization, identity, migration, displacement.*

## Methods and Materials

### Primary Texts

*The Inheritance of Loss* (2006)

*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998)

### Secondary Sources

Critical essays and reviews on Kiran Desai's work.

Scholarly texts on cultural heritage, globalization, and identity.

### Approach

A qualitative literary analysis of Desai's works.

Examination of key characters, themes, and narrative strategies to understand the representation of cultural heritage.

Application of postcolonial and cultural studies frameworks to analyze the tension between tradition and modernity.

## Findings and Results

### Cultural Heritage as a Source of Identity:

Desai's characters often find their sense of self rooted in their cultural heritage. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the judge's memories of

colonial India and Sai's relationship with her grandfather highlight how personal and collective identities are intertwined with cultural traditions.

### Globalization and Its Impact on Heritage

Desai portrays globalization as a double-edged sword. While it offers opportunities, it also threatens to erode cultural traditions. The conflicts in Kalimpong in *The Inheritance of Loss* illustrate how economic and cultural globalization disrupts local identities.

### Preservation through Storytelling and Memory

In *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, storytelling serves as a means of preserving cultural heritage. Sampath's escapades in the orchard become symbolic of the community's attempt to hold onto its traditions amidst societal changes.

### Interpretation and Discussion

Desai's works highlight the fragile balance between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to modernity. Her narratives emphasize

that cultural heritage is not static but evolves through interactions with external forces. The tension between tradition and change is vividly depicted in *The Inheritance of Loss*, where characters like Sai and the judge grapple with their colonial past and postcolonial realities.

Furthermore, Desai critiques the homogenizing effects of globalization, which often marginalize local cultures. Her portrayal of Kalimpong's socio-political unrest reflects the broader struggles of communities striving to assert their cultural identity in a globalized world.

In *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Desai uses humor and satire to underscore the significance of storytelling as a tool for cultural preservation. Sampath's journey symbolizes the resilience of cultural traditions in the face of modernization.

Desai's works also reveal the emotional and psychological dimensions of cultural displacement. Characters like Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* highlight the alienation and longing experienced by migrants, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage as a source of comfort and connection.

### Conclusion

Kiran Desai's novels offer a profound exploration of cultural heritage and its preservation in a rapidly changing world. By

portraying the struggles of individuals and communities to retain their traditions, Desai underscores the significance of cultural heritage in shaping identity and fostering resilience.

Her works serve as a reminder of the need to balance modernization with the preservation of cultural diversity. Future research could further explore how Desai's narratives contribute to broader discourses on heritage conservation and the impact of globalization on cultural identity.

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# THE ROLE OF EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT: THEMES IN LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE* AND *THE LOWLAND*

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## Abstract

*This study explores how empathy and comprehension might help reduce intercultural conflict as they are shown in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013). The difficulties experienced by immigrants and their descendants are reflected in both works' deft handling of issues of diasporic identity, generational divisions, and cultural dislocation. Gogol Ganguli's name is used as a metaphor for his cultural duality in *The Namesake*, which examines his biography and emphasises the difficulty of juggling his Indian ancestry and American identity. On the other hand, *The Lowland* highlights the nuanced connections between Subhash, Udayan, and Gauri while contrasting the political unrest in India with the experience of immigrants in the US. Lahiri emphasises the transforming power of empathy in overcoming generational and cultural divides while also highlighting the emotional and cultural sacrifices necessary for adjusting to new environments. This examination shows how Lahiri's stories promote comprehension and self-discovery as crucial strategies for negotiating the complex relationship between cultural legacy and contemporary identity.*

**Keywords:** *empathy, understanding, cross-cultural conflict, diasporic identity, assimilation, cultural heritage, generational gap, political turmoil, immigrant experience, dual identity, cultural displacement, self-discovery.*

## Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013) are dramatic explorations of the intricacies of diasporic identity and cross-cultural conflict, delivering significant insights into the human need for empathy and understanding while negotiating these obstacles. Lahiri's stories centre on people who are torn between the pressures of assimilation in a new country and the cultural customs of their ancestry. Her writings demonstrate how empathy can overcome cultural and generational barriers, allowing characters to resolve the conflict between two identities and establishing stronger bonds with their families and friends.

Lahiri explores the conflict between assimilation and culture preservation in *The Namesake* via the life of Gogol Ganguli, a second-generation Indian American. As a result of Ashoke's affection for Nikolai Gogol and his

parents' Indian heritage, Gogol's name ends up representing his identity crisis. According to Lahiri, "The first thing his father had given him was the name he had so hated, here hidden and preserved" (*The Namesake* 124). The need for empathy between immigrant parents and their American-born children is shown by Gogol's battle to embrace his name, which is similar to his quest to comprehend his cultural origins. According to critics like Jasbir Jain, this "multiplicity of homes" emphasises the inherent tensions of diasporic identity, where cultural norms and individual preferences often clash (13). Lahiri sees Gogol's relationships with Maxine and Moushumi as mirroring his continuous search for acceptance, each of which highlights the difficulties in striking a balance between cultural assimilation and kinship ties.

*The Lowland*, on the other hand, develops these themes by fusing political unrest with personal

identity. The story centres on Subhash and Gauri, who deal with loss, relocation, and complicated family ties in the context of the Naxalite uprising in India and the immigrant experience in the US. Subhash's choice to wed Gauri, which was motivated by obligation and empathy, stands in stark contrast to her emotional distance. According to Lahiri, "Her life had been fired from one place and ricocheted into another like a gunshot" (*The Lowland* 168). Subhash's unwavering patience and Gauri's incapacity to relate to her daughter Bela demonstrate the transformational power of understanding in overcoming intergenerational and cross-cultural disputes. The splintered identities of Lahiri's protagonists, who struggle with cultural in-betweenness and the compromises necessary to manage it, are highlighted by Homi Bhabha's thesis on hybridity (Bhabha 139).

Lahiri promotes empathy as a healing and reconciliation tool by shedding light on the complex realities of intercultural conflict in *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*. The experiences of her characters demonstrate the timeless value of empathy and comprehension in tackling the intricacies of diasporic identity and global interdependence.

## Discussion

### Empathy and Cross-Cultural Conflict: Navigating Identity and Relationships

*The Namesake* and *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri deftly examine the topics of intercultural discord and the critical role empathy plays in overcoming social and personal obstacles. The tension, dissonance, and ultimate reconciliation that often characterise diasporic identities are highlighted in both works as they explore the experiences of protagonists torn between the cultural traditions of their birthplaces and the expectations of their adoptive environs. Lahiri offers complex depictions of people battling with multiple identities, generational gaps, and

emotional burdens by analysing Gogol Ganguli's hardships in *The Namesake* and the politically charged background of the Naxalite movement in *The Lowland*. This highlights the importance of empathy in resolving disputes. Lahiri depicts the lives of second-generation Indian American Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake*, whose name comes to represent his battles with ethnic identification. Ashoke and Ashima, Gogol's parents, bring their customs and memories with them when they move to the US from India. In honour of Ashoke's transformative experience with Nikolai Gogol's writings, they give their kid the name "Gogol." But for Gogol, the name represents an identity that is neither Indian nor American, as well as an awkward and alienating link to his parents' past. "He despises that his name is both ridiculous and cryptic, that it has nothing to do with his identity, that it is not Indian or American but rather Russian" (*The Namesake* 76), according to Lahiri. Gogol's refusal to accept his given name and his efforts to alter it to Nikhil officially represent his larger defiance of the cultural norms that his immigrant parents forced upon him. His battle to balance his Indian ancestry with his American upbringing is a perfect example of the difficulties that many second-generation immigrants encounter. According to critics like Jasbir Jain, Gogol's ongoing balancing act between cultural dualism reflects the idea that "the boundaries of identity persist in uncanny ways, creating unresolved conflicts between home and the world" (13).

A key element in overcoming the age gap between Gogol and his parents is empathy. Despite their strong ties to their cultural heritage, Ashima and Ashoke eventually come to accept Gogol's decisions while feeling emotionally detached from them. For example, Ashima learns to deal with her son's independence while acknowledging that cultural changes are inevitable in the diasporic experience. Ashima's realisation that "being a

foreigner... is a sort of lifelong pregnancy—a perpetual wait, a constant burden" (*The Namesake* 49) is eloquently captured by Lahiri. Ashima is able to support her son's identity journey while preserving her ties to her ancestry because of this sensation of dislocation that is moderated by empathy.

Gogol's interactions with Maxine and Moushumi provide more examples of the difficulties associated with intercultural conflict and the need for comprehension. His ambition to completely integrate into American society and break with his Indian heritage is seen in his connection with Maxine, a white American lady. Gogol easily integrates into American society via Maxine's family, but their relationship eventually breaks down because of a lack of mutual awareness of his cultural heritage. According to Lahiri: "He had tried to throw himself into his life with Maxine, to ignore the absence of his family, to exist with her in her world, in her childhood home" (*The Namesake*, 185). On the other hand, it seems that his union with Bengali lady Moushumi gives him a link to his roots. But as shown by Moushumi's personal identity and adultery issues, deeper emotional divisions cannot be healed by common cultural origins alone. The breakdown of both marriages emphasises how important empathy and self-awareness are when handling interpersonal and cultural difficulties.

In *The Lowland*, Lahiri turns his attention to the emotional and political climate of the Indian Naxalite movement and how it affected the lives of immigrants. The book centres on two brothers, Subhash and Udayan Mitra, whose lives drastically diverge as a result of their divergent beliefs and lifestyle choices. Udayan's participation in the extreme Naxalite movement affects Subhash and Gauri's life and causes friction and, ultimately, catastrophe. Lahiri explores themes of sacrifice and exile by juxtaposing the siblings' divergent journeys and utilising Udayan's political activities as a

background. While Udayan's dedication to the movement highlights his idealism and disobedience, Subhash's choice to leave India and pursue his degree in the United States demonstrates his pragmatic outlook on life. Lahiri notes, "It was the only time he had ever taken a step they would not approve of, the only thing he had ever done in his life to defy his parents" (*The Lowland* 31). Both Subhash and Gauri are forever changed by Udayan's final passing, which forces them to deal with the fallout from both personal and political upheaval.

Lahiri's focus on compassion as a healing mechanism is shown in Subhash's empathy-driven acts, especially his choice to wed Gauri and take care of her pregnant child, Bela. In an attempt to provide Gauri with a secure existence free from the burden of Udayan's passing, Subhash marries her out of obligation and understanding rather than love. His attempts to provide Bela with a loving atmosphere demonstrate his dedication to healing the emotional wounds caused by their shared sorrow. Subhash and Gauri's relationship, however, is still strained and aloof, highlighting the limits of empathy when it is not reciprocated. "He had never expected her to love him," writes Lahiri. "He never expected to love her" (*The Lowland* 111). Subhash's silent perseverance and capacity to put Bela's welfare ahead of his own are prime examples of the transforming power of empathy in resolving cultural and family disputes.

On the other side, Gauri's trip illustrates the lack of comprehension and its effects. Gauri loses her emotional connection to Subhash and Bela as a result of her trauma from Udayan's passing and her previous engagement with the Naxalite struggle. With the line, "She would never have a home, she thought," Lahiri presents Gauri as a girl torn between her dreams and the consequences of her decisions. "She would always be moving between two shores" (*The*

*Lowland*, 250). The enduring effects of unsolved issues and the lack of empathy in handling them are shown by her incapacity to relate to her daughter and her final choice to leave. As pointed out by critics such as Homi Bhabha, diasporic identities can entail a condition of "in-betweenness," in which people grapple with reconciling their historical and contemporary selves (139). This separation is most shown by Gauri's loneliness and detachment, which stand in sharp contrast to Subhash's empathy-driven fortitude.

Lahiri emphasises the critical need for empathy and comprehension in resolving both individual and more general societal disputes via these interwoven tales. *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* show that while political and cultural conflicts can cause severe rifts, they can also be lessened by kindness and camaraderie. By navigating a complicated web of identities, pasts, and connections, Lahiri's characters show that empathy is an active force for healing and development rather than just a passive virtue. Lahiri's writings provide deep reflections on the transformational potential of knowledge in a society becoming more linked and globalised by examining the complex interactions between cultural heritage, individual identity, and emotional ties.

### **Generational, Familial Dynamics and Broader Implications of Empathy**

*The Namesake* and *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri deftly examine the family and generational dynamics that influence the experience of immigrants, with a special emphasis on the interactions between first-generation immigrants and their offspring. Lahiri explores the conflicts that emerge in families trying to negotiate the challenges of diasporic existence via the prisms of cultural identification, assimilation, and autonomy. These books also highlight the wider significance of empathy and comprehension as

transforming factors in resolving individual and group disputes, demonstrating how compassion and connection may cross-generational and cultural barriers.

The generational gap between Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli, who relocate to the US from India, and their son Gogol, a second-generation Indian American who was born and reared in Massachusetts, is depicted by Lahiri in *The Namesake*. As they work to maintain their customs in a strange country, Ashoke and Ashima bear the burden of their cultural heritage. They use their Bengali identity's social conventions, language, and rituals as a way to stay connected to their roots. According to Lahiri, "Ashima will not accept that her life in America will be divided forever as if she were a passenger on two trains, each on the opposite side of the world" (*The Namesake* 44). However, according to Gogol, these customs can seem onerous and foreign, mirroring the difficulty faced by second-generation immigrants in balancing their parents' expectations with their aspirations for autonomy and social integration. His aversion to his two names symbolises his internal turmoil—Nikhil, the official name meant to blend in with American society, and Gogol, the personal name associated with his father's survival of a train disaster. The diversity of cultural demands, according to critics like Jasbir Jain, "creates a persistent tension, preventing seamless integration into either world" (13). As the former want to maintain cultural continuity and the latter seek independence and a sense of belonging in their adoptive culture, this conflict highlights the generational divide between parents and children.

Gogol's ultimate acceptance of his name and ancestry serves as an example of how empathy and understanding may heal this generational gap. As he gets older, his ties with his parents change, especially when his father, Ashoke, passes away. Lahiri illustrates this transition

sensitively, saying, "In the years since his father's death, he has learnt to live with the name, celebrating it even" (*The Namesake* 289). Ashima demonstrates her sensitivity and understanding of the intricacies of the diasporic experience by gradually adjusting to her son's decisions, especially his choice to marry outside of their community. Understanding and compassion are crucial for managing family relations in a cross-cultural setting, as shown by the interaction of generational expectations and personal preferences.

The difficulties Bela, the daughter of Subhash and Gauri, faces as a second-generation immigrant are the main subject of Lahiri's *The Lowland*. The turbulent background of her parents and their divergent perspectives on American life have influenced Bela's experience. Despite the emotional gap left by Gauri, Subhash, who raises Bela as a single father after her departure, displays empathy and selflessness by committing to giving her stability and affection. In order to give her the impression that nothing was lacking, Lahiri writes, "He had tried to give her everything." "However, he was aware that there were certain things that he could never provide for her" (*The Lowland* 280). Bela's perception of herself and her role in the world is complicated as a result of growing up ignorant of her actual ancestry and her father's sacrifices.

Bela is forced to face the intricacies of her own identity as a second-generation immigrant after learning of her father's sacrifices and her mother's desertion. Lahiri draws attention to the difficulties faced by kids like Bela, who must navigate the reality of a new cultural environment while being influenced by their parents' cultural dissonance. Due to the long-lasting effects of Gauri's emotional distance, Bela and her mother have a tense and incomprehensible relationship. As people try to balance their lineage with their current situation, critics like Homi Bhabha have noted that such

diasporic experiences often result in fractured identities (Bhabha 139). This disarray in Bela's emotional journey is depicted by Lahiri, who shows that empathy is a tool for self-discovery and healing in addition to being a way to connect.

Beyond only focusing on specific people, Lahiri's writings highlight the transforming power of empathy in addressing internal and external crises. Lahiri illustrates empathy in *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* as a way to promote understanding, facilitate reconciliation, and bridge generational and cultural gaps. Empathy enables Ashoke and Ashima in *The Namesake* to acknowledge the particular difficulties their children confront in a bicultural setting and to accept Gogol's decisions progressively. Even as Gogol creates his own identity, empathy serves as a means for him to accept his lineage and comprehend the sacrifices made by his parents. Lahiri says, "True to the meaning of his name, he does his best to honour his father, to make his own life a gift to the one who gave him his" (*The Namesake* 288). This recognition of intergenerational empathy shows the significance of knowing as a tool for connection and healing.

Subhash's acts of empathy in *The Lowland* demonstrate the transformational potential of compassion in the midst of loss and relocation by acting as a counterbalance to Gauri's emotional detachment. Despite the lack of romantic love, Subhash's choice to wed Gauri and raise Bela as his kid is a testament to his selflessness and dedication to providing stability in the wake of tragedy. Because he was unable to look away, Lahiri says, "He had stepped into a role that was never meant to be his" (*The Lowland* 176). Even as he struggles with his loss and loneliness, Subhash's constant empathy helps him manage the difficulties of parenting and keeps Bela feeling connected and at home. In contrast, Gauri's journey highlights the negative effects of lacking empathy when it

comes to settling interpersonal and family disputes. Her emotional distance and unresolved guilt keep her from interacting with her family, which is why she cannot relate to Subhash and Bela. Lahiri's observation that "She was free, she told herself" eloquently conveys Gauri's loneliness. Unrepentant to live" (*The Lowland* 276). But this independence comes at the expense of fulfilling personal goals and meaningful connections, underscoring the need for empathy in building understanding and connection.

Through these stories, Lahiri shows that empathy is an active and transformational force that helps people deal with the intricacies of interpersonal, generational, and cultural issues rather than just being a passive feeling. Her writings imply that in order to overcome barriers, promote connections, and deal with the difficulties of diasporic identity, empathy and understanding are crucial. In a world that is becoming more linked and multicultural, Lahiri's depiction of people like Gogol, Subhash, and Bela demonstrates the timeless value of empathy while providing deep insights into the human ability for connection and recovery. According to critics, Lahiri's examination of empathy goes beyond her characters. It offers a more general reflection on the human desire for comprehension in a society characterised by cultural hybridity and displacement. As Jasbir Jain rightly notes, "the capacity for empathy enables people to cross boundaries, establishing avenues for communication and peacemaking" (18).

Finally, Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* illustrate the complex interaction of generational and family relationships within the diasporic experience, emphasising empathy's transforming power in conflict resolution and connection. Lahiri emphasises the value of knowing as a way to navigate the intricacies of the human experience via her subtle depictions of ethnic identity, family connections, and the

emotional landscapes of her characters. Her writings are proof of the timeless ability of compassion and empathy to heal wounds and forge deep bonds in a multicultural and dynamic society.

### Conclusion

*The Namesake* and *The Lowland* provide deep insights into the transforming potential of knowledge and empathy in reducing intercultural tensions. The challenges of diasporic identity, the conflict between assimilation and cultural preservation, and the generational gaps that characterise immigrant experiences are all deftly depicted in both works. Lahiri's stories emphasise that empathy is an active involvement that heals, unites, and promotes self-discovery rather than just a passive recognition of others' hardships. Gogol Ganguli's route to embracing his dual identity in *The Namesake* serves as an example of how empathy, especially across generations, helps people deal with the conflict between their cultural history and contemporary identities. Resolving personal and cultural difficulties requires mutual understanding, as seen by the complicated relationships between Gogol, his parents, and his lovers. This concept is further developed in *The Lowland*, which contrasts battles for personal identity with historical and political backdrops. Even in the face of severe loss and relocation, the lives of Subhash, Gauri, and Bela serve as examples of how empathy may foster resilience and act as a catalyst for healing. Fundamentally, Lahiri's work shows that while having their roots in complicated historical, political, and personal issues, cross-cultural disputes are not insurmountable. In order to bring disparate identities together and create deep relationships, empathy shows up as a uniting factor that cuts across borders. These stories serve as a reminder that understanding is a means of embracing the common humanity that underlies our world's



growing inter connectedness, as well as a means of resolving interpersonal conflicts. By illuminating the transformative role of empathy, Lahiri's works resonate beyond their literary landscapes, offering valuable lessons for addressing the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity in contemporary global societies.

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# FROM MARGINS TO THE FOREFRONT: IDENTITY NEGOTIATION THROUGH ANAND NEELAKANTAN'S SELECT NOVELS

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## Abstract

*In the great tapestry of Indian mythology, the voices from the margins are silenced and unheard, and their struggles are substituted by glorious heroes and simplistic good-and-bad dichotomies. In his work, Anand Neelakantan dares to break that convention and breathe life into the silenced, the misunderstood, and the demonized. He recycles that mainstreamed narrative and their perspectives. His version of Ravana that has been popularised as anti social-cultural from traditional Ramayana, is enlightened in social justice, that makes Ravana not as a one-dimensional villain but as a complex character deeply invested in issues of social justice. His retellings provide insight into how these mainstream characters resist subjugation by continuously renegotiating their identities, not only through personal transformation but also through political agency. Redemption and refounding the marginalised identities are one of the major underlyings that Neelakantan focuses on in his works. Cultural trauma the collective memory of a group, formed from historical events of collective suffering, violence or oppression Neelakantan delves into what it means for cultural trauma to be inherited and that of character identity formation. The journey of the narratives from being marginalized or overlooked to becoming central figures in narratives, often questioning dominant ideologies and highlighting the complexity of identity formation. Their battles both internal and external echo in contemporary struggles for equality and identity, reminds us that the fight to rise above imposed roles and claim one's place in history is as relevant today as it was in the past.*

**Keywords:** *mythology, redemption, refounding, renegotiating, subjugation*

In the great tapestry of Indian mythology, the voices from the margins are silenced and unheard, and their struggles are substituted by glorious heroes and simplistic good-and-bad dichotomies. In his work, Anand Neelakantan dares to break that convention and breathe life into the silenced, the misunderstood, and the demonized. He recasts mythological figures that are reinterpreting the telling of hero/villain within these frameworks of marginalization and shifting identities. *Asura: The tale of Vanquished*, *Vanara: The Legend Baali*, *Sugreeva and Tara*; and *Valmiki's women*, all

show a layer of Identity negotiation especially in and around hostile power regimes. His works offer a lens through which mythological characters negotiate their identities against the backdrop of oppressive power structures and shifting socio-political landscapes. The characters, be that gray or grey matter characters struggle with their identity in the broader ecosystem and their struggles are their epics. Neelakantan positions these characters on the fringes of traditional myths calling for readers to re-examine their assumptions around power, retaliation and atonement.

Neelakantan recycles that mainstreamed narrative in *Asura: The Tale of the Vanquished* into an outright reinvention of Ravana, who is the traditionally villainous star of the *Ramayana*. This depiction of Ravana as a multifaceted, grey conscience turns the good vs bad binary on its head. He is no mere villain, but a king, a brother, and a warrior trying to achieve equality and failing in his role within the political, social culture of his era. Using that frame, Neelakantan rethinks power and sovereignty, acknowledging a critique of how the vantage point of mainstream stories have historically excluded people such as Ravana. The identity negotiation of Ravana, starts here with him being described as a Brahmin, from an honoured family living in the middle lane but pushed again by the same system for being a rakshasa. His brotherhood with Kumbhakarna and his other half Vibhishana is pivotal in his identification, as they follow different paths within their family. The power of Ravana is not only that he is strong or wise, but even his communication of the rakshasa who are deemed a threat to the Aryan order, Lord Rama.

Neelakantan's version of Ravana that has been popularised as anti socio-cultural from traditional *Ramayana*, is enlightened in social justice, that makes Ravana not as a one-dimensional villain but as a complex character deeply invested in issues of social justice. Most commonly, he is shown as a sovereign who can be engaged to create a level society for his people and make leagues, enforce regulations that deliver safety and opportunity for the oppressed. Ravana's angers at the subaltern injustices are a metaphor of political repression he faces as a hegemonic element. So, for e.g., Ravana's attempt to snatch Sita is not just personal, it's a public insubordination symbolizing the class struggling against greater external forces in a much more vicious manner. It is important to note that Ravana evolved from the dichotomies of heroism and villainism.

Ravana's journey is shaped by a broader, more contentious engagement with societal structures that made his tragic fate. *Asura*, Ravana's actions and choices are from him as a defense of hegemonic powers interested in repressing him. As such, he becomes his own agent of resistance, but a flawed and contradictory man who paints the ambivalent image of a person battling the ethics of power with day to day survival.

Baali and Sugreeva are brothers with opposite ideologies. Even in physical and mental strength both are opposite pillars. Baali being strong and invincible, his identity cannot be separated from his divine strength, sagacity, and rulership over Kishkindha. However his invincible nature has become a double-edged sword while it sustains his reign, it also isolates him emotionally. His relationship with Sugreeva and Tara fractures his strength. These relationships, meant to stabilize his rule and identity, instead expose vulnerabilities that undermine his strength. His attachment to familial roles and patriarchal expectations reveals the personal costs of political power. Sugreeva brother of Baali, defined by his marginalization in Baali's shadow. His reclamation of power from Baali's dominance is his redefinition of identity. He moves from a victim of Baali's dominance to a sovereign capable of forging his own path.

