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Dr Mrudula Lakkaraju
Editor

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~Creative Writing in English ~

Laughter Among the Shattered Stones

Abdulghani Al-Shuaibi

Prose Poem

Their laughter breaks the silence like sudden rain on thirsty soil, scattering over the rubble as if joy itself were a stubborn weed growing between cracked stones. A broken swing, bent and rusted, creaks with the weight of innocence, and in that sound lies a rhythm older than sorrow. They chase a ball patched with tape, its bounce echoing against walls blackened by fire. The street, scarred and hollow, becomes a stage where hope rehearses itself again and again, refusing to forget the music of childhood. Even the dust dances, golden in the sinking light, as if heaven itself leans closer to listen.

Verse Poem

Within the ruins where silence weeps,
A fragile song of childhood leaps;
The broken street becomes a stage,
Defying war, defying age.

The ball rolls on through dust and flame,
Yet every kick repeats the same—
A metaphor of hope unbowed,
A rhythm rising from the shroud.

The swing still sways, though chains are torn,
Like dreams that rise when hearts are worn;
Their voices, bright as dawn's first beams,
Awaken life within the seams.

So let the stones recall their cries,
Like prayers ascending to the skies;
For even ruin, scorched and bare,
Holds children's joy, resilient, rare.

~English Literature~

Translation beyond Language: Cultural Rewriting of Literary Texts

Arun Kumar Yadav

Abstract

This paper examines translation as a cultural and creative process that goes beyond the mere transfer of words from one language to another. It argues that translation is not only linguistic substitution but an act of cultural rewriting in which texts are reshaped according to new social, historical, and ideological contexts. Drawing on theories of translation and adaptation, the study explores how literary works change in meaning, form, and function when they move across languages and cultures.

The paper focuses on the relationship between text and context, showing how translators and adapters respond to the cultural expectations of target readers. Elements such as social values, belief systems, narrative traditions, and emotional codes strongly influence how a text is rewritten. As a result, translated or adapted texts often differ significantly from their originals while still preserving core ideas, themes, and narrative structures.

By analyzing examples from cross-cultural literary adaptation, the study highlights strategies such as domestication, localization, reinterpretation, and genre-shifting. These strategies reveal how translators act as cultural mediators who negotiate between fidelity to the source and relevance to the target culture. The paper argues that such transformations should not be seen as loss or distortion but as creative renewal that allows texts to survive and remain meaningful in new cultural spaces. Ultimately, the study presents translation as an imaginative and ideological act that produces new literary meanings. Translation, therefore, becomes a form of rewriting that enables literature to travel, transform, and continuously reinvent itself across cultures.

Keywords: Translation, Culture, Rewriting, Adaptation, Context, Transformation.

Introduction

Translation has traditionally been understood as the act of transferring meaning from one language to another. However, modern translation theory has moved far beyond this narrow definition. Scholars now recognize translation as a complex cultural activity in which texts are not only linguistically transferred but also socially, ideologically, and aesthetically reshaped. As André Lefevere observes, “Translation is a rewriting of an original text” and this rewriting is always influenced by “ideology, poetics, and patronage.” This insight shifts attention from words alone to the cultural forces that shape translated literature.

When a literary text enters a new language and culture, it encounters a different system of values, beliefs, emotions, and narrative traditions. The translator must therefore negotiate between the source text and the expectations of the target audience. Lawrence Venuti explains this process through the concepts of domestication and foreignization, where translators either

adapt the text to local culture or preserve its foreignness. In both cases, translation becomes an act of cultural choice rather than neutral reproduction.

This research approaches translation as cultural rewriting—an activity that transforms texts in response to new contexts. It examines how meaning changes when literature travels across languages, genres, and cultures. By focusing on the interaction between text and context, the study shows that translation is shaped by history, ideology, and cultural identity. Translation beyond language, therefore, is not a loss of originality but a creative process through which literature gains new forms, new voices, and new life in different cultural spaces.

This research is grounded in major theories of translation, adaptation, and cultural studies that view translation as a form of cultural rewriting rather than mere linguistic substitution. The framework draws mainly from rewriting theory, cultural translation, adaptation theory, and postcolonial translation studies.

First, André Lefevere's theory of rewriting provides a central foundation. Lefevere argues that translation is a type of "rewriting" controlled by ideology, poetics, and patronage. According to him, translators reshape texts so that they fit the literary norms and power structures of the target culture. This study uses Lefevere's idea to examine how translated texts are manipulated—consciously or unconsciously—to serve cultural expectations.

Second, Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization are used to explain cultural choices in translation. Domestication adapts a text to local culture, making it appear natural and fluent, while foreignization preserves cultural difference. These concepts help analyze how translators negotiate between making a text familiar and maintaining its cultural uniqueness. Third, Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory supports the idea that translation is a creative process. Hutcheon views adaptation as "repetition without replication," meaning that adapted texts repeat stories but transform them according to new contexts. This helps explain why translated texts often differ greatly from their originals while still remaining connected.

Fourth, Walter Benjamin's idea of translation as giving a text a "second life" is used to understand translation as continuation rather than imitation. Translation allows a text to live again in a new language and time. Finally, postcolonial theory, especially the ideas of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, informs the ethical and political dimension of translation. Translation is seen as a space of cultural negotiation where power relations, identity, and voice are constantly re-shaped. This framework allows the study to treat translation as an ideological, cultural, and creative act rather than a purely linguistic task. Translation as cultural rewriting involves far more than the transfer of words from one language to another. It is shaped by ideology, power, history, and literary taste. André Lefevere clearly defines this broader role of translation when he writes:

> Translation is not made in a vacuum. It is made in a continuum of literary and social systems. Translators, like writers, are constrained by the systems in which they operate. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power. (Lefevere 2)

This statement shows that translation is not neutral. Every act of translation is influenced by cultural expectations, political forces, and literary traditions. When a text is translated, it is

reshaped so that it can survive and function in a new cultural environment. Thus, translation becomes a form of rewriting that reflects the values of the target culture.
Lawrence Venuti explains this cultural shaping through the concepts of domestication and foreignization. He argues:

> A translated text is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when it gives the appearance that it is not in fact a translation, but the "original." (Venuti 1)

This "fluency" hides the foreign origin of the text and makes it appear natural to the target culture. Such domestication shows how translation often erases cultural difference in order to satisfy readers. However, this also proves that translation is not only linguistic but ideological—it decides what kind of culture is made visible and what is made invisible. Translation as rewriting also involves adaptation of cultural values. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere observe:

> Translation is not just the transfer of texts from one language into another; it is a process that involves cultural transfer. Translators mediate between cultures, shaping texts for new audiences. (Bassnett and Lefevere 8)

This mediation means that translators act as cultural agents. They choose what to explain, what to simplify, what to omit, and what to highlight. Through these choices, the translated text becomes a new cultural product rather than a copy of the original. The idea of rewriting is further strengthened by the concept of adaptation. Linda Hutcheon states:

> Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication. It is not imitation, but creative reinterpretation. (Hutcheon 7)

This applies equally to translation. A translated text repeats the source story, themes, or ideas, but never reproduces them exactly. It transforms them according to new cultural needs. Thus, translation becomes a creative act that produces a new literary identity for the text. Finally, the relationship between text and context is central to cultural rewriting. Edward Said reminds us:

> No text is free of the conditions of its time and place. Every work is shaped by history, power, and cultural forces. (Said 4)

When a text moves into another language, it enters a new historical and cultural space. Its meaning is re-created according to that space. Therefore, translation beyond language is not about loss, but about renewal. It allows texts to gain new meanings, new readers, and new cultural lives. This discussion proves that translation is best understood as cultural rewriting. It is an imaginative, ideological, and creative act that transforms literature so that it can live again in different cultures. Translation, therefore, is not secondary to original writing—it is one of the most powerful ways in which literature travels, survives, and is reborn. Translation beyond language also involves power relations between cultures. Some cultures dominate global

literary circulation, while others remain marginal. This imbalance strongly affects what gets translated and how. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak warns against careless translation that ignores cultural depth:

> Translation is not just a matter of finding words in another language. It requires love, patience, and deep attention to the rhetoric, history, and silence of the text. Without this, translation becomes cultural violence. (Spivak 183)

This shows that translation can either respect cultural difference or erase it. When translators ignore cultural nuance, they turn rich local meanings into flat global products. Thus, translation as cultural rewriting can be ethical or harmful, depending on how responsibly it is done. The translator's role as an interpreter is also important. Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay "The Task of the Translator," argues:

> A translation does not seek to serve the reader. It does not exist for those who cannot read the original. It exists to reveal the deeper life of language, to show how meanings grow through transformation. Translation is not copying, but continuation. (Benjamin 73)

Benjamin suggests that translation gives a text a "second life." This second life is not identical to the first. It is shaped by new language, new culture, and new time. Therefore, translation is not secondary; it is a continuation of literary existence. Cultural rewriting is also influenced by ideology. What is translated, how it is translated, and what is left untranslated all depend on ideological choice. Lefevere explains:

> Rewriting manipulates literature to function in a given society. It reflects dominant ideologies, literary tastes, and power structures. Translators are never neutral. (Lefevere 14)

This means translation always carries cultural and political meaning. It promotes certain values while hiding others. Thus, translation beyond language becomes a tool that shapes cultural identity. Postcolonial theory strongly supports this view. Homi Bhabha describes cultural translation as a space of negotiation:

> Cultural meaning is never fixed. It is produced in moments of translation, where cultures meet, clash, and transform. This in-between space creates new identities. (Bhabha 38)

Translation, therefore, is not just movement between languages but between identities. When a text enters a new culture, it creates hybrid meanings—neither fully original nor fully foreign. This hybrid space is where cultural rewriting truly happens. Finally, translation as cultural rewriting allows literature to survive across time. George Steiner writes:

> Without translation, we would live in provinces bordering on silence. Every act of translation extends human thought. It keeps ideas alive by changing them. (Steiner 45)

This suggests that transformation is not betrayal but survival. Texts must change to remain alive. Translation beyond language ensures that literature continues to speak, not by remaining pure, but by becoming plural—speaking in many tongues, many cultures, and many meanings.

Conclusion

This study has explored translation as an act that goes far beyond linguistic substitution and enters the realm of cultural rewriting. By examining major theoretical perspectives, it has shown that translation is shaped by history, ideology, power, and literary systems. Translators do not merely transfer words; they reinterpret texts so that they can function meaningfully within new cultural environments. The discussion has demonstrated that every translation is a form of rewriting. Choices related to language, style, imagery, and cultural reference transform the original text in order to suit the expectations of the target audience. Concepts such as domestication and foreignization reveal that translation always involves cultural decision-making. As a result, translated texts are not neutral copies but new cultural products that carry the values and assumptions of the society in which they appear. The paper has also highlighted the ethical and political dimensions of translation. Translation can either respect cultural difference or erase it. It can empower marginal voices or silence them. Therefore, translation beyond language demands responsibility, sensitivity, and deep cultural awareness from the translator. In conclusion, translation emerges as a creative and transformative force in literary history. It gives texts new lives, new meanings, and new readers. Rather than seeing transformation as loss, this study views it as renewal. Translation, as cultural rewriting, ensures that literature does not remain confined to one language or culture but continues to travel, change, and live across the world.

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History, Memory, and Myth in Gurkha Literature

Deepak Mishra

Abstract

This paper analyzes Gurkha literature adopting the notion of collective memory propounded by Maurice Halbwachs in collaboration with the notion of mythscape propounded by Duncun S. A. Bell. Halbwachs believes that individual memories transform into collective memories because of the social frameworks of memory. Bell defines mythscape as a discursive realm which subverts, distorts, revisits, and questions the existing nationalist myth. In the likewise manner, collective memory questions the nationalist history thereby forming an alternative history. Bell believes that collective memory and mythscape are opposition to each other; however, this paper claims that they are complementary to each other in raising the issue of identity of the marginalized people and their position in the historiography of Nepal. This paper problematizes the exclusive tendency of the mainstream history of Nepal as well as the valorization of the bravery and loyalty of the Gurkhas instead of raising their ethno-militaristic identity in Gurkha literature. Sampling texts from Gurkha literature, including *The Throne of Stone, The Restless Quest,* and *The Crown of Renown* by J. P. Cross; *Ayo Gorkhali: A History of the Gurkhas* by Tim I. Gurung; and *Gurkha: Better to Die than Live a Coward: My Life with the Gurkhas* by Kailash Limbu, this paper argues that the individual memories of the characters, the narrators, and the authors transform into the collective memories of the Gurkhas thereby establishing the ethno-militaristic identity of the hill-based indigenous people of Nepal.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Mythscape, Ethno-Militaristic Identity, Alternative History, Gurkha Literature, Hill-Based Indigenous People

Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Collective Memory and Mythscape

This paper adopts the concept of individual memory and collective memory propounded by Maurice Halbwachs in his seminal book, *On Collective Memory* and *The Collective Memory,* in order to analyze the selective texts on Gurkha literature. It also adopts Duncun S. A. Bell's concept of mythscape to discuss on the links between history, memory, myth, and identity. It, at the same time, analyzes the ethno-militaristic identity of the hill ethnic groups in Gurkha literature. Halbwachs's primary thesis is that human memory can only function within a collective context. Moreover, he contends that collective memory is always selective and various groups of people have their different collective memories, which in the long run trigger their corresponding identities. In Bell's perception, collective memory and mythscape are oppositional in nature; however, this paper establishes their complementary positions in order to analyze the ethno-militaristic identity of the hill-based indigenous groups of Nepal in Gurkha literature.

Before establishing the relationship between individual and collective memory, Halbwachs foregrounds the antithetical relationship between history and memory considering it as "the ultimate opposition" (78). Stressing on this, Halbwachs describes the differences between history and memory. The multiplicity of memory and singularity of history have been highlighted in his perception that "there are several collective memories . . . . History is unitary, and it can be said that there is only one history" (Halbwachs 83). Besides the friendship between history and memory, Halbwachsian idea of emphasizing on their differences and opposition advocates for fulfilling the loopholes and shortcomings of history. No history in this world is inclusive and perfectly written. Moreover, except the first-hand or primary memories, the secondary and tertiary memories, too, have weaknesses of their own. Thus, history seeks assistance from memory and vice-versa. Halbwachs believes that "history is interested primarily in differences and disregards the resemblances without which there would have been no memory, since the only facts remembered are those having the common trait of belonging to the same consciousness" (84). From this, it can be derived that history favors differences and memory lays focus to resemblances. While defining and establishing the relationship between individual memory and collective memory, Halbwachs claims:

> If the memories often interpenetrate each other, the individual memories, especially, can, in order to confirm their remembrances, to better make them accurate and even to fill some gaps, support themselves with the collective memory, merge themselves with the collective memory and this does not mean that the individual memory will not follow its own way and all of this exterior support is progressively assimilated and incorporated to its substance. (98)

A remembrance is always a part of the collective memory, which incorporates a set of common individual remembrances. Similarly, an individual memory always resumes a part of the collective memory, which is not possible to apprehend as a whole; thus, an individual memory automatically transforms into a collective memory. In another sense of the term, an individual memory emerges in a context which is shared by others—the existence of an individual memory rests on the foundation of collective memory. Halbwachsian concept of individual and collective memory, that is, the assumption that collective memories are socially constructed is applicable in analyzing literary texts comprised of historical details, including Gurkha literature.

Shedding light on the nexus between individual and collective memory, Halbwachs contends, "The collective memory . . . involves the individual memories, however does not confuse with them" (98). Although individual memories transform into collective memories, the individual memories cannot be undermined. Going beyond this, Halbwachs strives to establish the relation between memory and identity thereby foregrounding the implication of collective memory in the formation of any historiography. In so doing, he claims, "We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetrated" (47). Thus, memory is the source of identity and vice-versa—identity of one's sex, caste, class, ethnicity, creed, and religion. As this paper analyzes the issue of ethno-militaristic identity of the hill ethnic groups of Nepal in Gurkha literature, it is noteworthy to define it at this juncture. Ethno-militaristic

identity is that consciousness within the military individual related to one's own ethnicity. In this backdrop, Dana Kachtan believes that ethno-militaristic identity is that "perception of impartiality and equality," which "seeks to expose the distinctions based on ethno-status that exist in the army" (150). Kachtan, furthermore, contends that army "has become an institution that plays a key role in creating, maintaining, and perpetuating ethnic identities among its soldiers" (150). Just as in the political scenario, there exists the rigorous consciousness to ethnicity in any military organization of this world. In Kachtan's perception, "ethnicity is not only replicated from civilian society, but is even more pronounced in the army than in civilian society" (150). The individual army who brings the consciousness and feeling of ethnicity automatically triggers collective consciousness as ethnicity is always collective in nature. While memorializing the past events in the military, the individual ethno-militaristic identity transforms into collective ethno-militaristic identity. This paper analyzes the selective texts indicating how they develop and establish the issue of ethno-militaristic identity in Gurkha literature from the perspective of collective memory as propounded by Halbwachs. Now, it is significant to discuss on the relationship between history, memory, and myth in association with identity.

To justify the aforementioned relationship, it is quite apt to consider Duncun Bell's concept of mythscape. In Bell's perception, mythscape refers to the "discursive realm in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, negotiated, and reconstructed constantly" (63). In the case of memories, especially collective memories, too, they are forged, transmitted, negotiated, and reconstructed constantly seeking for new identity. Following the same concept, Anne Holden Ronning shows the nexus between history, memory, myth, and identity and argues:

> Memory is a collective myth shared by a group and prevalent in postcolonial writing. These memories are not personal, inherited through storytelling with its concomitant distortion of detail. Memory and history are constructions of the past, though the factual elements of mythological memory are often difficult to identify. Such myths, by a "glorification" of the past, contribute to linking past and present in the formation of a contemporary stance, and can have a therapeutic effect. We can ask whether our identity is dependent on our history, tempered by memory and myth? (149)

Ronning's argument is worthwhile as it reveals the implication of memory and myth in the construction of history. Memories cannot come in their exact past forms as they get distorted with the passage of time. All these categories are related to the past events; however, their link with the present cannot be denied. When the past events are linked with the present through memories, they do have a therapeutic effect in any individual or group. History refers to the events of the past, memory to the remembrance of the past, and myth to the story of the past. Identity is needed for the present raising voices against the injustices perpetrated in the past. Thus, past and present are the focal points of history, memory, and myth; and, identity is the core of these categories.

Textual Analysis: History, Memory, Myth, and Identity Nexus

This paper analyzes the historical novels by J. P. Cross, historical memoir by Tim I. Gurung, and memoir by Kailash Khebang Limbu emphasizing on the ethno-militaristic identity of the hill-based ethnic martial groups linking history, memory, and myth. Ananda P. Shrestha has reviewed the first book, *The Throne of Stone,* providing his criticism with utmost sincerity. In so doing, he recounts the historical facts revealing that "the Chief or ruler of the Tura tribe or community would sit on the Throne of Stone and the chief Brahmin priest would anoint vermilion powder on his forehead. All the subjects would then come and pay homage" (307). This opening paragraph of Shrestha's review hints on the historical background of the pre-unification period of Nepal. The tradition of crowning the ruler was a unique tradition of Lamjung-based Dura Danda. The crown ceremony would be performed in front of the Tura or Dura people. Everyone used to show due respect and homage to the tradition. By the time Khaje Dura wanted to handover his chieftainship, twenty-five generations had undergone this ritual in front of the Throne of Stone.

For Cross, it was difficult to write a novel based on historical facts; moreover, being a foreigner then, he had to study a lot, do research on the available historical and mythical facts and events, and study the oral folk memories and myths thereby appropriating facts from the history of Nepal. Blending history, memory, and myth, Cross depicts the quest of his protagonist, Khaje Dura in his novel, *The Throne of Stone.* Between his two sons, Tile and Sete, the latter turns to be unsuitable to be the future chieftain of Lamjung. His dilemma of choosing the appropriate heir comes to an end after he sees a painting with black and white image. He is told that black is good and white is bad—things going in a reverse order. From this, he realizes that his elder dead son, Tile being black is good and the younger, Sete is white that is bad. Depicting the aforementioned incident, Cross narrates:

> And, hitting him like a thunderbolt, Khaje knew his quest had been answered. The old shaman's black and white at last made sense Kalu, black, was good; Sete, white was bad. Black was Kalu, Kalu Khan; white was Mohan Tura, Sete. He would have to go over to Raja Kulamandan Khan, his *mitjyu*, to ask for Kalu to be his son in place of Tile and heir in place of Sete. For the first time in a long while he smiled. He glanced up and caught his son giving him such a look that, whatever his new, unshakeable and permanent decision, he knew in his bones more trouble was on its way. (216)

Here, Cross's narration emerges out of the individual memory of Khaje Dura and it has its implication in the life of all the Lamjungyas, including the Duras of Dura Danda. Thus, the individual memory of Khaje Dura transforms into collective memory of his community. On the other side, as the details of Khaje Dura has been excluded from the mainstream historiography of Nepal, Cross relies on the folk memories or myths retold by the people of Dura Danda. Kulamandan Khan is a historical figure for which Cross appropriates the details from history of Nepal thereby linking history, memory, and myth, which are intertwined to one another in his narration.

