ATMIYA UNIVERSITY
RAJKOT, GUJARAT (INDIA)

Organize
One-day International Conference
On

New Emergence and Contemporary Trends in the English Language and Literature

11th OCTOBER, 2025

Special Issue - I (October 2025)

Editor-In-Chief
Dr. Divyang D. Vyas

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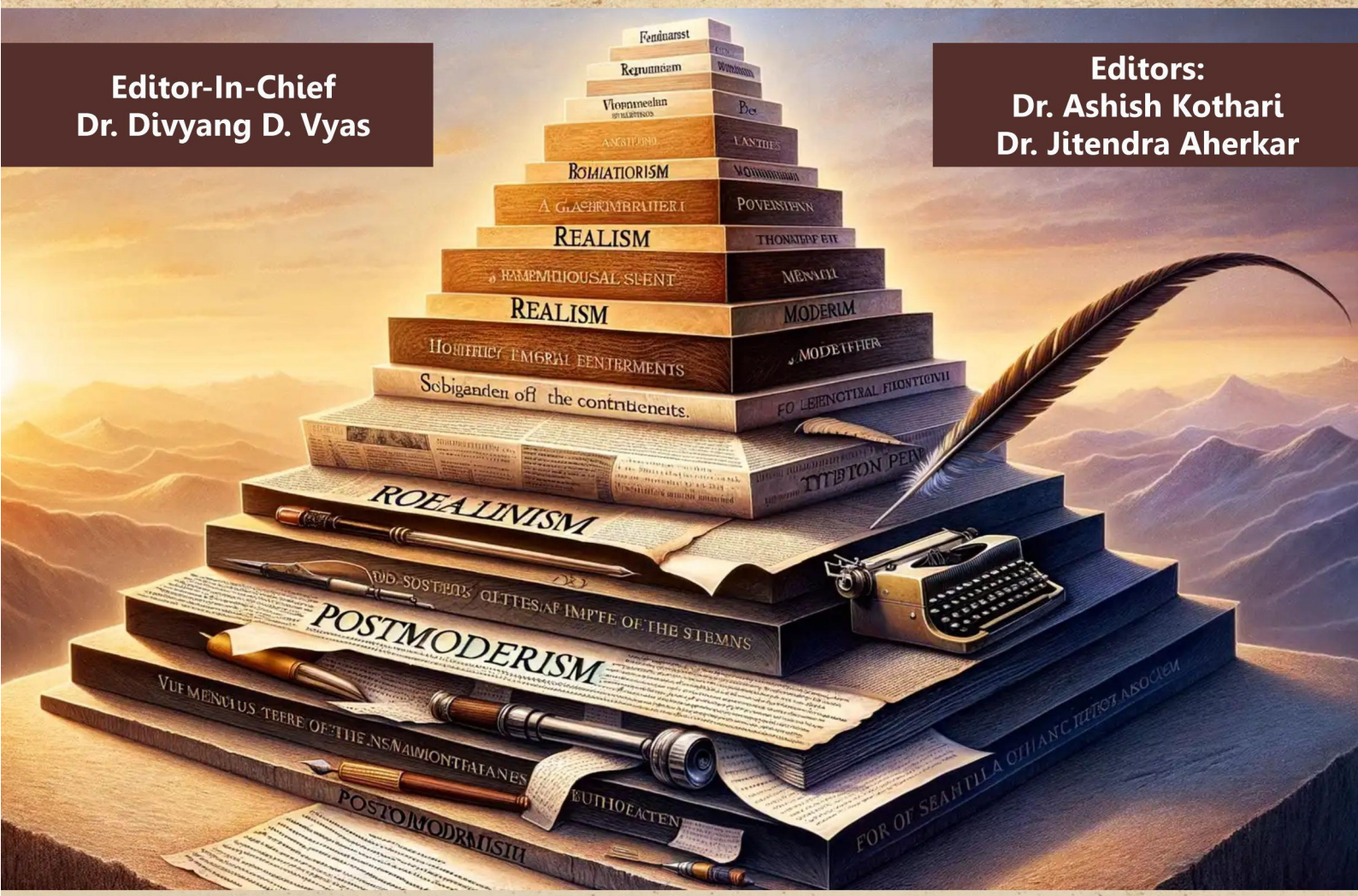
Dr. Ashish Kothari
Dr. Jitendra Aherkar



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CHIEF-EDITOR

DR. DIVYANG D. VYAS

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DR. ASHISH KOTHARI

DR. JITENDRA AHERKAR

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Dr. Kothari specializes in Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, and Industry Automation. His passion for fostering innovation has driven him to establish initiatives like Udisha Club, OSTC, SSIP, and Remote Center with IIT Bombay, benefiting over 15,000 learners through Coursera during COVID-19.

His contributions include 13 patents, 5 books, 25+ SCOPUS/WoS research papers, and 9 Ph.D. completions under his guidance. He has also delivered 15 expert talks with IUCEE and various universities in fields of Image Processing, MATLAB, Patent Filing Procedures in India, Machine Learning, and Artificial Intelligence. A humble mentor, he promotes scientific inquiry across all education levels, combining cultural values with technological expertise to inspire innovation and hands-on learning in students.

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A prolific researcher, Dr. Aherkar's scholarly work spans financial inclusion, rural development, gender studies, and microfinance, reflecting a holistic approach to societal advancement. His publications on rural migration, women's empowerment, and the impact of microfinance on rural trade linkages demonstrate his commitment to addressing socio-economic inequalities through evidence-based insights. Deeply rooted in empathy and driven by a mission to uplift marginalized communities, his initiatives focus on empowering women and rural populations by fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods. Advocating for sustainability and inclusive growth, Dr. Aherkar emphasizes the importance of balancing economic progress with environmental and social well-being. His research on rainwater harvesting, rural innovations, and holistic development highlights his vision for a future where academic inquiry and practical solutions converge to create equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies.

Conference Introduction of International Conference on New Emergence and Contemporary Trends in English Language and Literature

In an age defined by **velocity**, where the human condition is refracted through the prisms of the unbound reality, the landscape of English Language and Literature is not merely changing—it is rapidly evolving. This volume of documented research, derived from the proceedings of the International Conference on New Emergence and Contemporary Trends in English Language and Literature, hosted by the Department of Humanities at Atmiya University on 11 October, 2025, serves not just as a record, but as an attempted cartography of this intellectual reformation.

The central inquiry animating this conference was the constant new emergence which requires to be addressed. The contemporary trends of genre constantly dictate what is seen, read, and felt. Our endeavor was to explore this intricate dynamic: how do literary analysis, linguistic pedagogy, and critical theory respond to a reality fragmented by the ubiquitous rise of Artificial Intelligence, at times defined by posthuman ecologies, and informed by ancient, yet re-emerging, knowledge systems.

The volume organizes the intellectual breadth of the proceedings into six core thematic corridors, beginning with an exploration of Contemporary trends in Language Studies and language teaching by analyzing new practices in communication and linguistics. This dialogue is enriched by New Interpretations in Indian English Studies, which offers fresh readings through the vital lens of Indian Knowledge Systems and contemporary Indian literature. Further extending the critical scope are papers addressing Contemporary trends in Postcolonial Literature and Studies, specifically examining new literatures, the global impact of Diaspora studies, and the crucial field of Contemporary Trauma Studies. Parallel to these analyses is the section dedicated to Understanding the New Genres, which delves into emergent forms such as Environmental Literature, Digital Humanities, and the burgeoning trends in Film Studies. These diverse engagements connect to broader Contemporary trends in Literary Studies, which encourages dialogue on current theories, Comparative Literary Studies, and new developments in Translation studies, all leading to the final and most immediate focus: the Impact of use of AI in English Literature, which confronts the profound challenge posed by the influence and implications of Artificial Intelligence on the entire discipline.

Each submission testifies, the text is never bound by the page, but is instead an evolving, multi-species, and globally conscious entity. This collection rejects the notion of a static archive. It stands as an urgent call to action for the academic community to embrace the fluid, interdisciplinary, and ethically complex future of our field. This volume invites the reader to dive into these critical engagements and begin charting the emergent literary and linguistic topography.

Saurabh Chauhan H
Assistant Professor & Conference Secretary
New Emergence and Contemporary Trends in English Language and Literature
Organized by Department of Humanities, Atmiya University, Rajkot

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BĪBHATSA RASA AND AESTHETIC PURIFICATION IN FRANZ KAFKA'S METAMORPHOSIS

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Abstract

This study examines the vital role of Bībhatsa Rasa in Franz Kafka's novella Metamorphosis. It also emphasizes the various effects of Bībhatsa Rasa on the reader and evaluates the consequences that lead to its realization. The paper also include observations and certain powerful aftereffects of the Bībhatsa Rasa, such as detachment, aesthetic purification, and spiritual liberation. Drawing on Abhinavagupta's insight, the paper explores the aesthetic experience of disgust, which stimulates self-reflection and ethical awareness. Furthermore, the paper examines the character portrayal of Gregor Samsa and the consequences of his Metamorphosis into a Vermin, and evaluates Bībhatsa Rasa as a medium of aesthetic purification.

Keywords: Bībhatsa Rasa, Aesthetic Purification, Franz Kafka, Metamorphosis, catharsis.

Introduction:

"A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us."(**Franz Kafka)**

Pondering over the thought-provoking statement by Franz Kafka, we realize his ideology on books. According to Franz Kafka, a reader must select those books that affect mentally as well as emotionally, which awaken one from within and give courage to speak against the authoritarian institutions and dehumanized social structures.

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), a Czech-German writer and the most influential novelist of the 20th century. Among his best writings such as *The Metamorphosis* (1912)*, In the Penal Colony* (1914)*, The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926), *and Amerika* (1927). *The Metamorphosis,* a novella, is his masterpiece. A Nobel Prize winner, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who died in 2014, even said that it was reading Kafka's novel *The Metamorphosis* that inspired him to write his own books.

Such is the influence of the novella, *The Metamorphosis,* from which we observe

Kafka's sensibility, named as **Kafkaesque –** a situation which is surreal, nightmarish, and absurd, depicts the feeling of helplessness against the social system and highlights the irrational and dehumanizing side of an individual. Gregor Samsa protagonist of the novella, awakens one morning transformed into a vermin, unable to move and carry out human activity. Such are the surreal and absurd consequences with which Kafka designed his novella. Consequences are something that works as an axe to penetrate deep down towards the frozen sea (innermost self) of an individual, which again is a composition of nine dominant emotions (nine Rasa- a unified and ceaseless emotional experience). When any individual comes in contact with artistic expression (watching a movie, reading fiction or a poem, observing a painting, etc.) He or she realizes a sense of emotional realization and then liberation (purgation) of the dominant emotion depicted in the art. It is this process through which an individual experiences a subjective touch and an emotional experience with literature.

Concept of Rasa in Indian poetics

Rasa is the basic and most explored element in Indian poetics, the reason is that it is an indelible element of literature. "**Na hi rasaadrite kashchidarthah pravartate**" (Sinha and Kumar) that is, without rasa, no meaning can ever be conveyed. Rasa (a Sanskrit word) has multiple meanings, some of which are juice, liquid, sentiment, or flavour. Specifically in a literary context, Rasa is the prevailing sentiment within the reader and a dominant emotion or nature of any literary work. Tracing the tradition of Rasa as a concept in literature, then, Bharat's *Natyashastra* is said to be the first work in which the concept of generation of Rasa was defined by Bharatamuni as **" Vibhaavaanubhaav vyabhichaarisaNyogaad rasa niShpattih."** (Bharata, Canto 6). The combination of Vibhaav, anubhaav, and vyabhichaaribhaavs generates rasa.

The process of 'rasa niShpatti', that is, realization and liberation of Rasa, was discussed by Bharat in Natyashastra. But this realization of Rasa can only occur if Vibhavas, Anubhavas, and Vabhicharibhavas are combined together.

- **Vibhavas** (Determinants) that are the direct external cause for the rise of emotion in a character it is broadly classified into **Alamban Vibhavas**: the person or thing that has direct contact with the character and which results in the churning of the dormant emotional state in the character.
- **Udippana Vibhavas**: they are the (contributory determinants), in other words, they provide external support and influence the active emotional state of character.
- **Anubhavas** (consequent action) are the physical manifestations or reactions resulting from the experience of Vibhavas. It is mainly expressive in nature, and will vibhavas are felt emotional state.
- **Vyabhicaribhavas** (Transitory States): These are the fleeting emotional states that accompany the dominant emotion.

Further, the theory of Rasa was modified by three commentators and followers of the Rasa School of poetry. (Sinha and Kumar 67–89)

1. Bhattalollat's Utpattivaad

Utpatti- Rasa Utpatti- Where does the Rasa originate?

According to Utpatti vaad, the origin of Rasa is in the character performing the drama. In the Ramayana character playing the role of Shri Rama is the originator of Rasa.

The origin of the Rasa is in the character described in the drama, and there is no Rasa in the heart of the spectator.

2. Shrishanku's Anumitivaad

This theory of Anumitivad is a response to Utpattivaad.

Word – '**Anumaan'**- assumption or imagining one thing to be another.

For some duration, we assume the actor to be the real person facing the real condition. The Vibhaavs, Anubhaavs, and Vyabhicaribhavas are the factors that help us imagine that the actor is the original character and Rasa is the result of this imagination.

3. Abhinavagupt's Abhivyaktivaad

This theory of Abhivyaktivaad goes beyond Utpatti and Anumiti Vad. According to Abhinavagupt, emotions already in a dormant state are present in a person, under normal circumstances, these emotions are dominant as Sthaayibhaavs. But when there is a combination of Vibhaavs, Anubhaavs, and Sanchaaribhaavs, these Sthaayibhaavs are expressed or manifest (abhivyakt), and the pleasure of experiencing these emotions is called Rasa.

His other theory of Sadharanikaran (generalization) says that the personal emotion depicted in art transcends individual experiences, allowing the audience to engage with it on a universal plane. Through this process, the audience undergoes an aesthetic experience of Rasa.

Brief Storyline of *Metamorphosis*

The novella begins with Gregor Samsa, a travelling salesman, early morning he wakes up in his bed, but is unable to move due to his transformed body. He tries to roll over, only to understand his new body, tries to scratch his stomach with one of his many new legs, but feels no satisfaction; he feels disgusted with himself. Then he started pondering about his job, which ultimately gave him no pleasure; rather, his work was only to provide a livelihood that fulfilled his family's economic needs. A quick glance at the clock made him realize that he had overslept and missed his train to work. As he had yet not stepped down and was late for work, his mother came to ask about his well-being. She knocked on the door, and when Gregor replied, he realized that not only had his body also his voice had also changed. The family suspected that it might have happened that Gregor was under the weather; otherwise, he must have gone to his job early in the morning. The manager came to Gregor's house just to get a reason for Gregor's absence from the workplace. Except for his sister Grete, every member of his family and the manager had

gathered outside Gregor's room. They knocked and forced him to open the door. The manager wanted to have an explanation of Gregor's absence and unsatisfactory performance at the workplace. As Gregor's voice has now changed, none of them was able to understand Gregor's reply. "He seemed, unfortunately, to have no properteeth – how was he, then, to grasp the key? – but the lack of teeth was, of course, made up for with a powerful jaw; using the jaw, he really was able to start the key turning, ignoring the fact that he must have been causing some damage as a brown fluid came from his mouth, flowed over the key, and dripped onto the floor." (Kafka 16) Such was the hard condition of Gregor while he was opening the door.

Horrified by Gregor's appearance, the office manager bolts from the apartment. Gregor tries to catch up with the fleeing office manager, but his father drives him back into the bedroom with a cane and a rolled newspaper. Gregor injures himself squeezing back through the doorway, and his father slams the door shut. Gregor, exhausted, falls asleep.

He has faced multiple injuries from his father, once his sister and mother decided to remove the furniture from Gregor's room, they went into his room. Gregor used to hide himself behind a sofa so that no one would get annoyed by his appearance, and his sister used to come to the room, keep rotten food for him, and used to shut the door. While his mother was shifting the furniture, Gregor tried to save a wall picture in which a woman was wearing a fur hat, fur scarf, and a fur muff. His mother saw him hanging on the wall and immediately ran out of the room. Seeing this, his father misunderstood the situation and threw apples at Gregor, one of which sank into his back and remains lodged there, leaving Gregor with a permanent wound.

Now that Gregor was no more a bread earner, his father, mother, and sister began earning money to support the family. Mr. Samsa, when Gregor was earning, used to sit idle at home and was completely dependent on him, but after metamorphosis of Gregor he took a job as a bank messenger. Mrs Samsa started taking sewing work for extra income, and Grete Samsa got a job as a salesgirl. The family rented three lodgers for additional income by renting out a room in their apartment.

One evening, the cleaning lady forgot to close Gregor's room, the boarders' lounge, about the living room. Grete was asked to entertain them by playing violin. By hearing the sound of the violin, Gregor crept out of his bedroom. He forgot his vermin form, shame, and repulsive appearance and started thinking of his pre-transformation plans to pay for his sister Grete to study at a music conservatory. One of the boarders spotted Gregor, and they immediately moved out of the house without paying rent; the reason was the disgusting conditions in the apartment.

Grete tells her parents to get rid of this monster (Gregor) "We can't carry on like this. Maybe you can't see it, but I can. I don't want to call this monster my brother, all I can say is: we have to try and get rid of it."(Kafka 53) "How can that be Gregor? If it were Gregor he would have seen long ago that it's not possible for human beings to live with an animal...gone of his free will" (Kafka 54).

At the end, Gregor understood the situation and slowly moved back to his bedroom. He died from starvation, injuries, and constant neglect. "He could hardly feel the decayed apple in his back or the inflamed area around it,….he heard the clock tower strike three in the morning….then, without his willing it, his head sank completely, and his last breath flowed weakly from his nostrils."(Kafka 56)

On the other hand, the family members were relaxed and indifferent to the death of Gregor. They took a trolley ride out to the countryside and decided to move to a better apartment and finally thought to find a good suitor for Grete, who was in her youth with all the strength and beauty.

Manifestation of Bībhatsa Rasa in Metamorphosis

Bībhatsa Rasa is one of the nine rasa prevailing in Indian esthetics. In a literal sense, it means an emotion of disgust that arises from jugupsā, an Odious Sentiment, by seeing what is Unwholesome or Displeasing, hearing, seeing and discussing what is undesirable. (Bharata 95)

Sthayibhava: (Dominant emotion): jugupsā

Vibhavas: (determinants): include uncleanliness, unethical actions, or any inherently repulsive stimuli.

Anubhavas are the physical manifestations or reactions depicted through facial expression, gestures, and bodily reactions that convey aversion.

Vyabhicaribhavas: they are transitory emotions accompanied by sthayibhava; they include sorrow, fear, trembling, and other similar states that enhance the experience of disgust.

Vihavas (primary stimuli and enhancing factors) are as follows: the primary stimuli include the transformed body of Gregor Samsa, which is a horrible vermin with "many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked." (Page 1). While opening the door, he got injured, and a brown fluid came from his mouth. Again, multiple injuries inflicted by his father and a constant disgust from family are the primary stimuli directly connected with Gregor Samsa

Other factors (**Udippana Vibhavas):** the physical setting of Gregor's room, dark and gloomy surroundings, and rotten food are some of the external factors that can come under Udippana Vibhavas.

Anubhavas are the physical expression of the internally felt rasa depicted with certain actions and speech by the character in the novel. They play a vital role and can be said as a bridge that connects the reader with the character emotionally.

Gregor staring at his transformed body, awkward crawling and wiggling legs are some of the action that shows his disbelief and shock towards his transformation. He hides and ignores eye contact with family members, showing his shame and guilt. Further, the scream of his sister at seeing Gregor in a vermin form, shutting the door to ignore his existence, and fainting on seeing Gregor, shows disbelief at his metamorphosis. Constant frustration of his father with Gregor depicts emotions of fear, disgust and rejection by Samsa family. In addition, lying motionless, quiet acceptance of transformation by Gregor blends disgust with sorrow. Such are the anubhava, when depicted accurately, transmit the emotion from the character to the reader and result in generalisation of Rasa between a character and the reader. In addition, due to purgation, a reader realises and liberates the felt rasa accordingly.

Conclusion

Aesthetic Purification through Bībhatsa Rasa. Kafka, through the depiction of Bibhasta rasa, has drawn a paradox. Paradoxically, in the sense, through depicting horror, decay and death, he is making his audience realise the value of existence, society and the cruelty of human nature by leaving the reader in a state of moral and ethical awareness. In this manner, Bībhatsa rasa is playing a vital role in the novella metamorphosis by Franz Kafka.

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POETRY AS AN EXPRESSION OF TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE SHOWCASED BY SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN SING, SLIVERED TONGUE: A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Sing, Slivered Tongue is an anthology of South Asian Women's Poetry edited by Lopamudra Basu and Feroza Jussawalla. The anthology includes contributions of poems written on the themes of trauma and resilience by sixty-eight women poets belonging to different South Asian countries as well as diaspora. Poetry serves here as a medium to express complex and intense feelings of injury and healing through symbolic and metaphoric language. According to Cathy Caruth, a leading theorist in Trauma Studies, traumatic experiences transcend the capacity of any language to fully capture the complex feelings associated with a traumatic situation. Literature has always served as a tool to express even the least heard voices of the margins. The following research study attempts to analyse selected poems that are written as an expression of the trauma faced by women on a daily basis in a fast moving contemporary world. Women live in a situation of precarity and vulnerability today and face challenges and threats of sexual violence, financial instability, climate insecurity, fragility of family structures, racial as well as gender based discrimination. However, women also showcase strength to adapt to and prevail over these traumas. The paper will analyse how women convert trauma into a source of strength to overcome the atrocities. The research is significant as it voices the need for making this world a safe place for everyone, especially women.

Keywords: *Abuse, Identity, Loneliness, Poetry, Resilience, Sexual Violence, South Asia, Trauma, Women*.

Introduction

"There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to tell and thus come to know one's story." (Dori Laub, 78)

Sing, Slivered Tongue , published in 2025, is an anthology of South Asian Women's Poetry is edited by Lopamudra Basu and Feroza Jussawalla, two women poets themselves. Both the editors are Indian nationalities located currently in American academia. It is an effort to highlight the poems of pain and transformation born through women's strength and endurance. Most of the poems, not all, depict different kinds of trauma faced by these writers or women in general in the contemporary world, particularly South Asian arena. Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience having a lasting impact on an individual's physical, emotional, and mental health.

Trauma theory builds upon the psychoanalytical theory propounded by Sigmund Freud, and it examines the impact of trauma on an individual or a society. The theory strives to analyse the psychological effects of a traumatic experience. Trauma leaves behind emotional and physical scars. Examples of traumatic situations include social violence, abuse, war, disaster, genocide etc. Some leading theorists of the trauma theory include Sigmund Freud, Judith Herman, Bonnie Burstow, Cathy Caruth, and Bessel Van Der Kolk.

The anthology has trauma as its focal expressed through the medium of poetry using figurative language. Literature here serves as instrument to narrate personal traumas as well as a pathway towards a catharsis.

Significance of the title

The title Sing, Slivered Tongue is inspired by the legend of Khona, also known as Lilavati, a Bengali woman astrologer and poet. She is believed to have lived in the Rarh region between 9th and 12th centuries AD. She had learned astrology from her father-in-law Varahmihir who was one of the nine jewels in the court of Emperor of Chandragupta II or Vikramaditya. She was learned woman and her poetry containing her knowledge of astrology and clairvoyant powers became famous in the region. Varhamihir was encapsulated with jealousy and masculine ire when Khona surpassed him in the practice of astrology. As a result, she was persecuted and her tongue was cut off so that her voice could not reach to the masses. According to the legend, her writings survived and is continued to be cherished even today.

The title works as a metaphor for representing all those voices which have been silenced by the society. The cutting of the tongue represents silencing the opinions and ideas expressed by women throughout the world. The anthology is an attempt to help these silenced voices reach the masses. The legend of Khona has also been alluded to in the poem 'Severed Tongue' by Radha Chakravarty, where she writes:

"Now they say, my tongue must be tamed. They say, it's not my place to speak –

They say, a mere woman should be meek."(Chakravarty,32)

The poem builds upon the theme of patriarchy where men act as the heads of the house and think themselves as entitled to speak for the women of the family. They find it fit to control women's lives as well as make decisions for them. Women are reduced to the roles of a housewife and a caretaker. Patriarchy believes women aren't entitled to have any opinions of their own. The poem also suggests, that despite of the silencing, women find the strength to stand up for themselves. The title suggests that even a tongue which has been cut can sing its songs with harmony.

"But miracles will never cease! The severed tongue, cut loose, assumes a life of its own, bleeds new wisdom, which flows like molten lava from my volcano soul."(Chakravarty,33)

The ancient legend of Philomela tells the same story of violence on women many centuries ago and compares it with cutting of the tongue of a nineteen-year-old woman who was gang-raped in Hathras in 2020. Roopali Sircar Gaur's 'Philomela: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow' describes how Philomela was ravished and violated by Greek King Tereus of Thrace and cut off her tongue to hide his crime. However, she did not stay quiet and wove a tapestry depicting her agony. Her sister Procne avenged her by serving the flesh of their son to the king who was silenced forever. He poem inspires women to stand up for the crimes against them and feed the flesh of their sons to the rapists.

"must we then like Procne avenge feed the flesh of sons to fathers." (Sircar, 51)

With the establishment of the title, let us now look the themes of trauma and resilience looked at in other poems.

Poetry as an Expression of Trauma

The poems of the anthology explore themes such as child abuse, domestic abuse, familial abuse, divorce, abandonment, loss of a loved one to death or separation, racism, dislocation, collective trauma, acute trauma and so on. The editors of the anthology believe that women are still dominated by a hegemonic culture and that it is extremely important for them express themselves in order to prevail over and defy this dominance. In the contemporary world, the expectations laid on women have been doubled – apart from being an ideal wife and mother, they are also expected to provide financial support to the family. Therefore, in the process of handling the house as well as trying to make their lives again and again, they have started losing themselves.

Trauma leaves an indelible mark on a person, who, therefore, is not able to get beyond those memories which trigger trauma. Poetry provides voice to these unspeakable memories. While trauma disrupts memory and narratives, poetry mirrors this through fragmentation. Ellipses, broken syntax, and repetition. Poetry allows expression where ordinary language fails. Through metaphors, symbolism, and imagery, poets articulate what cannot be directly stated. Writing poetry can help a person to put ideas into words and express as well as come to a sense of balance with trauma. Poetry also provides hope that the writings of these poet will reach to the readers of all generations for time immemorial. Poetry inherits the idea that truth will survive no matter what as we have seen in the legend of Khona. Creating something as beautiful as poetry amidst the times of pain and suffering, just as Philomela wove a beautiful tapestry of her torture, is a testament to the strength and endurance of these poets to prevail over trauma. The subtitle of the poem 'Philomela: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow' indicated that the situation for women has not been improved and the trauma of sexual violence and misconduct is still prevalent. Their poetry will inspire the young readers all over the world.

Abandonment and Separation

Loneliness arising from abandonment or separation can lead to anxiety and depression. Most women lead a lonely life after many years of marriage either because of divorce or the death of their partners. Many of the poems from the anthology echo the pain and suffering of lonely women. Feroza Jussawalla's poem 'The Divorce Dislocation'

describes the physical and mental sufferings she had to endure after her divorce from her husband. She questions that even after thirty years of marriage, why did her husband felt the need to leave behind the wife with whom he had built a world of their own and go to another woman. She dedicated her life towards his career, moving from one place to another, never belonging to the places but just to him. Her mental stress transformed into physical illnesses which she had to endure on her own. She writes,

"That gut punch you dealt me husband. has turned into hernias hiatal, inguinal, strangulated bowels of pain,

Thirty years of service to you, husband, where did they go?"(Jussawalla, 71)

Feroza Jussawalla says that new concept of elder orphans has been generated in the modern New York society where elderly women are being abandoned and they have to be prepared to take care of themselves alone in the old age. These women only have themselves to rely on. Another poem, 'Silence of Sorrow' by Nandini Guha talks about the loneliness that takes the centre stage after the untimely death of a spouse. A woman has to put on a brave face and fulfil the responsibilities of a mother as well as of a father. Being a single mother, while lamenting the loss of a partner can become extremely difficult. Yet one learns to survive gradually. Women show immense resilience and strength in the face of adversity.

"Untimely death shattered my life like a bombshell.

The trauma of unending responsibilities loomed ahead of me They weighed down heavily on my shoulders.

Yet in me arose the determination not to cry and break down To remain calm in the face of emotional stress and mental confusion."(Guha, 60)

Women suffer in silence yet come through stronger. The poem 'Nobody Loves a Widow' by Asha Sen is a short but powerful depiction of the society's treatment of widows which is a part of the institutionalised religion. Widows are not invited to auspicious occasions such as weddings or religious rituals because they are considered to bring a bad omen. This kind of stigmas and superstitions are still present in the contemporary age.

Another poem 'Yashodhara' by Vinita Agrawal discusses the abandonment of his wife Yashodhara and son Rahul by Lord Buddha. Prince Siddharth had left home in order to gain enlightenment at a very young age. The world praises him for his sacrifice of the luxuries of life but very few put light to the grief and sorrows of his wife Yashodhara who was left alone with a new born child. She was bereaved of the love, care, and the support of her partner for the rest of her life. Her world had come to a stillness. She feared that her husband might come by and take her son with him as well.

"Such stillness Yashodhara as though nothing will ever move again Such grating vacuum, it could stifle enlightenment's voice

He will come back but only to take away your ten-year-old son His begging bowl his legacy to his child"(Agrawal, 1)

In another poem titled 'Fractured', Feroza Jussawalla says that nobody wants a fractured woman, nobody loves a broken woman. The poet herself has to go through many illnesses after her divorce which left her broken mentally and physically. She used Kintsugi as symbol of repair in the poem. She writes:

"Can we be Kintsugi'd? Using gold, to fill the cracks of my life, has become too burdensome" (Jussawalla, 72)

Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery using lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum to highlight the crack as part of the object's history. The philosophy behind this practice is of wabi-sabi which finds beauty in imperfections. Similarly, the poet compares herself to a broken pottery which has a history of betrayal, abandonment, separation and wants to get healed and find beauty in her imperfections. That way she will be able to find a new self, more valuable than the broken one.

Thus, the trauma of separation and abandonment goes deep inside one's identity and can be dangerous to one's mental and physical well-being.

Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse

The world today has become an unsafe place for women to be in. The times have increasingly become dangerous with the threat to women's body and dignity. Women face an amplified severe threat of crime and offense against them just because of their gender. Several poems from the anthology echo the themes of sexual violence and domestic abuse on women inspired by some major true events. Usha Akella's poem 'Naming' is dedicated to Jyoti, Delhi rape survivor, who was brutally raped in a moving bus by a group of men and died while being treated in the hospital. Her name was not revealed for a very long time in accordance with the law while the issue was being talked about in the whole world. The poem includes a quote from her father saying that his daughter did not do anything wrong and hence the world should know her real name. The poem describes the brutal scene and compares the men to hyenas:

"Her journey in a bus with predators:

Six men falling upon her like hyenas, a wheel jack handle and metal rod plunged in her private parts, the intestines ripped out, in a moving bus circumambulating Munirka, bite marks across her body…death in a Singapore hospital." (Akella, 7) Women from all the parts of India gathered in order to demand justice for the victim.

The entire country was in grief lamenting the loss of a daughter to monsters who were protected by the judicial system of the country. It took them around eight years to hang four of the six culprits which led people into believing that justice delayed is justice denied. Despite the increased scrutiny of crimes against women since December 2012, similar violent incidents have continued to make headlines in India. Many of these cases aren't even reported with the police and go unnoticed. Despite the changes in anti-rape laws, culprits of several rape cases are roaming free on the streets conducting crimes and demeaning women's dignities every hour. The testimony to this continuity of crimes towards women is the case of Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital's female doctor who was gang-raped and murdered while being on a night-duty in 2024. The case shook the entire medical community and raised questions on the safety of doctors and nurses in their workplaces. The poem, 'The Desecrated Mother' by Laksmisree Bannerjee has been written in the memory of a global protest against this particular crime. The poem is a wailing cry of the mothers of the brutal rapists who laments the births of their monstrous sons. The entire night cried with shame as these monsters forgot about their mothers and other female members of their families. These crimes against womanhood ignite a fire and unite the women under one roof against these monsters. These men were blind with lust and acted like Dionysus, the god of madness and wild frenzy.

"intoxicated with blind Dionysian fury they forgot their mother in their black souls they forgot the warmth of her lap and milk as they defiled brutally their Genesis whole"(Bannerjee,19)

The act of rape is a disrespect towards each and every living woman as it bereaves them of their dignity and self-respect.

An eight year old girl Asifa Bano in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir, was abducted, ravished and killed by a group of men including a bureaucrat, his son and police officers. The victim belonged to the nomadic Bakarwal community, and the crime was conducted in order to scare them off Jammu. The poem 'Asifa' by Prathim-Maya Dora-Lasky focuses on this very incident. The incident happened in January, 2018, but it was as late as April,2018 when the entire world became aware of it. The very first line of the poem symbolises the attention world pays to such horrific crimes as these as well as the delay in providing justice the citizens of the country.

"Asifa died in January

it was April when I learned it is always too late her body elegiac with pain"(Dora-Laskey, 36)

According to the reports, some of the culprits were police officers, officers who are sworn in to protect the citizens of their country. They have the sole responsibility to look after criminal activities as well as curb them. This very incident shook everyone's faith in the system.

"don't call the police some of them raped her don't call god – his priest raped her in the temple" (Dora-Laskey, 36)

It is said that the major issue was her religion. Yet again, religion triumphed over a woman's dignity and honour. She was just a child, probably unaware of what does the word religion even mean. This leads us to question, what does a religion teaches its followers? The very religion of the culprits worships Goddesses as the embodiment of strength (shakti), a divine energy which triumphs over evil. This very religion has a temple named Kamakhya Temple in Assam as well. What gives men the sense of entitlement over women's bodies? The poem is powerful description of agony and trauma felt when one reads about these incidents.

"we know how in our cruel, fool-ish world land and religion erupts on the soul of innocents" (Dora-Laskey, 37)

While these cases make headlines all over the world, fear consumes women. Shafinur Shafin's piece 'My Body, My Enemy' embodies this fear and societal conditioning which women face early in their lives. In the poem, a girl is warned by her mother since childhood that she must not go outside as there are ghosts and vultures who might consume her. The girl showcases faith in God, who she believes would save her. When she grows up her mother again warns her, but this time, of men who are ready to pounce on her body. This fear has instilled in her from the very start, so much so, that now she cannot go anywhere alone without being anxious.

Women tend to lose many opportunities because of this fear. And instead of make the world a safe place for them, or making laws and punishment stricter, the society asks women to be cautious and limit themselves. As a result, women's bodies seem a burden on them.

"I cannot help but feel,

That my body is a burden, a seal, Keeping me chained, afraid to roam,

For fear of the eyes of society now I understand,

there is No-God to save me

he is helpless too like mom" (Shafin, 122)

Shamim Azad's poetry, 'Add-Ons', describes how women's bodies have been subjected to violence in times of war. the atrocities of war, hunger, thirst, financial loss are amplified by sexual violence on women. This is a powerful example of acute trauma.

"But if you are a woman, you have inevitable trauma for your personal insecurity

simply because of your body." (Azad,13)

Pragya Bajpai created a powerful depiction of post-traumatic stress disorder caused by childhood abuse in 'Hidden Eyes'. The narrator claims that the abuse she had faced has opened her third eye. Opening of the third eye is often related with the Hindu God Shiva and symbolises anger, spiritual enlightenment , and change in perception. The narrator says she has to be alert and cautious all the time because of trauma she faced. She has to constantly navigate through insecurity and precarity.

Mahvash K. Mohtadullah's 'Ravaged' has a 17-year-old unnamed narrator who is getting married to her abuser, her father's cousin. Both of her parents are silent despite being aware of the prolonged exploitation and protecting the tormenter instead. She is describing the trauma she has been facing for several years now. Despite being good in studies, she is forced to get married today. The memories of the abuse are etched in her mind.

In Basudhara Roy's 'Therapy' , the narrator describes that she faced abuse as a child, sitting on her uncle's lap, watching a cricket match with her entire family. She was too naïve to comprehend whatever had happened to her and wasn't aware how to express these feelings. The incident seeped so deeply through her memory that she never watches cricket match ever.

Domestic abuse is another weapon to silence women used by patriarchal men in order assert masculinity. Pooja Garg's poem 'Dehiscence' asserts that men seem to find a way by showing aggression while women are deprived of and judged for it. It captures the imagery of falling tears of a daughter when her father slaps her for not eating her food. The poem also emphasises the ways in which patriarchal mindset works and how it renders women's

household's responsibilities to zero contribution towards a family. Despite taking care of the entire household, women are not given enough credit for their role as a homemaker.

Ayesha Perveen's 'Belt' describes the story of a wife who is beaten by her husband with the same belt she gad gifted him during the early years of their marriage which symbolises that men neglect the importance of the love and provided by women.

Marriage and Motherhood

Marriages are supposed to be a bliss for both the partners. The society and culture invests so many emotions into the institution of marriage. However, it is not similar for everyone. In many marriages, women face pressures of dowry abuse, marital rape, and domestic abuse. In the contemporary age, women have started looking upon marriage as a sham, which bind women through gender roles and patriarchy, limiting their opportunity to grow. This is a result of the inter-generational trauma passed on from mothers to daughters, who have been a witness to their mothers' pain and agony.

'Glorified Red' , a poem by Sangeeta Dey Roy symbolises the glorification of sacrifices made by women in the name of marriage. The word red in the title symbolises vermilion, or sindoor, which is worn by married woman. It is believed to be a sing of love, marriage, and devotion. It acts as a testament to a woman's marital status. According to the poem, when a woman gets married, the trajectory of her life is set, i.e., limited. She is being conditioned into becoming an idea wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. The poem is a satire against the expectations laid to become fit as an ideal woman.

"The altar had actually glorified Each petal of womanhood.

Which relayed a message, "Rejoice in every compromise And sacrifice you make ...

For these two virtues are seated in the Highest pedestal of womanhood."(Roy,35)

This perhaps is the reason why modern women are scared of marriages of unequal opportunities and responsibilities. They realise their actual worth and refuse to give their hopes and dreams in order to fit into a box. They have learned from the traumas of their mothers and are ready to transform their lives.

Kanwalpreet Baidwan's 'The Travails in the Bedroom' addresses the taboo surrounding women's sexual desires. Society suggests women to repress their desires, while their bodies are treated as a pleasure tool by men. The poem imparts the message to women of being aware about their bodies and desires and express them without hesitation. Men assert their power over women by governing her desires inside as well as outside the bedroom.

Motherhood is considered sacred for a woman by the society. It is widely believed that every woman has motherly instincts already embedded in her. Raising a child is solely expected to be a woman's responsibility. A unique bond is formed between a mother. Bhaswati Ghosh describes how a child gives hope to a mother in the times of difficulty in the poem 'Navigation'. The mother is exhausted from all the atrocities of her life and is navigation the ways in which she can provide a good life to her child. Her marriage is failed, yet she knows how to survive and would pass on this skill to her new-born as well.

There were many parts of India, where a son was desired and a girl child was looked upon as a burden. Therefore, people practice female foeticide, i.e., killing the child before it is born. 'JA' by Vinita Agrawal, describes the trauma of a woman whose daughter had been killed in her womb. She compares her daughter to a lotus, which blooms amidst muddy water. She wants her daughter 'emerge unstained' and survive amongst the hardest of times. But the family doesn't want a daughter in the family, they get the baby aborted. The mother is immensely traumatised because of the loss of her child, with whom she had formed a deep bond, and had dreamt of a blissful life for her.

Identity and Sense of Belongingness

Trauma destabilizes identity and fragments sense of belonging. Survivors of partition and migration trauma find it difficult to position themselves within a new culture as they cannot escape the memories of the past. Jaspal Kaur Singh's two poems, 'Refugee: Delhi Days as a Stateless Citizen' and 'Memories of Homes and Nests' reflect on the trauma faced by refugees and migrants.

The former poem describes the struggles of a refugee woman from Burma, waiting at the registration office in New Delhi for the extension of her permit to live in India. her fragmented sense of identity is depicted through the labelling her as illegitimate by her birthland. The poem also criticises the inappropriate behaviour of the officials towards refugee women. The woman had to please the corrupt officials by bringing them gits so that she could live in India a bit longer and finally call the country her home.

'Memories of Homes and Nests' portrays the trauma faced by partition survivors from Punjab, who had to flee to Burma, an unknown and foreign land, where they were discriminated against because of their religion. When they returned to India, they were identified as imported, and were not able to find the connection and solace in their own birthland. Displaced people often face alienation and isolation which amplified their trauma. They are constantly asked to prove their belongingness with a piece of paper. They often feel caught in between culture, as Homi Bhabha has explained in his concept of the third space.

Diasporic communities, away from their ancestral lands, also grapple with the question of identity. One's identity is formed by their culture, religion, caste, class, race, language, ethnicity, etc. 'My Name: Arunima' by Arunima Bhattacharya symbolises the efforts one has to make to assimilate in a culture different from their own. The name symbolises her entire existence, her identity, and also a reminder that she belongs to a different space from where she is now. People from foreign countries, the speakers of a different language, find it difficult to pronounce her name correctly. Her efforts to correct them symbolises the struggle to fit oneself in as well as prove that she is worth to assimilate in their culture. However, it is exhausting for her bereaves he of the confidence. The mispronunciation of her name by the people, symbolises their unacceptance of and discrimination towards people form different arenas, on their part.

Strength and Resilience

Survivors of trauma show adaptability and the capacity to endure despite facing dire situations. According to Judith Herman, trauma recovery requires not only surviving trauma but establishing safety and trust. Trauma healing can take place through creative expression such as writing poetry or making music or creating a painting. Women who face double oppression and trauma of violence and gendered silencing, reclaim their agency through everyday defiance.

'Inheritance of Pain' by Dilruba Z. Ara, provides ray of hope where women will break the cycle of inter-generational trauma, passed on from mothers to daughters, and come out stronger. 'Scars' by Laxmisree Bannerrjee, describes the resistance of woman who was abandoned by her infidel husband. Scars symbolise the unforgettable memories of mental and physical pain which leaves a mark on the body forever. However, she learned from her loss, and transformed that learning into strength. Trauma survivors develop new identity, strengths, and a deeper meaning of life.

"Yet I thank the unknown supremo For my tears hardened

Into granite chips,

For the flames that taught The lessons of love and life For his burning godhood

And your ice-cold humanity." (Bannerjee, 24)

Sonali Pattnaik's 'Say' , is a wake up call to women around the world to voice their concerns in loudest of voices. Only if women speak, they will be able to resist the atrocities directed towards them. Refusing silence, breaking taboos, and challenging oppressive power structures are signs of resilience.

Conclusion

Sing, Slivered Tongue is a collective testimony to South Asian women's traumas and survival. It focuses on how poetry, as a creative expression, helps women to articulate what is often silenced in society. Through its exploration of domestic violence, sexual abuse, marriage, motherhood, identity, and resilience, the anthology puts forward the many ways in which trauma shapes women's lives and their capacity for strength and survival. The title itself is an expression of the anthology's achievement in providing a medium of resistance, healing, and belonging to silenced

voices. The anthology is a foregrounding in expanding the scope of trauma studies in South Asian perspective, while also contributing to global narratives of pain and resilience.

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"A FEMINIST READING OF SHIKHANDI IN MAHABHARATA TRANSLATED BY K M GANGULI"

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Abstract

In the Indian mythology, Mahabharata is the greatest epic. Epics are more important to study men and women's history and their life style. In Indian mythology, epics show the women's reality. In reality women's character is the main part of the society. Women's struggles show everything. This paper provides the view about the character of Shikhandi from epic Mahabharata which is translated by Kisari Mohan Ganguli. Although Mahabharata is written from a man's perspective but what about woman's perspective? Even in today women are dominated by men. In Mahabharata, Shikhandi is a powerful character. She was a daughter of Dhrupad, the king of Panchal. After exchange her gender, Shikhandi becomes male character with the help of Yaksha. Actually Shikhandi is the rebirth of Amba a princess of Kashiraj. In Svayamavar, Amba was kidnapped by Bhishma. He returned to Hastinapura with Amba, Ambika and Ambalika, as wives to his younger brother Vichitravirya. Ambika and Ambalika had no any question regarding their kidnapped. Shikhandi is such brave and powerful woman, here we can see that women have their own respect.

This paper sees that every time women have to face problems. In women's point of view either husband or father are the only two refuges for them. We could not reject that 'modernization' and 'progresses' were responsible for the help of women. Women and men are equal in the society. Thus, feminism known as the eyes of women's society. Here feminism is shown by the character of Shikhandi, because of her misfortune and lack of destiny. Feminism have continue to campaign for women's rights. The belief that biology is original destiny. In reality, we cannot change our gender as well as our destiny. Gender shows our feeling, particular patterns of thought and specifically our behavior. In belief of society men are able to think logically and women are able to think emotionally. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality.

Keywords: *Agony, Aliance, Burden, Feminine, gender Exchange*

Introduction

In *The Mahabharata*, during the Kurushetra war Bhisham talks about Shikhandi. He states that Shikhandi exchanged her gender with the help from Yaksha. After the change of her gender, she becomes the brother of Draupadi. In ancient time, the main difference between women and men was based on gender and it was maintained that women and men have differences biologically. Firstly Shikhandi is known as 'Shikhandini'. His is the rebirth of Amba, the princess of Kashiraja. Amba had two sisters, Ambika and Ambalika. These princesses were won by Bhishma during their Swayamvara. Before Amba's marriage she tells Bhishma that she had already fallen in love with Salvaraja. She was not willing to marry anyone else. When faced with this problem, Bhishma allows Amba to go back to her lover and marry him. But, then, Salva rejects her because Bhishma had kidnapped her and hence she belonged only to Bhishma. Thus, it seems that women had no choice to select her life partner. Without any fault of hers, Amba faces panic and undergoes terrible problems in her life. It is true that women face so many problems without uttering any word.

Amba returns to Hastinapur and demands that Bhishma must marry her. Of course, Bhishma rejects her proposal of marrying him due to his declared vow. Unaware of her destiny, she decides to practice strict adherence to *tapasya* in her life. She comes across an ashram and there she meets Parashuaram, Bhishma's guru. She shares her misfortune with him. After hearing her, Parshurama meets Bhishma and insists upon him to accept Amba as his wife. But Bhishma still does not accept her and thus disregards Parshurama's command. As its consequence, Parshurama fights with Bhishma in Kurushetra for twenty- three days. But it did not make any difference.

Amba's Character as feminism point of view

Amba spends twelve years of her life in penance, and then she burns herself. Lord Shiva blesses her, by giving a boon that in future she would be born as a girl in king Dhrupad's house. But later she would become a man and kill Bhishma and take her revenge.

Accordingly, Shikhandi was born as girl to Dhrupad's queen; she was however, brought up like a boy. Feminism believes that the scope for women's participation are quite limited; they have some identities like of the mother, daughter, sister or wife. In *The Mahabharata* women did not have the choice to share their own thoughts and feelings with someone else. Not only Amba but other women were also suffering from this type of situation in their life. For example, Druapadi, Kunti, Satyavati, Gandhari etc. also had such situations in their lives too. They did have their own voice but could not use it. They were a part of their royal kingdom, but they are were nowhere in their kingdom. Women had no equal rights in the society. Women were not weak creatures, who would be controlled by men's power. In Amba's case, she is a powerful lady willing to take revenge on Bhishma who had destroyed her life. Feminism states that women have their own voice but they never use it. It is perfectly shown in Amba's character, at least she tried to take revenge and make it perfect in her real life. Not only Amba but any other women facing the same situation, would feel that gender only does not play important role but power and strength also plays an important role. Feminism also shows that woman tries to have her own rights.

Shikhandi's Gender Exchange

When Shikhandi marries the daughter of Hiranyavarma, his wife realizes that her husband was not a man and she had mistakenly got married with another woman. Looking at the miserable condition of her parent regarding her gender reality; Shikhandi leaves home and decides to end her life. At that time, she comes across a forest that humans were not able to enter because of Yaksha named Stunakarna. Without any fear, Shikhandi enters it and starts performing penance. At that time, she happens to tell the Yaksha about her life, Yaksha provides him his gender for a certain period of time and asks him to return to his family. Shikhandi accepts his idea and returns to his Kingdom of Panchal as a man, and not as a woman. He reveals all the realities to his father, the King Dhrupad. Then, a number of others also confirm Shikhandi's manhood. When Kubera visits Yaksha, the Yaksha does not meet him, rather avoids meeting him because of her female identity. Kubera curses the Yaksha that the sex exchange would now remain permanently. At the end, however, Kubera tells Yaksha that she would reclaim her true gender after the death of Shikhandi.

In the ancient period, the thinking about women, had two strategies of perspective: the Relational Perspective and the Individualist Perspective. In the relational perspective, through child-bearing, the women are equal to men. In the individualist perspective, the social roles should not be determined by gender. In *Mahabharata*, before the Kurushetra war, Shikhandi was among the chief warriors of the Pandava army. However Bhishma is not inclined to fight with Shikhandi, because in reality (for him) he was a woman. So, on the 10th day of the war, riding behind Shikhandi, Arjuna attacks on Bhishma, who gives up his arms and allows himself to be pierced with many arrows and falls from his chariot wounded and no more in a position to fight. His life ends on the day of Uttarayan. Sikhandi also gets killed later by Ashwatthama in a sword fight. Through Amba's character, the feminism shows the nature of gender inequality on the bases of the women's social roles.

Equal rules for Men and Women

The researcher intends to show through this study that men and women are free and equal in choosing and following the norms and rituals are made by the society. In *Mahabharata* women did follow and practice so many roles which are supposed to have been organized by men for them.

With the help of Shikhandi's character, Ved Vyas shows that women also have the same power and strength, and, if they want to use them they are definitely capable and entitled to use them. They even know how to use them and when to use them. It is clear that they are not merely servile to men and just the child-bearing machines. In reality, they are treated as servants in their homes. But actually, they do have their own individuality and identity.

In the 21st century, all women are capable of using their power. They do know about their strength. Not only women save their children's life but also they save their family's life. In the present scenario, women are strong enough to protect their life and future. Feminist literature aims at changing the society which is male dominated.

Feminism shows that men are not the only persons to frame rules in the society, but women are also contributors to the socio-political conventions. Even today, one may find that some rules are made only for women. However, feminism shows that no rules can be for women only!