Neelakantan, delves into the changing power dynamic between brothers, Baali & Sugreeva. In this battle of identity between twins Baali and Sugreeva is driven by sibling rivalry but also being outcompeted in turn by the dynamic of an ever-changing roles within a system. Baali is evil as a ruling strength, first off. The name Baali must be sealed because he is the king of Kishkindha and according to his name and reason for his strength, sagacity, divine favor. Sugreeva is malleable and is hinted at in the way he changes. His first marginalization as a submissive brother to Baali gives way to a

sovereign in his own right. And Sugreeva, whose identity is remade every minute by the dynamics in play between the brothers. The victory of Ravana over Baali represents both his reconquest of personal and political power, and his marrying into the cosmic drama of struggle and righteousness via Rama.

In Neelakantan's *Valmiki's Women*, he turns his gaze towards Women from the Ramayana that are usually side-lined or coded as evil, and introduces the necessity to rethink about the construct 'identity negotiation' through feminine lens. It may be Neelakantan's view that women like Shabari, Surpanakha and Kaikeyi, who are usually side-lined in much of traditional retellings, are made to have voices and agency by portraying them. The low-caste 'gimmer' Shabari is usually lampooned in the Ramayana and yet she manifests traits of devotion and despair. Even so, in Neelakantan's version of events Shabari remains a metaphor for commitment and endurance. Shabari's unshakable belief in Lord Rama, despite the social constructs that suppress her freedom to move beyond the caste-gender boundaries. Her story illustrates that women on the outside are able to construct the terms of their identity through a dynamic of deterritorialization and recapture of power. Also, Surpanakha who has been demonified for her fetishistic desire towards Rama, is depicted here with some shades of human by the author. He reinterpreted her fetishistic desires as a natural, albeit intense, yearning for love and respect.

The transformation of Surpanakha into a cruel being is shown as an effect from exile and denial. Even after reading Neelakantan's retelling of the story, Surpanakha is first and foremost still the woman who grows up within patriarchal society and so by extension the physical manifestations of male power influences this social marginalization which builds into what is seen as her identity. The authors version of Surpanakha, in shades of

gray, rejects the simplistic demonization of her character. By highlighting her emotional vulnerabilities and the systemic factors that lead to her transformation, the narrative offers a critique of traditional portrayals of women in mythology.

Neelakantan's works delve deeply into the lives of traditionally marginalized figures from the epics, presenting them as complex, multifaceted characters whose identities are not merely products of fate but are actively negotiated in the face of power structures and cultural constraints. His retellings provide insight into how these mainstream characters resist subjugation by continuously renegotiating their identities, not only through personal transformation but also through political agency. Through these narratives, Neelakantan reimagines their lives as a constant process of self-definition in response to the pressures of societal norms and the overarching forces of power that seek to control them.

Ravana, typically seen as the quintessential villain in the Ramayana, is reimagined in *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* as a complex figure struggling with his identity. Ravana's self-perception is deeply tied to his status as a king, a ruler who has long resisted the dehumanizing forces of the gods and the oppressive hierarchical structures they represent. In Neelakantan's retelling, Ravana is shown to be constantly negotiating his identity between his divine heritage, his role as the ruler of Lanka, and his moral complexities. His rebellion against the Gods is not just an act of defiance but a negotiation of power where he rejects the subjugation of his people to divine authority and instead seeks to establish a kingdom based on his own rules, which places him at odds with the dominant, divinely ordained forces. The process of negotiation here is critical where Ravana does not simply reject his heritage, but redefines it, attempting to reconcile his conflicting roles. His identity as a king, a son of Vishrava, and a

devotee of Shiva creates a complex fabric of self-identity, woven from resistance, reverence, and political ambition. This evolution of his character shows how subaltern figures, like Ravana, engage in a process of identity construction that is dynamic, influenced by forces both within and outside themselves.

In *Valmiki's Women*, Shabari, another marginalized figure from the Ramayana is reimagined, as a character who negotiates her identity through her steadfast resilience in the face of societal rejection. Traditionally, Shabari is a symbol of humility and devotion, waiting to serve Lord Rama despite being mocked for her status as a lowly woman of the forest. Neelakantan's Shabari, however, is more than a passive figure of devotion. Her interactions with the world around her are framed as acts of resistance to the cultural norms that exclude her from the sacred and the divine. Through her rejection of caste-based barriers and her devotion to the idea of dharma on her own terms, her identity shifts from that of a marginalized woman to a central figure in the narrative of redemption and cultural reclamation. Her life is a process of reclaiming her identity by redefining what it means to be 'pure' or 'worthy' in a caste-bound society. Her actions demonstrate how identities of marginalized characters evolve through resistance to societal norms. By offering Rama the fruits she has tasted, Shabari is not merely submitting herself to divine will, but asserting her own agency and sense of worth. The act of sharing the fruits is not just an expression of devotion; it is a subversion of the hierarchical norms that seek to dehumanize her. Among many of the iconic characters from Ramayana, Sugreeva has a similar yet equally deep problem on identity negotiation.

*Vanara: The Legend of Baali*, Neelakantan twists Sugreeva not as an accessory of sorts to Rama, but a character who is forging its identity in relation to Rama, his brother Baali and other

characters in this epic. Having a ruler of Vanaras and his tangle with power will try Sugreeva to the max and be perfect material for identity nirvana discussion. Sugreeva and his exile-return to power are of central significance in the development of his identity. Destination-wise, Sugreeva identity in exile and Baali's subjugation affirms allegiance to Rama as he starts processing a branding of a new identity that suits political machinations and survival on a personal level. Yet there are tensions to Sugreeva's identity change his arrival as the king, the need for Rama to help him get back to his throne distorts agency and demands continual fine tuning. Loyalty, fear, political ambition and negotiation, as just a psychological duel is not only the internal fight but instead formed through the external power relational and alliances which he builds with brings to light the intersection between personal identity and political agency.

Regaining the marginalised identities and Redemption are one of the major underlyings that Neelakantan focuses on in his works. Many iconic characters like Baali, Sugreeva and the women in *Valmiki's Women* become redefined creatures where their previous victimised identity obtained a strength of its own. King of the vanaras, Baali illustrates the subtle symbolism of redemption. Usually traditionally, Baali is color-by-numbers very dark but good-intentioned and the opposite is true for purple Sugreeva who is an abused brother. In Neelakantan's *Vanara* though, the character of Baali gets a richer moulding as he grows into person every inch by battling the beaten path laid before him. His sense of being betrayed by Rama, in particular leads him towards his final betrayal, where as well as seeking retribution he regains his honor and agency and thereby recasts himself from merely tragic hero into icon of resistance against divine dominion.

*Valmiki's Women* follow the same arc of redemption for the women, where their status

changes from victims to strong empowered figures of strength. In particular, Sita is pierced and bestowed with outside action more than in hetero-typical Ramayana narratives. Sitaramaakaradesikan sees the exile of Sita and Rama's time inside Lanka moments where she discovers herself, recovers this identity. Sita does not take her suffering passively, rather it is a journey to retrieve her strength and to discover her purpose and more importantly a woman, wife, mother. In the same vein, other female characters in the narrative, be it Shabari, Kaikeyi or others, move through their reclamation too these forms of being suppressed in patriarchal Gandharva Vyavahara.

Cultural trauma the collective memory of a group, formed from historical events of collective suffering, violence or oppression Neelakantan delves into what it means for cultural trauma to be inherited and that of character identity formation. The cultural trauma of Ravana are inseparably linked to his ruler identity over Lanka and his opposition against the divine order. The life of Ravana is a life of trauma: from being rejected by gods all his life or the sufferings he has to bear from his twisted family history. This trauma is intergenerational and it forms both Ravana, the ruler and victim of divine vengeance. Such is the cultural trauma that Dharma has been cast into a war with Rama for his very identity and legacy. Sugreeva, similarly is molded by his brother's treachery and consequent loss of kingdom as well. The background to his eventual political success is his exile and the fall from monarchy. It is the traumatic displacement, grief and betrayal that form a large part of Sugreeva's self-identification and in turn impact his choices as well as the dynamics he creates within other characters. Rama helps him regain his kingdom once again but his past trauma still determines the actions of the traumatized person.

Anand Neelakantan's narratives emerge as modern epics of reclamation. They challenge the

traditional boundaries drawn by culture and hierarchy, exposing that identity is not a fixed inheritance but a dynamic process shaped by resistance, resilience, and redefinition. Ravana, Surpanakha, Baali and Sugreeva through their struggles, the author dismantles the binaries of hero and villain, good and evil, creating a space for readers to explore the gray areas of human existence. Ravana is projected as a king fighting for social justice and the dignity of his people. Surpanakha dismissed or demonized in patriarchal narratives, symbolizing resistance against societal exclusion. Baali's journey, marked by the duality of his invincibility, illustrates the constant negotiation of identity in the face of shifting alliances and political dynamics. These characters resonate beyond their mythological contexts, reflecting timeless struggles for justice, agency, and humanity. Neelakantan's works invite readers to rethink inherited narratives, acknowledging the voices and perspectives that history has often silenced. Their battles both internal and external echo in contemporary struggles for equality and identity, reminds us that the fight to rise above imposed roles and claim one's place in history is as relevant today as it was in the past. Their stories, full of triumphs and tragedies, serve as mirrors to common lives, urging to navigate the complexities of power, identity, and morality with courage and introspection.

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# LANGUAGE AND MIGRATION IN THE WORKS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE

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## Abstract

*Bharati Mukherjee's novels and short stories vividly portray the complexities of migration, focusing on the linguistic and cultural struggles of immigrants. Language, as both a barrier and a bridge, plays a pivotal role in her narratives, shaping the identity and integration of her characters in foreign lands. This paper examines how Mukherjee explores language as a tool for self-reinvention, a marker of cultural dislocation, and a means of negotiating belonging in her works, including *Jasmine*, *The Tiger's Daughter*, and *Desirable Daughters*. By analyzing her characters' linguistic challenges and adaptations, this study reveals how language intertwines with migration to define the immigrant experience.*

**Keywords:** *bharati mukherjee, migration, language, cultural identity, belonging, linguistic adaptation.*

## Methods and Materials

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis of Bharati Mukherjee's selected works, focusing on:

### Primary Texts

*Jasmine* (1989)

*The Tiger's Daughter* (1971)

*Desirable Daughters* (2002)

### Secondary Sources

Critical essays and reviews on Mukherjee's work.

Theoretical frameworks on migration and language, including Edward Said's concept of exile and Homi Bhabha's hybridity.

### Analytical Approach:

Examining characters' linguistic struggles and their impact on identity.

Analyzing the role of bilingualism and code-switching in negotiating cultural belonging.

## Findings and Results

### Language as a Barrier

Mukherjee's characters often face linguistic alienation in their host countries. For instance,

Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* struggles with her hybrid identity, feeling disconnected from both her native Bengali and American English. Similarly, Jasmine in *Jasmine* confronts linguistic and cultural barriers as she navigates life in America.

### Language as a Tool for Reinvention

Mukherjee portrays language as a means of self-reinvention. Jasmine adopts new names and identities, symbolizing her linguistic and cultural adaptability. Her ability to learn and use English allows her to integrate into American society while redefining her identity.

### Negotiating Belonging through Bilingualism

In *Desirable Daughters*, the sisters' use of English and Bengali reflects their attempts to balance their Indian heritage with their American lives. Bilingualism becomes a means of negotiating belonging, allowing them to connect with both cultures while maintaining a sense of individuality.



### Interpretation and Discussion

Mukherjee's works highlight the transformative power of language in the immigrant experience. Her characters' linguistic struggles symbolize their broader challenges in adapting to new cultural contexts. Language serves as both a barrier and a bridge, reflecting the dualities of migration: loss and gain, alienation and belonging.

Mukherjee's portrayal of bilingualism and code-switching underscores the fluid nature of cultural identity. Her characters use language to navigate their hybrid realities, creating spaces where they can belong to multiple worlds. This aligns with Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which emphasizes the creation of new cultural identities in the interstitial spaces of migration.

Furthermore, Mukherjee's exploration of linguistic dislocation reveals the emotional and psychological toll of migration. Her characters' struggles with language mirror their inner conflicts, highlighting the inseparability of language, identity, and belonging.

### Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee's works offer profound insights into the role of language in migration. Through her characters' linguistic journeys, she illustrates how language shapes the immigrant

experience, influencing identity, integration, and belonging. Mukherjee's exploration of bilingualism and linguistic adaptation reflects the complexities of cultural hybridity in a globalized world. Her narratives underscore the resilience of immigrants as they navigate the challenges of language and migration, ultimately forging new identities in their adopted homelands.

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## WOMEN BEYOND STEREOTYPES: CONTRASTING ANUPAMA AND SHRIMATI IN SUDHA MURTY'S NOVELS

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### Abstract

*Sudha Murty, a celebrated Indian author, has long been a champion of presenting nuanced female characters who defy societal expectations while navigating the complexities of Indian traditions. Among her many memorable protagonists, Anupama from Mahashweta and Shrimati from House of Cards stand out as compelling contrasts in their journeys of self-discovery and empowerment. Both women challenge stereotypes in distinct ways, offering readers a spectrum of perspectives on resilience, individuality, and the evolving roles of women in society. She skillfully delves into the depths of human existence, exhibiting profound empathy and understanding of the struggles faced by women who suppress their emotions and endure in silence. Mahasweta throws light on the social stigma of Leukoderma. People with these skin conditions are still subjected to discrimination and mistreatment because of a lack of knowledge and awareness. Such discriminative thinking led to Anupama's life being destroyed. Shrimati's journey is one of transformation. From being a devoted wife who sacrifices her desires, she evolves into an independent individual who learns to prioritize her self-worth and happiness.*

**Keywords:** *resilience, self identity, stereotypes, structural oppression, individual agency*

### Introduction

Women beyond stereotypes" is a powerful concept that challenges and expands the traditional, often limiting roles and representations of women in society. It encourages a deeper understanding of the diversity, complexity, and individuality of women's experiences, abilities, and contributions. Women are often confined to stereotypical roles such as caregivers, homemakers, or assistants. Moving beyond stereotypes means: Recognizing women as leaders, innovators, and decision-makers. Supporting women's entry into male-dominated fields like science, technology,

engineering, and politics. Encouraging men to share roles traditionally considered feminine, such as caregiving.

Women come from different cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Moving beyond stereotypes means: Embracing varied body types, abilities, and ages in media and representation. Highlighting women's contributions across different communities, including indigenous, rural, and marginalized groups. Amplifying voices that have been historically silenced or underrepresented. No two women are the same, and stereotypes often fail to capture this nuance. Moving beyond stereotypes includes Promoting individual

stories, achievements, and passions. Acknowledging that women have diverse aspirations, from pursuing careers to focusing on family or both. Resisting societal pressure for women to conform to a particular mold of success or behaviour.

Society often places undue expectations on women to "have it all" or fit into predefined roles. Moving beyond stereotypes requires redefining success to include personal fulfilment, regardless of societal expectations. Encouraging open discussions about gender equality and bias in families, workplaces, and communities. Understanding how race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and other factors intersect with gender allows for a more inclusive approach to addressing stereotypes. By moving beyond stereotypes, society can empower women to live authentically and thrive in all spheres of life. How we choose to educate, represent, and engage with women's diverse experiences can create a more equitable and inclusive world.

### Inner Strength

Anupama, the protagonist of *Mahashweta*, is a beautiful, intelligent, and accomplished young woman whose life takes a dramatic turn when she is diagnosed with leukoderma, a skin condition that becomes a source of social stigma. Her once-idyllic world shatters as her husband and family abandon her, unable to see beyond her condition.

Anupama's journey is one of quiet yet unyielding defiance. Instead of succumbing to despair, she rebuilds her life, embracing her independence and finding solace in her work and self-respect. Through Anupama, Murty critiques the superficial standards of beauty that society imposes on women. Anupama's strength lies in her ability to reclaim her dignity and find purpose, transcending the labels that others attempt to impose upon her. Her story underscores a key theme: women are not defined

by their circumstances but by their ability to rise above them. Anupama breaks free from the victim narrative, emerging as a role model for self-reliance and inner strength.

### Navigating Complex Choices

In contrast, Shrimati, the central character of *House of Cards*, represents the dilemmas faced by women in more privileged yet equally challenging circumstances. A small-town girl who marries into a prosperous family, Shrimati initially dedicates herself to supporting her husband, Sanjay, in his career. Over time, however, she becomes disillusioned by the compromises and moral ambiguities that define her husband's professional success. Shrimati's struggle is more internal and complex. She embodies the tension between traditional expectations of loyalty and the modern desire for authenticity. Unlike Anupama, Shrimati's challenges are not rooted in societal rejection but in her own evolving sense of self. Her eventual decision to leave her comfortable yet unsatisfying life demonstrates courage and self-respect, even if it means stepping into uncertainty.

Shrimati's narrative speaks to a different stereotype such as the self-sacrificing wife who exists solely for her family's well-being. Murty challenges this archetype by showing that even women in ostensibly secure roles may feel stifled and unfulfilled. Shrimati's courage to prioritize her own values over societal approval illustrates the importance of individuality and moral integrity.

### Contrasting Yet Complementary

While Anupama and Shrimati's stories differ in context and challenges, they share an underlying message: women are not monolithic. They are multifaceted individuals capable of redefining their lives despite the constraints of societal norms. Anupama's journey is one of external defiance against social ostracization, while

Shrimati's is an internal battle to reconcile her values with her life choices. Together, they highlight the diverse ways in which women can resist stereotypes through quiet resilience or assertive action.

### **Sudha Murty's Feminist Lens**

Sudha Murty's portrayal of these characters reflects her deep understanding of the cultural and social landscapes of India. Without resorting to overt polemics, Murty weaves feminist themes into her narratives, emphasizing that empowerment does not always manifest as rebellion; sometimes, it is found in quiet perseverance or the courage to make hard choices. Anupama and Shrimati are powerful examples of women who transcend societal stereotypes in their unique ways. Through their stories, Sudha Murty invites readers to reflect on the many dimensions of womanhood and the importance of self-worth. In a world that often seeks to confine women to predefined roles, Anupama and Shrimati remind us of the strength, complexity, and individuality that define the essence of women beyond stereotypes.

Sudha Murty's narratives, while rooted in the Indian sociocultural milieu, resonate universally through their exploration of gender roles and women's struggles for identity. By analysing Anupama from *Mahashweta* and Shrimati from *House of Cards* through the prism of feminist theories, their journeys illuminate broader feminist themes like agency, intersectionality, and resistance to patriarchal norms.

### **Anupama: A Case of Structural Oppression and Individual Agency**

Anupama's story is emblematic of Simone de Beauvoir's assertion in *The Second Sex* that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Her initial life mirrors the idealized feminine archetype: beauty, talent, and marital bliss.

However, her diagnosis of leukoderma reveals the fragile and conditional acceptance women often face in patriarchal societies, where their worth is tied to their physical appearance and ability to conform to societal expectations.

### **Structural Oppression**

From a feminist structuralist perspective, Anupama's plight highlights systemic oppression. Her abandonment by her husband and ostracization by society reflect entrenched biases against women who deviate from established norms of perfection. Her struggle is not just personal but emblematic of the larger marginalization faced by women who fail to meet patriarchal standards of desirability.

### **Individual Agency**

Despite these societal constraints, Anupama embodies the concept of agency central to feminist theory. Her decision to leave her hometown, pursue a career in teaching, and reclaim her autonomy aligns with Judith Butler's notion of performativity. Anupama refuses to let her socially constructed role as a victim define her identity. She reclaims her subjectivity, challenging the normative gaze that seeks to dehumanize her.

### **Critique of the Male Gaze**

Anupama's rejection of societal pity and her estranged husband's belated attempts at reconciliation also challenge Laura Mulvey's concept of the "male gaze." Her refusal to return to her marriage despite societal pressure signifies her liberation from being an object of validation or redemption for male characters.

### **Shrimati: The personal as Political**

Shrimati's journey in *House of Cards* can be examined through the lens of second-wave feminism, which emphasizes the intersection of personal and political realms. While her challenges appear more internal, they echo

broader themes of patriarchal dominance in marital and professional spaces. Shrimati begins her life as the archetypal supportive wife, embodying the “angel in the house” trope critiqued by Virginia Woolf. However, as her husband’s moral compromises grow and her emotional needs remain unfulfilled, Shrimati begins questioning the traditional roles of wife and homemaker. Her eventual departure signifies her rejection of the societal expectation that women must sacrifice their desires for familial stability.

### **Emotional Labor and Gender Roles**

Feminist theorist Arlie Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour provides a framework for understanding Shrimati’s frustrations. Her silent, unpaid emotional contributions to her husband’s career are neither acknowledged nor reciprocated. By choosing to prioritize her sense of self over her marital obligations, Shrimati subverts the stereotype of the endlessly self-sacrificing woman. Shrimati’s departure is not merely a physical act but a moral one. It reflects Carol Gilligan’s theory of moral development, which posits that women often navigate ethical dilemmas through relational and care-based reasoning. Shrimati’s choice is deeply relational, it is not driven by self-centeredness but by a recognition that her integrity and happiness cannot thrive in a morally compromised partnership.

### **Intersectionality and Cultural Context**

While both Anupama and Shrimati challenge stereotypes, their experiences underscore the importance of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality. Anupama’s struggles are deeply influenced by her position as a woman from a middle-class, conservative Indian family, where societal perceptions of physical imperfections are magnified. Shrimati’s challenges, on the other hand, highlight the contradictions faced by women in upwardly mobile, urban environments where the promise

of progress often masks entrenched patriarchal expectations. Anupama’s social rejection is compounded by her economic vulnerability. Without financial independence, she faces greater social ostracization. Shrimati, by contrast, has the privilege of financial stability, but her agency is still curtailed by patriarchal expectations that tether her identity to her husband’s success.

Anupama’s story unfolds in a small-town setting, where societal judgment is more overt and oppressive. Shrimati’s struggles in an urban, cosmopolitan backdrop reveal a subtler, insidious form of patriarchy that uses progress and privilege to perpetuate traditional gender roles.

### **Themes of Resistance and Reclamation:**

Through both characters, Sudha Murty demonstrates that resistance to stereotypes can manifest in diverse ways. Anupama’s quiet perseverance and Shrimati’s decisive departure challenge the binary narrative of submission versus rebellion, offering a broader understanding of feminist resistance. Anupama redefines success not through societal validation but through self-fulfilment. Her ability to rebuild her life on her terms aligns with bell hooks’ call for women to “speak in their own voice” rather than through imposed narratives. Shrimati’s decision to leave her marriage reflects the courage to embrace uncertainty, a theme often celebrated in feminist theory as a radical act of self-love and self-respect. Her journey emphasizes that freedom lies in the ability to make choices that honour one’s values and integrity.

### **Conclusion**

Sudha Murty’s portrayal of Anupama and Shrimati highlights the diversity of women’s experiences and the importance of breaking free from monolithic stereotypes. Anupama’s resilience and Shrimati’s quest for authenticity reflect two sides of the same feminist coinwomen reclaiming their agency in a

patriarchal world. By situating their stories within broader feminist frameworks, we see that their struggles and triumphs are not just personal victories but profound critiques of the societal structures that seek to confine women. In celebrating their individuality, Murty invites readers to envision a world where women are valued not for how they conform but for how they choose to live authentically. Sudha Murty often focuses on ordinary women who achieve extraordinary things. Her stories feature women from rural and middle-class backgrounds overcoming barriers, such as patriarchy, poverty, and lack of opportunities, to create meaningful lives for themselves. Murty's narratives explore various social and cultural dimensions of women's lives, including caste, class, and rural-urban divides. Her stories provide a nuanced understanding of how these factors intersect with gender to shape women's experiences and opportunities. Through her novels, Sudha Murty advocates for women's agency, self-discovery, and empowerment. Her works inspire readers to rethink traditional roles and challenge the stereotypes that confine women to predefined societal expectations. By blending realism with optimism, she portrays a hopeful vision of a world where women can freely pursue their dreams and assert their identities.

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# WORLD LITERATURE IN COMPARATIVE FOCUS: TAGORE AND CHEKHOV'S CONTRIBUTION TO POSTCOLONIAL AND MODERN THOUGHT

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the literary contributions of Rabindranath Tagore and Anton Chekhov in shaping postcolonial and modern thought through their short stories. By drawing on the socio-political and cultural backdrops of colonial India and pre-revolutionary Russia, the study highlights their shared engagement with universal themes such as identity, cultural dissonance, existential inquiry, and social inequalities. Tagore's works, deeply rooted in the postcolonial Indian milieu, critique imperialism, caste dynamics, and the challenges of modernization. Chekhov's stories, meanwhile, explore existential alienation, class disparities, and the complexities of human relationships in a society on the brink of change. Both authors employ narrative styles that transcend local contexts, making their works resonant across cultures and time. Through textual analysis and comparative methods, the paper reveals how these authors navigate the intersections of the personal and political, reflecting on human resilience in the face of societal upheavals. The discussion situates their works within the broader discourse of world literature, emphasizing their timeless relevance and their ability to foster cross-cultural empathy.*

**Keywords:** world literature, tagore, chekhov, postcolonial thought, modernism, comparative literature

## Introduction

World literature is a dynamic field that transcends national boundaries to explore universal human experiences. Rabindranath Tagore and Anton Chekhov, two iconic figures from vastly different cultural and historical contexts, have made significant contributions to this domain. Tagore, a product of colonial India, and Chekhov, writing in a Russia on the cusp of revolution, both grappled with the socio-political realities of their times while addressing timeless existential questions.