Moreover, in the same novel, people from Dura Danda decide to ask for Kalu Shah and the predecessors of the Duras such as Naran, Chamu, Kushmakhar, and Sukraj Kepcha take the responsibility to visit to the palace of Kulamandan Khan. Cross narrates, "So it was decided that a delegation would go soon ask for Kalu Shah. Khaje announced that, apart from him, Naran his brother would go, as would Kushmakhar, Chamu, the animal imitator, and one called Sukraj Kepcha" (256). Here, in Cross's narrative, history, memory, and myth are inextricably intertwined. The Nepali and the foreign historians, Rishikanta Adhikari and Daniel Wright have included this event in their history books respectively.

Cross appropriates facts from history regarding Kulamandan's approval of offering his youngest son, Yashobrahma Shah to the people of Dura Danda. In so doing, he narrates the dialogue of Kulamandan Khan as: "He is now yours. He is five years old. His name is Yashobam Shah. I am sure you will have him married to Kalu's child widow" (271). Due to the existence of multiple versions of history regarding the period before Dravya Shah, Nepali historians are compelled to consider them as myths emerged from the folk memories. In the likewise manner, after winning the annual race in Ligligkot, Dravya Shah establishes a new tradition throwing aside the erstwhile established tradition of ruling for one year only. Depicting the event from the history of Nepal, Cross narrates the announcement of Dravya Shah as:

> I intend to remain raja of Liglig for the rest of my life. From today I tell you that winner of your annual race will not be king as, in the past, you have been exploited. Too much has been asked of you as those in charge of you for one year at a time have become too greedy never knowing how long their luck will last. (308)

It takes quite a long period to transform the folk memories and myths into history. Historians have to rely on the folk memories and myths to form a historiography possessing the historical facts inscribed on metal and stone plates, monuments, and coins. Thus, history, memory, and myth travel side-by-side in the formation of any historiography. Furthermore, Duras of Lamjung helped in making the history of Nepal and establishing the Shah Dynasty king in Lamjung. In Cross's novels, memory always triggers identity by relating the past with the present. At this juncture, it is worthwhile to concentrate on the tripartite relationship among individual, collective, and historical memory.

In this connection, throwing light on Halbwachs's book, *On Collective Memory,* Lewis A. Coser claims in his introduction chapter: "The book nevertheless contains many further developments of Halbwachs's thought in regard to such matters as relation of space and time to collective memory as well as fruitful . . . applications of the differences between individual, collective, and historical memory" (2). Despite the existing differences among the three categories—individual, collective, and historical memory—the embeddedness of one category with the other brings the issue of the link between history, memory, and identity at the forefront. Moreover, the relationship between history and memory rests on the foundation of their friendship and rivalry: memory as the other of history and memory and history as common entity. Whatever history excludes could be included by the power of memory—individual as well as collective. In the *The Throne of Stone*, the individual memories of Khaje Dura,

Kulamandan Khan, Yashobrahma Shah, and Dravya Shah automatically transform into collective memories of the people of Dura Danda, Kaskikot, Lamjung, and Gorkha respectively. This again gives birth to historical memory—the amalgamation of history and memory. Shrestha, while reviewing the novel, emphasizes on the contribution of the Duras in the history of Nepal and their affinity with the Gurungs.

The Duras have their own unique tradition and the boy children are offered bows and arrows on the very day of their naming ceremonies. They showed a great loyalty to the unifier of Nepal. Shrestha comments that "the Throne of Stone, tucked away in jungle covered mountains of West Nepal would play a prominent role in changing the course of history and shaping what is today known as modern Nepal" (307). Shrestha, here, emphasizes the inherent martial quality of the Duras right from their childhood. They are born warriors and fit for becoming true soldiers. These simple and loyal Duras were able to pave the route to the changing of the course of the history of Nepal. Moreover, today's Nepal is the outcome of their ancestors' efforts and endeavors. Duras are loyal ethnic people with a sense of friendship with any other castes and their contribution in the formation of modern Nepal should not be undermined in the history of Nepal. Shrestha also emphasizes on the role of the Duras in changing the course of history thereby forming and shaping what we call as modern Nepal.

In addition to this, the power of the Duras is the inherent loyalty which they display towards Nepal. As the Duras had established the predecessors of Prithvinarayan Shah, they contributed in laying the foundation of unification of Nepal. Highlighting the importance of the Duras in shaping modern Nepal, Shrestha comments:

> The book under review, the first part, deals with these developments based on a reconstructed village version of those far off days—the pre-dawn of Nepal's Gorkha Dynasty. It is a commendable effort at trying to piece together the age-old chipped and broken pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of Nepal's early history before unification in 1768 by King Prithvinarayan Shah, the founder of the Shah Dynasty of Nepal, and the ninth-generation descendant of Dravya Shah of the House of Gorkha. (307-08)

Before the unification of Nepal, there were the *Baise* and *Chaubise* principalities and a clear-cut history of that period is lacking for which the historians are compelled to rely on oral folk memories and myths. Cross, through his novel, has strived to fulfill the gaps of history such that the folk memories and myths of Lamjung in general and the Duras and Dura Danda in particular play their roles in framing and forming an alternative history going away from the mainstream historiography.

In his second novel, *The Restless Quest,* Cross moves a bit farther and strives to write the childhood of Chegu Dura—the mythical legendary figure, Bhakti Thapa, as depicted in the novel. This novel depicts the sudden transformation of mythical Chegu Dura to historical Bhakti Thapa; the historical veracity is that the people of Dura Danda still believe that the legendary Bhakti Thapa was Chegu Dura during his childhood. Because of the lack of a written history, it has taken the shape of a myth. The original Dura predecessors used to write Thapa after their names. Thus, the logic of relating Dura with Thapa rests on the foundation of the folk memories, hearsays, and myths available among the people of Dura Danda and Lamjung

in its entirety. In addition to this, while interpreting Cross's novels, it is vital to focus on the links among history, memory, and identity as foregrounded by Allan Megill. Establishing a perfect balance between the binary opposition of friendship and rivalry, Megill argues, "Valorization of memory tends to enter into the enterprise of history-writing and into public interest in history at those points where historical events and circumstances intersect with personal and familial experience" (50). Valorization of memory has become the new trend in history writing from the perspective of the marginalized. The intersection of memory with history builds up a remarkable implication in the transformation of individual memory into collective memory just as Halbwachs has propounded. In order to highlight the link between memory and identity, Megill borrows idea from the psychiatrist Oliver Sacks and argues, "Sacks focuses on the intersection of memory and identity" (50). Thus, the point of intersection between history, memory, and identity has a wider implication in the formation of alternative history, which the novels of Cross and the selective texts of Gurkha literature included in this research, have strived to unravel.

From the above, it makes us easier to derive that collective memory weaves the fabrics of alternative history, which raises the voice of the marginalized in order to establish their identity. In the literary history of Gurkha literature, especially in the genre of Historical Novels, it is quite difficult to find out such a comprehensive series of novels as that of Cross. However, his novels are found to be published in limited copies—the reasons are unknown. Cross has written his historical novels going through the process of appropriation—appropriating the historical facts, events, and evidences taking from the history of Nepal and giving birth to a self-created mythscape.

On the other side, regarding the history of Great Britain, the historical relationship of enmity and friendship with the East India Company has a tremendous impact in the writing of history of Nepal. As a true history in its totality is impossible to come into existence, imagination has to play its role somewhere in one or another sense while forming a historiography, albeit in the form of fiction. In this sense, the history-fiction dichotomy gets blurred thereby taking help of folk memories, oral traditions, myths, and legends. Quantrill, in his book review comments:

> The first novel, *The Throne of Stone* was published in 2000. It covered the period 1479-1559 and dealt with the establishment of the House of Gorkha which, in due course, was to become the royal family of Nepal. The second historical novel, *The Restless Quest*, published in 2004, and to be republished in 2010, covered the period 1746-1815 that placed Britain and Nepal on a collision course and saw the start of the British-Nepal connection. (141)

Both of these novels jointly cover the periods of 1479 to 1815. These periods laid the foundation of modern Nepal. Cross's first novel depicts the establishment of Shah Dynasty in Lamjung with the efforts of Khaje Dura and the people of Dura Danda. Accordingly, the second novel depicts the Anglo-Nepal War and its aftermath. In doing so, Cross appropriates the historical facts by adding his own imagination in- juxtaposition with the folk memories—individual as well as collective—and the documents retrieved from the Dura people in the form of myths.

As the course of Nepal's history is full with anomalies, controversies, and contraries, the act of appropriation, that is, appropriating the historical facts, opens the gateway to form an alternative history from the perspective of the erstwhile marginalized Duras. Thus, the ethno-militaristic identity of the Duras has been retrieved, albeit in a fictional and mythical mode thereby forming a new mythscape with local flavor questioning the existing national myth. While reviewing the third novel, Quantrill, emphasizes on the history of the formation and establishment of Gurkha Regiment/Rifles as: "JPX has, in addition to the title, dedicated this volume to those hill men initially enlisted by the East India Company, or Company Bahadoor, as known locally" (141). Here, looking things critically, the Gurkhas lost the Anglo-Nepal War; however, the third volume is entitled as *The Crown of Renown.* The title of the book conveys dual meanings—the crown might be the British or Nepali crown. Obviously, the British soldiers were powerful due to their modern weapons. However, the Nepalis fought with the utmost courage. The entire British soldiers had to face a great loss due to the valor exhibited by the Nepalis or the Gurkhas.

Moreover, after the loss of one-third of Nepal's territory, the Nepalis had to withdraw from war and compelled to make friendship with their British counterparts. On the other side, because of the valor and the martial quality inherent within the Nepali/Gorkhali Army, the British side wanted to build a relation of friendship with the Nepalis/Gorkhalis. Thus, the Gorkhali Army had been invited to establish Gurkha Regiment by the British-Indian Government, which had double intentions—making friendship with Nepal, and through it, utilizing their military martial quality in expanding and strengthening the British colonization within the Indian sub-continent. Quantrill, in his review of the same novel, documents the history of the Gurkha Regiments and comments, "The history of this two Regiments is covered extensively, in particular the role played by Badal Singh Thapa, initially a slave who served later in the Sirmoor Rifles with great distinction, indeed elevated to hero status and recorded as such in 2GR history" (141). In the first phase of the formation of the Gurkha Regiment, the 1st Gurkha and the 2nd Gurkha Regiments were established. It is not only about the Regimental history, but also the history of the bravery of the Gurkhas as they displayed during the Anglo-Nepal War. The status of the Gurkhas reached up to the pinnacle thereby signaling the internationalization of their glorious past and identity. The war memories of the Anglo-Nepal War have been weaved to form the history of the Gorkhali//Nepali Army—their guerilla warfare, military tactics and strategies, and the extra-ordinary martial quality.

Cross's third novel, *The Crown of Renown,* characterizes the protagonist, Badal Dura—a Dura from Lamjung serving in the British Indian Army and the recipient of Order of Merit, Second Class. Depicting the same, Cross narrates, "Among the combined list of recipients for bravery were the names of Lieutenant Tytler for Victoria Cross, Jemadar Badal Thapa for the Order of Merit, Second Class, and Sepoy Jas Bahadur for the order of Merit, Third Class" (504-05). Thus, the ethno-militaristic identity of the Duras has been narrated with a distorted identity—the mythical Badal Dura transforming into the historical Badal Thapa. Oral history in the long run transforms into a myth. Focusing on the identity of the Duras, Cross narrates:

> Dura people, one of the smallest ethnic groups in what later became Nepal, made up the community. Badal's forebears had once held great responsibility of being the official doorkeepers, the *dwares,* of the Lamjung raja for over two

> hundred years. Happier relationships of those earlier days were now only a plangent folk memory of a time lost forever and nearly forgotten. (4)

Here, Cross's narrative highlights on the plights of the Duras. They have lost their past status and are compelled to stay far away from the ruling elites and their ways of life. Whatever has already been lost of their past can only be retrieved in their memories. Thus, Badal's memory of the past is also the collective memory of the Duras as Cross makes his characters memorialize the past events.

Moreover, when the memory of the past is forgotten, history remains a far cry for which the same transforms into myth. Now, the Duras of Lamjung, especially residing at Khaje village, remember the deeds of their ancestor captured in their collective memories thereby igniting their ethno-militaristic identity in an indirect manner. Shedding light on Halbwachs's notion of collective memory and its relation with identity, Meenakshie Verma claims, "Very often the debate over memory indexes an identity crisis in communities as well as individuals. When we take our personal identity for granted, we are not self-conscious about the past. When identity is not in question, neither is memory" (xl). It is quite sufficient here to establish how memory and identity are interrelated to each other. They are just like the two sides of a coin; without the one, the other has no existence of its own. Verma, too, emphasizes on the formation of collective memory. Once memory gets an opportunity to interplay, it tends to transform itself into collective memory. This, again, offers us the opportunity to formulate a supposition that individual memories never remain static all of the time; once they are triggered, they get changed taking the form of collective memories. Thus, the dynamic nature of memory is to trigger identity. And, in Cross's novels through the identity of his protagonists, Khaje Dura, Chegu Dura, and Badal Dura, the communal identity of the Duras of Lamjung in the history of Nepal has been raised, questioned, and established.

Verma delineates the relationship between memory and identity stating that "there is an interdependent relationship between experience and narrative, between the narrative self and the narrated self. As humans, we draw on our experience to shape narratives about our lives, but equally identity and character is shaped by our narratives" (xxxvii). It is quite apt to understand that we are what we narrate. Memories are strengthened once they are narrated and there the question of identity is triggered automatically, which the novels of Cross exemplify throughout their narratives.

By this, it is significant here to highlight the relationship between Indian and the Nepalis—not in terms of nationality but in terms of military skills. The Gorkha/Nepal Empire wanted to annex many parts of India; however, after the defeat in the Anglo-Nepal War, they withdrew from their dreams and started making friendship with the British. Although the Indians were tortured and their properties plundered, the British unified India. The Gorkhali/Nepali Army assisted the British in their Unification Mission of the Indian principalities. And, the British-Indian Government and the British soldiers were quite aware that they would not be able to consolidate the principalities of India without the assistance of the Gorkhali/Nepali Army. While reviewing the same novel, Quantrill focuses on the contribution of Bhakti Thapa in annexing the Naya Muluk—Kumaon and Garhwal. In doing so, Quantrill comments:

> The Nepalis "Empire" was far more expansive than the current boundaries. The Naya Muluk, the "New Country" or "New Nepal" was a result of Gorkha expansion into areas that included Kumaon and Garhwal to the west. JPX weaves the description of Gorkha legends such as Bhakti Thapa, "one of the bravest Gorkhas known" and a creator of the Naya Muluk, who was killed in action during the Anglo-Nepal War. Prithvinarayan Shah exemplifies other important characters; immortalized as the current founder of Nepal who conquered the Katmandu Valley in 1768. Bhakti Thapa's progeny plays an important part in the novel as the East India Company expanded into Naya Muluk's territory and clashed with both Sikh, Russian, and Chinese interests. (141)

Expanding Nepal's territory towards Naya Muluk was the gateway to fulfill the dream of Prithvinarayan Shah to reach towards Bhutan in the east and Kashmir in the west. The dream of establishing a Himalayan Empire stretching from Bhutan to Kashmir became the part and parcel of the progeny of Prithvinarayan Shah. However, the Kashmir-Bhutan expansion mission came into halt after the Anglo-Nepal War and the signing of the Sugauli Treaty, 1816, which deviated the course of history from enmity to friendship. In that very Anglo-Nepal War, military heroes like Bhakti Thapa, Amar Singh Thapa, and Balabhadra Kunwar were able to raise the heads of all the Nepali people corresponding to their bravery, loyalty, and martial heritage by the name Gurkhas. The death of Bhakti Thapa opened a new gateway in the future of Nepal and the Nepali/Gorkhali Army.

Moreover, Nepal has gained her identity, especially her military capability after losing an unforgettable loss. Thus, the historical memory of the loss of the land has been deeply imprinted in the mind of the Nepalis/Gorkhalis. This might be expressed in the individual and collective memories of the people and the historians simultaneously. Had the mainstream historians and their history recounted the childhood or early life of Bhakti Thapa, Cross would not have framed his series of novels appropriating the historical facts and events. In weaving the history of the childhood of Bhakti Thapa, Cross is obliged to take the help of folk memories and myths spreading among the Dura people thereby creating his own mythscape of the Duras. The journal, *The Kukri: The Journal of the Brigade of Gurkhas,* too, emphasizes on the conviction that Cross has reconstructed this book from the combination of folk memories, previously unknown written sources, and myths. This makes it easier to derive that a historical novel cannot be structured in void and the level of complication increases to a higher degree when there are controversies and multiple versions like that of the history of Nepal. While framing the series of novels, Cross has appropriated the historical facts and events from the available historiographies as well as the previously unknown documents.

Moreover, it has been already stated that Cross's series of novels are the results of the amalgamation between history and the folk memories/myths. Thus, the history-memory dichotomy has been blurred in the process of forming a historical memory culminating into an alternative history ultimately. During this process, authorial imagination might have played a great role along with the historical appropriation. This can be proved from Cross's second novel, *The Restless Quest,* in which he creates a protagonist having a restless quest in his life appropriating facts and details from the history of Nepal, India, and Great Britain. The hero

Chegu Dura is shown as a mythical figure possessing an extraordinary quality—enriched himself with the skills of a warrior, a sleeper, a detective, and so on. The officials of the British East India Company seek a person from Nepal, that is, High Asia, who can make a good link with the Raja of Nepal Valley and bring information such that trade becomes easier with Tibet via Nepal. In the meantime, Colonel Munro proposes Mr. John Price to make Chegu Dura, the mascot of Sir Robert Clive, a spy with a false name. Cross narrates the event from the mouthpiece of Colonel Munro in this manner:

> He won't be expensive. It will be a different matter if he brings in any news we need to take military action. All he will need is his own small group to go with him on what will seem as a roving trade mission—salt, medical herbs, say, depending on the time of year, and whatever comes his way. He can be paid from Golding's secret vote. No difficulty there. As for a guard against loose talk, he can be given a false name—he'll think of one I'm sure—and report in from time to time. (298)

Here, a mythical character seems to be an advantageous personality for the historical personalities—Colonel Munro and Mr. John Price. After sometime, Cross's historical character Colonel Munro says, "Chegu. We wish you to have a 'name of war,' to be used by you to us as a man of High Asia, to keep the name Chegu Dura safe, to confuse people who do not need to know the truth" (300). This explicit blending of myth with history provides Cross a poetic license or writerly freedom. It is an indirect way to make the Duras raise their voices for the preservation of their identity, especially their ethno-militaristic identity.

As Chegu Dura gets the opportunity to change his name with the permission of Colonel Munro, he becomes happy and chooses his own new name, Bhakti Thapa. Depicting the same event, Cross narrates, "Chegu thought long and hard. 'Bhakti Thapa,' he said, repeating it a couple of times so they would not forget it. None of them could know it was an ironic twist to Chegu's saga, as it meant 'established devotee,'" and Cross adds, "Chegu left it untranslated as he did not know the English words" (300). Thus, Cross's mythical character manipulatively transforms into a historical character—valorization of myth repeatedly gives birth to history—his narrative technique blurs the line between myth and history. This can be observed in the argument of Megill advocating the intricate relationship between history, memory, and identity. Megill claims that Halbwachsian "account of historical memory deals with how an identity, whose integrity at a certain moment is assumed, goes about making a past determined by, and congruent with that identity" (44). Megill's derivation on the relationship among history, memory, and identity, depends on the continuous interplay between individual and collective memory as propounded by Halbwachs, who believes that identities are reflected in the collective memories of the past.

The statement that memory is determined by an identity has its direct relation with history as it records the past events; and, memories, too, are related to past, however, they make a link between past and present. Megill contends, "To be sure, over time, an identity will undoubtedly be reshaped by the collective memories that it has constructed, but, fundamentally, identity precedes memory" (44). Thus, the relation between memory and identity can be realized on the basis of their embeddedness. Besides this, Megill, while highlighting the

intertwining nature of memory and identity, contends, "A rule might be postulated: where identity is problematized, memory is valorized" (40). This indicates that threatened identity triggers memory and memories are always collective memories. In the same line, Barbara A. Misztal argues that "memory helps in the construction of collective identities and boundaries, whether these are national, cultural, ethnic, or religious" (28). Here, the domain of ethnic identity can be enlarged to ethno-militaristic identity, which is applicable in analyzing the condition and status of the hill-based ethnic groups of Nepal in Gurkha literature.