Conclusion

This paper shows that Shikhandi finally accomplishes taking revenge against Bhishma. After the rebirth of Amba as Shikhandi, she finally gets what she expected in the form of justice of her choice. She does suffer from terrible situations, but at last, she gets success. The way women are treated and humiliated in the society, a change is necessary. In the present time, we have questioned about Shikhandi's moral life. She was insulted at every point of her life. Even king Salava who fallen in love with her had also insulted her. Feminism questions why every time women have to suffer and get insulted in our society? Without any mistake on her part they are assaulted by the men-dominating society. In Mahabharata time, the women had their own choice and feelings. Nobody questioned about a woman's choice, feelings, priorities, and independence! In modernized culture, the male dominating society is still not considering woman empowerment at large. There is still some rigidity prevailing in the society which prevents it from accepting the equality of gender. Feminist literature shows that men and women have equal choice and feeling and women also have strong mind like men. In modern time woman's education is most important in the 21st century, women are more independent. Nowadays they work everywhere where earlier only men used to work. If we read our ancient literature, we shall come to realize that in India the gender discrimination is never supported by the culture and the Rishies of the ancient time.

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DIGITAL ERA AND ALIENATION: EXPLORING ISAAC ASIMOV'S THE FUN THEY HAD

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Abstract

Digitalization has profoundly transformed human experiences, identity, relationships and life- style. On the one hand, where digital and technological advancements provide us with many advantages; they have some disadvantages too. This paper explores the themes of digital advancements and alienation in the science fiction short story 'The Fun They Had' by Isaac Asimov. The story is set in distant future, where there are no schools or human teachers. Instead, advanced computers and software programs are teaching the students. Asimov's imagination of such mechanical teachers has turned into reality in the 21st Century, where computers and internet help students with their studies, advanced robots have started teaching in schools and AI advancing to replace teachers. But the question here remains is that will these mechanical teachers be as good teachers as humans? The protagonist's experience of studying with the mechanical teacher and her longing for the school of old times, human teachers and fellow students; leads to the idea that humans are basically social animals. This paper investigates this question through present scenario of digital and technological advancements and its psycho-social effects on society, relationships and human connection.

Keywords: human connections, isolation and alienation, Isaac Asimov, science fiction, technological advancements, 'The Fun They Had'

Introduction:

The 21st Century has marked enormous development in the field of technology. Technological advancements have led to rapid growth in digitalization and automation. Technology and digital equipments have entered almost all the sectors of human life; leading this age to be known as the Digital Age or Digital Era. The widespread use of technology has profoundly transformed human life; reshaping social relations, connections, psychosocial well-being, identity and lifestyle. These transformations have two-fold impacts: positive and negative. It is obvious that technology has many benefits like: saving our time, making our work easy etc; but it has some drawbacks too. One such drawback is alienation. In simple words, alienation means finding oneself alone or isolated even when surrounded by people. Kakati and Kumar in their psychological study of digital alienation point out that overuse of technology leads to the feeling of alienation from others as well as from one's own self. This paper explores these questions of alienation caused by digital advancements, with reference to the story *The Fun They Had* by Isaac Asimov.

Alienation: A Psychosocial Phenomenon:

Encyclopedia Britannica defines alienation as: "alienation, in social sciences, the state of feeling estranged or separated from one's milieu, work, products of work, or self." Zorcec et al. explain alienation as: "Alienation is treated as both a psychological and sociological concept. The sociological concept focuses on the social processes that lead to alienation while the psychological concept focuses on subjective feelings of alienation"(80). Alienation is a long recognized psychosocial phenomenon; but its manifestation in digital ecosystems derives a new form and challenge. The foundational framework of the concept derives its roots from the 'Theory of Alienation' of Karl Marx. "Although originally conceptualized in the context of labor, Marx's idea that individuals become estranged from themselves and others through systems of production is relevant to the digital ecosystems" (Kakati and Kumar 9685).

Digital alienation refers to the feeling of alienation caused by the overuse of technology, social media, online gaming and streaming, and other usage of digital platforms. Nowadays, social media platforms are not just tools for communication and leisure but essential spaces for identity construction and self-expression (Holly et al. 2023, as cited in Kakati and Kumar 2024, p. 9681). However, various researches suggest that these connections and identity construction are paradoxical in nature. On one hand, they provide spaces for connecting to strangers and identity

construction on online platforms; while on the other hand, they raise the feelings of disconnection and alienation in real world situations and from one's own real identity (Kakati and Kumar). This paradoxical nature of digital platforms and technological overuse greatly impacts social relations, identity, family dynamics and raises a feeling of loss of human connection – alienation, which in long term can lead to: rise in crime, stress – anxiety disorders and loss of self-confidence.

Reflections of Digital Alienation in *The Fun They Had:*

The Fun They Had is a simple yet thought-provoking science fiction short story by Isaac Asimov. Set in a distant future in 22nd century, the story presents the daily life of two kids: Tommy and Margie; who live in a time when there are no traditional schools or teachers. The time when technology has invaded into all sectors of life and the kids study alone at home with their "mechanical teachers" i.e. computers. One day the kids got to know about the schools of the old time, when their grandfathers' grandfathers were kids. Those schools were different from Tommy and Margie's school; because those schools of old time had "special buildings" where all kids used to go together and study. Also, they had human teachers unlike the "mechanical teachers" of the kids. The protagonist Margie's fascination about - "real book", the schools of old time, her longing for fellow classmates, human teachers and classrooms; points to the theme of alienation in the digital world.

This theme is reflected in the story in following points:

1. Margie's Longing for Fellow-Classmates:

Margie studies alone at home with her computer. Her only friend is Tommy, who is two years older than her. So, she does not have any friend with whom she can study or talk about her studies. Thus when she reads about the old time, when children used to go to the school together, study together, and used to play together; she is fascinated by that idea she thinks about the happy times that they would be spending. This is the reflection of Margie's alienation. Margie has a high-tech room with an advanced computer and equipments helping in her studies. But she finds it boring. She feels alone while studying with the computer. She longs for fellow classmates, real school and human teacher.

2. Lost Human Touch:

Margie's longing for fellow classmates is suggestive of lost human touch. In the advanced technological era, Margie has an interactive computer to teach her. But that computer cannot understand the mental and emotional state of Margie. It keeps teaching her whether she likes it or not, it cannot become a friend of Margie when she needs one. Margie cannot share her worries about her homework or any interesting story with it. The computer sometimes keeps commanding her restlessly.

Margie has her parents, she has a friend – Tommy as well. But when she reads of old times' school, she thinks about the fun of having classmates of her age and a human teacher. This suggests loss of human touch from one sector of Margie's life. Here, the theme of digital alienation resonates in the story.

***The Fun They Had* and Digital Alienation in the 21st Century:**

It has been rightly said that literature is the mirror of the society. Literature reflects the social, political, economical and psychological conditions of its contemporary time. The story *The Fun They Had* is ahead of its time. It was first published in 1951, when computers and technology were just in their initial stage.[1] At that Asimov imagined a society in 22nd century driven by advanced technology, smart and interactive computers, "telebooks" etc. However, Asimov's imagination has turned into reality in the first half of the 21st century. Today we have smart computers and machines, developing humanoid robots and rapidly advancing AI technology.

Through the years of development, technology has helped us to make our work easier and reduce the burden of our chores. But it is widely accepted fact that the more technology has advanced, the more humans have become dependent upon it. Today, technology has entered all the sectors of human work and life; such as: communication, entertainment, healthcare, education, e-commerce, digital payments, security, transportation and many more.

[1]ENIAC – the first electronic, programmable, digital computer was completed by February 1946. (https://www.britannica.com/technology/ENIAC)

One such sector presented in *The Fun They Had* is – Digital Education.

Digital Education in the 21st Century:

Digital education involves using digital technologies, tools, interactive programs, digital platforms etc. to support teaching, learning and assessment (European Education Area). This digital education can be entirely in online mode, where students are involved in distance learning; or it can be in hybrid mode, where teachers use these digital tools as teaching-aids. Nowadays, with the advancement of AI technology, there is beginning of AI-Humanoid Robots who teach students in school. India's first AI-Humanoid Robot – Iris – is introduced in Kerala. Hence, it can be said that technology is rapidly progressing in the field of education.

Its Benefits and Drawbacks:

Digital Education has many benefits, such as:

1) Flexibility and convenience of time and place
2) Interactive and engaging learning outcomes
3) Access to high-quality learning resources
4) Personalized learning (iDream Education).

However, it has many drawbacks too. Digital education is very helpful and beneficial in hybrid mode of learning, where human teachers are present to help students with learning. But entirely digital learning in online mode involves some challenges, such as:

1) High chances of distraction
2) Complicated technology
3) No social interaction
4) Difficulty staying in contact with instructors
5) Job markets do not accept online degrees (Sadeghi 84).

Various researches have proven that online learning during COVID-19 pandemic increased the feelings of fatigue, isolation and loneliness among students – leading to mental health issues. Li and Yang in their study of online learning burnout during COVID-19 upon 618 college students point out that students felt anxiety, stress, depression and isolation in online learning; they found it difficult to study without the immediate help available from their teachers (2). Syahputri et al. in their study of drawbacks of online learning during COVID-19 found out that most of the students faced increased fatigue level, headache and other physical pain, bad time management, feeling of isolation and difficulty in understanding lecturers' explanation (108-116).

Research Findings:

These studies upon online learning suggest that students feel isolated and alienated if they have to study alone at home. It leads them to the feelings like: loss of social connection, lack of social interaction, anxiety, stress and depression. Hence, it is proven that various impacts of digital era lead to the feeling of alienation in individuals, which is present in the story *The Fun They Had.* Asimov has aptly predicted the future possibilities and challenges of technology. It also suggests that some basic human qualities such as: need for love and care, need for connection with other humans; do not change in any century. Moreover, it presents the universality and relevance of literature in any time or place.

Conclusion:

Technology, digitalization or digital education have both: benefits as well as drawbacks. Technology helps in connecting to others via social media on one hand; and leads to alienation from society and oneself due to overuse and addiction, on the other hand. However, the increasing involvement of technology in education and all other sectors of life and detachment from one's social surroundings can lead to increased feeling of alienation in individuals. However, mindful use of technology can help us prevent such issues.

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A STUDY OF RASA IN JHAVERCHAND MEGHANI'S POETRY

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Abstract

This research is aimed to explore *Rasas*, especially *Veer Rasa, Raudra Rasa* and *Karuna Rasa,* emerged in the poetry of a renowned Gujarati poet, writer, folklorist, and freedom fighter, Jhaverchand Meghani. This study is based on the Indian aesthetic framework of Rasa described by Bharata in his work *NatyaShastra* and later on improved by Abhinavgupta. This research explores how Meghani's poetry explores universal feelings through the interaction of folk culture and poetic expressions. Meghani's poetry is a rich combination of *Rasas*. *Veer Rasa*, which is heroism, reflects the feeling of valor and is widely expressed in Meghani's poetry. We can also find moments of *Raudra Rasa* (anger) to protect the motherland and *Dharma* and *Adbhuta Rasa* (wonder) in the moments of celebrations. This research works as a bridge between rural oral traditions and classical aesthetic theories such as *Rasa*. This research argues that Jhaverchand Meghani's literary world rightly represents the Indian aesthetics and folk heritage and proposes him as the *Rasa Kavi* of Gujarat.

Keywords : *Rasa,* Jhaverchand Meghani, Indian Aesthetics, folk culture, *NatyaShastra,* folk poetry.

Introduction:

Jhaverchand Meghani holds a significant position in Gujarati literature, however, critical analysis of his poetry is often based on socio-historical context rather than a deep application of classical Indian poetics. In his literary career Meghani contributed approximately 100 books in various genres like short stories, novels, folktales including 9 poetry collections such as *Veni Na Phool* (1927), *Killol* (1930), *Sindhudo* (1930), and *Yugvandana* (1935). Recognizing his literary contribution, Mahatma Gandhi conferred him with the title of the *Rashtriya Shayar.* We can find that his poetry provides insights of regional folk traditions directly intersecting with the modern nationalist sentiments. This research paper aims to evaluate Meghani's poetry composed during the Indian Independence movement, through the lens of *Rasa Siddhanta*.

His poetry collection *Sindhudo* is one of the most significant poetry collections of Meghani, published in 1930. It was so much impactful during the independence movement that it was banned by the British Government. It contains patriotic songs like *Mot na Kankugholan, Veer Jatindra na Sambharana*, *Chheli Prartha* and other songs, which acted as a fuel for the freedom fighters.

Rasa is the core concept in the Indian Aesthetics. The literal meaning of *Rasa* is " juice, essence, or taste." In the context of literature, *Rasa* represents the aesthetic flavor of the literary work, which evokes a incredible and indescribable feeling in the audience who emotionally gets connected with it. This type of reader or audience is called *Sahridaya*. Realization of *Rasa* helps to analyze aesthetic methods which helps to utilize folk literature to be effectively used for socio-political purposes.

The core objective of this research is that how Meghani masterfully adopts two totally opposite aesthetic sentiments like *Veer Rasa* and *Karun Rasa.* He used the inherent emotional power of Saurashtra's folklore as fuel for the independence movement.

Aim and objectives

1. To analyze Jhaverchand Meghani's poems through the lens of Rasa theory
2. To highlight the universal implementation of Indian knowledge system.
3. To identify and interpret the dominant Rasa in the poems of Jhaverchand Meghani.

Research methodology

1. Use of qualitative research method.

2. Use of textual analytical method to analyze primary and secondary sources.

3. Use of descriptive methods to describe findings.

Foundations of Rasa Theory

Rasa is one of the core concepts of Indian Aesthetics which literally means "juice, essence, or taste." The theoretical base of *Rasa* is rooted in Sanskrit text, *Natyashastra* of Bharata Muni. To define *Rasa* Bharata Muni writes, "*Vibhavanubhava vyabhichari samyogad rasa niṣpattiḥ,"* means, *Rasa* evokes through the combination of *Vibhva, Anubhava and Vyabhicharibhava*. In an artistic context, it represents the aesthetic flavor of a literary or visual work that evokes a profound, indescribable feeling in the spectator, or *Sahṛdaya,* literally means someone who "has heart" and can connect emotionally to the work. The realization of Rasa is dependent upon the *Bhava*, emotional state crafted by the writer or performer. According to *Natyashastra,* realization of *Rasa* is not mere entertainment, but the transportation of the audience into an alternative reality of wonder, where they transcend the mundane physical realm to reflect on deeper, often spiritual, questions.

Rasa Nishpati

Literal meaning of *Rasa Nishpati* is aesthetic realization, which can be archived by integration of emotional and objective components, as defined in Bharata's Rasa Sutra as *Bhava, Vibhava and Anubhava.*

Sthayi Bhava:

Sthayi Bhava represents domination of an emotion. This is permanent and constant emotional condition that is transforms into related *Rasa.* Initially Bharata identified eight *Sthayi Bhavas* which later expanded to nine, by including *Shant Rasa.* These *Sthayi Bhava* and *Rasas* reated to them are as following.

Sthayi Bhava	Meaning	Rasa
Rati	Love or Passion	Shringara
Hasa	Laughter	Hasya
Shoka	Sorrow	Karuna
Krodha	Anger	Raudra
Utsaha	Enthusiasm	Veer
Bhaya	Fear	Bhayanak
Jugupsa	Disgust	Bibhatsa
Vismaya	Wonder	Adbhuta
Shanta	Peace	Shanta

Vibhava

Vibhavas are exciting conditions which initiates *Sthayi Bhavas. Vibhavas* can be further classified into *Alambana Vibhava* and *Uddipana Vibhava,* which are supporting objects and surrounding circumstances respectively.

Anubhava

Anubhavas are succeeding manifestations of feelings. This includes physical expressions in a character or surroundings atmosphere.

VyabhichariBhava

These are accompanying and short term emotions that supports dominating *Sthayi Bhava*. However, it does not form the primary aesthetic flavor it self. Basically, it enriches primary emotion.

Essence of *Rasa* in poetry of Jhaverchand Meghani.

While critically analyzing Meghani's literary works we can find that these classical principles are deeply illuminated in these works. Meghani's folk songs and patriotic verses were frequently sung in highly charged environments like political gatherings or high energetic events. This ensures that poetry must maintain an inherent aspect of the original event on which it is based on.

Expression of *Rasa* in *Sindhudo.*

Sindhudo is Meghani's most renowned poetry collection, published in 1930, while he was involved in the independence movement. Poems of this collection acted as the fuel in the independence movement, inspiring the spirit of nationalism amongst the people involved in various events of the freedom fight. While analyzing the work we can find that the intention of poet was not only to evolve the aesthetic pleasure but to actively convert the collective inertia and fear into the revolutionary enthusiasm. The most dominating *Rasa* in *Sindhudo* is *Veer Rasa.*

Charan Kanya is a masterpiece by Meghani, demonstrates the bravery of a teen *Charan* girl, who chased a lion to save her calf. In this work we can find Meghani's command of emotional expressions, from *Bhayanaka Ras* in description of lion, *Shringar Rasa* in description of teen *Charan Kanya t*o *Veera Rasa* in the description of *Charan Kanya* chasing the lion. While describing horrifying eyes of lion Meghani writes,

"Kevi Eni Ankh Jabuke! Vadal Mathi Vij Jabuke Jote Ugi Bij Jabuke

Jane Be Angar Jabuke Hira Na Shangar Jabuke Tamtamti Be Jyot Jabuke Same Ubhu Mot Jabuke"

In this horrible and realistic description Meghani compares lion's eyes with terrible objects things like thunder lightening and at the end he describes it as the death itself. This rich vocabulary shows Meghani's command over the language. Further, he shifts from *Bhayanaka Rasa* to *Shringar Rasa* to describe little *Charan* girl.

"Chundaliyali Charan Kanya Shwet Suvali Charan Kanya Bali Bholi Charan Kanya

Lal Himboli Charan Kanya Jagadamba-shi Chaaran-Kanya, Daang Uthave Chaaran-Kanya, Traad Gajave Chaaran-Kanya."

Which means, *Charan Kanya*, like mother goddess, raises her stick, and makes roar like thunder. In this description we can find mixed expression of *Shringar Rasa* and *Raudra Rasa* acting as *Vyabhichari Bhava* and which immediately becomes intense and erects the *Veer Rasa.* In further description Meghani says,

"*Sihan, Taro Bhadvir Bhagyo, Ran Meli ne Kayar Bhagyo"*

This description shows how lion ran away cowardly by the fear of *Charan Kanya.* This supports the *Charan Kanya'*s valor over the initial fear. We can find that Meghani expresses regional and inherent bravery and valor through this work.

We can find that feelings like heroism, enthusiasm, courage and valor have widely emerged in it. In one of the poem *Mot Na Kankugholan* Meghani writes,

"*Dhinga Darnidhar Dhinge Jhujh; Mare Haiye Kasumbi No Rang, Mare Haiye Kasumbi No Rang"*

Means the brave warrior struggle fiercely on the battlefield; my heart is dyed with the color of sacrifice. Here, *Kasumbi No Rang",* which is saffron color, is metaphor for sacrifice, bravery and valor. The poem *Chhello Katoro Jer no Aa Pijo Bapu,* was directly addressed to Mahatma Gamdhi, when he was preparing to sail to London for the Second Round Table conference. We can find pure *Veer Rasa* in this, and *Vibhava* is Gandhiji's risky mission and threat of political failure, which is symbolized as *Jer No Katori* means poisonous cup. The opening line of this poem directly delivers a heroic command by saying,

"*Chhello Katoro Jerno Pi Avje, Baapu!"*

In this the poisonous cup symbolizes the ultimate challenge that must be faced without any kind of hesitation, and the command of *Pi Avje* (drink and come back) is the core of the expression of *Utsah,* which needs heroic commitment.

Another famous poem from this collection is *Kasumbi NO Rang.* This poem is example of Meghani's mastery of mixing various emotions to evoke nationalism. The word *Kasumbi* refers to a reddish orange color, which symbolizes valor and sacrifice. In the context of Meghani, *Kasumbi* don't just stand for physical valor but also a moral valor and undefeatable determination. The poem starts with,

"Mari *Janani Na Hiayama Podhanta Pidho Kasumbi No Rang"*

This opening line says that this ultimate spirit of sacrifice and valor is not sudden, but it is inherent characteristics coming from ancestors, showcasing and ultimate *Sthayi Bhava* of Gujarat's culture and nationhood, which need to be awake. To awake this ultimate spirit Meghani writes,

"*Gholi Gholi Pyala Bhariya Rangila Ho Pijo Kasumbi No Rang…… Eva Doranga Dekhine Dariya Tekila Ho Lejo Kasumbi No rang."*

This sentence acts as a call up to utilize the *Kasumbi Rang* of valor and prepare for the absolute commitment. Meghani inspires to awake the spirit of valor and sacrifice through this stanza. *Karuna Rasa* also emerged in this poem through the *Sthayi Bhava* of *Shok*.

Meghani evokes sentiments by dwelling deep into the tragic and personal cost, which is needed for freedom,

"*Ho Raj Chhalkayo Kasumbi No rang…*

Eva Bismil Betaoni Maatane Bhale Kai Malakyo Kasumbi No rang"

This stanza refers to the sacrifice of mothers of their sons. This sacrifice is profound *Vibhava* of *Shoka.* Furthermore, poet uses word the valor smiled on the forehead of mother, transmitting this sorrow into dignified pride.

In poem *Koi No Ladakvayo* expresses feelings of family and friends of martyred soldiers. In this poem we can find mixed feelings of bravery and sorrow. Opening stanza of the poem is,

"*Rakta Tapakti So So Jholi Samarangan Thi Aave, Kesar Varani Samar Sevika Komal Sej Bichhave; Ghaayal Marata Marata Re*

Maat Ni Azaadi Gave."

In this stanza we can see Meghani's mastery of mixing feelings of sorrow and bravery. Sorrow of beloved of martyred solders and bravery of dying soldiers, who gave priority to the freedom of the motherland over their lives. This description initially has *Sthayi Bhava* of *Shoka* which evokes *Karuna Rasa* that eventually turns to the *Veer Rasa.*

Conclusion

At the end this research we can find that the effectiveness of Meghani's poetry is rooted in sophisticated use of *Rasa* and *Dhvani.* The emotional impact can be achieved not only through a vivid description but also through the suggestive power embodied in lively regional dialect and powerful imagery of Meghani. Meghani has successfully utilized the full emotional plot of the *Natya Shastra* to create regional identity of Saurashtra and a great national spirit. We can also find that Meghani's command over the language in his rich and diverse vocabulary. He smoothly mixes totally opposite *Rasas* like *Karuna, Shringar and Veer Rasa* in one poem. His works demonstrate that aesthetic merit is free from classical derivations.

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THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS IN THE ARTISTIC MANIFESTATIONS HARLEM RENAISSANCE

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Abstract

The Harlem Renaissance (1918–1937) marked a transformative era in African American history, where a flourishing of artistic expressions redefined the cultural identity and voice of African Americans. African American writers played a pivotal role in this renaissance, using their works to explore themes of racial pride, social justice, and cultural heritage. Writers such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay were central to this movement, using their works to challenge stereotypes, celebrate African American life and culture, and advocate for social change. This article explores the literary contributions of these writers, analyzing their themes of racial pride, cultural heritage, and resistance, and highlights their lasting influence on American art and literature.

Writers like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston created authentic and revolutionary art, capturing African American music's rhythm and oral traditions. McKay's works critiqued systemic racism and expressed a yearning for freedom and equality, breaking free from traditional narratives.

Through their writings, these artists fostered a sense of solidarity within the African American community and brought Black art and literature to the forefront of American culture. Their contributions laid the foundation for subsequent movements like the Civil Rights Movement and inspired future generations of writers and activists.

This paper examines the pivotal role of African American writers in the artistic manifestations of the Harlem Renaissance, emphasizing their ability to use literature as a means of self-expression, resistance, and cultural celebration, ultimately reshaping the narrative of African American identity within the broader American context.

Keywords: African American literary culture, African American identity, African American writers, artistic and cultural expressions, cultural revolution, Harlem Renaissance, New Negro movement.

1. Introduction

The Harlem Renaissance, also known as the "*New Negro Movement*," emerged in the early 20th century as a response to the socio-political and economic challenges faced by African Americans. This cultural explosion, centered in Harlem, New York, was a hub of artistic innovation and intellectual discourse, as African Americans sought to redefine their identity in a society plagued by systemic racism and segregation. Writers played a crucial role in this cultural rebirth, crafting narratives and poetry that reflected the complexities of Black life while celebrating its richness and diversity.

The Harlem Renaissance, spanning from 1918 to the mid-1930s, was a vibrant period of cultural, artistic, and intellectual awakening within the African American community. Central to this Cultural Revolution were African American writers, who not only reflected the lived experiences of Black Americans but also celebrated their heritage and articulated a vision for racial equality and pride. Their works, including poetry, fiction, essays, and plays, provided a profound exploration of themes such as racial pride, cultural heritage, social justice, and the complexities of African American life.

Literature during the Harlem Renaissance was deeply intertwined with other art forms, creating a synergy that enriched the cultural output of the time. These writers used their craft to inspire pride and solidarity within the African American community while engaging in dialogues about social and political change.

This article examines the critical role of African American writers in the Harlem Renaissance, exploring their artistic innovations, thematic concerns, and the impact of their works on African American communities and the broader cultural landscape of America.

These manifestations include literature, music and visual art. First, this article aims at highlighting how James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke inspired the young African American artists to

manifest their creativity during the renaissance. Therefore, significant artistic works were produced by African Americans during the 1920s and 1930s. Second, in this article briefly presents African American literature and examines some literary works such as Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*, Jean Toomer's *Cane*, works that are considered as important during the Renaissance. One can also notice Langston Hughes's *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, *I Too Sing America* and *The Weary Blues*, and Claude McKay's *Harlem Dancer* and *Harlem Shadow*. The chapter also discusses black women writing, such as Nella Larsen, Jessie Fausset and Zora Neal Hurston. Finally, besides literature, this article emphasizes African American artistic forms like visual art and music such as Jazz and Blues which took a great importance in African American cultural history. The article examines the significant contributions of African American writers during the Harlem Renaissance, focusing on the themes, styles, and cultural impact of works by figures like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer. It also highlights the role of black women writers like Nella Larsen, Jessie Fauset, and Zora Neale Hurston in shaping the literary landscape of the era.

2. Historical Context of the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance, a cultural revolution in the early 20th century, was influenced by historical events such as the Great Migration, World War I aftermath, and the "New Negro" ideology. African American writers played a crucial role in this period, articulating the complexities of Black life and reshaping the narrative of African American identity within the broader American and global cultural landscapes.

The Great Migration, which saw millions of African Americans move from the rural South to urban centers in the North between 1916 and 1970, was a pivotal factor in the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance. Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City, became the epicenter of this cultural movement, drawing Black artists, intellectuals, and writers seeking opportunities and freedom from the pervasive racial oppression of the South. This migration not only concentrated African Americans in urban areas but also created a fertile environment for the exchange of ideas and artistic collaboration.

World War I further catalyzed the Harlem Renaissance, as African American soldiers who fought returned home with heightened expectations for equality and recognition of their contributions. However, they faced widespread racism and segregation, leading to disillusionment but also a renewed determination to assert their rights and cultural identity. Writers like Langston Hughes,

Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay drew inspiration from this ideology, producing works that depicted the richness of African American life while challenging systemic racism.

The Harlem Renaissance was not confined to literature alone, as writers collaborated with musicians, visual artists, and performers, creating a multidisciplinary movement that highlighted the interconnectedness of art forms. Through their literary contributions, they laid the foundation for future movements advocating for racial equality and artistic expression, ensuring the enduring legacy of this transformative era.

3. Key Themes in Harlem Renaissance Literature

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of significant cultural and artistic creativity in the early 20th century, where African American writers produced works that reshaped the narrative surrounding Black identity in America. These works were deeply informed by historical and social realities, serving as both a celebration of African American life and a critique of systemic injustices they faced. Key themes in Harlem Renaissance literature included racial pride, cultural heritage, social justice, and resistance.

3.1. Racial Pride and Identity: This theme was central to the literary works of African American writers, who sought to redefine what it meant to be Black in America. Langston Hughes, for example, asserted the dignity and beauty of African Americans in his poetry, I, Too. Claude McKay's America acknowledged the harsh realities of systemic racism while expressing a complex sense of belonging.

3.2. Cultural Heritage and the African Roots: This theme was also central to Harlem Renaissance literature, with writers like Zora Neale Hurston and Jean Toomer exploring the folk traditions, dialects, and oral storytelling of African Americans, particularly those rooted in the rural South. Their works celebrated the

resilience and creativity of Black communities and emphasized the need to reconnect with African roots while embracing the evolving cultural identity of African Americans.

3.3. Social Justice and Resistance: Harlem Renaissance literature often served as a platform for critiquing systemic racism and advocating for social change. Writers used their art to confront issues such as segregation, economic inequality, and racial violence, challenging the status quo and demanding justice.

3.4. The Urban Experience: The Harlem Renaissance was a time when African American writers were able to create a unique and powerful narrative through their works. Their work aimed to challenge the status quo and promote a more just and equitable society.

3.5. Gender and Intersectionality: The Harlem Renaissance was a period of significant literary and artistic development in the United States, marked by the rise of African American women writers who challenged traditional gender roles and explored intersectionality. Zora Neale Hurston's novel "Our Eyes Were Watching God" explores themes of autonomy, love, and self-discovery, while Jessie Redmon Fauset's "Plum Bun" delves into the intersections of race, class, and gender. These works contributed to a broader understanding of how race and gender intersect, shaping the experiences of African American women and pave the way for feminist and intersectional scholarship.

3.6. The Influence of Music and Spirituality: Music and spirituality were also integral to the Harlem Renaissance, with writers drawing inspiration from African American musical traditions like jazz, blues, and spirituals. Langston Hughes' poetry, for example, incorporated the cadences of jazz and blues, while Countee Cullen's poetry reflected questions of faith, identity, and cultural legacy. By integrating music and spirituality into their work, Harlem Renaissance writers created a rich tapestry celebrating the multifaceted nature of African American culture.

3.7. Love and Intimacy: Love and intimacy were also explored in the movement, challenging traditional portrayals of African American relationships. Alain Locke's anthologies and essays celebrated the diversity of Black relationships, while Richard Bruce Nugent's Smoke, Lilies, and Jade explicitly explored queer desire, breaking taboos and expanding the scope of Harlem Renaissance literature. These explorations of love and intimacy added depth to the movement, emphasizing the humanity and individuality of African Americans.

The key themes in Harlem Renaissance literature ranging from racial pride and cultural heritage to social justice, gender, and spirituality highlight the richness and diversity of African American experiences. By addressing these themes, writers of the Harlem Renaissance not only redefined the narrative surrounding African Americans but also created a body of work that continues to resonate and inspire. Their literature stands as a testament to the transformative power of art in shaping cultural identity and advocating for justice, ensuring the enduring legacy of the Harlem Renaissance in American and global history.

4. The Role of Literature in Artistic Manifestations

The Harlem Renaissance (1918-1937) was a significant cultural movement that reshaped African American identity and creativity. Literature played a central role in the artistic manifestations of this era, serving as both a foundation and a bridge for other art forms. African American writers, such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston, used their works to establish a strong foundation for exploring African American identity. Their vivid portrayals of Black life resonated beyond the written word, influencing musicians, visual artists, and performers to incorporate themes of pride, resilience, and cultural celebration into their work.

The themes explored in Harlem Renaissance literature racial pride, cultural heritage, and social justice directly influenced visual art. Writers provided narratives and imagery that visual artists like Aaron Douglas and Jacob Lawrence translated into paintings and illustrations. For example, Douglas, often referred to as the “father of African American art,” drew heavily on the symbolism and thematic depth found in Harlem Renaissance literature.

Harlem Renaissance literature also played a significant role in shaping performance arts, including drama, theater, and spoken word. The narratives and dialogues crafted by writers often served as scripts and inspiration for theatrical productions that brought African American stories to life. Spoken word and poetry readings, held in Harlem’s vibrant salons and cafes, became key venues for literary expression, blending literature with live jazz and

blues performances. This fusion created an immersive artistic experience that reinforced the centrality of literature in the artistic tapestry of the Renaissance.

The connection between literature and music was particularly strong during the Harlem Renaissance, as jazz and blues, as emerging musical genres, were both influenced by and influential on the era's literature.

African American Literary Culture during the Harlem Renaissance

Racial and cultural stereotypes have shaped American society for many years. As a result, African American literary tradition emerged in particular from a need to affect social change. The African American authors have set a significant framework to shape black cultural identity and solidarity. Through the Harlem Renaissance, black writers started to explore their identity and cultural manifestations in the 1920s and 1930s (Bader vii, viii, ix). This self-discovery revealed itself in multiple ways including literary and artistic works (Perry 13).

James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke played an important role in helping the renaissance to gain recognition. Furthermore these two leaders aimed to present the creativity of the black artists to the world (Perry 13). By the publication of *The New Negro* 1925, Locke worked to discover and to demonstrate the black talents among African American writers. He stressed how this creative literary achievement could demonstrate to the world that the Negro can create his own culture through his creativity. As a result, Locke supported the African American writers spiritually and morally during the movement. Such support made the movement concrete and meaningful to the young black writers (15).

Weldon Johnson also shared the same ability to recognize and to embrace the talent of black writers (Perry 16). In addition to his encouragement and support for black writers, he influenced them to share their emotions of being black in a white society (17).

By the publication of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922, Johnson claimed that if African Americans produced literary works that expressed a certain level of cultural sophistication, America's white elite would understand the importance and the value of African American cultural development and grant black people political equality. This belief inspired Johnson's contributions to the Harlem Renaissance. However, instead of publishing literary works, Johnson chose to work as a critic and assist black authors in the process of publishing their works to the public (Hill 13). Furthermore, through *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, Johnson made the black literary past accessible to curious readers (Stokes 29). He provided a close reading of the Harlem Renaissance' texts while taking into consideration the ancient black literature (30).

Another work of Johnson that encouraged black writers was *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man,* a character narrate his movement from the deep South to northern cities, witnessing the sense of excitement of the intellectual and artistic change, and becoming obsessed by African American culture and folklore (Boi 66). *The Autobiography* was considered an important text that had a major impact on the Harlem Renaissance's political designs (Myers 5). It offered an argumentative encouragement and served as a literary framework for the movement that identified racial inequality (6). First published in 1912, but it was unrecognizable until its second publication in 1927. It influenced those involved in developing the movement's ideology (5). In

addition, it represented the race-color paradox since the ex-colored man was legally black and visibly white, and although he had faith that blacks can be successful in America, yet he passed as a white to achieve success (Nordhoff- Beard 403). In this literary work, Johnson depicted the educated black who served as a basic individual in the formation of the renaissance's ideology, showing how such social change could bring pride and respect to the African Americans (Myers5).

Through this support and encouragement of Locke and Johnson, African American authors proudly produced an impressive literary works by using the major genres of poetry, short fiction, novels, and plays with daring subjects, methods, and techniques (Hull 69). Because of their high aesthetics quality, Harlem Renaissance authors held an important role in African American literary history. This high artistic quality appeared in many works by Carl Van Vechten, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and others (223).

Black authors' literary works received widespread critical and social appreciation at the time (Bader ix). Van Vechten, was one of the Harlem Renaissance white critic and writer. He was considered one of the important writers of the movement. Vechten was enthusiastic about Harlem, as well as the African American culture. Through his

literary works, he brought the white recognition to the black art. One of his prominent works during the renaissance was *Nigger Heaven* 1926 (Perry 18) which represents black characters (Kellner 64).

The novel engaged in spreading, improving and illustrating the African American culture as Du bois, Locke and Johnson did (Hill 8). Despite the fact that the novel faced many negative criticizes, yet it attracted many white readers to the African American literature (Kellner 64).

Another important renaissance writer was Jean Toomer. He was regarded as the voice of a new wave of Harlem Renaissance authors by many critics and writers. He was better known for his seminal novel *Cane* (Bader 225). It was considered as the most important modernist literary effort that provided the black experience, individual impressions of that experience, and the ambiguities that existed between the South and the North. Many of the themes and concerns of later Harlem Renaissance literature were first presented in *Cane* (Boi 66). Jean Toomer's *Cane* was released in 1923 (Raynor 69). He illustrated the cultural and social fragmentation of African-American life in contemporary society (Bader 227). *Cane* received positive reviews for its modernist style and its study of black migration and the relationship between African Americans and their long

history in the South and Africa. *Cane*, on the other hand, was difficult to categorize since Toomer (Raynor 69) combined the different sketches, poetry, and drama into what has been described as an innovative, lyrical novel (Bader 226). His novel was regarded as an important literary work compared to other works during the renaissance (Raynor 69) because he was able to construct an actual and unique African American vision within the scope of experimental modernist literary styles that addressed both white and African American audiences (Bader 227). Besides Harlem Writers, Claude McKay was a militant poet who wrote several race poems such as his famous one *if we must die* 1919. His poetry has pictured his race's frustration, anger, and the search for true black identity. Furthermore, he tried in his poems to assure whites what it was like to be a Negro and how a Negro felt at the time (Hagino 89, 90). He depicted also dancing and music in his poems. Thus we can easily find that clubs and music which considered major components of Harlem life were included in McKay's, Larsen's and Van Vechten's writings (Capel Swartz 251).

McKay was considered one of the first Black artists that discussed the subject of the black man's cultural connection to Africa when he published his collection of poems, *Harlem Shadow* 1922. His collection of poems set the tone for the rebirth of Negro creativity realized during the Harlem Renaissance (Griffin 1).

In McKay's poem, *The Harlem Dancer* 1917-1922 (Shroyer 1), McKay illuminated the beauty of resilience and degradation of the African American Self-perpetuated by racial oppression in his poem (Critical Reading: 'the Harlem Dancer' and Her Storm par.1) by portraying a black woman that dressed and acted erotically for an audience only for earning a living, without regard to her self-respect (Shroyer 1, 2). This poem described that, although the renaissance provided further opportunities for blacks to perform, African Americans were still not recognized on the same level as whites (Shroyer 2, 3, 4).

Another important Harlem Renaissances figure was Langston Hughes. He was an African American poet, writer, playwright, and journalist (Utama 1). In his poetry, he emphasized African American spirituality and connectedness (Hill 16). His poem, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* was well known for two reasons. First, when it was first written and well- received in The *Crisis* in 1921, the poem attracted many readers to the creativity of Hughes. Second, the novel was a notable work because of the links it created between African heritage and recent African American culture (6).

Another poem written by Hughes, *I Too Sing America* 1926. This poem filled the gap between the black creative voice, dedicated writing, literary culture, and song. Hughes referred to the contradiction that the black voice was omitted from America while still being capable of singing (Michlin 236, 237). In the poem, Hughes portrayed racial prejudice from the perspective of slaves and oppressed blacks. Hence, Hughes's poetry represented a similar occurrence for many African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance, when segregation was still in practice (Utama 1, 2).

Furthermore, Hughes combined black music with his poetry. He had used Jazz music as a theme in his poems *Jazzonia* 1923 and *Cabaret* (Michlin 237), in which he portrayed the nightclubs of Harlem (Vogel 911). In addition, he found that the only artists voicing and singing the real truth of the black masses were the blues singers. He wrote *The Weary Blues* in 1923. Accordingly, it was a real blues poem in the sense that Hughes was combining the blues

with poetry, by elevating the blues man's voice to the status of a symbol of blackness. Thus, Hughes wrote about the blues; but, as he progressed, he discovered that the dialect, melody, rhythm, grief, and resiliency of the blues themselves could enrich his poetry. As a result, his poetry was not about the blues, but the poetry of the blues itself. Hughes was not obsessed with the blues only, but also jazz as we mentioned (Michlin 237).

African American Women's writing during the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance also witnessed an increase in women's writings (Bader ix). The black women who wrote during the Harlem Renaissance came from different backgrounds, and regardless of their differences, these writers had a goal of recreating the black woman. They asserted the value and determination of the black women in their writings and offered a way for the African American woman to redefine herself (Scott 9, 10).

Nella Larsen, Jessie Fausset and Zora Neal Hurston were an example of women writing who published during the Renaissance. Fausset and Hurston' works appeared in *Crisis* and *Opportunity* Magazines. Fausset depicted decent middle blacks, emphasized the parallels between blacks and whites, and she wrote in Standard English. While Hurston portrayed poor blacks, emphasized the distinctions between whites and blacks, and wrote in folk dialect. Despite the distinctions between the two writers, they shared common themes in their stories.

They used themes of family solidarity and ethics, as well as depicted women as the passive heroine, often carrying the brunt of responsibility. They wrote also about men-women relationships that could help black female's self-affirmation (Scott 9, 10). However, Larsen was regarded as the black star according to critics, although, she published only two novels. Furthermore, her works received a lot of positive criticism (Wall 207). In her writing, she addressed the African American middle-class life and investigated racial concepts (251).

Nella Larsen was a prominent Harlem black writer during the renaissance (Bader 159). Her works depicted race issues and sexism that faced the African American woman in her pursuit to build her own identity. She discussed also cultural differences. Most of Larsen's heroines adopted fake identities to facilitate their lives. However, those females ended up with psychological problems (Wall 208).

First Larsen's novel *Quicksand* 1928, she depicted the heroine as a mulatto, who suffered from some difficulties in her life, as a result of both ethnic and personal problems (Levering Lewis 142). Furthermore, the novel investigated into the heroine's emotional, social and sexual problems as a mixed race lady (Bader 160). *Quicksand* was described by Du Bois as the greatest piece of fiction created by an African American since the era of Chesnutt (159,160). Also it was accomplished by Hughes and Locke (Levering Lewis 141).

The second novel of Larsen *Passing* 1929, depicted also the ethnic and social problems and displacement of the heroine who was obliged to decide whether to pass as white or to stay faithful in her original black identity. However, the second novel did not get much accomplishment as the first one. Thus, during her lifetime, Nella Larsen had a famous success as an author during the Harlem Renaissance. However, she did not publish since 1930 till she died (Bader 160).

Jessie Fauset was also one of the key figures during the Harlem Renaissance. She was honored for her contribution to the *Crisis* Magazine. As the *Crisis*' literary publisher, Fauset uncovered early works by African American writers, such as Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, and Claude McKay (Tillman 27).

Fauset's writing about the Negro middle class was very brave and daring since blacks were considered inferior at that time. Fauset's narratives, which follow the lives of middle- class black families, were often based around a mulatto heroine's attempts to achieve economic stability and social status by passing for white. Many of Fauset's characters later experienced depression as a result of imposing false values on themselves and their relatives. She opposed the traditional literary portrait of women by portraying women who consciously pursued jobs and desired equality in their relationship with men (Tillman 27). In addition, instead of emphasizing the distinctions between black and white societies, Fausset highlighted their parallels (29).

Fauset's first famous novel, *there is A Confusion* 1924, depicted women breaking free from constraints of life without being overly punished. The novel portrayed a diverse variety of characters and behavior against the backdrop of American slave history and it addressed racial inequality (Tillman 29). Her second novel *Plum Bun* 1928 was considered as a novel which gave a sort of the renaissance's cultural history. In this novel, Fauset addressed the challenge of passing, and the problems faced by the heroine first as black and second as women (West 365).

In the other hand, Zora Neale Hurston took many radical changes as she tried to research and explore African American society to express it in her writing. Hurston's writing identity was constructed on her passions for anthropology, folklore, and African American Modernism. The mixture of these experiences encouraged her to represent a complex and Comprehensive image of African-American cultural identity (Russell 126). However, Scholars, critics, and anthropologies dismissed her for a long period (Dance 322).

Her most popular novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, was written in 1937 and closely reflected Hurston's life in several respects (Nordhoff-Beard 3). The novel was generally recognized as a masterpiece of African American and world literature. It emphasized an independent black women's life (Scott lll 599). It had been interpreted as a journal of Janie Crawford's effort to escape traditional cultural norms and define herself as an independent black woman. Janie's progress toward these aims was described by Hurston's representation of Janie's relationships with her husband for a long period (Thompson 2). In addition to her social and sexual development was described in this story (Raynor 72). However, this novel lacks a clear link to her role as a folklorist and anthropologist (Russell 126).

In *John Redding Goes to Sea* 1921, Hurston depicted how John can be taken back by the people around him. His wife and his mother banded together to submit him to their needs rather than pursuing his dreams. It depicted the black reality, where black men were marginalized by their wives, who dampened men's spirits and ambitions (Scott 12, 13).

Another literary work by Zora Hurston was Drenched *in Light* 1924. This novel portrayed how black parent purposefully brutalized their children to train them for a harsh future. This tradition might justify the grandmother's strict manner toward the heroine Isis. In the story, Isis has big dreams, but her grandmother wanted to suppress her ambitions, as well as the women in *John Redding Goes to Sea*, in which John's dreams were oppressed. Hurston in her writings believed that African-Americans had the right to dream but to not be oppressed neither by uneducated blacks nor by whites (Scott 28, 29).

African American Music during the Harlem Renaissance

Music was the most notable legacy of the Harlem renaissance, in which the black artists gain their cultural appreciation (Capel Swartz 251). Jazz and the Blues were regarded as art forms, despite their origins in folk or traditional black culture. They were two musical phenomena that helped shape the Renaissance and the African American culture, originated in a variety of areas like New Orleans, then were moved north by people migrating to Chicago, New York, and other cities. Similarly, most authors, poets, performers, and artists relocated to Harlem from many other parts of the country (Wintz and Finkelman x). Music also paved the way for the transition of black culture to white Americans during the Renaissance (Carreiro 2).

Jazz emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Mississippi Delta region. It was a mix of African, European, and American musical ideas, intonations, and rhythms. Jazz arrived in Harlem and other northern black neighborhoods through the great migration and oppression in the south. It was heard in bars and rent parties as part of the popular nightlife (Hill 10), and it was the most and recognizable form of African American culture among white Americans in the 1920s, making it an atmosphere for interracial cultural exchange (Carreiro 51). As the evolution of Jazz in Harlem, many white jazz players became acquainted with the black culture. Jazz music brought black culture to a mainstream audience, however, Dubois and others refused to give jazz that important because they thought it was rough and uninspired. They were, however, much more interested in expressions of what they perceived to be sophisticated culture as theatre, painting, poetry, and literature because black music for a while was addressing mostly social taboos. The African American historian Nathan Huggins also argued that only Hughes took Jazz seriously when he combined his poems with jazz music (Carreiro 45). Contrary to Huggins' argument, not all African American intellectuals were uninterested in jazz. According to Locke, while jazz was essentially Negro, it was, fortunately, indeed human enough to be popular. Jazz's fame, according to Locke, reflected the appreciation of its universal rhythmic qualities. Locke wished that an appreciation of jazz would lead to an appreciation of black culture (Carreiro 46, 47).

One of the popular figures of jazz music was Duke Ellington. In 1927, he made his debut at the cotton club, moved from Washington DC to Harlem, and eventually became the headliner at the cotton club. His success reached the attention of downtown white artists, who flew to Harlem just to hear his music and talks. However, despite the

growing success of African American performers, the majority of cinemas, and nightclubs were still segregated till the mid-1930s (Carreiro 48).

In 1928, a young American man, Benny Goodman, learned the ropes from notable black New Orleans natives then moved to New York and jammed in secret with some of the best black jazz artists of the time. As African Americans Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton joined Goodman's band in 1936; the color line was eventually broken. Wilson, Hampton, Goodman, and another white guitarist formed the Benny Goodman Quartet, the first professional multiracial group. Goodman later claimed that when they played, nobody cared much what colors or races as long as they played good music. Goodman's feelings about jazz's interracial aspects represented the Renaissance's actual cultural success (Carreiro 52, 53).

The Harlem Renaissance jazz music was remembered for its accessibility. As opposed to literature, jazz made it possible for whites in Harlem to cross the color line. An article or a poem, if well composed, may be disagreed with dependent on one's political beliefs and interpretation. However, it was difficult to ignore the existence of good music and genuine artistic talent. While jazz did not provide a path to political impacts or equality, it did offer opportunities for African American cultural development to become acceptable to parts of white society and also to be adopted by white musicians (Hill 9).

Regarding the blues, it arose in Mississippi in the late 1800s, its origins go back to the music of black slaves and, later, black plantation owners. The blues moved to the north as the other southern families during the Great Migration. In the 1920s, the blues were still not recognizable in the north; many people did not consider it important or acceptable music to be performed. Mostly, artists like William Grant Still and Duke Ellington did not become acquainted with the blues until after their careers had begun, in which each began to realize the beauty of the blues genre and its distinctive artistic nature ("An African-American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance" 9, 10).

Aside from its unique melodic style, the blues was a literary art form in which a person tells a story by music. These are typically tales of suffering and sorrow about wealth, relationships, or the racial oppression but they often demonstrate determination and resolve to fight these difficulties. Hughes combined the blues into his poetry and published *The Weary Blues* in 1926. His blues poetry often conforms to the style of a typical blues song ("An African- American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance" 11).

African American Visual Art during the Harlem Renaissance

The visual arts flourished alongside literature and music during the 1920s and 1930s (Ann Calo 49). The absence of black paintings before the renaissance made the African American Aeron Douglas the creator and the pioneer of the African American visual art (Kirschke 188). He was the most artistic figure closely identified with the movement. Douglas rapidly created a distinct painting technique. His style of painting depictions of African American life and culture attracted a lot of attention from Harlem's scholars. In 1925, Douglas illustrated *the Opportunity* and *the crisis* magazine (Farrington 50, 51) to illustrate political problems such as lynching and slavery (305).

Douglas had much opportunity to depict happiness and sadness, pain and pride of the African Americans (Kirschke 192). Hence, he developed a wide variety of work that helped form the movement and bring it to national recognition. Through his collaborations and paintings, he developed a method of integrating elements of modern art and black culture to glorify the African American experience while taking into consideration racial prejudice and segregation. He attempted to covey that black is beautiful (Duncan and Archino).

Fig.1. Douglas, Aaron. "Slahdji (Tribal Women)." 1925.

One of his artworks, *Slahdji (Tribal Women)* 1925 (see fig. 1 above), was made under the supervision of German artist Fritz Winold Reiss who inspired Douglas to derive influence from African art and culture., In this portrait, he attempts to build a visual language for Black beauty by highlighting body curves, thick lips, and African American portrait of the female black figure (Duncan and Archino).

Fig.2. Douglas, Aaron. "The Judgment Day." 1927.

Douglas also portrayed The *Judgment Day 1927* (see fig.2 above). It was an illustration for Weldon Johnson's collection of poems. The illustration depicts three figures: the angel Gabriel as the biggest figure in the image, on his right we can see the saved person who will go into heaven and on the left a group of sinners. From this illustration, by portraying black persons in identifiable biblical settings Douglas aims to convey to African Americans that, like the white, they were God's chosen people (Duncan and Archino).

Fig.3. Douglas, Aaron. “Harriet Tubman.” 1931.

Another work of Douglas was *Harriet Tubman* 1931 (see fig.3 above). It includes the female figure of Harriet Tubman, who worked with the Underground Railroad to free over 400 slaves in the nineteenth century. In that illustration, Douglas provided New Negroes with a narrative through which they could identify themselves, their origins, and their futures, while also demonstrating African American self-determination and defiance (Duncan and Archino).

5. Legacy of Harlem Renaissance Writers

The Harlem Renaissance (1918-1937) was a transformative era in American cultural history, where African American writers redefined the narrative of Black identity, creativity, and resilience. Their literary contributions laid the groundwork for future cultural and social movements, inspiring generations of writers, artists, and thinkers. The Harlem Renaissance writers' legacy is multifaceted, encompassing their influence on literature, activism, art, and the broader understanding of African American identity.