Tagore's narratives often reflect the tensions between tradition and modernity, the individual and the collective, and colonial oppression and cultural resilience. His stories, such as *The*

*Postmaster* and *Kabuliwala*, encapsulate the struggles of identity, belonging, and empathy. Similarly, Chekhov's minimalist storytelling in works like *The Lady with the Dog* and *Ward No. 6* delves into the alienation and moral dilemmas of individuals caught in a rapidly changing world.

This paper explores the intersection of their works within the frameworks of postcolonial theory and modernism, focusing on their relevance to world literature. By comparing their thematic concerns, narrative techniques, and cultural resonances, the study aims to underscore their universal appeal and enduring significance.

## Material & Methods

### 1. Textual Analysis

The study focuses on selected short stories by Tagore (*The Postmaster*, *Kabuliwala*, *The Hungry Stones*) and Chekhov (*The Lady with the Dog*, *Ward No. 6*, *The Bet*). These stories were analyzed for thematic elements, narrative structure, and cultural context.

### 2. Theoretical Frameworks

- **Postcolonial Theory:** Used to explore Tagore's critique of imperialism and cultural hybridity.
- **Modernism:** Applied to Chekhov's exploration of existential despair and social stagnation.
- **Structuralism:** Employed to identify underlying patterns and binaries in their narratives.

### 3. Comparative Approach

A comparative lens was adopted to identify similarities and divergences in how Tagore and Chekhov address universal human concerns, enabling a cross-cultural dialogue within world literature.

## Findings & Results

### 1. Themes of Identity and Cultural Dissonance

Tagore's *Kabuliwala* portrays the intersection of cultural identity and human empathy. The Afghan merchant, separated from his homeland, forms a bond with a Bengali child, highlighting shared humanity despite cultural divides. In contrast, Chekhov's *The Lady with the Dog* examines personal alienation within the confines of societal expectations, portraying love as both liberating and constraining.

### 2. Critique of Social Structures

Tagore critiques rigid social hierarchies and colonial exploitation. In *The Hungry Stones*, the haunting memories of the past serve as an

allegory for the lingering effects of colonialism. Chekhov's *Ward No. 6* similarly critiques institutional apathy and the dehumanization of individuals within bureaucratic systems.

### 3. Narrative Techniques

Tagore's lyrical and often symbolic storytelling contrasts with Chekhov's understated and objective prose. Both styles, however, evoke deep emotional resonance, emphasizing universal human experiences such as love, loss, and resilience.

### 4. Postcolonial and Modernist Reflections

Tagore's works encapsulate the struggles of a colonized nation navigating modernity, while Chekhov's narratives reflect the existential dilemmas of individuals in a society grappling with rapid modernization. Together, their stories underscore the universality of human struggles across temporal and spatial boundaries.

## Interpretation & Discussion

Tagore and Chekhov's narratives, though rooted in distinct cultural and historical contexts, converge in their exploration of universal human concerns.

### Postcolonial Resonances in Tagore

Tagore's stories highlight the complexities of colonial oppression and cultural hybridity. His protagonists often navigate the tension between Western modernity and Indian tradition, as seen in *The Postmaster*, where the titular character's rejection of rural Bengal mirrors colonial detachment. Tagore's use of symbolism and allegory further amplifies his critique of imperial power structures.

### Modernist Elements in Chekhov

Chekhov's minimalist prose embodies the modernist ethos of fragmentation and existential inquiry. His characters, such as Dmitri in *The Lady with the Dog*, grapple with the futility of



societal conventions and the search for authentic connections. Chekhov's focus on the mundane aspects of life underscores the existential crises faced by individuals in a rapidly industrializing society.

### **World Literature as a Unifying Framework**

The comparative analysis of Tagore and Chekhov situates their works within the broader discourse of world literature. Their shared emphasis on empathy, resilience, and cultural critique transcends local contexts, fostering a global dialogue on human struggles and aspirations.

### **Contemporary Relevance**

In an era of increasing cultural and political polarization, the works of Tagore and Chekhov offer valuable insights into the importance of cross-cultural understanding and the need to address systemic inequalities. Their storytelling serves as a reminder of the shared essence of human experiences, inspiring readers to embrace empathy and resilience.

### **Conclusion**

Rabindranath Tagore and Anton Chekhov's contributions to world literature extend far beyond their immediate cultural and historical

contexts. Through their exploration of identity, cultural dissonance, and existential struggles, they have enriched postcolonial and modernist thought, positioning themselves as pioneers of cross-cultural dialogue. Their works, characterized by profound empathy and incisive critique, continue to resonate with contemporary audiences, offering timeless reflections on human resilience and creativity. This comparative study underscores the enduring relevance of their storytelling, situating them as essential voices in world literature and advocates for universal human dignity.

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# ENCHANTED CORRESPONDENCE: RE-ENVISIONING THE EPISTOLARY TRADITION IN REBECCA ROSS'S *LETTERS OF ENCHANTMENT*

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## Abstract

*An epistolary novel consists of letters that unfold the plot. This research article explores the significant role of writing letters in sustaining the traditional boundaries in the modern world by analysing the Letters of Enchantment series written by Rebecca Ross. It serves as a magical act that transforms individuals in various ways. Epistolary forms are long appreciated for their capacity to convey intimacy, immediacy and fragmented narratives, which are enhanced in Ross's fantasy world through enchanted letters that connect different realms and realities. The study investigates how these magical letters act as bridges of connection, revealing vulnerability, nurturing relationships and propelling the narrative forward. A key focus of the analysis is the relationship between the physical aspects of writing—such as typewriters, ink, and paper and the metaphysical realms they access, symbolizing the strength of human connection in times of chaos. By blending the fantastical with the epistolary, Ross revitalizes this literary form to highlight the power of the written words in preserving identity, memory and hope in imaginative storytelling.*

**Keywords:** *typewriter, letters, love, resilience, memory, hope*

## Introduction

Rebecca Ross is a contemporary author celebrated for her engaging storytelling, detailed world-building and deep exploration of themes like love, resilience and the significance of words. Her *Letters of Enchantment* series is particularly notable for its innovative use of epistolary forms, where magical letters act as narrative anchors, connecting the protagonists and different realms. Iris Winnow and Roman Kitt are the protagonists of ages eighteen and nineteen. They are rivals who compete for the columnist position in the famous magazine Oath Gazette in the imaginary world of Ross. As journalists, they type all kinds of news existing in their society. In the beginning, Iris types a letter to search for her brother Forest, a war correspondent in the city, of Oath. The world is

divided into “Skywards” (DR 58) and “Underlings” (DR 58) where divine spirits live in the former world with magical powers and human beings live in the latter world with a magical connection. Iris's letters when typed and placed in her wardrobe automatically enters the wardrobe of Roman. Iris finds it weird when her typed letters vanish soon after being placed in her wardrobe. Ross creates an ancient means of communication in the modern world by blending fantasy and magic.

This article examines Ross's incorporation of ancient letter-writing concepts in her fantasy world. She blends tangible with the metaphysical, her enchanted letters connect Iris and Roman, building a strong relationship and making them soulmates. Words act as a source to strengthen them at the tough times of their

life. Brendan McCaughey quotes in his article, “Words are powerful. Spoken, written, or simply the words we use in our own minds- all words have potential power” (McCaughey). This research investigates how the epistolary forms are narrative tools in Ross’s *Letters of Enchantment* series and how a sense of belonging develops further between Iris and Roman. The article concludes that the epistolary traditions merged with magic portray the closeness of written communication in the novels. Her enchanted letters function as a narrative device that emphasizes the transformative power of the written word.

### Materials and Methodology

This article takes a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to explore how epistolary forms are reimagined in Rebecca Ross’s *Letters of Enchantment* series. Ross’s novels *Divine Rivals* and *Ruthless Vows* illustrate how epistolary forms when woven into fantasy, can connect realms, nurture relationships and uphold the resilience of human emotion in extraordinary situations. This research paper utilizes close reading to analyse key passages, highlighting Ross’s use of letters and magical elements, such as enchanted typewriters, to express themes of connection, intimacy and resilience. It deals with traditional aspects of letters in connecting long-distanced people at times of chaos and transforms them with clarity. Ping Zhou in his article comments that “Letters from different characters can provide multiple perspectives without the obtrusiveness of an omniscient narrator” (Zhou 288) within a fantastical setting. The significance of letter writing and its role in connecting characters is analysed through various dimensions.

### Findings and Results

This research finds that letter writing to the person we love transforms them and strengthens them during complex situations. Ross’s *Divine*

*Rivals* and *Ruthless Vows* prove these findings when Iris and Roman share their emotional turmoil and express their perspectives through the magical realism of using a magical typewriter in their real life. The typewriter is a magical medium that connects them beyond realities. The main aspect of this series is that the protagonists use typewriters and write letters which is a significant channel for interdimensional connection enriching the value of emotions. As the story begins, Roman finds letters in his wardrobe unaware of how the empty place is filled with letters from someone who constantly writes. He reads the letters and finds them more interesting and “tactic” (DR 40) because they are the letters written by Iris, his competitor. He continues reading because “he was deeply moved by her writing and the memories she shared” (DR 40). The enchanted typewriters in the story represent the meeting point of the real and the fantastical, where writing becomes a transformative act that links them despite the obstacles and different worlds.

The study further reveals how the epistolary form in Ross’s writing enhances reader engagement, allowing fragmented narratives to reflect the broken realities of Iris and Roman during their separation encouraging readers to piece together their experiences. As the story evolves, divine spirits from the skywards are involved in war where human beings are the war correspondents who fight for the gods. The protagonists love each other with true heartsthroughout their journey. Meanwhile, Iris and Roman are separated due to the terrible war sequence between the “Skywards” (DR 58) and the “Underlings” (DR 58). After this incident of war, Iris is unable to find Roman as he goes missing immediately after the huge bomb blast and she longs for him. She expresses “It’s only been five days since you last wrote, and yet it feels like five weeks for me. . . I miss them, I miss you and your words” (DR 183). Her love for Roman is abundant as she feels “She

couldn't bear to live in a world without him" (DR 220).

These findings indicate the powerful connection of words through personal communication that transforms the characters during their complex situations. This is evident in Roman's words, "How one little thing like typing a letter can open a door you never saw. A transcendent connection. A divine threshold" (DR 260). The series illustrates how letters function as vessels for intimacy, memory and resilience, connecting the characters and the world.

The tangible aspects of writing with fantastical elements act as a tool for motivation. When Iris and Roman stay together, she feels happy yet she says "I don't deserve to be this happy" (DR 267), this shows how female children try to avoid being happy even when happiness reaches them. Roman's reply motivates her to undergo all sorts of emotions despite situations. He comforts her by saying, "It's not a crime to feel joy, even when things seem hopeless" (DR 267). This shows how true love can be expressed through words, especially by writing letters. This epistolary form serves as the fundamental tool for the human desire for connection, even in extraordinary situations symbolising hope, emotional depth and the power of words to navigate and mend fractured realities.

This study emphasises how the quality of letters in this series captivates the readers and creates an emotional connection with the characters in the novel. Ross portrays the epistolary tradition and its boundaries in fantasy literature. It showcases how words transcend their physical form to embody a timeless action and the transformation in their journey.

### Interpretation

This research paper interprets the *Letters of Enchantment* series in which letters and words play a major role in narration, emotional

connection and relationship. The evolution of letters helps people rely on the personal exchange of feelings to the near and dear ones which is a magical and powerful tool that connects different realms in the fantasy world. Ross's enchanted typewriters help Iris and Roman to share their feelings of anxiety, happiness, longing and love which creates a new perspective of metaphysical exploration. Though they stay together or separated at a distance, they can feel the intimacy of their counterparts through the letters which reshape the realities in their broken world. Words of Roman play a major role in comforting and consoling Iris.

Love is the only ray of hope that maintains the existence of human beings. It is a commitment that the soulmates offer each other to lead a happy and satisfied life. Roman develops feelings of love towards Iris with the help of letters and sweet words connecting the pure heart and soul. His vows at their marriage create awe-struck moments and the feel of true love creates a peaceful and secure mind. He confesses to Iris, "I pray that my days will be long at your side. Let me fill and satisfy every longing in your soul... Even then, may I find your soul still sworn to mine" (DR 289). These statements show how love and emotions are kindled through the powerful technique of writing letters. Ross offers a new perspective that words and letters express intimacy and create a long-lasting memory. It provides a purpose to lead a life by reshaping the realities of the fragmented world through powerful words. Through this interpretation, this paper shows how humans possess resilience in their relationships when they survive at vast distances.

In the *Letters of Enchantment* series, these elements are expanded to include magical realism, enabling letters to transcend time and space. Letter writing "has the power to heal us and to help us grow" (Cangialosi) by tackling difficult situations. The recontextualization

mirrors a broader narrative of survival and hope, as characters utilize letter writing to combat isolation, navigate emotional challenges and forge connections that defy physical limitations. Ross's characters show how writing still possesses a way to connect our soulmates in the fast-moving world which helps them to communicate their mind at different worlds.

### Discussion

Rebecca Ross's *Letters of Enchantment* aids in exploring the letter writing form of communication in human life. This type of communication when mixed with magical elements challenges the ancient role of conveying feelings through letters. Ross portrays letter writing as powerful communication as it merges the closeness and intimacy of personal letters of the characters in an interdimensional way. The enchanted typewriters symbolize this transformation which serves as a connecting tool between the real and mundane. This creative approach not only maintains the emotional and narrative roles of letters such as building relationships and preserving memories but also enhances them, allowing letters to function as both literal and metaphorical channels of desire, relationship and strength in chaotic and broken worlds.

This is evident when Iris says to Roman, "Keep writing. You will find the words you need to share. They are already within you, even in the shadows, hiding like jewels" (RV 414). Everything begins fresh when we express our feelings to the right person at the right time. Here, Iris and Roman write letters to an unknown receiver and later discover the hidden magical power in the typewriter which provides a new perspective that resonates with contemporary readers. Ross incorporates magical realism in her series which broadens these features, enabling letters to overcome their limitations beyond physical forms. She exhibits the emotional and existential struggle of the

characters in writing letters to survive amidst the chaos. It is a form of self-expression that emphasizes the significance of letter writing to connect the protagonists during their tough times.

### Conclusion

This research article clearly shows that Rebecca Ross's *Letters of Enchantment* series reimagines the epistolary form in ways that expand its long-established literary functions. By incorporating magical realism, Ross turns letters into a multidimensional narrative tool that transcends time, space and physical reality. The enchanted typewriters featured in the series, serving both symbolic and practical roles, elevate the act of writing into a transformative experience, allowing characters to build emotional connections across interdimensional divides. These letters act not only as means of communication but also as symbols of resilience, hope and the lasting power of the written word. In doing so, Ross maintains the affinity and likeness of traditional epistolary forms while adding new thematic layers that resonate with modern readers. This study also supports the idea that Ross broadens the scope of writing letters within a fantastical context. Her letters convey thoughts or feelings; they shape the narrative, propel the plot, and create a distinctive reading experience by merging tactile and mystical aspects. It highlights how Ross's approach enhances the emotional depth and narrative complexity in her series. To conclude, Rebecca Ross's *Letters of Enchantment* series demonstrates how the epistolary form can evolve to address the thematic and narrative demands of modern fantasy literature. Her creative use of magical elements transforms the traditional letter-writing experience.

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## SUBVERTING PATRIARCHY: EXPLORING URUVI'S VOICE IN KARNA'S WIFE: THE OUTCAST QUEEN BY KAVITA KANE

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### Abstract

*Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen reconfigures the Mahabharata's grand narrative by centering Uruvi, a largely overlooked figure in Indian mythology, to interrogate entrenched patriarchal structures and gendered silences within the epic tradition. This study delves into the nuanced articulation of Uruvi's voice as a subversive force against the hegemonic norms of a deeply hierarchical society. By foregrounding Uruvi's perspective, Kane not only reimagines the Mahabharata's moral and ethical dilemmas but also critiques the systemic marginalization of women and their lived experiences. Uruvi's characterization transcends the passive roles typically assigned to mythological heroines, presenting her as an active agent navigating the conflicting realms of love, loyalty, and societal expectations. Through a feminist lens, this paper examines how Uruvi challenges Karna's unwavering adherence to dharma and caste ideologies, thereby exposing the implicit complicity of heroic archetypes in perpetuating gender and social inequities. The novel's narrative structure and Uruvi's voice serve as a counter-discourse to the dominant patriarchal ethos, inviting a re-evaluation of mythological frameworks. By situating Kane's work within the larger context of feminist mythological retellings, this study underscores the transformative potential of reinterpreting canonical texts to amplify marginalized voices and reimagine gender dynamics in literary traditions.*

**Keywords:** *feminist retelling, patriarchy, caste, gender dynamics, narrative voice, agency, feminist literary criticism, Indian mythology, reinterpretation of epic traditions, cultural significance.*

The resurgence of feminist retellings in Indian literature reflects a growing commitment to reimagining canonical texts through the lens of gender equity, offering nuanced perspectives on deeply entrenched patriarchal traditions. Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* exemplifies this literary movement by placing Uruvi, a largely overlooked figure, at the center of a reconfigured Mahabharata narrative. Through Uruvi's first-person perspective, Kane interrogates the moral and social hierarchies of epic traditions, crafting a narrative that critiques the systemic silencing of women. As Uruvi

herself asserts, "Being a woman in a world of men is an unrelenting battle" (Kane 56), a sentiment that encapsulates her struggle to assert agency within a rigidly hierarchical society. The novel's emphasis on Uruvi's choices, such as her defiant marriage to Karna despite his lower caste and societal disapproval, reflects a deliberate subversion of traditional gender roles and norms. In doing so, Kane challenges the "inflexible certainties" of dharma and varnashrama, allowing Uruvi to embody a critique of both individual and systemic complicity in perpetuating patriarchal

oppression. This study situates *Karna's Wife* within the broader framework of feminist literary criticism, exploring how the text amplifies marginalized voices to foster a more inclusive reimagining of epic literature.

The portrayal of women in traditional Indian mythology often reflects their subordination within patriarchal structures, with their identities tethered to their roles as wives, mothers, or sacrificial figures. Sita's unwavering devotion in *The Ramayana* and Kunti's silent endurance in the *Mahabharata* epitomize the archetype of the dutiful woman, where personal agency is eclipsed by societal expectations. Feminist authors have sought to reclaim these silenced voices, offering alternative narratives that celebrate female autonomy and resilience. Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* exemplifies this reclamation by presenting Uruvi as an assertive, self-aware character who resists traditional constraints. Uruvi's declaration, "I refuse to be the shadow of my husband or the puppet of my father" (Kane 34), signifies her determination to define her identity beyond societal roles. Similarly, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* reimagines Draupadi as a complex individual navigating the tensions between duty and desire, encapsulating the feminist endeavour to humanize epic heroines (Divakaruni 15). These retellings challenge the canon by emphasizing the emotional and intellectual depth of female protagonists, positioning them as active participants in shaping their destinies.

Despite the relative prominence of Draupadi in the *Mahabharata*, her narrative agency remains constrained by the epic's male-centric focus. Draupadi's anger and humiliation during the dice game evoke sympathy but do not afford her meaningful control over the unfolding events. In contrast, Kane's Uruvi is portrayed as a proactive figure who questions societal norms and confronts Karna's adherence to caste hierarchies, remarking, "Your loyalty to

Duryodhana is noble, but at what cost to your own honour?" (Kane 145). By granting Uruvi a first-person voice, Kane expands the narrative scope, allowing readers to witness the *Mahabharata*'s events through a woman's lens. As Indian feminist scholar Uma Chakravarti argues, "Mythology has historically been wielded to reinforce the normative order, but its retellings can become tools of critique and transformation" (Chakravarti 42). Through Uruvi's perspective, Kane not only critiques patriarchal traditions but also reimagines the *Mahabharata* as a site of feminist resistance. This narrative shift aligns with the broader feminist literary movement to challenge androcentric storytelling, underscoring the transformative potential of retellings in amplifying marginalized voices.

Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* introduces Uruvi as a character who defies the societal expectations of women in her time, embodying individuality and resistance to patriarchal norms. Uruvi's decision to marry Karna, a man of lower caste, is a bold rejection of the rigid varnashrama system that dictates social order. Her assertion, "I chose Karna for the man he is, not the title he wears," (Kane 62) exemplifies her refusal to conform to the caste prejudices that pervade her royal lineage. Uruvi's individuality is further emphasized in her outspoken nature, as she challenges not only societal norms but also the personal beliefs of those around her. Scholar Uma Chakravarti highlights that "women in mythology often served as symbols of virtue or tools of compliance," but Uruvi's character disrupts this trope by actively questioning and resisting these roles (Chakravarti 84). This subversion situates Uruvi as a feminist figure who refuses to be silenced in a male-dominated epic.

Uruvi's relationship with Karna becomes a critical lens through which the novel examines the intersections of caste and patriarchy. Despite her love for Karna, Uruvi does not hesitate to



confront him on his unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana and the caste system. Her poignant critique, “Your silence is as complicit as the voices that degrade others” (Kane 137), reflects her dissatisfaction with Karna’s passive acceptance of societal norms. This dynamic unveils the tension between personal love and societal structures, as Uruvi grapples with Karna’s moral dilemmas and their implications for her own principles. Indian feminist author Sudhir Kakar asserts that “relationships in mythology often reflect the societal norms of the time, but retellings offer a space to interrogate these dynamics” (Kakar 53). Kane utilizes Uruvi’s voice to interrogate these dynamics, offering a complex portrayal of a woman who loves deeply but refuses to condone injustice.

A defining aspect of Uruvi’s characterization is her role in shaping the narrative, which transforms her from a passive observer into an active participant in the unfolding events. Uruvi’s defiance of traditional gender roles is most evident in her refusal to remain a silent bystander. She questions the actions of the powerful, including Karna and Duryodhana, with courage and clarity, stating, “If silence is the price of loyalty, then I will speak even louder” (Kane 209). This role as a vocal critic positions Uruvi as a counter-narrative to the submissive archetype of women in epics. Indian feminist scholar Vandana Shiva observes, “Women’s narratives in mythology serve as powerful tools for resistance when they challenge androcentric traditions” (Shiva 112). Uruvi’s ability to articulate her dissent and assert her agency ensures that her perspective does not remain confined to the margins of the epic tradition but instead becomes central to its reinterpretation.

The tension between love, loyalty, and conflict is a recurring theme in *Karna’s Wife*, as Uruvi navigates the demands of her heart and the expectations imposed by society. Her profound love for Karna does not blind her to his

flaws, as she repeatedly questions his choices, particularly his allegiance to Duryodhana, which she sees as morally compromising. In one striking moment, she confronts him, saying, “Your loyalty blinds you to the suffering you perpetuate” (Kane 184). This statement encapsulates the central conflict of Uruvi’s character—a woman who balances her devotion to Karna with her unwavering commitment to justice and integrity. Kane’s nuanced portrayal of Uruvi reflects the broader feminist objective of reimagining mythological figures as multidimensional, conflicted, and deeply human. As Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni notes in her feminist critique of mythology, “The true power of mythological retellings lies in their ability to reveal the humanity of its characters, particularly its women” (Divakaruni 27). Uruvi’s journey in *Karna’s Wife* is emblematic of this transformative potential, as her voice resonates as a beacon of resistance within a patriarchal epic.

Karna’s unwavering adherence to dharma and loyalty to Duryodhana serve as pivotal elements in *Karna’s Wife: The Outcast Queen*, illustrating the inherent tension between personal morality and societal constructs. Karna, though portrayed as a tragic hero, remains complicit in perpetuating caste and gender hierarchies through his allegiance to a deeply flawed system. Uruvi sharply critiques this aspect of Karna’s character, remarking, “Your greatness falters when it yields to blind loyalty” (Kane 164). This critique highlights her progressive worldview, which values individual integrity over adherence to oppressive norms. Indian feminist theorist V. Geetha notes, “The dharmic code often validates the subjugation of both marginalized communities and women, presenting it as a moral imperative” (Geetha 89). By contrasting Karna’s steadfast loyalty to caste ideologies with Uruvi’s rejection of these constructs, Kane foregrounds the ideological divide that underpins their relationship. This

divergence reflects a larger critique of how patriarchal systems manipulate notions of duty to maintain oppressive social hierarchies.