The other selective text by Tim I. Gurung, *Ayo Gorkhali: A History of the Gurkhas,* covers the history of the bravery of the Gurkhas starting from the period of Anglo-Nepal War (1814-1816) to the present. Highlighting the unforgettable bravery of the Gurkhas, Gurung claims, "After the end of 1857 War of Indian Independence, nobody doubted the bravery, commitment, and loyalty of the Gurkhas again" (19). This proves that the other meaning of Gurkha was bravery, commitment, and loyalty during that period and the same prevails till date, albeit every Gurkha might not be able to display the aforementioned qualities. Gurung further contends, "The Gurkhas had firmly established themselves as one of the best in the services" (19). The martial qualities of the Gurkhas attracted the attention of the British East India Company. Later on, in the words of Ram Prasad Rai, their "grand role to exploit the mutinies won the trust of the British institution to their expertise in wars" (40). Rai's research is worthwhile in the sense that he has given value to Gurkha literature formed by the Nepali/Gurkha writers. In his research, he includes both the Nepali and foreign writers' books—historical memoirs and fictions, including historical novels. Commenting on Gurung's *Ayo Gorkhali: A History of the Gurkhas,* Rai argues:

> Though *Ayo Gorkhali: A History of the Gurkhas* consists of the Gurkhas' rescue of their officers, co-warriors, and civilians only after they started fighting for Britain, there should certainly be such actions even in Anglo-Nepal War. In every warfare, the wounded co-warriors get rescued as much as possible. After the Gorkhas' recruitment in the British East India Company army, they initially succeeded to suppress robbers and bandits, which was a rescue of the civilians from the robbers and bandits. With Gorkhas' strong role only, the mutinies in India were settled well. (42)

This suggests that the history of the bravery and rescuing tendency of the Gurkhas can be traced before the Anglo-Nepal War. Many hill tribes with their warrior identity were enrolled in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab in Lahore. From this Lahore, the term *Lahure* came in the history of Nepali/Gorkhali Army. The trajectory of the military history of Nepal can be enlisted as the Gorkhali Army, the Lahures, the Gurkhas, the Gorkhas, and the Nepali Army. In almost all the phases and periods, bravery, loyalty, commitment, and rescuing qualities of the hill tribes of Nepal can be observed. Rai's argument, too, focuses on the collective efforts of the Gurkhas—especially, the hill ethnic groups—in suppressing the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 in India. The unification of India could not have been possible unless the Gurkhas had fought displaying their martial quality. Moreover, during the process of unification, they were able to establish a good relationship with the common people of India thereby rescuing them from the dacoits, robbers, and bandits. Despite the abundant reference to the war memories in creating

or forming the military history of Nepal in Gurung's *Ayo Gorkhali,* Rai's research does not hint on the transformation of individual memories of the war veterans into their collective memories.

The transformation of individual memories into collective memories can be observed in the memories memorialized by Rifleman Prem Bahadur Gurung, 2/5 GR, from Phedikhola, Syangja. Joining in the British Indian Army in 1942 as a boy, he went to Japan. After participating in the Hyderabad Campaign, he left the Indian Army in 1951 and ultimately joined the Nepali Army thereby earning a pension after his retirement. Depicting Prem Bahadur's memory, Gurung recounts, "It took us twenty-nine days by sea to reach Japan. As a peacekeeping force, we mostly did ceremonial and guarding duties, and stayed two months at Hiroshima, two months at Ogaya, and three months at Tokyo before finally returning to India" (115). Rifleman Prem Bahadur Gurung's memory is his individual memory of going to Japan as a member of peacekeeping force; however, instead of using 'I' while narrating the event, he uses 'we' thereby memorializing it collectively. The Gurkhas, especially the hill-ethnic groups of Nepal, memorialize every incident and event of the wars of different periods in a collective manner. For the British the martial races were the Magars, the Gurungs, the Rais, and the Limbus. Accordingly, they formed their respective brigades; for example, among the regiments "2nd and 6th from the West Nepal had mostly Magars and Gurungs, and the 7th and 10th had Rais and Limbus from the East" (184). The hill ethnic groups seek their identities in the military profession. In this connection, Gurung further recounts, "These communities (Gurungs, Magars, Rais, and Limbus) were considered martial races" (184). Because of this, they were recruited in the Gurkha Regiments. Gurung, in order to highlight the collective Gurung identity, foregrounds his individual identity and claims:

> It's not your talent, preference or opportunity but birth that determines your future; your surname decides what you do in life, and your community tells you what's right for you in life. Our villages were no different. As Gurungs, we never tried business, office work or anything else in life. As we knew was farming, and that was what we all did for a living. When the opportunity of becoming a Gurkha arrived, we tried that and surprised ourselves when we found we were good at it. And the two-century-long history of the Gurkhas has already proven that point. (188)

Here, while revealing the military history of Nepal and the Gurkhas, Gurung links his individual memory with his Gurung community. Memorializing his experience of joining the British Gurkha Army, he reveals the overall memory of the entire Gurung community. Gurung's historical memoir recounts not only the two-century-long history of the Gurkhas but also the militaristic identity of the entire Gurung ethnic groups. Thus, Gurung's individual memory of being recruited and served in the British Gurkha Regiment transforms into collective memory of the entire Gurung community and ultimately the entire hill ethnic groups of Nepal, that is, the Gurkhas. Gurungs are by birth fit for military profession and they are highly praised for their martial qualities considering them as martial races.

Gurung's *Ayo Gorkhali* comes under the genre of historical memoir. Writing as a Gurung writer, he reveals his own experiences in the British Gurkha Regiment and the history

and memories of the Gurkhas, especially the war veterans. While doing this, he documents the history of the Anglo-Nepal War before the Sugauli Treaty, the recruitment of the Gurkhas in the British Army, the war with the Marathas, the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the victory and seize of Bharatpur, and the experiences of the WWI and the WWII. In almost all the wars fought by the Gurkhas, they displayed their bravery, courage, commitment, and loyalty, which might not come true in every one's case. They could preserve their militaristic identity even by losing their ethnic identity, for example, in the case of the Duras, they were compelled to write Gurung surnames to get the easy recruitment in the British Army. The collective identity of the entire hill-ethnic groups can be associated and included with the identity of the Gurkhas. Thus, Gurkha literature reveals the militaristic identity of the hill-based indigenous groups of Nepal.

In parallel with Gurung's *Ayo Gorkhali,* Kailash Khebang Limbu's *Gurkha: Better to Die than Live a Coward: My Life with the Gurkhas* depicts the valor of the Gurkhas. Limbu retraces the bravery and gallantry of the Gurkhas and writes, "This is the Gurkha motto. 'It is better to die than be a coward'" (208). As Limbu retraces the battle of Ypres, he compliments the courage of Rifleman Motilal Thapa stating that "he kept saying to himself 'I must not cry out I am a Gurkha'" (40). In his research, Rai compares Gurung and Limbu's understanding of Motilal's courage highlighting that "his devotion is like what Kailash Limbu writes" (40). Thus, Tim I. Gurung and Kailash Khebang Limbu's historical memoirs coincide themselves in many respects as both of them are Gurkha soldiers writing the war memories of the Gurkhas. However, Rai's research claims nothing about the transformation of individual memory into collective memory as propounded by Halbwachs, which this paper strives to unravel.

Limbu, in his memoir, memorializes the experiences of his self, the history, memory, and myth of the Limbus, and the experiences of the Gurkhas in the battlefield. Limbu retraces his identity as a Limbu in a straightforward manner: "My full name is Kailash Khebang Limbu and I am a Limbu. Limbu is my cast, Khebang is my village, and Kailash is what people call me" (12). Limbu associates his name Kailash with the holy mountain Kailash located in Tibet. Memorializing the existing mythical prediction system in Limbu culture, Limbu narrates, "When I was just a few days old, my mother's father measured me with his hand and said I was going to be tall and strong as a mountain" (12). This incident in Limbus's memoir might be the act of valorizing myth emerging out of the womb of oral history. No individual memory can remain in its static position as it has to gain its momentum transforming itself into a collective memory. This Halbwachsian model of transformation process can be explicitly seen in Limbu's memoir. As Nepal is a multiethnic country, "Nepalese are made up of many different castes, or tribes. Apart from Limbus, there are Chetris, Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Sunwars, and Thakurs, plus a few other smaller groups" (Limbu 12). A few other smaller groups may refer to Duras, Lepchas, and many other unidentified ethnic groups who contributed in the formation of Nepal as a nation-state. Limbus are considered as the highlanders and "it is from the hill-dwelling castes that traditionally the Gurkhas have been recruited—although this rule is no longer hard and fast" (Limbu 13). This indicates that the recruitment of only the martial tribes in the Gurkha Regiments has not remained a hard and fast rule; however, the majority of the recruitment rests on the martial race theory.

Limbu, in his memoir, demarcates the territory of the Limbus considering Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Bhutan as their primary dwelling places. Being a Limbu himself, Limbu asserts, "Collectively, this is known as Limbuwan, and there are thought to be around three

quarters of a million of us; so, though not as numerous as the Gurungs, we are still a large group" (13). The sense of collective identity of the Limbus can be explicitly seen in his assertion. Moreover, comparison of the population of the Limbus with that of the Gurungs indicates that every individual is intricately attached to one's own community and ethnicity. In order to highlight the same, Limbu retraces the history of the origin of the Limbus as:

> Originally, the Limbu people came to Nepal from Tibet. In our own language we refer to ourselves as *yakthumbas,* which translates as "yak herders." There are no yaks in Nepal, so this shows that our ancestors came from Tibetan plateau. Yet while Tibetans are almost all Buddhists, and while there are some Limbus who are Buddhists, my family follows the ancient Kirat religion. Unlike Tibetans, we believe in God whom we call Bhagawan. (13)

Considering Iman Singh Chemjong's research on the Limbus and their origin, Kailash Khebang Limbu's details on Limbus might be misleading. As Chemjong demarcates the territory of the Limbus even broader, including almost all the Himalayas, the plains of North India, and Afghanistan, Limbu's is too narrower. During the period of the *Mahabharata,* the territory of the Kirats was larger, too. Whether the Limbus call their God as Bhagawan or something else needs to be researched further. However, Limbu's aforementioned details prove the transformation of individual memories into collective memories as Limbu is unable to confine his memories within himself. The sense of collective identity overwhelmingly captures the mind of the writer and he starts remembering himself unable to detach from the clutch of his own community. In the case of Gurkha literature, the individual memories of the experiences of an individual army transform into the collective memories of the overall Gurkhas.

Conclusion

Finally, although Gurkha does not refer to an ethnic group, the hill ethnic groups consider themselves as Gurkhas. This might be due to the influence of the martial race theory on the basis of which the British recruited the Nepali youths from Nepal. Thus, history, memory, and myth in Gurkha literature trigger the sense of identity, especially the ethno-militaristic identity of the hill-based ethnic groups.

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Postcolonial Realities and Modernity in Pankaj Mishra's *Temptations of the West*

Janani M & NS Vijayalakshmi

Abstract

Pankaj Mishra's *Temptations of the West* and Frantz Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* both interrogate how colonialism reshapes subjectivity, politics, and culture, but they do so across different literal moments and topographies to reveal a participated problematic of "espoused" fustiness. Mishra reads South Asia's hassles with Western fustiness as producing uneven, cold-blooded conformations — loose institutions, Hindu nationalism, neoliberal capitalism, and fractured individualities — that remain structurally dependent on social patrimonies indeed when they claim to reject the West. Fanon, fastening on the Algerian War, theorizes anti-colonial struggle as a radical re-making of the settled tone, in which technologies and practices formerly tied to domination (radio, drug, civic space) are re-appropriated as tools of resistance and collaborative renewal. Together, these textbooks show that postcolonial fustiness is neither purely emancipatory nor simply secondary it's a contested field where social "murk" persist, yet where the possibility of transformative political agency and new imaginaries of community remains open.

Keywords: Postcolonial modernity, Colonial Legacy, Cultural Hybridity, Nationalism, Identity, Resistance, Neoliberal globalization.

Frantz Fanon's A Dying Colonialism is a seminal postcolonial textbook that explores the transformative impact of the Algerian War of Independence on the settled psyche and society. Fanon portrays colonialism not just as a political domination but as a comprehensive artistic and cerebral system that invades the identity and diurnal lives of the settled people. He argues that the emancipation of struggle awakens new forms of knowledge, forcing the settled to reject assessed social values and reclaim their artistic identity. This decolonization of the mind marks a critical shift — the settled begin to review their social and political realities on their own terms, using both traditional and ultramodern tools frequently ironically inherited from the colonial.

There is not occupation of territory on the one hand and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigured, in the hope of a final destruction. Under these conditions, the individual's breathing is an observed, an occupied breathing. It is a combat breathing.in a world where oppression is maintained by violence from above, it is only possible to liquidate it from violence from below. (A Dying Colonialism 96)

Like the postcolonial pressures stressed in Pankaj Mishra's *Temptations of the West*, Fanon acknowledges the contradictions in postcolonial fustiness. In" A Dying Colonialism," these contradictions crop through the Algerians' evolving use of technologies and social practices introduced by colonialism, similar as radio and drug. Originally defied as symbols of social control, they're ultimately appropriated as instruments of resistance and solidarity in the emancipation of movement. These dialectic glasses Mishra's observation of South Asia's struggle with Western fustiness where indigenous societies both repel and widely embrace

aspects of the social heritage, creating complex mongrel individualities and political realities shaped by ongoing social histories.

Both Fanon and Mishra emphasize the profound cerebral and artistic paroxysms accompanying political emancipation struggles. Fanon's definition of the revolutionary Algerian society as witnessing a deep renewal of identity and community parallels Mishra's definition of postcolonial South Asia caught between tradition, nationalism, and Western fustiness. Where Mishra illustrates the patient's ambivalence and inequalities embedded in social patrimonies, Fanon offers a more auspicious vision of revolutionary metamorphosis. Yet both fete the continuing influence of colonialism "shadow" indeed as societies seek to assert their independence and forge new futures amid the complications of globalization and enduring power imbalances.

Pankaj Mishra, born in 1969 in North India, is an acclaimed Indian essayist, novelist, and socialist. He holds a bachelor's in commerce from Allahabad University and a master's in English literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University. He began his literary career in 1992, contributing essays and reviews to various Indian publications while living in Mashobra, a Himalayan village. A prolific writer for outlets like The Guardian and The New York Times, Mishra has sparked several controversies and won the Windham-Campbell Prize for non-fiction in 2014.

Temptations of the West by Pankaj Mishra is a sophisticated postcolonial examination of South Asia's experience with modernity as framed by Western influences. In order to reveal the lasting effects of colonialism on India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Afghanistan and demonstrate how colonial legacies continue to influence current political and social realities, the book combines autobiography, travelogue, and political analysis. Mishra critically illustrates how British colonial institutions failed to adapt to indigenous realities, leaving behind an administrative and social structure that causes inequality, unemployment, and instability in contemporary India. The development of an egalitarian society has been hampered by these colonial legacies, and postcolonial India struggles with the paradoxes of inherited privilege, corruption, and lawlessness in the face of swift changes brought about by nationalism and global capitalism.

Such violence, extreme though it seemed, wasn't new to the university, which had long been witness to bloodier battles between the student wings of communist and Hindu nationalist organizations. These two groups tended to be allied with different ends of the caste system: the lower castes tended to be communist, the upper castes tended to be Hindu nationalist. But frequently now, the violence came for no ideological reason, with no connections to a cause or movement. It erupted spontaneously, fuelled only by the sense of despair and hopelessness that permanently hung over North Indian universities in the 1960s. This was itself part of a larger crisis caused by the collapse of many Indian institutions, the increasingly close alliance between crime and politics, and the growth of state organized corruption - processes that had accelerated during Mrs Gandhi's 'Emergency' in the mid - seventies. (TW 10)

Mishra's postcolonial notice includes the complex and equivocal nature of identity and fustiness in South Asia. He illustrates this through the Nehru family's contradictions as symbols of India's struggle with Western fustiness — embracing British artistic morals while facing the prospects of postcolonial nationalism. He exposes the crunches and mediocrity in political leadership that followed independence and how these shaped contemporary societal challenges. The book also reviews the rise of Hindu nationalism, showing how similar political movements paradoxically calculate on artistic forms shaped by Western social hassles indeed

as they reject Western influences. This highlights Mishra's broader thesis that the fustiness South Asia aspires to is n't a tone- defined construct but one irrevocably altered by the social heritage. The continuity of collaborative and estate divisions institutionalized through social fabrics exacerbates social fractures rather than resolving them.

> I write out of my experience,' Karan Johar had told me. This experience seemed limited — like many young hat ke film-makers, Johar was, I discovered, the son of a rich producer. But it was more widely shared than I had imagined. After ten years of economic liberalization, a small but growing number of Indians live as well as middle-class Europeans and Americans. During this time, many Indians in Britain and America have begun to see their ancestral country as an investment opportunity and a cultural resource. These rich but insecure Indians have bankrolled generously the Hindu nationalists' rise to power,and now support the assertion of Indian military and economic power. They also form the newest and most lucrative market for Bollywood films. (TW, 187)

Mishra's narrative also reflects the artistic and ideological mongrel in postcolonial South Asia, where Western fustiness coexists uneasily with original traditions and global commercial forces. He captures the antithetical symbols of this mongrel — from Bollywood's glamour and popular culture to the harsh realities of violence and social injustice. The book discusses how neoliberal free- request programs have tried to replace the state's part, fostering inequalities and social fermentation. Mishra's pictorial descriptions of everyday life reveal the pressure between stopgap and despair in a region trying to negotiate its place in a globalized world. This postcolonial lens not only reviews the effects of Homeric domination but also questions the pledges and threats of espousing Western models of progress and republic in surrounds burdened by deep literal inequalities and conflict.

> India is Shining, the Hindu nationalist government claimed in a series of poster and newspaper advertisements in late 2003. The prime minister and his deputy repeatedly cited the growing prominence of Indians around the world and asserted that the twenty first century was going to be the 'Indian century'. Many of the new Bollywood films increasingly came out of, and stroked, the same Indian fantasy of wealth, political power, and cultural confidence."(TW, 187)

Eventually, *Temptations of the West* presents a sobering yet complex postcolonial reality where South Asia is caught in the struggle between literal trauma and the desire for ultramodern metamorphosis. Mishra does not glamorize the West nor completely condemn it; rather, he provides an incisive analysis of how Western fustiness's appeal has shaped aspirations and anxieties in postcolonial societies. His accounts of Kashmir and Tibet punctuate the brutal consequences of undetermined colonizer and postcolonial conflicts, while also admitting small signs of stopgap amid suffering. The book eventually challenges romantic or simplistic narratives about East-West relations, revealing a postcolonial geography marked by artistic flux, political contradictions, and the ongoing impact of social histories on contemporary South Asia.

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Family Conflicts and the Prophetic Urge to Renounce: R.K. Narayan's Timeless Vision

Josephine Ashalatha Samuel

Abstract

R.K. Narayan's vision in *The Vendor of Sweets* portrays family conflicts as catalysts for a prophetic urge to renounce worldly attachments. Jagan, a Gandhian sweet vendor in Malgudi, faces turmoil as his son Mali returns from America embracing Western materialism, demanding cars, cash, and a live-in partner, which shatters their traditional bond and exposes paternal illusions. Through irony and psychological depth, Narayan depicts generational rifts fueled by miscommunication and cultural shifts, driving Jagan from possessive fatherhood to ascetic withdrawal, echoing ancient sannyasa ideals amid modern India's flux. This evolution critiques familial decay in globalization, framing renunciation as self-reconciliation rather than defeat. Ultimately, Narayan reveals harmony through detachment from possessive ties, offering enduring insight into human bonds fractured by ambition.

Key words: Blind father love, Rebel son, Generation gap, Family conflict, Hidden guilt, Shared home, Postcolonial setting, Moral failure, Carries alcohol, Quiet reconciliation.

Introduction

R.K. Narayan's novel *The Vendor of Sweets*, published in 1967, shows how family conflicts lead a father to give up everything for peace. The story is set in the fictional town of Malgudi and follows Jagan, a sweet vendor who lives a simple life. He follows Gandhian ideals of plain living and cares little for wealth or possessions. He reads sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gita and sells sweets cheaply to help poor people. Jagan has one son, Mali, who went to America for studies but returns transformed. Mali brings a woman named Grace, who is half American and half Korean. He claims she is his wife, though this is untrue. Mali rejects his father's traditional values. He demands money to start a business that produces stories using a machine. He is arrested for keeping a bottle of alcohol in the car and later abandons Grace. These events deeply wound Jagan. He feels sorrow over his attempts to control his son. Jagan encounters a bearded wise man who speaks about detachment. Gradually, Jagan realizes that family bonds can cause suffering. He chooses to abandon his shop, his house, and all responsibilities. He gives away his possessions and walks away in search of true peace, like a holy ascetic in ancient Indian tales. Narayan uses ordinary incidents to convey profound ideas about conflicts between tradition and modernity in India. Family strife leads Jagan to recognize the need to renounce worldly existence.

Conflicts and concerns examined in the novel

The issues in R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* continue to reverberate through contemporary society.

Blind Fatherly Love

Jagan shows constant love for Mali from the beginning. He calls him his "little prince" even after they have been apart for many years. When Mali returns from America, he brings many demands and bad habits. Jagan gives him money for a car, accepts the false marriage with Grace, and supports the story-machine idea without any complaint. Friends warn Jagan that Mali lies, drinks alcohol, and wastes money, but Jagan refuses to listen. He believes his son deserves one more chance. This blind love makes Jagan weak. He ignores his shop work to read holy books, yet he still empties his safe for Mali, who makes fun of his simple way of life. Jagan often tells himself, "After all he is my son and I must give him a chance to prove himself." When Mali is caught carrying alcohol in his car and gets arrested, Jagan immediately pays the fine without asking questions. He feels sad and thinks, "My little prince cannot be blamed entirely; I must have failed him somewhere." Family members tell him, "Your boy is lost." Jagan only smiles and prays. His old guilt makes him see Mali as a child instead of a grown man in trouble. He wonders, "How could I have guessed that he would turn out like this? For twenty years he has grown up with me." Over time, Jagan learns through pain that sometimes love must stop in order to save the soul.