1. **Redefining African American Identity:** The Harlem Renaissance writers played a pivotal role in reshaping how African Americans were perceived, both within their communities and in the broader societal context. They celebrated the richness of Black culture, history, and experiences, countering dehumanizing stereotypes that had long dominated mainstream literature and media. Their works emphasized themes of racial pride, resilience, and the complexity of African American life.
2. **Inspiring Future Literary Movements:** The literary innovations of Harlem Renaissance writers directly influenced later movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Arts Movement. The Renaissance's emphasis on racial pride and cultural authenticity provided a blueprint for future writers and artists to draw from. Figures like James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, and Toni Morrison were deeply inspired by the works of their predecessors, carrying forward the themes and styles pioneered during the Harlem Renaissance.
3. **Influence on African American Music and Art:** The Harlem Renaissance was characterized by its interdisciplinary nature, with literature serving as a cornerstone for other artistic forms. The themes and styles explored by writers during this period significantly influenced African American music, visual arts, and performance.
4. **Advancing Social and Political Activism:** The Harlem Renaissance writers were not only artists but also advocates for social justice, often critiquing systemic racism, segregation, and economic inequality using literature as a platform for activism. This commitment to social change became a defining aspect of their legacy, influencing future movements for racial equality.

5. **Elevating African American Women Writers:** The Harlem Renaissance also provided a platform for African American women writers to assert their voices and challenge societal norms. Writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and Nella Larsen explored themes of gender, race, and identity, creating nuanced portrayals of Black womanhood. Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God is a testament to the resilience and autonomy of African American women, addressing issues of love, identity, and self-determination. These works paved the way for later feminist and intersectional scholarship, inspiring writers like Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Audre Lorde to further explore the intersections of race and gender in their own works.

6. **Institutionalizing African American Literature:** The Harlem Renaissance marked a turning point in the recognition and institutionalization of African American literature. Anthologies like Alain Locke's The New Negro and publications such as The Crisis and Opportunity elevated the visibility of Black writers and solidified their contributions to American literature. These platforms not only showcased the diversity of African American voices but also legitimized their work within literary and academic circles.

This institutional recognition laid the foundation for the establishment of African American studies programs in universities, ensuring that the works of Harlem Renaissance writers would be studied and celebrated for generations. Their legacy lives on in academic curricula, literary festivals, and cultural institutions dedicated to preserving and promoting African American art and history.

7. **A Global Impact:** The influence of Harlem Renaissance writers extended beyond the United States, resonating with artists and intellectuals in the African diaspora and inspiring movements like Negritude in Francophone Africa and the Caribbean. Writers like Claude McKay and Langston Hughes traveled extensively, sharing their works and engaging with global audiences. Their writings emphasized the shared experiences of colonization and racial oppression, fostering solidarity among Black communities worldwide.

This global perspective enriched the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance, highlighting its significance as a movement that transcended national boundaries and contributed to a broader understanding of Black identity and culture.

8. **Enduring Cultural Legacy:** The works of Harlem Renaissance writers remain relevant today, serving as a source of inspiration and empowerment for contemporary artists and activists. The themes of racial pride, cultural heritage, and social justice explored during the Renaissance continue to resonate in the face of ongoing racial and social inequalities.

Contemporary writers, musicians, and visual artists draw on the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance to address modern challenges while celebrating the achievements of the past. The movement's emphasis on the transformative power of art serves as a reminder of the potential for creativity to inspire change and foster understanding.

The legacy of Harlem Renaissance writers is a testament to the enduring power of art and literature to shape cultural identity, inspire social change, and celebrate the richness of human experience. By redefining African American identity, influencing future artistic movements, and advancing social and political activism, these writers left an indelible mark on history. Their works continue to resonate across generations, ensuring that the Harlem Renaissance remains a pivotal chapter in the story of American and global culture.

Through their literary contributions, Harlem Renaissance writers demonstrated that art could be both a reflection of lived experiences and a catalyst for transformation. Their legacy serves as a beacon of hope and a reminder of the potential for creativity to transcend barriers and inspire progress.

Conclusion

This article explores how Locke and Johnson influenced African American artists during the Renaissance, encouraging them to produce literary works like Locke's *The New Negro* and the Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry*. These works aimed to demonstrate the creativity and beauty of black people, despite their race, to the white elite. The manifestation of the Harlem Renaissance can be considered as an essential element in forming the African American identity and culture. Indeed, their cultural production from literature to arts, including Jazz and the Blues were offering the African Americans a sense of pride and creativity.

The Harlem Renaissance is a significant period in American and global cultural history, marked by the transformative power of art and literature in challenging societal norms and reshaping identities. African American writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, and Nella Larsen used literature as a tool for redefining narratives and asserting cultural pride, exploring themes of racial identity, cultural heritage, and social justice. Their works provided a foundation for future generations to explore these themes.

The interplay between literature and other art forms was remarkable, with poetry inspiring jazz rhythms, novels and essays informing visual art, and drama setting the stage for vibrant performances. This interdisciplinary synergy created a cultural mosaic that elevated African American voices and challenged prevailing stereotypes. Writers infused their works with the sounds, sights, and struggles of their communities, making the Renaissance a holistic celebration of African American culture.

The Harlem Renaissance was deeply rooted in social and political consciousness, with literary works often criticizing systemic racism, economic inequality, and social injustice. These critiques laid the groundwork for future movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Arts Movement. The writers of the Harlem Renaissance demonstrated that art could be both a reflection of lived experience and a powerful catalyst for change.

The global impact of the Harlem Renaissance is further underscored by writers like Claude McKay and Langston Hughes engaging with audiences beyond the United States, fostering solidarity among the African diaspora and inspiring movements like Negritude in Francophone Africa. Their works emphasized shared struggles and aspirations, creating a transnational dialogue that enriched the 20th century's cultural and political landscape.

Studying the Harlem Renaissance offers lessons about the power of art to inspire change and foster understanding, reminding us of the resilience and creativity of marginalized communities. Their works are living testaments to the enduring power of literature to shape society and uplift the human spirit.

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PATRIARCHY IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S PLAY KAMALA

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Abstract

This research paper discusses the theme of patriarchy in Vijay Tendulkar's play Kamala, which is based on a true story where a journalist bought a woman from a flesh market. The play represents how women are treated as objects and not as human beings in society. The main character, Jaisingh Jadhav, presents himself as a bold journalist who wants to expose the evil of the flesh market, but in reality, he uses Kamala only for his own success. His patriarchal thinking presents the hypocrisy of men who speak about justice in society but do not respect women in their own homes. Along with Kamala, the play also focuses on Sarita, Jaisingh's wife, who realizes that even though she is not bought in a market, she is still living like a slave inside her marriage. She has no freedom to make decisions and is treated only as someone useful for her husband. This difference between Kamala's open exploitation and Sarita's hidden suffering makes the audience understand that patriarchy exists everywhere, cutting across class, education, and culture. As the play develops, Sarita becomes more aware of her condition and decides to live with freedom. Thus, through Kamala, Tendulkar not only exposes cruelty and patriarchy but also gives a strong message of hope that women can free themselves from oppression and build their own identity.

Keywords: Feminist perspective, Gender inequality, Patriarchy, Women's identity

Vijay Tendulkar is regarded as one of the most important dramatists of modern Indian theatre. We know that his plays focus on the social condition of Indian society and show how power, gender, and class create tensions in human relationships. Also, Tendulkar's drama challenges social traditions and expresses the hypocrisy that exists under the name of culture and progress. His plays also present the patriarchal mindset and conflict between individual freedom and social authority, where women live like slaves. We can say that Tendulkar's plays are not merely works of entertainment but serve as a mirror of society, revealing the cruelty and violence that usually remain concealed beneath respectability. Through plays such as Kamala, Silence! The Court is in Session, and Ghashiram Kotwal, Tendulkar presents how patriarchy and social inequality are deeply represented in society.

The play Kamala is based on a real-life incident. Ashwin Sarin, who was the Indian Express correspondent at the time, brought a girl from a rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference. Tendulkar uses this true story to show how horrible the flesh market is, how women are treated in society, how cutthroat the competition is in today's success-driven generation, and how hypocritical and selfish young journalists are.

At the beginning of the play, Jaisingh Jadhav returns from a visit to the rural flesh market. He has bought a tribal woman, Kamala, and brings her into his drawing room. This scene is important because it quickly brings out the main theme of the play, which is how men control women and treat them unequally in a patriarchal society.

During this moment, in the discussion between Jaisingh and Sarita, Jaisingh says, "Yes. For two hundred and fifty rupees. Even a bullock costs more than that" (p-14). He shows how little value he gives to Kamala's life. He speaks as if she is not a human being but an object or an animal that can be bought. His words reveal how money and male power work together. Because Jaisingh is a well-known journalist with social and economic power, he feels free to treat Kamala in this way. Comparing her to a bullock makes it very clear that women, especially poor and helpless women, are often treated like property in a patriarchal society.

This also represents Jaisingh's hypocrisy. He claims that he has brought Kamala to reveal the reality of the flesh market and to expose the exploitation of women. But in truth, he is using Kamala as a tool for his own professional achievement. He does not consider her individuality or humanity. He only wants to explore her in the press conference.

Throughout the play Sarita, who listens to this conversation, is deeply disturbed. At first, she is shocked by her husband's bad ideas. She understands that Jaisingh is speaking of Kamala as though she is not a woman with feelings and pain but only an object to be displayed. This moment becomes a turning point for Sarita's awareness,

because she begins to understand the selfishness and cruelty hidden behind her husband's confidence. It also makes her reflect on her own position as a woman in his household. If Kamala is treated like property in the open, Sarita too is controlled in a more subtle way inside the walls of her home.

From a broad social view, this moment shows how patriarchy affects not only villages but also urban and educated families. Jaisingh, who belongs to the middle-class society and is respected in society, shows the same attitude as the exploiters in the rural flesh market. By saying this line so easily, almost jokingly, he normalizes the exploitation of women. The audience feels disturbed because it forces them to realize that exploitation is not limited to remote places it exists in the drawing rooms of modern families as well.

In this play the scene underlines three important ideas: the control of men over women, the way women are reduced to objects, and the double standards of men like Jaisingh. Tendulkar shows this moment to make the audience think about how deeply patriarchy is rooted, even when it appears as progress and respectability. After Jaisingh brings Kamala home, he and Sarita talk about the flesh market. Sarita feels shocked that women are openly sold like animals. She finds it very unusual and painful. But Jaisingh answers casually. He says, "What's so unusual about the Luhardaga flesh market? Women are sold in many places like that, all over the country. How do you think all the red-light districts could operate—without that?" (p-15)

This discussion shows how careless Jaisingh is about the suffering of women. Instead of feeling sad or angry, he says that it is nothing unusual. According to him, such markets exist everywhere, and they are connected to red-light areas. Jaisingh also makes a very serious problem look like something normal. He thinks that buying women is just another easy thing in society. His tone is casual, but behind this casualness we see how women are treated without respect or humanity.

In this play, we also see the difference between Sarita and Jaisingh. Sarita is very shocked, but Jaisingh does not feel anything. For him, this is not about Kamala's pain or dignity, it is only about information that he can use for his career as a journalist. He wants to show himself as brave, but in reality, he has no sympathy for the woman he bought.

The words also reflect society's double standards. Many educated men like Jaisingh see such exploitation but treat it as natural. In this play, patriarchy does not only hurt women directly, but also makes men believe that injustice is ordinary. After that, we realize that the problem is not only in villages but also connected to city life and so-called respectable families. When Jaisingh talks like this, Tendulkar makes us think about how dangerous it is when cruelty and injustice become casual in everyday life.

Sylvia Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p-20).

Later in the play, Sarita talks to her uncle Kakasaheb. She has understood how her husband Jaisingh used Kamala for his personal career and also how he treated her like a servant in their marriage. At this time, Sarita finally speaks out about her pain and her wish for freedom.

Sarita says: "But a day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave. I'll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I'll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me." (p- 52). Here, Sarita accepts that till now she has lived like a slave in her home. Jaisingh never respected her as a person. He only wanted her for his personal needs, just like he used Kamala for his own work. When she says she is an "object to be used and thrown away," it shows how hurt she feels. She realizes that she was never treated with love or value, but only as something useful.

At the same time, this speech shows a change in Sarita. For the first time, she speaks with courage. She dreams of a day when she will live freely, when she will not be under anyone's control. She wants to make her own decisions, and she thinks that no one will rule her life anymore. It is not only about Sarita's personal life, but it also speaks for many women who suffer in silence. Through her words, Tendulkar shows that women may be oppressed, but they can also wake up and fight for dignity and freedom. Sarita's words also make us see the difference between her and Jaisingh. Jaisingh always used women for his benefit and never thought about their feelings. Sarita, after much pain, decides to question this injustice. Her voice represents hope and change.

In the ending of the play, Sarita decides not to depend on Jaisingh anymore. She refuses to live under her husband's control and prepares herself to face life on her own. This shows her growth from silence to courage. It also shows that

patriarchy may control women for some time, but women have the strength to break free. Sarita's final choice gives the audience hope that women can create their own identity and dignity even in a society that tries to suppress them.

In the middle of the play, Jaisingh and Sarita are at home. They are having a normal conversation, but Jaisingh suddenly speaks in a very strict tone. Jaisingh says: "It's I who take decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand?" (p-42) In this discussion we see how much control Jaisingh wants over Sarita. He believes that as the husband, only he has the right to decide everything in the family. He does not see Sarita as an equal partner. Instead, he speaks to her like a master speaks to a servant. The words also show the real face of patriarchy in everyday family life. Jaisingh does not even think that Sarita might also have her own wishes, opinions, or dreams. For him, her duty is only to listen and follow his orders. His question, "Do you understand?" is more like a warning, making it clear that she must obey.

Through this moment, Tendulkar shows how marriage becomes one-sided in a patriarchal society. A husband like Jaisingh thinks love and respect are less important than control and power. Sarita feels that her identity is ignored. She is not allowed to make decisions in her own home, even about her own life. This silent suffering makes her realize later that she too is living like a slave, just like Kamala in a different form. This discussion tells us a lot about how men control women inside homes. It reminds the audience that patriarchy does not only exist in villages or markets—it also rules the minds of educated men in modern society.

In this play, Kamala and Sarita are sitting together in Jaisingh's house. They are talking like two women sharing their ideas. Suddenly, Kamala asks Sarita: "How much did he buy you for?" (p- 34). Kamala's question is very innocent, but it is also very powerful. Kamala knows that she was bought for money in the flesh market. Kamala does not know that Sarita is the wife of Jaisingh, so she thinks Sarita also must have been "bought" by Jaisingh.

For Sarita, these words are shocking. She has always believed she is a respectable wife. But when Kamala asks this, Sarita realizes that her life is also like Kamala's in some ways. She is not free. Sarita feels like she is also a slave to Jaisingh, taking care of the house and living as he wants. Just like Kamala was bought with money, Sarita thinks she too has been "bought" in marriage. This moment shows how women are treated in Jaisingh's house in a patriarchal way. Kamala is sold in the market, while Sarita is controlled in her home. The place is different, but the pain is the same.

Also, Sarita begins to see the truth about her marriage. She becomes aware that Jaisingh never gave her respect as a wife. He only treated her as someone useful for his needs. Kamala's simple question makes her realize that she too is living without freedom. Through Kamala's innocent words, Tendulkar shows how patriarchy controls women everywhere. Whether it is Kamala or an educated wife like Sarita, both are treated as property. This one line makes the audience think deeply about women's condition in society and about the hidden slavery within marriage.

When Sarita talks to her uncle Kakasaheb about her problems, she feels sad because she has understood that her husband Jaisingh does not respect her. At this time, Kakasaheb tries to explain why Jaisingh behaves like this. He speaks very honestly and says:"Because he's like that. That's why there's manhood in the world. I too was just like this. Don't go by what I seem to be today. I gave your aunt a lot of trouble. As if it was my right. I didn't care what she felt at all." (p-47)

Kakasaheb tells the truth about men and patriarchy. He says that men like Jaisingh think this behavior is part of being a man. According to society, "manhood" means controlling women and not caring about their feelings.

Throughout the play, Kakasaheb also admits his own mistakes. He tells Sarita that in the past he too troubled his wife, Sarita's aunt. He behaved as if it was his right to hurt her and never thought about her emotions. Now he looks gentle and kind, but earlier he was just like Jaisingh. Through this conversation, the play shows that patriarchy is not only about one man or one family. It has been present in society for many years. Men from the older generation also believed the same ideas and passed them on to the younger generation. That is why Jaisingh also feels he has the right to control Sarita.

Also, Sarita thinks that her suffering is not new. Many women before her also faced the same pain and problems because of patriarchal authority. Kakasaheb's discussion also gives her strength. If men like Kakasaheb can admit their mistakes, then women like her can also speak up and demand respect. It shows clearly that patriarchy is taught

by society and is seen as "normal" by men. But at the same time, it also gives hope because change is possible when people accept the truth and question injustice.

To conclude, Tendulkar's play Kamala shows how patriarchy controls women and affects their lives in society. In this play, through Kamala and Sarita, we can see how men can rule over women's feelings, only for their own benefit. Jaisingh reflects this selfishness, using women for his personal gain without thinking of them as human beings. In this play, Sarita thinks that women can understand their feelings. The play also represents that patriarchy is not limited to one family or one generation; it is taught and continues in society over time. Tendulkar expresses that women like Sarita can challenge unfair rules, make their own choices, and live with respect and dignity. Kamala teaches us that even though patriarchy is strong, women can fight against injustice and create a strong life for themselves and for future generations.

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FROM TRADITION TO TECHNIQUE: NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN REVISIONIST MYTH

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Abstract:

Narration is a verbal or written act of putting our perspective in front of others. Similarly, the author's narration in a text is also his or her perspective, intended to share it with their readers. Traditional narratives of Indian myths are also the reflection of the author's vision and its contemporary period. Even with a common text, different narrative techniques can shift the way the author's perspective is delivered. The gesture to employ unique narrative techniques on the mythical texts with an intention to relate them with today's ideologies is called revisionist myth-making. Indian English contemporary authors revisit plots and characters from the ancient myth and modify them by using different narrative strategies than those already applied, which helps to look at the things from a different angle. Among late twentieth-century critical theories, feminism and subaltern studies illuminate resistance and challenge towards the dominant way of interpreting mythical texts such as patriarchy, gender roles and class. Narrative strategies in revisionist myth- making enable the infusion of reasoned argument and alternative perspective into traditional narratives. This research paper will examine the employment of narrative strategies in revisionist myth, its contribution towards the marginalised characters and its modern relevance within Ramayan and Mahabharat.

Keywords: Feminism, Mahabharat, Narrative Strategies, Ramayan, Revisionist Myth, Subaltern Studies

In the construction of any tradition, its ancient texts play the role of a guide. In the Indian context, they are Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and epics such as Ramayan and Mahabharat. Their rich values have continually contributed to building up human morals, philosophy and culture across generations. However, with the changing ideologies and socio-cultural realities of the twenty-first century, there has arisen a requirement to revisit these myths with modern lenses. The innovative narrative strategies used by contemporary Indian revisionist authors fulfil this need. The employment of narrative strategies makes the reinterpretation of myth and its modern relevance more scientific. Thus, the transition from tradition to technique in narrative forms is studied here with its concept and revisionist myth exemplar.

Demythification:

To know about the process of demythification, one should understand what mythification is. It is a constructive process rooted in religious values that revolves round a hero, gods or superhumans. To analyse and challenge the applied ideologies, to decode the in-built partiality and to make it readable for the contemporary modern readers, demythification breaks the construction framed by mythification. Like Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, demythification does not completely neglect the originality of the text. It opposes the living bias within the frame. It may use marginalised or imaginative characters to reason the modern beliefs. Demythification can twist or change the order of the original plots accordingly.

Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister* is a fine example of demythification through which the author could serve new perspectives. Demythification granted a spotlight to Urmila's character, who has been overshadowed in Ramayan. The author breaks the stereotypical character of Urmila given in the Ramayan and reconstructs her independent self. From a submissive and helpless wife of Lakshman, the character has been portrayed as an independent scholar, brilliant politician and emotionally intelligent lady. The author has deeply and metaphorically connected her fourteen years of sleep with her loneliness and loss. The traditional patriarchy has also been questioned through sharp dialogues of Urmila delivered in front of the royal family. This narrative strategy discloses the sufferings and injustice of patriarchal hierarchy.

In this way, demythification assigns modern agendas to revisionist authors. In today's time, a woman's intellectual mind struggles to balance her dual responsibilities inside and outside of the house without losing herself. As Urmila

did not resist from her duty as a wife and never stopped to build her own voice; this narrative strategy makes Sita's Sister relatable to those women of the twenty-first century.

Focusing on Marginalised Voices:

Though marginalisation is as old as humanity itself, it is often understood in the context of colonialism. From society to individual identity, almost every institution surrounding humans is designed. The existing components of every design are recognised in correlation with the others. Such correlations become a matter of who is superior to whom. Colonialism is the prime example of such hierarchical thinking, believing the uncolonised as others. Therefore, there is an initiative taken by post-colonial writers to discuss the colonised, lower-caste, Black people and females. Cultures are also consisting of such comparative components. The process of marginalisation is questioned in a manner through which the ignored are taken into focus. Through shifting the focus, it helps to provide the alternative interpretation of a canonical text. It highly elaborates the working power structures behind the dominant narration. Focusing on marginalised voices exemplifies a central concept of subaltern theory by bringing the experiences of suppressed gender, caste, characters and race into literature.

In Myth, there are few characters who have been marginalised, and one of them is a female character. The narrative strategies of ancient Indian myths are male-centric, which sidelines female characters. In revisionist myth, the narrative strategy to focus on female characters became popular lately. As a mixture of feminist and subaltern tendencies, many revisionist authors have written on marginalised females in myth, like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane and Popuri Lalita Kumari. *The Palace of Illusion* and *The Forest of Enchantments,* written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, centralise the marginalised voices of Draupadi and Sita by reinterpreting the mythical events from their points of view. She presents Draupadi as an independent thinker, inquisitive learner, and negotiator, and Sita as a warrior, self-discovering, and resilient.

Kavita Kane, in her novel Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen, creates an imaginary character called Uruvi as the wife of Karna. Posting Uruvi as the female narrator of the novel, the author throws light on caste-based marginalisation and injustice towards Uruvi and Karna alongside a strong feminist voice claiming her choice regardless of the set standards of societal dominance. Sita was not a sole victim of the patriarchal society of Ramayan, but there were other female characters also; the finest narration of this thought can be seen in Popuri Lalita Kumari's novella, *The Liberation of Sita.* She has merged Shurpanakha, Ahalya, Renuka Devi and Urmila's characters to connect with Sita's sufferings. Their individual encounters with Sita during her various phases of life are filled with concern, advice and self-discovery. Sita, choosing her mother earth at last, resists patriarchal dominance. Reshaping a character, imagining a new character or casting a group of supportive women to the others validates the narrative strategy 'to focus on the marginalised voices' rationally to break and challenge the hegemonic structure.

Allegory:

When an author shapes the key components of a narration symbolically, it is called allegory. Literary elements like characters, action and setting are consistently contextualised in this process. It covers the hidden meaning underneath a story. Characters and plots are designed in a way to disclose deeper philosophical, religious, political or historical ideas. In the context of revisionist myth, allegory employs multiple meanings in elaboration from past to present and vice versa. The author can show the personal or social relevance of contemporary problems with mythical revisits by using allegory.

The major application of allegory can be seen in Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel.* To analyse and critique the political history of independent India through mythical lenses required a strong relativism. Since the Mahabharata and independence of India share common struggles in terms of a new reign, truth, sacrifice and identity, the author subverts the Mahabharat and uses it as an allegory to narrate politics of that time. The role of allegory establishes a firm relationship between characters and plots of both kinds. Based on the role, designation, nature and relation, the politicians have been given signifying names and identities from the Mahabharat. Gandhiji, Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Jinha were represented as Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, Priya Duryodhani, and Karna, respectively. Though competent, Indira Gandhi's decisions have been critiqued with shared qualities of Duryodhan. Moreover, Shashi Tharoor has drawn upon some important incidents of the Mahabharat to allegorically point out military milestones of post-independence India, i.e., Sahadev's defeat from Bakasura symbolises India's military defeat in the Indo-China war, and Duryodhana's plan to burn the Pandavas indicates the emergency. The author's

intent is to show how ancient myths can be seen as grounded in historical reality while also transforming actual history into fictionalised narrative with the help of allegory.

Fictionalisation:

Fictionalisation is a core narrative strategy of revisionism. It consciously changes the predominant way of telling a story and initiates revising the original text. It is a modification of past narration to fit in the minds of modern readers. This modification sometimes puts the mythical characters in current states. It advocates creativity of the author, including new events, characters, twists, alternatives and lifestyle. Fictionalisation is a practice for the reader and author to interpret ancient text through multiple angles.

Once the demythification deconstructs the original mythical frame, the duty of fictionalisation begins in the true sense. The components are merged in a meaningful way. Anand Neelkantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* fictionalises the traditional narratives of Ramayan. First, the narrative perspective is replaced and made the novel, a counter-narrative of Ramayan from the traditional villain's point of view. The characters are portrayed way differently than the original ones. Ravana is more human-like, having faced injustice from his elder brother Kuber since his childhood days. Though he carries the brilliancy of a good leader, his emotional turmoil creates flaws. His ten heads are allegorically narrated in the form of his ten emotional turmoils, despite his stereotypical egoistic self.

Adopting the folk tale's saying, Sita is shown an abandoned daughter of Ravana whom he kidnaps to protect her from Ram, Lakshman and Deva's society. In this way the whole reason behind abduction from lust to protection is fictionalised. The author has also created a fictional character named Bhadra to represent the Indian citizens and their trust in politics. Alongside Ravana, Bhadra also shares the narrators' duty in the novel. Fictionalisation of characters and plot can change the whole perspective of authoritarian narration, break the binaries of good and evil and stand for the contemporary socio-political conditions.

Anthropomorphism:

With the need for modern relevance, a revisionist author often reshapes mythical characters with human qualities, which is called 'anthropomorphism'. Gods, demi-gods, animals and symbolic characters are humanised to interpret their inner psyche. Examining them with their originality may restrict a few aspects like the new perspectives, challenges to tradition, and the imagination of the author in revisionist myth. Therefore, anthropomorphism creates a humanly background for the character before their employment in alternative narration.

Among other revisionist Indian myth fictions, Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* can be considered a nice exemplar of anthropomorphism. The protagonist of the trilogy, Shiva, has been formed with human characteristics and emotional struggles. He guides the tribe and follows ethics, though he gets betrayed by the trustworthy people like a human goes through during his lifetime. From a human to become godlike, his journey is shown as an achievement rather than a natural possession. For example, his name, Neelkanth, comes from the incident when consuming medicinal liquid changed the colour of his throat into blue. Losing his love shows his human limitations against destiny.

Sati's portrayal as Vikarma, the one who is declared untouchable, initially points at her humanly aspects. Her inner psyche is constructive the way she receives the treatments from the external forces. In between suffering from her father's deeds and sacrificing her life like a mortal warrior, her character symbolises a human struggle against the society and family. Other than the protagonists, Kali and Ganesh were also passed through the process of anthropomorphism with an aim to critique the societal standardisation. Their uniqueness in appearance is represented as a physical disability of humans, which later strongly challenges human follies of marginalising the disabled. Anthropomorphism enhances the process of fictionalisation emotionally and makes the myth accessible to today's readers.

Polyphony:

The concept of polyphony comes from Mikhail Bhakhtin's dialogism, which discusses the individuality and multiplicity of voice. According to him, whatever is interpreted or said by us comes from our constructive background. Such singularity in opinion cannot be claimed as ultimate. Polyphony is a creative term that offers multiple voices in a single text. Our ancient texts are often told by a singular voice, and as a result, some characters are not given a chance to speak. Polyphony provides plurality in voicing the other characters against the process of marginalisation. It enhances the critical thinking of readers by resisting finalisation of any singular interpretation.

In revisionist myth, polyphony covers female, antagonist and traditionally outcast characters advocating multiplicity in voice. Kavita Kane's *Ahalya's Awakening* serves as a feminist counter-narrative of Ramayan. Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* is narrated from the perspective of antagonists – Ravana and Bhadra. *The Great Indian Novel* written by Shashi Tharoor mentions Eklavya's rejection of class-based discrimination.

Ambivalence, Irony and Paradox:

Ambivalence works on dissimilarity regardless of its certainty in the text. It is adopted by authors to bring complexity to the analysis of the text. Regarding characters, ambivalence discloses their opposite psychological states and actions. In revisionist myth, ambivalence works on binary themes like 'good' or 'evil' and 'right' or 'wrong'. Draupadi's character in *The Palace of Illusions* thinks in two completely different ways. Regarding her boon of virginity given by Vyasa, she has mixed feelings about whether it is a state of balance created for her or beneficial to her husbands.

After the gambling, Draupadi's uncertainty about relying on her husbands for her safety is visible in her dialogues.

Irony is a literary tool that originates from the contradiction and reversals of expectation. When political, social or religious expectations differ from their own set rules, the author uses irony to satirise it. The ironical narration is a helping tool to question the dominant power since it can decode the gap that creates a difference between the expected and its real scenario. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's use of irony in the concept of Dharma points out faults in male decisions. Known as the lord of Dharma, Yudhisthira couldn't resist putting Draupadi and his brothers in a bet, which ironically results in war.

Paradox is a self-contradictory literary tool which is helpful for deeper understanding of the truth. It can lay on any statement, situation or the action of the character. The revisionist myth can be taken as a paradox of traditional thinking, interpretation and portrayal of characters. Paradox does not claim the traditional or revisionist myth is wrong but rather treats them as a preservation of plurality. In the Mahabharat, the incident of Draupadi's humiliation in the court shows her suffering, shame and helplessness. But in *The Palace of Illusions,* the same incident turns out paradoxical, developing self-determination in her.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's skilful use of ambivalence, irony and paradox in *The Palace of Illusions* pulls down the traditional, male-centric narrative of the Mahabharat. Their major contribution to the narrative strategy fits with today's issues of identity, gender and power.

Fragmentation:

The concept of fragmentation can be understood through two literary periods, modern and postmodern. During modern times, one of the characteristics was the loss of traditional certainties; authors started to use fragmentation as a medium to express disappointment and subjective experiences. The literary narrations were fractured and divided into different parts following the process of fragmentation. In the postmodern era, the functionality of fragmentation was changed. Breaking away from the grand narrative, it started to serve as a single or multiple parts from the traditional, like a blank canvas to the author's creativity. Gradually, those fragments, though inspired by the similar background, become unique from each other based on multiplicity of meaning and start to target hierarchy.

Sharath Komarraju's *The Winds of Hastinapur* departs from the grand narrative of the Mahabharat by dividing the narrative into two distinct parts. The author has brought two prominent female characters – Ganga and Satyavati – to move away from male-centric narrative. Ganga and Satyavati, in their first and second halves, respectively, express their personal and emotionally raw insights, which is a breakaway from the authoritarian version. Fragmentation and flashback together help to select some important portions from the past to serve in front of feminist revisionist myth.

Intertextuality:

Like humans in society, texts in a large network exist in relation with other texts. Intertextuality is an understanding of how a text is built from direct or indirect influence of the other text. This influence or relation is not always passive adoption but contrasting too. In revisionist myth, the intertextuality is in the form of both adoptive and

contrasting. The postmodern use of intertextuality was doubtful towards authority; revisionist myth used it to question the traditional narratives and raise other possibilities out of it.

In her novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* Githa Hariharan employed intertextuality to connect the ancient and modern conditions of women under societal expectations. The ancient context of women is delivered by Devi's grandmother and father-in-law, which relates to the contemporary condition of Devi, her mother Sita, and her cousin Uma. The stories from her grandmother come from myth and are woven in correlation with various states of other females in the novel. For example, Damayanti's Swayamvara shows Devi's illusive authority to choose her life partner; the command of Sita's husband not to play Veena again is related to Gandhari's sacrificial act of blindfolding, and Uma's humiliation from her father-in-law is narrated alongside the mythical character Amba. Which kind of virtue a married woman should carry is explained by her father-in-law with the reference of Manu's law backing patriarchal stories of saints and their wives. Installing traditional ideologies from the ancient text to critique Women's suffering, injustice and suppression under the male-centric society of all time set a powerful intertextuality.

Along with reinterpreting myths, narrative strategies uplift marginalised characters and socio-political power structures. By serving multiple perspectives from a single originality, the valuation of these narrative strategies lies in recalling past narratives to highlight present issues. Their correlation shows how narrative innovation is essential for cultural renewal and critical engagement with tradition. Narrative strategies are indeed the backbone for the purpose of revisionist myth.

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PHILIP LARKIN AND THE POSTMODERN CONDITION: AN EXPLORATION OF IRONY, EMPTINESS, AND FRAGMENTED MEANING IN SELECTED POEMS

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Abstract

Philip Larkin is often considered as a traditional poet of everyday life, but a closer reading of his poems shows that his work carries deep postmodern concerns. This paper studies six of his poems like Aubade, High Windows, Talking in Bed, Church Going, Ambulances, and Love Songs in Age, to show how Larkin in these poems reflects the worries for the world where stable truths do not exist. Each of these poems highlights the collapse of old beliefs, whether in religion, family, love, or art, and exposes the silence, irony, and emptiness that remain. In Aubade, death appears without consolation; in High Windows, moral and religious traditions lead to a sensation of nothingness. Talking in Bed reveals the failure of language to bring intimacy; Church Going questions the future of faith, Ambulances portrays the random and universal reach of mortality, while Love Songs in Age shows how cultural ideals of romance fail to match lived reality. All these poems present Larkin not only as a poet of modern realism but also as a voice that anticipates the postmodern condition of doubt, fragmentation, and meaninglessness. This paper argues that Larkin's irony, skepticism, and his honesty place him firmly within the landscape of postmodern thought, even if he never openly claimed that label.

Keywords: Death, Emptiness, Fragmentation, Irony, Language, Postmodernism, Secularism, Skepticism

Postmodernism is often described as a way of thinking that questions certainty, challenges traditions, and doubts all forms of fixed truth. It is marked by irony, skepticism, and the sense that old systems of belief such as religion, morality, art, or even language no longer provide the security they once seemed to offer. Instead of clear answers, postmodern thought presents a world of fragments, doubts, and shifting meanings.

Philip Larkin is usually remembered as a poet of everyday life, someone who wrote in plain language about ordinary experiences. He is often placed within the Movement poets of the 1950s, known for their realism and restraint(no exaggeration). Yet, beneath his simple style, Larkin's poems show a deep unease with the world and a sharp questioning of inherited values. His work often strips away illusions and leaves readers facing emptiness, irony, and uncertainty.

Collapse of Belief and Religion

One of the clearest postmodern features in Philip Larkin's poetry is his treatment of religion. Instead of presenting it as a source of strength or meaning, he exposes it as something that has lost its power. Faith, for Larkin, no longer gives certainty, it has become an old story that fails to convince modern readers. This reflects Jean-François Lyotard's famous definition of postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives" which appear in his work *The Postmodern Condition a Report on Knowledge (1979).* Religion was once the strongest metanarrative in Western culture, but in Larkin's poems, it appears fragile, outdated, and even irrelevant.

In Aubade, Larkin directly confronts death and strips away the illusions that religion once provided. He writes:

"This is a special way of being afraid

No trick dispels. Religion used to try,

That vast, moth-eaten musical brocade

Created to pretend we never die" (Larkin)

The word "moth-eaten" suggests decaying what once seemed rich and beautiful has now been eaten away with time. For Larkin, religion is not a living truth but a decorative fabric covering over the terror of death. But the covering is too thin; it no longer works. Death, as he later puts it, is "nothing more terrible, nothing more true" (Larkin,

Aubade). In this moment, Larkin echoes the postmodern suspicion voiced that Terry Eagleton presented in his book *The Illusions of Postmodernism (1996)* in which he argued that postmodern thought often reveals a "vacancy at the heart of things". Religion, for Larkin, cannot fill that vacancy anymore.

While Aubade exposes death without comfort, Church Going looks at religion as a fading cultural habit. The speaker enters an empty church, not because he believes, but almost out of routine. He admits:

"Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,

And always end much at a loss like this,

Wondering what to look for" (Larkin).

This sense of being "at a loss" is at the heart of the poem. The speaker feels drawn to the church, yet he has no faith to guide him. It is, as Ihab Hassan described postmodern culture, a space of "indeterminacy" and "unmaking" which he presented in his book *The Postmodern Turn (1987)*. The church remains a serious place, but not for its religious role. Larkin concludes that it will survive as a symbol, a building that reminds people of the human need for meaning, even when belief itself has vanished:

"A serious house on serious earth it is,

In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,

Are recognised, and robed as destinies" (Larkin).

This final reflection is deeply postmodern because it refuses closure. The speaker neither reclaims faith nor rejects the church completely. Instead, he lingers in uncertainty. As Jacques Derrida argued, meaning is never fixed, it is always deferred, always unstable in his *Of Grammatology (1967)* . Larkin captures this instability by presenting the church as meaningful, but in a vague, unsettled way.

Together, Aubade and Church Going reveal how religion collapses in Larkin's world. In Aubade, it fails to cover the reality of death. In Church Going, it lingers as a cultural shell, stripped of real faith. Both poems echo the postmodern recognition that certainty has vanished, leaving us in doubt. By presenting religion not as truth but as a faded story, Larkin places himself firmly in the postmodern condition, a world where belief is unstable, and the silence behind it can no longer be ignored.

Irony in Philip Larkin's Poetry

Irony is one of the most important features of Philip Larkin's poetry. He often uses it to show the difference between how life appears and what it really is. His ironic tone is quiet but sharp, it makes readers notice the gap between expectation and reality, highlighting the emptiness, fragility, and unpredictability of human life.

In High Windows, irony appears in the way the older speaker watches younger generations having freedom in their youthful romance. At first, the speaker seems to admire their freedom, but the poem quickly shows that even this liberty is not fulfilling. The "freedom" that seems enviable to older generation do not escape the emptiness of life:

"And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows

Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless" (High Windows).

The irony lies in the contrast: what appears as liberation and possibility is, in fact, a reminder of nothingness. The poem subtly mocks the idea that freedom automatically leads to happiness, showing instead that life remains indifferent.

In his poem Talking in Bed, irony appears in human relationships. The speaker notes the difficulty of expressing feelings with honesty and kindness:

"It becomes still more difficult to find

Words at once true and kind,

Or not untrue and not unkind" (Talking in Bed).

Here, the ironic twist is in the language itself. Even in intimate moments, the attempt to communicate perfectly fails. The reader can see the absurdity of trying to express absolute truth or kindness, and this quiet irony reflects the postmodern idea that meaning is never fixed or guaranteed.

In his poem titled Ambulances, the irony is more subtle but deeply effective. Ordinary streets are filled with everyday life, yet a passing ambulance instantly reminds people of death:

"All streets in time are visited.

Then all the air is touched with an elegiac fall" (Ambulances).

The contrast between normal, everyday scenes and the sudden presence of mortality creates an ironic tension. Life goes on as usual, but death quietly interrupts, showing that human expectations of normalcy are fragile and temporary.

Finally, in his poem Love Songs in Age, irony appears in memory and time. The music of the past once seemed meaningful, but now it feels both comforting and deceptive:

"It held her like some hymn,

At once true and false" (Love Songs in Age).

The irony is in the contradiction: the hymn, which should provide clarity or meaning, now contains both truth and falsehood. This reflects the postmodern view that time changes perception, and what once seemed certain is now uncertain and ambiguous.

In all these poems, Larkin uses irony to show life's contradictions. It highlights the difference between appearance and reality, expectation and truth, freedom and emptiness. Irony allows readers to feel the complexity of human experience without forcing them to a single interpretation. In this way, Larkin's poetry captures the postmodern condition: skeptical, reflective, and deeply aware of life's uncertainties.

Failure of Language and Human Connection

A central postmodern theme in Philip Larkin's poetry is the failure of language to sustain meaningful human connection. In Talking in Bed, Larkin presents intimacy not as a bridge between two people, but as a space where communication falters, and isolation prevails. Postmodern theorists, such as Jacques Derrida, argue in his *Of Grammatology* that language is never fully transparent or stable, it can never capture reality completely . Larkin's poem exemplifies this idea, showing that words often fail to convey feelings and desires, leaving human relationships marked by distance and misunderstanding.

In the poem, the speaker observes:

"Talking in bed ought to be easy,

Lying together, here and now,

Trying to enjoy each other" (Larkin).

At first, these lines suggest the possibility of intimacy and comfort. However, the poem quickly undermines this expectation. Larkin continues:

"Yet more often than not, we are silent,

Or only one of us speaks, and the other

Listens, in the dark, half-hearing,

Half thinking of other things" (Larkin).

Here, the failure of communication is evident. The act of speaking does not bridge the emotional gap, it highlights it. Derrida's concept of the "aporia", , an inescapable problem in meaning, is apparent in these lines. Even when the speakers try to connect, language cannot fully express their inner states. Communication becomes partial, ambiguous, and inadequate.

Ihab Hassan has noted that postmodern literature often portrays the fragmentation of human experience and the unreliability of language in his book *The Postmodern Turn*. Larkin's poem mirrors this view: physical proximity, which might promise intimacy, does not guarantee understanding. Words, gestures, and even shared presence are insufficient to bridge the psychological or emotional distance between individuals. The postmodern self, as depicted here, exists in a space of fragmentation and solitude, unable to achieve total connection.

The poem's ending reinforces this sense of inevitable isolation:

"All night the talking must be pointless,

Or else, it becomes a kind of noise" (Larkin).

Even speech, when it occurs, is rendered ineffective. This aligns with Terry Eagleton's observation that postmodernism emphasizes "a world where communication is always partial, unstable, and prone to failure" (*The Illusions of Postmodernism*). Larkin's depiction is not pessimistic in a moral sense but realistic: intimacy cannot be guaranteed by mere proximity or verbal exchange. Language itself imposes limits on human understanding.

Talking in Bed thus presents a postmodern view of human relationships. Larkin demonstrates that, despite effort and desire, language is unreliable, and connection remains uncertain. The poem captures the loneliness inherent in modern intimacy, echoing the postmodern critique of traditional narratives that promised coherence, completeness, or mutual understanding. By portraying the failure of speech in the private, familiar setting of a bedroom, Larkin makes a broader statement about the limitations of human communication and the fragmented, often lonely experience of contemporary life.

Mortality and Time

Philip Larkin's poetry often confronts the inevitability of death and the relentless passage of time, portraying them with stark honesty. In Ambulances, he captures how mortality enters everyday life, disrupting routine and exposing human vulnerability. Postmodern theorists, such as Jacques Derrida, argue that existence is defined by absence and the instability of meaning (*Of Grammatology*). Larkin mirrors this postmodern sensibility by presenting death as unavoidable, yet socially distant, highlighting both its universality and the emotional isolation it creates.

In the poem, Larkin observes:

"The ambulances are the crows of death" (Larkin).

The metaphor immediately conveys the grim presence of mortality. Ambulances, ordinary objects in daily life, become symbols of the unavoidable approach of death. Ihab Hassan notes that postmodern literature often foregrounds the intrusion of existential realities into mundane experience (*The Postmodern Turn*). Larkin's attention to the ordinary—people going about their routines, unaware of death nearby—creates a stark contrast between life and mortality, emphasizing the fragility of human existence.

He continues:

"The shouting, the slewed mirrors, the lamp

Twisted over the driver's head

Into the windshield; all the hallways are full of light" (Larkin).

Here, the sensory immediacy of the ambulance is its siren, lights, and motion, pulls death into the present. Mortality is no longer abstract; it is visible, audible, and unavoidable. This aligns with Lyotard's observation that postmodernism often disrupts the smooth narratives of life, forcing attention to fragmented, immediate realities (*The Postmodern Condition*). Death intrudes suddenly and without explanation, reminding readers that time is finite and human life fragile.

The poem also explores the psychological dimension of mortality: the detached, almost clinical perception of others' deaths. Larkin writes:

"And that corpse you pass on the way, and this

That hides in a street, or behind a hedge" (Larkin).

Even though death is universal, human awareness of it is inconsistent. Terry Eagleton argues that postmodernism emphasizes the instability and unpredictability of experience (*The Illusions of Postmodernism*). Larkin captures this by showing that people often ignore death until it confronts them directly. Mortality, in this sense, is both omnipresent and socially invisible—a paradox characteristic of postmodern thought.

In Ambulances, Larkin also reflects on time. The poem suggests that life is fleeting and unpredictable, a constant movement toward death. The siren and the passing ambulance act as reminders that humans are always advancing toward the end of existence, yet often remain oblivious until confronted. Derrida's notion of absence resonates here: the presence of death is defined by its inescapable yet intangible nature (*Of Grammatology*). Mortality shapes life silently, reminding humans of their limitations without providing any comforting narrative.

Through vivid imagery and everyday scenarios, Ambulances reveals Larkin's postmodern engagement with mortality and time. Death is not a distant concept or a moral lesson; it is immediate, intrusive, and inevitable. The poem embodies the postmodern recognition that life is fragile, unstable, and ultimately finite, while also highlighting the psychological and social distances that shape human awareness of mortality.

Love and Aging

Philip Larkin's Love Songs in Age reflects the postmodern preoccupation with time, human fragility, and the limits of romantic idealism. Unlike traditional love poetry, which often celebrates passion and emotional connection, Larkin exposes the ways love diminishes over time, highlighting both disappointment and acceptance. Postmodern theorists argue that human experience is fragmented and unstable, and Larkin's poem illustrates this through the lens of aging, memory, and desire. As Ihab Hassan notes, postmodern literature often presents "the disintegration of experience and the collapse of traditional forms" (*The Postmodern Turn*). In this poem, aging acts as a force that erodes the illusions of romantic love, revealing the emptiness behind familiar rituals and memories.

Larkin opens with a reflection on diminished intimacy:

"The longer we live together, the less we talk,

And what we say is trivial, perfunctory,

Just to keep the sound alive" (Larkin).

The repetition of silence and trivial conversation suggests that love, once vivid and immediate, becomes routine and distant over time. Jacques Derrida's idea that language is inherently unstable resonates here; words cannot fully capture feelings or preserve the intensity of past emotions (*Of Grammatology*). Even in speaking, the speakers cannot reach the depth of their earlier attachment, leaving communication partial and fragile.

The poem continues by reflecting on memory and longing:

"We think of the first meeting, the excitement,

But the past is a faint echo,

Softened and distorted by the passage of years" (Larkin).

Here, Larkin portrays time as an erosive force. Memory, like language, cannot fully recover past experiences; it is always filtered, incomplete, and inevitably transformed. Lyotard argues that postmodern consciousness recognizes that grand narratives of permanence—whether in history, love, or identity—cannot be relied upon (*The Postmodern Condition*). Larkin embodies this view by showing that romantic narratives, like life itself, are fragile and impermanent.

Terry Eagleton observes that postmodern thought often exposes the limits of human experience, emphasizing contingency, fragility, and the impossibility of total understanding (*The Illusions of Postmodernism*). In Love Songs in Age, this perspective is clear: love endures, but only partially, marked by memory, silence, and unmet expectations. The poem does not lament or moralize; instead, it presents aging and diminished love with honesty and human insight.

Ultimately, Love Songs in Age is deeply postmodern because it refuses idealization. It exposes how love changes with time, how intimacy fails to remain constant, and how memory and language can never fully restore past experiences. Larkin's work emphasizes the fragmented, provisional nature of human emotion, aligning with postmodern critiques of completeness and certainty. By highlighting the quiet erosion of passion and the subtle melancholy of aging, Larkin creates a reflective and humane meditation on love, demonstrating that even in decline, human connections carry meaning—though provisional, fleeting, and always incomplete.

Conclusion

Philip Larkin's poetry shows life as it really is uncertain, fragile, and often lonely. Across poems like Aubade, High Windows, and Talking in Bed, he explores the collapse of belief, the limits of language, and the inevitability of death. Love, time, and human connection are never perfect; they are partial, fleeting, and sometimes empty. Yet, Larkin presents these truths with honesty and clarity, helping readers face the realities of life without illusions. His work captures the heart of postmodern thought while remaining deeply human, showing that even in a fragmented world, reflection, awareness, and empathy give life meaning.

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THE INTERSECTION OF MEME AND LITERATURE: HOW DIGITAL CULTURE IS CHANGING THE WAY WE READ AND WRITE

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Literature is always difficult to define. As R J Rees says, Literature of power which connects people with sublimity, abstract thinking, and with a lot many perspectives. In the similar way, memes are the decentralized forms. Memes are always created with more than one perspective. As Bredley Wiggins says that the meme is not a passive replicator, but an active form of mediated discourse that demands human intentionality, interpretation, and participation. Memes are directly proportional to the human rational though it is an art of imitation. These memes are the internet memes which can be defined as pieces of content (images, videos, texts, etc.) that are collaboratively created, iterated, and spread by users in a participatory digital environment. Limor Shifman defines an internet meme by saying that it is "a group of digital items that share common characteristics of content, from, or stance- are created with awareness of each other, and – are circulated, imitated, and transformed via the internet by multiple users." This denotes the importance of interpretation in the memes, as memes are not just single images or jokes, but genres of content built on reference and variation that why it can be called as a collective creative practice. In the current time, memes have begun to intersect with literature and which is seen traditionally as a high art form.

Memes are often considered transmissible patters in terms of cultural and literary information from mind to mind and sometime artistic response, which directly denotes some particular actions and mentalities of specific groups and people. As it has been observed through social networks that memes have been focused mainly on connecting some cultural, philosophical and other texts and literature terms with humour, key phrases, ways of doing things, icons, and jingles, among other fundamentals. While memes are typically though of as a form of visual communication, some memes are based on literary works and have given rise to new forms of literary analysis and interpretation. As Bredley Wiggins says that memes are not only about meant to merely pass along like genes but are actively reshaped and reinterpreted.

Here, the first meme which says that "Me Being Iago in everyone's life, can be wounded but can't be killed", it may have more than one interpretation like playing politics in the family, office, and among friends but still can't get caught and if get caught still they can't do anything to prove me guilty. Another perspective is, it can used as a teaching pedagogy where students can understand a whole scene about the how Iago created conflict in the play in just one meme. Second meme denotes concept of criticism on how Samuel Johnson judged William Shakespeare and how his most of the judgements where strongly positive.

Memes as literary Forms and Critiques

Any inquiry into memes and literature must begin with theory. The term 'meme' itself originates from evolutionary biology. In 1976 Richard Dawkins coined *meme* to describe a self- replicating unit of culture- an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person similarly to a gene. Dawkins' memetic theory proposed that cultural ideas undergo variation, competition, and inheritance majorly like biological traits. This concept of Memetics provides a framework for understanding how tunes, phrases, images of culture propagate. Here Dawkins himself has noted that today's meme is a different phenomena as it is 'Hijacking of the original idea' which is driven not by random mutation but by intentional human creativity and remixing. These are not like Genes, which copy with high fidelity, internet memes often deliberately mutate where users edit images, add new captions, and culturally recontextualize content for humorous or expressive effect. This intentional remix culture suggests that while memetic evolution occurs, it is guided by social context, wit, and commentary more than blind variation.