Uruvi's feminist interventions in the narrative are marked by her refusal to remain silent in the face of Karna's questionable decisions. Her confrontation of Karna over his complicity in the disrobing of Draupadi exemplifies her bold defiance of gendered silences, as she exclaims, "You stood and watched as a woman's dignity was torn apart—was that your dharma?" (Kane 196). This moment encapsulates her role as a moral voice within the text, challenging the normalized subjugation of women under the guise of dharmic loyalty. Additionally, Uruvi's persistent critique of casteism reveals her broader challenge to systemic inequalities. When addressing Karna's rigid beliefs, she asserts, "Caste is not destiny; it is a prison we must escape" (Kane 132). Feminist scholar Susie Tharu argues that "mythological retellings become sites of resistance when they expose the intersections of caste, gender, and power" (Tharu and Lalita 45). Through Uruvi, Kane unravels these intersections, presenting a character who consistently interrogates the moral and ethical foundations of her society.

Despite Uruvi's strength and agency, her struggles within a deeply patriarchal framework underscore the systemic marginalization of women. Even as a queen, Uruvi faces social ostracism for her marriage to Karna, a man of lower caste, revealing the enduring stigma attached to transgressing caste boundaries. Reflecting on her isolation, she observes, "Even as a queen, I am but an outcast in the eyes of society" (Kane 211). This statement echoes the broader struggles of women who defy societal norms, highlighting the pervasive nature of patriarchal control. Indian feminist scholar Nivedita Menon emphasizes that "patriarchy operates through both overt restrictions and subtle mechanisms of exclusion" (Menon 56).

Uruvi's experiences, from her isolation in court to her conflicts with societal expectations, embody these mechanisms, making her struggles emblematic of broader issues faced by women in patriarchal societies. Kane's portrayal of Uruvi thus serves as both a critique of these systems and a call for reimagining gender dynamics within epic and contemporary narratives.

Kavita Kane's use of a first-person narrative in *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* is a transformative choice that imbues Uruvi's story with subjectivity and agency, disrupting the traditionally androcentric framework of epic storytelling. Uruvi's ability to narrate her own experiences allows her to reclaim the space typically denied to women in epics, providing readers with an intimate understanding of her thoughts, struggles, and aspirations. Uruvi observes, "To speak is to exist; silence is the language of the forgotten" (Kane 43), a declaration that underscores the power of her voice in defining her identity. Feminist critic Susie Tharu notes that "narrative voice is a crucial site of power in literature, as it determines whose perspective is validated" (Tharu and Lalita 61). By positioning Uruvi as the narrator, Kane subverts the Mahabharata's male-dominated discourse, allowing her protagonist to question and critique the epic's patriarchal ethos from within.

The novel employs key symbols to underscore Uruvi's resistance to societal norms, with her marriage to Karna serving as the most significant. Her choice to marry for love rather than political gain or societal approval is a radical act of defiance against patriarchal and casteist structures. Uruvi states, "I am no prize to be won, but a woman who chooses her own path" (Kane 78), a sentiment that redefines her role as an autonomous agent rather than a pawn in a patriarchal system. War, another recurring symbol, represents not only the physical battlefields of the Mahabharata but also Uruvi's internal struggle against societal expectations

and Karna's unwavering dharma. Uruvi's lament, "The war outside pales against the battles I fight within my heart" (Kane 189), reflects the layered conflicts she navigates as a woman striving to uphold her values amidst systemic oppression. These symbols, woven into the narrative, enrich the text's thematic complexity, highlighting love as a site of power, struggle, and resistance.

In reimagining the Mahabharata through Uruvi's perspective, Kane critiques and revises the framework of classical epic storytelling. While the original epic glorifies the heroism and moral dilemmas of male protagonists, *Karna's Wife* reframes these narratives to center the lived experiences of women. Uruvi's critique of Karna's silence during Draupadi's humiliation—"Your strength lies not in your arms but in your conscience, and today, you failed both" (Kane 201)—reveals her moral clarity and challenges the glorification of male valor that often excuses complicity. Indian feminist scholar Nivedita Menon argues that "the reinterpretation of epics through a feminist lens exposes the fractures within patriarchal ideologies and their inherent contradictions" (Menon 78). Kane's narrative achieves this by presenting Uruvi as both a participant and a critic of the Mahabharata's ethical and social constructs.

The narrative structure of *Karna's Wife* not only disrupts the epic's traditional storytelling but also amplifies its feminist critique. By giving voice to Uruvi, Kane enables a nuanced exploration of themes such as loyalty, love, and justice from a perspective that has historically been marginalized. Uruvi's declaration, "To love is not to follow blindly, but to question what is wrong even in those we cherish" (Kane 213), encapsulates the novel's core message of critical engagement with the systems of power that shape individual lives. Feminist theorist Uma Chakravarti's assertion that "retellings become transformative when they reimagine not just characters, but the very structures that define

their narratives" (Chakravarti 67) resonates deeply with Kane's work. By intertwining Uruvi's personal story with broader societal critiques, *Karna's Wife* stands as a powerful counter-discourse, inviting readers to reconsider the Mahabharata through a lens that challenges patriarchal and casteist norms.

Feminist mythological retellings like Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* challenge the androcentric lens of classical epics by reclaiming the narratives of women sidelined in traditional texts. While Divakaruni's Draupadi revisits her life with a focus on agency amidst political turmoil, Kane's Uruvi interrogates the patriarchal and casteist foundations of society through her personal struggles. Uruvi's declaration, "To be a queen is not to rule but to endure," (Kane 122) resonates with the struggles of Draupadi, but Uruvi's explicit challenge to casteism makes her story uniquely powerful. Scholar Arshia Sattar notes, "Retellings like these destabilize the masculine dominance of epics, introducing women's voices as instruments of critique and transformation" (Sattar 48). By crafting Uruvi as a woman who not only resists but also reshapes her circumstances, Kane deepens the thematic discourse on gender, caste, and morality, distinguishing her work from other feminist retellings.

Kane's *Karna's Wife* resonates deeply with contemporary readers because of its emphasis on reclaiming female narratives in mythology. In a patriarchal society where women's voices are often erased or trivialized, Uruvi's insistence, "I will not be remembered as an ornament of Karna's story, but as a voice that questioned his silences" (Kane 189), mirrors the broader feminist struggle for visibility and representation. As Indian feminist Nivedita Menon observes, "Revisiting cultural texts is crucial to dismantling the enduring myths that justify gender inequality" (Menon 72). Through

Uruvi, Kane not only reclaims a voice but also addresses enduring societal issues, such as the complicity of silence in oppression. Her story's resonance with modern gender dynamics lies in its exploration of themes like autonomy, moral courage, and resistance, which continue to be relevant in contemporary feminist discourse.

The literary and cultural significance of feminist mythological retellings lies in their ability to challenge the deeply ingrained social and cultural norms that epics traditionally perpetuate. Uruvi's critique of Karna's loyalty to Duryodhana—"Blind loyalty to flawed ideals is not strength, but cowardice" (Kane 197)—serves as a broader metaphor for questioning the societal structures that prioritize obedience over justice. Feminist scholar Susie Tharu emphasizes that "retellings are sites of resistance, enabling a reimagining of history and tradition through a subversive lens" (Tharu and Lalita 81). Kane's work, in its refusal to glorify the epic's patriarchal heroes without critique, invites readers to engage with Indian mythology as a space for interrogating contemporary issues such as caste, gender, and morality.

Moreover, the broader implications of works like *Karna's Wife* for Indian literature are significant, as they represent a growing trend of feminist interventions in classical texts. Kane's narrative, where Uruvi insists, "We rewrite history not by forgetting, but by remembering differently" (Kane 221), highlights the importance of such retellings in reshaping collective memory. These stories not only contribute to the feminist literary canon but also serve as cultural artifacts that challenge monolithic interpretations of tradition. Arundhati Roy aptly observes, "The rewriting of myths is a political act, one that claims space for the marginalized in history and imagination" (Roy 56). In Kane's hands, Uruvi becomes a powerful symbol of this reclamation, offering contemporary readers a lens to critically engage

with the past while envisioning a more inclusive and egalitarian future.

In conclusion, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* offers a compelling feminist critique of the Mahabharata, positioning Uruvi as a transformative figure who challenges the patriarchal structures that dominate the epic. Through Uruvi's narrative, Kane dismantles the silence imposed on women in traditional texts, amplifying marginalized voices and presenting a reimagined ethical framework. As Uruvi asserts, "To speak is to define oneself, to deny speech is to deny existence" (Kane 43), Kane reclaims agency for female characters historically confined to passive roles. This intervention contributes significantly to feminist literary theory by highlighting the narrative potential of reinterpreting classical works to challenge gendered and caste-based oppression. As Sharmila Rege asserts, "The retelling of myths is a subversive act that forces the culture to question its foundational myths" (Rege 78), and through her reimagining, Kane invites readers to reconsider the moral and social constructs that have been historically enshrined in Indian epics. The novel thus serves as a powerful tool in reshaping both the narrative landscape of the Mahabharata and the cultural discourse surrounding gender and power.

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# MAPPING QUEER IDENTITIES: MEMORY, SPACE AND CLOSET IN THE GRAPHIC MEMOIR *FUN HOME* BY ALISON BECHDEL

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## **Abstract**

*Graphic memoir bridges two prominent genres of comic studies and autobiography. The subversive potential of graphic narratives and the employment of sophisticated concerns makes the genre more appealing bringing it to the literary mainstream. The thematic concerns explored in these narratives incorporate social and political causes ranging from gender, sexuality, political turmoils, and cultural conflicts, etc. The dual narrative potential of graphic memoirs with both verbal and graphic storytelling adds to the reception of the genre. Queer graphic memoirs are one of the celebrated texts in the contemporary market with memoirists like Alison Bechdel, Sharon Lee De La Cruz and Kabi Nagata exploring the graphic as a medium. Queer graphic memoir has the benefit of genuinity and authenticity as it depicts the lived experiences of queer Individuals. This paper tries to explore the gay subtext in the graphic memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel with a focus on the concept of closeted sexuality juxtaposed with the open sexual expression. The intergenerational queer experiences of repressed and accepted queer identities is one of the key research questions raised in this paper. This study also analyses the intersections of sexuality, gender expectations and family dynamics and how these different domains are intertwined in the Formulation of one's multiple identities with an emphasis on queer visibility and self-discovery.*

**Keywords:** *queer, sexuality, gender, intersectionality, graphic memoirs.*

## **Introduction**

Queer Studies is one of the academic disciplines which critically look at the issues related to sexual orientations and gender identities. Queer studies, otherwise called LGBTQ studies, have an analytical framework of Queer theories which helps in analysing the thematic concerns of sexual orientations and gender identities in literary texts. In this paper *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel is taken as a focal text for research. It is a graphic memoir published in 2006 by the American cartoonist Alison Bechdel. The beginning of the twenty first century saw a rise of popularity in graphic non-fiction works. Even though graphic novels have been best sellers in the mainstream market, the inclusion of serious and sophisticated issues like gender, sexuality, and political causes made the genre more appealing in the popular culture

as well as in academia. This paper tries to discuss the nuances of being queer in a gendered space of family and the intersections of family and sexuality with a parallel reading of closeted and open sexuality.

## **Objectives**

- To examine the queer representation with reference to closeted and open sexuality.
- To study the gay subtext in the graphic memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel.
- To explore the concepts of memory and space in the focal text.
- To analyse the intersections of sexuality, gender expectations and family dynamics and how these different domains are intertwined in the Formulation of one's multiple identities

## Material and Methods

*Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel is taken as the primary material of the study. Textual analysis is employed as the primary method in writing this paper with a focus on characters, narratives and thematic concern. Close reading is utilised to analyse the character's arch and development. Visual analysis as a visual methodology is used to study visual composition of the text. The analytical framework of intersectionality is employed to understand the intersections of gender, sexuality and family in the identity formation of the characters.

## The Significance of Remembering

Life writing and autobiography have always been a prominent genre in mainstream literature. When it comes to graphic memoir the text gets the added authenticity of the genre autobiography. Since it has the label of lived reality associated with it, graphic memoirs are no longer sidelined as mere children's literature or low literature. Merging the two genres of graphic memoir and autobiography, the term autography is used in the contemporary studies on graphic memoirs. Alison Bechdel remembers her father, Bruce Bechdel mainly through the abundant collection of literary works after his death. Since Bruce was a passionate reader and an English teacher, he resonated most of the time with the fictional world rather than real life. To young Alison Bechdel, the literary references of father sounded oblivious but later the literary texts help her to remember a person who was obscure to her.

Bechdel uses an amazingly rich and difficult vocabulary in *Fun Home* and an equally rich array of texts and images drawn from memory, photographs, maps, books, letters, diaries, newspaper articles, dictionary entries, telephone messages, transcripts, and scraps of paper to try to map her father's life and death, her relationship to her father, and the intersection of

her own coming-out story with her discovery of her father's bisexuality. (Kyler, 2010)

The narration of Bruce Bechdel is solely through the memory of Bechdel; she utilises every possible means to identify and relate to her father after recollecting his words, letters and entries. Throughout the text, Bechdel tries to build a connection between her and her father's life. The unhappy closeted life that he dealt with made her realize the difficulty to live with a closeted queer identity. The presence of a dead father figure in the whole plot navigating the life of Alison highlights the significance of the act of remembering. Bechdel's memory of her father reflects the internal conflict her father was experiencing, it was invisible but at the same very evidently visible in the nook and corner of the restored gothic home. The last image in the text is also her memory of her father standing ready to catch her in a swimming pool and she writes, "But in the tricky reverse narration that impels our entwined stories, he was there to catch me when I leapt" (Bechdel, 2006, p. 232).

## Role of Familial Space and Formulation of the Self

The text highlights Alison Bechdel's relationship with her father Bruce Bechdel. The first chapter titled, 'Old Father, Old Artificer' is the narrative and pictorial description of Bruce Bechdel and their family home. The young Alison's viewpoint of her father's maniacal restoration of their old house and the detailing given to each item in the house is fascinating. She recalls her father's potential to turn garbage into gold and his passion in putting everything together at home. To Alison, "for if my father was Icarus, he was also Daedalus—that skilful artificer, that mad scientist who built the wings for his son and designed the famous labyrinth...and he answered not to the laws of society, but to those of his craft" (Bechdel, 2006, p.7). From 1962, when her parents brought the home followed by eighteen years, her father has been restoring the house. Alison's

conversations with her father were about literature and literary characters. Even after his death, Alison searches for the allusions from literature to figure out Bruce Bechdel as a person. Multiple intertextual reference to literature can be seen in the text like Daedalus and Icarus, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Chorus Line*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *The Odyssey*, *Ulysses*, *The Great Gatsby*, etc.

It is through literary characters, where Bruce Bechdel represents himself by incorporating the attitudes and even dressing style of certain characters. Thus, identifying the father figure was as difficult for Alison as comprehending a sophisticated fictional character. In her childhood, Bruce compels Alison to dress up in certain ways and always gives instructions to present herself the way that would please the societal expectation. The young Alison's resistance to follow the expected gendered behaviour in the surrounding of rural Pennsylvania also highlight the conflicted love and admiration she had towards her father. The early death of her father puzzled to a point where could not even grieve in totality for her father. The second chapter titled 'A Happy Death' discusses Alison's way of coping with her father's death. It goes back to the family history and her father's multiple jobs of being an English teacher and funeral director. The narration is multi-layered since the thought process of Alison, the past events and the literature references are intertwined.

### **Queer Identities and Gay Subtext**

In *Fun Home* the queer identity is represented through two characters, Alison Bechdel, the memoirist and her father Bruce Bechdel. Queering is portrayed at two different levels where Alison's sexual identity and open and free on the other hand Bruce's is closeted. The narration from the viewpoint of Alison about her father contrasts with the later realisation of the life Bruce lived. There is an ongoing introspection within Alison about the suspicions

surrounding her father's death soon after her coming out to her family.

Alison Bechdel understands gradually how she was so different from her father yet so similar to him in many aspects. Bechdel draws the exact opposite nature of her and father with the allusions from literature like "I was spartan to my father's Athenian. Modern to his Victorian. Butch to his Nelly. Utilitarian to his Aesthete" (Bechdel, 2006, p.15). But after her father's death, she finds instances where she could resonate with her father. Bechdel finds out about her father's closeted sexuality after his death. Her being lesbian makes his father's secret relationship with men understandable and acceptable. With her sexual orientation she finds parallel with her father. Bechdel made an announcement that she is lesbian four months before her father's death and that makes her believe that her announcement has something to do with her father's sudden death hit by a truck. In one of the instances Bechdel says, "My father's death was a queer business—queer in every sense of that multivalent word" (Bechdel, 2006, p.57). Bechdel comes to know about her father's sexuality from her mother, "Your Father has had affairs. With other men" (Bechdel, 2006, p.58), knowing this after her father's death could not stop her from thinking how her revelation affected her father. While recalling the relationship between her father and mother, Bechdel could only think of two instances where they showed affection; "I witnessed only two gestures of affection between them. Once my father gave my mother a chaste peck before leaving on a weekend trip. And one time my mother put her hand on his back as we were watching TV" (Bechdel, 2006, p.68) and both these instances made Bechdel uncomfortable.

Bechdel throughout the narration tries to recognize her father by recalling his words, his book recommendations and their conversations. At the end she decides to not to pretend to know her dad completely. Since many of her findings from the recollections still raise questions and do not provide definite answers. "Perhaps my



eagerness to claim him as “gay” in the way I am “gay,” as opposed to bisexual or some other category, is just a way of keeping him to myself—a sort of inverted oedipal complex” (Bechdel, 2006, p.230). Her father’s closeted self makes her embrace her sexual orientation more openly since she did not want to lead a life like him. “And in a way, you could say that my father’s end was my beginning. Or more precisely, that the end of his lie coincided with the beginning of my truth” (Bechdel, 2006, p.117). Her father’s suppressed sexual identity gives her courage to openly accept who she is as a person and how to express herself.

### Conclusion

The visual aspect makes the graphic memoirs unique from other literary genres. The captivating power that graphic narrative holds is visible in the success of the early comics to the present-day autography. It has the potential to convey the story through both words and pictures. The pictorial representation of bodies and identities bring the attention of more readers as it provides multiple aesthetic sensual experiences. Graphic memoir can be utilised as a subversive tool to discuss topics such as gender and sexual identity. Alison Bechdel’s attempt has been successful in portraying the minute nuances of individuality and sexual orientation through *Fun Home: : A Family Tragicomic*. She skilfully crafted the dynamics of family, the agency of space and alternative sexuality within a text. The visual representation adds volume to the characterisation of Alison and the series of events that mould Alison as a person- her struggle to come to terms with the gendered roles and expected behaviour, her inability to fully conceive her father while growing up and her decision to openly embrace her sexual identity. Alison’s narrative undoubtedly invokes a wide range of perspectives and novel reading experience.

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# CULTURAL PLURALITY AND ADOLESCENT IDENTITY: A STUDY OF ASHOKAMITRAN'S *THE EIGHTEENTH PARALLEL*

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## Abstract

*The study explores the intricate interplay between cultural plurality and adolescent identity in Ashokamitran's The Eighteenth Parallel. Set against the historical backdrop of Hyderabad in the 1940s and 1950s, the novel examines the protagonist Chandru's coming-of-age journey amidst communal tensions, political upheaval, and familial expectations. Chandru's life is a reflection of the larger socio-political dynamics of the time, especially the annexation of Hyderabad into the Indian Union and the turmoil it brought to the city's multicultural fabric. The novel delves into how the city's shifting cultural and political landscape influences Chandru's perception of identity, belonging, and self-worth. This study probes Ashokamitran's narrative techniques, particularly his use of humor, irony, and subtle social commentary, to highlight the complexities of adolescent growth in a pluralistic society. It also examines the juxtaposition of Chandru's personal dilemmas—academic aspirations, unrequited love, and familial pressures—with the overarching historical realities of communal violence and the decline of the Nizam's rule. The analysis sheds light on the psychological impact of navigating such a diverse and turbulent environment during adolescence. Furthermore, the study situates the novel within the broader discourse of post-colonial literature, emphasizing how it captures the collision of tradition and modernity, individual agency and societal expectations, and personal growth against the backdrop of historical change. The findings reveal a nuanced narrative that bridges personal growth with broader socio-political commentary, offering insights into the universal struggles of identity formation in multicultural and politically volatile settings. By placing Chandru's journey within the historical context of Hyderabad, the study underscores the enduring relevance of Ashokamitran's themes, making them vibrate with readers across time and place.*

**Keywords:** tradition, modernity, struggles of identity, communal violence, personal dilemmas.

## Introduction

Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* is an emotional and nuanced coming-of-age novel set in Hyderabad during a turbulent period in Indian history. Written in Tamil and translated into English, the novel captures the socio-political and cultural dynamics of the 1940s and 1950s, a time when the princely state of Hyderabad was transitioning from the Nizam's autocratic rule to becoming part of the Indian Union. Through the lens of its protagonist, Chandrasekhar (Chandru), a young Brahmin

adolescent, the novel presents a deeply personal narrative interwoven with the larger historical and cultural transformations of the era. The title, *The Eighteenth Parallel*, metaphorically represents the thin, precarious line separating various cultural and social realities in the protagonist's life and the city he inhabits.

### Nizam's Hyderabad

During the first half of the 20th century, Hyderabad was a princely state ruled by the Nizam, one of the wealthiest monarchs of the

time. The state was a vibrant center of cultural and commercial activity, known for its architectural splendor, artistic traditions, and thriving multicultural society. However, the Nizam's autocratic rule also led to socio-political tensions, as the administration was characterized by an unequal power structure and a rigid caste and class hierarchy. Hyderabad's demographic composition was a mosaic of diverse communities. Hindus are the majority population in the state, contributing to its agricultural, artisanal, and trade sectors. Muslims held significant positions of power under the Nizam's administration and contributed to Hyderabad's rich cultural identity, including its cuisine, language (Dakhni Urdu), and religious traditions. Other Communities like Parsis, Marwaris, Telugu-speaking communities, and others added to the city's pluralistic character. This co-existence fostered a rich blend of traditions, art forms, and social practices. However, this diversity was also a source of tension, as socio-religious disparities and political differences created fault lines in the city's social fabric.

### **The Razakars**

The Razakars, a paramilitary organization, emerged as a significant force in Hyderabad during the late 1940s under the leadership of Qasim Razvi. Their primary objective was to maintain Hyderabad's independence as a Muslim-ruled state, resisting its integration into the Indian Union. The Razakars enforced the Nizam's rule through forcible measures, often targeting the Hindu majority and other insurgents. They engaged in acts of violence, including looting, forced conversions, and massacres, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. The Razakars' actions aggravated communal tensions, creating deep divisions within Hyderabad's multi-cultural society.

*'The Indian tricolour was flying a top Delhi's Red Fort. The day for Bharati's joyous*

*song of liberation in D.K. Pattammal's resonant voice had organised a join-the-Indian Union Day and someone had managed to secretly hoist the Indian flag at dawn in Sultan Bazaar. The Police were in a quandary. 'Bring down the damn thing.'* (*The Eighteenth Parallel, Ashokamitran, p. 77*)

This passage captures a moment of political and emotional turmoil during the Hyderabad annexation. The reference to music and culture underscores how deeply embedded the freedom struggle was in the everyday lives of people, making this an emotional depiction of history interwoven with personal and communal resistance. The fear instilled by the Razakars eroded trust between communities, disrupting the city's tradition of peaceful co-existence. Many Hindus and other non-Muslim communities fled the city, while those who remained faced heightened discrimination and violence. The political turbulence culminated in the Indian government's decision to annex Hyderabad. In 1948, Operation Polo, a military intervention, was launched to integrate the state into the Indian Union.

### **Immediate Aftermath**

The Nizam surrendered, and Hyderabad became part of India. The Razakars were disbanded, and Qasim Razvi was arrested. The annexation marked the end of feudal rule and the beginning of democratic governance in the region. Hyderabad began to adapt to its new identity within a secular and democratic India, blending its traditional practices with modern values. Hyderabad's journey from a princely state under the Nizam's rule to its integration into the Indian Union is a story of resilience, conflict, and transformation. The multicultural society that once thrived under the Nizam faced immense challenges during the Razakar era, only to emerge redefined in the post-annexation period. The city's ability to navigate these shifts, while retaining its unique identity, serves as a

testament to its enduring spirit. Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* captures these historical and cultural dynamics through the lens of its protagonist Chandru, providing an intimate portrayal of the human experience amid such epochal changes.

### Literature Review

The exploration of adolescent identity in culturally pluralistic and politically volatile settings has been a recurring theme in literature and scholarly research. This section reviews relevant works to contextualize Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* within the broader discourse of post-colonial literature, identity studies, and narrative techniques.