Rebel Son

Mali never listens to his father. After spending time in America, he moves away from Indian traditions. He lives freely, without clear rules, and is always chasing new ideas. He keeps writing stories all the time. His father calls out to him, "Find proper work, think of marriage!" but Mali only smiles, takes his notebook, and goes to stay with his friends. He writes late at night, turning daily problems into stories. America has changed the way Mali thinks about duty and everyday life. He does not care about routine or responsibility. He moves through life without worrying about what others expect. Mali tells his father, "I do not want you to cook for me hereafter. We have our college canteen." This makes his father angry, and people in the town whisper about it, but Mali continues to live as he wants. "Peace reigned at home, with speech between father and son reduced to a minimum." Mali eats outside most of the time, works on his story-machine idea, and rejects all advice. His father watches him grow more distant but remains silent. Mali continues to act as a rebel and follows only his own wishes.

Generation Gap

Jagan strongly believes in traditional ways of life. He prefers a simple life where family duty is important and traditions guide his actions. He lives simply, prays regularly, and makes sweets using old methods passed down over time. He hopes that his son will follow the same calm and

steady life. When Mali returns from America, he is completely changed. He wants quick money, fast cars, city life, and Western freedom. He leaves college, avoids family meals, and angrily tells his father, "Your life is too slow for me now." They argue often. Jagan begs him, "Stick to your roots and work steadily like I did." Mali only laughs and says, "I need cash, speed, and to live by my own rules." Earlier, the house was peaceful, but now there is almost no conversation between father and son. People in the village talk about their problems, and the house feels cold and unhappy. Jagan feels sad that his traditions are fading, while Mali thinks his father is stubborn and does not understand progress. There is no agreement between them. Mali suggests careless business plans, and Jagan becomes more silent. Jagan thinks deeply, "The boy looked up angrily… 'For twenty years… he has grown up with me… but how little I have known him!'" The father stays connected to tradition, while the son rushes toward a modern future, and the gap between them keeps growing.

Family Conflict

Family conflict grows slowly in Jagan's sweet shop. Jagan is an old man who values his successful sweet business and sees it as a family tradition. He believes work, marriage, and duty are important, and he wants his son to respect these values. Mali, influenced by life in America, openly rebels. He leaves the sweet shop, prefers writing and strange ideas, and lives freely with his friends. He eats at college canteens to avoid home food and family ties. They argue about Mali's laziness, foreign ideas, and dislike for traditional marriage. Their arguments slowly stop turning into fights and instead become silence. Jagan watches helplessly while Mali lives without rules. This conflict shows the deep gap between generations old Indian values and the careless freedom of youth. In the end, the sweetness of the shop turns bitter because of their silent struggle.

Hidden Guilt

Hidden guilt grows quietly beneath the family conflict, like syrup left too long in Jagan's shop. Jagan strongly holds on to his sweet business and treats it as a sacred family duty. He speaks about Gandhian values, hard work, and responsibility, but deep inside he feels guilty. He believes his son's failure is partly his own fault as a father. Mali, influenced by life in America, openly rebels. He leaves the sweet shop, spends time with friends, and prefers writing in notebooks instead of working. He refuses family care. Though he seems careless, he also feels some hidden guilt for leaving his duties behind. Slowly, their arguments fade into silence. Both carry unspoken regret—Jagan feels guilty for failing his son, and Mali feels hurt by his father's strict beliefs. People in the neighborhood whisper about them, and the success of the sweet shop begins to feel bitter. The conflict between generations continues quietly, filled with guilt and distance.

Shared Home

The shared home becomes a place of tension and conflict. It is a small house in Malgudi filled with the smell of sweets and constant disagreement. Jagan takes care of the house while reading holy books and managing his shop. He sees the home as a place of tradition where a son must respect duty and responsibility. Mali, however, treats the house as a temporary place. He fills it with notebooks and foreign items and often leaves to stay with friends. He refuses home-cooked food and says, "I do not want you to cook for me hereafter." Living in the same house, the father's strict beliefs clash with the son's restless lifestyle account books on one side and writing notes on the other. Slowly, they stop talking to each other. The house, once full of family customs and warmth, turns quiet and divided, showing the struggle between old traditions and new freedoms.

Post-Colonial Setting

The post-colonial setting of Malgudi shows family conflict clearly. The town reflects a time after Independence, where new freedoms exist but old traditions are still strong. Jagan protects his sweet shop as a symbol of traditional Indian life. He believes in Gandhian values, caste rules, and family duty, and sees these as very important. Mali represents the new generation shaped by foreign influence, especially America. He brings modern habits into the home, leaves notebooks everywhere, spends time with friends, and rejects traditional family life. He openly refuses home care. Living together in this mixed cultural space increases their conflict. Jagan's strict traditional life clashes with Mali's modern and restless attitude. Slowly, they stop communicating. Through Malgudi, Narayan shows how India itself is divided between tradition and modernity, where a once sweet family legacy becomes bitter under modern change.

Moral Failure

Moral failure slowly damages the bond between father and son, like jaggery spoiled by overboiling in Jagan's shop. Jagan talks about Gandhian values, purity, and selfless duty. He believes he is morally right, but his strict control over his son shows his weakness. He criticizes Mali while quietly making compromises himself. Mali reacts by behaving carelessly. He ignores his duty as a son, follows American habits, wastes time on notebooks, and easily leaves the comfort of home. He rejects family care. Living in the same house makes their moral failures more visible. Jagan's failure as a guide meets Mali's careless and irresponsible behavior. Slowly, anger replaces words. Through this conflict, Narayan shows how both the father's excessive control and the son's betrayal weaken moral values, turning a once meaningful family tradition into something empty and broken.

Carries Alcohol

Mali carrying alcohol becomes the final and most serious moment in the family conflict. In the streets of Malgudi, his green car becomes a sign of Western influence and bad choices. Jagan, who believes strongly in religious values, has always hated the "horrible car" because it brings disorder into their home. He wants discipline and control, while Mali chooses freedom and rebellion. Mali, influenced by American life, ignores rules and responsibility. He avoids home life, eats at canteens, writes in notebooks, and openly rejects his father's care. When the police arrest Mali for hiding alcohol in the car and driving carelessly, it confirms how far he has fallen. By this time, there is already no communication between father and son. Jagan quickly arranges bail for his son, but the incident fills him with deep sadness. Though he feels morally right, he also realizes that something precious has been lost forever. This event completely breaks the family bond and destroys Jagan's hopes, turning the sweetness of life bitter.

Quiet Reconciliation

In R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, a quiet form of reconciliation appears even though the family remains broken. The story takes place in their silent home in Malgudi, where father and son have stopped talking. After Mali's accident and arrest, Jagan helps him by arranging bail without blaming or scolding him. Although Jagan is hurt, his strict Gandhian attitude slowly softens. Mali returns home after jail, changed but not openly sorry. He does not apologize, but he stays quietly in the house and goes back to writing in his notebooks. He still keeps his distance and repeats his earlier rejection. There is still silence between them. Even so, small actions begin to heal the pain. Though they do not speak much, they live together calmly. Narayan does not show an emotional reunion. Instead, he suggests that tradition and family ties slowly survive rebellion, and quiet acceptance replaces open conflict.

Conclusion

In R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, the conflict between Jagan and his son Mali shows a clash between old traditions and new ideas in post-colonial Malgudi. Jagan, an elderly sweet seller, follows traditional values and Gandhian beliefs. He spends his days making sweets, reading holy books, and keeping account records. He wants his son to live a responsible life and often advises him, "Find proper work, think of marriage!" However, Jagan also feels hidden guilt. He worries that he has failed as a father while watching his values slowly disappear. Mali, influenced by life in America, openly rebels. He leaves the sweet shop, spends time with friends, and focuses only on writing in notebooks. He clearly rejects family life and says, "I do not want you to cook for me hereafter. We have our college canteen." Slowly, arguments stop and silence takes over. "Peace reigned at home, with speech between father and son reduced to a minimum," while neighbors quietly talk about the family's shame.

The situation becomes worse after Mali is arrested. His green car, a symbol of excess and bad influence, brings him to jail for hiding alcohol. Jagan quietly pays the bail, feeling both relief and deep sadness. There are no more loud fights. Instead, a quiet change begins. Mali

returns home calmer, writing less, while Jagan becomes softer and less strict. They do not talk much, but they begin to live together peacefully again. Narayan does not give a dramatic ending. Instead, he shows that families often survive through silence and patience. Over time, tradition slowly returns, rebellion fades, and life continues with understanding rather than conflict.

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Fragmented selves: Construction and Regulation of Female Identity in Contemporary Dystopian Fiction

Ketaki Pawar

Abstract

Contemporary dystopian fiction often highlights female protagonists; however, these narratives frequently emphasize the regulation of identity rather than focusing on themes of empowerment. This study analyzes the mechanisms through which dystopian regimes in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, and *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard systematically construct, fragment and regulate female identity. Utilizing feminist identity theory alongside Michel Foucault's notion of subject formation, this study posits that the regulation of identity serves as a fundamental mechanism of political domination. The processes of naming, categorization, surveillance, and biological determinism serve to diminish women to functional roles, thereby undermining individuality and reinforcing ideological conformity. This paper offers a unique feminist interpretation of contemporary dystopian fiction by redirecting critical attention from resistance to the processes of identity formation.

Keywords: Female Identity, Dystopian Fiction, Gender Regulation, Surveillance, Feminist Theory

Introduction

The twenty-first century has experienced a notable increase in dystopian fiction focused on female protagonists, featuring narratives that delve into themes of authoritarian regimes, surveillance, and ideological conformity. Literary works including The Hunger Games, Divergent, The Handmaid's Tale, and Red Queen present female protagonists who traverse societies characterized by strict hierarchies. Although critics frequently highlight the valor and defiance exhibited by these women, such interpretations may inadvertently mask a more widespread mechanism of domination: the formation and disintegration of female identity. Dystopian societies extend beyond the mere limitation of women's actions; they impose regulations on the very essence of their identities. The construction of identity within these narratives is shaped by political ideology, social classification, linguistic control, and the regulation of the body. Female characters frequently find themselves confined to recognizable roles – tributes, faction members, handmaids, or individuals categorized by blood – thereby ensuring adherence to ideological frameworks while simultaneously diminishing their personal agency.

This paper posits that modern dystopian literature portrays identity as a locus of control and subjugation. An analysis of Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, Tris Prior in *Divergent*, Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Mare Barrow in *Red Queen* reveals the ways

in which identity fragmentation and regulation serve as a fundamental mechanism of power. This study employs a meticulous textual analysis and engages theoretically with the works of Butler and Foucault, highlighting the nuanced and significant mechanisms through which dystopian systems exert control over women.

Theoretical Framework: Analyzing Identity, Power Dynamics, and Gender Constructs

Feminist theory underscores the notion that identity is a product of social construction rather than an inherent quality. Judith Butler's theory of performativity posits that gender identity is constructed through a series of repeated actions influenced by cultural and political norms (Butler 34). In dystopian societies, the intensification of these norms leads to the transformation of identity into an instrument of authoritarian control.

Michel Foucault's concept of productive power provides deeper insights into the ways in which individuals internalize domination. He posits that power influences knowledge, norms, and self-perception, resulting in individuals who engage in their own regulation (Discipline and Punish 194). Dystopian regimes illustrate this productive power through the imposition of rigid identities that women are forced to occupy.

Feminist dystopian criticism broadens this framework, illustrating the ways in which women's identities are governed by their bodies, language, and reproductive roles. Naming conventions, uniforms, biological markers, and ritualized roles serve as mechanisms of control that diminish women to purposes defined by the state. This theoretical framework facilitates a comparative analysis of the four novels, emphasizing common strategies of identity fragmentation.

Manufactured Identity and spectacle in *The Hunger Games*

Suzanne Collins, in *The Hunger Games*, delineates identity as a construct shaped by state-controlled spectacle, illustrating the mechanisms through which the Capitol fabricates public personas to maintain its political hegemony. The identity of Katniss Everdeen undergoes a transformation upon her arrival in the Capitol, where her physical form becomes a canvas for both visual and ideological representation. The intricate procedures of grooming, costuming, and televised interviews serve to obliterate her previous identity as a District Twelve girl, substituting it with a meticulously crafted persona intended for public consumption. Katniss acknowledges this metamorphosis as she perceives that she has become "Someone else," a construct designed for the scrutiny of the audience (Collins 63). The spectacle transcends mere presentation of identity; it actively generates it through mechanisms of repetition, visibility, and surveillance.

The broadcasted format of the Games guarantees that Katniss remains under constant observation, necessitating her to manage her conduct, emotional expressions, and ethical reactions. This persistent visibility corresponds with Michel Foucault's argument that surveillance functions as a disciplinary tool by fostering self-regulation (Discipline and Punish 201). Katniss recognizes that survival is contingent not solely upon physical prowess but also on embodying an identity that aligns with the expectations of the Capitol. The expressions of empathy she exhibits, including the establishment of alliances and the manifestation of sorrow,

are mediated by the awareness of observation, thereby converting genuine feelings into calculated acts.

The imposed romantic narrative between Katniss and Peeta serves to illustrate the disintegration of identity within the realm of spectacle. The Capitol's insistence on framing a love story diminishes Katniss's emotional existence to a mere consumable narrative, prioritizing political spectacle over personal authenticity. She consistently interrogates the genuineness of her own emotions, acknowledging that her public persona is constructed while her inner self remains in a state of ambiguity (Collins 131). This distinction between the inner self and external performance demonstrates how spectacle disrupts a cohesive identity by necessitating that individuals engage in conflicting roles at the same time.

The symbolism inherent in costumes serves to amplify this constructed identity. The persona of the "girl on fire," bolstered by visual motifs of flame and spectacle, elevates Katniss to the status of a symbol rather than merely a subject. The representation of her body is both aesthetic and political, functioning as a visual emblem of the Capitol's authority in shaping meaning. In this context, identity is devoid of autonomy and transformed into a political tool, illustrating the efficacy of dystopian authority when individuals are reduced to mere symbols rather than acknowledged as multifaceted beings.

Factional Categorization and Psychological Division in *Divergent*

In *Divergent*, Veronica Roth articulates identity as a stringent construct enforced through factional categorization, illustrating how psychological division serves as a mechanism of social control. The faction system simplifies individuals to a singular dominant virtue – Abnegation, Dauntless, Erudite, Amity, or Candor – thus overlooking the intricate and multifaceted nature of human identity. Tris Prior's experience highlights the constructed nature of this system, especially during the aptitude test, which undermines her self-identity by uncovering conflicting tendencies. The uncertainty she experiences after the test indicates the onset of identity fragmentation, as she comes to understand that belonging is contingent not upon authenticity but rather on adherence to a prescribed identity (Roth 23).

The initiation rituals and fear landscapes serve as mechanisms of discipline that aim to internalize the ideology of the faction. Fear simulations necessitate that individuals engage with anxieties that are shaped by cultural constructs rather than being inherently personal, thereby reinforcing the notion that identity is formed through systematic exposure and adherence. Tris's divergence poses a significant threat as it challenges the boundaries of psychological compartmentalization; her capacity to engage with various fear responses reveals the constructed essence of faction identity. According to Michel Foucault, the efficacy of disciplinary systems is significantly heightened when individuals engage in their own self-regulation (Discipline and Punish 202). Tris's recognition of the pervasive surveillance inherent in the faction system drives her to scrutinize her own conduct, leading her to repress elements of her identity that diverge from the expectations set by Dauntless.

Roth further elucidates the psychological division manifested in Tris's internal struggle between her Abnegation upbringing and her Dauntless initiation. This tension disintegrates her identity, resulting in anxiety and self-alienation instead of fostering empowerment. Tris often contemplates the inherent challenges of wholly embodying a singular faction identity,

acknowledging that "it is not possible to be one thing completely" (Roth 42). Such instances illuminate the psychological toll of imposed categorization, wherein identity is maintained solely through perpetual performance and the anxiety of potential exposure.

The faction system functions as a mechanism of governance that emphasizes order at the expense of individuality. The societal structure in Divergent necessitates that individuals articulate their identities through limited ideological characteristics, thereby facilitating compliance and obscuring coercion under the guise of choice. Tris's fragmented selfhood illustrates that dystopian power operates not only through external control but also through the internal destabilization of identity, making psychological division a key strategy of domination.

Naming, Language, and Identity Erasure in *The Handmaid's Tale*

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood illustrates how naming and language serve as fundamental mechanisms through which the Republic of Gilead methodically obliterates female identity. Offred's patronymic name, which literally signifies "of Fred," serves as a linguistic indicator of possession rather than individuality. Through the substitution of personal names with identifiers associated with male authority, Gilead effectively diminishes women to mere transferable property, thereby disconnecting identity from individual history. Offred clearly acknowledges the brutality of this erasure as she contemplates that her name is something she "must hide," for disclosing it would entail reclaiming an identity that the regime aims to obliterate (Atwood 84). In this context, the act of naming emerges as a political endeavor aimed at the eradication of subjectivity.

The language utilized in Gilead is not simply confined; rather, it is ideologically reconfigured to uphold compliance. The restriction on women's access to reading and writing hinders the development of personal narratives, thereby obstructing the articulation and preservation of identity in textual form. Offred's fragmented, memory-driven narration serves as a poignant illustration of this imposed silence, wherein her thoughts traverse internally, devoid of any opportunity for external affirmation. This is consistent with Michel Foucault's assertion that the regulation of discourse allows power to construct reality itself (Discipline and Punish 27). The state's monopolization of language dictates not only the permissible discourse but also the parameters of memory, thereby exerting control over identity at a cognitive level. The use of ritualized phrases like "Blessed be the fruit" and "Under His Eye" exemplifies the role of language as a tool for surveillance. The recurrence of these expressions converts speech into a form ideological enactment, necessitating that women articulate support for the very system that subjugates them. The mechanical repetition of these phrases by Offred serves to demonstrate the manner in which language is stripped of personal significance and recontextualized as an instrument of compliance (Atwood 29). In this linguistic framework, identity assumes a performative role rather than an expressive one.

The obliteration of identity is exacerbated by reproductive regulation, wherein women's bodies are both linguistically and socially diminished to mere biological function. Terms such as "Handmaid" and "Wife" function as simplistic designations that reduce identity to mere reproductive function. Offred's identity increasingly wavers as her body is regarded as an object of state investment rather than a manifestation of personal autonomy. Her memories of her past existence – her name, her daughter, and her occupation – emerge sporadically,

indicating that identity exists merely as disjoined recollection rather than as an experienced truth (Atwood 113).

The narrative structure employed by Atwood serves to underscore this fragmentation. The non-linear, episodic structure reflects Offred's fragmented consciousness, emphasizing the psychological ramifications of identity erasure. Narrative construction emerges as a convert form of defiance, manifesting not in explicit insurrection but in the safeguarding of identity through language that remains unspoken in the public sphere. *In The Handmaid's Tale*, identity endures in a fragile state, upheld by the mechanisms of memory and narration instead of through social acknowledgement.

By systematically manipulating naming conventions, language, and reproductive terminology, Atwood illustrates that the mechanisms of dystopian power function most effectively when they undermine the linguistic foundations of identity. Gilead's dominance over language systematically deprives women of autonomy and the essential tools necessary for the expression of their own identities.

Biological Classification and Identity Displacement in *Red Queen*

In *Red Queen*, Victoria Aveyard meticulously constructs identity through the lens of biological determinism, illustrating a dystopian society where blood color serves as the fundamental marker of social value and individual destiny. The strict demarcation between Reds and Silvers simplifies identity to a mere biological classification, thereby converting genetic variation into a political stratification. Mare Barrow's identity is first characterized by her Red blood, which symbolizes disposability, poverty, and a lack of power. The unforeseen emergence of her electric abilities disrupts this classification, revealing the tenuousness and constructed nature of biologically determined identity (Aveyard 17).

Mare's forced assimilation into Silver society exemplifies the complexities of identity under authoritarian regimes, where reclamation is supplanted by further displacement. Labeled an anomaly rather than an individual, she endures surveillance, training, and public performance aimed at masking the regime's ideological inconsistencies. Her coerced transformation into a Silver noble necessitates the enactment of manners, speech, and obedience that starkly contrast with her lived experience as a Red. This enforced performance disrupts her sense of self, leading to identity dissonance rather than genuine empowerment. Mare consistently acknowledges that her body has become a political tool, manipulated to uphold social order (Aveyard 112).

The Silver regime's dominance over Mare's body serves as a clear illustration of Michel Foucault's notion of bio-power, in which authority exerts influence over populations through the regulation of bodies and biological processes (Discipline and Punish 139). The capabilities of Mare, instead of providing independence, amplify oversight and limitation, thereby strengthening the idea that extraordinary bodies pose a significant threat to authoritarian regimes. Her identity fluctuates among being a weapon, a symbol, and a liability, hindering the establishment of a coherent self. Aveyard delves deeper into the concept of identity displacement by examining the implications of blood purity and the notion of inheritance. The notion of silver superiority is presented as a natural and unavoidable phenomenon, concealing the underlying systemic violence through biological discourse. Mare's internal conflict

illustrates the psychological ramifications of lacking a cohesive identity; she is not wholly integrated into either red or silver society. This transitional position creates a sense of isolation for her, illustrating how dystopian authority undermines identity to maintain compliance.
Public rituals and trials serve to reinforce the existing biological hierarchy, thereby transforming individual identity into a collective spectacle. Mare's visibility as a "lightning girl" serves to commodify her distinctiveness, thereby diminishing her individuality to mere symbolic utility. Her struggle transcends mere external oppression; it encompasses the profound erosion of selfhood amidst relentless redefinition. In Red Queen, identity emerges as a site of continuous displacement, influenced by biological classification and maintained through coercive performance. By examining the convergence of biological concepts, visual representation, and monitoring practices, Red Queen elucidates the mechanisms through which dystopian systems manipulate genetic diversity to control individual identity. Aveyard's narrative illustrates that biological classification, rather than offering stability, operates as a mechanism of fragmentation that diminishes personal autonomy and strengthens authoritarian control.