It memes are cultural texts, they are the perfect examples of intertextual. The concept of intertextuality, introduced by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, posits that every text exists in relation to others- text quote, parody, and reference one another, forming a mosaic of associations. Internet memes thrive on this principle. For instance, a meme might overlay a well-known movie quote onto a political photograph- the humor or insight arises only if the viewer catches the allusion. A meme may not make sense to someone outside the cultural loop because it heavily relies on the audience's familiarity with the referenced text (be it a classic novel, a viral video, or another meme). Thus, memes form a vast web of cross-referencing content as a living hypertext of cultural knowledge. This can be seen as an extension of literary intertextuality into the vernacular creativity of everyday internet users. In essence, meme culture has taken what scholars like Bakhtin and Barthes observed about texts – that they are in dialogue with each other – and turned it into a massive multiplayer game of quoting and remixing. Memes only "work" when people recognize the intertext being invoked.

Are memes a form of literature? At first glance, literature and memes might seem worlds apart – one evokes images of weighty novels and lyrical verse, while the other brings to mind funny pictures on social media. However, when examined closely, internet memes exhibit many of the hallmarks of literary forms, from narrative structuring to commentary and critique. In fact, some scholars argue that memes have more in common with traditional storytelling genres like the fable or parable than with random internet chatter. Like fables, memes are often succinct, convey a moral or message, and belong to no single author – they emerge from communal creativity. Moreover, memes increasingly serve as a popular medium for **literary critique** and interpretation. By distilling complex ideas into witty, accessible formats, memes democratize literary criticism, allowing a broad public to engage with texts in a playful yet meaningful way.

One vivid example of a meme functioning as a literary critique is the "Listening to Trash" meme. In this meme image, a young man is humorously shown plugging his headphones into a garbage can, as if listening to it like one would listen to music. The meme's caption typically compares the trash can to a certain artist or genre – effectively conveying the message, *"This music is garbage."* Here we see a visual metaphor doing the job of a biting music review. Instead of a long critique in an essay, the meme creator uses an image and a few words to comment on the quality of modern music (or whichever target is specified). This mirrors the literary technique of metaphor and satire. Just as an essayist might metaphorically call bad music "trash," the meme literalizes that metaphor in image form. The result is a *striking statement* that often evokes laughter while making a critical point. Interestingly, research has shown that meme comprehension engages similar cognitive processes as understanding metaphors in literature. The audience must map the concept of "trash" onto "music" in this case, which is akin to interpreting a metaphor in a poem. Thus, a meme like "Listening to Trash" operates as a micro-literary critique, employing imagery to express an evaluative stance. Its impact can be more immediate than a formal critique – in a split-second, viewers grasp the creator's opinion and often share it for its humor and relatability. In the broader sense, memes are being used to critique not just music but literary works themselves. One can find memes that playfully criticize a novel's ending, mock a plot hole, or highlight a theme – functions traditionally associated with book reviews or literary essays, now executed through viral imagery.

Evolution of Literature in the era of Online Memes

The rise of social media has given rise to a new form of literature known as “Twitterature”, where authors write short, pithy works that mimic the style and brevity of tweets. These works often incorporate elements of meme culture, such as hashtags and internet slang, and can be seen as a reflection of the way in which social media has changed the way people communicate.

In addition, some writers have used memes as a way to subvert traditional literary forms and to challenge the idea of what constitutes “serious” literature. For example, the Twitter account @SoSadToday, run by poet Melissa Broder, features short, humorous tweets that often incorporate images and memes. Broder’s work has been praised for its ability to explore serious themes such as anxiety and depression while also incorporating the playful, irreverent style of internet culture.

As Alison Bechdel in The Comics Journal” wrote about the comics that “It's {Making Comics} like learning a new syntax, a new way of ordering ideas. It is similar in the case of Memes, making memes is like learning a new syntax and a new way of ordering ideas.

In the same way nowadays, younger generations are more involved with ‘Twitterature’. For instance, “Life is actually stuck between may and may not be”, “me only follows one way and that is I know nothing” and “Nowadays public opinions are considered as Allegory of my life”- these tweets denote how popular meme culture is among youngsters. Uploading daily routines on Twitter has become more common and funnier. Though meme culture is still a relatively new phenomenon, its impact on literature is already being felt. Whether through the incorporation of meme aesthetics into literary works, the creation of Twitterature and other forms of short-form writing, or the analysis and interpretation of internet memes themselves, meme culture is changing the way people think about literature and the ways in which people communicate and express ourselves. As such, it will be interesting to see how meme culture continues to evolve and impact literature in the years to come.

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Memes can also be a kind of perspective. For example, ‘What People Think I Do/What I really Do’. This shows how artistic memes could be.

The digital age has brought about significant changes in the way they consume and interact with literature. One of the most interesting phenomena that have emerged in recent years is the transformation of text into memes. Memes are units of culture that spread rapidly across digital spaces, often in the form of images, videos, or text. They are a way for people to express ideas, emotions, and experiences creatively and humorously.

Literature, too, has been adapted and transformed into memes. This has led to a new way of engaging with literary works and has brought them to a wider audience. For example, classic novels, such as Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, have been turned into memes that feature witty captions or humorous images that poke fun at the characters or plot.

As a speaker on a 2017 San Diego Comic-Con panel titled "The Secret Origin of Good Readers" said, “To decipher a story coming to you in the form of words and images has become a vital part of society”. This denotes that meme culture helps to narrow an entire novel in just a few words with the help of images. This might be helpful for the readers to develop the skill of filling gaps and silences from the text.

In some cases, memes have become a way to reinterpret and subvert literary works. For example, the meme “Distracted Boyfriend” features a man turning his head to look at another woman while his girlfriend looks on in disapproval. This meme has been adapted to various literary works, such as Romeo and Juliet, where the man is Romeo, the woman he is looking at is Juliet, and the girlfriend is Rosaline.

In the same way, Philosophers and philosophical texts have made their way through people into memes. Suppose Socrates is known as one of the most renowned philosophers in the world. Regardless of the stream, most people are aware of him and who he is. For an instance, he used to question everyone, in relation to this, he sits with his

disciples and questioned something which is out of the world though it is a serious topic still the meme is the creation of both funniness and seriousness, and that meme is attached here to understand it clearly.

Similarly, in the case of Plato, the meme has been created in such a way where metaphysical meets sarcasm, such as there was a tweet where a man after losing weight was appreciating his body by saying 'This is my original body' and his friend was a sheer follower of Plato and replied with 'Everything is thrice to the reality bro.' Here on one side, this tweet shows depth but on the other side, it conveys sarcasm.

That's why a research scholar Daniel C. Dennett has quoted that "Words are memes that can be pronounced."

There is also a meme that portrays philosophical irony. This meme indicates how sometimes philosophers are way funnier than stand-up comedians. This is all about perspective. If someone takes this meme seriously then more meanings might be added to it.

Another way literature has been transformed into memes is through the use of parody. Parody memes take the form of a popular meme but replace the text or image with a humorous version that references a specific literary work. For example, the meme "One Does Not Simply Walk into Mordor" from the Lord of the Rings has been adapted into "One Does Not Simply Write a 10-Page Paper in One Night" for students struggling with assignments.

This denotes that, the adaptation of literature into memes has become a popular way for people to engage with literary works in digital spaces. It has opened up new ways of interpreting and subverting literary works and has brought them to a wider audience. As digital culture continues to evolve, it will be interesting to see how literature is further transformed and adapted into the new forms of communication that emerge.

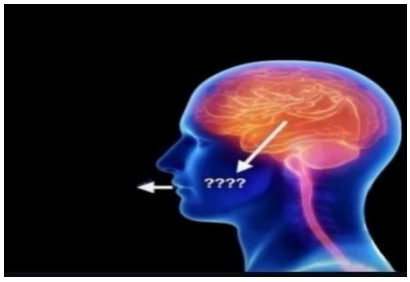
Overall, while the impact of meme culture on literature is certainly significant, it is important to remember that the relationship between memes and literature is a two-way street. Just as memes can be based on literary works and themes, literature can also be a source of inspiration and material for the creation and propagation of memes.

Once Jerod Kintz said “What are words worth if you write like Wordsworth? Not as much as a man named Wordsandpicturesworth. That's so long, so I'd just call him Memesworth, and I'd use him to help me sell ducks.” It denotes that meme culture rationally helps in uplifting business as well as literature.

While Dark memes and literature are two very different forms of expression. Dark memes often use humor, irony, or sarcasm to tackle serious or controversial topics, while literature explores these topics through more nuanced and complex storytelling. While dark memes can be a form of social commentary, they often rely on shock value or oversimplification to convey their message. Literature, on the other hand, allows for a more in-depth exploration of the human experience, often delving into complex psychological and philosophical themes.

Dark memes often emerge from online communities that are steeped in a particular set of values, beliefs, and cultural references. By sharing and creating these memes, members of these communities can bond over their shared sense of humor and worldview, while also using memes as a way to critique or challenge mainstream culture.

Similarly, literature can also reflect the values and beliefs of the society in which it is produced. It can serve as a commentary on the social, political, and cultural issues of the time, and offer readers a new perspective on their own experiences.



Memes and literary works may seem like two entirely different forms of communication, but they share a common purpose: to convey meaning in a way that resonates with the audience. Memes are images, videos, or phrases that convey a message or idea in a humorous or satirical way, while literary works are written expressions of ideas, emotions, and experiences. In recent years, memes have become a ubiquitous part of internet culture, and their impact on the way people communicate and interpret meaning cannot be ignored.

One way to understand the relationship between memes and literary works is to view memes as a form of adaptation. Just as movies and TV shows are often adapted from books and other literary works, memes can be seen as adaptations of cultural products. In this sense, memes are not just random images or phrases, but rather cultural artifacts that reflect our collective understanding of the world around us.

Memes often take literary works and transform them into something new and unexpected. For example, the “Distracted Boyfriend” meme uses a stock photo of a man looking back at another woman while his girlfriend

looks on in disapproval. This image has been repurposed to reflect various scenarios, including literary ones. In one version of the meme, the man is looking back at Shakespeare's Hamlet while his girlfriend looks on in disapproval. This adaptation highlights the tension between traditional and modern interpretations of the Memes and literary works may seem like two entirely different forms of communication, but they share a common purpose: to convey meaning in a way that resonates with the audience. Memes are images, videos, or phrases that convey a message or idea in a humorous or satirical way, while literary works are written expressions of ideas, emotions, and experiences. In recent years, memes have become a ubiquitous part of internet culture, and their impact on the way we communicate and interpret meaning cannot be ignored.

Another way that memes and literary works intersect is through the use of satire. Satire is a literary technique that uses humor and exaggeration to criticize or comment on a particular aspect of society. Memes often employ satire to make fun of cultural phenomena, including literature. For example, the "Drake Hotline Bling" meme features a screenshot from Drake's music video, in which he is seen making various hand gestures. The meme is often used to poke fun at the pretentiousness of literary criticism, with captions like "When you finally understand the symbolism in Moby Dick."

Finally, memes and literary works both have the power to shape our understanding of the world around us. Literature has long been used to convey complex ideas and emotions, and memes are increasingly being used to do the same. Memes often serve as a shorthand for cultural concepts, allowing us to quickly communicate complex ideas and emotions with just a few words or images. For example, the "This is fine" meme features a dog sitting in a room that is on fire, but he tells himself that "this is fine." The meme has been used to comment on everything from political corruption to climate change, highlighting how memes can help us process complex issues in a way that is both humorous and poignant.

Also, memes and literary works may seem like disparate forms of communication, but they share a common goal: to convey meaning in a way that resonates with the audience. As our understanding of culture continues to evolve, it is likely that memes and literary works will continue to intersect and influence one another. By understanding the relationship between memes and literary works, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the role that both forms of communication play in shaping our understanding of the world around us. play, and how our understanding of literary works can change over time.

Conclusion

Memes are no longer confined to social media entertainment; they have become a cultural lens through which literature itself can be re-imagined. Their power lies in universality and flexibility, memes are everywhere, and they can emerge from anywhere, especially when literature is concerned. A single line, character, or scene can be transformed into countless memes, each carrying a unique interpretation or perspective. This plurality of meaning mirrors the very essence of literary criticism, where no text has a single fixed reading but instead unfolds differently for every reader. In this way, memes do not merely simplify or trivialize literature; rather, they extend its life, allowing texts to circulate in digital spaces with renewed relevance, humor, and critique. Ultimately, the meme's ability to capture multiple voices and viewpoints reflects the enduring richness of literature itself that is dynamic, evolving, and open to endless reinterpretations.

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All Images are collected from various social media

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FROM BASEMENTS TO SKYLINES: THE SAGA OF POSTCOLONIAL SPACE IN PARASITE AND THE WHITE TIGER

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Abstract:

This paper explores the representation of class and space in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019) and Ramin Bahrani's *The White Tiger* (2021) through postcolonial spatial theory. The study argues that cinematic space operates not just as a backdrop but as an important catalyst which narrates social hierarchies through renowned concepts like "production of space" "third space" and narrative techniques.

Both of the films draw key motifs and actions through the indifferences present around them. Parasite's verticality of infrastructures and The White Tiger's horizontal spatial metaphors works as an isolative layer to show the differences of poor and elites. Together, the films chart a postcolonial cartography of inequality which is beyond national borders.

By reading these films comparatively, the paper highlights how space in contemporary cinema narrates the equal-opposites on the same spectrum. In doing so, it contributes to current debates in literary and cultural studies by showcasing how skylines and slums represent elitism, flashiness and survival, resistance in the global era.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Spatial Theory, Film Analysis, Parasite, The White Tiger, Narratology, Neoliberalism, Class Struggle, Architecture, Social Mobility.

Introduction: A Tale of Two Houses

In the modern global city, the distance between a penthouse and a basement is not measured in metres, but in lifetimes. This chasm—social, psychological, and brutally physical—is the contested territory of Bong Joon-ho's Parasite and Ramin Bahrani's The White Tiger. Released within two years of each other, these films struck a global nerve, offering blistering critiques of a world where the gap between the haves and the have-nots has become an impassable gulf. Though born from the unique social landscapes of South Korea and India, their stories resonate as universal fables of ambition, desperation, and the invisible walls that define our lives.

This paper delves into how these two films articulate a profound critique of neoliberal capitalism through the language of space. The theoretical work of thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Henri Lefebvre helps us understand this landscape, revealing how the colonial logic of division persists not as a racial boundary, but as a class-based one, etched into the very concrete and glass of the metropolis. The opulent homes at the heart of both films—the Parks' architectural marvel and Mr. Ashok's sterile apartment—are what Lefebvre would call conceived spaces, abstract dreams of order and wealth. The protagonists' worlds—the Kim family's fetid semi-basement and Balram Halwai's squalid servant's quarters—are the desperate lived spaces of survival. The drama unfolds in the collision between the two.

To understand how these spatial stories grip us, we must turn to cinematic narratology. The films' directors are our guides, and their choices shape our entire experience. Bong Joon-ho's camera acts as a silent, empathetic observer, forcing us to feel the suffocating weight of the Kims' environment. In contrast, Ramin Bahrani gives his protagonist, Balram, the reins. Through a confessional voice-over and fourth-wall-breaking smirks, Balram makes us his co-conspirators on a dark journey upward.

What emerges from this comparison is a devastating critique of the postcolonial condition. Both Parasite and The White Tiger reveal the architecture of inequality to be a sophisticated trap. They show that the climb from the bottom to the top is not a matter of hard work, but a brutal game where the path upward is either an illusion or a violent transgression that costs the climber their very humanity.

2. The Lens: Seeing and Narrating a Divided World

2.1 The Ghost of Colonialism: A City Split in Two

Long before the glass towers of Seoul and Delhi rose, colonial cities were deliberately, violently segregated. Frantz Fanon famously described this as a "Manichean" world, split into the spacious, well-lit town of the coloniser and the cramped, dark world of the colonised. This spatial logic never truly disappeared; it was simply absorbed into the DNA of the postcolonial city, re-emerging as the barricades of class, caste, and wealth.

The work of Henri Lefebvre gives us a language for this. He insisted that space is not empty, but actively produced by the societies that inhabit it. The gleaming, minimalist home of the Park family is a prime example of his conceived space—an idea of perfection, cleanliness, and security given form by architects and capital. It is a space designed to keep the chaos of the outside world at bay. Yet, for the Kim family, this same house becomes a lived space, a stage for their elaborate deception and, for a fleeting moment, a playground where they can taste a life they were never meant to have. The tension between these two ways of experiencing a single space is the engine of the film's conflict.

2.2 The Director's Gaze: Telling the Story of Space

How we, the audience, perceive these divided worlds is entirely in the hands of the filmmakers. In The White Tiger, director Ramin Bahrani makes a bold choice: he lets Balram tell his own story. Balram's constant, cynical voice-over turns his life into an instructional tale, a business pitch to the Premier of China on "how to get ahead." The camera often takes Balram's point of view, peering out from the driver's seat or observing his masters from the shadows. When he turns to the camera with a knowing grin, he implicates us. We become complicit in his crimes, forced to ask ourselves if we, in his position, would do any different.

Bong Joon-ho takes a different approach in Parasite. There is no single narrator. Instead, the camera itself is the storyteller. The film opens by descending, craning down into the Kim family's semi-basement, immediately establishing their place in the world: below everyone else. In the Parks' home, the camera glides smoothly, respecting the clean, horizontal lines of the architecture. Bong masterfully uses windows, doorways, and staircases as frames within his frame, constantly reminding us of the barriers—visible and invisible—that separate the two families. We are not co-conspirators here; we are witnesses to a slow-motion tragedy, watching from a perspective that sees all but can change nothing.

3. Upstairs, Downstairs: Architecture and Inequality

Both sagas begin in a place of profound subjugation, a physical space that mirrors a social and psychological prison.

3.1 The Sunken Place: Parasite's Semi-Basement and Bunker

For the Kim family, life is a daily struggle against gravity. Their semi-basement home, a real feature of Seoul's urban landscape, is a world seen from below. Their only window looks out onto a grubby street where drunkards relieve themselves. It's their fragile portal to a world that barely acknowledges their existence. The film's most harrowing sequence is not one of violence, but of water. When a torrential downpour floods the city, the clean rain that gently falls on the Parks' lawn becomes a torrent of sewage that erupts from the Kims' toilet, violently reclaiming their home for the filth they try so hard to keep at bay.

But the true horror lies deeper. The discovery of a secret bunker, a tomb beneath the pristine foundations of the house, is a stunning revelation. In this hidden space lives another man, even more desperate than the Kims. This bunker is the house's dirty secret, proof that the glossy surface of modernity is built upon a dark, forgotten foundation. It is here that the Kim patriarch, Ki-taek, will end his story—not just in a basement, but in a tomb, a ghost tapping out messages from the absolute bottom of the world.

3.2 The Rooster Coop: Caging the Mind in The White Tiger

Balram Halwai's prison is a state of mind he calls the "Rooster Coop." Bahrani gives this metaphor a visceral, unforgettable image: a marketplace cage full of chickens, watching passively as one of their own is butchered, knowing they are next. "They see and smell the blood," Balram's voice-over tells us, "yet they do not rebel." This, he argues, is the story of India's poor—trapped not by bars of steel, but by an internalised culture of servitude.

This mental cage is reinforced by every space he inhabits. His village is visually rendered in a dusty, oppressive sepia tone, a place of feudal darkness. When he moves to Delhi, his home is a dank, forgotten corner of a concrete parking garage, a servant's cell directly beneath the gleaming apartment of his masters. Bahrani's sharp cuts between Balram's cockroach-infested quarters and the bright, spacious world of Ashok and Pinky are a relentless visual assault, showing two worlds occupying the same geography but existing in different universes.

4. Infiltrating the Fortress: The Performance of Belonging

The heart of both films is an act of infiltration, a desperate performance where the protagonists must wear the mask of the elite to enter their world.

4.1 The House as a Stage: Deception in Parasite

The Parks' home is less a house than a minimalist stage, a perfect backdrop for the family's effortless, curated life. For the Kims, it becomes the set for their audacious play. One by one, they audition for and win their roles—tutor, art therapist, driver, housekeeper. Bong's camera follows them as they master their lines and blocking, moving through the alien space with a growing, but precarious, confidence.

The magnificent floor-to-ceiling window in the living room functions as a kind of cinema screen. For the Parks, it frames their manicured garden, a symbol of nature tamed. When the Kims take over the house, they sit before this same window, watching the rain and dreaming of a life of such peace. But their performance has a fatal flaw: their smell. The faint, sour scent of the semi-basement clings to them, an invisible marker of their origins. It's the one detail they cannot fake, the "line" that Mr. Park, with a polite wrinkle of his nose, will not cross.

4.2 The Driver's Seat: Education of a Predator in The White Tiger

Balram's infiltration is a process of intense, predatory education. From the driver's seat—a space of both immense power and total subservience—he observes, listens, and learns. Bahrani's camera places us there with him as he chauffeurs his masters through a world of shopping malls, five-star hotels, and corrupt political dealings. He learns that the morality of the rich is flexible, their power built on a foundation of hypocrisy.

His eventual ascent to the skyline of Bangalore is shown as a visual triumph. After committing the ultimate transgression, he is reborn. The film's final scenes show him as he always dreamed: a successful entrepreneur in a crisp suit, looking out from a modern office over the city he has conquered. But his narration, and his wry smiles to the camera, remind us that his success is built on a bedrock of violence. He didn't break the Rooster Coop; he just figured out how to become its keeper.

5. When the Floor Gives Way: The Violence of Collision

In both films, the carefully maintained distance between upstairs and downstairs cannot last. The climax is a brutal eruption, where the repressed world of the basement crashes into the pristine world of the garden party.

5.1 The Garden Party Massacre in Parasite

The fragile truce between the two worlds shatters spectacularly on the Parks' manicured lawn. The perfect garden party, a symbol of bourgeois civility, descends into a bloodbath. The catalyst is the sudden, shocking appearance of the man from the bunker, bringing the subterranean horror into the sun-drenched afternoon. But the breaking point for Ki-taek is something far more subtle: Mr. Park's reflexive disgust at the smell of the man from below. In that moment, Ki-taek sees not a man reacting to a stranger, but his own employer reacting to him. The polite mask slips, and the raw contempt underneath is laid bare. The violence that follows is a primal scream against a lifetime of quiet humiliations. The result is a brutal restoration of order: Ki-taek is entombed, and his son Ki-woo is left in the basement, dreaming of a future the film has already told us can never come.

5.2 A Murder on the Road to Freedom in The White Tiger

Balram's moment of violent rupture is not a chaotic explosion but a cold, calculated execution. It takes place in the claustrophobic confines of the car on a dark, rainy night. Bahrani shoots the scene with terrifying intimacy. The weapon is a broken Johnnie Walker bottle, the shattered symbol of the very wealth he served. The act is ugly, personal, and transformative. It is the bloody price of his freedom. Unlike Ki-taek's act of rage, which leads to his

own imprisonment, Balram's violence is framed as an act of ruthless self-creation. It is the terrible, necessary step that allows him to break free from his spatial and social destiny and begin his climb toward the skyline.

6. Conclusion: The View from the Top

Viewed together, Parasite and The White Tiger offer a powerful, and profoundly troubling, diagnosis of our contemporary world. They are not just stories about class; they are stories about the spaces that create and enforce it.

Bong Joon-ho leaves us with a sense of heartbreaking pessimism. The world of Parasite is a closed system, a cruel architectural joke where every ladder leads back down. The final images of Ki-woo, dreaming of one day buying the house, are a gut punch, a confirmation that the dream of social mobility is the most seductive illusion of all. The skyline, for the Kim family, will forever remain a distant, unattainable view.

Ramin Bahrani offers a more cynical, and perhaps more chilling, conclusion. Balram gets to the top. He reaches the skyline. But in doing so, he becomes a mirror image of the masters he despised—ruthless, exploitative, and alone. His story suggests that the Rooster Coop can be escaped, but only by the one creature savage enough to kill its way out: the white tiger.

Both films are a warning. They hold a mirror up to a world of glittering surfaces and dark foundations, of lives lived in sun-drenched mansions and others in flooded basements. They serve as a chilling reminder that the foundations of our gleaming skylines are often darker and deeper than we dare to imagine

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NEW AVENUES FOR CONSUMPTION: DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS EMERGING GENRE IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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Abstract

The rise of digital platforms has created new ways for audiences to access and engage with literature, influencing how and what is published and read. The digital age has transformed the landscape of literature, challenging traditional definitions of text, authorship, and readership. This paper explores how online narratives, electronic literature, and digital storytelling platforms shape new modes of literary expression in the twenty-first century and stand as an upcoming genre in literature. Fan fiction communities, interactive hypertexts, blogs, and social media narratives have emerged as powerful cultural forms, democratizing authorship and redefining literary aesthetics. The contemporary web- based works demonstrate how digital experimentation destabilizes linear storytelling, blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, and expands reader participation. The paper situates these innovations within the broader framework of Post-Modernism, Post-Humanism and Digital Humanities, arguing that digital literature reflects a shift toward collective authorship and multimodal textuality. By analyzing the aesthetics of fragmentation, interactivity, and hybridity, the study shows how literature adapts to technological change, reflecting contemporary anxieties and desires in a networked world and coming out as a new genre in contemporary literature.

Keywords: *Authorship, Digital Humanities, Electronic Literature, Post-Humanism, Post-Modernism, Readership.*

Introduction

The twenty-first century marks a watershed moment in the history of literature. No longer confined to the printed book, narratives now exist across screens, hyperlinks, blogs, and social media platforms. The rise of digital technologies has transformed literature into a fluid, interactive, and collaborative art form. “Digital literature” or “electronic literature” or e-lit, includes works that are born-digital—created for and accessible only through digital platforms—as well as hybrid works in which print texts incorporate digital aesthetics. Hypertext fiction, multimedia storytelling, fanfiction communities, blogs, and online magazines exemplify how literature adapts to the cultural and technological shifts of our time and reshaping how stories are told and how identities are constructed in the digital age.

This paper argues that “Digital Storytelling is emerging not merely as a new medium for literature, but as a robust and distinct contemporary literary genre.” It is defined by a unique set of formal characteristics that reflect and respond to the anxieties and desires of a networked world. Drawing on the theoretical lenses of “Post-Modernism”, which helps analyze narrative fragmentation, “Post-Humanism”, which addresses the blending of human and technology in textual creation, and the methodological insights of “Digital Humanities”, this study analyzes how DST destabilizes linear narrative, democratizes authorship, and expands reader participation.

The Digital Literary Landscape: Emerging Forms of DST

The emergence of Digital Storytelling is characterized by the proliferation of textual forms that thrive exclusively within the computational environment. This section maps the landscape of contemporary DST, illustrating how narratives have broken free from the constraints of the print medium to foster new possibilities for expression and engagement, thereby defining the contours of the emerging genre.

Hypertext and Interactive Narratives (Electronic Literature)

At the most formally experimental end of DST lays Electronic Literature (E-Lit), which utilizes computational functionality to challenge narrative linearity. Key to E-Lit is “Hypertext Fiction” and “Interactive Narratives”, which replace the stable sequence of the printed page with a branching, multi-linear structure. The reader is no longer a passive recipient but an active navigator, whose choices determine the trajectory and, often, the meaning of the narrative. This formal instability directly embodies the aesthetic of “fragmentation”, where coherence is deferred and constructed uniquely by each user's path.

Social Media and Ephemeral Narratives

The rapid growth of platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, and blog aggregators has fostered highly condensed and ephemeral forms of DST. Narratives told through serialized Twitter threads, collaborative blog fiction, or interactive 'choose-your-own-adventure' formats on social media platforms demonstrate a key aspect of the new genre: “Multimodal Textuality.” These narratives frequently combine text, image, video, and audience comments, blurring the lines between literary creation and public discourse. This mode of expression, driven by platform-specific constraints (such as character limits), privileges immediacy and rapid consumption, mirroring the pace of contemporary networked life.

Collaborative and Participatory Communities (Fan Fiction)

Perhaps the clearest example of the democratization of authorship is the rise of “fan fiction communities”. Platforms like Archive of Our Own (AO3) and Wattpad allow readers to become writers, co-opting, expanding, and transforming established fictional universes. This phenomenon radically destabilizes the singular, authoritative authorial voice. Instead, DST fosters a model of “collective authorship”, where stories are collaboratively edited, reviewed, and extended, embodying the spirit of communal creativity. The success of these forms is predicated on “reader participation”, redefining the literary work as an open, evolving process rather than a closed product.

Global and Indian Perspectives

Globally, digital literature has produced a variety of innovative narrative experiments. Michael Joyce‟s *Afternoon, a Story* (1987), often cited as one of the earliest works of hypertext fiction, demonstrated how hyperlinks could replace linear plot with branching storylines, giving readers agency to navigate the text. Mark Z. Danielewski‟s *House of Leaves* (2000), though a printed novel, embodies digital aesthetics through its fragmented typographies, footnotes, and labyrinthine structure that mimic the experience of navigating online texts.

Jennifer Egan‟s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010) includes a chapter in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, signaling the intrusion of digital forms into print literature. Similarly, Shelley Jackson‟s *Patchwork Girl* (1995) reimagines Mary Shelley‟s *Frankenstein* through hypertextual fragments, emphasizing the multiplicity and fragmentation characteristic of digital textuality. These works highlight how literature now embraces interactivity, hybridity, and multimedia aesthetics, anticipating the participatory logic of internet culture.

Fanfiction communities and platforms such as Wattpad, Inkitt, Fanfiction.Net, Radish Fiction, Commaful, Sweek, Webnovel, Medium, Dreame, and Archive of Our Own (AO3) further illustrate the global democratization of literature. These spaces empower readers to become writers, expanding narrative worlds and challenging notions of intellectual property and originality. Such communities thrive on collective authorship, reflecting what Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006) describes as participatory culture.

In the Indian context, digital literature intersects with questions of accessibility, language, and readership. The rapid growth of internet users in India has given rise to blogs, online literary magazines, and self-publishing platforms. Indian writers increasingly use digital spaces as both creative laboratories and community hubs. Preeti Shenoy, for instance, began her literary journey through blogging, where she connected directly with readers before transitioning into mainstream publishing. Her trajectory exemplifies how digital platforms act as incubators for literary careers. Similarly, self-publishing portals like Kindle Direct Publishing and Pratilipi provide opportunities for emerging voices to bypass traditional publishing hierarchies.

Digital literature in India also reflects multilingual realities. Online platforms enable writers in English and regional languages to reach wider audiences, fostering cross-cultural dialogue. Furthermore, social media has become a narrative space in itself, where micro-fiction, poetry threads, and Instagram stories expand the very definition of literature. These forms democratize access, while also raising questions about the sustainability and preservation of digital texts in a rapidly changing technological environment.

Analysis of Digital Storytelling Aesthetics

The study of digital literature draws on interdisciplinary theories from postmodernism, post-Humanism, and the digital humanities. N. Katherine Hayles, in *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008), defines electronic literature as texts “that are digital born and cannot be accessed without a computer.” Such texts employ

hyperlinks, sound, animation, and reader interaction as integral components of meaning. Similarly, Espen J. Aarseth‟s concept of "Ergodic literature" in his work *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, (1997) emphasizes the active role of readers, who must navigate and co-create the text. Lev Manovich‟s *The Language of New Media* (2001) provides further insights into how digital environments transform narrative forms, highlighting the database as a cultural form that rivals linear storytelling.

The generic identity of Digital Storytelling (DST) is cemented by three defining aesthetic features: fragmentation, interactivity, and hybridity. These features not only distinguish DST from print literature but also demonstrate the genre's deep engagement with the post-modern and post-human conditions.

Fragmentation and Post-Modern Plurality

The aesthetic of „fragmentation‟ is the foundational post-modern feature of DST. Unlike the print novel, which mandates linearity, digital texts are often non-sequential, modular, and structurally incomplete until the moment of reading. Post-Modern theory provides the necessary critical lens to understand the structural aesthetics of DST. Narratives across hypertexts and social media feeds are often characterized by "fragmentation, indeterminacy, and surface-level engagement". This aesthetic reflects the post-modern critique of grand narratives and stable truths.

DST, particularly in interactive hypertexts, fundamentally rejects the linear, singular narrative path upheld by traditional literature. By forcing the reader to click, jump, and select, DST embodies the post-modern condition where meaning is fluid, plural, and perpetually deferred.

The rise of fan fiction and collaborative platforms aligns perfectly with the post-modern proclamation of the "*Death of the Author*" by Barthes in 1967, which means a text‟s meaning should not be restricted by the author‟s intentions or personal biography. Instead, once a work is created, it takes on a life of its own, allowing readers to interpret it based on their own experiences and perspectives. In DST, authorship becomes distributed and decentralized, shifting creative authority from a single source to a collective community of readers and writers.

In works of complex hypertext, the narrative is distributed across multiple lexia (nodes) linked by hyper-jumps. This forces the reader to construct the narrative whole, reflecting the post-modern rejection of a singular, authoritative truth. The text exists as a potentially infinite network of stories, where the individual reader's path constitutes their unique, yet fragmented, reading experience.

Similarly, stories told through threads or serialized across different social media feeds are inherently fragmented. They are interrupted by platform algorithms, advertising, and other users' posts, embedding the narrative within the chaotic flow of the network.

Post-Humanism: Hybridity and the Networked Subject

The shift from the autonomous, solitary reader to the networked, technologically-mediated participant is best understood through "Post-Humanism". This theory challenges the humanist distinction between the human subject and the technological medium.

DST works are inherently post-human artifacts; they are not simply about technology, but are co-created by human input and technological code. The text is a hybrid entity, where the hardware, software, and network all contribute to the final narrative form. "Hybridity" is the aesthetic feature that most clearly positions DST within the post-human theoretical framework. It refers to the merging of disparate elements—media, genres, and ontological states—within a single textual experience.

DST frequently employs "Multimodal Textuality", combining text, moving image, sound, and databases. A narrative might require reading a fictional blog, watching an embedded video, and reviewing a faux-database, demanding a holistic, media-aware form of literacy. This media-blending marks a generic departure from the primarily linguistic nature of print literature.

DST often blurs the boundary between reality and fiction. Works like Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) or fictional narratives disseminated through real-world platforms require the reader to treat the fiction as a plausible reality, using real-world tools to solve narrative puzzles. This collapse of ontological boundaries reflects the networked subject's own existence, which is constantly hybridizing the virtual and the material.

The experience of reading DST, reshapes the identity of the reader, who becomes a „networked subject". The line between human agency and algorithmic determination is blurred, reflecting a post-human understanding of selfhood as embedded within technological systems.

Digital Humanities: Interactivity and the Redefinition of Readership

The field of "Digital Humanities (DH)" serves as the methodological framework, enabling scholars to analyze the vast scale and unique data structures of DST. The aesthetic of interactivity fundamentally redefines the role of the reader, moving them from a passive consumer to an active participant, a generic trait essential to DST. This feature operationalizes the collective authorship discussed earlier.

DH tools allow for the study of large-scale DST phenomena, such as tracing the evolution of fan fiction tropes across thousands of stories or mapping reader pathways through complex hypertexts. This provides empirical evidence to support qualitative generic claims. DH focuses on the text's inherent structures, including coding, databases, and metadata. By treating the digital text as a "code-based object" rather than merely a meaning- based one, DH enables a deeper analysis of the aesthetic principles of interactivity and hybridity which are the very characteristics that define DST as a genre.

Interactivity is most visible in fan fiction, where the capacity for commenting, reviewing, and extending stories transforms reading into a creative, communal act. The literary work is not complete upon publication but remains open to continuation and revision by the community. This shared authority over the narrative object, where the reader"s input directly influences the textual environment, is a defining generic marker of DST.

From a Digital Humanities perspective, interactivity also refers to the dialogue between the user and the code. When a reader clicks a link or enters a command, they are engaging directly with the underlying software that generates the text. This practical, computational interaction establishes a co-creative relationship between the human reader and the machine, embodying the post-human premise.

These theories illuminate how digital literature challenges traditional categories of authorship, narrative structure, and textual authority. In postcolonial contexts such as India, these transformations are further inflected by questions of accessibility, linguistic diversity, and cultural representation.

Key Themes in Digital Literature

1. Interactivity and Reader Participation: Digital texts often require active reader engagement. Hypertext narratives, interactive fiction, and online games turn readers into co-creators, challenging the linearity of print.
2. Collective Authorship and Democratization: Anyone with internet access publish, make literature more inclusive in digital platforms. This democratization disrupts traditional publishing and opens space for diverse voices.
3. Fragmentation and Non-Linearity: Contemporary digital works embrace discontinuity, reflecting both postmodern aesthetics and the fragmented rhythms of digital life. Hyperlinks, shifting perspectives, and multimedia layering mirror the fractured nature of memory and identity.
4. Multimodality and Hybrid Forms: Digital narratives incorporate text, image, sound, and animation. This multimodality transforms reading into an immersive, sensory experience.
5. Identity and Cultural Memory: Digital literature often engages with themes of identity, displacement, and cultural memory. Online storytelling archives marginalized voices and creates collective spaces of remembrance, particularly relevant in postcolonial societies like India.

Challenges and Critiques

Despite its innovations, digital literature faces significant challenges. The ephemerality of digital texts raises questions about preservation and accessibility. As platforms evolve or disappear, works risk being lost to obsolescence. Issues of copyright and authorship remain contentious, particularly in collaborative environments such as fanfiction.

Over use of digital platforms results in physiological and psychological setbacks. They may result in addiction of digital platform which alienates people from the society. People may develop insecurity and lack boldness to convey their publicly in offline. There will be lack of genuinity as the authorship is not centered here. This may also reduce the value and appreciation of good contents.

Moreover, the digital divide continues to shape who can participate in digital literary culture. While urban, English-speaking readers have greater access to e-lit, many communities in India and the global South remain excluded due to infrastructural inequalities. These tensions underscore that digital literature, while democratizing in theory, may reproduce existing disparities in practice.

Conclusion

Digital literature represents one of the most significant transformations in contemporary English studies. By moving "beyond the page," it reshapes narrative forms, reader-writer relationships, and the very concept of what counts as literature. From global hypertext experiments to Indian blogging cultures, digital narratives highlight the adaptability of literature in the face of technological and cultural change.

From hypertext fiction to online fan communities, digital narratives challenges traditional notions of a fixed text, sole authorship, and passive readership, forcing a re-evaluation of what constitutes 'literature' in the contemporary era.

As this paper argues, digital literature is not a departure from tradition but an extension of it, carrying forward the literary impulse into new media ecologies. It democratizes authorship, expands the aesthetics of storytelling, and reflects the fragmented, networked realities of our time. At once global and local, experimental and popular, digital literature underscores the resilience of storytelling as a human practice. In doing so, it demonstrates that literature remains vital, evolving, and indispensable in the digital age.

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THE SHADOW OF SNORRI: RECONSTRUCTING PRE-CHRISTIAN NORSE COSMOGONY BY CONTRASTING THE PROSE AND POETIC EDDAS

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Abstract

The Norse mythological world, popularized in modern media, is largely a construct derived from Snorri Sturluson's 13th-century Prose Edda. This paper argues that Snorri's work, while invaluable for preservation, systematically reorganizes the older and more ambiguous cosmological fragments found in the Poetic Edda to align with a Christian medieval worldview. Through a comparative analysis of the two texts, this study examines key differences in their accounts of cosmogony, the nature of the gods, and the character of Loki. It finds that the Prose Edda imposes a linear narrative, a patriarchal hierarchy, and a moral clarity that smooths over the archaic, cyclical, and inherently chaotic vision presented in the older poetry. The paper concludes that recognizing Snorri's authorial lens is crucial for any scholarly attempt to understand the pre-Christian beliefs of Scandinavia, as the Poetic Edda offers a glimpse into a more ancient, fatalistic, and complex worldview that Snorri felt compelled to rationalize.

Keywords: Norse mythology, Prose Edda, Poetic Edda, Snorri Sturluson, Cosmogony, Medieval Literature, Christianization, Source Criticism

Introduction

The contemporary understanding of Norse mythology is almost entirely dependent on two medieval Icelandic texts: the anonymous Poetic Edda (compiled c. 1270 CE but containing compositions believed to be much older) and Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda (c. 1220 CE). Traditionally treated as complementary sources that form a coherent whole, a critical comparative analysis reveals they are often philosophically and structurally at odds. The Poetic Edda presents a worldview that is cyclical, deeply fatalistic, and comfortable with paradox and ambiguity. In stark contrast, Snorri Sturluson, a Christian scholar, lawspeaker, and diplomat, composed the Prose Edda as a scholarly treatise with a dual purpose: to preserve the skaldic poetic tradition for a post-pagan elite and to create a systematic narrative from the complex and sometimes contradictory pagan lore. As scholar Margaret Clunies Ross notes, Snorri's work is "a treatise on the art of poetry and a mythology organized so as to explain the origin and meaning of the poetic diction known as kennings" (Clunies Ross 35). This paper contends that in executing this project, Snorri imposed a narrative coherence, a genealogical structure, and a sense of linear history that fundamentally reframed the Norse cosmos, aligning it with a medieval Christian mindset. By analyzing their differing accounts of creation, the nature of the divine, and the role of the trickster Loki, this study will deconstruct Snorri's synthesis to argue that the Poetic Edda provides a crucial, if more fragmented, window into a more archaic and fundamentally different pagan worldview.

Literature Review

The critical study of the Eddas has long acknowledged Snorri's Christian context. Early scholarship often accepted his narrative at face value, but modern philology and source criticism have become increasingly skeptical.

Source Criticism: Scholars like Klaus von See and Eugen Mogk have led the charge in questioning the authenticity of Snorri's narratives, arguing that he often filled gaps in the older tradition with his own inventions or interpretations based on classical and Christian models (von See 12; Mogk 25).

Snorri's Christian Lens: The most significant area of study revolves around Snorri's biases. As Thomas DuBois asserts, "Snorri was a Christian author explaining pre-Christian traditions to a Christian audience" (DuBois 47). This perspective is crucial for understanding his euhemeristic prologue in the Prose Edda, where he frames the Norse gods as ancient Trojan warriors who migrated north and were mistakenly worshipped as gods—a common medieval tactic to discredit paganism while preserving its stories.

The Poetic Edda as an Archaic Source: While not free from Christian influence itself, the Poetic Edda is generally regarded as containing older, more traditional material. John McKinnell's work on the composition of these poems

suggests they retain core elements of a pre-systematized, oral tradition where contradiction and regional variation were inherent features, not problems to be solved (McKinnell 88).

Comparative Mythology: The work of scholars like Georges Dumézil and, more recently, Jens Peter Schjødt, uses comparative Indo-European analysis to reconstruct underlying structures in Norse myth. This often reveals concepts like sacred sovereignty and cyclical time that align more closely with the fragmented Poetic Edda than with Snorri's streamlined narrative (Schjødt 112).

This paper builds upon this foundation of critical scholarship by providing a focused, point-by-point comparative analysis of the core cosmological differences between the two texts, highlighting the specific narrative choices Snorri made to Christianize the pagan cosmos.

Methodology

This research employs a comparative textual analysis methodology. The primary sources are the Poetic Edda, specifically the Völuspá (The Prophecy of the Seeress) and Vafþrúðnismál (The Sayings of Vafþrúðnir), and the Gylfaginning (The Beguiling of Gylfi) section of Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda. These texts are examined side-by-side to identify divergences in their accounts of:

1. Cosmogony: The process and imagery of world-creation.
2. Theology: The nature, hierarchy, and morality of the gods.
3. Eschatology: The conception of fate and destiny, particularly through the figure of Loki.

Each divergence is then contextualized within the historical and cultural background of 13th-century Iceland, drawing on secondary scholarship to argue whether it represents an archaic feature preserved in the poetry or a medieval innovation introduced by Snorri.

Analysis: Two Visions of the Norse Cosmos

1. Cosmogony: Ordered Narrative vs. Chaotic Emergence

The creation of the world is presented in starkly different tones across the two texts, highlighting Snorri's drive for order and physical clarity.

In the Prose Edda (Gylfaginning): Snorri provides a clear, linear, and quasi-scientific narrative. He describes a primordial void, Ginnungagap, flanked by a realm of ice, Niflheim, and a realm of fire, Muspelheim. Creation is a physical, almost mechanical process: the ice melts from the heat, and from the dripping rime emerges the first being, the giant Ymir. The gods later slay Ymir and fashion the physical world from his corporeal substance: "They took Ymir's skull and made from it the sky… They took his brains and threw them into the air, and they became the clouds" (Sturluson 18). This is a tidy, logical, and above all, ex nihilo (out of a pre-existing substance) creation story that would have been familiar and intellectually acceptable to a medieval Christian audience accustomed to the Genesis narrative of a world formed by a divine architect.

In the Poetic Edda (Völuspá): The creation is more enigmatic, emergent, and less concerned with physical engineering. The völva (seeress) who narrates the poem recalls a time before time in a series of haunting, non-linear images:

I remember yet the giants of earliest birth,

Those who me of old have nurtured;

I remember nine worlds, I remember nine giant-women,

The mighty Measuring-Tree below the earth. (Larrington 4, stanza 2)

The poem speaks of the sons of Bur (Odin and his brothers) who "lifted up the land" and "shaped the world" (Larrington 5, stanza 4), but the process is vague. More crucially, the focus is not on assembly but on the establishment of cosmic order (ørlög, primal law) and language by the gods: "They gave names to noon and night, / to morning and midday, / to years and to ages" (Larrington 5, stanza 6). This suggests a cosmogony based on

defining conceptual principles and naming—an act of intellectual and cultural creation—rather than merely assembling physical parts from a corpse.

2. The Nature of the Gods: Patriarchs vs. Ambiguous Powers

Snorri's portrayal of the Æsir fundamentally reshapes them into a pantheon recognizable to a European audience, moving them away from their more complex and ominous origins in the poetry.

In the Prose Edda: The gods are organized into a clear patriarchal hierarchy. Odin is the undisputed "All-Father," a wise, if sometimes cunning, ruler. Thor is the straightforward, powerful protector of mankind. Loki is positioned as the cunning, semi-outsider trickster. This structure is clean, dramatic, and mirrors a feudal or royal court. Snorri's project, as Preben Meulengracht Sørensen suggests, was to create a "mythology for a new age," one that could be appreciated as literature and history rather than as a living religion, thus necessitating a rationalized structure (Meulengracht Sørensen 215).

In the Poetic Edda: The gods are more morally ambiguous and their power is more shamanistic and fearful. Odin is not simply a father-king; he is the god of frenzy, poetry, death, and hanged men. He gains wisdom through self-sacrifice and terrifying ordeal, not through innate nobility:

I know that I hung on a windswept tree

nine long nights,

wounded with a spear, dedicated to Odin,

myself to myself. (Larrington 34, Hávamál stanza 138)

This is a god of terrifying knowledge gained through pain and paradox, not a wise old ruler. The poems are filled with a deep sense of fatalism. The gods are not omnipotent; they are subject to the same web of fate as everyone else and are actively, and often desperately, trying to stave off their own doomed destiny, Ragnarök.

3. The Case of Loki: Trickster vs. Proto-Devil

The evolution of Loki's character is perhaps the clearest example of Snorri's Christian influence.

In the Poetic Edda: Loki is a complex trickster figure. He is a companion to Odin and Thor, yet he also initiates the chain of events that leads to Baldr's death. His role is ambiguous a necessary, if dangerous, part of the cosmic balance. He is not purely evil; he is chaos and change incarnate. As Stefanie von Schnurbein argues, the eddic Loki is a "boundary-crosser" whose actions, while destructive, are integral to the narrative dynamics of the myths (von Schnurbein 102).

In the Prose Edda: Snorri refines this ambiguity into a clearer narrative of moral decline. He directly links Loki to the death of the beloved god Baldr, framing it as a malicious act of pure spite. Following this, Snorri describes Loki's punishment in gruesome, vivid detail: he is bound to a rock with the entrails of his son, and a serpent drips venom onto his face (Sturluson 78-79). This imagery is powerfully reminiscent of the Christian devil's eternal torment in hell. Snorri reshapes Loki from an ambiguous agent of chaos into a more familiar Satanic figure, a clear antagonist for his divine protagonists, thereby introducing a Manichean good-versus-evil dynamic that is largely absent from the older poetry.

Conclusion

The synthesized Norse mythology known today is a construct, heavily weighted toward Snorri Sturluson's coherent and accessible narrative. However, as this comparative analysis has demonstrated, reading the Prose Edda against the grain of the Poetic Edda reveals the profound and systematic influence of a medieval Christian scholar actively at work: organizing, rationalizing, and moralizing a belief system that was likely far more comfortable with mystery, paradox, and existential dread.

The Poetic Edda presents a vision where order is fragile and constantly negotiated, gods are powerful yet doomed intermediaries with fate, and creation is an ongoing conceptual struggle. The Prose Edda, in contrast, presents a world with a clear beginning (a divine murder and engineering project), a structured patriarchal pantheon, and a

clear moral polarity centered on a Satanic antagonist. Recognizing this distinction is not to discount Snorri's immense contribution to preservation—without him, much would be lost—but to acknowledge that our view of the Norse cosmos is forever seen through his clarifying, and inevitably altering, lens.

For future scholarship, this means a renewed focus on the Poetic Edda as the primary source for archaic elements, using Snorri's text cautiously as a guide rather than a gospel. It also invites further interdisciplinary study, comparing the eddic worldview to other Indo-European mythologies and archaeological findings to triangulate a pre-Snorri understanding of Norse belief. Ultimately, a true understanding of the Norse cosmos requires listening to the older, more chaotic, and more haunting voices that echo through the poems, voices that Snorri, for all his genius, could not help but try to silence into order.

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CARTOGRAPHIES OF RESISTANCE: FEMINIST SPATIALITIES IN BANU MUSHTAQ'S HEART LAMP

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Abstract

This paper investigates the interplay of gender, space, and resistance in Banu Mushtaq's Heart Lamp (2025), translated from Kannada into English by Deepa Bhasthi. The analysis draws on Henri Lefebvre's The Production of Space (1991) and Doreen Massey's Space, Place and Gender (1994), along with postcolonial feminist interventions by Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to show how domestic, religious, and institutional spaces become sites of negotiation. Close readings of "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal," "Fire Rain," and the title story "Heart Lamp" illustrate that kitchens, courtyards, maternity wards, and mosques are not passive backgrounds but dynamic terrains where women challenge patriarchal structures. Acts such as refusing the patriarchal address yajamana, adorning a girl's hair with jasmine, or invoking Qur'anic inheritance rights reveal subtle strategies of resistance inscribed in everyday life. The paper also considers translation as a spatial practice. Bhasthi's rendering preserves cultural idioms and context-specific terms, exemplifying Lawrence Venuti's "foreignizing" strategy and echoing Spivak's insistence on maintaining women's rhetorical particularities. In this sense, translation reconfigures local narratives into global feminist conversations without erasing their cultural rootedness. Integrating feminist literary criticism, spatial humanities, and translation studies, the paper argues that Heart Lamp charts a feminist cartography of resistance, complicating fixed notions of domesticity, community, and subjectivity within South Asian Muslim women's writing.