Cultural plurality's impact on individual identity has been extensively examined in post-colonial literature. Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space* (1994) emphasizes the in-between space where hybrid identities emerge due to the interaction of diverse cultures and histories. Similarly, Hall (1990) discusses identity as a dynamic construct influenced by social and cultural changes. While these frameworks provide theoretical foundations, there is limited application to the Indian adolescent experience during specific historical moments, such as Hyderabad's annexation. In *The Eighteenth Parallel*, Ashokamitran situates Chandru's personal identity struggles within a multicultural city undergoing political upheaval, aligning with Hall's notion of identity as a "production" influenced by external conditions.

Adolescent protagonists navigating socio-political changes are a recurring theme in Indian literature. R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) portrays the innocent struggles of adolescence in a simpler pre-Independence setting, while Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) explores how familial and societal pressures shape young lives in rural India. Unlike these works, *The Eighteenth Parallel* examines adolescence amidst the communal

tensions and cultural diversity of Hyderabad, offering a unique urban perspective. Recent studies, such as Ghosh (2017), have highlighted the need for nuanced examinations of Indian adolescent identity within specific historical contexts. Ashokamitran's portrayal of Chandru contributes to this emerging field by embedding adolescent struggles within Hyderabad's multicultural and politically charged environment.

Literature set in Hyderabad often copes with its history of cultural plurality and political turbulence. Works like *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh explore communal tensions and identity but focus on broader national implications rather than the localized impact on individual growth. Ashokamitran's narrative stands out for its precise depiction of Hyderabad's annexation and its influence on daily life and personal identity.

Ashokamitran's use of humor, irony, and minimalist prose has been lauded by critics such as Ramachandran (2015) and Viswanathan (2019) for its ability to capture complex emotions and social realities. These studies emphasize his skill in blending personal stories with socio-political commentary. However, they do not focus on how these techniques are employed to explore adolescent identity specifically. In *The Eighteenth Parallel*, Ashokamitran's narrative style amplifies the complexities of Chandru's personal growth, using subtle humor and irony to juxtapose individual dilemmas with historical realities.

### Objectives

1. To promote interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars, educators, and practitioners within the field of English Studies, fostering collaborative approaches to contemporary challenges.
2. To explore recent advancements and emerging trends in English Studies, with a focus on innovative pedagogies,

literary analysis, and interdisciplinary research methods.

3. To strengthen global collaboration and networking by creating opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, enabling scholars and practitioners to share knowledge, ideas, and best practices.
4. To encourage critical thinking and innovative research by providing a platform for the exploration of new perspectives, methodologies, and ideas, advancing the field of English Studies.

### Research Methodology

This study on *The Eighteenth Parallel*, by Ashokamitran adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary research approach that combines literary analysis with socio-historical context to explore the interplay between cultural plurality and adolescent identity. The primary methodology is literary analysis, where the text is examined for themes, character development, narrative techniques, and socio-political commentary. Key aspects of the novel, including the protagonist's coming-of-age journey, his interactions with a multicultural society, and his evolving identity amidst political turmoil, are scrutinized.

The secondly, it is the psychological depth and evolution of the protagonist, Chandru, will be explored, particularly in relation to his cultural background, familial pressures, and responses to the socio-political environment of Hyderabad in the 1940s and 1950s. Thirdly, it is a close reading of Ashokamitran's narrative techniques, particularly the use of humor, irony, and subtle social commentary, will be conducted to understand how they contribute to the depiction of adolescent identity within a pluralistic society.

### Findings and Results

Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel*, offers profound insights into the interplay between

cultural plurality, adolescent identity, and historical upheaval. Chandru's coming-of-age story is deeply intertwined with the socio-political climate of Hyderabad in the 1940s and 1950s. The annexation of Hyderabad into the Indian Union, along with the communal tensions of the era, profoundly shapes his sense of self and belonging. The political unrest serves as a parallel to his internal struggles, highlighting how broader historical events leave an indelible mark on the formation of individual identity.

### Narrative Tools

Ashokamitran skillfully weaves Chandru's personal struggles—academic failures, unrequited love, and familial discord—with the broader historical narrative. This juxtaposition not only contextualizes Chandru's dilemmas but also underscores the universality of adolescent struggles in the face of external chaos. The interplay highlights the difficulty of navigating personal growth amidst societal fragmentation. Ashokamitran employs humor and irony to critique the socio-political realities of the time subtly. These techniques provide a layered understanding of Chandru's experiences, allowing readers to empathize with his confusion and vulnerability while critically engaging with the historical and cultural milieu of Hyderabad.

### Cultural Plurality and Adolescent Growth

Chandru's interactions with people from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds serve as a microcosm of Hyderabad's multicultural fabric. These relationships challenge his preconceived notions, exposing him to diverse perspectives and contributing to his evolving worldview. The novel underscores the importance of cultural plurality in shaping a young individual's identity. The communal violence and societal divisions during the annexation of Hyderabad profoundly affect Chandru's psyche. The narrative captures his

sense of alienation and fear, reflecting the broader anxieties of a generation caught between tradition and modernity, security and upheaval. Chandru's experiences highlight the deep psychological scars that such tensions can leave on adolescents.

### Universal Themes

While deeply rooted in the historical and cultural specificities of Hyderabad, *The Eighteenth Parallel* transcends its immediate context. Themes of adolescent confusion, the search for identity, and the impact of societal upheaval resonate universally, making the novel relevant to readers across cultures and time periods. Ashokamitran's nuanced portrayal of Chandru's experiences offers a quiet yet profound critique of the socio-political conditions of the era. The narrative reflects on issues such as communal violence, socio-economic inequality, and the fragility of cultural harmony, providing insights that remain pertinent in contemporary discussions about pluralistic societies.

### Conclusion

*The Eighteenth Parallel*, stands as a testament to Ashokamitran's brilliance in capturing the profound intricacies of identity formation within a culturally pluralistic and politically tumultuous environment. Through the lens of Chandru's adolescence, the novel transcends the personal to illuminate the universal struggle of navigating selfhood amid external upheavals. Chandru's journey mirrors the internal conflicts faced by individuals as they reconcile their personal aspirations with societal expectations, all within the volatile backdrop of Hyderabad's annexation. This study underscores how Ashokamitran skillfully intertwines the narrative of a young man's coming-of-age with the broader socio-political shifts of post-colonial India. By situating Chandru's internal struggles against the backdrop of historical realities, the novel reveals the dual shaping of self and

society. The intersection of personal growth with cultural plurality emerges as a central theme, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in identity formation during periods of transition. The findings affirm the novel's relevance beyond its historical setting, positioning it as a vital text for exploring the interplay of individual and collective identities in multicultural and politically volatile contexts. Ashokamitran's layered narrative becomes not just a story of one adolescent but a broader commentary on the universal challenges of belonging and self-discovery in pluralistic societies. Ultimately, *The Eighteenth Parallel* invites readers to reflect on the enduring complexities of cultural coexistence and personal growth, leaving an indelible impact as both a literary masterpiece and a profound exploration of identity in a fragmented world.

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# THE TYRANNY OF SILENCE: TRAUMA AND HIERARCHICAL OPPRESSION IN ANURADHA ROY'S *SLEEPING ON JUPITER*

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## Abstract

*Trauma and language have an intertwined, complex relationship that significantly affects trauma survivors' linguistic prowess and communication skills, which as a result disrupts their speech patterns and causes difficulty in retrieving memories. The concept of 'tyranny of silence' is often embedded within the broader discourse of censorship, oppression and the consequences of silence in societal and personal contexts. The research interrogates how trauma profoundly affects an individual's ability to articulate their thoughts and emotions. To examine the impacts of trauma on an individual's articulation, the study uses the trauma theory of Judith Herman and a qualitative textual analysis, a close reading method on Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping On Jupiter*. The purpose of the study is to offer a comprehensive understanding of trauma's profound impact on communication while emphasising the role of societal and cultural factors in perpetuating trauma.*

**Keywords:** *trauma, childhood trauma, fragmented narratives, symbolic language*

Literature is an artistic tool to represent human thoughts, emotions, and experiences. It mirrors the multifaceted realities of society and offers diverse perspectives illuminating human complexities. Trauma is one of the most prominent genres among many other genres explored in literature. Literature is a powerful tool for processing, expressing and understanding the complex effects of trauma. Trauma occurs as an emotional, psychological or physical response of an individual to a distressing or disturbing event such as abuse, violence, loss or natural disaster. Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* defined trauma as

Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because

they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life...traumatic events...threats to life or bodily integrity...close personal encounter with violence and death...extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe. (24)

Trauma narrative in literature often delves deeply into the complexities of survivor's psychology, it portrays their inability to process and articulate their traumatic experience instead they use fragmented language, silence, repetition and indirect language such as the usage of metaphor to convey the indescribable nature of trauma. David Purnell describes trauma narratives in literature as:

When these narratives are further silenced by the shame culture...it places limitations on



the development of one's identity, creating a self-imposed need to stay silent and hidden...narratives that help continue needed conversations... strength of auto ethnographic narratives. (232)

The concept 'tyranny of silence' in literature is often depicted as a repression of an individual or a community who denies their ability to speak, act or express. For instance, Thomas Hardy's characters in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* suffer under the weight of societal expectations, which enforce silence on issues like class and morality. Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* addresses the tyranny of silence, through the systemic oppression and the patriarchal structure that is silencing women in literature and history. James Joyce portrays silence as a form of rebellion and constraint through Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* grapples with religious and societal pressures.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* explores the tyranny of silence surrounding slavery and trauma, the unspeakable horrors of the past manifest as literal ghosts, showing how silence perpetuates pain. Margaret Atwood portrays silence as a tool of control used in Gilead's theocratic society, where women's voices are stifled. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* illustrates the societal consequences of enforced silence where dissenting voices are obliterated to maintain power. Franz Kafka's protagonists', like Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis*, are often trapped in a world where their silence leads to alienation and despair. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* critiques colonial powers' silencing of indigenous identity and voice.

The term 'tyranny of silence' gained contemporary prominence with the publication of Flemming Rose's book *The Tyranny of Silence*. She wrote about the global debate over free speech, particularly following the controversial publication of cartoons depicting

the Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. The book reflects on the cost of free expression and the pressures to remain silent in the face of threats or cultural sensitivities. Similarly, Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* portrays the effect of trauma on an individual's language, where silence constitutes a core element. Anuradha has used fragmented memories and flashbacks as a narrative tool to highlight how trauma disrupts memory and language. Nomi Frederiksen, the protagonist of the novel is represented as a voice of trauma victims and poignantly depicts the devastating impact of child sexual abuse. Sheretunsto Jarmuli, a temple town on the northeast coast of India where she unleashes a torrent of suppressed memories of the insidious betrayal of Guruji who was supposed to be her pillar of trust.

Silence in Nomi's narrative emerges as a haunting echo of the ineffable nature of her trauma. Her inability to articulate her emotional turmoil is prominently evident when she describes her struggles to live with her foster mother after she escapes from the ashram with the baggage of her traumatic experience, "It was always so quiet in her foster mother's house. Silent enough to hear leaves fall and rain drip from the roof, silent enough to make it hard for her to cry at night without being noticed" (116).

Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* stresses that survivors of trauma often remain silent due to the fear of being judged, blamed and dismissed:

To speak about experiences in sexual or domestic life was to invite public humiliation, ridicule, and disbelief. Women were silenced by fear and shame, and the silence of women gave license to every form of sexual and domestic exploitation. Women did not have a name for the tyranny of private life. It was difficult to recognize that a well-established democracy in the public sphere...or advanced dictatorship in the home. (20)

The silence is not only a manifestation of internal repression but also a strategic response to avoid societal victim-blaming instead of offering emotional support. Similarly, in *Sleeping on Jupiter* the narrative portrays Nomi's silence as a self-preservation strategy in a society that often disparages and shames victims of abuse: "I would wonder what to say, where to start...I dissolved the lump that had somehow appeared in my throat..." (39)

Anuradha Roy in *Sleeping on Jupiter* masterfully portrays the entrenched cultural and social structures of Indian hierarchical society that perpetuate child abuse survivors to be silenced as the power discourse suffocates the victims' voices to be unheard. Roy highlights this systematic power structure through the character Guruji who misuses his position as a religious leader:

'I am your father and your mother now. I am your country. I am your teacher. I am your God.' He said it like a chant, as if they were words often repeated and always the same. (37)

The novel illuminates how power acts as a shield for the abusers from being accountable. Initially, Guruji is portrayed as a mystic of the divine and a revered spiritual oracle for his devotees who trust him with blind faith but later as the novel progresses his true colours are revealed, his teachings and his core beliefs on spirituality are not genuine but deceitful. It is also exposed that he is more driven by selfish desires such as power, wealth and sensual indulgence. His wealth and his connections with powerful politicians are noticeable when Nomi says:

That morning, we had been told, the chief minister of the state was coming to the ashram. He was Guruji's discipline. Guruji had other rich and powerful disciples who respected his powers and this was why even illegal boat girls were safe inside the ashram...Guruji even had his own aeroplane. (140)

Roy highlights the major societal issues of prioritizing the existing social hierarchy and preserving power structures over safeguarding the rights, dignity and welfare of vulnerable individuals. The character Champa in the novel is a young girl who escapes the ashram and seeks help from the police but she is returned to the ashram, because of the influence of Guruji on the police which highlights the systemic barriers faced by survivors in seeking justice, which is evident through the conversation between Nomi and Champa "We're going to run away. There's nothing to lose', Champa whispered... I said, 'you ran away twice. The police brought you right back'. 'This time I won't go to the police'." (234)

Silence is the adverse result of anxiety over retaliation which is fear of being harmed, attacked and judged in response of speaking out about their traumatic experience and inadequate supportive social systems. Similarly, in the novel when Champa and Nomi escape the ashram, Champa advises Nomi to be silent about the abuse of Guruji since the people contemplate to believe the survivors. As Champa states,

Champa had told me what to say when we reached the girl's home... 'Not a word about the ashram' Champa said. 'Everyone rich and famous in his disciple, they all think he's a god. They'll never believe anything bad about him. They'll take us straight back there...we'll be dead, like Jugnu.' (239)

The research paper demonstrates the struggles of trauma survivors, particularly as articulated in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*. The novel serves as a potent catalyst for survivors, providing a voice to the silenced and highlighting the psychological impact of trauma. The research implies how cultural and socio-cultural factors, including social hierarchies, power dynamics, and inadequate support systems, contribute to trauma and hinder recovery.

The research findings shed light on the importance of confronting the tyranny of silence through courage, collective action and the preservation of truth, and highlight that systematic oppression requires conscious reform, education, and empowerment. It suggests establishing transparent reporting mechanisms in social institutions, enforcing accountability for abusers, and offering survivor-centric resources such as counselling and legal support to victims. Educational awareness of victim-blaming societal norms fosters empathy, teaches consent, and holds individuals accountable regardless of their status in the public sphere. Survivors must be empowered to reject shame through self-

expression, family support, and public narratives providing help to emphasise their innocence and displace the blame on abusers.

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# NAVIGATING THE TIDE: ECOCRITICISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE HUNGRY TIDE*

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## Abstract

*This paper investigates ecocriticism in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide. It analyzes the portrayal of environmental conservation, ecology, human life, and its complex designs in the Sundarbans. This novel challenges anthropocentric stories. The author critiques the action taken by the government to protect nature that excludes, ignores, and displaces the local people, and the interconnectedness of humans and nature. Also, Ghosh criticizes conservation politics for preserving the environment while neglecting the people who live there. This novel is an important work in environmental literature because it focuses on the main issues that we face in the current age.*

**Keywords:** *ecocriticism, environmental literature, the hungry tide, conservation politics, sundarbans, human-nature relationship*

## Introduction

In the world of ecological crisis, literature is an important medium to analyze, criticize, and examine the bond between humans and nature. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* highlights this issue. The Sundarbans, a large mangrove forest located where the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers meet, serves as a place of suffering and survival in this novel (Ghosh 15). The incidents and characters reflect the impact of environmental decay and portray the tension between human life and environmental preservation.

This paper applies eco-critical theory to examine *The Hungry Tide*. Ecocriticism is a growing literary theory that explores how environmental issues are reflected in literary texts. Scholars like Cheryll Glotfelty and Greg Garrard argue that literature is not merely a reflection of human culture but a crucial agent in shaping environmental consciousness (Glotfelty and Fromm 22; Garrard 6). This study conveys that Ghosh challenges the anthropocentrism (human-centric) worldview. He demonstrates

how nature has the ultimate potential to protect and destroy simultaneously. Moreover, he critiques environmental preservation policies, arguing that policies should protect nature as well as the local communities that depend on it (Ghosh 189).

## Materials and Methods

### This research integrates:

#### 1. Primary Textual Analysis:

A close reading of *The Hungry Tide*, understanding the portrayal of the Sundarbans, the crucial relationship between humans and nature, and historical events like the Marichjhapi massacre (Ghosh 141).

#### 2. Secondary Sources on Ecocriticism and Environmental Studies:

- Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader*: Provides foundational insights into how literature engages with environmental concerns (Glotfelty and Fromm 44).

- Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism*: Explores key concepts such as anthropocentrism, ecological justice, and the non-human perspective (Garrard 28).
- Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*: Contextualizes the socio-political dimensions of environmental conservation in postcolonial settings (Nixon 56).

**3. Qualitative Approach:** Examining the themes, metaphors, and characters in this novel to reveal the environmental message by Amitav Ghosh.

### Findings AND Results

Ghosh states that nature plays an important role in molding people's lives. The tides, climate, weather, and mangroves in the Sundarbans can both protect and destroy human lives (Ghosh 45). Ghosh calls the tides a "living entity" because they are indifferent to people's lives (Ghosh 178). Environmental literature should pay attention to the power of nature.

This novel criticizes the displacement of people due to conservation policies. The Marichjhapi massacre, where local communities were displaced and harmed to protect the tigers, raises ethical concerns regarding whether protecting nature should come at the cost of human suffering (Ghosh 217). Ghosh explains conservation from various perspectives through the characters of Piya (modern, scientific approach to nature), Fokir (traditional knowledge), and Kanai (intellectual perspective). Rob Nixon's idea of "slow violence" explains how conservation policies often harm marginalized communities (Nixon 89).

This novel argues that humans and nature should coexist harmoniously. Through characters like Piya and Fokir, Ghosh demonstrates that modern scientific knowledge and traditional indigenous knowledge can

complement each other (Ghosh 243). Piya's research about dolphins reveals how humans can live without destroying nature. Ghosh suggests that eco-centrism is as crucial as anthropocentrism.

### Interpretation and Discussion

#### Ecocriticism and Non-Human Agency

Ghosh challenges the traditional narrative style that portrays nature as a passive backdrop. By depicting the mangroves as an active agent, he aligns with Greg Garrard's view that literature should focus on the ecological perspective (Garrard 51).

#### Conservation Ethics and Social Justice

A central theme in this novel is the tension between protecting nature and respecting human rights. The Marichjhapi massacre raises questions such as:

- Is it fair to protect nature by harming or ignoring marginalized people?
- How do ecological policymakers balance justice between people and nature?

#### The Role of Indigenous Knowledge

The value of traditional knowledge is underscored through Fokir, whose deep understanding of the Sundarbans contrasts with Piya and Kanai's modern approaches (Ghosh 132).

#### Literature as an Ecological Medium

Ghosh demonstrates how literature can connect scientific knowledge with everyday experiences. Through his compelling narrative and impactful characters, *The Hungry Tide* encourages readers to rethink their relationship with nature.

#### Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is a remarkable work in environmental literature that examines ecological challenges and human

struggles. The novel questions anthropocentrism, critiques conservation ethics, and promotes a balance between human and ecological concerns. Ghosh highlights the necessity of integrating local and scientific knowledge in conservation efforts. This novel inspires readers to take responsibility for environmental preservation in a world grappling with climate change and ecological destruction.

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## INTERSECTION OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND TRAUMA IN ERNEST J. GAINES'S *A LESSON BEFORE DYING*

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### Abstract

*African American literature employs social realism to seize the complexities and challenges faced by Black communities, offering a powerful critique of systemic racism, oppression and social inequality. This article examines the intersection of cultural memory and trauma in Ernest J. Gaines's novel *A Lesson Before Dying*, set in 1940's Louisiana, as the novel portrays the experiences of African Americans in the Rural south, highlighting the ongoing impact of historical trauma on individual and collective identities. It also outbreak the trauma and cultural memory faced by the individuals and the nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between personal experiences, collective identity, cultural memory and traumatic impact of African American individuals.*

**Keywords:** *emotional imbalance, racial prejudice, oppression, deculturation, subjugation*

The intersection of cultural memory and trauma in Ernest J. Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying* explores the experiences of African American individuals in the rural south setting in 1940s. The novel delves into the way in which cultural memory and trauma are intertwined, highlighting the impact of historical events on individual and collective identities. The novel unquestionably works over most of the same issues as did those that preceded it: definitions and possibilities of black manhood; the cultural memory of slavery, racism, and oppression continues to traumatize African Americans affecting their relationships between the generations, especially of young men and older women; the conflict between secular progress and traditional religion, especially as the latter is embodied in ministers and traditional forms of worship; questions of what behavior constitutes authentic and enduring love between men and women; questions of black migration, affecting their sense of self-worth and identity, and the

struggle to obtain justice in the labor and penal systems, to maintain and assert some dignity and freedom of action in the face of raw southern racism. Along with problems, character types have reappeared. Sheriff, minister, convict, white landowner, black schoolteacher, Creole woman-each has been drawn from the lineup.

So the novel has a very different and emotionally more demanding plot than any preceding it. It also has key characters not paralleled in any other work: Vivian, who would perhaps parallel Alma Martin, had Alma been developed, but who is distinctly beyond Catherine Carmier or Mary Agnes Le Fabre in life experience, maturity, and self-possession; Paul Bonin (whose name in English means "good"), the white policeman; and, above all, Jefferson, who is distinctly different from Marcus Payne and Proctor Lewis. These characters differ from earlier ones both in type and in development. Along with Grant, they have complexity of thought, impulse, and

choice. With them are minor characters of a new type: children seen and heard in a schoolroom, the school superintendent, Grant's mulatto former schoolteacher, and a minister who (at last) is neither a fool nor a knave. Characters of a wider diversity can deal with issues of wider, deeper complexity and more exacerbating emotion, even as they are gathered in response to one focusing event—the unjust condemnation of Jefferson. To learn what such a character would experience in such a situation, Gaines then researched prison life by extensive interviews with death-row lawyers, sheriffs, and deputies who had worked with such convicts.

To find out, he would take such a person and put him in the most demeaning of situations, on death row for a crime he merely witnessed in terror, and with almost no time left for any change in status. He is not even acknowledged socially as a man or a human. Then, in a classic irony, Gaines would send his convict an unwilling teacher of the kind who existed when teaching was the only profession blacks could achieve in the South, one who hates his role and is unsure of his own worth and manhood. Finally, he crowned the lesson in humanity by commissioning the teacher through the insistent voices of women.

However, is not centrally about Jefferson and his lesson in manhood/humanity before his electrocution. It is not even primarily focused on Grant Wiggins, forced to become mentor to his failed former pupil, slowly yet at last willingly becoming his student's student. The accuracy of her reading is corroborated by Gaines's report that he first intended to set the novel in 1988 but changed to 1948, a time when executions were still done in the parish where the crime was committed, when a portable chair was transported from one parish to the next on the bed of a truck, in sight of all, and when visits would be arranged by local people with the sheriff rather than by an attorney with the warden of the penitentiary. Gaines's comments

imply a protagonist status for the community. Not only Jefferson, not only Grant, but the entire local populace must be instructed, must be changed radically by the impact of the event that disrupts their days and ways of thinking about and relating to each other. All will learn how to live better as Jefferson learns to die. In this sense, Gaines has explored again and brought to a new degree of resolution in this latest novel all the issues he had explored before.

To accomplish his traumatic experiences, Gaines brings together by forces within the community its two most alienated members, has them learn from each other while interacting with the community; by their painful process of learning, they teach their lesson to the community. Grant is central to the project and the story because he is professional teacher, survivor, and narrator, but Jefferson is much more than secondary to him; he is more crucial to the story even than Vivian. Jefferson is the shadow side of Grant—uneducated and unambitious, without honor in his own black community and without imagination of anything beyond it, a pupil who never learned, much less came back to teach, victim of socially encouraged ignorance rather than dangerous achievement. Together, Grant and Jefferson are two versions of one imprisoned person, of one damaged black man. The thematic resolution must encompass both of them and, through them, their people.

A crisis is Jefferson's only way to achieve manhood. The novel even questions the "acceptance of a system of exploitation that necessitates, even guarantees that young black men like Jefferson will become convicts." That problem is trickier. Certainly the community in the novel is geared to such an expectation. And expectation is a form of acceptance. If the authorial voice is to oppose that, then the entire community must learn otherwise or else be shown as failing its most important educational opportunity. By seeing unexpected behaviors in



Jefferson, the black community must be led to new ways of relating to its "lesser" members—whether lesser by age, education, poverty, or talent. And in some credible measure, white society must be incorporated into wholesome community. Any hope of future justice and decent interaction requires the powerful to move toward compassionate imagination and toward recognition of humanity in the vulnerable.