Comparative Synthesis

Throughout the entirety of the four novels, the regulation of identity serves as a pivotal mechanism of dystopian authority. Surveillance as depicted in *The Hunger Games*, factional classification in *Divergent*, linguistic erasure in *The Handmaid's Tale*, and biological determinism in *Red Queen* collectively serve to fragment and exert control over female subjectivity. The concept of identity emerges as a locus for the generation of psychological compliance, which serves to dissuade dissent and bolster systemic authority. Young adult dystopias highlight the themes of performance and internalized anxiety, whereas adult dystopias focus on the concepts of bodily and linguistic erasure. Regardless of variations in audience and genre, a consistent theme emerges: the utilization of identity as a mechanism of regulation, highlighting the pervasive nature of this control strategy.

Conclusion

Modern dystopian literature demonstrates that the manipulation of identity exerts a more significant influence than explicit oppression. The processes of fragmentation, regulation, and enforced categorization of female identity yield compliant subjects while simultaneously undermining the essence of individuality. This paper conducts a detailed examination of *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Red Queen*, revealing that identity formation serves as a fundamental mechanism of authoritarian control, rather than resistance.
This study provides a unique feminist interpretation of contemporary dystopian fiction by concentrating on the processes of identity construction and fragmentation, thereby illuminating the nuanced mechanisms by which dystopian regimes exert control over women. The findings highlight the enduring significance of dystopian literature in the analysis of gendered power dynamics and mechanisms of social control.

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Reframing the Komagata Maru Incident: Cultural Memory and Nationalist Myth in the film *Jeevan Sangram*

Liss Marie Das

Abstract

This paper examines the 1974 Hindi film *Jeevan Sangram* as a cultural text that reconfigures the Komagata Maru incident through the lens of Indian nationalist ideology. While the historical episode represents a moment of racial exclusion and migrant suffering within the British Empire, the film reframes it as an extension of India's anticolonial struggle. Drawing on Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory and Paul Connerton's concept of prescriptive forgetting, the study analyses how popular cinema selectively remembers and mythologises history. The film constructs its fictional protagonist, Arjun Singh, as a symbolic figure of revolutionary continuity, linking the Komagata Maru episode to earlier resistance movements such as the 1857 uprising. In doing so, *Jeevan Sangram* suppresses the transnational realities of migration, racism, and imperial geopolitics, replacing them with a heroic nationalist narrative. The paper argues that this cinematic reworking exemplifies how postcolonial popular cinema functions as a powerful medium for shaping cultural memory, reinforcing nationalist myth-making while marginalising inconvenient historical truths.

Keywords: Cultural memory, Postcolonial cinema, Nationalist myth, Komagata Maru, Migration, Prescriptive forgetting, Indian independence movement

Introduction

"It is a sad story; it is a shameful story" (Chattopadhyay 1) — this description of the Komagata Maru incident captures the enduring trauma associated with one of the most painful episodes in the history of Indian migration. In 1914, the Japanese steamship Komagata Maru, carrying 376 passengers—predominantly Sikh men from British India—was denied entry into Canada due to racially exclusionary immigration laws. After weeks of detention and deprivation, the ship was forced to return to India, where colonial authorities responded with violence at Budge Budge dockyard. Historically, the incident stands as a stark reminder of imperial racism, migrant vulnerability, and transnational injustice within the British Empire.

Despite its significance, the Komagata Maru episode has not been remembered uniformly across cultural forms. While historical and diasporic scholarship has largely foregrounded questions of migration, racial discrimination, and imperial governance, popular cultural representations—particularly cinema—have often reframed the event through alternative ideological lenses. The 1974 Hindi film *Jeevan Sangram,* directed by Rajbans Khanna, offers one such reconfiguration. Rather than depicting the passengers as migrants confronting exclusionary policies in Canada, the film transforms them into revolutionary nationalists whose return to India is portrayed as a deliberate act of anticolonial resistance.

This paper argues that *Jeevan Sangram* does not merely narrate history but actively reconstructs it through selective remembrance. Using Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory and Paul Connerton's concept of prescriptive forgetting, the study examines how the film produces a mythologised version of the Komagata Maru incident that aligns with nationalist ideology. By foregrounding heroic sacrifice, revolutionary continuity, and emotional allegiance to the nation, the film suppresses the complex realities of migration, racial exclusion, and imperial geopolitics that shaped the historical event.

While existing scholarship has examined the Komagata Maru incident primarily through historical, political, and diasporic perspectives, it has paid limited attention to its cinematic reimagining as nationalist cultural memory. Addressing this gap, the present study analyses *Jeevan Sangram* as a cultural text that illustrates how popular cinema participates in the construction of collective memory in postcolonial India. Through a close reading of various aspects of the film, it demonstrates how the film converts a transnational moment of migrant suffering into a domesticated tale of patriotic sacrifice, thereby reinforcing nationalist myth-making while marginalising uncomfortable historical truths.

Methodology and Analytical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative textual and cultural analysis of the Hindi film *Jeevan Sangram* (1974), treating cinema as a literary and cultural text. The analysis is grounded in Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory, which examines how societies construct and transmit shared understandings of the past, and Paul Connerton's concept of prescriptive forgetting, which explains how certain historical narratives are deliberately marginalised to establish new collective identities. Using these theoretical frameworks, the paper closely examines the narrative structure, characterisation, symbolism, and historical omissions to understand how the Komagata Maru incident is reimagined within a nationalist discourse. The methodology foregrounds interpretive reading rather than empirical analysis, enabling an exploration of how popular cinema reshapes historical memory to align with ideological and cultural imperatives in postcolonial India.

Historical Context: Migration, Exclusion, and Anticolonial Anxiety

The Komagata Maru incident must be situated within the racially exclusionary framework of early twentieth-century Canadian immigration policy and the broader anxieties of imperial governance. Although both India and Canada were part of the British Empire, Canadian immigration practices were shaped by a deeply racialised vision of national belonging that privileged white settlers while systematically restricting Asian migration. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Canada had begun implementing legal and social mechanisms designed to prevent the entry of immigrants from Asia, despite their status as British subjects (Morse 100; Suyama 28; Wayland 38). Measures such as the Continuous Journey regulation effectively barred Indian migrants, as no direct steamship routes existed between India and Canada, thereby institutionalising racial exclusion through bureaucratic means.

It was within this context that the Japanese steamship Komagata Maru, chartered by Gurdit Singh, arrived in Vancouver harbour in May 1914 carrying 376 passengers, the majority

of whom were Punjabi Sikhs. The voyage was conceived as a challenge to discriminatory immigration laws and an assertion of imperial citizenship rather than as a revolutionary mission (Puri 79). Upon arrival, the passengers were denied entry and detained aboard the ship for nearly two months under deteriorating conditions, with limited access to food and water. Ultimately, the vessel was forced to return to India, where colonial authorities responded with violence at Budge Budge dockyard, resulting in multiple deaths and arrests. Historically, the incident has been understood as moment of migrant suffering produced by the intersection of racial exclusion, imperial authority, and transnational displacement (Takai 35–37).

At the same time, the Komagata Maru episode unfolded against a backdrop of intensifying anticolonial unrest and imperial surveillance. The early twentieth century witnessed the emergence of transnational revolutionary networks, most notably the Ghadar Party, formed by Indian migrants and students in North America in 1913. The movement articulated a radical critique of colonial rule and sought to mobilise Indians across the diaspora against British imperialism (Tirmizey 134–36). Colonial authorities closely monitored these activities, perceiving overseas Indian populations as potential sources of political subversion (Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny* 82). While the Ghadar Party played a significant role in shaping anticolonial consciousness, historical evidence indicates that the passengers of the Komagata Maru were not directly affiliated with organised revolutionary action. Their migration was motivated primarily by economic hardship and structural exclusion rather than by coordinated insurgent intent (Puri 16).

Nevertheless, the British administration frequently conflated migration with sedition, interpreting the Komagata Maru episode as part of a broader revolutionary threat. This conflation enabled the colonial state to justify repressive measures and to frame the incident within the language of political conspiracy rather than humanitarian injustice. As subsequent historical accounts suggest, dissatisfaction generated by the Komagata Maru affair contributed to heightened colonial anxiety, particularly in Punjab, but the incident itself remained rooted in the realities of racialised migration and imperial exclusion rather than revolutionary organisation (Morse 108).

This historical distinction is crucial, as it is precisely the gap between migrant experience and nationalist interpretation that *Jeevan Sangram* seeks to overwrite. By collapsing migration into militancy and transforming displaced subjects into revolutionary heroes, the film replaces historical complexity with ideological coherence. The background of racial exclusion and imperial surveillance thus provides the necessary context for understanding how the cinematic narrative selectively reconfigures the Komagata Maru incident to serve nationalist cultural memory.

The 1974 Hindi film *Jeevan Sangram,* directed by Rajbans Khanna, reimagines the Komagata Maru incident not as a moment of migrant exclusion but as a symbolic episode within India's nationalist struggle against British colonial rule. From its opening frames, the film signals its ideological orientation through explicit dedications to figures such as Baba

Gurdit Singh, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, and Kartar Singh Sarabha—individuals associated with revolutionary resistance rather than migration. These dedications immediately reposition the Komagata Maru episode within a nationalist framework, preparing the viewer to read the narrative as a story of patriotic sacrifice rather than diasporic trauma.

The film's narrative centres on Arjun Singh, a fictional revolutionary figure who functions as a symbolic conduit between past and present resistance movements. Arjun is portrayed not merely as an individual character but as a reincarnation of earlier anticolonial fighters, evoking memories of the 1857 uprising and Sikh resistance under Guru Gobind Singh.

Through this characterisation, *Jeevan Sangram* constructs a sense of historical continuity that links disparate moments of resistance into a unified nationalist myth. As Jan Assmann argues, cultural memory operates by transferring meaning across generations and historical contexts, allowing the past to be reactivated in the service of present identity formation (111). Arjun embodies this process, serving as a living archive through which earlier struggles are symbolically revived.

Cinematic techniques play a crucial role in reinforcing this construction of cultural memory. Patriotic songs, emotive dialogues, and recurring visual motifs—most notably the image of Mother India in chains—transform political resistance into a moral and emotional imperative. These images function not as historical representations but as mnemonic devices, designed to elicit affective identification rather than critical engagement. The repeated invocation of sacrifice and martyrdom situates nationalism within a sacred register, where resistance becomes a duty transcending individual life. In this framework, historical specificity gives way to mythic abstraction.

Significantly, *Jeevan Sangram* omits any sustained engagement with the racialised immigration policies that defined the Komagata Maru incident. The passengers are never represented as migrants confronting exclusion in Canada; instead, they are portrayed as revolutionaries returning to India with the express purpose of organising armed resistance. This narrative shift exemplifies what Paul Connerton terms "prescriptive forgetting," a process through which inconvenient or disruptive memories are deliberately excluded to establish a coherent collective identity (62–63). By erasing the realities of racial discrimination, migrant suffering, and imperial geopolitics, the film replaces historical complexity with ideological clarity.

The transformation of migrant subjects into nationalist heroes also collapses the distinction between transnational displacement and political militancy. Dialogues within the film explicitly assert that no true Indian can remain passive abroad while the nation remains enslaved, thereby reframing migration itself as a moral failure unless redeemed through revolutionary return. This logic not only rewrites the historical motivations of the Komagata Maru passengers but also domesticates a transnational event, relocating its meaning entirely within the territorial and ideological boundaries of the nation-state.

The film further strengthens this nationalist reinterpretation by linking the Komagata Maru episode to the activities of the Ghadar movement, despite historical evidence indicating the absence of direct organisational affiliation between the passengers and revolutionary networks. Through narrative condensation and symbolic association, *Jeevan Sangram* presents the return of the ship as part of a coordinated anticolonial uprising, culminating in Arjun's ultimate sacrifice. His death is framed not as a tragic loss but as a necessary act that transfers the responsibility of liberation to the Indian masses. In doing so, the film converts individual martyrdom into collective moral capital.

As Renisa Mawani observes, maritime histories challenge conventional understandings of space, memory, and remembrance by foregrounding mobility, rupture, and uncertainty (93).

Jeevan Sangram, however, resists this destabilising potential. Rather than engaging with the sea as a site of displacement and exclusion, the film transforms the voyage of the Komagata Maru into a closed narrative of return, purpose, and sacrifice. The ship becomes a symbolic vessel delivering revolutionaries back to the homeland, stripped of its historical associations with detention, deprivation, and imperial violence.

Through these narrative and aesthetic strategies, *Jeevan Sangram* demonstrates how popular cinema functions as a powerful mechanism for shaping cultural memory in postcolonial India. By selectively remembering resistance while systematically forgetting migration, racial exclusion, and diasporic vulnerability, the film constructs a nationalist myth that privileges emotional cohesion over historical accuracy. The Komagata Maru incident thus becomes less a record of imperial injustice and more a canvas upon which the ideals of sacrifice, unity, and nationhood are projected.

Conclusion

Jeevan Sangram demonstrates how popular cinema functions as a powerful medium for shaping cultural memory in alignment with nationalist ideology. By reframing the Komagata Maru incident within the narrative of India's anticolonial struggle, the film transforms a historically complex episode of racial exclusion and migrant suffering into a coherent nationalist myth. This, cinematic reworking privileges, heroic sacrifice, emotional allegiance to the nation, and revolutionary continuity, while marginalising the transnational realities of migration, imperial racism, and diasporic vulnerability that defined the historical event.

Drawing on Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory and Paul Connerton's notion of prescriptive forgetting, this study has shown how *Jeevan Sangram* selectively remembers resistance while systematically erasing inconvenient historical truths. The film's portrayal of the Komagata Maru passengers as committed revolutionaries rather than displaced migrants exemplifies a deliberate act of mnemonic reconstruction, in which history is reshaped to serve the ideological demands of postcolonial nation-building. Through symbolic figures such as Arjun Singh and recurring motifs of martyrdom and Mother India, the film converts a transnational moment of imperial injustice into a domesticated narrative of patriotic sacrifice.

Such representations invite critical scrutiny, particularly in contemporary contexts where questions of migration, citizenship, and historical accountability remain deeply contested. By collapsing migration into militancy and substituting historical specificity with mythic coherence, *Jeevan Sangram* reveals the ethical and political stakes involved in cinematic memory-making. The film underscores how cultural memory, when mobilised through popular media, can reinforce dominant nationalist narratives while silencing marginalised histories. Recognising these processes is essential for developing a more nuanced engagement with the past—one that acknowledges both the power of nationalist storytelling and the histories it chooses to forget.

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Defying the Script: Stigma, Performance, and the Rewriting of the Tawaifs Public Identity in Colonial India

Priya Kumari & KK Ahmed Shabin

Abstract

Tawaifs are widely remembered today as morally stigmatized figures positioned at the margins of Indian social and cultural history. However, this perception is not intrinsic to their historical position. It is largely the product of colonial moral regulation and later nationalist respectability politics. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, tawaifs occupied complex and influential roles. They were highly trained performers, cultural arbiters, and economically autonomous women central to courtly life. This paper seeks to correct this historical misconception by re-examining the cultural and political agency of tawaifs through the lives of three prominent figures- Begum Hazrat Mahal, Gauhar Jaan, and Jaddan Bai. By adopting a qualitative cultural- historical and performance- oriented approach, this study draws on Erving Goffman's theory of stigma and dramaturgical self- presentation. It interprets how the social identities of tawaifs were historically re-scripted under colonial rule through shifts in moral discourse, institutional regulation, and historiographical representation. Rather than treating stigma as an inherent condition, the paper argues that it emerged through processes that recast cultural visibility as moral deviance. By tracing shifts in political authority, technological mediation, and institutional authorship across three historical case studies, the paper demonstrates how stigma was discursively produced rather than naturally inherited. Against this backdrop, the public roles and performances of these women- be it through political leadership, mediated musical circulation, or cinematic authorship, complicate and exceed the stigmatized identities retrospectively imposed upon them. The persistence of this re-scripted identity is also visible in contemporary popular representations, such as the Netflix series *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar.* The series reflects how colonial- era narratives continue to shape present- day cultural memory of the tawaif. By situating historical analysis alongside its contemporary afterlife, this paper positions tawaifs as active historical agents who defied imposed social scripts and reshaped the terms of women's participation in public life. In doing so, the paper offers a historically grounded assessment of the tawaif that complicates prevailing assumptions about gender, performance, and public life in colonial India.

Keywords: Tawaifs, Stigma, Performance, Public Identity, Cultural Agency, Colonial India

Introduction

This paper critiques dominant narratives surrounding tawaifs by examining how their cultural and political roles in eighteenth and nineteenth century India have been retrospectively misrecognized through colonial and patriarchal frameworks. While tawaifs are often remembered today as marginal and morally suspect figures, such perceptions are not intrinsic to their historical position. Drawing on Erving Goffman's theory of stigma, this study argues

that the social identities of tawaifs were transformed through processes that reduced culturally elite performers to morally discredited subjects. Goffman defines stigma as an attribute that is "deeply discrediting", reducing an individual "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one". (Stigma 3). In the case of tawaifs, this stigmatization emerged not from their artistic practices, but from colonial moral regulation and nationalist respectability politics that reclassified cultural visibility as moral deviance.

Historically, tawaifs occupied influential positions within Mughal and early colonial courtly culture. They were trained practitioners of Hindustani classical music, Kathak dance, and Urdu poetry, and functioned as cultural arbiters, educators in etiquette, and custodians of refined aesthetic traditions. As Veena Talwar Oldenburg notes association with tawaifs conferred prestige, and elite families frequently entrusted them with the social and cultural education of young men (Oldenburg 263). Similarly, Sohini Chanda, Archana Patnaik, and Suhita Chopra Chatterjee together observe that tawaifs were recognized as an elite performing community, active across court assemblies, private gatherings, and kothas (Chanda et al. 198). These roles reflect what Goffman terms actual social identity- this is the lived cultural authority of tawaifs prior to colonial intervention (Stigma 2). The onset of British colonial rule initiated a decisive re-scripting of this identity. Victorian sexual morality, combined with administrative regulation, collapsed the distinction between artistic performance and sexual labour. Through legal mechanisms such as Contagious Diseases Act, tawaifs were subjected to surveillance and medical control. This led to effectively reclassifying them as morally and medically suspect bodies. Within this colonial moral order, public visibility itself became a site of suspicion. As norms of respectability hardened under Victorian influence, the tawaif's presence in public cultural spaces was increasingly read as evidence of moral transgression rather than artistic authority. This transformed their performance from a marker of prestige into a sign of social risk. As Goffman notes, stigma is not inherent in an attribute but emerges through social interpretation, constituting a discrepancy between an individual's actual social identity and the expectations attached to a given social order (Stigma 3). In the colonial context, this shift rendered the tawaif's cultural visibility morally legible as risk rather than refinement. This stigmatization was further reinforced by nationalist reform movements that sought to construct a "respectable" Indian womanhood grounded in domesticity and chastity. Tawaifs, whose public presence and economic autonomy fell outside this emerging ideal, were increasingly excluded from the cultural narrative of the nation. The result was a persistent misrecognition in which their artistic and political contributions were either erased or reframed through moral suspicion. Rather than interpreting tawaif performance as resistance in a self- conscious sense, this paper reads their public roles as historically complicating the stigmatized identities imposed upon them. Through political leadership, mediated musical circulation, and cinematic authorship, figures such as Begum Hazrat Mahal, Gauhar Jaan, and Jaddan Bai occupied public positions that exceeded the, limits of the "spoiled identity" assigned to them, revealing the instability of stigma itself.

Review of the Literature

Scholarships on tawaifs in eighteenth and nineteenth century India has grown substantially. Over the past few decades, they have been recuperating the cultural significance and

challenging earlier reductive portrayals of courtesans as merely marginal or immoral figures. Much of this scholarship has focused on the historical transitions that altered the positioning of performing women in the social discourse, the usage of performance to mediate power realtions, and the role of tawaifs in the political participation of nationalist movements against colonialism. While the scholarship has played an important role in asserting the agency of tawaifs, it still leaves unanswered the question of how the stigmatization of tawaifs could be discursively constructed and retroactively laced upon the figure of the tawaif in the discourse of colonialism and nationalism. A significant strand of scholarship examines the historical transformation of performing women under colonial rule. Mekhala Sengupta in Courtesan Culture in India: The Transition from the Devadasi to the Tawaif or Baijee studies on the transition from the Devdasi tradition to the tawaif and baijee culture. She traces how temple-based performers, once respected for their religious and artistic roles, were gradually displaced and stigmatized. Sengupta demonstrates that British colonial intervention played a decisive role in recasting indigenous performance traditions through Victorian moral frameworks, laying the groundwork for later marginalization. Similarly, Vijay Prakash Singh's analysis of the Lucknow courtesan in From Tawaif to nautch Girl: The Transition of the Lucknow Courtesan documents the transformation of the tawaif into the "nautch girl". A figure increasingly associated with commodification and moral suspicion. Singh shows how colonial discourse collapsed distinctions between art and sexuality, reducing complex cultural performers to spectacles of entertainment and vice.