Keywords: feminist spatiality, Kannada literature, Muslim women's writing, resistance, translation studies

Introduction:

The relationship between women and space has been a central concern for feminist writers and critics in South Asia. From Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's visionary *Sultana's Dream* (1905) to Ismat Chughtai's bold *Lihaaf* (1942), women's literature has persistently questioned how domestic interiors, religious prescriptions, and social norms regulate female lives. While questions of voice, identity, and agency have been extensively explored, the spatial dynamics of women's negotiations with patriarchy often remain less visible, particularly in regional literatures. Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp* (2025), translated into English by Deepa Bhasthi, brings this concern to the forefront, portraying everyday geographies of Muslim communities in Karnataka as contested terrains marked by both constraint and subtle defiance.

The global recognition of *Heart Lamp* further highlights the importance of this perspective. In 2025, the book became the first Kannada work to receive the International Booker Prize, a landmark moment for regional Indian literature in translation. The judging panel described the collection as "witty, vivid, colloquial, moving and excoriating," while chair Max Porter emphasized it as "a radical translation that ruffles language to create new textures in a plurality of Englishes" (India Today; BBC). Reviews in The Indian Express and Financial Times drew attention to Mushtaq's ability to depict women's lives without sensationalism, instead anchoring stories of pain, endurance, and faith in gestures of quiet dignity. For Mushtaq, these stories grow out of lived realities: "My stories are about women—how religion, society, and politics demand unquestioning obedience from them … turning them into mere subordinates" (Times of India). Translator Deepa Bhasthi has explained her approach as "translating with an accent," consciously retaining Kannada rhythms and cultural resonances in English to preserve authenticity and resist linguistic flattening (Debnath).

Within this context, *Heart Lamp* demonstrates how space operates simultaneously as a tool of patriarchal control and as a site of female resistance. This paper analyses three stories from the collection— "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal," "Fire Rain," and the title story "Heart Lamp." These narratives show that kitchens, courtyards, maternity wards, and mosques are not inert backdrops but active spaces where women assert themselves against restrictive structures. Small but meaningful acts—rejecting the patriarchal address *yajamana*, adorning a young girl's hair

with jasmine, or invoking Qur'anic rights to inheritance—reveal the everyday practices of dissent that women inscribe in their lived spaces.

Translation, too, functions as a spatial practice in this collection. Bhasthi's decision to retain cultural idioms and community-specific expressions aligns with Lawrence Venuti's idea of "foreignizing" translation and resonates with Gayatri Spivak's call to honour the rhetorical particularities of women's voices. In this way, the translation not only conveys meaning across languages but also preserves cultural geographies that might otherwise be erased.

By intertwining textual strategies, lived environments, and translation practices, *Heart Lamp* situates itself within the wider tradition of South Asian feminist writing—from Rokeya Hossain and Chughtai to Qurratulain Hyder and Sara Abubakar. It offers a cartography of resistance where kitchens, mosques, hospitals, courtyards, and even metaphors become charged terrains of negotiation. Its international acclaim signals not only the literary power of Kannada Muslim women's narratives but also the importance of space as a category for understanding feminist modes of endurance, survival, and defiance.

Literature Review:

The study of how women negotiate, transform, and resist spatial constraints has gathered momentum in feminist literary criticism and cultural geography over the past decades. In South Asia particularly, scholars have pointed out how domestic, institutional, and religious spaces function both as sites of oppression and resistance for Muslim women. Nonetheless, regional literatures, especially vernacular literatures such as Kannada, remain underrepresented in these conversations. *Heart Lamp* by Banu Mushtaq therefore occupies a critical gap, aligning with existing scholarship yet extending it into new spatial and linguistic territory.

One major strand of scholarship addresses Muslim women's literary agency through spatiality in Anglophone and Urdu literatures. For example, Sheelalipi Sahana's doctoral dissertation, *Gendered Spatiality: Twentieth Century Muslim Women's Writing from the Indian Subcontinent*, examines works by Rashid Jahan, Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder, Attia Hosain, and Khadija Mastur, showing how domestic, public, and "in-between" spaces are used by women writers to assert identities and agency (Sahana). Sahana demonstrates that even in highly constrained settings—colonial and postcolonial—women devise forms of resistance via subtle spatial practices, material objects, and everyday routines. This provides useful precedent for reading Mushtaq's domestic gestures (kitchens, courtyards, language) as part of a tradition of resisting static spatial orders.

Another relevant work is Usha Sanyal's *Scholars of Faith: South Asian Muslim Women and the Embodiment of Religious Knowledge* (2020), which investigates how religious education institutions (madrasas, NGOs) enable Muslim girls and women to reinterpret their roles in private and public spheres. Sanyal argues that religious knowledge is not merely imposed but is embodied, lived and renegotiated. In these spaces of learning and faith, women find channels of power and critique. This parallels Mushtaq's stories where religious texts (Qur'an) are not external but internal to family life, becoming tools for resistance rather than doctrinal constraints. (Oxford Academic)

Literature on feminist spatial theory provides a theoretical scaffold for these literary practices. Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991) theorizes space as produced socially through practices, symbols, language, power relations. Doreen Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994) emphasizes the multiplicity of space, its "always under construction" nature, and the idea that places are shaped by power, relationships, and contestation. Postcolonial feminists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty (*Feminism Without Borders* (2003)) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emphasize situated knowledge and the politics of translation or representation. Lawrence Venuti's work on translation, especially *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), offers a lens for assessing how translations can foreignize, preserve cultural texture, and resist homogenization.

Within Kannada literature and specifically narratives by Muslim women, fewer detailed studies exist that combine spatial theory with postcolonial feminist critique and translation studies. Recent reviews of *Heart Lamp* in mainstream media and academic commentary highlight the book's attention to "ordinary" details, spatial intimacy, and acts of resistance through language and ritual (India Today, Indian Express), yet they do not deeply interrogate the spatial dimension as a theoretical category. Similarly, author's interviews (Mushtaq via Times of India) and translator's reflections (Deepa Bhasthi via Scroll.in) speak of translation as preserving cultural accents, but academic work has not yet fully theorized translation as spatial crossing in the Kannada → English context.

Therefore, the gap in existing scholarship is twofold:

Regional literatures, particularly those in Kannada and by Muslim women, have not been extensively examined through the analytic lens of feminist spatiality.

Translation studies as applied to vernacular feminist writing need deeper attention—how translation not only carries meaning but restructures space, identity, and resistance.

This study seeks to address these gaps by placing *Heart Lamp* at their intersection: reading its stories via feminist spatial theory, considering religious, domestic, medical spaces, using textual evidence, and theorizing translation as spatial practice. This situates Mushtaq's collection both in scholarly lineage and as a novel contribution to feminist spatial humanities.

Theoretical Framework:

The analysis of Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp* requires an interdisciplinary framework that brings together feminist spatial theory, postcolonial feminism, and translation studies. This section outlines the theoretical principles informing the reading of Mushtaq's work, drawing upon Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Michel Foucault, Linda McDowell, and Lawrence Venuti. These perspectives enable us to conceptualize space not merely as a physical backdrop but as a site of social production, contestation, and feminist resistance.

Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991) has been central to the "spatial turn" in the humanities. Lefebvre contends that space is not neutral or natural but is produced through social relations, institutions, symbols, and everyday practices (Lefebvre 83). For this study, his insight explains why Zeenat's refusal to use the term *yajamana* in "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal" disrupts domestic hierarchies: the household is reproduced as a patriarchal space precisely through such linguistic acts. Her rejection interrupts the circulation of norms, unsettling the symbolic structure of space.

Doreen Massey develops Lefebvre's insights by emphasizing that space is never fixed but is "always under construction," open to contestation and negotiation (*Space, Place and Gender* 9). Massey also highlights the gendered organization of space, showing how mobility, visibility, and access are unevenly distributed. In *Heart Lamp*, women's insistence on jasmine adornment or claims to Qur'anic inheritance illustrate Massey's principle: these acts open space to alternative configurations, transforming kitchens and courtyards into terrains of dignity and possibility.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders* (2003) provides a postcolonial feminist perspective particularly relevant to *Heart Lamp*. Mohanty critiques universalist depictions of "Third World women" as passive victims, advocating instead for attention to context-specific practices of resistance. She proposes the concept of "situated resistance," where women mobilize cultural and religious resources to contest domination (Mohanty 22). This framework illuminates Jameela and Arifa's insistence on Qur'anic inheritance rights in "Fire Rain," which does not reject Islamic tradition but re-reads it against patriarchal misinterpretation.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emphasizes the politics of representation and translation. In "The Politics of Translation," she argues that women's texts must be translated with attention to their rhetorical texture, rather than being domesticated into a smooth universal English (Spivak 182). This principle is directly relevant to Deepa Bhasthi's translation choices in *Heart Lamp*, particularly the retention of culturally embedded words like *yajamana* and *bhabhi*. Spivak's work helps frame translation not simply as linguistic transfer but as an ethical act that preserves subaltern voices.

Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) expands this debate. Venuti critiques "domesticating" translation that erases difference in favor of fluency, advocating instead for "foreignizing" strategies that highlight cultural specificity. Bhasthi's translation of *Heart Lamp* aligns with Venuti's principle, as she herself has remarked on "translating with an accent," allowing the rhythms of Kannada to inflect English (Debnath). For this paper, Venuti's framework conceptualizes translation as a spatial reconfiguration—transporting local geographies into global feminist circuits without effacing their rootedness.

Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, articulated in "Of Other Spaces" (1986), describes spaces that simultaneously reflect, invert, and disturb societal norms. Heterotopias accommodate contradiction, serving as counter-sites. The lamp in the title story functions in this way: fragile but enduring, it illuminates women's resilience even as it reflects the constraints around them. Foucault's theory thus provides a vocabulary for understanding how metaphor itself can operate as spatial resistance.

Linda McDowell's *Gender, Identity and Place* (1999) demonstrates how medical and care institutions reproduce gendered dependency, presenting women as inherently vulnerable and in need of regulation. This is reflected in Shaista's childbirth experiences, where medical advice imposes confinement and emphasizes weakness. Yet, as McDowell's framework allows us to see, women may renegotiate these spaces: Shaista's refusal of prolonged seclusion exemplifies agency within constraint.

Together, these theoretical perspectives frame *Heart Lamp* as more than a collection of stories: they position it as a critical text in feminist spatial humanities. Lefebvre and Massey help explain how everyday acts reshape social geographies; Mohanty, Spivak, and Venuti situate these practices within postcolonial and translational politics; Foucault and McDowell illuminate how both metaphors and institutions can be reimagined as spaces of resistance. This layered framework prepares the ground for a close textual analysis of Mushtaq's stories, where domestic, religious, medical, and symbolic spaces emerge as terrains of feminist negotiation.

Textual Analysis: Negotiating Gendered Space and Feminist Resistance in Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp*

Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp* presents an intricate exploration of how gendered spaces—domestic, institutional, communal, and memorial—simultaneously constrain and enable women's agency. Across its narratives, Mushtaq demonstrates that spaces are socially produced, ideologically mediated, and relationally constituted, exemplifying Henri Lefebvre's claim that "(social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 26). This section critically examines three stories— "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal," "Fire Rain," and the eponymous "Heart Lamp"—to illustrate how patriarchal power is enacted, negotiated, and resisted across overlapping spatialities.

4.1 "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal": Domestic, Institutional, and Memorial Spaces

In "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal", the domestic sphere is portrayed as both regulatory and negotiable. The narrator, Zeenat's refusal to address her husband as *yajamana* or *pati*—terms that encode ownership—constitutes a deliberate semantic subversion: "If I use the term yajamana and call him owner, then I will have to be a servant… I do not like establishing these owner and servant roles" (*Heart Lamp* 7). This linguistic intervention destabilizes normative patriarchal hierarchies and resonates with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique of cultural narratives that produce subaltern positions ("Can Sub" 287). Religious discourse compounds this regulation: "for us Muslims, it is said that… our pati is God on earth" (*Heart Lamp* 8), reflecting Chandra Talpade Mohanty's observation that patriarchal and religious ideologies often conflate female subjectivity with duty and sacrifice (Mohanty 66).

Everyday gestures, however, offer subtle forms of resistance. The narrator's act of tying jasmine flowers into Asifa's hair— "I forced her to sit next to me and tied them in her hair. The girl's eyes filled with tears, and she disappeared inside the house, Iftikhar's empty teacup and saucer in hand" (*Heart Lamp* 11)— symbolizes recognition and care within the domestic sphere, transforming it into a site of ethical and relational intervention. Doreen Massey's theory of space as constituted by multiple trajectories (Massey 154) illuminates how such micro-practices create possibilities for agency within spatial constraints.

Institutional spaces, notably the maternity ward, are likewise contested. Shaista challenges medical authority by asserting, "I am healthy. Why should I remain lying down all the time? Even when my first daughter was born, I was in bed only for fifteen days." (*Heart Lamp* 17), enacting Foucault's notion of the disciplinary gaze (Foucault 89) while demonstrating tactical negotiation of bodily autonomy. Memorial spaces, in contrast, expose patriarchal contradictions: Iftikhar's fantasy of "Shaista Mahal" contrasts sharply with Shaista's disposability after death, underscoring the dissonance between symbolic glorification and material erasure (*Heart Lamp* 21).

Finally, Deepa Bhasthi's translation exemplifies Venuti's "foreignizing" strategy (Venuti 20), retaining culturally specific terms such as *yajamana*, *pati*, and *fatiha*, preserving the socio-cultural particularities of Muslim women's lived experiences while communicating resistance across linguistic boundaries.

4.2 "Fire Rain": Communal and Religious Spaces as Sites of Contestation

Banu Mushtaq's Fire Rain portrays the negotiation of power, faith, and gender across domestic, communal, and sacred spaces, emphasizing how authority and care intersect in the lives of women and men. The story begins with Arifa attending to her sick son, Ansar, as he suffers from high fever and possible meningitis. She sits beside him with a "wet cloth on his forehead" while he lies exhausted (*Heart Lamp* 22). This intimate moment situates the household as a space of maternal care and quiet resilience. However, the domestic sphere is destabilized when Mutawalli Usman Saheb intervenes with authority rather than compassion, as he "furrowed his brow and body, and shook her roughly awake" (*Heart Lamp* 22). The oscillation between protection and domination reveals the tension inherent in domestic spaces, where women's agency exists quietly but powerfully.

This tension extends to the household debate over inheritance. Jameela asserts: "One-sixth of our father's property belongs to me" (*Heart Lamp* 23). By invoking her Qur'anic right within the domestic setting, she transforms the home into a juridical space, challenging patriarchal authority. Mutawalli's frustrated response—his anger at being told how to manage family affairs—demonstrates the way male authority depends on the exclusion of women from decision-making. Yet Arifa's measured intervention reinforces the moral and religious legitimacy of women's claims: "It says clearly in the Qur'an that a girl child has a right to her share, doesn't it?" (*Heart Lamp* 26). Through these exchanges, Mushtaq depicts the home as "a socially produced space," where domestic interiors are continually contested through speech, silence, and religious discourse (Lefebvre 26).

The negotiation of power further expands into communal and sacred spaces. When Mutawalli organizes Nisar's funeral, the mosque and cemetery become sites of political and religious assertion. In this context, Mutawalli directs his followers: "We have to put in all our efforts to have Nisar's remains exhumed from there and buried here. We must be ready to face any obstacle, any problem, do you understand?" (*Heart Lamp* 33). The mosque, ostensibly for prayer, is appropriated as a platform for communal mobilization, reflecting how religious spaces can function as arenas of masculine solidarity (Asad 14). Yet the prior interventions of women resonate through these communal actions, demonstrating that domestic moral claims bleed into broader civic and religious spheres. The cemetery, too, becomes politically and morally charged. As the crows screech in Mutawalli's mind during the exhumation, the story evokes a natural, almost cosmic witness to injustice: "Crows began to screech in the mutawalli saheb's mind" (Heart Lamp 28). The recurring proverb— 'Hakhdaar tarse toh angaar ka nuuh barse'… If the one who has rights is displeased, a rain of fire will fall (*Heart Lamp* 26)—links denied rights to moral and cosmic consequences, emphasizing the interconnectedness of law, faith, and ecology in contested spaces.

Deepa Bhasthi's translation preserves the cultural and affective density of Mushtaq's original Kannada text. Terms and idioms, such as the proverb about fire-rain, are retained, exemplifying Lawrence Venuti's strategy of "foreignization" by keeping the rhythm and texture of local Muslim life intact (Venuti 20). Furthermore, the translation foregrounds women's rhetorical interventions, as in Jameela's Qur'anic invocation or Arifa's quiet moral interjection, ensuring their voice retains its specific affective weight rather than being flattened for "a global audience" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 309). In "Fire Rain," domestic, communal, and sacred spaces are thus inseparable sites of contestation, where women, whether silenced or quietly assertive, reshape the moral and political geography of their communities.

4.3 "Heart Lamp": Negotiation, Maternal Agency, and Relational Resistance

The eponymous story "Heart Lamp" dramatizes how domestic space—structured by kinship authority and patriarchal codes—becomes a contested site where women negotiate survival and agency. From the outset, Mehrun is positioned not as a daughter seeking refuge but as a defendant under scrutiny: "Once her eldest brother's instruction was issued, Mehrun walked in, her footsteps heavy and unsteady. It felt like a courtroom" (*Heart Lamp* 90). The metaphor of juridical space captures how everyday familial settings regulate women's bodies and choices, echoing Henri Lefebvre's view of space as "a social product" (Lefebvre 26). The brothers invoke *izzat* (honour) as the ultimate measure of her worth: "If you had the sense to uphold our family honour, you would have set yourself on fire and died" (*Heart Lamp* 93). Against this disciplinary logic, Mehrun voices a counter-narrative of deprivation: "I begged you not to make me stop studying. … Many of my classmates aren't even married, and yet I have become an old woman" (*Heart Lamp* 91). By shifting the focus from personal failure to structural denial, she reframes dishonour as a product of patriarchal obstruction rather than her own inadequacy.

If patriarchal kinship demands silence and erasure, maternal agency reconstitutes the domestic through relational care. Mehrun's despair reaches its height when she "picked up the can of kerosene and went around the house, unable to decide where she should be when she poured it on herself" (*Heart Lamp* 99). The act of circling through the very rooms she has sustained—kitchen, yard, thresholds—reveals how closely home and body are entwined in her struggle. Yet this trajectory is ruptured by her daughter Salma, who confronts her with a different ethic of obligation: "Just because you have lost one person, you will throw all of us at that woman's mercy? … We want you" (*Heart Lamp* 100). More than speech, it is touch that reorients the scene— "Salma put the baby on the ground and cried, 'Ammi! Ammi! Don't leave us and go!' She held her mother's legs … and the matchbox fell from her hand" (*Heart Lamp* 99). This embodied intervention foregrounds resistance as intergenerational and affective, rather than oppositional in a legalistic sense. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's insistence on attending to women's voices "without erasing their difference" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 287) is reflected here: Salma restores Mehrun's agency not by denying her suffering but by situating her life within a network of maternal responsibility and care.

The extinguished lamp becomes the central metaphor of precarious survival and renewal. The narrator observes that "the lamp in Mehrun's heart had been extinguished a long time ago" (*Heart Lamp* 97), capturing her inner desolation. Yet by the story's end, Salma rekindles this inner light: Mehrun whispers, "'Forgive me, my darling,' as the darkness of the night was thawing" (*Heart Lamp* 100). The thaw signals temporal and spatial transformation, where maternal resistance generates fragile futures beyond patriarchal judgment. Deepa Bhasthi's translation, by retaining culturally specific idioms like *tasbih* and *seragu*, enacts what Lawrence Venuti terms a "foreignizing" practice (Venuti 20), embedding the narrative within Kannada-inflected Muslim life-worlds while making it legible globally. Thus, "Heart Lamp" complicates the notion of domesticity as mere enclosure; instead, it charts how maternal agency and relational bonds reconfigure oppressive spaces into fragile but enduring terrains of resistance.

Conclusion

In summing up, it can be said that Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp*, in Deepa Bhasthi's resonant English translation, advances a distinctive feminist cartography of resistance rooted in the quotidian lives of Muslim women in Karnataka. The collection reveals that spaces conventionally viewed as sites of constraint—households, courtyards, mosques, maternity wards—are also arenas where women negotiate power and re-inscribe agency. Through acts as subtle as refusing to utter an honorific, placing jasmine flowers in a girl's hair, citing Qur'anic inheritance rights, or declining postpartum confinement, Mushtaq's characters demonstrate that resistance is not reducible to spectacular defiance. Instead, it unfolds as incremental, situated practice: embodied, linguistic, aesthetic, and relational.

By framing these acts through the lens of feminist spatial theory, *Heart Lamp* underscores that domestic and institutional spaces are socially produced and therefore open to reconfiguration. Its use of metaphor, especially the enduring image of the lamp, expands this argument into the symbolic realm, asserting that survival itself constitutes resistance. Translation extends this project further, re-mapping regional geographies into global feminist circuits while refusing to erase their linguistic and cultural textures.

The significance of *Heart Lamp* lies in its insistence that resistance can coexist with vulnerability, silence, and endurance. It situates South Asian Muslim women's narratives within broader feminist spatial humanities while preserving the specificity of regional experience. Future scholarship can build upon Mushtaq's work by examining other vernacular literatures through spatial theory, and by further theorizing translation as an act of feminist geography. In its textual subtlety, cultural rootedness, and translational reach, *Heart Lamp* not only documents women's negotiations with patriarchy but also illuminates the very spaces in which resistance persists.

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ILLUMINATING ROMANTIC AESTHETICS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF M.H. ABRAMS' THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP

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Abstract

Published in 1953, M.H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* is a landmark in the study of Romanticism and the history of literary criticism. Based on his doctoral dissertation, the book extends beyond a reinterpretation of Romantic theory to present a comprehensive map of Western aesthetics. Abrams organizes critical traditions into four principal orientations: the mimetic, which views literature as an imitation of reality; the pragmatic, which measures it by its effects on the audience; the expressive, which regards it as the outpouring of the artist's inner life; and the objective, which considers the artwork as an autonomous structure.

Abrams highlights how Romanticism, in particular, privileged the expressive model. The poet was no longer conceived as a mirror passively reflecting the external world, but as a lamp projecting inner illumination. This metaphor marked a decisive philosophical and aesthetic shift from neoclassical ideals of imitation, harmony, and order to Romantic emphases on subjectivity, imagination, and creative autonomy. In exploring this shift, Abrams demonstrates how Romantic theory redefined authorship, poetic function, and the role of imagination in art.

At the same time, he situates Romantic criticism within a long intellectual continuum, connecting the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Dryden, and Pope to those of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The book's enduring value lies in its synthetic framework, which unites philosophy, criticism, and poetic theory into a clear conceptual vocabulary. By charting both historical continuities and radical transformations, Abrams provides a model that remains foundational for literary studies, offering insight into literature's relation to author, audience, and world

Introduction

When *The Mirror and the Lamp* was published in 1953, M.H. Abrams did far more than offer a reinterpretation of Romantic theory he crafted a sweeping intellectual map of the evolution of Western literary criticism. Rooted in his doctoral dissertation, the book has since assumed a seminal place in the study of Romanticism and literary theory at large. Abrams approaches his subject with exceptional clarity, scholarly depth, and philosophical insight, demonstrating how literary criticism has shifted over time through varying conceptions of the function and origin of art. Central to *The Mirror and the Lamp* is Abrams' delineation of four principal critical orientations: the mimetic, which views literature as an imitation of the external world; the pragmatic, which evaluates literature by its effect on the audience; the expressive, which regards literature as a projection of the artist's inner world; and the objective, which treats the work of art as an autonomous object. These modes, as Abrams compellingly argues, represent changing paradigms of how art has been theorized in relation to truth, morality, and the self. The expressive theory, which he locates as dominant in Romanticism, marks a critical turning point in literary history. According to Abrams, Romantic poets and critics shifted the metaphor of the poet from a mirror passively reflecting the world to a lamp actively illuminating it from within. This symbolic transformation encapsulates a broader philosophical move toward subjectivity, imagination, and individual creative power, distinguishing Romanticism from the neoclassical emphasis on order and imitation. Yet Abrams' achievement lies not only in articulating the Romantic shift but also in tracing a continuous, dynamic dialogue across centuries of aesthetic thought from Plato and Aristotle through Dryden and Pope to Wordsworth and Coleridge. His framework provides scholars and students alike with a durable conceptual vocabulary for understanding how literature interacts with authorial intention, audience reception, and the broader world. Thus, *The Mirror and the Lamp* is more than a study of Romanticism; it is a masterful historiography of literary theory itself. Abrams' ability to synthesize philosophy, criticism, and poetic theory into a coherent structure has left an indelible mark on literary scholarship, making the book a foundational text in both historical and theoretical studies of literature.

I. Conceptual Framework: Mirror and Lamp as Metaphors

The very title of *The Mirror and the Lamp* encapsulates the profound epistemological and aesthetic shift that M.H. Abrams seeks to chart within the history of literary criticism. The "mirror" serves as a metaphor for the classical and neoclassical conception of literature as a faithful imitation or reflection of the external world. Rooted in the mimetic theory of art articulated by Plato and Aristotle, and refined through the Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers such as Sidney, Dryden, and Dr. Johnson, this view prioritizes objectivity, decorum, and correspondence with reality.

In contrast, the "lamp" signifies the Romantic revolution in literary theory, in which the artist is no longer seen as a passive imitator but as an active creator. The light comes not from the world but from within the artist, whose imagination becomes the source of illumination. This shift, vividly captured in Abrams' invocation of W.B. Yeats "the soul must become its own betrayer, its own deliverer, the one activity, the mirror and the lamp" (Abrams 1) represents a move from external referentiality to internal expressiveness. The metaphor of the lamp thus symbolizes a reorientation in the function of literary art: from replication to revelation, from depicting the world to disclosing the inner self.

This conceptual dichotomy is not merely poetic but methodologically foundational to Abrams' argument. It allows him to structure a genealogy of critical thought, demonstrating how Romanticism inaugurates a distinct expressive paradigm. Under this model, literature becomes a vehicle of personal vision, emotional authenticity, and imaginative transcendence an idea profoundly influential in shaping modern understandings of the literary function. By grounding his theoretical framework in these evocative metaphors, Abrams not only clarifies historical developments in aesthetic theory but also furnishes a lasting critical lens through which literature and its criticism can be interpreted.

II. Four Critical Orientations: Abrams' Analytical Grid

Abrams' structural genius lies in the "four coordinates" model of literary theory: world (mimetic), audience (pragmatic), artist (expressive), and work (objective). Each of these orientations foregrounds a different axis of literary value and interpretation:

Mimetic criticism, rooted in Plato and Aristotle, regards art as an imitation of the universe. Plato's skepticism contrasts with Aristotle's more constructive approach, which defines tragedy as an imitation of action and highlights its cathartic effect (Aristotle 3). Abrams shows how mimetic theory dominated until the eighteenth century.

Pragmatic theories shift focus to the audience. Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* emphasizes literature's didactic function "to teach and delight"—aligning poetry with moral instruction and persuasive rhetoric. Horace and Cicero are key classical figures supporting this view (McKeon 33).

Expressive theories place the artist at the center. As Romanticism matured, particularly in Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1798), poetry came to be seen as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth). Abrams traces this shift through German Romantic thought and figures like Schelling, Herder, and Goethe.

Objective theories regard the work as self-contained, largely emerging in twentieth-century formalism. Abrams traces this lineage through Kant's disinterested aesthetic and into New Criticism, which privileges the text over context.

III. Romanticism and the Rise of Expressive Theory

Abrams' most significant contribution lies in identifying the Romantic turn toward expressive criticism. The artist is no longer a craftsman following rules but a visionary whose inner state shapes the poetic product. Abrams contextualizes this development within larger intellectual currents philosophy, theology, natural science making his work interdisciplinary in scope.

The emergence of expressive theory is not abrupt but evolutionary. Abrams tracks its rise from Longinus' concept of the sublime to Wordsworth and Coleridge, noting that romantic aesthetics often resist systematic classification.

His nuanced discussion of the German influence—especially through Lessing, Kant, and Schelling demonstrates how Romanticism re-imagined poetry as a personal, almost sacred, expression of inner truth (Copleston 131).

IV. Theoretical Rigor and Historical Breadth

What sets *The Mirror and the Lamp* apart as a landmark in literary criticism is its remarkable synthesis of historical breadth and theoretical precision. Abrams undertakes the ambitious task of surveying more than two millennia of aesthetic thought from classical antiquity to the Romantic age yet manage to avoid the pitfalls of generalization by organizing his inquiry around a coherent and illuminating taxonomy: the four critical orientations mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective. This conceptual grid does not merely categorize critical theories; it functions as a flexible analytical tool that reveals the underlying assumptions shaping each era's understanding of literature.

Abrams' historiography methodology is both rigorous and interdisciplinary. He draws upon literary texts, philosophical discourses, and evolving critical traditions, weaving them into a seamless narrative that is both diachronic and diagnostic. By placing literary theory within its broader intellectual and cultural contexts, he allows the reader to see not only what critics said but why they said it how their aesthetic judgments were influenced by prevailing epistemologies, metaphysics, and models of subjectivity. In this way, *The Mirror and the Lamp* offers not just a retrospective map of Western criticism but a lens through which to interpret ongoing debates in contemporary literary theory, particularly those concerning authorial intent, aesthetic autonomy, and the politics of representation.

Moreover, Abrams' nuanced treatment of canonical figures reflects his sensitivity to transitional and hybrid modes of thought. Samuel Johnson, for instance often aligned with the neoclassical tradition is shown to possess an undercurrent of psychological insight and individual sensibility that prefigures Romantic expressivism. Likewise, Coleridge, who stands at the heart of Romantic theory, is portrayed as both a visionary innovator and a critic deeply indebted to older philosophical systems, particularly German idealism and Christian metaphysics. Abrams thus resists reductive periodization; instead, he highlights the complex continuities and ruptures that shape the evolution of critical thought.

In doing so, *The Mirror and the Lamp* not only historicizes the Romantic imagination but also models a scholarly approach that is both historically grounded and theoretically attuned an approach that continues to influence literary studies today.

V. Language, Style, and Structure

One of the most admirable features of *The Mirror and the Lamp* is M.H. Abrams' masterful control over language, style, and structure. His scholarly prose is characterized by clarity, precision, and an unassuming intellectual elegance that makes complex ideas accessible without sacrificing depth. Particularly in the early chapters, Abrams adopts a pedagogically inclusive tone, guiding readers through foundational concepts with measured explanations and well-chosen examples. As the work progresses and the philosophical stakes intensify particularly in discussions involving German Romanticism, Kantian aesthetics, and idealist metaphysics his language correspondingly becomes more intricate, demanding greater interpretive engagement from the reader. Latin phrases, German critical terms, and inter-textual references are introduced with care, reinforcing the depth of his analysis without overwhelming the coherence of his argument.

The structural design of the book reflects Abrams' commitment to clarity and scholarly rigor. Each chapter is methodically constructed, typically opening with an epigraph or a carefully selected quotation that sets the thematic tone. This is followed by a sustained and detailed exposition, in which Abrams methodically unpacks historical developments, theoretical frameworks, and textual examples. His transitions between sections are smooth, often punctuated by reflective commentary that synthesizes the preceding discussion while opening avenues for broader speculation. This recursive movement from textual specifics to conceptual generalization demonstrates a didactic sensibility that serves both novice readers and seasoned scholars.

Moreover, Abrams' structural discipline supports his broader project: to reframe literary criticism not as a static field, but as a living discourse shaped by historical change and philosophical dialogue. His lucid exposition and systematic architecture invite readers to inhabit this evolving conversation, rather than merely observe it. In this

sense, the style and structure of *The Mirror and the Lamp* are not only vehicles for content but embodiments of Abrams' critical ethos analytical, historically grounded, and intellectually generous.

VI. Critical Impact and Enduring Relevance

The Mirror and the Lamp fundamentally reshaped the study of Romanticism by situating it not as an isolated aesthetic rupture but as a pivotal moment within a much broader intellectual continuum. M.H. Abrams demonstrated that Romanticism, while revolutionary in its expressive emphasis, was also deeply embedded in classical, Enlightenment, and theological traditions. In doing so, he reframed Romantic theory as both a culmination of prior thought and a precursor to modern conceptions of creativity, subjectivity, and imagination. This repositioning enabled a more dynamic and historically sensitive understanding of Romantic literature and its place in the trajectory of Western thought.

The influence of Abrams' work extends well beyond Romantic studies. His four-orientation model mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective has been taken up, adapted, and debated across a range of disciplines. Structuralist critics found in his method a foundation for analyzing textual functions, while psychoanalytic and post-structuralist theorists engaged with his expressive paradigm to explore the psychological and linguistic dimensions of authorship and identity. More recently, cognitive literary theorists and scholars in media studies have found Abrams' frameworks applicable to the analysis of narrative structures, image-based media, and digital creativity. This adaptability speaks to the enduring utility of *The Mirror and the Lamp* as a methodological tool.

Perhaps most significantly, Abrams did not merely describe the contours of Romantic theory; he offered a critical method an interpretive schema through which literature could be evaluated, contextualized, and compared across epochs and genres. His historiography precision and conceptual clarity have empowered subsequent generations of scholars to move fluidly between historical criticism and theoretical inquiry. The book's capacity to foster dialogue between disciplines and critical schools ensures its continued relevance in the evolving field of literary studies.

More than a historical document, *The Mirror and the Lamp* remains a living instrument of criticism a testament to Abrams' rare ability to illuminate not only the past but the intellectual possibilities of the present.

Conclusion

M.H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* endures as a monumental achievement in the field of literary criticism a work that has not only clarified the theoretical foundations of Romanticism but also transformed the broader landscape of critical inquiry. Its elegant conceptual framework, combined with a meticulous engagement with over two millennia of aesthetic discourse, offers more than an interpretation of literary history; it provides a method for thinking critically about literature's evolving role in human culture. By shifting the focus from merely *what* poetry expresses to *why* and *how* it expresses; Abrams elevates literary criticism from an evaluative practice to a philosophical exploration of human creativity, consciousness, and meaning. His analysis affirms that literature is not only a reflection of external realities or artistic conventions, but a deeply expressive and transformative act rooted in the imaginative interior of the writer and resonant with the psychological and moral lives of its readers. In bridging historical erudition with theoretical insight, Abrams invites us to see the lamp of creativity not in opposition to the mirror of critical reflection, but as its source of illumination. His legacy continues to shape how scholars, critics, and readers engage with literature not simply as texts to be judged, but as acts of human expression to be understood. As such, *The Mirror and the Lamp* remains not just a foundational text in Romantic studies, but a guiding light in the ever-evolving field of literary theory.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF KARMA IN THE GARUDA PURANA: AN ANALYSIS OF COSMIC JUSTICE AND ETHICAL LIVING

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Abstract

This paper examines the philosophical foundations and practical applications of karma theory as presented in the Garuda Purana, one of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas of Hinduism. Through close textual analysis of original Sanskrit shlokas and their interpretations, this research explores the text's comprehensive framework of cosmic justice, ethical living, and the mechanics of rebirth. The study investigates how the Garuda Purana articulates a sophisticated system of karmic cause and effect that governs both material existence and spiritual progression. By examining the text's descriptions of the afterlife journey, judgment process, and rebirth mechanisms, this paper demonstrates how the Purana integrates metaphysical principles with practical ethics to guide human conduct toward liberation. The research also considers contemporary relevance and scholarly debates surrounding the text's interpretation, positioning the Garuda Purana as a significant contribution to Hindu philosophical thought that continues to influence religious practice and ethical understanding in modern contexts.

Keywords: Garud Puran, Karma, Karmic Philosophy, Afterlife Journey, Justice

Introduction

The Garuda Purana stands as one of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas of Hinduism, offering a profound exploration of karmic philosophy and its implications for human existence. This encyclopedic text, presented as a dialogue between Lord Vishnu and his divine vehicle Garuda, provides one of the most detailed expositions of the afterlife journey and the mechanics of karmic retribution in Hindu literature. The philosophy of karma (action) and its corollary, phala (fruit), represents a central organizing principle throughout the text, governing everything from cosmological processes to individual moral choices. This research paper examines the Garuda Purana's comprehensive treatment of karmic justice, analyzing its theoretical foundations, practical ethical implications, and soteriological objectives. Through close reading of key Sanskrit shlokas and comparative analysis, we explore how this text articulates a sophisticated system of cosmic justice that continues to influence Hindu thought and practice today.

The Garuda Purana's unique contribution to Hindu philosophy lies in its detailed mapping of the post-mortem experience and its explicit connections between earthly actions and otherworldly consequences. Unlike other Puranas that focus primarily on creation myths and deity worship, this text dedicates significant attention to pretakalpa (rites for the departed) and the journey of the soul through Yamaloka, the realm of the god of death. Its teachings have made it particularly significant in funeral rites and mourning practices within Hindu tradition, where its recitation is believed to assist both the living and the dead in navigating the transitions between lives.

Historical Context and Textual Background

Composition and Dating

The Garuda Purana was likely composed over an extended period during the first millennium CE, with scholars proposing various dates for its compilation. According to researchers like Pintchman and Gietz, the text was composed between the 4th and 11th centuries CE, with significant expansions and revisions occurring over several centuries. Lead beater suggests it originated around 900 CE, given its chapters on Yoga and Tantra techniques that developed later, while Dalal places it between 800-1000 CE with additions in the 2nd millennium. The text exists in multiple versions with varying content, though most contain approximately 15,000-19,000 verses, with only about 8,000 preserved in extant manuscripts.

Structure and Organization

The text is systematically divided into two primary sections:

Pūrvakhaṇḍa (First Section): Also known as Ācārakhaṇḍa, this section contains 229-243 chapters covering diverse topics including cosmology, mythology, ethics, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, gemology, and architecture. Comprising approximately 90% of the text, this section serves as an encyclopedic compilation of ancient Indian knowledge.

Uttarakhaṇḍa (Later Section): Also called Pretakhaṇḍa or Pretakalpa, this section contains 34-49 chapters focusing exclusively on funeral rites, afterlife experiences, soul journey, karmic retribution, and eschatological themes. This portion represents approximately 10% of the text but has gained particular cultural significance for its role in death rituals.

The text is presented as a dialogue between Lord Vishnu and Garuda, with Garuda receiving knowledge from Vishnu and subsequently narrating it to the sage Kashyapa, who then transmits it to the mythical forest of Naimisha, where it reaches the sage Vyasa. This narrative framework establishes the text's theological authority while providing a cohesive structure for its diverse contents.

Theoretical Foundations of Karma in the Garuda Purana

The Concept of Karma and Samsara

The Garuda Purana presents karma as an immutable natural law governing the universe through cause and effect. The text articulates a sophisticated understanding of how actions produce consequences that extend beyond a single lifetime, shaping the soul's journey through samsara (the cycle of rebirth). According to the text, every thought, word, and deed generates karmic impressions that determine the soul's future experiences:

"Yathā karma tathā phalam, yathā vāk tathā rasaḥ"

(As is the action, so is the result; as is the speech, so is its essence).

This fundamental principle emphasizes the precise correspondence between actions and their consequences. The text further explains that beings undergo rebirth according to their accumulated karma:

"Aṣṭācatuḥṣaṣṭiḥ koṭyo jīvarāśer anekaśaḥ \

Bhavanti yonayaḥ sarvāḥ karmabhiḥ karmabhir janāḥ"

(Eighty-four lakhs [8.4 million] of species exist repeatedly for the multitude of souls. All these wombs are obtained by people through their actions).

This famous verse highlights the vast scope of possible rebirths and the role of karma in determining one's form in the next life.

Ethical Framework and Dharma

The Garuda Purana establishes a comprehensive ethical framework that connects right action with spiritual progression. The text emphasizes the importance of dharma (righteous duty) as the foundation for generating positive karma:

"Dharmeṇa pāpam apakarsati dharmaḥ sarvatra vijayate"

(Through dharma, one removes sin; dharma triumphs everywhere).

The text provides detailed guidelines for ethical conduct across various stages of life and social roles, emphasizing truthfulness, compassion, non-violence, and self-discipline as essential virtues for spiritual progress. These moral prescriptions are not presented as arbitrary rules but as natural laws that align individual behavior with cosmic order, thereby generating positive karmic consequences.

Table: Types of Karma and Their Effects in the Garuda Purana

Type of Karma	Definition	Spiritual Consequences
Prārabdha	Karma that has begun to fructify and is experiencing in the present life	Determines current life circumstances

Sañcita	Accumulated karma from past lives not yet experienced	Forms the reservoir of potential future experiences
Āgāmi	New karma being created in the present life	Shapes future rebirths and experiences
Sāttvika	Actions performed with purity and selflessness	Leads to liberation and higher spiritual states
Rājasa	Actions performed with desire and attachment	Leads to continued cycle of rebirth
Tāmasa	Actions performed with ignorance and delusion	Leads to degradation and lower births

Mechanisms of Karmic Justice

The Afterlife Journey and Judgment

The Garuda Purana provides one of Hinduism's most detailed descriptions of the afterlife journey, outlining the soul's passage from death to rebirth with meticulous attention to karmic mechanisms. According to the text, the soul remains near its former residence and relatives for twelve days after death, during which time it enters the body of the priest conducting funeral rites and listens to recitations of the Garuda Purana to gain liberation.

The text then describes the soul's journey to Yamaloka, the realm of Yama, the god of death, who serves as the judge of the dead. Upon death, the subtle body (sūkṣma śarīra) carrying karmic impressions travels for nearly a year to reach Yama's abode, encountering various obstacles and manifestations based on individual karma. The narrative includes detailed accounts of the different hell realms (naraka) and their corresponding punishments for specific sins, creating a comprehensive moral framework that connects earthly actions with post-mortem consequences.

The text describes Yama's court where the soul's actions are evaluated:

"Yamadūtāḥ krūrarūpāḥ pāśahastāḥ sudāruṇāḥ \

Ādāya tam narakaṃ yānty ājñayā yamasyāmitaujasah"

(The messengers of Yama, of fierce form, with nooses in hand, very dreadful, take him to hell by the command of Yama of boundless energy).

Rebirth and Human Destiny

The Garuda Purana emphasizes that human birth represents a precious opportunity for spiritual advancement, as only in human form can beings consciously work toward liberation (mokṣa) from the cycle of rebirth. The text states that among the 8.4 million species of life, human birth is the most conducive for spiritual practice:

"Durlabhaṃ mānuṣaṃ janma tad apy adhruvam arthadam \

Tatra api mokṣasādhanaṃ varākānāṃ vicāraṇaṃ"

(Rare is human birth, and even that is uncertain in its value. Even in that, the means to liberation is the consideration of the wretched).

The conditions of one's birth—including family, health, wealth, and spiritual inclinations—are presented as direct consequences of past karma. Those who have performed virtuous deeds may be born into favorable circumstances, while those with negative karma face challenges and suffering. This karmic determinism is not presented as fatalistic but as providing the raw materials from which individuals can work toward liberation through present actions.

Table: Karmic Correspondences in Rebirth According to the Garuda Purana

Earthly Actions	Karmic Consequences	Realm or Rebirth
Virtuous deeds, charity, spiritual practice	Favorable rebirth	Heavenly realms or auspicious human birth

Selfish actions, materialism	Continued worldly existence	Middle-level human births
Harmful actions, violence	Suffering and degradation	Lower human births or animal realms
Extreme cruelty, spiritual neglect	Extended suffering	Hell realms followed by lower births

Key Shlokas on Karma Philosophy

Foundational Verses on Karmic Law

The Garuda Purana contains numerous verses that articulate the fundamental principles of karmic operation. These shlokas provide insight into the text's philosophical sophistication and its understanding of moral causality:

"Yathā karma guṇā yānti dehināṃ pretya ceha ca \

Sukṛtāni śubhe loke duṣkṛtāni asukhe tathā"

(According to the quality of karma, embodied beings experience in this world and after death. Good deeds lead to happiness in the next world, while bad deeds lead to suffering).

This verse emphasizes the precise correspondence between actions and their consequences across lifetimes. Another important shloka highlights the inescapability of karmic consequences:

"Na swargarno na pātālaṃ na martyeṣu kadācana \

Kartāraṃ karmaṇāṃ kaścid atyeti puruṣarṣabha"

(Neither heaven, nor the netherworld, nor the earth—no one anywhere ever escapes the consequences of their actions, O best among men).

Verses on Ethical Action and Liberation

The text places special emphasis on the relationship between action, intention, and spiritual liberation:

"Karmabandhanaṃ pravadanti tajjñāḥ saṃsārahetum paramaṃ hi jantoh \

Tatsādhanāni pravadanti tajjñāḥ karmāṇi pāpāni śubhāni caiva"

(The knowers declare that karmic bondage is the supreme cause of transmigration for the living being. The knowers declare that its means are actions, both sinful and auspicious).

This verse acknowledges the binding nature of karma while suggesting that both positive and negative actions can perpetuate the cycle of rebirth. The solution offered is the performance of action without attachment to results:

"Karmāṇi nirdvandvatayā kṛtāni nibandhanāni na karonti santaḥ \

Tatsādhanāni pravadanti tajjñāḥ jñānāni muktau phalam aśnute"

(Actions performed without duality do not create bondage for the wise. The knowers declare that knowledge is the means to liberation; one enjoys the fruit of liberation).

Comparative Analysis with Other Hindu Texts

Karma Philosophy in the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads

The Garuda Purana's treatment of karma shares significant similarities with but also exhibits distinct differences from other Hindu scriptures. Like the Bhagavad Gita, the Garuda Purana acknowledges the binding nature of action while advocating for performance of duty without attachment to results. However, while the Gita emphasizes devotion (bhakti) as a path to transcend karmic consequences, the Garuda Purana provides more detailed descriptions of the afterlife mechanics and karmic retribution.

Compared to the Upanishads, which focus primarily on jñāna (knowledge) as the means to liberation, the Garuda Purana offers a more structured system of ethical action and consequences. The Upanishadic declaration "yathā karma tathā vitā" (as one acts, so one becomes) finds elaborate expansion in the Garuda Purana's detailed mapping of actions to their specific consequences across lifetimes.

Contrast with Buddhist and Jain Concepts

The Garuda Purana's karma philosophy also shows interesting points of comparison with Buddhist and Jain concepts. While all three traditions accept the basic framework of karma and rebirth, the Garuda Purana differs in its theistic orientation, attributing the administration of karmic justice to Yama and his servants. Unlike Jainism, which emphasizes extreme non-violence (ahimsa) as central to karmic purification, the Garuda Purana presents a more graduated system of ethical obligations based on one's social role and stage of life.

Buddhism's emphasis on intention (cetanā) as the essence of karma is echoed in the Garuda Purana's attention to mental actions and attitudes, though the Purana places greater emphasis on ritual actions and their precise outcomes.

Contemporary Relevance and Applications

Modern Interpretations and Ethical Guidance

The Garuda Purana's karma philosophy continues to influence contemporary Hindu thought and practice. Its detailed descriptions of the afterlife journey inform funeral rites and mourning practices, where its recitation is believed to assist the soul in its post-mortem transition . The text's emphasis on ethical action provides guidance for Hindus navigating modern moral dilemmas while maintaining traditional values.

The text's concept of karma has also found resonance in contemporary psychological and wellness contexts, where the principle of cause and effect is applied to mental health and personal development. The idea that present circumstances result from past actions encourages personal responsibility and conscious living, while the possibility of shaping future outcomes through present actions offers hope and agency.

Criticisms and Scholarly Debates

Modern scholarship has engaged in critical analysis of the Garuda Purana's karma philosophy from multiple perspectives. Some scholars question the literal interpretation of hell realms and precise karmic correspondences, suggesting these may be allegorical representations of psychological states. Others have examined the text's social implications, particularly regarding its descriptions of karmic determinism and social status.

Feminist scholars have noted that the text sometimes reflects patriarchal assumptions about gender and karma, though others argue that its fundamental principles of ethical cause and effect are applicable regardless of gender. These diverse interpretations demonstrate the text's complexity and its capacity to sustain multiple hermeneutical approaches.

Conclusion

The Garuda Purana presents a comprehensive system of karmic philosophy that integrates metaphysics, ethics, and soteriology into a coherent worldview. Its detailed descriptions of the afterlife journey and karmic mechanisms provide Hindus with a map of cosmic justice that reinforces ethical living and spiritual practice. Through its sophisticated treatment of action and consequence, the text offers both warning and hope: warning about the inescapability of karmic justice, and hope through the possibility of spiritual liberation through righteous action and knowledge.

The text's enduring relevance testifies to its profound insights into the human condition and its ability to address fundamental questions about justice, suffering, and ultimate meaning. As both a sacred text within Hindu tradition and a philosophical document of enduring value, the Garuda Purana continues to offer guidance for navigating the complexities of human life while aspiring to spiritual liberation. Its karma philosophy represents a significant contribution to Hindu thought and remains a vital resource for understanding the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human action.

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REALISM AND EMERGING TRENDS IN INDIAN CINEMA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF PAATAL LOK

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Abstract

This paper examines how realism and evolving narrative practices are reshaping Indian screen culture, using the Amazon Prime Video series *Paatal Lok* (2020) as a central case study. Positioned within India's post-liberalization social and media transformations, the study argues that *Paatal Lok* marks a major turn toward sociological realism, hybridized genres, and politically informed storytelling made possible by over-the-top (OTT) platforms. Through textual study, media discourse analysis, and comparative contextualization, it identifies how formal elements—such as mise-en-scène, dialect use, non-linear narrative, sound design, and character construction—subvert conventional Bollywood formulas. The paper also highlights the industrial dynamics, including platform autonomy, censorship limits, and new casting practices. Ultimately, the series demonstrates how realism in the digital era combines affective storytelling with structural critique and genre experimentation.

Keywords: realism; OTT; neo-noir; Indian cinema; *Paatal Lok*; cultural politics; hybrid genres

Introduction

Over the last decade, Indian cinema and streaming media have undergone critical shifts driven by globalization, multiplex culture, and the rapid growth of OTT platforms (Jha). Traditional Hindi cinema, long known for melodrama, song sequences, spectacle, and star-dominant storytelling, is increasingly challenged by digital formats that promote realism, layered narratives, and sociopolitical critique (Dwyer 114–16). *Paatal Lok*, produced by Anushka Sharma and created by Sudip Sharma, is regularly cited as a landmark in this transition. Blending crime thriller elements with commentary on caste, class, religion, and media sensationalism, the series responds to changing audience appetites and industrial conditions.

This paper explores how *Paatal Lok* reflects and redefines realism in the digital era. It asks: In what ways does the series adopt realist strategies, and what does this indicate about emerging trends in Indian audiovisual storytelling? Drawing on realism theory, genre studies, and platform analysis, the paper uses textual, discourse-based, and comparative approaches to situate the series within evolving cultural and industrial contexts.