Jefferson, Grant, and the entire community must learn the lesson that all Gaines's protagonists struggle to learn: that no one is anyone's "hog," that "manhood" is really strong and sensitive humanity, which includes perceptive and reactive comprehension of others' acts and feelings, and the moral and relational values that enable one to learn and love, make commitments, and survive as an integral personality wherever one is, regardless of external circumstances or even impending loss of life. When Grant has opened his own mind and heart to that lesson, he is fit to go on teaching. Neither California nor Louisiana offers him escape from racism's indignities; if he ever does go away again, it will not be in that false hope. By contrast, when Jefferson has learned and practiced the lesson, he finds his voice, no matter how broken his expression or how brief. He has escaped indignity even as racism is taking him to the electric chair. And when the whole community has learned, as much as each member can, there is hope for the children, hope for race relations and for a more human world. The novel is structured to reveal aspects of this theme, its "lesson" of individual humanity experienced and developed only in wholesome community relationships. The structure might be described as two concentric circles. Within one, the plot is worked out: Grant and Jefferson interact with each other by resistance and then engagement, and the entire community gradually and increasingly interacts with both of them until all have learned the lesson. Each significant character is seen learning; each changes as the

chemistry of human relationships is altered in the laboratory of the community, with Jefferson's impending death as catalyst for reactions.

The first crisis bringing unlikely togetherness is the announcement of the date of Jefferson's execution. Reverend Ambrose and Grant can meet with Guidry in Pichot's parlor (but have nothing to say to each other and are excluded from the service of coffee) because they must take the news to Emma. Guidry refers to her as the "old woman . . . who attended the trial," Ambrose as "His nannan" (157). Action now becomes an even more purposeful and revealing pattern of "going to": Guidry calls the doctor with real kindness for Miss Emma and only ironic care for the doctor's shoes in the muddy quarters; Ambrose goes to Emma for her support; Grant goes away for "a long walk in the opposite direction," wanting Vivian alone, "absolutely no one else" (159). When he does to Emma's, where most of the people of the quarters already have gone, no one wishes to speak to him. Vivian goes herself to Grant, and in a low-keyed contrast to the lovemaking in the fields, they lie "very close together with all our clothes on" (162). That new experience of love gives him strength to go with her back to Emma, who now asks him to come together with Ambrose to help Jefferson. Vivian improves her relationship with the old women by her compassionate attention, yet it devolves upon Grant, in lesson one of this section, to make Vivian understand black women's urgent need for a "stand" by men like Jefferson and himself. In teaching her, he enforces the lesson on himself and prepares to teach Jefferson.

Jefferson's execution date has focused all mental energies, including his traumatic imbalance of his psych. It belongs to his developing manhood that he begins to think his own thoughts without or beyond the promptings and pleas of Grant or the elders. The sequence of Jefferson's progress and everyone else's with his-

is marked by the sequence of visits to the jail. Using Gaines's embedded dating as it is possible to gauge their spacing, the urgency of the community, and the moral miracle of Jefferson's final six weeks of life. Shortly after the execution date is set, three visits are made within a week: on Friday by Grant, on Monday by the elders, and on Wednesday by Grant again. On Friday, Grant finds that Jefferson has reflected and is ready to talk about execution, minimally but humanly. A "whole gallona ice cream" (170) may be "hog" quantity, but it is human food, something pleasant he has never had enough of and can now have, even if it is the last thing in his life. His smile is not bitter, not ironic. He looks at Grant "not as he had done in the past" but "with an inner calmness" (171). He begins to think of people and things outside his cell: notices good weather, asks about Gable's baby. Reflective memory of his plan to hunt with Gable on the day of the Group killing begins his assumption of responsibility for being instead at the murder scene.

Jefferson's final achievement is rendered in his diary, that part of the novel that has garnered most critical attention and unreserved praise. It has been considered chiefly as an act of writing that both develops and reveals Jefferson's character. Philip Auger notes that writing in itself runs counter to the whites' assessment of Jefferson; by it he takes his life in "new and different" directions. By the power of language, he escapes one "prison house," achieves his manhood, finds a new "word" and produces a "biblical" text to guide others. Babb and Beavers stress the power of writing for self-knowledge, self-worth, and self-assertion; through his words Jefferson grasps his thoughts and feelings, names and claims his own history, evaluates it, and asserts his resources to end it bravely.

In final, Grant returns to first-person narration so a reader may hear, as only he did, Paul's moving account, and be, as he was, converted to whatever service of humanity or

eventual faith in God is needed or possible. He also must, with integrity and in brief, poignant understatement, reveal his response as no one else can. On the reader's response may depend, in some measure, the future of his students, of all children, of the human community. In this last novel, Gaines raised once more his foremost, recurrent issues and largely resolved them. Not fully, of course, because the issues remain in the American and human community. The novel dichotomizes not man and woman but hog and human. The same trait of "standing" that defines manhood in Jefferson has been required of all his protagonists, is required of and available to any person willing to face his or her moment of challenge. Manhood equals simple, integral humanity. Learning that lesson and acting on it create "quality" in every Jefferson, every Irene Cole and Louis Washington, Emma and Ambrose, Grant and Vivian. The character of Jefferson, in particular embodies the trauma of his community, highlighting the need for empathy, education and collective healing. Though Gaines's expose the powerful portrayal of the intersection of cultural memory and trauma in the experiences of African Americans, as it explores the complex relationships between cultural memory, trauma and identity and provides a nuanced understanding of the impact of historical trauma on African American communities.

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# AUSTER'S DOPPELGÄNGERS: UNPACKING THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF QUINN AND FANSHAWE IN CITY OF GLASS AND THE LOCKED ROOM

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## Abstract

*Paul Auster's City of Glass and The Locked Room, the first and third novels in his New York Trilogy, explore themes of identity, authorship, and the blurred boundaries between reality and fiction. At the heart of these novels are two seemingly distinct characters: Daniel Quinn, a detective writer who becomes embroiled in a mysterious case in City of Glass, and Peter Fanshawe, an elusive writer whose work is edited by an unnamed narrator in The Locked Room. Despite their contrasting narratives, a deeper exploration of their characters reveals striking parallels, particularly in the themes of isolation, identity fragmentation, and the tension between creation and destruction. Central to understanding both characters is the motif of the doppelgänger, which functions not only as a psychological concept but also as a literary tool to examine the interconnectedness of the two protagonists. Quinn's assumption of the identity of William Wilson, a fictional detective, in City of Glass mirrors Fanshawe's enigmatic disappearance and the narrator's obsessive relationship with his literary legacy in The Locked Room. Both characters experience a form of existential displacement, where their sense of self becomes increasingly fluid, fragmented, and reliant on external, often uncontrollable forces. Through the lens of postmodernism, Auster's novels interrogate the malleability of identity and the recursive nature of authorship. Quinn's journey as a pseudo-detective and Fanshawe's retreat into anonymity highlight the instability of narrative structures and the porous boundaries between self-authorship and external manipulation. Their fates intersect as they grapple with their roles as both creators and creations, embodying the profound sense of alienation that pervades Auster's work. By analyzing the doppelgänger dynamic between Quinn and Fanshawe, this paper explores how Auster uses these characters to interrogate the nature of identity, reality, and narrative construction. Ultimately, the interconnectedness of Quinn and Fanshawe challenges the reader's understanding of autonomy and control, offering a rich exploration of the postmodern condition through the lens of literary and psychological doubling.*

**Keywords:** *identity, language, postmodern, psychology, doppelgänger*

## Comparative Literature: An Introduction

Comparative Literature is an interdisciplinary field of study that examines literature across cultural, linguistic, national, and disciplinary boundaries. Unlike traditional literary studies, which often focus on a single language or national canon, comparative literature seeks to

uncover connections, influences, and divergences between texts from diverse contexts.

Rooted in the principles of cross-cultural analysis, the discipline often explores themes such as identity, translation, narrative structure, and intertextuality. Comparative literature draws

from various theoretical frameworks, including postmodernism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial studies, to examine how literature reflects and shapes human experiences across different societies and time periods.

The field also emphasizes the importance of multilingualism and cultural diversity, encouraging scholars to engage with texts in their original languages whenever possible. By fostering a global perspective, comparative literature deepens our understanding of how storytelling transcends borders and offers insights into universal and culturally specific aspects of the human condition.

As a discipline, comparative literature continues to evolve, embracing emerging methodologies and engaging with new media, globalization, and transnational identities. It remains an essential field for understanding literature's role in a complex, interconnected world.

Paul Auster, a literary luminary of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, was an American novelist, essayist, poet, screenwriter, and filmmaker. His works, often characterized by their introspective and philosophical nature, delve into the complexities of identity, chance, and the blurred lines between fiction and reality. Auster's novels, such as the acclaimed "New York Trilogy," are renowned for their intricate plots, enigmatic characters, and a sense of existential dread. His writing style, marked by its minimalist prose and evocative imagery, has captivated readers worldwide. Auster's influence extends beyond the literary world, with his works inspiring filmmakers, artists, and thinkers alike. His legacy as a master of postmodern fiction and a profound observer of the human condition endures, making him a significant figure in contemporary literature.

Paul Auster's *City of Glass* is a captivating novel that delves into the blurred lines between fiction and reality, identity and chance. Published in 1985 as the first installment of the

"New York Trilogy," this enigmatic work introduces readers to Daniel Quinn, a writer who inadvertently becomes entangled in a mysterious investigation. As Quinn assumes the identity of a fictional detective, William Wilson, he is drawn into a labyrinthine world of surveillance, deception, and existential uncertainty. Auster's minimalist prose and evocative imagery create a haunting atmosphere, as Quinn's quest for truth leads him to question the very nature of his own existence. *City of Glass* is a seminal work of postmodern fiction that continues to captivate readers with its exploration of identity, chance, and the fragility of the human condition.

Paul Auster's *The Locked Room* (1986) is the concluding novel in his acclaimed *New York Trilogy*. It tells the story of an unnamed narrator who is tasked with editing and publishing the works of his childhood friend, Fanshawe, after Fanshawe mysteriously disappears. As the narrator becomes entangled in Fanshawe's life—taking on his literary legacy and even his family—the novel explores themes of identity, authorship, and the boundaries between self and other. With its metafictional layers and psychological depth, *The Locked Room* serves as a thought-provoking meditation on creativity, obsession, and the haunting nature of absence.

Maurice Blanchot, a prominent French philosopher and literary critic, delves into the concept of the doppelgänger in his works, particularly in his exploration of literature and the uncanny. While he doesn't explicitly outline a "theory" of the doppelgänger, his writings offer profound insights into its psychological and metaphysical significance.

Blanchot views the doppelgänger as a manifestation of the subject's liminal state, a figure that emerges from the depths of the unconscious. It represents the uncanny double, the alter ego that both mirrors and threatens the individual's identity. This double is not merely a physical replica but a spectral presence that

challenges the boundaries between self and other, life and death.

For Blanchot, the doppelgänger is a literary device that can be used to explore the limits of language and the human condition. It is a figure that haunts the margins of consciousness, a reminder of the fragility and uncertainty of existence. Through the doppelgänger, Blanchot delves into the uncanny, the unsettling feeling of familiarity and strangeness that arises when the familiar becomes unfamiliar.

While Blanchot doesn't provide a systematic theory of the doppelgänger, his writings offer a rich and nuanced understanding of this enigmatic figure. His exploration of the doppelgänger's role in literature and philosophy provides valuable insights into the psychology of the uncanny and the nature of human identity.

### **The Doppelgänger Motif in Auster's Characters**

Auster's fascination with the doppelgänger is crucial to understanding Quinn and Fanshawe. Both characters function as mirrors of each other, reflecting different facets of identity and existential inquiry. Drawing on Maurice Blanchot's notions of the uncanny, Quinn and Fanshawe can be seen as doubles that destabilize notions of selfhood. Quinn's assumption of a detective's persona (William Wilson) and Fanshawe's almost spectral presence as an absence (communicated only through his manuscripts and the narrator's accounts) reflect how identity is not fixed but fluid, layered, and often fragmented.

Blanchot's idea of the doppelgänger emphasizes the tension between familiarity and estrangement. Quinn, in his role as Wilson, begins to lose himself, becoming estranged from his former life, while Fanshawe's "locked room" becomes a metaphorical prison of his identity—a space where he both exists and recedes. Their trajectories illustrate a recurring theme in

Auster's work: the self as a construct that is perpetually unraveling under scrutiny.

### **Language as Creation and Destruction**

Language plays an instrumental role in both characters' narratives, functioning not only as a tool for expression but as a means of constructing and deconstructing reality. For Quinn, language is a double-edged sword. As a detective, he relies on language to interpret signs and piece together clues. However, the deeper he ventures into the case, the more language fails him, highlighting its inherent instability. His descent into silence by the end of *City of Glass* is emblematic of language's inability to encapsulate the complexities of existence.

Fanshawe, on the other hand, wields language with an almost godlike authority. His manuscripts, which the narrator discovers in *The Locked Room*, represent his attempt to create a self-contained universe. Yet, the narrator's act of editing and publishing these works reveals the paradox of language: while it offers a means to immortalize the self, it also subjects that self to interpretation, distortion, and commodification. For both characters, language becomes a site of existential conflict, underscoring Auster's preoccupation with the limits of storytelling.

### **Solitude and Alienation**

Quinn and Fanshawe are quintessential outsiders, figures defined by their isolation. Quinn's detachment from society is evident in his initial reluctance to take on the role of detective. His life as a writer of detective fiction is solitary, and his adoption of William Wilson's identity exacerbates his alienation, as he loses touch with his own sense of self. His physical wandering through the streets of New York becomes a metaphor for his internal displacement.

Fanshawe's isolation is even more profound, as it is rooted in a traumatic past. The "locked room" that he obsesses over is not just a physical

space but a psychological state—a manifestation of his inability to connect with others. His retreat into writing is both a means of coping with and perpetuating his alienation. While Quinn's journey leads him to a state of existential despair, Fanshawe's story ends in literal disappearance, emphasizing their shared yet divergent paths as solitary figures.

Auster's use of interconnected narratives in *The New York Trilogy* highlights the postmodern blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality. Quinn and Fanshawe, while existing in separate novels, seem to share a liminal space where their identities and stories overlap. This interconnectedness invites readers to consider them not as distinct individuals but as variations of the same archetype—a writer-detective figure grappling with the mysteries of existence.

This overlap is further emphasized by the narrators' ambiguous roles. In *City of Glass*, Quinn's story is filtered through the lens of an unnamed narrator, creating a layer of separation between the reader and Quinn's experiences. In *The Locked Room*, the narrator's relationship with Fanshawe becomes a focal point, as he assumes Fanshawe's role both professionally and personally, further blurring the boundaries between self and other. The narrative interplay between these novels reflects Auster's interest in the construction of identity as a collaborative process, shaped by both internal and external forces.

### Themes of Chance and Contingency

Chance plays a pivotal role in the lives of Quinn and Fanshawe, serving as a catalyst for their respective journeys. Quinn's involvement in the Stillman case is entirely accidental, a wrong number that sets off a chain of events he cannot control. Similarly, Fanshawe's disappearance and the narrator's subsequent discovery of his manuscripts are serendipitous occurrences that reshape the narrator's life.

This emphasis on chance reflects Auster's broader philosophical inquiries into the randomness of existence. For both characters, chance events disrupt their carefully constructed lives, forcing them to confront the uncertainties of identity and reality. Yet, while Quinn succumbs to the chaos of chance, Fanshawe uses it as an opportunity for reinvention, suggesting a divergence in their responses to the same existential predicament.

### The Metaphor of the Locked Room

The concept of the "locked room" serves as a unifying metaphor for both characters' struggles. For Fanshawe, the locked room represents a space of confinement and isolation, a place where he can retreat from the world but also a prison of his own making. For Quinn, the locked room is less literal but equally significant—it is the psychological space he inhabits as he loses himself in the Stillman case. Both characters are, in a sense, trapped by their own identities, unable to escape the confines of their self-perception.

The locked room also functions as a broader metaphor for the act of writing itself. Writing is both a solitary and confining act, a process of delving into one's inner world while remaining physically isolated. For both Quinn and Fanshawe, writing becomes a means of exploring the limits of their identities, yet it also reinforces their alienation, reflecting the dual nature of creativity as both liberating and constraining.

### Conclusion

Daniel Quinn and Peter Fanshawe, the central figures of *City of Glass* and *The Locked Room*, embody Auster's recurring themes of identity, chance, and the power of language. Through their shared fascination with the nature of reality and their roles as writers and investigators, they serve as doppelgängers, reflecting different aspects of the human condition. Their stories,

though distinct, are interconnected through their exploration of the limits of selfhood, the instability of language, and the role of chance in shaping existence. Auster's ability to weave these characters' narratives into a cohesive thematic tapestry underscores his mastery of postmodern storytelling. By examining the similarities and differences between Quinn and Fanshawe, readers gain a deeper understanding of the existential questions that permeate Auster's work, affirming his status as a profound observer of the human condition.

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## REPRODUCTIVE REALITIES: TECHNOFEMINISM AND ECOFEMINISM IN YOKO OGAWA'S *PREGNANCY DIARY*

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### Abstract

*Yoko Ogawa is a prominent Japanese author. His novella Pregnancy Diary delves into themes of motherhood, identity, and the intersection of technology and nature. This novella offers an introspective perspective of motherhood and complexities involved in it. Due to the impacts of modern technology, themes of technofeminism emerge. It raises the relationship between nature and technology in this contemporary era. This work analyses how individuals redefine themselves through motherhood or trauma.*

**Keywords:** pregnancy, vulnerability, technofeminism, medical technology, endanger, chromosome ruin

*The Pregnancy Diary* is a novella by Yoko Ogawa. It explores the theme of interplay between technology and nature. It navigates the complexities of motherhood through the lenses of techno feminism and ecofeminism. It deals with the conflict between techno feminism and ecofeminism as discussed in this work. From the perceptions of two women characters such as the narrator and her sister, these two ideologies are shaped. The narrator's sister is in her pregnancy. She is strongly influenced by techno feminism. She is anxious about the medical appointment. She meticulously notes her temperature charts at regular intervals. It shows her complete reliance on technology to navigate her pregnancy. Even though she feels empowered with technology, she gets only emotional tension and disturbance during her appointment with doctor. It reflects the vulnerability that accompanies pregnancy. She does not understand the contradictory nature of herself having strong personal connection and the impersonal nature of medical technology.

In the view of Techno feminism, woman thinks technology empowers her. But it is actually a reinforcement of patriarchal structures. In *The Pregnancy Diary*, the sister meticulously charts her basal temperature. It exemplifies techno feminist themes. She relies

on medical technology and data to track her fertility. Using technology for reproduction, is actually a tool for patriarchal i.e. technological control over women during fertility. This data-driven approach to pregnancy is in contrast with holistic understanding of life and birth i.e. degradation of nature. It is reflected through the contrasting environment the novella presents: the sterile environment of the M Clinic and the natural garden where they played during their childhood. The narrator recalling the memories they spent in the garden denotes her longing for connection to nature.

The narrator reflecting on her sister's pregnancy reveals ecofeminist perspective. Her memories of the garden indicate a yearning for natural and less controlled experience of motherhood. The garden is full of vibrance it is in sharp contrast with the sterile environment of the clinic. It reflects the tension between embracing technology and longing for a natural connection to present life and future birth. During her pregnancy, she becomes emotionally detached with others and completely relies on her medication of pregnancy. This is a strange attitude during motherhood. That is because of her internal struggle to reconcile herself in absorbing medication during motherhood. She

ignores the narrator's reflections on the natural world—birds singing, clouds dissolving and traditional New Year's preparations.

The depiction of the ultrasound experience illustrates the contrasts between technofeminism and ecofeminism. The sister's fascination with the ultrasound machine and the gel used during the procedure reflects a technofeminist perspective. Here technology comes as a source of connection to the unborn child. The medicalization of pregnancy provides her with a sense of empowerment. After the procedure, she notices the lack of gel left on her stomach and gets disappointed. It signifies her yearning for an intimate connection with her pregnancy, through medical technology. She struggles to reconcile her identity as a woman and a mother with the technological framework surrounding her pregnancy.

Relying on medical interventions and the clinical visits to Dr. Nikaido, underscore a technofeminist perspective. The narrator's sister's consultation with her psychiatrist and her reliance on his words suggest a dependence on medical authority. But, the narrator is skeptical about Dr. Nikaido's effect on her sister. The use of modern conveniences, like the Water Pik and the avoidance of certain foods to make the sister comfortable reflects a technofeminist perspective. Though technology seems to manage pregnancy and health, it cannot fully address the deeper emotional needs of the sister. The narrator's decision and experience of eating outside and her admiration of the natural world contrast with the artificiality of the indoor environment filled with odors. This connection with nature and enjoying a meal in the garden highlight the ecofeminist perspective.

When the brother interacts with the narrator and his wife, it reflects the pregnant sister's reliance on doctors and their expertise. The medicalization of pregnancy is highlighted through the sister's previous experiences with Dr. Nikaido and the pills he prescribed. But this

couple lacks the emotional connection. It is evident that technology and medical interventions cannot fully address the deeper emotional needs of the sister. At one stage, the sister craves for food as a source of comfort.

To understand pregnancy, the medical language they use is not commonly understandable by people. The people with medical knowledge and technology alone can understand pregnancy. The sister proudly uses clinical language while discussing her pregnancy.

"This is about the time that the eyelids separate," she told me. "If the fetus is a boy, the genitals are starting to descend from the abdominal cavity." Her tone, as she described the baby, was cool. And there was something disturbing about the words she used—"fetus," "genitals," "abdominal cavity"—something that seemed inappropriate for an expectant mother. (62)

She refers to medical pamphlets then and there. It indicates her technofeminist perspective. However, her the emotional disconnection and the narrator's discomfort suggest that medical knowledge alone cannot address the complexities of the experience. Technofeminism fails in giving emotional connection and comfort to the people whoever follows it.

The focus on food preparation and the natural elements of grapefruits connect to ecofeminist themes. It emphasizes the importance of nurturing and organic experiences. The act of making jam becomes a way to reclaim a sense of agency and connection to the natural world amidst the anxieties of modern life. The narrator's awareness of the fruit's origins and her initial efforts to ensure its safety reflect a desire to foster a healthy environment for her sister and the baby. However, when it turns out to be a hybrid grapefruit, it splits DNA, because of scientific

developments made on it, it becomes a weapon created by technology.

This narrative builds upon the themes of pregnancy, and familial relationships, culminating in the impending arrival of the baby. The narrator reflects on her sister's transformation. The sterile environment of the clinical examination room is actually the industrialization of childbirth. It is in sharp contrast with the intimate nature of bringing a new life into the world. Relying completely on medical facilities creates only impersonal experience. This well-worn medical instruments and practices overshadow the natural aspect of childbirth. The sister from her girlhood prepares her mind to experience this medical trauma. She begins to imagine her childbirth through medical lens. She does not embrace the emotional and physical aspects of labour, but falls into the pit of medication processes.

The sister enumerates having "awful possibilities" (66) of begetting a baby with a birth defect. It reflects contemporary anxieties surrounding medical discourses on childbirth. Pregnancy is not seen as life-affirming process but it threatens with risks. It may fail in giving the mother the joy of motherhood with its potential medical failures. She finally cannot escape the reality of the baby of the born baby's condition. Succumbing to medical technology, she distances herself from the natural aspect of pregnancy and childbirth. Wajcman views reproductive technologies as agencies of patriarchy.

Radical feminists' strong opposition to the development of the new reproductive technologies reflects fears of patriarchal exploitation of women's bodies. Central to this analysis is a concept of reproduction as a natural process, inherent in women alone, and a theory of technology as an agent of patriarchy. (18)

Departure from traditional practices of childbirth indicate a cultural shift away from community to technology.

The sister's weight gain during pregnancy reflects medical gaze on women's bodies. The numerous medical interventions she has highlights potential complications involved in it. The female body is seen only through medical lens. It leads to disempowerment. The biological act is made to complications and it invokes only anxiety and reduces successful births. The narrator notices the change in her sister's body. "But there has been no change in my sister's appetite, and fat is beginning to accumulate in her cheeks and neck, her fingers and her ankles. Thick, soft fat. I feel a little disoriented every time I see her like this. Her whole body is swelling before my eyes like a giant tumor." (64) The negative connotation used by the narrator to denote the sister's sudden increase of weight indicates that the life is not born with the medication, only tumour is forming in her womb.

The narrator receives a bag of American Grapefruit as there was a "little accident at the supermarket where I was working today. One of the stock boys slipped on a piece of lettuce and broke a whole cart full of eggs." (62) As her manager could not tell the grape fruits, he gave her the big bag of grapefruits. This little act of slipping on the piece of lettuce leads to her receiving a big bag of American grapefruits. She reaches home and prepares jam in the absence of her sister. While cooking, she gets the glimpse of its destructive nature that she came to know at her class. In her class, the pamphlet was circulated. It warns about the carcinogenic properties of imported fruit. The grapefruit is typically associated with health and vitality, but the presence of antifungal PWH which is a harmful chemical turns out to be poisonous. Eventhough she recalls this during her cooking process, she continues her cooking. The pregnant sister entering the house suddenly and begins to consume the jam directly from the pot confuse the narrator. Her craving for consumption is actually the primal action of the

medication that she is undergoing. The narrator becomes helpless. Eventhough she understands its potential danger associated with it, she feels powerless to intervene.