Another body of literature emphasizes performance as a site of cultural authority and autonomy. Veena Talwar Oldenburg's influential work Lifestyle as a Resistance foregrounds the economic independence, artistic mastery, and social power of courtesans in Lucknow. She also argued that their lifestyle enabled them to negotiate patriarchal and colonial pressures. Shramana Das, concentrating specifically on thumri, in Performance as a Protest: Thumri and tawaif's quest for Artistic Autonomy, similarly illustrates the manner in which musical performance became an act of artistic agency by the tawaifs in a context where the societal position of the tawaif itself had become very fragile. Complementing these arguments, Chanda, Patnaik, and Chatterjee in The Courtesan Project and the Tawaif's Cultural Commons conceptualize the tawaif's role with the term "cultural commons" and also identify the importance of the tawaif in the preservation of musical and aesthetic legacies, which continue to influence Indian aesthetics. While these studies do make a strong argument for the recovery of cultural agency, the act of performance itself is again defined only as a resistance or protest.

A third strand of scholarship positions tawaifs within political and nationalist histories, particularly in relation to the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and beyond. Lata Singh in her work Visibilising the 'Other' in History: Courtesans and the Revolt brings attention to the involvement of courtesans in the uprising, emphasizing their use of social networks, financial resources, and influence to support anti- colonial resistance. Neha Arora in Redrawing the Contours of Nationalist Discourse through the Voices of Courtesans- Turned-warriors further explores how courtesans who participated in the rebellion disrupted nationalist narratives that privileged domestic, chaste womanhood, positioning them as political actors rather than peripheral figures. These studies are crucial in challenging historiographical erasure. However, they are inclined to concentrate more on instances of political engagement, and less on those

discursive contexts that caused tawaifs to be viewed as morally compromised under the colonial and nationalist readings.

Together, the existing scholarship has immensely extended the understanding of the tawaifs as cultural and political agents and challenged the historiography of passiveness and decline. Yet, most of the scholarship may be conceived as presupposing stigma as a state of being against which the tawaifs opposed and negotiated, instead of understanding stigma as a historico-social form of misrecognition of their identities. Less attention has been paid to how colonial moral discourse and nationalist respectability politics redefined the meaning of public female performance itself, transforming cultural visibility into a marker of deviance. This study builds on the insights of earlier scholarship while departing from the resistance- centered readings. Focusing instead on the stigma as a social mechanism through which the identities of tawaifs were re-scripted in colonial India.

The current literature has approached the issue of agency, performance, and participation in a manner that is either resistance oriented or recovery based. The current literature has approached the issue of agency, performance, and participation ina manner that is either resistance oriented or recovery based. The primary gap this paper addresses lies not in establishing whether tawaifs possessed cultural or political influence, but in examining how such influence was rendered socially problematic through shifting moral discourses. In much of the existing literature, tawaifs are positioned either as empowered cultural actors or as victims of colonial and patriarchal marginalization. What stays underexplored is how these two positions came to be entangled overtime, producing a stigmatized identity that obscured the complexity of their public roles.

While this scholarship has been necessary in recuperating tawaif agency, it has paid comparatively little attention to the historical production of stigma itself. This study would like to intervene in the present scholarship by highlighting how the life and public career of Begum Hazrat Mahal and those of Gauhar Jaan and Jaddan Bai complicate the stigmatized narratives retrospectively foisted on the tawaifs. Rather than reading their performances and visibility as acts of conscious resistance, the paper analyzes how their political leadership, mediated musical circulation, and cinematic authorship occupied public spaces that exceeded the moral and social frameworks used to define them. In doing so, it foregrounds stigma as a mode of historical misrecognition, demonstrating how tawaifs' cultural authority and public presence continued to shape social and political life even as their identities were increasingly subject to moral reclassification. This paper departs from resistance- centred readings by focusing on how stigma emerged through discursive reclassification rather than lived transgression.

Begum Hazrat Mahal: Political Visibility and the Retrospective Production of Stigma

The section will discuss how the female leadership of the rebellion of 1857 became susceptible to the threat of retrospective misrecognition by using Begum Hazrat Mahal as a case study. Begum Hazrat mahal occupies a very complicated position in the history of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the colonial memory of colonial India. Begum Hazrat mahal is commonly referred to as one of the most prominent women leaders of the Indian rebellion of 1857. Her political authority has nevertheless been narrated through exceptional and moralized frameworks that obscure the nature of her leadership. Following the exile of Nawab Wajid Ali

Shah to Calcutta, Hazrat Mahal assumed political responsibility in Lucknow and became the main force behind the organization of resistance in Awadh. Her presence in a public, militarized political space marked a significant departure from dominant gender norms of nineteenth century India, where elite women were largely confined to domestic sphere. Her assumption of political authority was not an anomalous personal act but a response to the structural crisis produced by British annexation policies.

These policies caused a breakdown of local sovereignty and precipitated widespread resistance in Awadh. Awadh was among the most affluent and culturally significant regions in northern India. Thus, it's annexation by the British generated widespread resentment. The application of the Doctrine of Lapse under Lord Dalhousie enabled the colonial administration to annex Indian states by declaring their rulers illegitimate, which is often on questionable grounds. As Gandhi observes, the Nawab of Awadh believed his kingdom would remain secure since he had several sons, "the youngest being groomed under the careful watch of his favourite wife, Hazrat Mahal" and could not have anticipated annexation on the "flimsy ground of the misgovernance, for which the British themselves were responsible" (Gandhi 238). This administrative intervention disrupted the sovereignty of the region, thereby creating a situation that culminated in the rebellion of 1857. With Wajid Ali Shah exiled, Begum Hazrat Mahal, mobilized forces of the sepoys, chieftans, as well as civilians, to fight the British forces. She collaborated with other leaders such as Raja Jai Lal Singh, thereby building a political front.

Her leadership extended across strategic planning, alliance building, and battlefield organization, enabling insurgent forces to capture and defend Lucknow for a prolonged period. Gupta records that British authorities repeatedly attempted to neutralize her influence through offers of pension and conditional authority, all of which she refused: "The British made several offers to the Begum- a hefty pension and a rule under them as their regent. But the Begum rejected them all. It was everything or nothing for her and that remained the case until the end" (Gupta 92- 93). Contemporary accounts indicate that Begum Hazrat Mahal's authority was not symbolic but operational. Her involvement in military action was well documented, including her presence during the key confrontations. Gupta notes that "the battle of Alambagh is mentioned in letters of gold in the annals of India's first war of independence," describing her active role in sustaining resistance (Gupta 90). Similarly, British records of the Battle of Musa Bagh acknowledged that she was "present at the battles, combating and rallying around the rebelling masses," sometimes depicting her riding elephants into battle (Gupta 90). While these accounts confirm her leadership, they also reveal a tendency to frame her authority through spectacle rather than strategy.

These accounts illustrate how Hazrat Mahal's authority was rendered legible through spectacle and exception, rather than strategic leadership, contributing to her marginalization in historical narratives. The subsequent marginalization of Begum Hazrat Mahal in colonial and nationalist historiography can be understood through Erving Goffman's concept of stigma as a historically produced process of misrecognition. Goffman argues stigma as unfolding through what he terms a "moral career", a process through which stigmatized individuals learn dominant social norms and gradually come to understand themselves as socially discredited, adjusting their self-conception in response to shifting social encounters and expectations (Goffman 32-34). In Hazrat Mahal's case, political authority that was exercised as legitimate leadership during the rebellion was later reframed as anomalous once colonial power was

reasserted. Her visibility as a woman occupying public political space became difficult to reconcile with emerging moral frameworks that equated female respectability with domesticity.

This reframing was further consolidated by nationalist narratives that privileged male figures of the independence movement while marginalizing women whose public roles did not align with ideals of respectable womanhood. Hazrat Mahal's association with a "defeated" rebellion and her refusal of colonial compromise rendered her a politically inconvenient figure. As Goffman observes, stigma is stabilized through contradictory forms of recognition, in which individuals may be acknowledged as socially significant while simultaneously marked as exceptional or marginal to the dominant narrative (Goffman 123–125). Consequently, Hazrat Mahal's political contributions were acknowledged yet contained, positioned as exceptional rather than integral to the history of anti-colonial resistance.

Statements attributed to Begum Hazrat Mahal, such as her declaration "Look at this insignia… we believe in harmony yet will never hesitate to take up the sword if oppressed" (AK Gandhi 246) underscore the symbolic authority through which she articulated political resolve. Similarly, her exhortation "The British have taken away all our power, yet we are sitting like stooges…" (AK Gandhi 246) reflects the extent to which she mobilized collective resistance. Yet these expressions of leadership were subsequently filtered through historiographical frameworks that struggled to accommodate female political authority within acceptable moral categories.

Rather than reading Begum Hazrat Mahal solely through narratives of resistance, her historical trajectory illustrates how women's political visibility became vulnerable to stigmatization when it exceeded the limits of normative recognition. Her marginalization was not the result of insufficient agency but of a retrospective narrowing of interpretive frameworks that recast political leadership as moral deviation. In this sense, her case exemplifies stigma as a mode of historical misrecognition, reshaping not only individual identity but the narrative contours of colonial history itself. Her case demonstrates how stigma can emerge through historiographical framing, even when agency and authority are historically evident.

Gauhar Jaan: Mediated Visibility, Technology, and the Reconfiguration of Stigma

If Hazrat Mahal's visibility was political, Gauhar Jaan's was mediated through technology, marking a shift in how public female performance was circulated and judged. Begum Hazrat Mahal's trajectory demonstrates how women's political visibility, when exercised outside normative frameworks of gender and authority, became vulnerable to retrospective misrecognition. A similar process of reclassification, however, unfolded in the cultural sphere, where public artistic presence was increasingly subjected to moral scrutiny under colonial modernity. The life of Gauhar Jaan illustrates how technological mediation and expanding audiences reshaped the terms through which female performance was seen, valued, and eventually stigmatized. The life and career of Gauhar Jaan illustrate a distinct yet equally significant mode through which the tawaif's public visibility was reconfigured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born as Angelina Yeoward in 1873 and later adopting the name Gauhar Jaan, she emerged as one of the most celebrated tawaifs of her time, renowned for her mastery of Hindustani classical music. Her career coincided with the arrival of recording technology in India, and her status as the first Indian artist to record her voice on a gramophone

in 1902 marked a critical moment in the transformation of musical performance, cultural circulation, and public identity. Through this technological mediation, Gauhar Jaan's visibility expanded beyond courtly and elite spaces, entering new circuits of mass consumption that reshaped how tawaifs were seen, heard, and remembered.

Gauhar Jaan's early prominence already placed her within a complex social field. As Gupta notes, by the early twentieth century she had become "the most celebrated female musician in Calcutta and even across the nation," effectively attaining the status of a cultural icon (Gupta 103). Yet this visibility also rendered her vulnerable to the moral scrutiny that increasingly accompanied public female performance under colonial modernity. Unlike earlier courtly settings, where tawaifs operated within relatively stable patronage structures, the gramophone introduced new audiences and new forms of interpretation, loosening performers' control over how their art—and by extension, their identities—would be received.

Erving Goffman's discussion of information control is particularly useful in understanding this shift. Goffman shows that stigma is shaped by an individual's capacity to manage when, how, and to whom potentially discrediting information becomes available, especially when increased visibility makes such control difficult to sustain (Goffman 42–45). In Gauhar Jaan's case, the gramophone both enabled unprecedented cultural reach and introduced a degree of narrative vulnerability. Her recorded voice travelled independently of her physical presence, detaching performance from the regulated spaces of the kotha or court and subjecting it to new moral readings shaped by colonial respectability norms.

At the same time, Gauhar Jaan actively engaged with this new medium in ways that complicated its stigmatizing potential. One of the most notable features of her recordings was her deliberate verbal identification at the end of each performance. This act of naming—asserting authorship and presence within a technologically mediated form—functioned as a strategy of self-inscription in a context where performers were often anonymized or reduced to consumable sound. While this gesture did not eliminate stigma, it disrupted the erasure of artistic labour that frequently accompanied the commodification of female performance.

The gramophone also altered the economic structure of musical labour, enabling Gauhar Jaan to operate beyond traditional systems of patronage. Gupta observes that "taking on Gauhar Jaan as a recording artist proved to be an expensive affair," with her nazrana ranging between INR 3000–4000 per sitting, which was an exceptionally high sum for the period (Gupta 104). This financial autonomy distinguished her from prevailing stereotypes of female dependency and positioned her as a professional artist negotiating her worth within a modernizing cultural economy. Yet, drawing on Goffman's concept of the moral career, this autonomy did not necessarily translate into moral legitimacy; rather, as norms governing acceptable forms of female independence shifted, cultural prominence became increasingly subject to intensified public scrutiny (Goffman 32–34). This transformation reveals how expanded circulation intensified moral scrutiny, recasting cultural prominence as moral risk.

The expansion of Gauhar Jaan's visibility through recording and print culture further illustrates this tension. Her photographs circulated widely on postcards and even appeared on matchboxes produced in Austria, extending her image far beyond Indian borders (Gupta 106). These forms of circulation elevated her status as a cultural figure while simultaneously exposing her to new regimes of interpretation in which visibility itself became morally charged. The same technologies that normalized Indian classical music within global circuits also contributed to

the gradual reclassification of tawaifs as ambiguous public figures whose prominence required moral explanation.

Gauhar Jaan's personal lifestyle choices further complicated these narratives. Her extravagant expenditures—such as spending INR 1,200 on her cat's wedding or INR 20,000 on the birthday celebration of its kittens—were frequently cited as evidence of excess. Similarly, her insistence on private train travel with an entourage of cooks, aides, a doctor, and even a barber during performance tours challenged prevailing expectations of feminine modesty. Her repeated violations of colonial regulations, including the use of horse-driven wagons reserved for the Viceroy and her willingness to incur daily fines of INR 1,000, underscore the friction between her public persona and the regulatory norms governing female behaviour.

Rather than reading these acts solely as expressions of rebellion, they can be understood as moments where Gauhar Jaan's public visibility exceeded the moral frameworks available to interpret it. As Goffman shows, stigma becomes socially stabilized when conduct that exceeds available normative categories is repeatedly forced into fixed identity frameworks, privileging classificatory identity over the specific contexts in which actions occur (Goffman 123–125). In Gauhar Jaan's case, financial independence, technological engagement, and public display were increasingly read not as professional authority but as moral excess, contributing to the gradual narrowing of how her identity was remembered.

Gauhar Jaan's legacy thus reveals the ambivalent consequences of mediated visibility. While recording technology enabled her to enter the cultural mainstream and preserve Indian classical music for future generations, it also exposed her to intensified moral judgment as colonial and nationalist discourses redefined respectable femininity. Her career demonstrates that stigma did not arise from artistic practice itself, but from the shifting interpretive frameworks through which public female presence was understood.

Where Begum Hazrat Mahal's political authority was rendered problematic through its militarized visibility, Gauhar Jaan's cultural authority was destabilized through technological circulation. Together, these cases illustrate how different forms of public presence—political and artistic—were retrospectively reframed as moral deviance. This trajectory finds further continuation in the life of Jaddan Bai, whose engagement with the emerging film industry presents another site where women's visibility, labour, and respectability were renegotiated under modern media regimes. Gauhar Jaan's career thus illustrates how modern media reshaped the conditions under which stigma was produced, rather than dismantling it.

Jaddan Bai: Cinema, Authorship, and the Re-Scripting of the Tawaif Identity

Jaddan Bai's own movement from being a tawaif to being a film-maker can be seen to be another advancement in this regard, where women made inroads into the establishment of culture that was otherwise the exclusive preserve for men. While Gauhar Jaan's life trajectory shows how the role of the tawaif became known to more and more people through the intervention of technology, but at the same time was also subjected to certain judgements of morality. Jaddan Bai's foray into the early days of Indian cinema can be said to be another shift in the dynamics between feminine performance, authorship, and stigmatization. Jaddan Bai's life and career represent a critical extension of the tawaif's engagement with modern public

culture, marking a shift from performance-centered visibility to cinematic authorship and institutional participation. Born in 1892 into a family of the legendary courtesan Daleepabai, Jaddan Bai received intense training in classical music from a tender age. Even as the colonial and male dominated ideology reinforced the 'tawaif' tradition as socially stigmatized, it was in such a milieu that these qualities of her art went on to play a vital role in her cinema. As Gupta notes, it was Daleepabai's training that enabled Jaddan Bai to enter and navigate the male-dominated film industry, where she emerged as a singer, actress, producer, director, screenwriter, and composer, even as the label of "proficient tawaif" remained firmly attached to her identity (Gupta 134).

Jaddan Bai's transition into cinema during the 1930s was unprecedented not only in terms of medium but also in terms of institutional authority. At a time when women's participation in public life was increasingly circumscribed by nationalist respectability politics, and when cinema itself was viewed with moral suspicion, her decision to relocate from Calcutta to Bombay in 1933 with the ambition of becoming a film producer marked a decisive reconfiguration of female agency. As Gupta observes, "it is a testament to Jaddan Bai's ambition and courage" that she relinquished established fame and wealth to pursue control over cinematic production (Gupta 137). This move reflects what Erving Goffman describes as a shift in the management of identity, in which stigmatized individuals regulate the contexts in which they appear in order to control how socially marked attributes are interpreted (Goffman 99–102).

The establishment of her own production company, Sangeet Movietone, in 1934 further underscores this shift. The first productions of the studio, *Talashe Haq,* released in 1935, was followed by a series of productions in which Jaddan Bai not only performed on screen, now as an artist, but took on key positions in the cinematic process, such as directing and acting in *Talashe Haq (1935), Hriday Manthan (1936), Madam Fashion (1936), Jeewan Swapna (1937) and Moti Ka Haar (1937)* (Gupta 138). The assumption of so many roles in the cinematic production chain not only upended traditional notions of a hierarchical structure in which women, especially those from 'stigmatized' backgrounds, were subject to male oversight, but the very formation of the studio gave Jaddan Bai access to these very structures.

Jaddan Bai's films also engaged critically with contemporary moral and political discourses. Gupta notes that many of her productions assessed the "degenerating moral values of a society deeply influenced by western moralistic ideas," while simultaneously participating in nationalist discourse through veiled support for swadeshi values (Gupta 139). Rather than presenting overtly radical critiques, her work operated within dominant cultural frameworks to expose their contradictions. This strategy aligns with Goffman's observation that stigmatized individuals often navigate social systems not by direct confrontation but through role management and strategic participation, a process that renders the boundaries of social classification contingent and unstable (Goffman 131–135).

What is critical to acknowledge is that Jaddan Bai's involvement with films did not diminish but in fact transformed the stigma that was already a part of her life as a tawaif, rather its terms were shifted. Although Jaddan Bai was no longer judged in a sexually inflected way characteristic of tawaifs in general, the presence of moral censure due to tawaif lineage continued to inform public perceptions of Jaddan Bai. However, with her films increasingly emphasizing women's education, marriage, and economic independence, Jaddan Bai displaced

the female visibility gesture from its discursive location in moral deviance to one in cultural ethics. Within this framework, films enabled the tawaif's misrecognized cultural place to be differently constituted despite its continued containment. Her work demonstrates how stigma adapted to new cultural forms, persisting even as women gained authorship and institutional authority.

Jaddan Bai's socio-political agency extended beyond her professional life into her role as a cultural mentor and matriarch. Described as a woman of "talent, wise business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit" (Gupta 144), she actively shaped the career of her daughter, Nargis, ensuring the continuation of women's participation in public cultural life across generations. Her influence thus operated not only at the level of individual achievement but also through the creation of pathways for women's sustained engagement with cinema and the arts.

Taken together, Jaddan Bai's career demonstrates how the tawaif's transition into modern media did not simply signify liberation or assimilation but marked a complex re-scripting of identity. Cinema offered expanded visibility and authorship while simultaneously reproducing the moral frameworks through which tawaifs were judged. Her life is a testament to the ways in which the stigma has been historically maintained not as an essence, but as an interpretive form that was adjusted to the new cultural paradigm. It is in this way that the legacy of Jaddan Bai is the fulfilment of the trace established by Hazrat Mahal and Gauhar Jaan, demonstrating the ways in which political agency, technological intervention, and cinematic authorship all served, in opposite ways, as the space within which the woman's appearance became possible and simultaneously misunderstood in the charged colonial and nationalist narratives. Far from marking the end of the stigma, the success of Jaddan Bai indexes the ways in which it has been able to re-caliberate itself in terms established by the nationalist and cinematic discourses.

Conclusion

Across political history, musical circulation, and cinematic authorship, this paper has shown how stigma emerged through shifting regimes of visibility rather than inherent moral transgression. This paper has argued that the stigmatization of tawaifs in Indian cultural memory is not an inherent or transhistorical condition but a historically produced form of misrecognition shaped by colonial moral regulation and nationalist respectability politics. Through a cultural-historical reading informed by Erving Goffman's theory of stigma, the study demonstrates how the public visibility of tawaifs—once a source of cultural authority—was progressively reinterpreted as moral deviance through shifting discursive frameworks. Rather than treating stigma as a static attribute or focusing solely on acts of resistance, this paper has traced the processes through which social identities were re-scripted under changing regimes of power, representation, and mediation.