Literature Review

Indian cinema scholarship has traditionally centered on representation, censorship, gender politics, star culture, and the parallel cinema movement (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen; Dwyer). Realism has been theorized largely in two strands: social realism centering on material conditions (Ghosh 48–50) and aesthetic realism, emphasizing stylistic authenticity via long takes, ambient sound, and natural settings (Bazin 36–38).

The parallel cinema tradition of the 1950s–80s, often backed by state institutions, served as the primary realist counterpoint to commercial Hindi cinema (Ghosh). While economic liberalization in the 1990s reinforced market-oriented filmmaking, OTT platforms have more recently revived realist themes, aided by flexible financing, fewer censorship restrictions, and serialized formats (Jha; Thompson and Bordwell).

Digital narrative studies link streaming platforms to new story structures—episodic arcs, binge viewing cultures, nonlinear timelines, and minimal song-based interruption (Bal 18–21). Critical reviews of *Paatal Lok* consistently note its authenticity, layered plotting, and politically sensitive themes (Sharma, interviews). However, academic writing on the show remains minimal. This research builds on journalistic and cultural commentary while embedding analysis within larger theoretical frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

1. Realism in Cinema

Influenced by André Bazin, the study views realism not as replication of reality but as an aesthetic and ethical mode that discloses social power structures through mise-en-scène, location shooting, and narrative plausibility (Bazin 35–39).

2. Neo-Noir and Genre Theory

Neo-noir is marked by moral ambiguity, fatalism, and decaying urban landscapes (Thompson and Bordwell 412–13). *Paatal Lok* fuses noir codes with crime drama and social critique, reflecting genre hybridization in digital formats.

3. Platform Studies and Industry Analysis

OTT platforms such as Amazon Prime influence content by commissioning layered narratives, reducing censorship, and enabling niche targeting through data analytics (Jha). The autonomy provided to creators shapes form, aesthetics, and risk-taking.

Methodology

A qualitative, mixed-methods approach informs the analysis:

- Textual Analysis of all eight episodes, emphasizing plot, dialogue, cinematography, casting, editing, and sound.
- Discourse Analysis of reviews, interviews, and online audience receptions.
- Comparative Contextualization with *Sacred Games*, *Delhi Crime*, and *Mirzapur* to identify contrasts and shared design features.
- This triangulation connects formal techniques with sociopolitical and industrial conditions.

Analysis

1. Realism as Aesthetic and Social Strategy

The tripartite metaphor of Swarg (elite), Dharti (middle), and Paatal (underclass) maps India's stratified realities. Migrant struggles, caste-based exclusion, and institutional apathy appear in documentary-style detail (Ghosh 56). Vernacular speech—Haryanvi, Rajasthani, Nepali, Punjabi—authenticates regional identities. Natural lighting, handheld camera movements, and ambient street noise reinforce cinematic realism (Bazin 37).

The series critiques systemic failures rather than isolated wrongdoing, depicting media sensationalism, police corruption, and opportunistic politics as entrenched structures.

2. Genre Hybridization

Although framed as a crime investigation, *Paatal Lok* integrates neo-noir visual codes, nonlinear flashbacks, and unresolved endings. Characters resist simplistic categorization, and the show avoids neat justice-based closure, aligning with noir fatalism (Thompson and Bordwell 414). Social backstories prevent the suspects from being caricatures and instead contextualize actions within structural violence.

3. Characters as Individual and Social Figures

Hathiram Chaudhary embodies institutional compromise and personal disillusionment. The suspects' histories—linked to caste trauma, migration, and survival—illustrate systemic constraints. While female characters are less foregrounded, figures like Dolly and Sara demonstrate agency, countering archetypes Mulvey critiques (Mulvey 8–9).

4. Media Spectacle and Public Imagination

Television debates and viral news are depicted as catalysts of social panic. The show stages media as a theatrical zone where moral outrage is commodified, echoing contemporary studies of spectacle and populism.

5. Political Subtext and Censorship Navigation

Themes of nationalism, religious extremism, and caste hostility are conveyed through layered narrative and allegory. OTT platforms, while less censored, demand strategic subtlety (Jha). The show balances critique with metaphorical storytelling, using the concept of "Paatal" as both literal and symbolic space.

Case Study: Key Sequences

1. Episode 1: Gritty Realism and Spatial Disorientation

The series begins with an unpolished, street-level tone that immediately sets the mood of urban decay and moral ambiguity. The visuals emphasize uneven pavements, congested spaces, dim lighting, and underpasses tagged with graffiti—elements that create authenticity and ground the viewer in a lived reality rather than a stylized fictional world. The camera often follows characters through winding alleys, abandoned lots, and liminal public spaces, producing a sense of spatial confusion. This disorientation is deliberate: it mirrors the fractured social environment, the alienation of the city's residents, and the lack of clear moral or institutional direction. Instead of establishing a stable setting, the episode thrusts viewers into chaos, signaling that the truth in this world is neither linear nor easily located.

2. Tope's Flashback: Violence as Social Consequence

Tope's backstory works as a humanizing counterpoint to his involvement in violence. Rather than framing him as a mere perpetrator, the flashback contextualizes his actions as the product of generational poverty, caste-based marginalization, broken families, and systemic neglect. The flashback doesn't justify the violence but reframes it as an outcome, not a choice made in isolation. The narrative points to how structural inequities push individuals toward crime, often in the absence of opportunity or dignity. This sequence challenges sensational portrayals of criminals and underscores the argument that violence is deeply rooted in social breakdown rather than innate criminality.

3. Media Trials: Spectacle vs. Reality

The media sequences expose the glaring contradiction between televised discourse and lived violence. On-screen anchors dramatize events with sensational headlines, moral posturing, and polarized commentary. This performance of truth stands in stark contrast to the unrest unfolding simultaneously in the streets—communal anxieties, police brutality, and public outrage remain unmediated and raw. The editing frequently cuts between studio debates and real-world turmoil, highlighting how news coverage transforms suffering into spectacle. The scenes critique the erosion of journalistic integrity and show how misinformation, selective framing, and political pressure shape public perception. The televised trial becomes not a search for justice but a performance of national identity, fear, and control.

4. Final Episodes: Unresolved Noir and Systemic Distrust

The final episodes resist narrative closure. Key questions remain unanswered, justice feels deferred, and corrupt systems persist unchanged. Rather than delivering catharsis, the conclusion reinforces the noir sensibility of ambiguity and pessimism. Characters who seek truth or justice confront bureaucratic obstacles, institutional apathy, and personal disillusionment. Even revelations fail to restore order or trust. This refusal to resolve the plot neatly reflects a deeper thematic concern: the system itself is too fractured, biased, and self-serving to deliver closure. The narrative leaves viewers in a state of discomfort, pointing to continuity rather than resolution—cycles of exploitation, broken governance, and moral uncertainty remain intact.

Comparative Context

Compared with *Sacred Games*, which emphasizes mythic scale and conspiracy, *Paatal Lok* is grounded in sociological realism. *Delhi Crime* uses procedural pacing rooted in true events, while *Mirzapur* employs pulp violence. *Paatal Lok* merges investigative realism with psychological and political commentary.

Discussion and Broader Implications

1. Realism now operates within mainstream digital entertainment rather than niche art-house spaces.
2. Marginalized identities appear with depth, though commodification of trauma remains a concern.
3. Long-form episodic formats encourage character development and thematic layering (Bal 19).
4. Political critique is rendered subtly rather than didactically, reflecting changing censorship dynamics.
5. Global OTT reach fosters transnational viewership and cultural circulation (Dwyer 120).

Conclusion

Paatal Lok signifies a key shift in Indian visual storytelling. By merging neo-noir elements with social realism, the show exemplifies how OTT platforms enable new cinematic languages and narrative freedoms. It critiques institutional failures while portraying violence and trauma in a morally ambivalent register. This emergent form redefines realism in Indian cinema by combining stylistic restraint, sociopolitical depth, and hybrid storytelling. Though the packaging of violence for entertainment remains paradoxical, the series sets a precedent for layered, politically attentive narratives in the digital era.

Limitations and Future Scope

The study relies on textual and secondary discourse analysis. Further research could incorporate audience ethnography, production interviews, platform algorithm studies, or cross-cultural reception. Additional work may also explore comparative responses to regional OTT productions.

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TRAVELOGUES ACROSS AGES: TRANSFORMATION OF CONTENT

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Abstract:

Travelling has always been regarded as one of the greatest sources of knowledge. It broadens human understanding through exploration, cultural exchanges, and personal experiences. Since ancient times, people have documented their journeys—whether on foot, by waterways, or through different modes of transport—not only to share their adventures but also to describe their struggles, cultural differences, and religious practices. These early travel accounts often combined reality with wonder and gradually became valuable sources of knowledge and historical evidence.

As time passed, the purpose of travel began to change. Traders, missionaries, explorers, and learners of culture travelled for specific goals, and their writings reflected these aims. By the late twentieth centuries, travelogues also evolved into post-colonial narratives, offering interpretations shaped by issues of power, identity, and cultural encounters between the colonizers and the colonized. In the modern age, travel writing became more personal, focusing not only on places but also on the feelings, landscapes, and cross-cultural experiences of the traveller.

Today, in the digital era, travelogues live on blogs, vlogs, social media posts, and documentaries. They combine words, pictures, and videos to make the experience richer and more colourful. What once was a written account of journeys has now become a multimedia expression, easily shared with a global audience. This paper traces the evolution of the travelogue—from its early role in sharing knowledge and trade experiences to its present form, where it spreads information about places, food, and travel itineraries online. It highlights how travelogues continue to serve as both a literary form and a cultural mirror of human journeys.

Keywords: Cultural Exchange, Digital Storytelling, Exploration, Post-colonial Narratives, Travelogue

Introduction:

Humans have always felt the urge to venture beyond familiar surroundings. These journeys were not only physical but also intellectual and cultural, prompting travellers to observe, reflect, and record their experiences. Early travel accounts often combined practical details with wonder, offering readers both guidance and a glimpse into worlds they could only imagine. Over time, such writings became valuable repositories of knowledge, culture, and history.

Travel writing, one of the earliest forms of writing over the ages, encompasses a range of writers from pilgrims to emissaries and from businessmen to commoners. The urge to know the world, through voyages, geographical explorations, quests for culture, tradition, and governance, have all been discussed and written in the travel writing. The earliest form of travel writing aimed at noting down the path and dangers faced during the journey in the form of a diary. As William H. Sherman notes:

Documentation had always played an important role in travel, particularly in oversea ventures. English merchants and mariners had long been instructed to keep careful records of their movements, to direct the travellers who would follow in their footsteps and fill in the gaps of geographical knowledge (Sherman 17)

Travel writers have noted their difficulties and struggles they had to face during the journey. Living the comfort of home and journeying to the far-off countries is adventures. Bill Bryson in his book *Neither here nor There* notes:

"What an odd thing tourism is. You fly off to a strange land, eagerly abandoning all the comforts of home, and then expend vast qualities of time and money in a largely futile attempt to recapture the comforts that you wouldn't have lost if you hadn't left home in the first place " (Oxford Dictionary of quotations and proverbs 281)

DK Illustrated Family Encyclopaedia explains the reasons for 'Travel' as:

"People have been on the move since prehistoric times: initially to find food or territory, and then for trade, exploration, and pleasure. Some have travelled a great distance to escape danger or oppression" (845)

To know the unknown and travel to the land of socially, culturally, and religiously dissimilar people especially primitive land was the attraction for travel writers. To record their unique experiences of under-developed or developing countries, explorers used to note them down in diaries that ultimately developed into the travelogues. As Buzzard states*: "Dr. Samuel Johnson was eager to visit the Scottish Highlands and Islands to see the 'simplicity and wilderness' of 'system of life almost totally different' from that of civilized south."* (Buzzard 43)

Initial Travelogues: Diaries and Journals

In their earliest form, travelogues were often kept as diaries or journals, serving as personal records of journeys rather than works meant for a wide audience. Travellers carefully noted their routes, distances, modes of travel, and the challenges or dangers they faced along the way. The content of these journals was shaped by the purpose of the journey—whether for pilgrimage, trade, exploration, or diplomacy—making them valuable historical and cultural documents. Over time, these personal records became the foundation of more structured travel writing, offering not only guidance for future travellers but also a window into the lives, traditions, and societies of distant lands.

William H. Sherman in his article ' Stirrings and searchings' well argued that the style and content both changed with the growth of genre Travelogue and the writers' approach:

The travellers' experiences could then be described in letters, essays, sketches, plays, and poems. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, the most characteristic form was the 'report' or 'relation', which combined a chronological narrative of movements and events with geographic and ethnographic observations. The narrative voice in these texts could be either strongly first person or strongly third person, depending on whether the author wanted to emphasize the travellers or what they encountered. (Sherman 30)

Since ancient times, travelers from various regions have journeyed across the world for purposes such as trade, culture, religion, and exploration. In the 5th century BCE, Herodotus, often called the 'Father of History,' combined historical storytelling with travel observations, describing different civilizations and their ways of life. Around the 3rd century BCE, foreign travelers began visiting India, drawn by its spiritual heritage and material prosperity. Ambassadors, merchants, and pilgrims sought knowledge of the Vedas, insights into peaceful living, and India's wealth in agriculture and trade.

Megasthenes, one of the earliest visitors to India, served as ambassador to Chandragupta Maurya at Pataliputra and recorded his impressions in Indica, describing fertile plains, fruit-bearing mountains, and a prosperous society marked by discipline and wealth. In the 4th century CE, pilgrims like Egeria wrote detailed accounts of their religious journeys, documenting sacred sites and early religious practices. Later travelers, such as Pausanias in the 2nd century CE, created one of the earliest travel guides, carefully describing monuments, rituals, and geography. Throughout history, explorers from Europe, Asia, and other parts of the world visited distant lands and left written records, blending curiosity, observation, and personal reflection.

Chinese pilgrims such as Faxian and Hsuan Tsang further enriched the travel literature on India. Faxian, who visited during the Gupta period, highlighted India's economic prosperity, moral society, and facilities such as free medical care, though he also noted the marginalization of untouchables. Hsuan Tsang, travelling in the 7th century during Harsha's reign, recorded his observations in *The Records of the Western Regions*. His work provided detailed information on geography, politics, culture, religion, and economy, while also affirming India's image as a sacred land.

Firstly, early travelogues focused on practical and geographical observations. Travellers carefully recorded routes, distances, modes of travel, and the challenges they faced, along with descriptions of landscapes, climate, plants, and animals, providing useful guidance for future travellers. Secondly, they paid close attention to cultural and social aspects, documenting the customs, beliefs, daily life, rituals, and social practices of the people they encountered, thus offering readers a window into societies very different from their own. Thirdly, many travelogues included the personal reflections of the writers, blending their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to new experiences with factual recording. This combination of practical details, cultural insight, and personal observation made early travelogues valuable historical and educational documents, preserving knowledge about distant lands and inspiring future explorers.

Medieval Era Travelogues: Geographical and cultural Wonders

During the medieval era, travel served as an important platform for recording and sharing experiences across continents. Pilgrimages, diplomatic missions, and trade expeditions encouraged travelers to explore distant lands and document their observations. European, Japanese, Chinese, and Mughal travelers journeyed with varied purposes—religious devotion, administrative insight, or trade—and their writings often combined personal curiosity with a sense of responsibility to convey knowledge to the wider world. Explorers, merchants, and emissaries of the medieval period carried the burden of discovering new territories while recording the cultures, customs, and practices of the people they encountered.

One of the most notable medieval travelers was Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan scholar born in 1304, whose curiosity and keen observation gave rise to his renowned travelogue, *The Rihla*. Ibn Battuta traveled extensively across Africa, the Middle East, India, and parts of Southeast Asia, providing detailed accounts of religious practices, social customs, governance, and daily life. His writings are remarkable for their human approach, emphasizing empathy and understanding of the diverse peoples he met, making his travel narrative both a historical record and a cultural commentary.

Similarly, Marco Polo, the Venetian merchant and explorer born in 1254, undertook a long journey from Venice to China, spending seventeen years in Kublai Khan's empire. In his *Travels of Marco Polo*, he described the magnificence of Asian cities, the complexities of trade networks, religious beliefs, and social customs. He observed daily life in detail—from bathing practices and dietary habits to religious rituals and ethical codes—providing a vivid portrayal of societies across Persia, India, and China. Polo's accounts, while occasionally embellished with wonder, combined careful observation with cultural insight, offering Europeans a rare glimpse into the wealth, diversity, and sophistication of Asia.

Medieval travel literature, exemplified by the works of Polo, Mandeville, and the Letter of Prester John, often blended observation with elements of imagination, including depictions of monsters, exotic peoples, and fantastic landscapes. Such narratives served to entertain, define the boundaries between the familiar and the unknown, and reflect the worldview of the time. Over the course of the medieval period, the genre evolved from blending marvel and myth to increasingly systematic and factual records, as seen in later travelers like Niccolò de' Conti and ("Beyond the Known World")

Medieval travel writers, though often mixing fact with fantasy, were deeply focused on exploring distant lands, describing cultures, and highlighting religious or exotic elements that fascinated European readers. Their interest lay in geography, trade, and spiritual journeys, but also in shaping an image of the "other" through tales of wonder. Over time, their works shifted from marvel-filled narratives to more factual and practical accounts, paving the way for later

Renaissance and modern Travelogues: Literary crafts

During the Renaissance and post-medieval period, travel writing underwent significant transformation as explorers, diplomats, and scholars documented their journeys with greater attention to observation, detail, and purpose. Thomas Bavin's narrative accounts of Newfoundland, published in 1583, exemplify this development. Bavin accompanied Sir Humphrey Gilbert, an English soldier and navigator, who sought, with Queen Elizabeth's consent in June 1578, a northwest passage to Asia and the discovery of new territories not under British control. Bavin wrote accounts of the strangeness he encountered and carefully noted the commodities offered by the land. He was instructed by Gilbert to

"draw figures and shapes of men and women in their apparels as also their manner… in every place, you shall find them differing from us," which led them to study the social structure, religious customs, and relations of the native peoples, even recording aspects of their language in an English dictionary (Sherman 18).

Thomas Coryate (1577–1617), an English poet and traveler, represents another important figure of the Renaissance era in travel writing. He is considered by many to have been among the earliest Britons to undertake a Grand Tour of Europe. After the death of his father, Coryate used his inheritance to begin his travels, sailing from Dover on 14 May 1608. Using a variety of transportation—cart, boat, horseback—he journeyed through Paris, Lyons, Turin, Milan, Padua, and Venice. Coryate later extended his travels to Constantinople, Greece, Asia Minor, Alexandria,

the Nile, Lebanon, Mesopotamia, Persia, Candahar, Lahore, and finally Agra, arriving there in October 1616. During the four years he spent in the East, Coryate learned Persian, Turkish, and Hindustani. His correspondence, compiled in *Letters from Asmere, the Court of the Great Mogul, to several Persons of Quality in England* (1616), features a woodcut showing him riding an elephant, and other letters were later included in *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625)

The concept of the Grand Tour, initiated in 17th-century Europe for the upper classes, further transformed travel writing. "The tour was a social ritual intended to prepare these young men to assume the leadership positions preordained for them at home" (Buzard 38). Unlike earlier journeys that involved risk, struggle, and survival, these tours offered comfort and luxury, changing the nature of travel. Modern travel writers such as Paul Theroux have commented on this, warning that

"All these obvious things you find out by traveling slowly, in the laborious way on the ground, staying in fairly bad places but talking to people. The red carpet is not the way to see a country, and I don't want to meet officials, I want to meet people who are living real lives."(16)

By the 18th and 19th centuries, European travel writing increasingly reflected the expansion of imperial power. Britain's naval victories and colonial dominance allowed travelers to access distant lands, observe cultures, and document trade, governance, and society. In India, for instance, travel writers recorded the customs, topography, and vegetation of newly acquired territories, particularly after the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799, which made the subcontinent more approachable for Europeans. Notable figures such as Mark Twain, born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835, continued this tradition in a literary and reflective mode. His *Following the Equator* recounts a thirteen-month tour through Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, India, and South Africa, combining vivid descriptions of natural beauty, social observations, local legends, and reflections on morality and life. Twain's work exemplifies a matured form of travel writing, blending personal experience with literary craft and critical observation, demonstrating the evolution of the genre from medieval curiosity to Renaissance and post-medieval literary exploration.

20th and 21st Century Travel Writing: Personal and Cultural Journeys

In the 20th and 21st centuries, travel writing changed radically. It moved beyond simply noting geography, trade routes, or politics, and became more personal, reflective, and literary. Modern travel writers focus on truly experiencing the places they visit, connecting with the people, cultures, and environments along the way. Unlike medieval or Renaissance travelers, whose journeys were often driven by curiosity, diplomacy, or empire-building, contemporary writers explore the emotional, social, and cultural side of travel, turning their journeys into both a discovery of the world and a journey of self-reflection.

Writers like Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin, Dervla Murphy, Colin Thubron, Amitav Ghosh, V. S. Naipaul, and Salman Rushdie show how this shift took place. They paid close attention to the local societies, traditions, and everyday lives of the people they met, often noticing contrasts between their own perspective and the realities around them. Theroux, for example, stressed slow travel and connecting with ordinary people rather than officials. Chatwin and Murphy focused on cultural diversity and human resilience, while Thubron combined history and storytelling to capture the essence of a place. Writers like Ghosh, Naipaul, and Rushdie added a literary touch, reflecting on history, migration, identity, and globalization, making their travel accounts a mix of narrative, social insight, and cultural critique.

Modern travel writing is often about ethical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and understanding humanity. These writers bring places to life through detailed descriptions of landscapes, daily routines, rituals, and traditions, blending personal stories, reflections, and observations. They invite readers to experience the unfamiliar with empathy and curiosity. In the 21st century, digital media, photography, blogs, and social platforms have given travel writers new ways to reach audiences and experiment with storytelling.

In short, modern travelogues focus on connecting with people and places, exploring cultural and social realities, and reflecting on the human experience. Instead of just listing routes or resources, these travel accounts tell stories that help readers understand the world and themselves, making travel writing both a window and a mirror of human life.

Digital Travel Writing: Blogs, Vlogs, and Online Narratives

In the 21st century, travel writing has undergone a significant transformation due to the advent of the internet and digital media. Blogs, vlogs, and social media platforms now enable travelers to share their journeys instantly with a global audience. Unlike traditional travelogues, these digital formats integrate text, photographs, and videos, providing readers and viewers with a more immersive experience of different places. Travel bloggers and vloggers document not only the sights but also their experiences, emotions, and personal reflections, often including practical information such as travel expenses, accommodation, and local cuisine. The primary purpose of these digital travelogues is not merely to inform but also to foster cultural understanding, inspire curiosity, and allow others to experience the world through the perspective of the traveler. Additionally, such platforms often become valuable sources of diverse and interesting information for future travelers. (Spurrell)

Digital travel writing is highly interactive. Blogs can provide detailed cultural insights, historical context, or personal stories, while vlogs show the sights, sounds, and movement of a place in real time. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and personal blogs allow travellers to experiment with style, storytelling, and multimedia. Viewers can comment, ask questions, and share experiences, making the travelogue a shared journey. The purpose behind this kind of writing is often to educate, entertain, and foster understanding across cultures. Many digital travel writers also focus on ethical tourism, local interactions, and environmental awareness, reflecting modern values and encouraging responsible travel.

One of the most important aspects of digital travel writing is accessibility. Anyone with a smartphone and internet connection can become a storyteller, bringing diverse perspectives from around the world. These accounts often celebrate the everyday life of local communities, human resilience, and cultural traditions, making travel more relatable and less about exoticism or conquest. In essence, blogs, vlogs, and online narratives continue the tradition of travel writing—exploring new places, people, and cultures—but they do so in a way that is immediate, personal, and deeply human. The purpose of these modern travelogues is to entertain, inform, inspire empathy, and create a sense of connection between travelers and audiences worldwide.

Conclusion:

Travel writing has changed a lot over the centuries, reflecting how society, technology, and curiosity have evolved. From the early diaries and journals of explorers, pilgrims, and ambassadors to the detailed accounts of medieval and Renaissance travelers, travelogues have served as guides and windows into new worlds. In modern times, travel writing became more personal and reflective, focusing on people, culture, and self-discovery. Today, digital media has made travel writing interactive and multimedia-based, allowing a global audience to experience journeys instantly. Despite these changes, the main purpose remains the same: to explore, observe, and share the world while giving readers insight into both the places visited and the traveler's own thoughts. Travelogues continue to connect cultures, share knowledge, and bring people closer, helping readers understand the world and each other better.

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HUMANISTIC CONCERNS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE : A STUDY OF SELECT SHORT STORIES OF SUDHA MURTY

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Abstract:

This study conducts a thorough analysis of a carefully chosen group of Sudha Murty's short stories — *'Amma, What Is Your Duty?', 'Honesty Comes from the Heart', 'The Red Rice Granary', 'A Life Unwritten', 'A Lesson in Life from a Beggar', and 'Bombay to Bangalore'*— utilizing F. R . Leavis's Humanistic Approach as its theoretical framework. Leavisian criticism advocates for literature that has a profound moral essence , an elevated sensitivity, and the ability to conduct a "criticism of life" by assessing the quality of human experience within its particular socio-cultural context. This research suggests that Sudha Murty's seemingly straightforward stories are deep investigations of this principle. It will examine how her work, grounded in the everyday realities of contemporary India, acts as an essential channel for humanistic principles like empathy, moral integrity, compassionate responsibility, and enduring hope. The article will illustrate how Murty's characters—from the wise but destitute beggar to the grandmother aspiring for literacy—exemplify a moral sincerity that aligns with Leavis's principles. Through examining themes of social disparity, intergenerational connections, and individual redemption, the study contends that Murty's work goes beyond mere entertainment to participate in an essential ethical dialogue. This paper argues that her narratives are an essential element of the modern "great tradition" in Indian English literature, which fundamentally aims to validate human dignity and promote a more compassionate and ethically aware society.

Keywords: Didactic,Humanism,Morality,Philanthropy,ShortStories,SudhaMurty, Sympathy

Introduction :

Contemporary Indian English literature signifies a dynamic and diverse field within the worldwide literary scene, gaining prominence in the post-colonial and post - liberalization periods. It operates as a vibrant cultural artifact, intricately interlacing the elaborate fabric of contemporary Indian society—a society balancing profound traditions and the relentless pressures of globalization, urbanization, and technological advancement. This collection of work explores the worries, hopes, and identity struggles of a nation in transition, articulating both personal and shared experiences. From the extensive stories of authors such as Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, and Amitav Ghosh to the heartfelt poems of modern poets, this body of literature continually interacts with urgent social concerns, establishing it as an important space for cultural and moral examination. In this vibrant and developing tradition, the short story, characterized by its brevity and directness, has discovered a distinct impact, providing clear, enlightening glimpses into Indian life.

A constant and prevailing theme throughout this literary tradition is its deep involvement with humanistic issues. Transcending simple aesthetic or experimental endeavors, a substantial segment of modern Indian English literature is profoundly engaged in probing the essence of human experience: the ethical conflicts, the fights for dignity, the ties of compassion, and the search for significance in a frequently perplexing world. This emphasis connects the literature to a deep-rooted humanistic tradition that centers on human welfare, values, and agency. The narratives often act as a moral guide, challenging social inequalities, honoring strength, and highlighting the essential humanity that unites people across divides of class, caste, faith, and geography. It is a body of work that not only mirrors society but also aims to analyze and enhance it through the strength of empathetic understanding and ethical contemplation.

To analyze this humanistic aspect, this research paper will utilize the Humanistic Approach of the renowned British critic F.R. Leavis. According to Leavis, the central role of literature was to serve as a "criticism of life," requiring moral seriousness, an elevated sensibility, and a thorough assessment of the quality of human experience represented in a piece. He promoted literature that nurtured a "great tradition" of moral consciousness

and intricate human insight. A Leavisian perspective, highlighting literature's moral duty and its ability to foster empathy, offers a strong theoretical basis for examining narratives primarily focused on human values. This method enables us to go beyond perceiving stories as mere narratives and instead regard them as profound interactions with the ethical structure of society.

Sudha Murty, the author central to this study, embodies a quintessential figure in this regard. Sudha Murty is well known Indian author, philanthropist and educator. Murty is best known for her philanthropist work through her non profit charitable organization "Infosys Foundation" and her contribution to literature in Kannada and English Language. "*Be the reason someone smiles. Be the reason someone feels loved and believes in the goodness in people."* (Bennett) She has a talent for explaining very deep things in simple language, and because of this talent, her books have been translated into various languages too. Through her extensive oeuvre, especially her short stories, Murty has established a distinct niche as a narrator of the ordinary and a proponent of enduring principles. Her stories, frequently based on her vast experiences in social work and corporate settings, are marked by straightforward language and deep understanding. They remain steadfast in their depiction of social challenges such as poverty, gender inequality, and corruption, while also being rich in their acknowledgment of integrity, generosity, empathy, and charitable responsibility. Murty's storytelling possesses a naturally instructive quality, not in an overly forceful manner, but through a subtle, compelling influence that highlights the moral decisions found in everyday existence.

This study will perform a detailed textual examination of a chosen collection of Sudha Murty's short stories to support its argument. The chose n narratives—*'Amma, What Is Your Duty?', 'Honesty Comes from the Heart', 'The Red Rice Granary', 'A Life Unwritten', 'A Lesson in Life from a Beggar', and 'Bombay to Bangalore'* (Murty) —were selected for their unique and impactful examination of fundamental humanistic concepts. Every narrative acts as a case study: from examining compassionate responsibility versus strict legality in 'Amma, What Is Your Duty?' and the inherent moral integrity in 'Honesty Comes from the Heart' (Murty) and the deep wisdom discovered in marginalised life in 'A Lesson in Life from a Beggar'. Utilizing Leavisian principles of moral examination and the assessment of "life," this research will show that Murty's work goes beyond merely recording present - day Indian reality and instead engages in a humanistic endeavor. It contends that her narratives validate the feasibility of ethical existence, promote empathy as a social value, and ultimately utilize the short story format to deliver a significant, heartfelt, and lasting critique of life.

Problem To Be Investigated :

Even with their widespread recognition, Sudha Murty's short stories are frequently overlooked by critics and regarded as overly simplistic or excessively instructive. This viewpoint results in a notable deficiency in literary studies, since her writing does not possess a thorough analytical structure that can reveal its profound literary value. The primary issue, then, is the lack of a thorough critical assessment that transcends viewing her narratives simply as moral stories to recognizing them as intricate interactions with humanistic principles. This study explores this issue by examining how F.R. Leavis's Humanistic Perspective, focusing on moral significance and viewing literature as a "critique of life," can be relevant to a range of Murty's narratives. The research will examine if her fiction has a deeper purpose—not merely to instruct, but to assess the quality of human experience critically and promote the empathetic understanding that Leavis advocated, thus securing its rightful position in modern Indian English literature.

Research Objectives

- To understand the fundamental principles of F.R. Leavis's Humanistic Approach, demonstrating its significance as a theoretical framework for examining modern Indian short stories.
- To examine and classify the key humanistic themes, including empathy, integrity, perseverance, and social responsibility, present in the selected narratives.
- To analyze the pedagogical components in Murty's narrative style and assess how they operate not merely as ethical oversimplifications but as a profound "critique of existence," in the Leavisian framework.

- To evaluate how Murty's depiction of ordinary, frequently overlooked characters nurtures a rich human consciousness and encourages a sophisticated grasp of ethical opportunities in contemporary India.
- To highlight Sudha Murty's important role in modern Indian English literature by situating her writing within a humanistic framework that interacts with the country's socio-cultural and ethical landscape

Research Method :

This research will utilize a qualitative design, using c lose textual analysis to explore the chosen short stories of Sudha Murty. The main method will involve using F.R. Leavis's Humanistic Approach as a theoretical lens to analyze the narratives. This encompasses a thorough analysis of the literary works to recognize, evaluate, and understand the presence of humanistic issues like ethics , compassion , and altruism. The methodology will require an organized close reading of the main texts, concentrating on character development, thematic evolution, and symbolic features. The goal is to investigate how the narratives serve as a "criticism of life "and exhibit "ethical gravity," thus conforming to Leavisian ideals.

A Brief Overview of Sudha Murty And Her Story Collection :

Sudha Murty's writing career flourished in the late 20th and early 21st centuries , a time frequently referred to as the contemporary or post-modern era of Indian English literature. This period transcended the post-colonial concerns of previous authors to adopt a more assured, worldwide, and varied Indian identity. Her work is characterized by its immense simplicity and rich humanism. A prolific writer, philanthropist, and teacher, Murty extensively utilizes her rich experiences as chairperson of the Infosys Foundation, offering a genuine and practical viewpoint in her stories. Her body of work, encompassing novels, non-fiction, technical publications, and literature for children, is unified by a continual emphasis on the experiences of everyday individuals, their ethical conflicts, strength , and the delicate but impactful gestures of compassion that influence human connections. Her engineering background and philanthropic vision shape a distinctive storytelling approach that is rational, empathetic , and free from excessive embellishment , rendering her work both accessible and profoundly impactful. *"This book contains some of my most cherished experiences that are like beautiful flowers to me and have been put together here as if to complete a garland."* (Murty ,3) Her writing features straightforward, relatable language, a robust ethical foundation, and a strong connection to Indian culture and local experiences. In contrast to the intricate stylistic explorations of some of her peers, Murty's work emphasizes the remarkable stories of everyday individuals, especially women. She consequently embodies an important populist and colloquial thread within the broader, intricate fabric of contemporary Indian literature in English.

Sudha Murty's anthology, "Here, There and Everywhere", is essentially organized around a human - centered perspective. The entire collection adheres to the fundamental Leavisian belief that literature should act as a "criticism of life." Murty accomplishes this not via intricate literary experimentation, but by intentionally concentrating on the mundane, raising daily challenges and victories into touching reflections on virtue. Her storytelling approach — approachable, compassionate, and grounded in everyday language—is a human-centered decision. It makes moral and philosophical exploration accessible to all, implying that deep insights into dignity, compassion, and resilience are not limited to the grand or the remarkable, but can be found "here, there, and everywhere" within the Indian social structure, thereby nurturing the same "human awareness "that F. R. Leavis considered vital to exceptional literature.

Exploring Humanistic Concerns In Chosen Tales :

Contemporary Indian English Literature is deeply connected to humanism, having arisen from a post - colonial setting to document the personal journey in a swiftly changing, yet tradition oriented, culture. This literary tradition continually addresses fundamental humanistic Issues the search for identity, the fight for dignity, the examination of social injustice , and the investigation of universal feelings such as love , loss, and resilience. By amplifying varied, frequently overlooked viewpoints and examining intricate moral challenges, it inherently places importance on the individual, their internal experiences, and their moral decisions. Hence, the genre not only records India's socio - political environment but also engages in a humanistic endeavor,

employing narrative empathy to promote a greater awareness of the common human experience and to uphold the intrinsic dignity of individuals amid significant social transformation.

6.1 The Realization of Compassionate Responsibility : "Amma, What Is Your Duty?"

This section examines Sudha Murty's short story "Amma, What Is Your Duty?" as a deep investigation of social duty and ethical enlightenment. The story, told from the author's perspective, focuses on a crucial clash with her daughter , Akshata. The narrative starts by highlighting Akshata's sensitivity through her interactions with blind students, which gently encourages the reader to contemplate realities outside their own privilege. The main conflict arises when Akshata, troubled by the situation of a talented but underprivileged blind boy named Anand Sharma, confronts her mother's passivity. Her touching inquiry— *"Amma, when an educated person like you, well travelled, well read and without love for money does not help poor people , then don't expect anyone else to do. Is it not your duty to give back to those unfortunate people? What are you looking for in life?"* (Murty , 26)—acts as the pivotal moment in the narrative, prompting profound self - reflection. This prompts the narrator to reflect on her life's meaning, ultimately resulting in her stepping down from a position of power to pursue a journey of charitable work with the Infosys Foundation.

This story fundamentally represents F.R. Leavis's idea that literature should function as a "criticism of life." It executes this critique by thoroughly examining the social contract of the educated, wealthy elite in modern India. The narrative demonstrates the Leavisian notion of "moral seriousness" not via theoretical discussions, but by depicting a main character who is driven to look past career achievements to assess the moral integrity of her life. The narrator's isolation, in which she contemplates, *"I was forty-five years old. What was my duty at this age? "What was I looking for in life?"* (Murty ,27) embodies a quintessential Leavisian instance of ethical examination. In a modern setting rife with inequality, the narrative asserts that genuine humanism exists in the deliberate choice to connect privilege with poverty. The pinnacle of humanistic fulfillment is found not in praise, but in the deep, meaningful joy of helping others. Consequently, the narrative advocates for a human consciousness in which responsibility and empathy emerge as the greatest indicators of a life fully realized.

6.2 Honesty Amid Poverty : "Honesty Comes From The Heart"

This subsection explores Sudha Murty's short story "Honesty Comes from the Heart," showcasing it as a compelling affirmation of the belief that ethical integrity is an inherent human trait, unconnected to financial resources or academic credentials. The story centers on the author's encounter with Hanumanthappa, a tribal youth who achieved the eighth position in his state examinations, despite being the son of a laborer with a low income. Touched by his situation, Murty extends his support for his continued education. The key point of the narrative happens later, not during this offer, when Hanumanthappa , having received a stipend, willingly refunds *"My expenditure during these months was less than Rs 300 per month. Therefore, I am sending you the Rs 300 that I have not used for the last two months. Kindly accept this amount."* (Murty ,34)because of a college closure and strike. This unexpected display of integrity, done without hope for reward or recognition, astonishes the narrator and serves as the story's moral foundation, prompting her to realize that *"Experience has taught me that honesty is not the mark of any particular class nor is it related to education or wealth. It cannot be taught at any university. In most people, it springs naturally from the heart."* (Murty ,35)

In this narrative, Murty presents a persuasive Leavisian "criticism of life" that questions widespread socio - economic biases. In a modern environment frequently skeptical about morality and quick to link virtue with privilege, th narrative expresses a revolutionary humanistic concept : that moral awareness is an essential characteristi of the human experience. Hanumanthappa's character reflects the "moral seriousness" valued by Leavis; his deeds are not aimed at social advantage but genuinely represent his true nature. The narrative challenges a society that frequently evaluates an individual's value based on their riches and interrogates the core principles of moral teaching. By instilling deep integrity in a character from a marginalized background, Murty fosters a "human awareness" that urges the reader to acknowledge and honor the inherent dignity and worth found in every person, irrespective of their social status. In this way, the narrative acts as a powerful reminder that the truest forms of honesty are not developed within organizations but instead arise naturally from the human soul.

6.3 The Spirit of Selfless Giving : “The Red Rice Granary”

This section explores Sudha Murty’s short story "The Red Rice Granary" as a deep reflection on the ssence of genuine charity and its foundations in cultural heritage. The story functions on two simultaneous levels : a modern story and a recollection from childhood. It begins with the writer's disappointment after a corporate charity event, where affluent staff contribute "hundreds of bags" stuffed with " clumps of high – heeled shoes (many without a matching pair), worn – out underwear , dirty shirts"— essentially worthless items they wouldn't utilize themselves. This contemporary instance of cursory, self - satisfied charity is sharply contrasted with a recollection of the author’s grandparents in her hometown. They kept two granaries : one at the front containing premium white rice for the poor, and another at the back with lower - grade red rice for the family's use. When a young Murty inquires about this custom, her grandmother shares the core lesson of the story : *"Dear child, whenever you want to give something to somebody, give the best in you, never the second best. That is what I have learnt from life. God is not there in the temple, mosque or church. He is with the people . If you serve them with whatever you have, you have served God."* (Murty , 42) This lesson is reinforced by her grandmother, who cites ancestral wisdom on giving, stressing that it should be done with "joy," "genuineness," and "without anticipation, as it is not a present." "This is an obligation."

This narrative offers a compelling Leavisian "criticism of life" by contrasting two conflicting methods of philanthropy, thus assessing the ethical value of both. The story demonstrates "moral seriousness" by analyzing the underlying reason for giving, contending that genuine charity is not a mere exchange for social acknowledgment but a noble obligation arising from compassion and esteem for the recipient. Contemporary donors, despite their education and affluence, lack the humanitarian sensitivity that their simple, uneducated grandparents have in plenty. In a modern environment where charitable acts can frequently appear insincere or disconnected, Murty’s narrative demands a resurgence of a more genuine, compassionate humanism. It fosters a "human consciousness" that acknowledges the divine in each person and suggests that the greatest form of generosity respects the dignity of the recipient. The practice of grandparents, grounded in cultural knowledge, acts as an enduring ethical guide, indicating that the moral well being of a society is assessed not by the quantity of its contributions, but by the authenticity and altruism behind those gifts.

6.4 The Untold Heritage of Compassion : “A Life Unwritten”

This part examines Sudha Murty’s short story "A Life Unwritten" as a profound investigation into how quiet, caring deeds can forge deep and unexpected legacies of empowerment. The tale is presented through a frame story in which the author's father, Dr. R.H. Kulkarni, shares a significant event from his beginnings as a young physician in an isolated village. One night, he is compelled to help deliver the baby of a disgraced unmarried teenage girl from a prominent family, who is kept in hiding. Confronted with a dire scenario—a frightened patient, a makeshift delivery surface of rice bags, and a family that prioritizes honor over existence — Dr. Kulkarni fulfills his medical responsibilities. Nonetheless , his genuine humanitarian gesture takes place following the birth. Noticing the girl's anguish and the danger to her and her newborn’s safety, he goes beyond just rescuing them physically. He presents a way to freedom, suggesting she escape to Pune and train as a nurse. Importantly, he hands her the complete amount of one hundred rupees he earned for the delivery, saying, *"My father handed over the money to the girl. "This is all I have with me right now, he said . 'Use it and do what I have told you. '"* (Murty ,62) This singular demonstration of profound compassion and moral bravery triggers a series of happenings that reach a conclusion many years later when Dr . Kulkarni, now an emeritus gynecologist, reconnects with the woman and her daughter, who has also become a physician operating a care facility named after him : "R . H . Diagnostic."

The narrative acts as a brilliant Leavisian "criticism of life," demonstrating that moral responsibility reaches well beyond just professional obligations. Dr. Kulkarni’s behavior reflects the "moral seriousness" that Leavis advocated; his choice to jeopardize his own safety and forfeit his entire fee was not a strategic decision but an instinctive demonstration of profound compassion for someone in distress. The story compellingly shows that the most important humanistic contributions are frequently "unwritten" they aren’t documented in formal records or public recognition but are reflected in the changed lives of individuals. In a modern society typically oriented towards quick , quantifiable results, this narrative validates the lasting impact of a single act of kindness. It fosters a "human awareness" that acknowledges our interdependence and the ability of one courageous act to disrupt cycles of oppression and inspire lasting change for futur generations. The heritage of "R .H . Diagnostic "embodies

the belief that genuine service involves enabling others to shape their own destinies, rendering this narrative a timeless reminder of the subtle, transformative strength of compassion.

6.5 The Teaching Of Pain And Happiness : " A Lesson In A Life From A Beggar"

This section analyzes Sudha Murty's short story "A Lesson in Life from a Beggar" as an engaging tale about the life changing potential of viewpoint and the deep insights that can emerge from the most surprising sources. The narrative starts with Meena, a perpetually gloomy and skeptical friend whose pessimism exhausts everyone in her vicinity. After years of being overlooked and forgotten , the narrator unexpectedly runs into a drastically changed Meena in Mumbai—now vibrant, lively, and hopeful. This profound change creates the main enigma of the story. The trigger for this transformation, as Meena discloses, was not a counselor or a spiritual teacher, but a destitute, elderly beggar and his five-year-old granddaughter whom she watched from her window. On a rainy day when she was unable to provide them food, Meena anticipated seeing despair, but instead observed them "laughing, clapping, and joyously screaming, as though they were in paradise." Famine and precipitation were of no concern. They were completely soaked and completely joyful. This scene turned into a moral and emotional awakening, compelling her to reassess her privileged life and deep-seated dissatisfaction. She informs the narrator , *"They knew how to be happy with life as it was. I felt ashamed of myself. I even started to make a list of what I had and what I did not have. I found I had more to be grateful for than most people could imagine. That day, I decided to change my attitude towards life, using the beggar as my role model."* (Murty , 144) This awareness ignited a two – year path of deliberate transformation, leading to the calm and appreciative woman encountered by the narrator.

This narrative acts as a direct and impactful Leavisian "criticism of life " questioning the precise standards with which contemporary society assesses joy and achievement. The story displays "moral seriousness " by fundamentally interrogating the worth of material ease when devoid of spiritualand emotional depth. The beggar, in extreme poverty, transforms into an unexpected Leavisian moral compass, representing the "human awareness" that genuine happiness arises from an internal condition rather than from outside situations. Murty employs this striking difference to criticize the shallow worries and constant discontent that afflict modern urban life. Meena's change highlights an important humanistic issue: nurturing gratitude and discovering happiness in simplicity. In a society increasingly influenced by consumerism and comparison, the narrative suggests that the most valuable teaching arises not from formal schooling but from witnessing life with an open and compassionate heart. The beggar' quiet teaching encourages a significant shift in values, asserting that wisdom and the ability to find joy are human traits available to everyone, no matter their social or economic status.

6.6 From Weakness To Independence : "Bombay To Bangalore"

This section examines Sudha Murty's short story "Bombay to Bangalore" as a striking example of how one kind act of intervention can spark a transformative journey from total vulnerability to full self -sufficiency. The story starts with the writer's experience on a packed train, where she meets Chitra, a thirteen year - old girl who has run away and is concealing herself beneath the seats. The girl represents complete fragility - "slender, shadowy, terrified," wearing ragged clothing and shaking in front of the furious ticket inspector who menaces to turn her over to the authorities. Even though the collector offered practical guidance stating that "experience is the best teacher" and highlighted that these situations are typical , Murty's "heart could not embrace the collector's counsel." This decisive moment — when she opts to purchase the girl a complete ticket from Bombay to Bangalore despite doubts and additional costs — represents the moral essence of the story. What starts as mere compassion transforms into ongoing responsibility as Murty organizes housing, education, and eventually observes Chitra's incredible transformation from a troubled orphan to a self - assured software expert in the United States. The tale reaches completion when, years later, Chitra astounds Murty by covering her hotel expense in San Francisco, tearfully *stating"Akka, if you hadn't helped me, I don't know where I would have been today-maybe a beggar, a prostitute, a runaway child, a servant in someone's house... or I may even have committed suicide. You changed my life. I am ever grateful to you."* (Murty , 189)

This account offers a deep Leavisian "criticism of life" by exploring the ethical obligations people have toward strangers in a progressively impersonal society. The narrative illustrates "moral seriousness" by examining compassion not just as feeling, but as dedicated action that connects privilege with deprivation. Murty's first choice challenged by officials and onlookers embodies the humanistic principle of acknowledging intrinsic worth in every

individual, independent of their societal usefulness. In today's world, where urban anonymity frequently fosters apathy towards the marginalized, the narrative advocates for the impactful role of individual action in disrupting patterns of poverty and hopelessness. The transition from the packed Indian train to a San Francisco hotel mirrors the moral progression from reliance to empowerment, reflecting the Leavisian advocacy of "human awareness"—demonstrating how a single conscious ethical decision can change a human fate. Chitra's transformation from a quiet, traumatized girl to a self - reliant, appreciative professional exemplifies the story's main humanistic theme: genuine social change starts with personal moral bravery that fosters the hidden potential within each person. The story serves as a strong reminder that in our connected world, compassion is not just a personal quality but a societal power that can bring about changes across continents and generations.

Conclusion :

This study has effectively shown that Sudha Murty's short stories represent a significant manifestation of F.R. Leavis's Humanistic Approach, acting as an essential "critique of life" that explores the moral and ethical structure of modern Indian society. The chosen narratives demonstrate a steady and impactful connection with fundamental humanistic principles —compassionate responsibility , inherent honesty, altruistic generosity, quiet understanding, and life - changing perseverance. In a time characterized by social division and ethical uncertainty, Murty's work stands out not as straightforward teaching, but as a significant literary endeavor that promotes empathy and moral accountability. In the end, her literary works validate that the primary purpose of literature is to encourage the "human consciousness" required to understand and humanize a growingly intricate world, establishing her as an important humanist figure in modern Indian English literature.

Further Scope For Research :

The results of this study present multiple opportunities for additional academic exploration. An intriguing approach would be a comparative analysis of Sudha Murty's humanistic themes alongside those of other modern Indian authors such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh and etc. examining the distinctions in their narrative methods and social commentaries. Another crucial aspect is the gendered facet of humanism in her work, examining how her female protagonists maneuver and challenge patriarchal frameworks to bring about social transformation. Additionally, studies might broaden to include a pedagogical examination, exploring the effectiveness of utilizing Murty's short stories as instruments for value education in educational programs to promote empathy and ethical reasoning in students. Finally, examining the overlap between philanthropy and literature in her non-fiction and fictional works might offer deeper insight into how her genuine humanitarian beliefs are creatively transformed into her imagined realms.

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TRAUMA AND ITS MANIFESTATION AS GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN MARVEL'S WANDAVISION

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Abstract

The present research attempts to trace the elements of Trauma and how it manifests as Gothic elements in Marvel Studio's 2021 miniseries *WandaVision.* Trauma is defined as an emotional response to a tragic event such as death of a loved one, accidents, natural disaster, violence or abuse. These events lead to shock and denial which are common after effects of trauma. Long term effects or symptoms of trauma include imbalanced emotional state, flashbacks and some physical symptoms like headaches or nausea as well. Trauma is something that interrupts a person's life and leaves behind unimaginable aftermath. Gothic Fiction, also often referred to as Gothic Horror is a genre of fiction writing. The name originates from the settings of early gothic novels which were set in castles and mansions referred to as Gothic architecture in European Middle Ages. Gothic Fiction focuses on elements such as haunted settings, combination of awe and terror, presence of supernatural entities or elements, tyrannical villains and an atmosphere of mystery and fear. This paper examines the miniseries *WandaVision* through the lens of Trauma. It analyses the protagonist Wanda Maximoff's experience with trauma and its effects on her as well as how that trauma manifests into gothic elements that are seen in the series. Wanda's trauma is the driving force behind the events that take place in the series. Wanda loses her husband Vision and that impacts her deeply. Her denial of the entire situation causes her to take the entire town of Westview hostage through mind control and create a fabricated reality where Vision is alive. These actions, which are the direct response to her trauma, create situations that have gothic elements. These Gothic elements can be seen in the atmosphere that the series creates; a sense of mystery and terror surrounding Wanda's actions and the element of supernatural is represented by Wanda herself who is a witch.

Keywords: *Doppelganger, Fabricated reality, Gothic Fiction, Grief, The Uncanny, Trauma*

Introduction:

WandaVision, Marvel Studio's miniseries that came out in 2021, delves into the aftermath of Wanda Maximoff's trauma after the event of *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). The series explores aftermath of trauma, denial, grief and the dangerous consequences of unchecked power. Each episode of the series mirrors a different era of television, which works as a metaphor for Wanda's fractured psyche. The series' narrative is driven forward by Wanda's immense grief that stems from a lot of losses. Her traumatic childhood in Sokovia, the demise of her brother Pietro, and, most significantly the death of Vision in *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), creates a collective weight that leads to her creation of the Westview anomaly. This act of escapism is a form of denial and a desperate attempt to rewrite her narrative and reclaim a sense of normalcy. *WandaVision's* narrative, that blurs the line between realities and incorporates supernatural elements, creates an atmosphere of unease and terror. This exploration of the uncanny and terrifying is a hallmark of Gothic tradition.