The grapefruit is basically a source of nourishment but it becomes a potential harm. The narrator is aware of the carcinogenic properties of the fruit. The medical and technological advancements which are supposed to empower women, only endanger women. The narrator allows the sister to eat, in other words nature allows technology to overpower but finally takes its wins at the end. The narrator foresees the disturbance in the baby's chromosome. She wonders, "whether the

chromosomes in there were normal, whether the cocoons were wriggling somewhere deep inside her." (62) The sister who gets succumbed to medical technology falls a victim to it because of her own choice. The narrator understands this end and watches the destruction. The novella ends with the narrator going "to meet my sister's ruined child."(69) It indicates none can attain victory by suppressing nature.

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# FRACTURED TRADITIONS: A POSTCOLONIAL WOMAN'S JOURNEY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S ROOTS AND SHADOWS

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## Abstract

*Shashi Deshpande's novel explores how a woman named Indu challenges traditional expectations in a Maharashtrian Brahmin family. The story follows her personal growth from a dependent daughter to an independent woman, who questions societal norms. Indu represents the modern Indian woman who rejects predetermined family expectations; seeks personal sexual autonomy; questions traditional marriage structures; and challenges patriarchal family systems. The novel reveals how women across different generations have experienced systemic family oppression and undergone a silent struggle to realise their own personal identity and position within family members and in society. A lifelong resistance and resilience has been forced on women biologically and psychologically. A well known psychoanalyst, Sudhir Kakar comments, "For many Indian women, marriage marks the beginning of a life-long struggle to reconcile their own sexual desires with the societal expectations of a good' wife," (Page123) in his book *Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality*. This particular passage adds much to Sashi Deshpande's ideologies, that the societal constraints and expectations that deny Indian women sexual freedom after marriage, highlights the tension between cultural ideals and individual desires. Symbolically, a family represents restrictions on women's freedom, prolonging dependency both in their biological residence and in-laws acquaintance. Deshpande critically examines: women's experiences in postcolonial India and the conflict they encounter between tradition and individual desire. Towards the end, the protagonist Indu's return to her husband is not about submission, but a conscious choice of self-determination, symbolizing women's evolving role in Indian society. The novel ultimately portrays women's journey from marginalization to self-awareness wanting them to claim their rights and freedom. It's not Deshpande or the protagonist's suffering, the novel as a whole sounds to be a powerful depiction of how Indian women are transforming their lives in the postcolonial era.*

**Keywords:** sexual autonomy; resilience; submission; marginalization

Indu's journey represents a nuanced exploration of a woman's quest for self-discovery and individual identity within the framework of traditional Indian family dynamics. Her narrative powerfully demonstrates the generational tensions between conservative expectations and modern aspirations, revealing the complex psychological landscape women navigate in their pursuit of personal liberation.

Few extracts from the novel (Sashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows*, 1st edition, published by Sangam books), taken into account expose the expectations from the in-laws: "A daughter-in-law should be like a daughter, obedient and loyal. But Indu is different, she has

her own ideas" ridiculed Indu's Mother-in-law (Page 201)

"Indu should be more careful about what she says and does. She should think about the family's reputation" advised the Father-in-law (Page 241)

Mother-in-law's expectation of obedience and loyalty from Indu and the father-in-law's concern with maintaining the family's reputation is well grasped from the utterances. A similar kind of situation is also observed by the protagonist Rukmini in "The Collector's Wife" by Mitra Phukan. Rukmini exclaims, "The weight of their expectations was crushing me, making me feel like a bird in a gilded cage, with no freedom to fly." (Page 123) This extract is

placed to support Indu's lack of freedom in the clutches of in-laws. The women characters reflect the unfortunate life forced on them in the name of patriarchy. Also the quote underscores the objectification of women, reducing them to mere possessions or titles, stripping them of their agency and identity.

Indu delivers her contrary notions against her in-law as: "I had always known that I was expected to be a good daughter, a good wife, a good mother. But what about being a good person?" (Page 123)

"My mother-in-law had very clear ideas about what a daughter-in-law should be. And I had very clear ideas about what I wanted to be." (Page 156)

These ideas bring out the difference between expectations and the pain in adjourning the same. Indu's struggle with the predetermined expectations placed upon her by her family, encapsulates the conflict between her own aspirations and the expectations of her in-laws. "I felt trapped between two worlds, the world of my parents and the world of my in-laws. Both wanted me to be something I was not"-----Indu (Page 187)

"My mother-in-law's words cut deep into me. I felt like I was being pulled apart by the conflicting demands of my family and my own desires." (Page 219)

These words of disparity squeezes out the conflict between Indu's own aspirations and the expectations of her in-laws. This quote highlights the conflict Indu faces in navigating the expectations of her own family and those of her in-law. For a girl, in Indian society, familial rules are forced to be followed both from her own family and the in-laws's side. Conflict arises when they struggle to bare the difference. Often Mother-in-law become the rule makers.

At times, husband's play the role of a catalyst in balancing Mother and Wife, where intimacy becomes vital. Women were regretted to have sexual freedom too. They weren't allowed to

decide when, to have a child. Bearing a child depends on either the in-laws or the husband. The wife is forced to carry the offspring for ten full months, amidst regular family regular duties.

"I felt a surge of desire, but it was quickly suppressed. I had been taught to suppress my desires, to be a good wife and mother." (Page 143)

Women from their childhood were trained to suppress their feelings, emotions and needs. This long termed repression creates scratches internally resulting in an unbalance.

"I wanted to explore my own body, to know what gave me pleasure. But I was afraid of being discovered, of being labeled immoral." (Page 168)

A mixture of self-realization and fear of self-realizing can be observed. This dilemma has been the hallmark attitude of Indian women, since long. The well educated expose their ideas whereas the illiterate perish before realizing.

"My husband's touch felt like a duty, a obligation. I wanted to feel desire, to feel wanted. But it was all so mechanical." (Page 201)

Biological union is always expected to have love on both the sides. But lack of understanding and intimacy getting artificial reveal the poor relationship between husband and wife. Husband being unaware of the same, on the other side women have to quell herself whether she loves or denies, "I felt like I was living in a prison, trapped by societal expectations. I wanted to break free, to explore my own desires." (Page 241)

These deplorations brings out Indu's desire for freedom and autonomy. She feels trapped by societal expectations around sexuality and wants to break free and explore her own desires. Indu's internalized societal norms around sexuality has been conditioned to prioritize her roles as wife and mother over her own desires. Whereas her desire for sexual autonomy and self-discovery

gets held back by fear of societal judgment and labels. Indu's dissatisfaction with her sex life should have made her feel like fulfilling a duty rather than experiencing pleasure or desire. These laments brings to limelight, Indu's internal struggle for sexual autonomy and highlight the societal norms and expectations that limits her desires and the tension between her own aspirations. Women's position seemed to be worse than a slave, as she lacks the freedom to be close in contact with her legally announced husband, and the societal norms dictates what and when to do, sounds to be artificial.

Indu's conversation with Sunil portrays her willing to question both her husband and the patriarchal society: "I feel so trapped, Sunil. I feel like I'm just going through the motions of being a wife and mother. I want more out of life."

When approached psychologically, this particular utterance is outcome of Claustrophobia. In words of David H. Barlow, eminent American Psychologist, Claustrophobia is often associated with feelings of panic, anxiety and helplessness, and can be triggered by arrange of stimuli, including elevators, tunnels and small rooms." Indu might have felt the suffocation within herself between the way she was bred from childhood, new rules in the in-laws's house, and no point of relaxation makes her procure Claustrophobia, without her knowledge, and speaks so nervously.

"What do you mean? You have everything you need. A comfortable home, a loving husband, children... what more could you want?"

"I want to be able to make my own decisions, to have my own identity. I want to be able to pursue my own interests and passions. But every time I try to do something for myself, you or the children or the servants need something from me. I feel like I'm constantly being pulled in different directions."

"That's just the way it is, Indu. That's what being a wife and mother means. You have to put others first." (Pages 201-203)

This conversation outpours Indu's feelings of suffocation and frustration within her marriage. Her husband's response reflects the societal norms that prioritize family duties over individual desires. "In Indian culture, the husband-wife relationship is often idealized as a sacred bond, but in reality, it can be a complex and challenging relationship" comments Ashish Nandy, one of the Political Psychologists.

### Conclusion

Patriarchal society has indeed broken women deeply, stifling their autonomy, freedom and identity. The countless restrictions placed on them have led to a fragmentation of their identities as they struggle to navigate the complexities of social expectations, family obligations and personal aspirations. Through the prism of literary works such as *Roots and Shadows* by Shashi Deshpande, we witness the inner turmoil of women like Indu, who want to express themselves but are bound by the chains of tradition and conformity. "Women's liberation is not just a women's issue, it is a human issue," argues Arundhati Roy. The fractures inflicted on women are multiple: their choices and decisions are often dictated by social norms, which limit their freedom and free will; Their identity is often subsumed by their role as wife, mother and caregiver, leaving them with no sense of identity; Women's desires, aspirations and passions are often suppressed, forcing them to live a life that is not theirs. "Women's education is essential for the progress of India. It has enabled them to participate in the development process and contribute to the growth of the country" (page 178) advised Mahatma Gandhi, who later encouraged women to continue to resist, subvert and challenge the patriarchal norms that are intended to constrain them. Through their efforts, they have opened

new avenues, regained their power of agency, and gradually healed the fissures that had been imposed on them. Ultimately, recognizing and addressing these divisions is essential to create a more equal society, where women can flourish as full, autonomous individuals, free from masculinity. Through their hard and prolonged work, they have charted new paths and reclaimed their position. In addition, many positive factors have enabled women to advance: access to education and economic opportunities has enabled women to achieve independence and autonomy; women's organizations, support groups and online communities provide a safe space for women to share experiences, receive support and mobilize for change; women's voices and stories are increasingly represented in the media, literature and politics, providing role models and inspiring future generations; the women's rights movement has gained momentum, with more people recognizing the importance of gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms. "The most important thing is to give women the opportunity to make their own choices and decisions," said Kiran Bedi, former Governor General of Pondicherry, in her book "I Dare!" Kiran Bedi." (page 124). Women have always shown extraordinary resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity, finding ways to survive, thrive and create positive change, establishing

themselves in almost every field. The great economist Amartya Sen stated in his book *Development as Freedom* that "the status of women in India has improved significantly since the colonial era. They are now safer, more secure and more confident." (page 305)

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# CULTURAL MEMORY: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF REPRESSION AND IDENTITY IN EMILY BRONTE'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* AND PERUMAL MURUGAN'S *A LONELY HARVEST*

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## Abstract

*The researcher seeks to counter the humdrum reality of cultural discourse, unleashing two different cultural texts based on Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung's ideological standpoint of displacement, and collective and personal unconsciousness memory. Dream carries the power to unmask unconscious repressed desires and pathetic illusions that must be concealed within complex domain structures. The study aims to decentralize false consciousness of class and economic order, perpetuating a normative cultural performance. Drawing upon the methodology of Cultural memory, the research aims to expose the structural existential ideology called traditional social disorder. Cultural memory offers a critical background to reconstruct the typical normative social ideology such as gender, class, and race within a particular group. The convergence of cultural memory and psychic humanity penetrates a force to disclose repressed thoughts of human psychic mechanisms. Within this spectrum, the researcher is tempted to scrutinize the psychic apparatus of social convergence crisis bound with the matter of hierarchal cultural discourse.*

**Keywords:** *displacement, cultural memory, collective memory, cultural discourse*

The imbrication of Literature and Cultural Memory constitutes a coercive force to examine the ontological reality of universal violence of class and cultural stereotype oppression in human social dimensions and it powerfully exposes the internal world of human psychic reality. The juxtaposition of cross-cultural context expresses the myth of power in constructing identitarian pride and its consequence on the victim's psychic process. The intersection of Collective and Personal unconsciousness in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and Perumal Murugan's *A Lonely Harvest* regulates the characters' structural strategic journey of personal and collective unconsciousness memories in diverse cultures.

The novels *Wuthering Heights* and *A Lonely Harvest* comparison offer a universality of existential oppression based on social discourse such as class and gender stereotypes intact in two different cultural contexts. The importance of class and cultural ideology reveals a horrible formalistic prejudice vaguely enthralled in both cultures, provoking a pessimistic torment on the individuals' psychic apparatus. When the characters' social constraint choices fail them to exist in reality, their autonomy becomes illusory, resulting in a hallucinatory effect on the characters' internal world of emotional psyche. The discourse of social taboo configurations in both cultural edges constitutes an indispensable tragic consequence on individual conscience.

*Wuthering Heights* articulates a social paradigm of class conflict and how it destroys one's conscious mind. Whereas, in *A Lonely Harvest*, Ponna is seen to be in her traumatic illusion of Kali, picturing a portia tree that functions as an enlivening memory of Kali for her ephemeral within a superstructural evil society.

In both novels, the repercussion of cultural norms intricates a paranoia illusion on individual entities featuring demonized subdued repression desire. Here the threshold of consciousness is filled with traumatic neurosis configurations, Ponna sees the portia tree as part of Kali's life, yet he hangs on it and Heathcliff's unconscious mind scaffolds an experienced archetypal memory of Catherine providing him a substitute satisfaction in his psychic illusion transcending the boundaries of life and death. The repressed characters, Heathcliff and Ponna, endure distressing experiences due to their choices in disrupting deadlocked circumstances. In both cultures, the subjugation is different, and the characters' powerless to defend pathetic illusions within an impenetrable dungeon reveals the universal disorder of cultural performances.

The concept of Freud's description of 'dream work' provides a royal roadhouse to understanding repressed desires in the unconscious mind. "The process of displacement which substitutes indifferent material for that having psychic significance (for dreaming as well as for thinking) has already taken place in those earlier periods of life, and has since become fixed in the memory" (Freud 154). The novels *Wuthering Heights* and *A Lonely Harvest* effectively demonstrate the prosaic displacement of psychic dream displacement in the minds of the characters Heathcliff and Ponna.

In *A Lonely Harvest*, Ponna's buried naïve memory of Kali manifests into a latent dream. The psychic force of Ponna's indescribable pain displaces her repressed thoughts through the representation of nature. Her wounded psyche embraces the warmth of a new experience in a

farm field. Ponna's firmness in cultivating an exploited land offers her a natural rhythm of peace and purpose to her melancholic soul, as she harvests "The brinjal plant had grown big and fully taken over the bed...The chilli plants too thrived, with flowers and new fruits growing lush all over...The ragi plant too grown well and filled on the entire field" (213). Ponna's strategy of constructing an ecosystem modifies her subdued repression and stimulates a threshold of consciousness with her connection with the environment. The copiousness of real thought represents the ideal element of her actual truth is concealed behind the disfiguration of unpleasant memory.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's fragmented collective memory of Catherine is inhumed in his unconscious thoughts. His dream condensation is a reliable reaction that turns out to be a manifestation of retained memory of Catherine which confronts as a latent dream, and it cannot be vividly displayed but is concealed within the complex structure of his psychic mechanism. Heathcliff's dream displacement disfigures dream condensation of Catherine and disappears the resembling core of his subconscious dream thoughts. Heathcliff's unpleasant thought coincides with destructive violent revenge, "It is a poor conclusion, is it not?" he observed, having brooded a while on the scene he had just witnessed...when every thing is ready and in my power, I will find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten me – now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives. I could do it, and none could hinder me" (276).

At this juncture, both Ponna and Heathcliff are subjected to a savage life in a different cultural configuration, their authentic identity is different but their analogue of hallucinatory torment is incarcerated within the psychic sphere. The characters' suppressed cravings are contrarily maintained in both novels, according to their cultural ideological governing structure. Jung describes the human self as the totality of

all psychic processes. Jung defines the collective unconscious as a source of psychic hereditary existence, which is exclusively distinguished from an individual's negative unconscious memory. Therefore, the collective unconscious contents are never stored in the conscious psychic process, rather they prevent individuals from acquiring the contents of the personal memory. The firm existence of the psychic memory in the unconscious mind is purely made up of the content of archetypes that demonstrates the capability of psychic life understanding.

The high strata of cultural inference inject faceless stereotypes and create collusion of transcending human differences. The collective unconscious shares the ethnocentric experience of civilized cultural patterns resulting in archetypes. Jung explains it as "unlike the personal unconscious, it is made up of individual and more or less unique contents but those of universal and regular occurrences" (Jung 179). The notion of a collective unconscious is articulated through the repository of cultural discourse beliefs.

In *A Lonely Harvest*, Ponna's social status as a widow in a white sari possesses the pattern of cultural norms. Ponna is seen as a victim of farcical cultural inscription and her psychic apparatus is filled with traumatic neurosis consciousness, stimulating alienation as Ponna grieves, "I am draped in white now. From now on they will say it is unlucky to start a day looking at my face. They will turn away if they see me coming down the street. They will say I should not take part in auspicious functions" (160). Thus, the outrageous lamentation of Ponna demonstrates the universal phenomena of social prejudices that swallow the existence of a trauma victim.

Likewise, in *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's class discrimination conjures the real nature of universal adoptive archetypes of class consciousness. Heathcliff, as an orphan and outsider, frantically tries to inhabit within the social hierarchy. The notion of incorporating shadow archetype is to unmask the disposition

of Heathcliff's dark psyche as a consequence of his failure to fit into the constructive cultural hierarchy. Jung offers a concept of shadow archetype in literature titled *Psychology Religion: West and East* asserts,

Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continuously subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected. It is, moreover, and liable to burst forth in a moment of unawareness. At all events, it forms an unconscious snag, blocking the most well-meant attempts. (Jung 93)

Heathcliff's demonized shadow consciousness is generated from a repressed isolation of his failure to conform to the unmarked dimension. This repressing shadow results in Heathcliff outbursts when he overhears Catherine's intention of neglecting him for his low social standards, "That will do to explain my secret...I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now" (71). Thus, Heathcliff is infuriated by the dark shadow consciousness to avenge Catherine's family to the ground.

Jung's prime work, *The Structure and Dynamics of Psyche*, outlines personal unconsciousness as a psychic phenomenon because of its lack of quality in consciousness. According to him, subliminal psychic content possesses an energy value to invoke consciousness. As the value of conscious content becomes lower, it sinks more readily behind the threshold of consciousness. Thus, the unconscious is responsive to all repressed content memories resulting in subliminal impressions. Further, it is associated with an unconscious process that generates a dream. Besides this dream content, there lies a

conscious repressive pain of thoughts and feelings which Jung refers to as the 'Personal Unconscious'.

Personal unconsciousness reproduces the material content of repressed pain and thought through the censor of endo-psychic repulsion. Both *A Lonely Harvest* and *Wuthering Heights* embody the concept of 'Subliminal impression' as an intermediate factor in exposing unconscious memories of characters' inner agony. In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's inconsumable pain evaporates when he learns the news of Catherine's death, causing his inner psyche to be fatally shattered. The novel profoundly illustrates the psychological distress of Heathcliff as he mourns,

And I pray one prayer – I repeat it till my tongue stiffens – Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you – haunt me then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe; I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss where I can not find you! oh God! it is unutterable! (146)

Similarly, in *A Lonely Harvest*, Ponna is morbidly disturbed by an emotional illusion of her deceased husband Kali's frail image transgressed from her subconscious mind. The sense of guilt for participating in the fertility ritual without his concern impulses a psychic repressed trauma, stimulating a gory image of Kali's hanging body beneath the Portia tree. The unbearable distressing vision of Kali turns Ponna to reflect repressed thoughts that are buried in her unconscious mind. "All right, you are with me now. I am not going to let go of you. She would see Kali's body hanging there. She saw that gory image of him, the way she had seen him laid out on the cot, only now upright...she could not bear to look at this for too long. It filled her with fear and rage, and she always started crying. More than the tragedy of

Kali's death, Ponna felt that it was an even greater punishment to be left with that gruesome image of him" (10).

The social identitarian stereotypes system indeed causes an indispensable psychic torment when individuals fail to contemplate the conjuring reality. The continuous recollection of psychic dream material content shapes the existence of waking consciousness in both Ponna and Heathcliff's real-life experiences in the actual unsurmountable chasm. Thus, the paradigm of cultural memory framework plays a pivotal role in understanding Freud's dream work of displacement introspective in the cross-cultural context of *A Lonely Harvest* and *Wuthering Heights*.

Another important factor of Carl Jung's theoretical concepts of Collective unconscious, Shadow archetype, and Personal unconscious exemplifies the universal archetype patterns in guise of cultural taboos' impact on the psychic apparatus of human social relationships within a cultural hegemonical structure. Therefore, *A Lonely Harvest* and *Wuthering Heights* have comparisons as well as contrary cultural narrative elements. Both novels mirror human constructive and destructive psychic mechanisms based on the normalized cultural phenomenology of universal archetypes.

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# EMOTIONAL INHERITANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE IN *THE STONE ANGEL*

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## Abstract

*The novel traces Hagar's transformative journey from a arrogant, phlegmatic woman to a resistless individual confronting her life's unresolved agony. Born into a dogmatic society that valorizes emotional suppression, Hagar internalizes a rigid emotional framework that prevents genuine human connection. The study focuses on: Intergenerational emotional inheritance manifested through familial communication patterns; Psychological mechanisms of pride as a defensive strategy against vulnerability; the profound impact of unspoken emotions on familial relationships; personal transformation through memory and self-reflection. Marvin Shipley, a dutiful elder son who cares for Hagar despite her historical emotional distance represents loyalty and pragmatism. John Shipley, the favored younger son dies tragically, symbolizing Hagar's emotional disconnection. Bram Shipley, Hagar's husband, whom she marries against her father's wishes, represents her rebellious nature. Doris Shipley, Marvin's patient wife manages Hagar's care. Henry Pearl, one of the childhood friends represents Hagar's past connections. Moving around with the characters, Laurence should have starved to construct such a familial bond leaving the reader with an aching heart.*

**Keywords:** phlegmatic; self-reflection; intergenerational trauma

The novel explores how these characters interact within Hagar's complex emotional universe, revealing intergenerational trauma and the psychological consequences of emotional suppression. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, discusses how traumatic experiences effect individuals and families across generations, highlighting the importance of understanding the impact of trauma on both mind and body, proves that intergenerated trauma gets transmitted to generations kindling yet other related deficiencies, in his book "*The Body keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.*" [2] Hope the author had either personally experienced or observed such consequences around her.

The novel powerfully illustrates how unprocessed emotions and psychological traits can be unconsciously passed down, creating a cycle of emotional disconnection that impacts multiple generations. Hagar inherits her father's unyielding pride, which becomes a destructive

force in her life. This pride leads to displeasing consequences like unsuccessful marriage, strained relationships with family members, inability to express genuine affection and consequently contributing to her son John's tragic death.

Like the stone angel as an idol, symbolizing her emotional state, Hagar remains emotionally frozen, unable to shed tears or connect meaningfully with her loved ones. Her inheritance manifests as a "stone-like" emotional disposition that prevents genuine human warmth. The novel reveals emotional inheritance as a complex process of unconscious trait transfer. Which can be observed from the character, Hagar, who inherits her father Jason Currie's pride, becomes a destructive psychological mechanism that prevents genuine emotional connection. Biologically it's believed that genes and chromosomes are carriers of characteristics. For instance, "Heredity is not just about the genes we inherit from our parents.

It's also about the influences that shape our traits and behaviors... The story of heredity is a complex one, full of twists and turns, "[3] insisted Carl Zimmer, one of the renowned American Science writers, blogger and columnist. If Genes play a vital role internally, environment in which one lives constitutes external behaviour, which cannot be refused. This highlights the complex relationship between heredity and the acquisition of parental characteristics.

Hagar's inability to express emotions stems directly from her upbringing. She cannot cry or show vulnerability, mirroring her father's stoic Presbyterian ethic. This emotional rigidity is a profound form of intergenerational inheritance that transcends mere personality traits.

"I couldn't weep. I felt frozen, unable to mourn or feel sorrow. I had been frozen for so long, I didn't know how to thaw. I had grown a carapace, a shell of pride and self-control, and I couldn't crack it open, even now." (P. 34)

This extract illustrates Hagar's difficulty in expressing her emotions, particularly in the face of her husband's death. Her inability to weep or mourn suggests a deep-seated emotional suppression, which has been reinforced by her pride and self-control. The image of the "carapace" or shell is a powerful metaphor for Hagar's emotional armor, which has protected her from hurt but also prevented her from experiencing life fully.