The three case studies presented in this paper- those of Begum Hazrat Mahal, Gauhar Jaan, and Jaddan Bai, speak to different but interrelated ways in which this re-scripting took place. The political agency of Begum Hazrat Mahal during the Rebellion of 1857 demonstrates how woman's agency in militarized and public spheres was made historiographically problematic, re-scripted through tropes of exceptionals, affect, and failure. The erasure of

Begum Hazrat Mahal from colonial and nationalist historiography is not of lack of agency but one of discomfort at a woman's occupancy of sovereignty beyond gender norms.

Gauhar Jaan's career marks a transition from courtly performance to technologically mediated visibility. While the gramophone enabled the preservation and popularization of Indian classical music, it also exposed female performers to new forms of moral scrutiny as their art circulated beyond controlled performance spaces. Her case demonstrates how modern technologies intensified stigma by detaching performance from its original cultural contexts and subjecting it to colonial and bourgeois moral interpretation.

Jaddan Bai's entry into early Indian cinema represents a further stage in this trajectory, where women from the tawaif tradition moved from performance to authorship and institutional participation. Via film production, she exercised her creativity as well as economic power in a way that contested the gender hegemony, while the taint of her background persists in defining public responses. Her story demonstrates how stigma evolves but does not vanish by adjusting itself in accordance with new forms of expression in the cultural landscape.

Cumulatively, these trajectories demonstrate that the notion of stigma not only constituted the social classification imposed upon tawaifs but in fact embodied a discursive tool that converted cultural visibility into moral risk. Moreover, this study proves, in accordance with Goffman's understanding of the subject, that the gap separating actual and virtual social identity widened in the context of colonial modernity, so that continued misrecognitions persist to inform historical representation to this day. The continued historical representation in contemporary media culture further articulates the necessity to reassess the frameworks utilised in cultural memory.

By positioning tawaifs as pivotal figures in the political, musical, and cinematic histories of India, this paper seeks to make an intervention in the field of literary and cultural studies by historicizing stigma as a process rather than a term. This paper urges a necessary reappraisal of the public presence of women under colonial rule- no longer as transgressive figures or iconic spectres but rather as complicated actors whose presence undercut the discourse that sought to hold it. This project thus launches a research agenda exploring the ways in which gender, performance, and the media are intertwined.

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Deconstructing the ‘Other’: An Ecocritical Study of Anthropocentrism in Jack London’s *White Fang*

Rahul More

Abstract

Jack London's novel *White Fang* tells the story of a wolf-dog's difficult journey from the wild Yukon to becoming a domesticated pet. The book highlights that, unlike the simple animal world, human society is more complex, requiring White Fang to adapt not just to his surroundings but also to human morality and ethics. Through the wolf-dog's challenging experiences with both cruel and kind human masters, the story explores themes of survival, the struggle between nature and civilization, and ultimately, how compassion and love can transform a life. Philosophers and thinkers have long criticized the concept of an "other" which is used to justify treating people or groups differently. This connects to anthropocentrism, the human-centered worldview that sees animals as inferior. By analyzing how the wolf-dog White Fang is treated in literature, the paper aims to understand what drives humans to feel superior. Ultimately, the text argues that cruelty towards animals comes from this human-centric perspective. By showing White Fang's tenacious will to live and his eventual loyalty, the novel offers a powerful reflection on the meaning of life and the human-animal bond.

Key words: anthropocentrism, animal world, morality, ethics, survival, human-animal bond.

Introduction

Using ultramodern ways of allowing like Cultural Studies, Animal Studies, and Posthumanism, scholars are re-examining the long- held belief that humans are the most important species. The mortal- centric view, known as anthropocentrism, places humans at the center of everything and treats other species as less important. By studying how tykes have come mortal companions, this exploration shows that our relationship with other creatures is a participated story, not one of mortal dominance. numbers like Donna Haraway have challenged this tone-centered mortal perspective, and moment, activists worry that this mortal-first thinking is causing ecological heads like the "Anthropocene" or the mortal- dominated period. By fastening on a "harmonious concurrence" this work aims to remind people that all species are connected and must learn to live together on a participated earth. The new academic field of" Animal Studies" examines how humans treat other creatures, a content largely ignored by social lores until the 2000s. This interdisciplinary movement, also called the "beast turn," challenges the long-held belief that humans are unnaturally superior to other species by fastening on the part of creatures in mortal culture, history, and gospel. By re-examining how creatures are portrayed in literature and other textbooks, Animal Studies seeks to move past the traditional, mortal- centered standpoint to fete the significance and independent actuality of non-human brutes.

Jack London's 1906 novel, White Fang, tells the story of a wolf- canine's delicate trip from the Canadian nature to life with humans. Grounded on London's own gests, the new details how the beast must acclimatize to the complex world of mortal society, which, unlike the wild, is governed by moral and ethical rules. Through White Fang's metamorphosis, from a wild critter of instinct to a pious and tamed canine the story highlights the power of love to heal deep-seated pain and despair. This trip reflects London's own hunt for a happier life, as he explores the abecedarian mortal need for connection and belonging. Jack London's novel, White Fang, follows a wolf-canine's delicate trip from the wild to the world of humans. Through his jesting with different mortal possessors, some cruel and some kind, White Fang's wild nature is gradationally converted by love and a desire for civilization. The story reflects London's belief that compassion can heal indeed the deepest pain and that one must acclimatize to society's ethical rules to truly thrive. Eventually, the new serves as an important communication about growth, the law of survival, and the profound, transformative power of love.

White Fang, the main character, is a part wolf and part canine who feels like a castaway wherever he goes. He's rejected by the wolf pack for being part canine and bullied by tamed tykes for his wolf heritage. The constant hostility he faces in both the wild and mortal society hardens him into a vicious fighter, a survival instinct that takes over in his delicate world. Jack London gave mortal- suchlike studies and passions to the beast characters in White Fang, which is a way of using creatures to tell a story about mortal society. This allowed him to explore ideas about civilization, atrocity, and survival without sounding too moralistic. Putting the story in the beast's perspective also makes the social commentary more important and subtle. While the book is a reflection on mortal actuality, it's also a gripping adventure full of suspension, triumphs, and backstabbing. Jack London's story about his canine, Rollo, shows how smart tykes are and how they learn to communicate with humans. When London would pretend to be sad and fake- cry, Rollo learned that this was actually a signal for play, analogous to a" play arc". Experimenters like Bekoff (2007) have set up that tykes use special movements, like play curvatures, to gesture their intentions, especially during rough play that could be misjudged. Rollo's geste is a great illustration of social literacy, which is when a canine learns to do commodity by watching a mortal. This process is corroborated through operant exertion, where Rollo's voluntary action of imitating London was awarded with further playtime. This confirms that tykes learn and acclimatize their geste grounded on positive issues.

In Jack London's novel, White Fang endures three dramatic changes in his life and with his masters. He's first raised by a Native American, Gray Beaver, who trains him to be a sled canine. Latterly, he's vended to a cruel man named Beauty Smith, who forces him into vicious canine fights. White Fang's life is only saved by a new proprietor, Weedon Scott, who rescues him from a brutal match with a bulldog. With Scott, White Fang learns to trust, love, and come a pious, cultivated family member, eventually earning the title" the Blessed Wolf" from Scott's family. In White Fang, Jack London explores the idea that a beast's terrain shapes its veritably nature and development. The story follows the title character, a wolf- canine mongrel, from the wild nature to the world of mortal civilization. Born to a wolf father and a half- canine, half-wolf mama, White Fang first learns the brutal laws of the wild. Still, his trip takes a dramatic turn when he's captured and traded by humans, including a cruel man named Beauty Smith, who forces him into confrontations. His changing circumstances demonstrate how external forces — both good and bad — can fester a being's character, proving that White Fang's life is

a constant process of conforming to his terrain. Living brutes and their surroundings have a two- way relationship the terrain shapes and controls how organisms develop and bear, but living effects also laboriously change the terrain around them. It's a constant, interdependent process where each side influences the other (Zhu Wen, 1993).

Although critic S. K. Robisch (2009) argues that viewing *White Fang* as a coming-of-age story risks overlooking its tragic, naturalistic elements, the novel's strong focus on learning and development makes this perspective hard to ignore. When we interpret White Fang's education through a less human-centered lens, we see how he learns social rules and interprets human behavior to gain rewards and avoid punishment. His process of adapting includes forming an attachment to a human, which is shown through signs like separation anxiety and submissive behaviors, such as muzzle grabs. By the end of the story, the wolf-dog has learned to communicate with humans and live peacefully with other dogs, showing that his journey is one of successful adaptation rather than tragic decline. Having lacked love and warmth in his early life, White Fang feels a deep, instinctive need for it. As a pup, he experiences loneliness, hunger, and fear as his constant companions. His father is a vague memory, his siblings fade away, and even his mother, Kiche, becomes distant and cold after they are separated and reunited. This harsh upbringing, where survival is everything, only strengthens the deepest, most sensitive part of his heart, which yearns for genuine affection.

White Fang's difficult experiences teach him a crucial lesson: the world is harsh and unloving, a fact that deepens his need for true affection. After leaving the wild, his life in the Indian village is filled with constant abuse, and he is later sold to a cruel man named Beauty Smith, who forces him into dog fights. In this world, White Fang serves humans out of fear and obligation, not love. This brutal environment confirms his fears that the world is a cold, dangerous place, but it also fuels a deep, underlying desire for the warmth and true love that he has never known. After being rescued from certain death by his new master, Weedon Scott, White Fang is deeply distrustful and hostile towards his rescuer. Having only known cruelty from humans, he initially responds with snarls and bites whenever Scott tries to touch him. Undeterred, Scott patiently and lovingly cares for the wolf-dog, creating a safe and kind environment. This consistent affection slowly begins to heal White Fang's tortured spirit, as he realizes that not all humans are barbaric. He eventually learns to accept and even enjoy Scott's gentle touch, though he is unfamiliar with the feeling of love itself. This slow but sincere change in White Fang's behavior shows how love can overcome even the deepest trauma. After his traumatic experiences, White Fang eventually adapts to a life without constant struggle and violence. Guided by kindness, he becomes docile and open to companionship, allowing love to become a central force in his life. This process transforms him from a fearful, savage creature into a domesticated dog, showing how love helps him find a place in civilization and embrace morality.

In *White Fang*, Jack London illustrates the harsh "law of the wild" through a process we now call operant conditioning. Early on, White Fang, a wolf cub, discovers his hunting nature by playfully biting a chick and being rewarded with the taste of blood and meat. This positive reinforcement encourages the behavior and teaches him that he is a predator. London repeatedly shows how the cub is both the hunter and the hunted, which instills a deep-seated distrust of his environment and other animals. This ongoing cycle of survival and danger shapes the cub's character and defines his existence in the wild. After almost drowning when he

mistakenly tried to walk on the water's surface, White Fang's inherited fear of the unknown is reinforced by this painful experience. From then on, he develops a deep suspicion of anything that looks one way but behaves differently. This event teaches him to distrust his own perceptions and to be more cautious of his environment, permanently shaping his view of the world around him. The readers learn that the cub, “would have to learn the reality of a thing before he could put his faith in it” (London, p. 45).

Jack London's portrayal of White Fang’s early life clashes with Donna Haraway's idea of dogs as "companion beings" that share a sacred bond with humans. White Fang is treated as a piece of property, first by the indifferent Grey Beaver and then by the cruel Beauty Smith, who profits from forcing the wolf-dog into brutal fights. This abuse commodifies White Fang, ignoring his sensitive and emotional nature, and leaving him deeply traumatized. It is only with his final owner, Scott, that White Fang experiences true love and care, allowing him to slowly overcome his fear and aggression. With the help of other dogs, White Fang acclimates to his new family and eventually demonstrates the profound loyalty Haraway describes. By selflessly protecting Scott's family, White Fang embodies the kind of deep connection that Haraway imagines between humans and companion species. Donna Haraway's work aims to dismantle the view that dogs are inferior to humans by highlighting them as "companion species" that actively shape and respond to us. She draws on philosopher Jacques Derrida's ideas, criticizing those who observe animals without acknowledging that animals observe us right back. This means we need to move beyond simply "seeing" and learn to "look" back at them with respect, recognizing their unique feelings and responses. In this way, White Fang can be seen not just as an animal, but as a being that, co-shapes itself with its human interactions. Only by appreciating their distinct characteristics can we truly understand and treat them as the complex, reciprocal companions that Haraway describes.

Conclusion

By exploring the life of a dog like White Fang, literature offers a way to reconsider our own role in the world and how we relate to other living things. The story focuses on the dog's inner life, showing that animals are not just simple creatures but have their own complex feelings and experiences. This approach challenges the human-centric view that has often led to the mistreatment of animals. The book reminds us that humans and other species are closely connected and that building respectful relationships is key to a more accepting way of living. Ultimately, White Fang's journey from a wild animal to a loyal companion shows that personal growth is a lifelong process. Through life's ups and downs and the pursuit of love, he learns and adapts, proving that facing challenges is what gives life true meaning. The book is a classic story of personal development and transformation, following the journey of a wolf-dog hybrid, White Fang. It uses his progression from a wild animal to a domesticated companion to explore larger ideas about life and society. The narrative shows that while an individual's background (nature) is important, their experiences and relationships (nurture) play a much greater role in shaping their character.

The story also reflects on Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest" showing how White Fang's life is defined by the struggle to live in a harsh and brutal environment. However, the novel also shows that there is more to life than just survival. White Fang's story

demonstrates that civilization, represented by his loving final owner, can introduce a different kind of strength, one based on love and kindness rather than just brute force. Love is presented as a powerful force for change that can help rebuild a life and drive growth. Ultimately, White Fang is a story that encourages a positive outlook on life, suggesting that anyone can grow and adapt despite their difficult past. Through White Fang's experiences, the novel teaches readers that by facing challenges, pursuing love, and embracing a mindset of continuous growth, they can build a stronger and more independent self. The novel inspires readers to find their own meaning in life, even amidst a challenging modern world.

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Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie: Language, Identity and the Postcolonial Imagination in their selected Novels

Rhitabrata Chatterjee

Abstract

This essay explores how a language shapes identity in the postcolonial context in the novels of Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri. It looks at how both authors turn linguistic displacement into a form of creative power. In Midnight's Children, Rushdie uses a lively, mixed English that reflects the diversity and fragmentation of postcolonial India. His vibrant style, often called "chutnification," takes back the colonizer's language through parody and linguistic play, making memory an active effort to rewrite history. In contrast, Lahiri's The Namesake features a simple style focused on silence, restraint, and translation. Her characters experience linguistic separation, highlighted by Lahiri's own adoption of Italian, which portrays exile as a search for linguistic belonging. By comparing Rushdie's expansive imagination with Lahiri's reflective approach, this essay argues that both writers change the way we see postcolonial expression. Rushdie expresses hybridity through linguistic rebellion, while Lahiri internalizes it through self-exile and reinvention. Ultimately, it claims that in their stories, language and memory are not just passive containers of identity; they are active, transformative spaces of resistance and renewal. Through these, the postcolonial self constantly reimagines its relationship to history, culture, and a sense of belonging.

Keywords: postcolonial imagination, memory, hybridity, diaspora, linguistic exile

Language and memory constitute two of the most vital coordinates in postcolonial literary production. They serve not merely as tools of narration but as acts of reclamation, negotiation, and identity-formation. In Jagdish Batra's article "Will Jhumpa Lahiri Overtake Salman Rushdie?", we find him quite passionate about a comparative discussion between the two. Taking inspiration from this article, here we try to analyse postcolonial language usage, as it manifests in the works of Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri, operating within this nexus of linguistic experimentation and identity creation. The significance of language usage in the words of Salman Rushdie is best expressed in the following lines from his *Imaginary Homelands*, 'books that draw new and better maps of reality and make new languages with which we can understand the world'(Rushdie, 100). The significance of new language is basically needed to foster the ideas of the new world. The words of Srinivas Iyengar, as referred by Braj B. Kachru is also very significant in this regard, "…Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks. It is a new voice, no doubt, but it is as much Indian as the others. Rushdie's language constitutes 'an act of vernacular resistance that prevents his work from being sold merely as a global commodity'" (Kachru, 46).

Although they come from different generations and have distinct styles, both writers express the diasporic and postcolonial experience using language shaped by the histories of

colonial disruption and the chance for creative renewal. Rushdie's lively, mixed English is restless, broad, and challenging. This contrasts sharply with Lahiri's careful minimalism and her later shift to writing in Italian. Still, both deal with feelings of alienation, desire, and identity transformation that come from linguistic exile. In their stories, language becomes a powerful space of memory and resistance, where fragmented identities, histories, and homelands come together. This essay looks at the connection between language and identity as key themes in the postcolonial works of Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri. It argues that while *Midnight's Children* (1981) celebrates linguistic mixture as a form of narrative rebellion, *The Namesake* (2003) shows a shift from realistic restraint to a quieter, reflective retreat into another language. Despite these different paths, both authors demonstrate the postcolonial writer's attempt to express a world where language serves as the main tool for reimagining memory, belonging, and selfhood.

Rushdie's use of language, along with his broad style, involves careful experimentation with punctuation, creative word formation, and consistent code-switching. These techniques break conventional patterns of standard English and create a unique narrative style that is closely tied to his fiction. This linguistic richness isn't just for show; it serves an ideological role by resisting cultural uniformity and promoting a diverse, dialogue-driven perspective that aligns with democratic values. Through his unconventional use of language, Rushdie often challenges the urge towards linguistic and cultural uniformity, emphasizing a commitment to diversity and coexistence. In contrast, Lahiri's connection to language is shaped mainly by feelings of disconnection and emotional distance. In her work, language often conveys a sense of displacement instead of joy, serving as a reminder of a broken sense of belonging. In her essay "Teach Yourself Italian," Lahiri discusses how Bengali, her native language, takes on an unfamiliar quality in America, deepening the migrant's feeling of being caught between cultures and languages. This ongoing discomfort with language informs her subtle narrative style and focus on quiet alienation. The stylistic differences between Rushdie and Lahiri are especially clear in how they use prose texture. Rushdie's writing stands out for its linguistic flair, mixing old-fashioned expressions, casual speech, and popular cultural phrases in a colorful style. In contrast, Lahiri uses a more measured and understated way of writing. Her prose avoids showy language, prioritizing clarity and emotional restraint (Batra,30). Even when she includes informal elements, these moments are carefully chosen to maintain the overall seriousness of her narrative voice. Lahiri highlights cultural specifics not through excessive language but by selectively using untranslated Indian terms—like *daknam*, *bhalonam*, *sari*, *mashi*, *pishi*, and *kaku*—which subtly root her stories in a feeling of connection to the diaspora without needing explanations (Batra,31). At the same time, her fiction reflects global movement through mentions of European food culture, especially in scenes with Gogol and Moushumi, where French cuisine and dining traditions express both cosmopolitan ambitions and emotional distance. Together, these language choices highlight Lahiri's unique approach to exploring identity through restraint, silence, and a focus on simple language rather than vibrant mixing.

Rushdie and Lahiri both tackle a common postcolonial issue related to language and identity, but they come at it from different angles. Rushdie's lively and mixed use of language challenges the hold of colonial English. He turns this former colonial language into a tool for imaginative and political resistance. On the other hand, Lahiri looks at linguistic displacement

in a more thoughtful and reflective way. “Lahiri’s fiction reminds one of the Victorian styles of character portrayal through scenes and situations, persons and places. Lahiri is a painstaking writer whose quality is reflected in her labored prose that tries to create a balance between the internal and the external aspects, between the landscape and the mindscape (Batra,29). Rushdie’s writing expands outward with its richness and variety, while Lahiri’s style focuses inward, emphasizing restraint, silence, and emotional depth. Together, their different approaches highlight a key tension in postcolonial thought between being rooted in language and experiencing ongoing alienation.

For Rushdie, language is closely tied to his larger aim of rethinking history. In *Midnight’s Children*, English acts as a sign of India’s fractured postcolonial state. Saleem Sinai’s story, blending historical facts with myth and personal memory, reflects the country’s disordered and chaotic formation. Rushdie’s well-known idea of “chutnification” intentionally challenges ideas of linguistic purity, pushing readers to face a multilingual world influenced by English, Urdu, Hindi, and local expressions from Bombay. Language thus becomes a lively space where cultural diversity is not just shown but actively practiced. This intentional mixing serves as a way of resisting colonial influences. By distorting and “contaminating” standard English, Rushdie symbolically takes it back from its colonial roots. It may be said that, in the words of K.T.Sunita, “Indian expatriate writers do not write from the position of a distant foreign community, such as the exiled Black or West Indian novelist, but their writing reflects the perspective of someone caught between two cultures” (Sunita,82).

The novel *The Namesake* centres on the experiences of a Bengali Indian immigrant family negotiating life in the United States. Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli attempt to adapt to an unfamiliar social and cultural environment, while the emotional core of the narrative lies in their son Gogol’s encounters with displacement, frustration, and estrangement. In order to remain connected to their homeland, Ashoke and Ashima undertake frequent visits to India and consciously maintain ties with extended family members, using these practices as anchors of cultural continuity. As Indira Nityanandan observes, the novel traces a gradual process of cultural negotiation through Ashima’s perspective, articulating the expatriate’s effort to make sense of the complex social web in which she finds herself (Nityanandan 15).