The origins of Gothic Fiction can be traced back to the 18th century when Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* was published in 1764. Walpole's novel is recognized as the first Gothic Novel. This novel introduced all the key elements that would later become essential characteristics of the genre itself, such as, medieval setting, supernatural events, and the atmosphere of mystery and terror. Walpole's use of the word "Gothic" itself was significant. It referred to the Middle Ages architectural style which he associated with a sense of ancient, the mysterious and the sublime. By using this term to describe his book, he connected the genre to a particular aesthetic and historical perception. This genre was further expanded by authors like Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis. Radcliffe emphasized on suspense and psychological terror and Lewis explored darker themes. In the 19th century, Gothic fiction was further explored by authors like Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe. The Victorian Era witnessed a surge in popularity of Gothic fiction. It reflected the growing anxieties about the industrialization and social change. Classical works of this genre such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* were published during this time. The 20th century brought about the Modern Gothic and the Gothic revival. Gothic themes persisted and were adapted into new forms such as film and television. Authors like Shirley

Jackson explored psychological horror in contemporary settings. Gothic themes continue to resonate in contemporary literature, film, and popular culture.

Wanda's inner turmoil, made visible through the progressively strange reality she creates in Westview, is the heart of *WandaVision*. The series' portrayal of grief, refusal to accept reality, and the potential for self-harm aligns with Gothic themes which focus on mental instability and shadowy corners of human psyche. This contrast between a counterfeit perfect world and Wanda's inner suffering warrants a deeper look into the Gothic themes it explores that are the direct manifestation of her trauma and its aftermath. This paper will trace how Gothic elements that form a building sense of fear and dread simultaneously serve as representations of hidden trauma, and how that trauma manifests into dangerous coping mechanisms as showcased in *WandaVision*.

Trauma and its manifestation in *WandaVision*:

WandaVision is not merely a superhero narrative but a deep exploration of trauma, grief, and psychological mechanisms individuals employ to cope with the unbearable pain. Wanda's experiences are a series of devastating traumas, beginning with the deaths of her parents in Sokovia. These foundational traumas are further worsened by Hydra's experimentation on her, loss of her brother Pietro, and by the brutal death of Vision. The cumulative effects of these events cause deep psychological wounds that ultimately manifest into the creation of the Westview anomaly. The initial sitcom aesthetic of the Westview, while being a simple act of escapism, also functions as a form of psychological denial. By recreating ideal scenarios from classic sitcoms, Wanda attempts to create a reality where her losses are invalid and her desires are fulfilled. This act of denial, however, is inherently unstable. The return of the suppressed and the unavoidable outburst of Wanda's unresolved trauma are symbolized by the Gothic themes that prevail in *WandaVision*. In addition to being plot devices, the sitcom's cracks, glitches, and unsettling shifts in reality are visual representations of Wanda's broken mental state. With its transitional areas and old buildings, Westview's eerie atmosphere mirrors Wanda's inner turmoil and instability.

In *Don't Touch the Dial* (Episode 2), the heightened anxiety during the magic show, where Wanda's powers momentarily malfunction, reveals the fragility of her control. The sudden appearance of the beekeeper from S.W.O.R.D. within the Hex's boundary serves as an intrusion of the outside world, a reminder of the reality she is attempting to suppress. This intrusion triggers a visible reaction from Wanda, demonstrating the stress and effort required to maintain the illusion. The rapid rewind and alteration of the scene highlight her desperate attempts to rewrite reality and erase any reminders of her trauma.

In *Now in Color* (Episode 3), the rapid progression of Wanda's pregnancy and the sudden birth of her twins, Tommy and Billy, can be interpreted as a manifestation of her desire to create a complete and fulfilling family life. However, this accelerated timeline also suggests a sense of desperation, a need to fast-forward through the complexities and challenges of real life. The conversation with Geraldine about Pietro's death triggers a violent reaction from Wanda. The sudden shift from light-hearted banter to intense emotional distress reveals the raw pain that lies just beneath the surface of her constructed reality. When Monica mentions Ultron, Wanda ejects her from Westview. This is a clear indicator of her inability to handle her past traumas. This episode demonstrates how Wanda's attempts to create a perfect reality are constantly threatened by the intrusion of traumatic memories and external forces. The idyllic facade begins to crumble, revealing the underlying anxieties and unresolved grief that permeate her psyche.

We Interrupt This Program (Episode 4), shifts the perspective to the outside world and provides a crucial context for understanding Wanda's actions. The revelation that she has created the Hex and trapped the residents of Westview highlights the destructive potential of her unchecked trauma. The S.W.O.R.D. monitoring of Westview, and the visual representation of the sitcom broadcasts, provide a stark contrast between Wanda's fabricated reality and the objective reality of the situation. The viewing of Wanda's re-writing of reality from the outside, gives the viewer a sense of how powerful, and how dangerous, Wanda's mental state is. This episode serves as a turning point, exposing the true nature of Wanda's control and the devastating consequences of her actions. It marks the transition from a seemingly light-hearted sitcom to a dark and unsettling exploration of trauma and its aftermath.

All-New Halloween Spooktecular! (Episode 6) marks a turning point in Wanda's control over Westview. The brief but disturbing glimpses of Vision's decaying form are a manifestation of the intrusive nature of traumatic memory. These visual glitches, these moments of decay, represent the breakdown of Wanda's carefully constructed reality. They are evidence of the underlying instability of her psychological state, the inability to fully suppress her trauma.

The moments where the citizens of Westview are outside of the hex, and are frozen in place, or repeating the same actions over and over, is a clear sign of the damage that Wanda is causing.

Previously on (Episode 8) serves as a clinical examination of Wanda's traumatic history. The flashbacks, presented as a series of forced re-experiences orchestrated by Agatha Harkness, expose the raw vulnerability of Wanda's psychological wounds. The scene depicting the destruction of her childhood home is particularly significant. The lingering image of the bomb, the sound of falling debris, and the expressions of terror on her parents' face creates a visceral sense of trauma. This scene aligns with the concept of traumatic memory, which is often fragmented and emotionally intense. Vision's death at the hands of Thanos which is shown in stark detail, acts as the culminating trauma, the event that triggers the creation of Westview. The repetition of this traumatic scene, its imposition into Wanda's constructed reality, underlines the unrelenting nature of traumatic memory. The moment where Wanda and Vision discuss grief, with Vision's line "but what is grief, if not love persevering" is a moment of deep introspection. This moment shows how her love and grief are intertwined, and how her grief is the driving force behind the creation of Westview.

The Series Finale (Episode 9) sees Wanda confront the consequences of her actions. Her confrontation with Agatha Harkness, her acknowledgment of the pain she has caused, and her decision to dismantle the Hex represents a moment of catharsis. Her action of releasing the people of Westview, and saying goodbye to her created family, shows the start of her healing process. This moment of catharsis, however, is not a simple resolution. Wanda's journey towards healing is ongoing; a process that will require continued self-reflection and growth. Her final moments, with the Darkhold, shows that her story is not over, and that she still has much to learn. The ending scene, with Wanda studying the Darkhold, shows that she is attempting to understand her powers, and to control them. This is a crucial step in her healing process.

Bessel van der Kolk's work, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma,* emphasizes the way in which traumatic experiences are stored within the body. Wanda's immense power, her ability to manipulate reality, can be seen as a manifestation of this corporeal encoding. Her powers, initially a source of control and protection, become a conduit for her unresolved trauma. The Hex itself, the physical manifestation of Wanda's power, can be interpreted as a physical expression of her trauma. Its fluctuating boundaries, its unpredictable shifts in reality, reflect the internal chaos and instability that Wanda experiences. The trapped citizens of Westview, forced to play their assigned roles, can be seen as externalizations of Wanda's own internal fragmentation, her sense of being trapped and controlled by her trauma.

Wanda's trauma is the direct link between the gothic elements that are present within the show. The creation of the Westview anomaly, which is a direct result of her trauma, is the primary presence of gothic elements. It represents the element of fabricated reality, which is a prominent characteristic of gothic works. Another instance of these gothic manifestations is the continual appearances of glitches in Wanda's fabricated reality. The domestic, peaceful everyday life is suddenly interrupted by these glitches. It creates an uneasy environment as the familiar suddenly turns foreign. This presence of the uncanny is another element of gothic works.

Gothic elements as manifestations of trauma in *WandaVision*:

Gothic fiction often relies on specific geographical features to evoke a sense of unease and the uncanny. These features, including enclosed spaces, decaying structures, and liminal zones, serve as physical manifestations of psychological states. In *WandaVision*, the peaceful town of Westview, initially presented as a picture-perfect suburban haven, gradually reveals its inherent instability and Gothic undertones. The very creation of Westview itself as a fabricated reality, created from Wanda's subconscious and trauma, aligns with the Gothic concept of the "haunted house." As Jerrold Hogle argues, the Gothic house is not merely a physical space, but a "psychic space," reflecting the internal anxieties and repressed desires of its inhabitants (Hogle, The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction, 2002). Wanda's constructed reality which is initially a comforting illusion becomes increasingly claustrophobic and menacing as the series progresses. The boundaries of Westview, imposed by the Hex, function as a physical manifestation of Wanda's isolation and her desperate attempt to contain her grief and trauma.

Moreover, the slow breakdown of the sitcom pretence reveals Westview's crumbling infrastructure especially in episodes like *We Interrupt This Program* (Episode 4) and *All-New Halloween Spooktacular*! (Episode 6). A tangible sensation of the weird is created by the glitches, distortions, and disturbing changes in reality, such as the untimely death of Vision in episode 6 (26:00). According to Freud's idea of the uncanny, as discussed in *The*

Uncanny (1919) a phenomenon important to the Gothic, that results from the familiar becoming shockingly foreign. Rooted with the familiar tropes of domesticity and amusement, the seemingly perfect sitcom universe starts to cause anxiety when its falseness is exposed. Additionally, adding to the Gothic mood of Westview, are the transitional areas such as the edge of the Hex and the abandoned S.W.O.R.D. outpost. These spaces, which exist between reality and illusion, represent the unstable boundaries of Wanda's psyche. The Gothic theme of the old and haunted house is further supported by the nagging presence of Agatha Harkness' house, with its secret basement and dark, overgrown yard. This house, a site of dark secrets and forbidden knowledge, embodies the Gothic fascination with the past and its lingering influence on the present.

The doppelganger is a recurring motif in Gothic literature and represents darker, repressed aspects of self. In *WandaVision,* the appearance of "White Vision" (Episode 8 and 9), who is a resurrected, memory-less version of Vision, serves as a terrifying doppelganger. This Vision challenges Wanda's idealized version of her husband and forces her to confront the falsity of her constructed reality. Moreover, Agatha Harkness who is imprisoned by Wanda in her fabricated reality, the "nosy neighbour," serves as a Gothic antagonist by representing the monstrous feminine. Her ability to manipulate magic and her desire to possess Wanda's power places her as a threat to the established order of Westview. Agatha's reveal in *Previously On* (Episode 8) and her manipulation of Wanda's past trauma aligns with the Gothic villain's tendency to exploit vulnerability and bring about suffering. Her dark magic and her coven-like association with the Salem witch trials contribute to the series' Gothic atmosphere, evoking a sense of ancient evil and supernatural dread. The mind-controlled citizens of Westview who are trapped in Wanda's fabricated reality and are forced to play their assigned roles, function as a collective doppelganger. Their blank stares, robotic movements, and expressions of silent suffering all highlight the dehumanizing effects of Wanda's control. Their existence which is a reflection of Wanda's own suppressed trauma, underlines the Gothic theme of the individual being consumed by their own creation.

Conclusion:

WandaVision skilfully blends superhero storytelling with Gothic elements, using the latter to delve into the deep psychological impact of trauma. This research has highlighted the series' Gothic features, from Westview's unsettling atmosphere to the doppelganger and the monstrous feminine, revealing how these elements visually represent Wanda Maximoff's internal struggles and trauma. The initially tranquil Westview gradually morphs into a Gothic setting, mirroring the fragmentation of Wanda's mind under the weight of grief. Gothic tropes effectively portray the intangible nature of trauma. Westview's liminal spaces, decaying facades, and controlled citizens' act as physical manifestations of Wanda's psychological wounds, aligning with the Gothic tradition of using setting to reflect internal states. As Jerrold Hogle notes in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, the Gothic house often functions as a "psychic space," embodying the anxieties of its inhabitants. In *WandaVision*, Westview precisely serves this purpose, becoming a psychic space where Wanda's trauma is both contained and revealed.

Furthermore, the emergence of White Vision as a doppelganger and Agatha Harkness as a monstrous feminine figure underscores the darker aspects of Wanda's psyche and the external forces that exploit her vulnerability. Agatha's manipulation exemplifies the Gothic villain's tendency to prey on the vulnerable, a common genre theme. As Barbara Creed argues in *The monstrous-feminine: Film, feminism, psychoanalysis*, the "monstrous-feminine" often depicts female figures as threats to established order. The series' exploration of trauma offers a nuanced understanding of Wanda's actions. The Hex, a physical manifestation of her power and pain, poignantly represents the body's ability to store and express trauma, as discussed by Bessel van der Kolk in *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Ultimately, *WandaVision* transcends genre boundaries to provide a powerful commentary on the lasting effects of trauma and the complex journey of healing. While employing fantastical elements, its exploration of grief, loss, and the uncanny resonates with universal human experiences. The series highlights that while trauma can lead to destructive outcomes, there is also the potential for catharsis and recovery.

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LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF DISABILITY AND ITS CHANGING PERCEPTIONS: A STUDY THROUGH SELECTED WORKS FROM THE GREEK TO THE PRESENT

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Abstract:

Disability Studies has been a developing area of research across several disciplines including Sociology, Psychology, Medical Humanities as well as Literature. The perception about Disability has changed from the Ancient to the Modern times. It has also been reflected in Literature from time to time. Disability as an idea didn't exist in the Ancient Ages. But we find literary representations wherein the disabled characters are portrayed both in negative as well as positive light. In modern times we can see that the disabled or physically impaired persons are considered source of inspiration and motivation for others. This changing perception has been reflected in literary works of different ages.

The present paper endeavors to study the development in the idea of Disability through examples from literary works from the Greek to the present times. It would evaluate character portrayals of the disabled in representative literary works of Greek, Medieval and Modern Ages. It is observed that the disabled are finding acceptance in the society specifically in the professional world. The present will try to see what has brought this positive change of perception.

Keywords: Ableism, Change of Perception, Disability, Discrimination, Social inclusion, Special ability, Disabled as source of inspiration

The Idea of Disability: It's Evolution

The term 'Disability' etymologically came to be meant 'being unable to act' in the 16th century. Historically, it has been understood as some 'disadvantage', 'punishment' or 'defect'. It has been commonly defined by social structures and religious beliefs. With the rise of Medical Science in the late 19th century, it is now treated not as an individual's case but as an individual's limitations within his or her environment. In ancient times, the persons with disability or people with physical lack were deprived of socialization. In the Medieval age, such disabilities were considered divine punishment or curse. The individuals were not allowed education and were also used as means of entertainment. On the other side, the blessings of the disabled were considered sacred and it was believed that they get early entry into the Heaven.

In Modern times, the persons with disability have found acceptance in the society. Medical Science has led the world to a realization that any defect, deformity or disability is natural and hence an individual is not to be blamed or held guilty of the disability. Thus, the present society believes in their inclusion. They are accepted socially as well as in certain professions. However, at individual level, there are still many unsolved questions. But the major shift of thought to include them as social beings and not to keep them excluded, is the most positive effect of the development in Medical field. The term 'disabled' has been replaced by 'differently abled' or 'specially abled'. This weakens the derogatory sense of the idea of disability and presents it as a source of inspiration for the normal people.

Literature, rightly called the mirror of society, has reflected these changing perceptions from time to time. There are mythical and literary figures portrayed as having some lack and they represent the thoughts about disability in a particular age. The paper would study this evolution of this idea through how disability has been represented in Greek and Roman, Medieval and Modern-Postmodern ages. There is a difference between the works of literature and personal accounts like autobiographies or autobiographical writings by the persons with disability. In personal accounts, there is the voice of dissatisfaction and injustice and the feeling that the disabled are yet to be accepted and treated as integral part of society.

Greek and Roman Literary Representations:

There was no understanding of disability developed during this age. People simply treated the disabled as different from them and thus not like them or a part of their society. There are both positive as well as negative perceptions of disability reflected in Greek and Roman works. The first important example is Prophet Tiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus the Rex* which was recreated by Seneca. The Prophet is blind but has deep insight. He is presented as an extraordinarily powerful man who can see the invisible, communicate with the spirit and can bring out the secret or truth that common people can never find. Through his special power and knowledge, he reveals Laius's murderer's name. In the same play, Oedipus blinds himself on discovering the truth of his birth and parentage. Blindness in the ancient literature is presented as the knowledge of truth. What one can see with real eyes, is often not the truth. One can understand truth with deeper spiritual insight.

Another example is the mythical character Hephaestus, God of the blacksmiths, who is famous for his divine craftsmanship. He is depicted as lame and clubfooted. He was initially rejected from Mount Olympus by his mother Hera. Like Prophet Tiresias, Hephaestus is also known as extraordinarily skilled. Demodocus in Homer's *Odyssey* is a blind singer, well-respected, in the court of King Alcinous. He is another example of physically imperfect man having some skill that distinguishes him from the common men. All these examples establish the idea of otherness but they are portrayed as the privileged other. The portrayals of characters like Manthra and Shakun in Indian epics convey the negative perception of the idea of disability.

Medieval Literary Representations:

In Medieval age, disability was defined in theological terms. It was believed that disabilities were a consequence of some sin or crime against religion, and such individuals needed redemption through faith. It was also thought as a test taken by the Divine. In literature of this time, we find Hagiographical texts portraying lives of the Saints who often had to suffer from physical ailments on their spiritual path leading to salvation and liberation.

Also, we find portrayals of sinister characters who are presented as physical imperfect or deformed. Although not explicitly mentioned in *Beowulf*, it comes to our knowledge while reading it that the monster Grendel and his mother both are physically impaired. An Old French poem translated as *The Romance of the Rose* is an allegorical work that personifies the sin Avarice as a disabled character thus disabilities were also used to represent negativity symbolically and metaphorically.

During Renaissance, we see positive perception of disability through literary works, a remarkable shift from negative portrayals to the positive one wherein the disabled is presented as 'a person able to act'. The example is the play *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*(sometimes attributed to Thomas Heywood). In this play, an unnamed character is only called the Cripple who carries out the entire action of the play as he has promised to help other character in winning a favour as an act of reciprocation. The play is a City Comedy and the portrayal of the Cripple deconstructs the conventional image of the disabled. It also presents the disabled as an extraordinary and empowered character leading to establish it as a source of inspiration.

Norse Havamal verses preach wisdom and support strengths of individuals. These verses also present positive thoughts on disability and bring out their capabilities through stating that "The lame can ride horses" and "The deaf can fight and do well".

Modern Literary Representations:

The attitudes towards disability noticeably changed with the Modern Age. Disability was recognized as a natural limitation for which an individual is not responsible. It gradually developed sympathetic approach towards the same. The thought of social inclusion of the disabled individuals prevailed and they found acceptance in society. They found courage to come with their own voice. With their acceptance in society, the perception of disability changed from their inferior status to treating them as specially abled and source of inspiration. Thus, broadly the society included them and normalized disabilities. This opened up a space for the disabled to speak about or write their lived experiences. The fact that they are different from others can't be denied and therefore there were disabled writers who shared their experiences that convey that they are still suffering from injustice and the society continue to discriminate them from the normal people. The example of writing on lived experience is the American novel by Susan Nussbaum who presents the complexities and struggle of the residents in a nursing home who fight for their

freedom and dignity against illtreatment done to them. The center exclusively set for the disabled is called an ill place.

The other side of representations is the inspirational one. The physically impaired or differently abled are presented as capable to do what normal people often fail to do. Also, the disabled are thought as a source of inspiration for others, who despite their limitations act with confidence and courage. For example, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is a novel by Mark Haddon in first-person perspective wherein the protagonist is Austistic and is presented with his uniqueness and abilities to solve problems bringing a positive ending to the story.

To sum up, it can be said that the disabled are yet to be fully accepted in the society. They are yet to become an integral part of our culture. To raise awareness for the same is the need of the day. Literature can play a major role in spreading it. The society will be livable for humans only when the so-called different and physically imperfect humans are made integral part of it. The Modern times have seen an obvious change in people's perception and understanding of disability which must be appreciated. But the society is yet to understand the problems of disabled individuals who are silently struggling to be recognized as social beings.

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TRUTH AS SUBJECTIVITY: A KIERKEGAARDIAN READING OF VIBHISHANA'S IDEA OF DHARMA

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Abstract

The Ramayana, one of India's grand epics, has typically been read through collective concerns of duty, devotion, and the cosmic struggle between dharma and adharma. Within this framework, the figure of Vibhishana has often been judged ambivalently: as a righteous devotee who defected from Ravana's adharma, or as a betrayer who violated kinship and loyalty. This paper re-examines Vibhishana's choice through the philosophical lens of Søren Kierkegaard's existential thought—specifically his concept of "truth as subjectivity" and the paradoxical "leap of faith." Unlike conventional dharmic exegesis that emphasizes universal obligations, a Kierkegaardian reading highlights how Vibhishana exemplifies subjective faith realized through inward passion and existential responsibility. Drawing upon Kierkegaard's framework of the three stages of existence—the aesthetic, ethical, and religious—this paper argues that Vibhishana embodies the transition from the ethical to the religious stage, enacting a "teleological suspension of the ethical." His betrayal of Ravana thus becomes less an act of treachery than a paradigmatic moment of existential authenticity. The study situates this interpretation within comparative philosophy, engaging both Indic concepts of dharma and Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism, to demonstrate how the cross-cultural dialogue between these traditions opens new insights into both. Ultimately, this reading positions Vibhishana as a "knight of faith," whose subjective commitment reveals that dharma is not only universal but also existentially personal.

Keywords: Vibhishana, Kierkegaard, Subjective Truth, Dharma, Ramayana, Leap of Faith, Existential Ethics

Introduction

The Ramayana, composed in multiple versions across South and Southeast Asia, is often regarded as both a sacred narrative and a moral blueprint for human conduct. While Rama, Sita, and Hanuman occupy central positions in the text's moral universe, Vibhishana, Ravana's younger brother, is often relegated to the margins. His defection to Rama's side has produced contested interpretations: for some, he is a paragon of dharma who recognizes Rama's divinity; for others, he is remembered as a betrayer of kinship solidarity, a figure whose righteousness is intermingled with moral ambiguity (Goldman, 2004).

This ambivalence makes Vibhishana a particularly fertile subject for philosophical interpretation. His choice forces us to consider questions beyond legalistic or ritualized notions of dharma: What does it mean to act righteously when duties conflict? How do individual conscience and universal law relate? At what point does loyalty to family give way to higher obligations?

In Western philosophy, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) raised analogous concerns in his exploration of faith, individuality, and the paradox of ethics. For Kierkegaard, truth is not an impersonal universal but rather "subjectivity," realized in the passionate inwardness of the individual before God (Kierkegaard, 1846/1992). His concept of the "leap of faith" involves transcending rational universals and ethical norms in an act of subjective commitment, exemplified in his reading of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

This paper places the Ramayana in dialogue with Kierkegaard to argue that Vibhishana's choice can be understood as existential and paradoxical. By interpreting his defection through Kierkegaard's stages of existence—particularly the movement from the ethical to the religious—we discover that Vibhishana embodies a "teleological suspension of the ethical." This comparative approach not only reframes Vibhishana's contested position in the Ramayana but also demonstrates how Kierkegaard's existentialism resonates beyond the Christian framework, illuminating non-Western ideas of dharma.

Kierkegaard's Existential Framework

The Three Stages of Existence

Søren Kierkegaard, often regarded as the "father of existentialism," articulated a vision of human life as a progressive journey through distinct stages of existence. These stages are not rigid categories into which people are permanently locked, but rather existential modes or ways of being, reflecting qualitative shifts in selfhood and meaning. Kierkegaard presents this framework to demonstrate how human beings move from superficiality toward authenticity, ultimately confronting the paradox of faith. The three stages—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—structure his phenomenology of existence.

The Aesthetic Stage

The aesthetic stage is characterized by immediacy, pleasure-seeking, and avoidance of deeper responsibilities. The aesthetic person is concerned with satisfying desires, pursuing beauty, art, and entertainment, and escaping boredom.

- **Immediacy and Escape**: For Kierkegaard, boredom is "the root of all evil" (*Either/Or*, 1843), and the aesthete tries to fill the emptiness of existence with diversions.
- **The "Rotation Method"**: Kierkegaard describes how aesthetes attempt to maximize pleasure by constantly rotating experiences and avoiding commitment. This method reflects a refusal to be deeply invested in anything.
- **Lack of Authentic Identity**: Though this stage appears appealing, it lacks grounding. The aesthete avoids responsibility for their own selfhood and therefore lives in despair, albeit often unconscious despair.

A literary example Kierkegaard cites is the seducer Johannes in *Either/Or, Part I*, who manipulates others for pleasure but remains inwardly hollow. The aesthetic life, though seemingly free, is enslaved by immediacy.

The Ethical Stage

The ethical stage arises when the individual recognizes the emptiness of purely aesthetic living and embraces responsibility. This stage is defined by the pursuit of moral duty, integrity, and universal principles.

- **Commitment and Responsibility**: Unlike the aesthete, the ethical individual accepts obligations, whether through marriage, profession, or civic duty. The turn inward brings seriousness and depth.
- **Universality of Moral Law**: The ethical stage reflects Immanuel Kant's influence on Kierkegaard. Here, the agent obeys laws that are universally valid—ethical demands apply to all rational beings.
- **Selfhood and Continuity**: By willing ethical duty, the individual matures into a more coherent self, no longer tossed about by momentary pleasures.

Marriage is Kierkegaard's archetypal example of the ethical life, representing a life of responsibility and commitment. However, the ethical stage still remains within the realm of universality: its laws and truths are rational, communicable, and socially recognized.

The Religious Stage

The religious stage surpasses the ethical through paradoxical faith. While the ethical represents universality, the religious requires the individual to face God directly, beyond universals.

- **The Leap of Faith**: The religious stage is not attained rationally but through a leap, where the individual abandons reliance on systematic ethics and embraces faith in the absurd. This leap is not irrational, but supra-rational, beyond human calculation.
- **The Knight of Faith**: Kierkegaard contrasts the "tragic hero" (who sacrifices for a universal cause) with the "knight of faith," who suspends universality for a higher command from God. Only the knight of faith stands alone before the Absolute, isolated from the comfort of universal justification.

- **Paradox and Inwardness**: Here, "truth is subjectivity." The individual's inward relation to God becomes more important than external validation or ethical approval. This truth appears scandalous to those still in the ethical stage.

Abraham as the Exemplary Case

Kierkegaard's most famous example of the religious stage is Abraham in *Fear and Trembling* (1843/1985). God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. From the ethical/universal perspective, this is murder, a monstrous act. From the religious perspective, however, it represents absolute faith in God's higher command.

- **Ethical Contradiction**: Abraham must suspend the universal ethical law ("thou shalt not kill") for a paradoxical divine requirement.
- **Faith as Paradox**: Abraham cannot justify his action to others—it remains incomprehensible. His act hinges not on rational certainty but on trust in the absurd possibility that God would not truly forsake him.
- **Isolation of the Believer**: Abraham's anguish, or "fear and trembling," reflects the loneliness of the knight of faith. Only God can validate his decision, not human law or society.

Thus, the religious stage demonstrates the climax of Kierkegaardian existence: where faith transcends reason, ethics, and universal law in an existential leap toward inward authenticity.

The Journey Between Stages

Movement between stages is not automatic. Many remain trapped in the aesthetic, seduced by comfort or pleasure. Some reach the ethical but cannot endure the paradox of the religious. Kierkegaard emphasizes that this movement is a personal, inward task: no social reform or philosophical system guarantees progress. The leap into the religious is lonely, passionate, and irreducibly subjective.

In this way, Kierkegaard's three stages map the existential path from superficiality, through duty, into faith. They reveal life not as linear progression but as a series of crises—moments when individuals must risk everything in pursuit of authentic existence

Truth as Subjectivity

For Kierkegaard, the highest truth is not objective knowledge but subjective passion. Faith cannot be reasoned into existence; it is internally embraced in commitment. "Truth is subjectivity" means that genuine existence depends not on conformity to external objectivity, but on inward appropriation of meaning (Evans, 2006). This "subjective truth" can appear paradoxical, even contradictory, when viewed externally.

Through this hermeneutic, individuals confront existential decisions that tear them away from comfortable universals. It is here that Vibhishana's choice resonates profoundly with Kierkegaard's thought.

The Ramayana's Ethical Crisis: Vibhishana's Defection

In Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Vibhishana emerges as Ravana's pious brother, who repeatedly counsels him against arrogance and unrighteousness. While Ravana insists on retaining Sita, Vibhishana argues for her return, warning that adharma will lead to Lanka's destruction (Goldman & Goldman, 1996). When his counsel is rejected, and he is humiliated by Ravana and peers, Vibhishana crosses enemy lines to offer himself in service to Rama.

This act, dramatic and divisive, sits at the center of ethical ambiguity. From the perspective of *rajadharma* (duty to king) and *kulasneha* (familial loyalty), Vibhishana sins gravely by abandoning his brother. Yet from the perspective of *sanatana dharma* (eternal righteousness), his recognition that Rama embodies cosmic order legitimizes his choice.

Vibhishana explains himself by stating that loyalty to adharma is no loyalty at all. Thus he frames his betrayal as fealty to cosmic truth rather than personal gain. Still, the act cannot be reconciled easily with ethical universals; it is at once righteous and transgressive.

Vibhishana's Leap of Faith

The Ethical Dilemma

Vibhishana stands at a crossroads between two ethical frameworks:

- **Obligations to kinship and sovereignty** (ethical universals within society).
- **Obligations to cosmic dharma** (a higher moral order not reducible to family loyalty).

Remaining with Ravana would have been the "ethical" choice in the Kierkegaardian sense of duty to social universality. Abandoning Ravana for Rama meant transgressing the ethical—but not in the aesthetic sense of selfish indulgence. Rather, he acted in line with inward passion and higher responsibility.

The Religious Transition

This act parallels Abraham's paradox. Both Abraham and Vibhishana suspend the ethical, moving into the religious sphere:

- Abraham violates the ethical law against killing to obey God's command.
- Vibhishana violates the ethical law of loyalty for the sake of righteousness embodied in Rama.

In both cases, the decision can only appear as scandalous betrayal when judged by external standards. Its authenticity lies in the inward commitment to a higher telos.

Kierkegaard would call Vibhishana a "knight of faith"—not heroic by human standards, not universally comprehended, but singular in his paradoxical act of inward truth.

Dharma as Subjective Truth

Traditional Interpretations of Dharma

In classical Hindu thought, dharma is both universal and particular. Manu's *Dharmashastra* and other texts outline obligations based on varna, ashrama, and social role (Olivelle, 2004). In epic literature, dharma is portrayed situationally—context and motive matter. Conflicts of dharma (*dharma-sankata*) occur when duties clash, leaving no clear universal law.

Traditional exegesis usually defends Vibhishana by appealing to *sanatana dharma*: he aligned with Rama, who is *maryada purushottama* (the ideal man and embodiment of dharma). Thus, he becomes a righteous figure validated by Rama's acceptance (Brockington, 1998).

Kierkegaardian Inflection

Yet Kierkegaard's philosophy introduces a sharper existential dimension. Instead of seeing Vibhishana as simply fulfilling external dharma, we see him as enacting inward faith. His choice is not obvious, nor externally prescribed. He acts amidst uncertainty, without any assurance that Rama will accept him, relying only on inward conviction.

Vibhishana thus demonstrates that dharma is not merely objective code but also subjective appropriation. In choosing against social universals, he reveals that authentic dharma sometimes requires personal leaps into paradoxical faith.

Comparative Philosophy: Dialogues Between Traditions

The cross-cultural dialogue between Ramayana and Kierkegaard raises important philosophical insights:

- **On Universalism vs. Subjectivity**: Indian dharma traditions emphasize cosmic universality. Kierkegaard emphasizes individual subjectivity. Vibhishana becomes a meeting point where universality and subjectivity converge—he aligns with cosmic dharma through personal inward decision.

- **On Betrayal and Authenticity**: Both traditions grapple with moments when apparent betrayal (of kin, of ethics) paradoxically becomes fidelity to higher truth. This tension is exemplified in Abraham and Vibhishana alike.
- **On Faith Beyond Culture**: Kierkegaard worked from Christian categories, yet his existential notion of faith maps meaningfully onto dharmic contexts. Similarly, Vibhishana illustrates universal existential dilemmas: the risk, paradox, and passion of authentic truth.

This comparative approach broadens the horizons of both traditions, showing that Kierkegaardian subjectivity can illuminate the Ramayana, while Indian categories enrich existential philosophy.

Vibhishana's Reception: Betrayer or Saint?

Across history, Vibhishana has been remembered ambiguously. Many folk tellings depict him as treacherous, tarnished by betrayal of kin. In Lanka's national memory, he is sometimes regarded as a traitor complicit in the destruction of Ravana (Ricl, 2007). Conversely, devotional traditions elevate him as a model of righteous surrender to Rama.

This dual reception underscores Kierkegaard's insight: the knight of faith can never be understood universally. From the outside, the leap of faith appears contradictory—either treachery or sainthood. From within, it is the authentic expression of subjective truth.

Contemporary Implications

Vibhishana's Kierkegaardian reading has contemporary resonance in ethics and politics. How do individuals today navigate conflicting duties—loyalty to nation versus loyalty to humanity, solidarity with community versus conscience? Vibhishana's decision reminds us that authenticity cannot always rest in universals. Sometimes truth requires the courage to stand apart, risking misunderstanding for the sake of higher commitment.

Conclusion

Vibhishana stands as a unique figure in the Ramayana whose existential decision embodies Kierkegaard's concept of truth as subjectivity. Faced with irreconcilable ethical demands, he chooses not on the basis of external universal law but through an inward leap of faith. By joining Rama, Vibhishana becomes a knight of faith who suspends the ethical (loyalty to kin and sovereign) for a higher telos (dharma and cosmic order).

This comparative exploration of Kierkegaard and the Ramayana demonstrates that dharma is not merely universal obligation but also existential and subjective. What may appear as betrayal externally can be authenticity inwardly. By situating Vibhishana through Kierkegaard's existential categories, we not only expand interpretive horizons for the Ramayana but also affirm the global relevance of Kierkegaard's insight: that truth, ultimately, is subjectivity, and faith is a risk that demands inward passion.

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LEARNER INTEREST AND GAME-BASED LEARNING: A SYNERGISTIC APPROACH TO LANGUAGE SKILL ENHANCEMENT

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Introduction

In the domain of language acquisition, technology has opened up new frontiers for learning. Game based learning can be a tool for enhancement of language learning ability. Now a days students are much involved in playing online games like PUB G, Free fire and Call of duty. The Researcher noticed that the students spend hours playing these games in the classrooms and break hours in the college. the researcher also notice that the students also lagging in communication skills. The researcher decide to turn their interest in playing these games into learning platform.

The Japanese cultural anthropologist Mizuko Ito mention about interest driven learning in her book, *Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design,* that Interest-driven learning is a learner-centred approach that emphasizes the role of personal interests and intrinsic motivation in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In this framework, learners are more likely to engage deeply and persistently when the subject matter aligns with their passions or hobbies. Research suggests that when students pursue learning tasks that are personally meaningful, they exhibit higher levels of engagement, creativity, and sustained attention (Ito et al. 15). According to authors Daniel Edelson and joseph Donald, In the context of language learning, interest-driven activities such as multiplayer gaming provide a dynamic environment where learners naturally use and practice the target language to achieve goals, communicate with peers, and solve problems collaboratively (Edelson and Joseph 122). According to the psychologist Lev Vygotsky, The authentic use of language, fueled by interest, transforms learning from a passive intake of rules into an active, social, and contextual process (Vygotsky 86). Thus the students interest in playing the games can be taken as a platform for enhancing language learning ability.

Objectives of the study

- To explore how interest-driven learning in multiplayer online games influences learners' motivation to improve their English language skills.
- To identify which aspects of language acquisition, such as speaking fluency, listening comprehension, vocabulary expansion are most impacted through game based interaction.
- To examine the language acquisition that gained during gameplay and how these impact the real time English usage.

Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine how interest-driven learning in multiplayer games through interacting in English language. The study combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of learners' language leaning ability.

Participants

The participants were 80 undergraduate engineering students aged 19 to 22 from an engineering college in Salem, Tamilnadu. All students had basic English knowledge and were regular players of multiplayer games such as PUBG, Free Fire, and Call of Duty. Target population was selected by voluntary participation.

Research Design

The current study followed a 30 day intervention , where participants were asked to play their preferred multiplayer battle game for at least three hours daily. The students were instructed to speak and interact through English. The players were randomly formed and rotated once every 5 days to encourage varied peer interaction. Participants used

in-game voice chat features to interact. The recorded audio tape were submitted to the instructor every seek during the intervention.

Data Collection Methods

The participants were diagnosed through pre-test conducted by the researcher. In the pre-test, their speaking skills, listening comprehension and knowledge of vocabulary were tested.

In order to examine closely, how the interacting in the games, the audio recording of live gameplay sessions were collected as data. Participants were instructed to record their in-game voice chats while playing multiplayer games such as PUBG, Free Fire, and Call of Duty during intervention period. A total of 90 recorded sessions were collected, each ranging from 20 to 30 minutes. The recorded sessions were analysed by the researcher to identify key features of language use, such as vocabulary range, phrases and sentence structure.

Data Analysis

The recorded data were analysed through qualitative thematic approach. The aim was to find out how students use English in spontaneous, interactive settings during the multiplayer gameplay. The analysis focused on the participant's use of vocabulary, phrases, sentence structure and pronunciation. An example of their language use was the repetition of imperative phrases like "Cover me," "Hold position," or "Enemy spotted at 4 o'clock." Players used directional vocabulary such as "We should flank them from the right" , "we must get it from left side". The transcripts also revealed that collaborative language practices, such as clarifying doubts, for instance, a student asked, "What's loot?" and a teammate responded, "Loot means items or weapons you collect." The researcher also observed that language switching were happened during the interaction, they tend to speak in their native language then automatically they corrected themselves, for example one student says "Aiyo, he's behind, sorry, he's behind the rock" . This pattern shows that the participants' growing confidence and awareness of using English language consciously.

Furthermore, fluency markers such as reduced hesitation, increased sentence complexity, and quicker response times were noted towards the end of the intervention. These findings shows that the multiplayer games, when interest-driven and language focused, provide an intuitive platform for enhancing language learning abilities, particularly listening and speaking competence.

Limitations of the Study

- The current study included only 30 engineering students from one college, which limits general results.
- The total days of intervention is thirty so long-term language improvement was not measured.
- Scope for Further Research
- Include more students from different courses, colleges, or backgrounds.
- Conduct the study over a longer period to see long-term effects.

Conclusion

The current study explored the potential of multiplayer online games as active, interest-driven environments for English language learning. Over a thirty day intervention, engineering students engaged in interaction through English language while playing online games like PUBG, Free Fire, and Call of Duty. The findings strongly support the idea that virtual battlefields, when approached with a focus of language learning, offers better opportunities for enhancing language learning ability.

The analysis of recorded data of the gameplay sessions revealed notable improvements in learners' vocabulary usage, listening comprehension, sentence formation and pronunciation. These outcomes were highlighted the greater motivation, reduced anxiety, and a more enjoyable language learning experience compared to traditional classroom methods. The current study concludes that interest-driven, game-based learning motivates learners and provides a meaningful and effective context for language acquisition.

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NARRATIVE NUISANCES OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE TALE (2018), AND THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER (2012)

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Abstract:

The Tale (2018) and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012) are the narratives dealing with the aspect of child sexual abuse. Both the narratives deal with the aspect in their nuanced manner. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012) deals with abuse at multiple levels. Charlie, the main character of the narrative, getting himself abused at a very young age is extremely sensitive towards his peers and the abuse in their lives. Abuse is dealt in the movie at multiple levels from abusive cisgender relationships to brutal homosexual ones. The latest narrative on the subject *The Tale* is a novel way of assessing the fabrication of adult memory of abuse. Both these narratives on abuse would be looked at parallelly. This would provide us the ways to understand child sexual abuse through its ways of representation.

Characters are the survivors of sexual abuse, a female survivor in the case of *The Tale,* and a male survivor in the case of *The Perks of Being Wallflower.* We would try to asses some pertinent questions such as: what stories do they tell themselves in order to survive? How do they deal with childhood trauma? We meet the characters in their adulthood, how as adults do they communicate with the unspeakable childhood?

Jennifer Fox the writer and director of her autobiographical narrative *The Tale,* differentiates between rape and child sexual abuse. Very rightly she mentions that child sexual abuse has the aspect of manipulation to it. In her Interview with Riley Chow Fox mentons that: “child abuse is done by working on child’s psyche, to bring them into a feeling that this is someone who cares about you and loves you. It isn’t done by violence at all and that’s what’s so difficult about child sexual abuse.”

The Tale narrates the entire process of this manipulation. The little girl Jenny, the portrayal of Jennifer Fox herself, is depicted to go through abuse with the minutest details. Jenny is the oldest of five siblings growing up in a crowded Jewish family. The narration starts with 40 years old Jenny coming across letters written by her to the riding coach Mrs. G and running coach Bob. These letters are from the summer she took a riding lesson at the mere age of 13. At a young age, she assessed her relationship with Bob as a love affair, while reading it after decades makes her revisit the situation with new light.

Jenny is made to feel protected, loved and special the things which she is craving. Her needs are identified by Mrs. G and Bob to be manipulated for their own gain. For the first time, someone was taking interest in a flat-chested, flat-hipped girl, who looked like a small boy. For the first time, someone was telling their secrets to her, and for the first time she was validated for her anti-establishment ideas. All these new experiences makes her do whatever was required to be a part of their cult. To an extent that she was ready to form a sexual relationship with this person too. Thus it becomes the prime example of manipulation of the child psyche.

Similar happens in *The Perk of Being a Wallflower.* The abuser here is Charlie’s beloved aunt, visiting the family on Christmas. From the stitch marks on her wrists, we can conclude that she herself must have faced the abuse. But the abused becomes the abuser here. She abuses Charlie sexually telling him to keep mum about it. Fortunately/Unfortunately she dies the same Christmas night in an accident. Charlie’s birthday, his aunt’s death, and Christmas fall on the same day, thus the trauma of abuse and death culminates on the ‘happy’ occasion of Christmas and birthday. He is asked to keep it a secret.

It becomes interesting to process the character’s journey from the point they were abused to the point where we meet them in their life journey. We meet Jennifer at 40 and Charlie at around 18. Both Charlie and Jennifer are in

denial. Jennifer thought of the abuse as a love story while Charlie blacked out the entire event and images from his memory. Both of them see their perpetrators as someone who could never even think of hurting them.

An Individual's reaction to the trauma of sexual abuse becomes important to study. Jennifer Fox has the theory of calling the individual survivor rather than revictimizing them by calling them, victims. Being the daughter of holocaust survivors she has always heard stories of surviving the darkest traumas, in her interview with Terry Gross she says that the word victim scares her more than the event itself.

by putting the word victim on a child or even an adult, you take away agency. And even though, technically, I had little agency because I was too young, the false even belief that you have agency is what keeps us alive and keeps us actually surviving and going beyond trauma. So when you make a child a victim, you destroy the thread that they have to get out of suffering. Sorry for this very archaic way - I don't have words for it - but, of course, technically, I was a victim. I don't use the word victim myself anymore. I use the word survivor because survivor is what I feel like. I got in. I got out. I survived. Most people survive. It doesn't mean there isn't damage. It doesn't mean there isn't a hurt. It doesn't mean there aren't things that I was traumatized about. But let's preference the story of the muscle and the strength and not preference the story of the weakness.

She wants to focus on a tale of survival rather than of weakness. Because survivors of child sexual abuse do have their own personal 'thread' by which they hang on to get out of it. She is not denying the pain it causes but her focal point is on the 'The Tale' which made them survive. We can also assess Charlie's process of survival in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower.* Charlie is in denial of what happened to him by narrating to others as well as himself that his aunt was his favourite person. Until the end of the narrative, the viewer believes Charlie, until it comes out from his unconscious that his aunt herself was the abuser. She told him to keep it a secret which he hides from himself too. His remote wish as the child that the person hurting him should die becomes true and thus he believes himself to be the killer of his aunt.

Both the children, Charlie and Jenny construct the narrative of their personal survival. But *The Tale* is distinct on its own as it shows the process of this construction. Portrays the circumstances under which the child is able to form such a narration. How she forms the narrative that she was the one who broke up with Bob, she ended the relationship even after a long perusal by Bob. Thus she is the master of her own story. While Charlie's story is narrated as that of the victim. One who had no power over things, one who had to succumb to others' wishes and thus spent his life until the epiphany and confession moment in misery. He is portrayed as alone and depressed, extremely affected by the trauma.

Fox is not denying this trauma as individuals might react differently. But she is asking us to circulate the stories of strength. She says that we need to take utmost care when working with children in helping them punish their abuser:

as adults, we don't understand that when we talk to kids, we're also creating horror. When you go to a child and say to them, you poor victim, you are destroying the inner structure that's keeping them alive. Instead, we should be basically propping up the parts of them that have gotten them through this ordeal by talking about survival skills and instinct, and strength.

Such survival stories will tell them that they are strong, that they come from good stock, and that they will persevere and prevail. These are the kind of stories that actually help kids to be survivors, and help them to be resilient. These are the kind of stories we have to prefer with children. As mentioned above the context of being a Jewish child in an overcrowded house affects the child. Hearing the stories of surviving the holocaust makes up Fox's temperament towards life as such.

On the other hand, *Perks* also is a story of survival but told in the manner of victimhood. He is introduced to us as a weakling who comes to strength after the confession. Although it also tells the story of courage but more of the story is about coming to terms with himself. He is shown to be passing through the ordeal of multiple suicidal attempts before gathering up the strength. His ordeal is portrayed as painful. Fox believes in telling more stories with lesser violence on the character who had already suffered once.

In *The Tale* communication of the older self-assessing, the memory of a younger self is the unique quality of the narration to portray abuse in a novel manner. The older self finds the letters written by the younger version and this communication between the two selves of a single person is interestingly woven. The capacity of a younger person

to put perspective on things as crucial as trauma is looked at critically by the older self. Through this assessment of the younger by the older self, the older self also learns to put things into perspective. Such inquiry into memory showcases the gullibility of a child. There is a lack of depth, in analyzing into child's psyche, as well as in the adult's building of a narrative based on this psyche in most child sexual abuse narratives, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* being one of them.

Perks deals with issues of abuse along with other issues in the movie, while *Tale* is solely based on the child who survives such an abuse. The story follows only one character and her journey. This aspect also makes *The Tale* more focused.

Another narrative difference in *The Tale* from other narratives is that there is no one epiphany moment in the movie which makes the character realize the trauma. *Perks* have those moments at the end of the movie when he is able to accept the childhood trauma finally as well as confess it to others. Giving him the freedom from the bondage of lies that he had been living with. For Fox such abuse narratives are 101, she wanted to attempt something new. In her dialogue with Elena Lazic she mentions the same aspect:

When you tell people about sexual abuse, they think: "Oh my God! It's so horrible!" Or they have this perception of a person who is sexually abused as someone crying in a corner, and it's a big drama. For me, as a survivor, it's not like that. You live with something in a very, again, ordinary way. It's part of you. I don't see this event as horrific in the way *you* see it as horrific. I see it as part of my life, and I'm investigating a narrative in my life, not something from a horror film. So I wanted to show the ordinariness of it all.

For her sexual abuse is not a 'horror film'. It becomes a part of life. Narratives about abuse need not always be as someone bottling up the emotions to be released at a singular moment. In actual life, there is no singular moment that can be separated as the moment of catharsis. People with trauma deal with it on regular basis. The journey towards peace might to an individual through moments of release. *The Tale* makes no changes in past and present, with no big camera moments to suggest these changes.

Fox co-relates this narrative technique with her ideas of survivor-victim. As the singular epiphany moments drives the message of victimhood and weakness. It doesn't address the struggle of the individual. Charlie also is a survivor, he has devised his way. But he is portrayed as someone unable to cope with the situation until his one moment where all the understating and confrontations are expressed. On other hand, Jenny's journey moves in a comparatively stable manner, one step after another. This focus on epiphanic moment also nullifies the idea that the person has lived through the process of coming to terms with trauma with the help of multiple such moments as well as also takes away the focus from a person's journey in a future made up of such moments. Thus, Charlie's episode of suicide at the end of the movie makes us compartmentalize his life into past, present, and future. Past as traumatic, present as reliving, and future as happy. While past, present, and future are mingled into one in *The Tale.*

One of the most critical aspects of *The Tale* is its portrayal of sexual abuse on screen. To depict a sex scene between an adult and a child becomes the critical point. Generally, such scenes are avoided by directors. Symbolically they are shown through suggestions, closed doors, and blackouts. Fox bravely portrays such scenes without hesitation. She feels that these scenes are the prime requirement of the narrative about abuse.

One reason for showing them was to take them out of the box. As child sexual abuse is a taboo topic in our society. We are afraid to talk about it. Because of this child has the fear of no one believing them. Fox is trying to normalize talking about the grotesque reality of our lives. she finds it ironic that in a world where women are put under the threat of violence daily, where we see horrific bloody affairs done on women daily, where sexuality is everywhere, we are not able to talk about child abuse. How we have constructed abuse as some taboo.

In her interview with Elisabeth Subrin, she mentions:

I had a man, the head of an NGO called Promundo say, "You know, for me the message of this film is that you cannot look away." He felt like it was the hand of the director holding his head to look. And I've had many, many people say to me, "Good work." Even [those who work in child abuse,] said, "I didn't understand until I saw these scenes.

Thus her motive to show these scenes in the film is to make people face the issue at hand and not avoid it, or black it out. The horror of these scenes needs no blackout.

Fox explains the entire process of filming such sensitive content with a young actress. With the help of body doubles and CGI, she was protected emotionally as well as physically. Even the scenes where she had to lie down on the bed are shot standing up. Actress's mother as well as representatives from welfare organizations.

In her interview with Ashley Morton, she mentions how, when we are talking about female sexual abuse it is important to consider that as women we are abused at everywhere, from workplaces to the privacy of our homes.