"'I've never been one to show my feelings,' I said, 'It's not seemly.' Marvin looked at me, and for a moment I thought he would say something, but he didn't. He just looked at me, and I felt a pang, but I wouldn't let myself feel it." (P. 117)

This excerpt highlights Hagar's mental disability to express her emotions, even to those closest to her. Her comment that it's "not seemly" to show feelings suggests a strong social conditioning against emotional expression. The fact that Hagar feels a "pang" but refuses to acknowledge it illustrates her

ongoing struggle with emotional suppression. Peter A. Levine, a renowned expert in trauma and stress, defines emotional suppression in the context of his Somatic Experiencing (SE) approach: "Emotional suppression refers to the automatic, often unconscious, process of inhibiting or 'freezing' emotional responses, particularly those associated with traumatic or stressful events. This suppression can lead to a dissociation from one's emotions, sensations, and bodily experiences, resulting in a range of symptoms, including anxiety, depression and physical pain." [4] Emotions, when suppressed gradually results in other psychological issues depending on the mental stability of the individual. Healing or regular intervals of counseling can be a cure to get rid of such short comings. On the other hand, if this defect is not given care, might result in various mental disorders.

The Stone Angel itself symbolizes this emotional inheritance a monument of pride, blindness, and emotional petrification. The statue represents not just Hagar's emotional state, but the generational transmission of emotional suppression. Hagar's inherited traits lead to: Self-imposed isolation; inability to connect with family; deep personal suffering; perpetuation of emotional distance across generations. "I've lived a life of self-imposed silence. I've never spoken my mind, never expressed my feelings. I've been a stone angel, silent and unyielding," (P. 276) highlights Hagar's recognition of her self-imposed isolation and her tendency to suppress her emotions.

"I've built walls around myself, walls of pride and self-control. But now, at the end of my life, I'm beginning to see that those walls have kept me prisoner, have kept me from living." (P. 295) accentuates Hagar's growing awareness of the costs of her self-imposed isolation and her desire to break free from her emotional prison.

"'I don't need anyone,' I said. 'I'm fine on my own.'" (P. 201) This dialogue illustrates Hagar's

insistence on independence and self-sufficiency, even as she struggles with loneliness and isolation. Realizations and dilemma becomes regular habits of people like Hagar in general.

"Bram and I slept in the same bed, but we might as well have been strangers." (P. 67) brings out the lack of intimacy and connection between Hagar and her husband Bram. Hagar's inability to connect with her husband has made their relationship feel empty and loveless. Physical nearness can never be considered as intimacy. A hygienic relationship needs a parallel communion. This strained moves well focuses the package of family bond

"I felt a surge of anger, but I pushed it down. I didn't want to argue with Bram." (P. 105) The quality of defending for oneself seems to be descending here. At times when people don't advocate for themselves, unpredictable consequences becomes the result. Hagar seems to be distancing herself away from the family each time a quarrel uprises.

"My father was a hard man, unyielding and unforgiving. He never showed affection, never spoke a kind word."(P. 23) Parents are always the path-directors, whereas Hagar's father's emotional unavailability and lack of affection has created a lasting impact and the ability to connect with others and form intimate relationships. A vague behaviour always keeps one aloof than mingle with a group.

"I learned from my father to suppress my emotions, to never show weakness. But it's a hard habit to break."(P.211) Self-realization comes later after getting involved in all hardships. Hagar's father's emotional unavailability and suppression have been passed down to her. This legacy of emotional suppression has contributed to Hagar's inability to connect with her family and form meaningful relationships. These spoken parts provide insight into Hagar's struggles to connect with her family and form intimate relationships. Ultimately, the novel demonstrates how emotional patterns are

transmitted through family dynamics, creating a cycle of psychological inheritance that shapes individual experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Hagar's life shows that emotional inheritance does not have to be a permanent limitation or something to be assumed. Through introspection and eventual acceptance, she transforms her inherited emotional landscape, revealing a profound potential for personal growth and psychological healing. Not all difficulties in life has solutions, it is the intensity that determines our suffering and our handicap to reach an end point. We must recognize that not all tasks in human life end with sufficient success. When success and failure are embraced with hygienic consistency, imbalance is avoided. In one way or another, everyone has their own perspective on happiness and desires, depending on economic, political, environmental, family, hereditary and other vital influences. In scientific terms, self-imposed isolation can be a loss of self-esteem, a negative attitude towards everything that happens to oneself and others. A mindful way to relieve stress is to practice whatever keeps us busy and active. Avoiding immediate emotive reactions or responses to social and family events can lead to malaise. A balanced approach to life is what is expected, and a responsible way to take healthy and periodic vacations can lead to happiness. Being content and happy with what we have is also a way to live a balanced life. Dissatisfaction, like the drop on a lotus leaf, is what most religious practices insist on for lasting happiness. People feel anxious when they have simultaneously experienced failure or loss. The happiness gained from success is worse than the pain gained from failure. When anxiety and worry are balanced, life becomes sweet, but practically a difficult task.

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# CONFINEMENT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY IN EMMA DONOGHUE'S ROOM

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## Abstract

*Emma Donoghue's novel "Room" explores the profound psychological landscape of confinement through the unique narrative perspective of a five-year-old child, Jack, who perceives his captive environment as his entire world. The novel ingeniously deconstructs reality by presenting a microcosm where objects become characters and limited space transforms into a complete universe. The narrative's power emerges from Jack's innocent yet constrained viewpoint, where Room is not a prison but a home, and everyday objects possess agency. Donoghue strategically uses Jack's limited linguistic and cognitive framework to reveal the traumatic circumstances of his mother's captivity while maintaining a surprisingly hopeful tone. Thematic Exploration in the novel critically examines concepts like: the malleability of human perception; survival mechanisms in extreme psychological conditions; the mother-child bond as a resilience strategy; the psychological impact of spatial and social limitation. By presenting confinement through a child's perspective, Donoghue transforms a potentially horrific narrative into a nuanced exploration of human adaptability and psychological resilience. Emma Donoghue's Room embodies multiple post-modernistic elements that challenge traditional structures and perception. Narrative Perspective told from a five-year-old's limited perspective challenges conventional storytelling methods and presents fragmented reality through Jack's innocent observations. No traditional chapter divisions is observed, sections titled "Presents," "Unlying," "Dying," "After," and "Living" breaks linear narrative conventions. Blurring boundaries between reality and imagination celebrating fragmentation as a liberating experience. Questioning reliability through Jack's restricted understanding redefines spatial perception and transforms confinement into a complex psychological landscape. The novel brilliantly illustrates postmodern principles by presenting a unique narrative that deconstructs traditional storytelling, offering a profound exploration of human adaptability and perception.*

**Keywords:** confinement, cognitive framework, perception

## Introduction

*Room* tells the story of Jack, a five-year-old boy who lives with his mother in a small 11-by-11 foot room, which he believes to be the entire world. His mother, kidnapped seven years earlier by a man called Old Nick, has been keeping Jack safe and hidden in this confined space. On Jack's fifth birthday, his mother devises a daring escape plan by convincing Jack to pretend to be dead. Jack successfully escapes and helps the police rescue his mother. After their liberation, they struggle to adapt to the outside world, with Jack initially wanting to return to the familiar Room. Eventually, they visit Room one last time, where Jack says goodbye and realizes it no longer holds any emotional significance for him. The novel explores themes of survival, maternal love, and

human resilience in the face of extreme confinement.

Ma and Jack develop intricate coping mechanisms to survive their confined environment in "Room". Ma meticulously structured daily routines creating routine educational and play activities. She maintained physical and mental stimulation for Jack and made him to understand the full trauma of their situation.

Jack, during the earlier stage had lot many difficulties. He then created his room as his entire universe, using imagination to transform limitations into possibilities. He also developed unique psychological defense strategies and framed games and rituals with Ma. Certain techniques were both followed by Ma as regular exercises: daily "Scream" ritual to release

psychological tension; counting in descending order during stressful moments; treating inanimate objects as companions; using TV as mental escape and learning tool. In general life situations, people rely on television as weekend time pass. After all, primary coping mechanism is their profound emotional bond, which becomes their primary source of psychological resilience and survival strategy. Jack and Ma transform their traumatic confinement into a protective, nurturing environment through creativity, mutual support, and imaginative adaptation

In *Room*, Emma Donoghue displays confinement as a complex psychological landscape that transcends physical limitation. Confinement is not merely a spatial restriction, but a profound psychological experience that reshapes human perception and survival mechanisms. A 11x11 foot room becomes an entire universe for Jack, in compulsion or fate. Confinement creates a unique mother-child survival ecosystem, out of Old Nick's stupidity or villainy. As a whole seven total years becomes a hell, Ma at least has confined from the outer world. But Jack becomes victim for a no man's emotional imbalance.

For Donoghue, confinement might have been: a circumstance that challenges traditional understanding of demarcation; where subsistence is mandatory; a space of psychological adaptation; feedback madness of a stranger or a closed one. The narrative reveals confinement not as a static condition, but a dynamic psychological compulsive acceptance where human resilience, maternal love, and child's innocence reconstruct reality within extreme limitations.

"I've been in this room for nine years, ever since I was nineteen." (Page 11)

"The room is my world, and Old Nick is the only other person in it." (Page 15)

"I try to remember what it's like outside, but it's hard to picture." (Page 23)

"I miss the sunshine, the fresh air, the sound of birds singing." (Page 63)

"I try to keep track of time, but it's hard when every day is the same." (Page 89)

These extracts conceal the anguish of the protagonist. Ma shouldn't have predicted Old Nick to behave so violent. At times she takes it a compulsion of other man's cruelty.

"I miss the feeling of grass beneath my feet." (Page 143)

"Sometimes I feel like I'm disappearing, like I'm not even a person anymore." (Page 157)

"The room is a cage, and I'm the bird that's trapped inside." (Page 171)

"I try to remember what it's like to be free, but it's hard to picture." (Page 185)

"Old Nick says I'm his, that I belong to him." (Page 201)

"Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever be free again." (Page 217) Here are the publisher details for Emma Donoghue's *Room*.

These laments fill the readers with their retinas full. Abruptly exposes the protagonist's longing for freedom and connection with nature. Ma's longing for freedom and uncertainty about their future and a psychological toll of prolonged confinement. Her disconnection from the outside world should have made her come to a conclusion that Old Nick's motives for confinement are possessive and controlling.

Self-Confinement refers to a voluntary restriction of one's own freedom, often due to personal choices, fears, or psychological factors. It can be a coping mechanism or a way to avoid dealing with external challenges or stressors. This may involve physical or emotional isolation, but is ultimately a self-imposed constraint. "Self-confinement is a coping mechanism used by individuals to deal with stress, anxiety, or other negative emotions, often resulting in feelings of isolation and disconnection" observed Marsha Linehan in his book. This sort of self-confinement, at times becomes a self-exile from anything, be it

personal or a public issue. Whereas, becoming a victim of anybody's psychotic disorder becomes unbearable, like those of Ma and Jack. Old Nick should be punishable for violating one's time and life. Jack becomes innocent underdog.

Conversely, for Jack, the same confined space is his entire universe—a nurturing, safe environment where every object possesses personality and meaning. His innocent perspective transforms the room from a site of trauma into a comprehensive world filled with imagination, comfort, and maternal love. Jack personifies objects like Rug, Plant, and Bed, creating an intricate ecosystem that represents complete security and familiarity.

This remarkable narrative demonstrates how psychological perception can radically reframe physical space. While Ma experiences the room as a claustrophobic nightmare, Jack perceives it as a protective womb-like environment that represents his entire existence. Their contrasting experiences highlight the extraordinary human capacity to construct emotional meaning within even the most restricted physical boundaries. Ma and Jack's relationship is a testament to the resilience of the human attachment system, even in the face of extreme trauma" demonstrated John Bowlby in his book "Attachment and Loss".

Compelled confinement, like the one experienced by Jack in Emma Donoghue's *Room*, can have severe and long-lasting effects on a child's physical, emotional, and psychological development. Certain potential effects of Compelled Confinement on a Child like Jack leads to strange understanding of this universe. Psychologist Lev Vygotsky suggests that Jack's confinement may lead to cognitive impairment, including difficulties with problem-solving, memory, and attention." which normal kids possess.

Language is the vital part which a child ought to acquire depending on its environment. Jack in a restricted campus will lack such

attitude. Jean Piaget emphasized that Jack's limited exposure to language and social interactions may lead to delayed language development, in his book "The Language and Thought of the Child."

Analysing Jack's behaviour, American Psychologist Harry Harlow predicted that he might have difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships. This symptoms can be observed in limited numbers among children who are brought up under normal family setup. But this causes a syndromic effect on Jack, becomes unavoidable. If language and social behaviour becomes abnormal, then definitely or consequently he might have to possess emotional irregularities leading to increased anxiety, unwanted fear and worries, uncontrollable aggressiveness, too much of freedom and care both as well be a drawback to him until he adopts to the new outer world.

On the other hand few psychologists suggest positive healing opportunities too. For instance, Benjamin Spock prescribed "a hygienic and safe environment to support physical, emotional and psychological development." Which means a special care can heal him and mould him to adopt the current world he survives.

American Cognitive Scientist Noam Chomsky wanted live exercises to be conducted to Jack for betterment. Engaging Jack in conversations, reading books louder, and sing songs can support Jack's language development and socializing skills. Though these characteristics are natural for a normal child, Jack has to be injected with these exercises.

Latest developments in Psychology and appropriate healing methodologies pave way for better solutions. It's the part on the subject to make use of the medications and get rid of the shortcomings and prove eligibility.

## Conclusion

Emma Donoghue's *The Room* is a thought-provoking novel that explores the themes of

confinement, trauma, and the construction of reality. Through the eyes of Jack, a five-year-old boy who has never experienced the outside world, we witness the psychological effects of prolonged confinement on individuals, particularly children. As psychologists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky suggest, children's cognitive and social development is heavily influenced by their environment and interactions with others (Piaget, 1926; Vygotsky, 1986). Jack's confinement, therefore, has severe implications for his development, including language delay, social isolation, and emotional regulation difficulties (Herman, 1992; Goleman, 1995). Moreover, the novel highlights the complex relationship between confinement and the construction of reality. As Noam Chomsky argues, language plays a crucial role in shaping our perception of reality (Chomsky, 1968). Jack's limited exposure to language and his reliance on Ma's narratives, significantly influence his understanding of the world. The Room also raises important questions about the impact of trauma on individuals and society. As Marsha Linehan suggests, trauma can have severe and long-lasting effects on mental health, including the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder (Linehan, 1993). Ma's experiences, therefore, serve as a powerful reminder of the need for support and understanding in the aftermath of trauma. In light of these insights, it is clear that *The Room* offers a nuanced and thought-provoking

exploration of the human experience. As we reflect on the novel's themes and characters, we are reminded of the importance of empathy, understanding, and support in the face of trauma and adversity.

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# MODERN APPROACHES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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## Abstract

*The subject of English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone transformative changes and has been driven by advances in pedagogy, linguistics and technology. Traditional methodologies have given manner to modern techniques that emphasize learner autonomy, interactivity, and cultural relevance. This paper examines outstanding present-day methodologies in ELT, inclusive of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and generation-stronger gaining knowledge. It evaluates their theoretical underpinnings, practical packages and effectiveness in numerous studying contexts. Through critical evaluation, the examination highlights the significance of adapting methodologies to cater to numerous learner wishes, fostering engagement and ensuring linguistic and cultural competence.*

**Keywords:** *english language teaching, task-based language teaching, communicative language teaching, content and language integrated learning, present-day methodologies.*

## Introduction

English, as a worldwide lingua franca, holds a pivotal role in verbal exchange, schooling, and expert contexts. The call for effective English language coaching has caused the development of diverse coaching methodologies. Traditional strategies along with Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual tactics have paved the manner for progressive strategies that prioritize communicative competence and learner-targeted practices. Modern ELT methodologies combine advances in cognitive technology, pedagogy, and era, reflecting a shift from teacher-centred education to collaborative, contextualized studying experiences. This paper explores key modern-day methodologies in ELT, reading their theoretical foundations, packages, and challenges. By examining Task-Based Language Teaching, Communicative Language Teaching, Content and Language Integrated Learning, and the use of era, this look at targets to offer insights into effective coaching strategies for contemporary rookies.

## Modern ELT Methodologies

### Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching emphasizes using meaningful responsibilities as the central unit of preparation. It is rooted in cognitive and constructivist theories. TBLT's goals are to expand language talent through actual communicate. TBLT is grounded within the concept that language mastering occurs most successfully when newbies engage in obligations that replicate real-world conversation. It attracts the standards of interaction hypothesis and output speculation, which pressure the significance of significant interaction and language use.

1. Real-global duties: Activities which include function-playing, project paintings, and hassle-fixing simulate true situations.
2. Focus on fluency: Learners prioritize conversation over accuracy, improving their self-assurance in using the language.

3. Evaluation: Performance is assessed based totally on task crowning glory as opposed to linguistic accuracy.

4. Challenges:

Implementing TBLT requires cautious venture design, a balance between fluency and accuracy, and instructor training to manage various learner talents.

### **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative Language Teaching specializes in developing learners' capacity to communicate effectively in diverse contexts. It prioritizes fluency and functional language use over structural accuracy. CLT is rooted in sociolinguistics and useful linguistics, emphasizing language as a tool for interaction. Hymes' concept of communicative competence underpins this approach, advocating for language use in socially appropriate approaches. The practical applications include group discussions, debates, and interviews to promote a real-existence communicate. The teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding newcomers to discover language use organically. The use of newspapers, motion pictures, and podcasts ensures publicity to natural language. The critics of CLT spotlight troubles that include loss of focus on grammar, problems in assessing communicative competence, and challenges in contexts where examination-orientated education prevails.

### **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

CLIL integrates language-gaining knowledge with content-based totally guidance, allowing learners to gather subject knowledge and linguistic competencies concurrently. CLIL is prompted using Vygotsky's sociocultural principle and Cummins' framework of cognitive instructional language talent (CALP). It emphasizes scaffolding and contextualized learning. The subject integration is based on

teaching technology, history, or geography through English. Then, the gradual development from basic to complicated linguistic structures. Finally, the evaluation of each difficulty is based on language proficiency. CLIL needs specialized trainer training, curriculum design, and substance development to balance content and language targets correctly.

### **Technology-Enhanced Learning**

Technology has revolutionized ELT by presenting entry to diverse resources and interactive platforms that support customized studying. Technology-superior studying aligns with constructivist and connectivist theories, emphasizing collaborative and learner-pushed procedures. The digital equipment includes language learning apps, virtual truth (VR), and gamification to beautify engagement. The blended mastering methods combine face-to-face and online education for flexible studying pathways. Collaborative systems are oriented to tools like Google Classroom and Padlet to foster interaction and peer getting to know. The amount of digital literacy, getting the right of entry to to era, and retaining learner motivation in virtual environments pose demanding situations.

### **Comparing Traditional and Modern Methodologies**

Traditional methodologies such as Grammar-Translation centred on rote studying and structural accuracy. In contrast, modern processes emphasize communicative competence, learner engagement and contextualized language use. The shift reflects evolving pedagogical paradigms, prioritizing experiential and interactive learning over passive information acquisition. The adaptation to learner needs is also very important. Modern methodologies underscore the importance of learner-centered guidance. By thinking about factors which include skill ranges, cultural

backgrounds, and learning styles, instructors can tailor techniques to maximize effectiveness in learning. In fact, differentiated education and formative assessment similarly can enhance learner consequences.

### Future Directions in ELT

The destiny of ELT lies in the integration of rising technologies together with synthetic intelligence, augmented reality, and records analytics. The personalized ways of gaining knowledge, pathways, adaptive exams and immersive reports will redefine language preparation. Moreover, a renewed consciousness of inclusivity and sustainability in ELT can address international academic demanding situations.

### Conclusion

Modern methodologies in English Language Teaching constitute a paradigm shift closer to interactive, contextualized, and learner-focused tactics. Task-Based Language Teaching, Communicative Language Teaching, Content and Language Integrated Learning, and era-more suitable guidance offer various strategies to fulfil the desires of present-day inexperienced persons. By embracing those methodologies and adapting them to unique contexts, educators can

foster linguistic competence, cultural attention, and lifetime learning. Therefore, constant research and innovation in ELT will ensure its relevance and effectiveness in a dynamic international landscape and strengthen our students.

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# AN EXPLORATION OF INDIAN AND GREEK LITERARY TRADITIONS

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## Abstract

Comparative literature fosters knowledge of literary works across cultures by highlighting the issues, influences and unique expressions. Indian and Greek literature are ancient, historical and profound sources and offer a fertile place of knowledge and exploration. This article examines the parallels and divergences between these two age-old traditions that specialize in subject matters like mythology, heroism, philosophy and morality through literature. By juxtaposing the "Mahabharata" and the "Iliad", the Upanishads and Greek philosophy, and the epics' societal roles, one can discover the familiar nature of human expression and the uniqueness of cultural contexts. This paper traces the appreciation of two important worldwide literatures and their interconnectedness and similarity.

**Keywords:** comparative literature, Indian literature, Greek literature, myths, epics, philosophy.

## Introduction

Comparative literature bridges cultural and temporal divides, presenting insights into the shared human circumstance. Indian and Greek literature, with their historic roots and rich traditions, provide compelling material for such an examination. Both civilizations, by their literary works, grapple with existential questions, ethical dilemmas and societal norms. This paper explores thematic parallels and contrasts between Indian and Greek literature, with particular recognition of their mythological narratives, philosophical inquiries, and epic traditions.

## Mythology and Cosmology

Indian and Greek literature are deeply rooted in mythology, serving as foundational frameworks for their cultural and spiritual identities. The Indian pantheon, as depicted in texts like the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and *Puranas*, features gods and heroes whose actions encompass cosmic standards like dharma (righteousness) and karma (motive and impact). Similarly, Greek mythology, as portrayed in Homeric epics and Hesiod's *Theogony*, gives a pantheon of deities whose interactions with mortals illustrate

topics of hubris, destiny, and divine justice. While each tradition uses mythology to explain cosmic origins and ethical order, their strategies range. Indian myths regularly emphasize cyclical time and reincarnation, while Greek myths are conscious of linear progression and the finality of mortal lifestyles. For instance, the *Bhagavad Gita*'s discourse on everlasting soul contrasts with the *Iliad*'s preoccupation with legacy and mortal glory.

## Heroism and the Epic Tradition

The *Mahabharata* and the *Iliad* are huge epics that explore heroism, obligation, and human flaws. In the *Mahabharata*, heroes like Arjuna face ethical dilemmas that transcend a person's dreams, emphasizing adherence to dharma. The *Iliad*, however, celebrates the heroism of Achilles, whose pursuit of private glory and vengeance underscores the Greek ideal of excellence. Despite their differences, each epics spotlight the tension between individual ambition and communal duties. The battlefields of Kurukshetra and Troy signify the stage in which human virtues and vices conflict, imparting timeless lessons about the complexities of human nature.



### Philosophy and Morality

Indian and Greek literature are profound in their philosophical explorations. The Upanishads delve into metaphysical principles like Brahman (last reality) and Atman (self), seeking to uncover life's closing cause through introspection and non-secular exercise. Greek philosophy, represented using thinkers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, investigates information, ethics, and governance through reasoned argumentation. While the Upanishads emphasize religious liberation and cohesion with the cosmos, Greek philosophy often makes a speciality of human society and rationality. For example, the *Taittiriya Upanishad* explores the layered nature of fact and human achievement, even as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* examines practical virtues and the pursuit of eudaimonia (flourishing). However, both traditions attempt to define and reap the best of life through awesome situations.

### The Role of Literature in Society

Indian and Greek literatures serve as ethical and cultural compasses by reflecting and shaping societal values. The Mahabharata's didactic narratives educate ethical behaviour, even as the Iliad's tragic grandeur conjures up reflection on human limitations. Both traditions use storytelling to address popular issues such as justice, leadership, and the human circumstance. Furthermore, the oral traditions of each piece of literature underscore the communal factor of storytelling. Indian kathas and Greek rhapsodies facilitated the transmission of cultural background, adapting to societal adjustments over centuries. This dynamic interplay among oral and written forms ensured their enduring relevance. The parallels between Indian and Greek literature illustrate shared human worries, at the same time as their divergences spotlight cultural specificity. Both traditions discover

topics of divine intervention, destiny, and moral choice. However, Indian literature's spiritual introspection contrasts with Greek literature's emphasis on human organization and rationality. For example, the *Bhagavad Gita* provides a non-secular framework for action, advocating detachment and devotion. In comparison, Greek tragedies like Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* probe human limitations inside the bounds of destiny and purpose. These differences underscore the particular approaches every way of life addresses conventional questions.

### Conclusion

Hence, the comparative view of Indian and Greek literature is famous for each through the universality of human expression and the richness of cultural particularities. While their mythologies, epics, and philosophies deal with shared worries like morality, heroism, and the cosmos, their tactics mirror awesome worldviews fashioned by using historical and cultural contexts. Through these literary traditions, we can deepen our knowledge of the interconnectedness of world literature and the various methods of humanity to seek the means and purpose of a benevolent life.

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