By comparing the narrations of abuse we realize how abuse could be understood. In comparison, Fox provides us with new tools to grope with ideas. Her questioning into the child's psyche and memory is a nuanced way to grasp the child's gullibility in the scheme of things. The idea of not labelling the individual as a victim but a survivor, giving them the agency to be independent of their trauma. Seeing trauma as a part of life rather than life itself. Even showcasing the bold sex scenes for the sake of bringing the taboo topics out of the box. Comparing these aspects with other abuse narratives makes us realize the need for such narrations.

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WHISPERS OF TRANSGRESSION: ADULTERY AND SUBVERSIVE DESIRE IN WOMEN'S FOLK SONGS OF MEDIEVAL RAJASTHAN

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Abstract

This paper explores the theme of adultery in the women's folk songs of medieval Rajasthan, examining how seemingly simple lyrical expressions encoded complex negotiations of desire, honor, and social transgression. While elite courtly chronicles and legal codes depicted adultery as a moral and legal crime threatening the fabric of caste and kinship, women's oral traditions—*ghoriyo*, *banjara geet*, and *jhoola songs*—often reimagined forbidden love with layered voices of longing, rebellion, and subtle critique. These songs, performed in intimate and communal spaces, blurred the boundary between sanctioned devotion to the husband and unsanctioned passion beyond marriage. By analyzing recurring motifs of clandestine meetings, the absent husband, the enticing lover, and the gossiping community, this study shows how folk literature created a counter-discourse that challenged patriarchal control over female sexuality. Rather than serving merely as moral cautionary tales, many of these songs reveal women's agency in articulating desires outside rigid marital structures. In this sense, adultery in folklore emerges less as a violation and more as a metaphor of freedom, a poetic space where women could speak of passion without fear of direct retribution. The paper situates these songs within broader literary and folkloric trends, drawing comparisons with Bhakti and Sufi poetry, where the language of transgressive love carried spiritual undertones. It also engages with feminist folklore scholarship to reinterpret women's oral traditions not as passive reproductions of patriarchal norms but as vibrant expressions of subversive desire. By foregrounding adultery in folk songs, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of gender, power, and the politics of voice in medieval Rajasthani cultural memory.

Keywords: Adultery**,** Rajasthani Folklore**,** Women's Songs**,** Subversive Desire**,** Medieval Rajasthan**,** Gender and Oral Tradition

Introduction

Adultery has long occupied a contentious place in cultural imaginations across the world, oscillating between condemnation and fascination. In medieval Rajasthan, this tension was deeply embedded within the social structures of caste, kinship, and patriarchy. Legal codes, religious texts, and courtly chronicles depicted adultery as a transgression that destabilized family honor, lineage purity, and the moral order. Yet, in the intimate and largely women-centered domain of oral traditions, particularly in the folk songs sung across Rajasthan, adultery emerged as a site of negotiation—where desire, defiance, and subversive voices could find expression. The study of these songs—*ghoriyo*, *banjara geet*, and *jhoola* songs—reveals a hidden archive of female experience that complicates the patriarchal portrayal of women as passive bearers of honor and chastity. Instead, they highlight women as agents who reimagined their desires in defiance of restrictive codes of morality.

The oral performance of women's folk songs in Rajasthan has historically served as a cultural space for expressing emotions and anxieties that could not be articulated in public, patriarchal domains. Scholars of folklore such as Ann Grodzins Gold and Gloria Raheja have shown how these oral genres encode women's voices of longing, anger, humor, and critique in ways that subvert official discourses (Raheja & Gold, 1994). In particular, folk songs often feature motifs of the absent husband, the alluring stranger, or the clandestine lover, thereby centering women's experiences of desire in contrast to the disciplinary gaze of religious law and community surveillance (Gold, 1997). This suggests that adultery, while condemned in dominant narratives, became a metaphorical and poetic trope for freedom in women's songs—an articulation of desires beyond socially sanctioned marriage.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to foreground adultery not simply as a moral violation but as a cultural idiom through which women voiced subversive desires. By situating these songs within the broader literary traditions of medieval India, particularly Bhakti and Sufi poetry, the analysis draws attention to the ways in which transgressive love—whether spiritual or corporeal—was often articulated in symbolic language. Bhakti poetry frequently framed the devotee's love for the divine in terms of adulterous passion, as seen in the songs of Mirabai,

who envisioned herself as Krishna's lover outside the bounds of social norms (Hawley, 2005). Similarly, Sufi poetry used the metaphor of forbidden love to describe the soul's yearning for union with the divine (Flueckiger, 2006). In this sense, the women's folk songs of Rajasthan, though rooted in lived social realities, resonate with broader South Asian traditions where transgression becomes a mode of spiritual, emotional, and cultural articulation.

Importantly, these songs were performed in communal and intimate contexts: during weddings, harvest festivals, and gatherings of women in courtyards or fields. The performative nature of these traditions ensured that they were not isolated acts of individual rebellion but collective practices of sharing and reimagining desire. As Blackburn (1989) argues in her study of South Indian songs, oral performances allowed women to articulate emotions that otherwise found little recognition in patriarchal society. In Rajasthan, too, this performative dimension created a counterpublic where women's experiences of love, betrayal, longing, and defiance could be voiced without direct confrontation.

This paper adopts a feminist folklore approach to analyze the subversive potential of adultery in these songs. Rather than viewing folklore as passive reproduction of patriarchal values, it draws from feminist scholarship that emphasizes the agency and creativity of women in oral traditions (Chakraborty, 2014; Narayan, 1989). These perspectives shift the lens from adultery as sin to adultery as narrative device—one that enabled women to explore and express desires beyond the rigid marital and caste structures of their society. The act of singing itself becomes a form of resistance: a performance of what could not be spoken in public.

The paper also situates these songs within the historical context of medieval Rajasthan, a society shaped by Rajput ideals of honor (*izzat*), martial masculinity, and rigid codes governing women's sexuality. As scholars have noted, women's bodies became symbols of community honor, and transgressions such as adultery were harshly punished both socially and legally (Gold & Gujar, 2002; Hansen, 1992). Yet the persistence of adultery motifs in folk songs suggests that women found ways to reclaim their voices in cultural spaces where their desires could be imagined, if not lived. This is consistent with what Wadley (2005) observed in her studies of North Indian folklore: that oral traditions often serve as alternative archives of social life, preserving perspectives marginalized in official histories.

By examining recurring motifs such as the absent husband, the secret lover, and the gossiping neighbor, this paper demonstrates how adultery functioned as a symbolic language of both rebellion and survival. These songs did not necessarily advocate for adultery in practice but used its imagery to carve out a space of imaginative freedom for women. In doing so, they blurred the lines between moral cautionary tales and subversive fantasies. As Narayan (1997) points out in her analysis of Himalayan folktales, the ambiguity in folklore allows multiple readings—moral, comic, subversive—depending on the context of performance.

Historical And Cultural Context

To understand the significance of adultery in the women's folk songs of medieval Rajasthan, it is necessary to situate these lyrical traditions within their broader socio-historical framework. Medieval Rajasthan, dominated by Rajput polities and embedded in wider North Indian cultural currents, was a society that valorized honor, kinship, and martial masculinity. Women, within this order, were often reduced to symbols of family and caste prestige. Their sexuality was not their own; rather, it was tightly regulated by kinship structures, legal injunctions, and community surveillance. This historical backdrop illuminates why the recurring theme of adultery in women's folk songs carried such transgressive weight.

At the heart of Rajasthani medieval society were the Rajput ideals of *izzat* (honor) and *maryada* (propriety). These values upheld the collective prestige of the clan and were deeply entwined with the control of women's sexuality. Gold and Gujar (2002) argue that women in Rajasthan were seen as "repositories of honor," their chastity serving as a metaphor for the purity and continuity of the lineage. Adultery, therefore, was not simply a matter of private morality but a direct assault on the social fabric of caste and kinship.

The practice of *purdah* (female seclusion) and the glorification of *sati* (widow immolation) illustrate how patriarchal systems sought to contain and discipline women's bodies. As Hansen (1992) notes in her study of North Indian performance traditions, women's social roles were narrowly circumscribed, with marriage defining their identities and responsibilities. A wife's loyalty and chastity were elevated as the highest virtues, while transgression was portrayed as catastrophic for both family and community.

Yet, this very obsession with regulating women created fertile ground for alternative voices to emerge in cultural spaces outside elite discourses. While chronicles and Dharmaśāstra texts prescribed obedience and fidelity, women's folk songs often imagined alternative realities where passion defied convention.

Legal And Religious Codifications Of Adultery

The legal and religious discourse of medieval India strongly condemned adultery. The *Manusmṛti* and later Dharmaśāstras classified adultery as a grave sin, prescribing severe punishments for women who transgressed marital fidelity (Gold, 1997). Community councils (*panchayats*) in Rajasthan were equally vigilant, often imposing ostracism or physical penalties for illicit liaisons.

Religious traditions, too, sought to regulate desire within sanctioned frameworks. Hindu dharma emphasized the wife's devotion to her husband as a form of religious duty, while Islamic jurisprudence in medieval Rajasthan strictly forbade extramarital relationships. However, in practice, communities often relied on social shame, gossip, and ridicule as mechanisms of control, creating a culture where women's reputations were constantly under surveillance (Raheja & Gold, 1994).

This legal-religious context makes the presence of adultery motifs in women's folk songs all the more striking. Instead of reinforcing prohibitions, these oral traditions often gave voice to women's clandestine longings, transforming adultery from a crime into a metaphor of desire.

Kinship, Marriage, And Women'S Confinement

Marriage in medieval Rajasthan was not simply a personal union but a socio-political arrangement designed to consolidate alliances and preserve caste purity. Raheja and Gold (1994) highlight how women's marriages often involved long periods of separation from their husbands, especially when men were engaged in warfare or service. These absences created conditions where longing, loneliness, and desire found articulation in women's songs. The absent husband became a recurring motif, often juxtaposed with the presence of a seductive lover or the tantalizing possibility of escape.

Wadley (2005) notes that North Indian folklore frequently addressed women's experiences of confinement within marriage, offering symbolic outlets for expressing dissatisfaction. In Rajasthan, songs about adultery reflect this same dynamic, where the strict boundaries of kinship and duty were transgressed through poetic imagination. The gossiping community, another common motif, underscores how women were constantly policed by their neighbors and kin, making the idea of a secret lover both dangerous and exhilarating.

The Bhakti And Sufi Influence

Although women's folk songs in Rajasthan were rooted in everyday experience, they were not isolated from broader literary and devotional traditions. The medieval period was also the era of Bhakti and Sufi movements, both of which employed the language of transgressive love to articulate spiritual devotion. Mirabai, the celebrated Rajasthani saint-poet, famously described her love for Krishna in terms that often transgressed the boundaries of marital fidelity (Hawley, 2005). Her songs blurred the line between divine devotion and conjugal loyalty, echoing the same tensions explored in women's oral traditions.

Similarly, Sufi poets employed metaphors of forbidden love and intoxication to describe the soul's yearning for God (Flueckiger, 2006). These devotional traditions legitimated the use of adulterous or illicit imagery as a vehicle for profound emotional and spiritual truths. In this context, women's folk songs can be seen as part of a larger cultural current in which transgressive desire was reimagined not as moral failure but as a gateway to truth, freedom, or fulfillment.

Women's folk songs in Rajasthan constitute one of the richest archives of oral culture in South Asia. Unlike written chronicles or elite literary works, these oral traditions capture the voices of women who were otherwise excluded from the production of textual knowledge. They exist at the intersection of everyday life, performance, and memory, serving both as entertainment and as vehicles for expressing complex emotions and critiques. In medieval Rajasthan, genres such as *ghoriyo* (marriage songs), *banjara geet* (songs of itinerant communities), and *jhoola* (swing songs) formed vital parts of women's communal and ritual lives. These songs not only reflected the rhythms of domesticity but also encoded subversive narratives of desire, longing, and transgression.

Genres of Women'S Songs

The diversity of women's folk songs in Rajasthan reveals how oral traditions were intertwined with life-cycle rituals, agricultural rhythms, and community gatherings. *Ghoriyo*, for example, were marriage songs performed by women in households and neighborhoods to mark a bride's departure or arrival. While ostensibly celebratory, these songs often carried undertones of anxiety, longing, and critique of marital arrangements. As Raheja and Gold (1994) observe, *ghoriyo* frequently depicted the ambivalence of leaving one's natal home and the uncertainties of conjugal life. Within such contexts, hints of desire outside the prescribed marital bond sometimes surfaced, challenging the ideal of wifely fidelity.

Banjara geet, associated with itinerant trading and nomadic groups, carried motifs of mobility, longing, and illicit encounters. Since these communities were often perceived as existing on the margins of settled society, their songs carried connotations of freedom, danger, and transgression (Gold, 1997). For women in sedentary, tightly controlled village environments, the banjara lover represented a figure of both temptation and escape—an embodiment of the forbidden.

Jhoola or swing songs, often sung during festivals like *Teej* or the monsoon season, were playful yet deeply symbolic. The swinging motion itself evoked metaphors of oscillation between duty and desire, stability and freedom. As Narayan (1997) notes in her studies of Himalayan oral traditions, such songs often provided women a safe space for expressing emotional ambivalence in symbolic forms. In Rajasthan, the *jhoola* song became a vehicle for voicing clandestine desires, where the absent husband and the enticing lover frequently appeared as contrasting figures.

The context of performance is crucial to understanding the power of women's folk songs. These songs were not solitary compositions but communal acts, performed in courtyards, fields, or ritual gatherings. As Blackburn (1989) demonstrates in her study of Tamil women's songs, the collective dimension of oral performance allowed women to articulate sentiments that might have been dangerous or unacceptable in individual speech. Singing in groups, often in call-and-response formats, created a shield of collectivity that diffused individual responsibility while amplifying shared emotions.

In Rajasthan, women's performances were often marked by intimacy and exclusivity. Songs were sung while grinding grain, drawing water, or tending children—activities that men rarely entered. Gold and Gujar (2002) note that these everyday performances created a "women's world" where norms of propriety were relaxed, and humor, irony, and critique thrived. In such spaces, themes like adultery could be sung with playful irony, transforming taboo into shared laughter or whispered complicity.

The performative aspect also enabled improvisation. Folk songs were not fixed texts but living traditions, adapted to particular occasions and audiences. This fluidity meant that singers could introduce motifs of longing, mock community gossip, or even satirize male authority, all under the guise of "entertainment." As Lutgendorf (1991) has argued in his analysis of North Indian performance traditions, improvisation allows oral performers to embed social commentary within seemingly innocuous genres. Women in Rajasthan used this flexibility to encode their desires in subtle, layered ways.

Recurring Motifs of Desire And Transgression

Certain motifs recur across women's folk songs in Rajasthan, giving shape to the ways desire and adultery were articulated in oral tradition. One such motif is the absent husband, whose physical absence opens a space for longing and temptation. In *ghoriyo* and *jhoola* songs, the absent husband is often juxtaposed with the alluring presence of a lover—sometimes a stranger, sometimes a community outsider like the banjara. This juxtaposition highlights women's vulnerability within patriarchal marital systems while also dramatizing their agency in imagining alternatives (Gold, 1994).

Another recurring motif is gossip and surveillance. Songs frequently allude to neighbors or kin who police women's reputations, spreading rumors about illicit encounters. While gossip is depicted as a form of social control, its presence in song also serves to acknowledge women's awareness of these mechanisms and their resilience in navigating them. Raheja and Gold (1994) argue that such references encode both the dangers and the allure of transgression, reminding audiences of the thin line between desire and social disgrace.

The motif of the secret meeting is another common trope, often evoking night-time trysts, stolen glances, or clandestine exchanges. Narayan (1989) emphasizes that such imagery in folklore carries multiple layers of meaning: literal, symbolic, and spiritual. In the context of Rajasthani women's songs, the secret meeting functions both as an erotic fantasy and as a metaphor for hidden desires that could not be expressed openly.

A striking feature of these songs is their reliance on humor and irony to veil subversive content. Adultery is rarely celebrated outright; rather, it is framed through jokes, playful exaggerations, or ironic reversals. For example, songs might mock the absent husband's impotence or naivety, contrasting him with the virility of the lover. Humor allows potentially dangerous sentiments to be voiced in ways that deflect blame, ensuring that women's desires could be shared without triggering overt social sanction (Wadley, 2005).

This strategy resonates with what Hiltebeitel and Erdman (2000) describe in their work on oral epics: the use of comic and ironic devices to question dominant moralities while preserving plausible deniability. In Rajasthan, women's laughter during performances often reinforced the collective subversive power of these songs.

The articulation of adulterous desire in Rajasthani women's songs parallels broader South Asian traditions of devotional poetry. Bhakti poets such as Mirabai frequently used the metaphor of the illicit lover to describe their relationship with the divine (Hawley, 2005). Mirabai's insistence on Krishna as her true consort was itself a form of rebellion against her marital duties, aligning her spiritual devotion with an eroticized transgression.

Sufi poetry, too, employed imagery of forbidden love, intoxication, and longing to articulate the soul's yearning for union with God (Flueckiger, 2006). These traditions legitimated the use of adulterous metaphors as vehicles for profound truths, thereby creating cultural resonance for women's folk songs that similarly employed illicit desire as metaphor. Though not explicitly devotional, Rajasthani women's songs echoed these broader traditions, situating personal longing within a shared cultural idiom of transgression.

Oral Tradition As Cultural Memory

Women's folk songs are more than just expressions of individual emotions; they function as repositories of cultural memory. Gold (1997) emphasizes that oral traditions in Rajasthan preserved women's perspectives across generations, creating a counter-archive that complicates the male-dominated histories of chronicles and law codes. By repeatedly voicing motifs of desire, absence, and transgression, these songs inscribed women's experiences into cultural memory, ensuring their survival despite societal attempts at silencing.

This capacity to encode memory through performance underscores the resilience of oral traditions. As Narayan (1997) demonstrates in her studies of folktales, oral narratives carry the power of ambiguity, allowing communities to adapt meanings to changing contexts. In Rajasthan, women's songs of adultery preserved a space for imagining freedom, even as historical conditions shifted around them.

Motifs serve as recurring narrative and symbolic devices that enable oral traditions to convey layered meanings. In the women's folk songs of medieval Rajasthan, motifs surrounding adultery reflect not only individual experiences but also broader cultural tensions between desire, duty, and social control. Through these motifs, women negotiated the boundaries of sexuality and voice, articulating longing, irony, and critique within communal performance. This section explores the most prominent motifs: the absent husband, the secret lover, clandestine meetings, gossip and surveillance, and the use of humor and irony. Each of these motifs highlights the ways adultery was reimagined as metaphor, offering women a poetic language for subversive desire.

The Absent Husband

The absent husband is one of the most pervasive motifs in women's songs across Rajasthan. In *ghoriyo* and *jhoola* songs, the bride or wife frequently laments her husband's absence, whether due to war, trade, or service to the ruler. As Gold (1997) observes, this absence created both emotional and narrative space for imagining alternative relationships. While the lament often begins in tones of grief and loneliness, it quickly transitions into ambivalence, where longing shifts toward the possibility of another man filling the void.

The absent husband motif thus reflects the lived realities of medieval Rajasthan, where Rajput men often spent long periods away from home in service of martial obligations. Raheja and Gold (1994) note that women's songs simultaneously acknowledge the pain of absence and subvert the expectation of unwavering fidelity by entertaining

the idea of desire elsewhere. In doing so, the songs highlight the tension between social duty and personal longing, with adultery functioning as an imaginative escape from confinement.

The Secret Lover

The figure of the secret lover often enters songs as a contrast to the absent husband. Sometimes he is a banjara, an itinerant trader embodying mobility and freedom (Gold, 1994). At other times, he is depicted as a neighbor or stranger whose allure disrupts the monotony of domestic life. In all cases, the lover represents temptation, danger, and the thrill of the forbidden.

This motif resonates with Bhakti traditions, where the illicit lover symbolizes divine passion. Mirabai's devotion to Krishna, described in terms of an illicit union outside marital bonds, echoes the folk songs' use of the lover as a figure of transgression (Hawley, 2005). Similarly, in Sufi poetry, the forbidden beloved embodies spiritual longing (Flueckiger, 2006). In Rajasthani women's songs, the secret lover does not necessarily represent divine truth but instead reflects women's capacity to reimagine their own erotic subjectivity.

By voicing attraction to a secret lover, women singers articulated desires that official discourses sought to silence. Narayan (1989) argues that folklore often operates through "dual voices"—one that conforms outwardly to social norms and another that encodes critique or rebellion. In the motif of the lover, this duality is clear: while the songs may superficially reaffirm loyalty to the husband, they simultaneously indulge in fantasies of transgressive desire.

Clandestine Meetings

Another recurring motif is the clandestine meeting between the woman and her lover. These meetings are often set at night, under the cover of darkness, or in secluded spaces like groves, fields, or courtyards. The imagery of secrecy heightens the tension between desire and danger, underscoring the precariousness of transgression.

Blackburn (1989) has shown in her study of South Indian oral songs that clandestine encounters often symbolize more than literal acts—they serve as metaphors for hidden emotions, unsanctioned aspirations, and the permeability of social boundaries. In Rajasthani women's songs, the secret meeting functions similarly. Even when no actual liaison occurred, the metaphor of secrecy allowed women to articulate suppressed desires in symbolic form.

These clandestine moments also reflect the structure of women's lives in patriarchal households. Restricted by seclusion (*purdah*) and surveillance, women's experiences of intimacy were tightly controlled. By imagining or voicing secret encounters, singers articulated an alternative to their everyday confinement, creating a poetic counter-space where the impossible became thinkable (Raheja & Gold, 1994).

Gossip And Surveillance

Songs of adultery frequently reference gossip, rumor, and the policing of women's reputations. The gossiping neighbor, the watchful mother-in-law, or the critical community appear as recurrent characters who embody the mechanisms of patriarchal surveillance. These figures represent the social risks of transgression, reminding singers and audiences alike of the consequences of stepping outside marital norms.

Yet, the inclusion of gossip in song also signals women's awareness of and resistance to such control. Humor often transforms the gossiping neighbor into a figure of ridicule, undermining her authority. Wadley (2005) points out that gossip in folklore often reflects the dynamics of power, where women simultaneously suffer from and manipulate reputational discourse. In Rajasthani songs, gossip is both threat and opportunity: it constrains women's behavior but also provides a stage for irony, where community policing itself becomes a subject of laughter.

This motif also highlights the communal dimension of adultery. Unlike private romances, adulterous liaisons in folklore are always entangled with social surveillance, underscoring the impossibility of secrecy in tightly knit rural societies. By referencing gossip, songs foreground the tension between private desire and public morality.

Humor, Irony, And Play

Perhaps the most striking motif in these songs is their reliance on humor and irony. Adultery, a theme fraught with moral danger, is often treated with playfulness. Songs mock the absent husband's impotence, exaggerate the lover's

charms, or poke fun at the gossiping neighbor. This use of humor allows dangerous sentiments to be voiced without overtly challenging patriarchal norms.

Hiltebeitel and Erdman (2000) describe irony in Indian oral epics as a strategy for "veiling dissent," where critique is embedded in laughter. In Rajasthani women's songs, irony functions similarly. The humor transforms adultery into a safe subject, protecting singers from direct censure while allowing audiences to enjoy the subversive thrill. Gold (1994) emphasizes that laughter in women's performances created solidarity, reinforcing communal bonds while also affirming shared desires and frustrations.

Humor also complicates interpretation. Was the song merely a joke? Or did it encode genuine longing? This ambiguity is central to folklore, which thrives on layered meanings. Narayan (1997) argues that oral traditions deliberately cultivate multiple interpretations, allowing different audiences to hear different messages. For women, this ambiguity provided plausible deniability: one could always insist the song was "just for fun" even as it carried deeper significance.

Taken together, these motifs show how adultery functioned less as literal advocacy and more as metaphor. The absent husband dramatized loneliness, the lover symbolized temptation and freedom, clandestine meetings embodied hidden desires, gossip represented social constraint, and humor provided protective cover. In this symbolic register, adultery became a poetic language through which women explored themes of passion, confinement, and rebellion.

As Raheja and Gold (1994) argue, women's folklore in Rajasthan constituted a counter-discourse that challenged the rigidity of caste and kinship systems. By embedding transgression in song, women carved out imaginative spaces of agency within otherwise constrained lives. Adultery, in this sense, was less an act of betrayal and more a metaphorical rebellion—a whisper of freedom carried on communal voices.

Conclusion

The historical and cultural context of medieval Rajasthan reveals the deeply gendered structures that sought to discipline women's sexuality. Against this backdrop, the folk songs that featured adultery motifs emerge as radical, even if subtle, counter-discourses. While legal and religious frameworks condemned adultery as a dangerous threat to social order, women's oral traditions reimagined it as a poetic metaphor of freedom and longing. The next section will turn to the songs themselves, exploring the genres, performance contexts, and recurring motifs that shaped this vibrant oral tradition. The examination of women's folk songs in Rajasthan underscores how oral traditions functioned as subversive spaces where desire could be articulated beyond patriarchal constraints. Genres such as *ghoriyo*, *banjara geet*, and *jhoola* enabled women to embed narratives of adultery within the rhythms of everyday performance, balancing humor, irony, and metaphor to veil transgressive content. Far from being passive reproductions of patriarchal morality, these songs demonstrate women's creative agency in reimagining their lives and desires. By situating these oral traditions within both their performance contexts and their resonances with Bhakti and Sufi poetics, this study reveals how adultery emerged not simply as a forbidden act but as a metaphorical language of freedom, survival, and subversion. The motifs of adultery in Rajasthani women's folk songs provide crucial insights into how oral traditions encoded subversive desires. By deploying figures such as the absent husband, the secret lover, and the gossiping community, women articulated the tension between social duty and personal longing. Through humor and irony, they transformed dangerous themes into communal play, preserving ambiguity while sharing dissent. These motifs reveal adultery not as moral failure but as poetic metaphor, allowing women to voice passions and critiques that could not be spoken in daily life.

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A TALE OF TWO TONGUES: STUDY OF UNIVERSAL THEMES IN HINDI REMAKES OF REGIONAL CINEMA

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Abstract

A 'canon' in literature on any language, at its formation, carries one basic idea and that is 'universal emotions.' Any great work of art that joins that club of 'world literature' would have at its core project some basic human emotion that crosses the spatio-temporal boundaries and appeals to every individual. The English language went on to become a world language. A bridge that connects countries of different languages and therefore the canon of literature are either works originally written in English or translations into English language. Basically they were rewritten in a language that is accessible to a wider range of audience.

The central focus of this paper is also the same. The study focuses on a selection of popular Hindi remakes, including *Singham*, *Hera Pheri*, *Bhool Bhulaiya*, *Drishyam*, *Kabir Singh*, *Ghajini*, *Saathiya*, *Dhadak*, and *Shaitaan*. The central argument posits that the enduring appeal and commercial viability of these remakes are rooted not in novel narratives, but in the universal human emotions and themes that the original regional stories effectively explore. By transcending linguistic and geographical barriers, these films tap into a shared emotional vocabulary related to love, loss, revenge, family, and redemption. The paper will explore how these remakes act as cultural bridges, introducing stories and narrative styles from diverse Indian regions to a broader national audience. Ultimately, the study concludes that the commercial success of these remakes is a testament to the power of universal emotions to connect with audiences across diverse cultural landscapes, making a compelling case for their continued relevance in the Indian film industry.

Keywords: Bollywood, Cultural Impact, Hindi Cinema, Remakes, Regional Films, Universal Emotions.

Thematic Foundation and Cultural Translation

India is not cinematically monolithic; it is a tapestry woven from multiple linguistic and cultural narratives, including films from Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, and Gujarati industries.[2] These regional stories often excel at capturing hyperlocal identities and specific societal nuances, yet their influence has historically been restricted by linguistic barriers.[4] The process of remaking a successful regional film into Hindi cinema functions as a critical act of cultural translation.[3] Hindi remakes introduce stories and narrative styles from these diverse regions to a significantly wider, pan-Indian national audience, thereby acting as "cultural bridges".[1]

The imperative for these remakes is not merely creative but commercial: they leverage source material that has already proven its artistic and commercial merit in its local market, often achieving immense success (e.g., *Sairat* joining the ₹100 crore club regionally).[5] This validation de-risks the investment for Bollywood, which then applies its superior production scale and vast distribution network to maximize the film's reach.

The adaptation process, however, necessitates a difficult negotiation, balancing the preservation of the original's regional authenticity and thematic strength against the inevitable pressure of "homogenizing effects of national cinematic representation".[3] Filmmakers engaging in cultural adaptation often view this process not as simple imitation, but as routing an original idea "through the Indian heart," embedding it within mainstream cultural and societal norms to ensure resonance with the mass market.[6]

The enduring commercial appeal and high financial returns of a selected group of Hindi remakes—including *Singham*, *Hera Pheri*, *Bhool Bhulaiya*, *Drishyam*, *Kabir Singh*, *Ghajini*, *Saathiya*, *Dhadak*, and *Shaitaan*—are directly attributable to the power of the universal human emotions and themes embedded in the original regional stories, which are then skillfully presented through cultural translation designed for pan-Indian accessibility.[1] This paper explores how fidelity to, or calculated dilution of, the core emotional premise determines the commercial viability of the adaptation.

Love, Loss, and Societal Conflict

Remakes focused on intense personal relationships, particularly those challenging societal norms, illustrate the spectrum of adaptation fidelity—from near-perfect replication to significant thematic dilution, often aimed at softening complex social commentary for broader acceptance.

The Commercialization of Intensity: *Kabir Singh*

Kabir Singh (2019), a remake of the Telugu film *Arjun Reddy* (2017), serves as a crucial example of high-fidelity adaptation. Because Sandeep Reddy Vanga directed both versions, the Hindi film was essentially a "scene to scene copy," ensuring that the consistency and intensity of the original narrative were maintained.[7] The core theme—the visceral pain of lost love leading a protagonist to self-destruction—is deeply universal.[13]

The success of *Kabir Singh* (grossing ₹379 crore compared to *Arjun Reddy*'s ₹51 crore) demonstrates the immense scaling factor provided by the Hindi film industry.[8] The inherent power of the emotional core was amplified by Shahid Kapoor's performance, chartbuster music, and Bollywood's superior distribution.[14] The film's controversies surrounding its alleged glorification of toxic masculinity, rather than hindering its performance, paradoxically boosted its buzz and, consequently, its commercial viability.[14] This massive financial success validates the hypothesis that if a powerful emotional story is readily accessible in the national language, its commercial potential is exponentially realized.

Cultural Dilution and Class Focus: *Dhadak*

In contrast to the fidelity observed in *Kabir Singh*, the adaptation of *Sairat* (Marathi, 2016) into *Dhadak* (2018) involved crucial thematic compromises. *Sairat* was a potent examination of transgressive love against the backdrop of systemic caste differences and the brutality of honor killing.[5] While *Dhadak* retained the core premise of caste difference and honor killing, the setting was shifted to Rajasthan, and key character dynamics were altered.[5]

The adaptation diluted the original's sharp socio-political critique by generalizing the conflict into a more palatable "inter-family/inter-state" cultural clash.[15] Most notably, the character of the female lead, Parthavi (Janhvi Kapoor), was presented as a "product of privilege," a significant departure from the original heroine, Archana, who was portrayed as strong and equal to her lower-caste partner.[9] This adjustment diminished the fortitude of the character, substituting social critique (systemic caste oppression) with individual emotional melodrama (a wealthy girl struggling with newfound poverty).[9] This "softening effect" suggests that when remaking dramas rooted in sensitive, regional social issues, mainstream Hindi cinema often caters to a pan-Indian audience by prioritizing emotional spectacle over challenging ideological stances, ensuring broader comfort and box office acceptability.

Urban Polish and Relationship Realism: *Saathiya*

Saathiya (2002), remade from the Tamil film *Alai Payuthey* (2000), explores the universal theme of love maturing into marriage and the subsequent trials of cohabitation and responsibility.[10] The Hindi remake was deemed "a very worthy remake," capturing the same spirit but with certain aesthetic adjustments.[11]

The adaptation provided a glossy, polished aesthetic fitting for an urban Bollywood romance, particularly through the use of established stars like Rani Mukherjee and Vivek Oberoi.[10] While *Alai Payuthey* captured a sense of the leads "growing up onscreen," *Saathiya* presented its characters with the competence and polish expected of mainstream Bollywood movie stars.[10] The film successfully married the universal theme of post-elopement difficulties with the visual language of urban Bombay, confirming that successful remakes often involve translating universal emotional narratives into the familiar, high-production aesthetic of the mainstream industry.

3. Thematic Analysis :Vengeance, Survival, and Justice

The action and thriller genres demonstrate how Hindi remakes strategically refine regional action tropes or prioritize technical execution to elevate the universal themes of justice, survival, and vengeance for a national scale.

The Universal Protector: *Drishyam*

Drishyam (2015), based on the 2013 Malayalam film of the same name, is one of the most commercially and critically successful remakes, rooted in the powerful, primal theme of a father protecting his family at all costs.[17]

The film's success stems from its core universal appeal: the ingenious survival tactics employed by an ordinary man against a relentless authority figure.

The Hindi adaptation maintained extreme fidelity to the plot, recognizing that the narrative structure and emotional tension were already perfected in the original.[19] The primary shift was technical: the Hindi version was described as "slightly refined and less melodramatic" in comparison to the original, benefiting from enhanced cinematography, color grading, and production values.[19] This case proves an adaptation strategy where, if the emotional core (family survival) and narrative complexity are inherently compelling, the remake's function is primarily to provide technical sophistication and greater star power to maximize national reach.

Reframing Heroism: *Singham*

Singham (2011), remade from the Tamil film *Singam* (2010), deals with the enduring universal theme of justice prevailing over corruption, delivered through the *masala* action genre.[21] The Hindi version, directed by Rohit Shetty, retained the core action drama but introduced a significant thematic modification.

While regional *masala* films often rely on the "one man army trope," *Singham* strategically placed a "higher focus on the camaraderie and team work of the police department".[23] This deliberate update grounded the narrative in a more aspirational institutional structure, evolving the concept of justice for a modern, national audience who may favor collective, responsible action over pure, individualized vigilantism.[23] This strategic refinement shows that successful remakes often modify outdated regional tropes to align with contemporary national expectations regarding heroism and law enforcement.

Trauma, Memory, and Scale: *Ghajini*

Ghajini (2008), remade from the 2005 Tamil film (itself inspired by the American film *Memento* [24]), explores the intense universal themes of trauma, memory loss (anterograde amnesia), and methodical revenge.[25] Both Indian versions center on a wealthy businessman seeking vengeance for the murder of his lover, aided by instant photographs and tattoos.[25]

The primary adaptive strategy here was one of immense scaling. The Hindi version transformed a successful regional thriller into a mammoth Bollywood action spectacle, utilizing Aamir Khan's star power and heightened production values.[24] The film's box office success affirmed that the powerful core themes of profound loss and methodical retribution can translate flawlessly when packaged with high-end commercial polish and sound design demanded by the national market.

Genre Synthesis and Thematic Dilution

The analysis of comedy and psychological horror remakes reveals diverse outcomes: while situational comedy can sustain extreme fidelity, dark narratives often require substantial alteration to achieve commercial closure.

High Fidelity Comedy: *Hera Pheri*

Hera Pheri (2000), based on the 1989 Malayalam film *Ramji Rao Speaking* [26], remains a benchmark for successful comedy remakes, rooted in the universal anxiety of financial hardship leading to a comedy of errors.[26] The film's director, Priyadarshan, explicitly stated that *Hera Pheri* was made "frame-to-frame" and that the dialogues were direct translations from the Malayalam script.[27]

This case demonstrates that pure situational comedy, driven by universal characters responding to desperation, requires minimal cultural negotiation. The characters' shared predicament—being tenants in desperate need of money who stumble upon a cross-connected ransom call—is inherently relatable across linguistic demographics.[26] The success was contingent only upon stellar casting (Paresh Rawal, Akshay Kumar, Suniel Shetty) and preservation of the original's comedic timing.[26]

Psychological Depth and Star Power: *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*

Bhool Bhulaiyaa (2007) remade *Manichitrathazhu* (Malayalam, 1993), centering on the complex psychological theme of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID).[28] The original, inspired by a psychiatrist's case diaries, explored psychological realism rooted in childhood trauma.[29]

The Hindi remake successfully translated this theme into a horror-comedy format, prioritizing the introduction of a rational solution through the character of a psychiatrist (played by Akshay Kumar) to resolve the suspense.[28] The remake thus served as an effective cultural bridge, packaging a complex psychological concept (DID) within a mass-market genre framework, achieving substantial commercial success while maintaining fidelity to the core psychological explanation.

Dilution of Darkness: *Shaitaan*

The remake *Shaitaan* (2024), based on the Gujarati film *Vash* (2023), provides a clear illustration of adaptation driven by the commercial mandate for a positive resolution. *Vash* explored the dark themes of family helplessness and torture, culminating in a bleak, nihilistic ending where the mother and son die in an accident, and the daughter is left mentally and physically unstable while the father suffers a horrific revenge.[31]

Shaitaan, however, introduced significant plot deviations, removing scenes of brutal assault and, most critically, replacing the original's devastating climax with a commercially palatable "happy ending" where the entire family is saved.[31] By diluting the severity of the psychological torture and substituting a tragic, enduring narrative with a successful rescue, *Shaitaan* sacrificed the narrative's original messaging about helplessness and revenge for the sake of audience comfort and commercial closure.[32] This suggests a strong bias in mainstream national cinema against presenting universal themes of pure evil or trauma without the reassurance of a positive, cathartic conclusion.

Conclusion: Commercial Success as Thematic Validation and Cultural Impact

The analysis of nine commercially successful Hindi remakes confirms that their power is intrinsically linked to the validated universal human emotions and themes embedded in their regional source material.[1] Whether the films explored desperate comedy (*Hera Pheri*), intense love and loss (*Kabir Singh*, *Saathiya*), survival against odds (*Drishyam*), or the fight for justice (*Singham*, *Ghajini*), the core emotional narrative was the primary driver of national audience appeal.

The process of cultural adaptation operates on a dual level. First, the thematic consistency must be maintained where possible, particularly in genres like situational comedy or high-stakes survival thrillers, where the plot and emotion are already universally accessible.[20] Second, strategic modifications are implemented to mitigate elements deemed too regional, too dark, or too complex for the national audience, leading to the dilution of specific social commentary (*Dhadak*) or the replacement of bleak conclusions with commercially viable happy endings (*Shaitaan*).[9]

The Hindi language film industry serves as the ultimate scaling mechanism. The vast disparity in box office earnings between regional originals and their Hindi remakes—even for films with high fidelity—demonstrates that once proven, potent regional stories are made linguistically accessible via the Bollywood apparatus, their commercial potential explodes nationally and globally.[8] Thus, these remakes continue to function as vital cultural bridges, introducing stories from India's linguistic diversity to a broader national consciousness and ensuring that regional narratives remain central and relevant to the evolving fabric of pan-Indian cinema.[1]

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INDIAN MYTHOLOGICAL STORIES AND WOMEN THEN AND NOW: A CRITICAL READING OF THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT BY GITHA HRIHARAN

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Abstract

Mythology has been an inseparable part of Indian culture. Through its stories one find way to live their lives. Written in 1992 Githa Hariharan's debut novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* explores the plight of women, supressed by traditions and mythical stories. The novel has also won a Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1993 as the best first book to put forward the struggles of women. Even though being called mother, daughter, and daughter-in-law she still suffers from marginalisation. Men have always been seen as a representative of culture in most of the societies. The paper articulates how the characters mould the mythological stories and interprets them according to their beliefs from centuries. The protagonist remembers the stories of her grandmother with folding of new events. She does agree and also see how the stories were differently interpreted by people to supress women's identity and voice. The novel also calls how childhood stories effect our later stage of life and the imprints of it never leave.

Keywords: feminism, identity, mythology, stories, suppression

Full Paper

Introduction:

The term 'myth' comes from Greek word 'mythos' which means stories or narration. Myth means a traditional story laid out which contains gods, heroes and supernatural elements. In India, myths are contained in ancient text like Vedas, puranas and epics. It contains stories of gods and other great heroes who have some importance to culture. This also show 'art for life's sake' through these stories.

Women are considered as a symbol of purity and prosperity from ancient times. In Hindu culture the daughter is considered as a form of goddess. But the other side of coin tells different stories. The only character who has mostly suffered in stories or in reality is women. The patriarchal structure is prevalent from generations due to which the rules imposed on women were of no surprise. With the induction of flame of feminism in western globe the insights were also seen in colonized countries too. The mythology which was once used to teach a person how to lead a life, are now being used to silence their voice and suppress them confiding their roles to daughter, wife and daughter-in-law.

One can understand if males promoted patriarchy but as said that one of the biggest enemies of a woman is another woman, proves to be somewhat right. The suppression is not merely physical but also psychological as one starts to perceive themselves like told.

Gritha Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* explores how the mythical stories of women told by her grandmother and father-in-law contradict the ideas of suffering of women. Even though her grandmother wanted her to follow traditions still encouraged her to have her own thought. The protagonist Devi had her conscious to see how the stories were interpreted selectively and narrowed their conclusions to fit in the situation.

The novel is a bildungsroman where the central character goes many changes in her life and proclaims her self-identity. The story follows Devi, who is a young woman went to America for pursuing her masters and is now returning to her motherland India. Her journey does not only represent crossing of continents but the culture and mindset. She is welcomed by her mother and grandmother; this symbolizes the roles a woman goes through. She revisits her childhood which was surrounded by the stories of mythology her grandmother used to tell her. From the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata the some of the events of not so famous women like Gandhari, Amba and Draupadi are taken.

With her return, her mother Sita wants her to get married to a man named Mahesh who is seen as a typical Indian husband. Her fantasy of choosing her husband on her own will is not seen in far-fetched reality. After her marriage, she shifted to her in-law's house where she stayed with her father-in-law and a caretaker cum cook Mayamma. Her husband stays emotionally distant from her and expects her to fulfill the rigid traditional norms placed on women. Even being educated she loses her identity and adherends to the need of the time, she feels trapped in her own house. Mayamma's past also has dark memories of her failed marriage and yet she stands resilient and endures pain in silence.

Devi's mother Sita also represents how gender roles confided her passion for music and her identity gets lost in four walls of her house. She wants her daughter not to endure the same pain but she does not have the strength to stand up against the prevailing norms. The act of running with her lover Gopal is seen as resilient and represents her power to free herself from thee cycle. But when she suffers the same pain and the difference is of person not of patriarchal values. Devi then goes back to her mother's house refusing to continue any roles society placed on her. She has now gone on the journey to find herself again and become independent so no man controls her life.

Mythical stories are intertwined with the main narration which compares the situation of the women in story and in reality, shows mere difference. Novel has an open ending for the interpretations as Devi has not completely escaped the traditional society but took an initiative to explore herself.

Literature review:

Abraham, A. R. (2019). THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT: A READING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIAN MYTHS AND GENDER STEREOTYPES. In *Pramana Research Journal* (Vols. 9–9, Issue 5) discusses the problems faced by women in the patriarchal society. Author as her roots to Hindu mythology has personal touch to the story.

Kalita, M. K., & Deka, B. (2023). Dilemma of Identity in Githa Hariharan's Thousand Faces of Night: A Feminist Perspective. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, *8*(6), 041–044. The paper proves the point how the three consecutive generations break free their marriage and finds won way to deal with the freedom. They face unfulfilled desires which are explored after they cut their marriage ties.

Mili, T. (2024). Rewriting the Epics: A feminist reading of Githa Hariharan's The Thousand Faces of Night. *Journal of Computational Analysis and Applications*, *33*(8). The paper explores the feminism through the Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. With the theories of Simon de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva and other postcolonial critics challenges conventional gender roles.

Chandramani. (2020). Masked Women and myths in "The Thousand Faces of Night." *Litinfinite Journal*, *2*(2), 1–10. The paper emphasis on how women in ancient India were seen as an object. Through the women characters the sense of self-realisation and resilience is seen.

The story opens in America where Devi is enjoying her last days as her master's degree is completed. Her mother wishes to marry her off as she has reached the age of marriage. It can be sensed that Devi is a bright student as she got scholarship to study in USA. Her mother didn't cut down her wings but motivated her to chase it. In her last days Devi had a friend named Dan who she liked but knew that there is no future for then. She enjoyed with her friends in a bar, drank alcohol and even smoked. The western culture is seen as open minded as people don't judge on women drinking and smoking. Living in this open-minded society Devi faced consequences while returning back. When she returned her grandmother and her mother welcomed her whole-heartedly. Due to her grandmother's stories she thought od herself as 'devi' goddess as her name was Devi too.

Her mother arranged a meeting with a man named Mahesh who was a regional manager in a multinational firm at Banglore. His ambition toward his career represented modern ides. With her return Devi fantasised of 'swayamvara'. She remembered the story her grandmother told her; once a princess named Damyanti had 'swayamvara' for her to choose an appropriate husband. Even with all the controversies and conspiracies made by gods she still managed to put garland on the king of Nishad, Nala. She didn't hesitate and showed her boldness of choosing whoever she pleased. Devi's grandmother gave the moral that "A woman gets her heart's desire by great cunning." (TFN, 20) So, with this she had desire of choosing her husband on her will but the reality was more different. 'Option' the term is rarely given to woman, as she has to approve on first whatever her family tells and

after marriage her husband. Her own choice does not matter to anyone in the society. Men are taught to never bend down in front of a woman and treat her like an object. They have seen their fathers and grandfathers doing the same so, even though they want to change their conditioning does not allow them. After her marriage she went to her in-law's house, a traditional patriarchal norm.

Her new journey of life had many new hurdles waiting for her. She became a housewife even with so many degrees from international universities. Her life changed from carefree girl to a responsible Indian housewife. She lived with her father-in-law, Baba and caretaker and cook named Mayamma. Baba was a Sanskrit professor so, he used to her stories like her grandmother did. Her mother-in-law's name was Parvati. Baba choose Parvati as the name felt reliable and she would fulfil her wifely duties. Parvati is the name of lord Shiva's wife, she married him against her family's will. Shiva who lived in Kailash wanted to have divine force through meditation and she encouraged and motivated him to do so. The story contrasts here as Baba's thoughts had his mythological story which lacks historical proof. He thought that her wife would also fulfil her duties like Parvati did but the reality contrasts as she leaves him to find god and penance. This shows how a name of woman is also judged before even knowing her. How can a name justify what a person truly is? Women are not only judged before even meeting but also on looks, colour, dressing sense and their style of walking. Even after so many years of feminism the judgement has still not gone. But with time a new judgement is made that if they are independent, they will have their voice and will not follow the traditional norms.

The stories Baba told her contrasted with her grandmother as he focused on how woman needs to follow tradition and societal norms. He taught her what culture and religion is according to Vedas.

Mayamma once shares her painful life story, she was married in a family where women were considered as an object who gives birth to a son. She was married in an age of twelve and her husband was a drunkard and gambler and only wanted physical pleasure from her. Her mother-in-law believed in astrology and was told her daughter-in-law will have many sons. Her mother-in-law tortured her with false religious practices for birth of a son. After years of penance, she gave birth to a son. But her husband fled away with money and her mother-in-law died. Her son grew up beating and torturing her more but she still served him on his death bed. This is a typical Indian story of a woman; she was considered an object who had no respect in her own house.

Devi's husband was a typical Indian husband who had no emotional space for her wife. The distance between them grew day by day. Once Devi met Gopal, who was a singer and musician. With his sweet voice she captivated Devi's heart now her dream of choosing a man came true. She fled away with Gopal but after all the love he gave he also started showing the patriarchal attitude her husband showed her. She then got to the decision that she is tired of man's making decisions of her life and being dependent on them. She went back to her mother's house. Her mother tried to make her adjust in her husband's life but Devi didn't care.

Once Devi found a photo of her mother playing veena. She questioned on the photo on which her grandmother told her that her mother used to play veena like goddess Saraswati. After her marriage she took Veens with her and in her free time after completing every house chore she used to practice it. Once her father-in-law called her and due to sound of veena she was not able to hear. "Put the Veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law" (30). The dialogue shows that woman's first priority should be her husband and family and on the nae of gender roles she is supressed and her voice is silenced. In anger she pulled out a string of veena so hard that she got both physically and emotionally hurt.

Her grandmother compares this incident with Gandhari who swore on never to see the world again as her husband was blind. Her sacrifice made her an example how woman should forget her self and be devoted to her husband. Gandhari didn't knew that her husband was blind and in rage she took this step as going back and breaking the marriage was not an option for woman.

Society allows men to step up for making their self but crushes even the small wishes of women when they try to stand for themselves. The burden of responsibility is therefore placed on them so that they don't have courage to speak up.

Another story from Mahabharata of Amba, Ambika, Ambalika were three princesses kidnapped by Bheesma from their 'swayamvara'. Amba the eldest choose King Salwa and garlanded him but Bheesma still kidnapped her too and took them to his step-mother. After knowing about King Salwa they let her to go him but questioning her purity

he refused to accept her. Feeling humiliated Amba goes back to Bheesma, who also refused to accept her. She vowed take her revenge from Bheesma so, she went to forest and pleased Shiva with penance. Shiva gave her a garland that whosoever wears garland will surely kill Bheesma. The story continues with Draupadi, Hariharan thinks of her as the reincarnation of Amba who gives this garland to Arjuna and he kills Bheesma in the Mahabharata war. The story primarily questions the purity of a woman. A man wants her wife to be pure and never be touched by a man. But the same society accepts multiple wives of a man. The woman who is left by a man is considered as bad luck. A woman does not have any identity and right to liv without her husband. The society whose though process is so narrowed, how can accept an independent woman?

The characters chosen by Devi's grandmother are not major like Sita, Kunti or Durga. She choses the minor and unfamous characters like Gandhari, Ganga and Amba to give the moral she wants her granddaughter to learn. The morals and turned and twisted in a way to benefit the society. The wrong ideas her grandmother forced in her mind made her become a woman who she was not. The suppression is shown in a different way than other mythological novel of the time. At the end Devi goes in a voyage to find herself and her identity. There is a sense of relief the reader gets when Devi takes one step further to find her own identity. She knows that the journey is not at all easy but she still tries for herself and all the other women of the society so they can also gather courage to stop enduring and start protesting.

Conclusion:

Hariharan's craftmanship is highly praised as she interweaves modern fictional story with the mythology. She demonstrates how mythology is weaponized to supress women across generations. The novel marks Devi's bildungsroman, a journey which forces her to adjust in harsh traditions then living a free life in America. Through the stories of woman mythological figure, Hariharan demonstrates the continuous pattern of women whether ancient queens or modern wives are continuously pressured to perform her wifely duties. The psychological suppression kicks more than the physical abuse. Even though Devi's grandmother had a soft corner for her she still under the pressure of norms transmitted norms indirectly through her stories. Devi's final decision of walking away from Mahesh and Gopal resonates the act of self-realisation that women does not need a man to define her. The open-ended novel shows a ray of hope that some day Devi with persistent efforts would become independent. Women must gain true female autonomy and consciously reject the idea of predetermined roles assumed for her in society and in future should rewrite their own narratives for the new modern world she herself created.

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