Lahiri demonstrates that although diasporic communities initially strive to preserve inherited customs and ethnic identity, they gradually absorb the social and cultural practices of the host nation. This transition is evident in the Gangulis’ evolving relationship with American festivals and rituals. While Ashoke initially resists celebrations such as Christmas and Thanksgiving, Gogol later recalls that his parents adopted these customs primarily for the sake of their children, recognising their need to belong within American society (Lahiri, 286). As a result, Gogol and his sister Sonia grow up more thoroughly Americanized than their parents had anticipated. Groomed to be both bilingual and bicultural, the children experience cultural tension and displacement in intensified ways (Praveen,96). Although they are encouraged to participate in Bengali religious observances such as *pujas*, Gogol and Sonia—like many children in immigrant Bengali households—develop a stronger preference for American food and lifestyle practices than for traditional dishes.

Confronted with these generational shifts, the parents, despite their initial discomfort, gradually incorporate elements of American life into their own routines, recognising that adaptation becomes a necessary act of care in raising children within a diasporic context

(Nityanandan, 96). In *The Namesake*, Lahiri examines themes of identity, dislocation, cultural negotiation, and divided loyalties through Gogol Ganguli. The novel follows about thirty years of Gogol's life, starting from his birth in 1968 to a significant personal change around the year 2000. This journey leads him toward self-understanding and acceptance. Throughout, Gogol faces a recurring identity crisis. He tries to separate himself from his parents and seeks a life away from Bengali language, customs, and history, yet he cannot break away from his cultural roots. His efforts to shape his own identity continually reveal the strong pull of inherited identity. The title *The Namesake* emphasizes the weight of carrying someone else's name, a struggle that shapes Gogol's internal conflict. His name becomes a source of discomfort and isolation, following him even after he legally changes it to Nikhil. This change does not fix his anxiety. The unusual name "Gogol" continually marks him as different, deepening his feeling of exclusion. For Ashoke, though, the name holds deep personal significance. He gives it to his son as a symbol of survival and renewal, recalling how a book of Nikolai Gogol's writings was crucial in saving his life during a terrible train accident. The pages he was holding at the time helped rescuers find him, making the author Gogol a symbol of hope. This intimate meaning, however, is lost on his son. What represents rebirth for the father becomes, for Gogol, an unwelcome reminder of his difference, creating tension between his private self and the social world around him. Gogol resents his parents' yearly visits to India and yearns for personal autonomy:

> He dreads the thought of eight months without a room of his own, without his records and his stereo, without friends. (Lahiri, 89)

Gogol knows that his parents and their friends call India simply 'desh', a word that represents emotional ties and cultural roots (Praveen,105). However, he doesn't feel that same emotional connection. Instead, he views India through an American perspective, seeing it as a distant place rather than a homeland. He grows tired of discussions focused on marginality and exile. Only near the end of the novel does he realize that chasing a perfect or completely acceptable name is ultimately unrealistic. His rejection of the name given to him by his father becomes a source of late regret, a truth he only acknowledges after Ashoke's death, when reconciliation is no longer an option.

Following his father's death, Gogol becomes very aware of where individuals fit within their family and society. This personal loss brings him closer to his family and helps him see the importance of their shared practices and values. As he starts to recognize his ethnic background and family traditions, Gogol begins to accept his identity more fully. However, this change puts a strain on his relationship with Maxine. She does not understand why he needs to be emotionally close to his mother and sister after the loss. When she says, "You guys can't stay with your mother forever" (Lahiri, 182), it shows she cannot grasp Gogol's grief. Later, when she suggests he take a vacation to escape his situation, Gogol replies firmly, "I don't want to get away" (Lahiri,182). This response highlights his growing commitment to family ties and his refusal to distance himself from his loss as a way to cope. During a birthday party hosted by his girlfriend Maxine's family, Gogol faces questions about his cultural identity. Pamela asks him about his "Indianness," especially concerning his name. His name is not clearly Indian or American; it comes from the Russian author Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol.

This situation emphasizes his feelings of cultural uncertainty. By the time Gogol understands the deeper meaning of his name, the chance for resolution has already slipped away (Praveen, 115). In reaction, he creates a new identity by adopting the name Nikhil. He uses this name to hide a name that has always disturbed him, sticking to him like a bothersome irritant he cannot shake off. His effort to reinvent himself connects to Homi K. Bhabha's idea that identity in postcolonial situations develops in a middle ground, where cultural meanings are constantly reshaped instead of being fixed:

> …as a consequence, in colonialist representations the colonized subject is always in motion, sliding ambivalent between the polarities of similarity and difference… (John Mcleod,53)

Moushumi, Gogol's wife, extends this trajectory further; confronted with her increasing assimilation into American norms, she seeks refuge in the French language:

> Immersing herself in a third language, a third culture, had been her refuge…It was easier to turn her back on the two countries that could claim her in favour of one that had no claim whatsoever (Lahiri,.214).

A discussion about Moushumi's character highlights Jhumpa Lahiri's own shift toward the Italian language. Critics place Lahiri in a blended diasporic tradition shaped by what readers expect and how they receive her work. Madhuri Chawla points out that each new English-language publication heightened Lahiri's awareness of what her audience wanted. This change gradually reduced her creative satisfaction and increased her anxiety about failing (Chawla,5). Her growing disconnect from English comes to a head in her essay "Teach Yourself Italian," where she talks about her frustration with the language that brought her literary fame. Lahiri connects this discomfort to her ongoing struggles with identity and belonging, themes already present in *The Namesake*. She argues that English, weighed down by institutional authority and the demands of representation, became a limiting medium. In contrast, Italian is her first freely chosen language; it is not tied to family heritage like Bengali or to the pressures of English. Bengali serves as a maternal legacy, and English acts as a path to cultural legitimacy, while Italian provides Lahiri with a linguistic space free from colonial history or ancestral identity. Writing in Italian allows her to escape the need to present immigrant authenticity and the imagined characters that fill her English-language stories.

Lahiri's resistance to English is different from Salman Rushdie's. Instead of trying to reshape English from inside, she separates herself from it entirely. As a hyphenated writer, Lahiri reflects on the weight of living multiple linguistic lives: an early existence before literature, a career filtered through English and its immigrant scrutiny, and a warm yet unfinished bond with Bengali ("Teach Yourself Italian"). Italian becomes a space she consciously selects, not for belonging but for freedom from representational pressure. Lahiri describes it as a "protective bark," which keeps her safe from family claims, audience expectations, and the wider demands of literary authority (Chawla,7). In *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft et al. are of the view that:

> Language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial center- whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a 'standard' against other variants which are constituted as 'impurities', or by planting the language of empire in a new place- remains the most potent instrument of cultural control (Bill Ashcroft et al,283)

Postcolonial writers often challenge the assumed superiority of Standard English by experimenting with different forms of the language and blending local linguistic styles into their work. Instead of using the colonizer's version of English, these authors create diverse "englishes," each with its own nuances and culturally specific features. When English becomes a way for the colonized to express their experiences, it is effectively decolonized in terms of content, while its form adapts to reflect local realities. Writers use a range of linguistic strategies to achieve this. Salman Rushdie's English, often referred to as "chutnified," allows him to question any single ideology and promote diversity and hybridity. His use of language resists uniformity and embraces multiplicity. Bishnupriya Ghosh argues that English in India is not separate from Indian realities; it has become a local form, significantly shaped by class and region. She points out that Rushdie's "localized or regionalized urban (Bombayite) use of English" does not oppose the vernacular but is deeply rooted in it. According to Ghosh, Rushdie's fiction is filled with local references and context-specific language (Ghosh, 130). This richness may not always resonate with Western readers, and Rushdie does not always highlight these elements for them. His dense historical, cultural, and linguistic context ensures that his work is tied to its specific site of expression. This acts as a form of vernacular resistance, preventing his stories from being consumed simply as global commodities.

Rushdie's approach to vernacularization involves ongoing interactions between English and Indian vernacular languages (*bhashas*). This interaction positions English as a pan-Indian language that seeks to showcase local diversity while also becoming native through these dialogues. As a result, English helps convey Indian national culture to an international audience while remaining rooted in local contexts, serving as a means to express national issues. Rushdie's treatment of language also includes unique punctuation, innovative word formations, and extensive code-mixing. These techniques disrupt the normal flow of English and create a distinct Rushdiean style. Such linguistic experimentation supports Nehruvian ideals of democracy and pluralism, by resisting centralization and honoring multiple voices. For example, *Midnight's Children* juxtaposes languages in a way that is both accumulative and expressive, creating a polyphonic texture that avoids strict ideological hierarchies. In the Indian context, this implies not just one national language but a national "linguistic system" made up of many coexisting languages. Rushdie's linguistic blending becomes essential to his portrayal of Indian multiplicity and his responses to contemporary challenges. His so-called "Super-Sexy-High-Masala Art" captures the democratic resistance that arose during the Emergency, celebrating political and narrative fragmentation as symbols of democratic pluralism against authoritarian views. Fragmentation is thus seen as a positive aspect, representing diversity and variety. Furthermore, Rushdie's language acknowledges those for whom English was never a foreign language but one used creatively and informally within communities.

Punctuation is vital in this linguistic approach. Rushdie uses unconventional punctuation to disrupt syntax and create the feeling of oral storytelling. By breaking traditional punctuation rules, he challenges the formal codes of the colonizer's language. This disruption reflects Indian speech patterns and narrative habits. Raja Rao's foreword to *Kanthapura* is relevant here, noting how Indian storytelling often flows rapidly and cumulatively, with episodes following each other almost seamlessly (Rao, 9).

Rushdie's punctuation practices resonate with this oral and episodic storytelling style. Rushdie also extensively experiments with word formation to further the process of vernacularization. Indian words like pajama, goonda, rasgulla, and gulabjamun are pluralized with the English 's'. Honorific terms like "Cousin ji" and "Sister ji" incorporate cultural signs of respect. He creates compound expressions such as "paan shop" and "green medicine wallah" to add local flavor, and sometimes combines an Indian term with its English translation, as seen in "dia lamp" or "lathi stick." New adjectives emerge through suffixation, leading to words like "vinegary" and "shivery," while compounds like "lip-jutting" and "crazy-sounding" further expand English's expressive capacity.

Rushdie's language also features inventive constructions, such as "clock-hands" and metaphorical phrases like "biriyanis of determination," along with joined words—"whatsitsname," "Godknowswhat"—mimics the speed of spoken language. Clusters like "birthanddeath" and "whatdoyoumeanhowcanyousaythat" heighten the sense of quick dialogue. Occasional misspellings ("unquestionabel," "straaange," "existance") and grammatical errors ("mens," "informations") enhance the feeling of local speech. Grammatical deviations, like dropping articles or using nonstandard date formats, further contribute to the nativization of English. Finally, Rushdie's novel blends vocabulary from various languages—Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, and different forms of English—creating a richly hybrid dialect. Phrases like "chaand ka tukda," "lassi," "arre baap," "wah wah," along with informal English terms like "gotcha," "whaddya," and "innit," illustrate this multilingual quality. Together, these strategies show how Rushdie transforms English into a flexible, diverse, and resistant medium that captures the complexities of the Indian postcolonial experience.

A comparative reading of Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri shows that their responses to postcolonial expression complement each other rather than oppose. Rushdie's lively, hybrid language and Lahiri's subtle realism represents two different yet related approaches to dealing with linguistic displacement. Rushdie's magical realism serves as a national allegory, where personal stories connect with broader political narratives. In contrast, Lahiri's minimalist prose looks inward to examine the emotional lives of people in the diaspora. Despite these stylistic differences, both writers actively engage with translation—cultural, linguistic, and psychological. Rushdie's narrators translate the diversity of the subcontinent into English through multiple voices and humor. Meanwhile, Lahiri's characters navigate different languages as they seek self-understanding. For both authors, storytelling serves as a way to deal with loss and find a sense of belonging. Rushdie highlights the imagination's role in bridging the gap between the self and a lost homeland. Similarly, Lahiri sees language as a way to access different versions of the self. Their works suggest that postcolonial writing cares less about returning to a pure original language and more about navigating the tension between memory and language, exile and expression.

Ultimately, Rushdie and Lahiri show that language in the postcolonial setting acts not just as a way to express ideas but also as a temporary home where displacement turns into meaning, and identity is constantly reshaped.

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Indigenous Ecological Resistance: Nature's Agency with women in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*

Siliva Dash & Narayan Jena

Abstract

This paper examines Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* as an attempt to show the aesthetic side of the femininity. It argues that the eternal feminine in nature makes it aesthetically valuable. Similarly, the nature of woman that is similar to the nature of Earth makes woman beautiful and aesthetically valuable. *Gardens in the Dunes* engages with and foregrounds Indigenous relationships with the Earth as powerful alternatives to the unsustainable and damaging ways that many Euro-American and European societies live today.

Keywords: Indigenous resistance, ecological healing, survival, eco-feminism, interconnectedness etc.

Introduction

Gardens in the Dunes travels through a breathtaking variety of natural settings, such as the American Southwest, Long Island, Brazil, England, Italy, and the Mediterranean island of Corsica. The captivating quirks and political views of the people who inhabit each of these lands are revealed by Silko's captivating descriptions of the flora and landscapes that are native to each of these locations and, in certain cases, those that have been artificially transported there. *Gardens in the Dunes* draws on elements of the naturalist tradition to build an exciting tale of adventure, intrigue and mystery. The novel challenges and reshapes those conventions into something that is distinctly indigenous" (Arnold 40). Similar to *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko depicts a hot, dry, and dusty Native American environment with few water sources in *Gardens in the Dunes*. Only desert plants can thrive in their vast, untamed, and uncultivated surroundings.

Relationship with the earth

In its complex readings of a range of fictional gardens, gardeners, and gardening practices, Leslie Marmon Silko's 1999 novel *Gardens in the Dunes* engages with and foregrounds Indigenous relationships with the Earth as powerful alternatives to the unsustainable and damaging ways that many Euro-American and European societies live today. Set at the close of the nineteenth century, it focuses primarily on a single all-female Indigenous Sand Lizard family, the only group still using the traditional dune gardens. Told from the perspective of the young Sand Lizard child Indigo, the story follows Indigo and her older sibling Sister Salt once they are captured by Indian agents after their mother goes missing at a Ghost Dance in Needles Arizona, and dies and is buried by her granddaughters at the old dune gardens. Declared

‘orphans’ by the state, the sisters are separated and with Sister Salt sent to the Parker Reservation on the Colorado River while Indigo is sent to Indian boarding school in California. The story then follows two separate strands: Sister Salt’s life as a successful ‘business entrepreneur’ offering laundry services at the site of the construction of a new river dam; and Indigo’s successful escape from Indian school, her temporary ‘adoption’ by the Euro-Americans Edward and Hattie Palmer, and her subsequent tour of the eastern United States then Europe.

American Indian Literature and Eco-criticism

Environmental justice activist and critic Adamson points out in American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place that "writers, teachers, environmentalists, and literary and cultural critics have a key role to play in these conversations and debates" because our current “environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination” (Adamson 184) . Native American women novelists have advanced the ongoing discussion about our shared responsibility to all life on Earth throughout their careers. Silko combines an ecofeminist reclamation of European pagan/ Great Goddess iconography, sacred landscapes, and white feminist autonomy with a celebration of Indigenous relationships to the land and women's resourceful resistance in her third novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*. The novel is an ecological critique of the nineteenth-century white imperialist botanical exploitation of landscapes and Indigenous peoples.

The story revolves around the lives of Hattie, a white feminist religious studies scholar, and the self-possessed sisters Indigo and Sister Salt, who are among the last of the fictional Sand Lizard people. The novel is set in the 1890s, mostly in the Southwest but also heavily on the east coast, in Europe, and in Brazil. Hattie has access to higher education during a period when women were not often granted this privilege. Her thesis on "the equal status accorded the feminine principle in the Gnostic Christian tradition" (Silko 99) is rejected by her male Harvard professors. She then meets and marries Edward, a gentleman scientist and entrepreneur who gathers plant materials worldwide using the unethical and illegal methods common to imperialist botanists. Edward's failure to recognize the evil nature of his line of work and to separate himself from it ultimately leads to his death.

Women as an independent part of Culture and nature

In Silko's writing, the portrayal of women as independent of culture challenges traditional societal norms and offers a fresh perspective on gender roles. Silko's focus on women as autonomous beings separate from cultural expectations disrupts the male-centric perspective typically found in ethnographic studies (Gould 1980). This perspective aligns with Edwin Ardener's critique of traditional anthropological models, which tend to prioritize the male experience and overlook the unique perspectives and experiences of women. Furthermore, Silko's representation of women as independent of culture aligns with the call for more inclusive approaches to the history of women in various contexts, including the American West (Jameson 1988). Moreover, Silko's portrayal of women as independent of culture highlights the agency and resilience of these female characters. They are not defined solely by their

cultural surroundings, but rather they possess their own agendas, agency, and strategies for navigating and shaping their lives (Gould 1980). In summary, Silko's writing challenges traditional notions of women as being solely defined by their cultural context and instead portrays them as independent actors with agency and the ability to shape their own destinies.
The start and finish of Indigo, a young Native American girl, whose mission is to present a forward-thinking perspective on sustainable agriculture. The political issues facing Native Americans are addressed in *Gardens in the Dunes*, but the legacy of good practice is known as husbandry, it teaches out the ruins of good practice and views gardens as the nexus of (non-human) nature and culture. In addition to serving as a symbol of indigenous agency, Indigo's hybrid garden serves as the hub of meaning where all people, all gardens, and all earth are united. Throughout the majority of the book, Indigo, the young girl who grows into a young woman, serves as our observing vehicle. She narrates how two distinct types of agencies that is human and non-human and to know and accommodate one another rather than how humans control the planet.

Indigeneity, ecology and Feminine

The main character, Indigo, grew up in a sheltered environment in the Mojave Desert dunes, away from the sight of the Indian police. The family occasionally visited the town of Needles, California, where they camped on the riverbank and sold baskets to visitors at the train station. After their grandmother dies, Indigo and her sister are taken from their mother and hidden among the dunes at a Ghost Dance with Wovoka's disciples. Following her arrest by the Indian police, Indigo is sent to an Indian school in California. However, she manages to escape and finds safety with Hattie, a North Eastern woman who has recently been married to Edward, a botanist and plant hunter. The story also revolves around Sister Salt, Indigo's sister. This side story could stand alone as a standalone book. The massive dam project serves as the scene. Its plot follows Sister Salt's journey to motherhood via her friendship with Candy, a black chef. A female Mexican revolutionary who embezzles Candy's savings is also a part of this tale. When last seen, Candy was pursuing her. Sister Salt brings her infant back to the dunes. Edward uses a lengthy narrative that is interpolated to tell the story of his unfortunate journey to Brazil in order to steal valuable orchids. The novel's main focal point is Indigo. The idea that the novel is told in the "third person" is oversimplified because Silko is an expert at the subtle arts of storytelling and frequently employs free indirect discourse. It would be more accurate to describe the novel's trajectory as a garden tour.

Furthermore, it seems very evident that the reader, like Indigo, is out and about. We first come across Edward's Californian citrus (a fruit from such a tree) orchard, where Indigo has taken refuge and Hattie is preparing a decorative garden. Edward's dunes gardens are already well-known for their sustaining plants. In his book True Gardens of the Gods, Ian Tyrrell compares and contrasts the horticultural practices of California and Australia. He argues that the development of Californian horticulture was motivated by moral and utopian principles, opposing agricultural monocultures and pastoralism. Tyrrell also explores the relationship between this small-scale vision and the natural desire to create gardens for aesthetic and acclimatization purposes. From Tyrrell's analysis, we could interpret this scene from Silko's book as a representation of the growth of Californian horticulture. Hattie's artistic

endeavors and greater sense of moral purpose for her life in California, Edward's morally restrained but practically shameful hunting for non-endemic species to acclimate, and the surrounding citrus orchard. Edward is about to embark on a new mission to steal cuttings from citrus medica plants, this time to Corsica. The growing demand for candied citrus peel, which was produced from this specific citrus variety, at the time drove a thriving but highly protected Corsican industry. Hattie convinces Edward that Indigo should accompany them after urging the Indian school's director. And now for the garden tour to begin. They stay in Massachusetts with Hattie's father before departing for Europe. Edward showed us around his experimental farming methods and the beautifully manicured gardens of Susan, his sister.

The group stays with Hattie's Great-Aunt Bronwyn in England, who is based close to Bath and has a mysterious garden that she inherited from her grandfather. They stay with Hattie's friend Laura, an amateur archaeologist, in her classical yet equally ethereal garden in Italy while travelling to Corsica. The Corsica expedition turns out to be just as misguided as we have come to anticipate from Edward's endeavors by this point. Due to a dishonest Australian doctor he meets on a trip to Corsica, who tricks him into mining for meteorites in the Arizona desert where he becomes ill, Edward ends up dead after being imprisoned for the attempted theft. Through methods of working with the land, Gardens in the Dunes investigates a variety of legacies of connection with it. In a commentary included with the Scribner edition of the book, Silko states, "Gardens are a feature of almost every human culture, and they have long been associated with religion. I have always been fascinated by pre-Christian European beliefs and the pagans' adoration of hallowed springs and tree groves. (Silko 4)

Unlike Indigo, Hattie, and Bronwyn, Susan and Edward view plants as "exquisite tokens," not souls (Ryan 127). This is where the motivations for Susan's gardens and Edward's commercial botanizing differ from those of Bronwyn and Laura's gardens, the gardens in the dunes, and Susan's gardens. Even though Indigo finds many aspects of Susan's garden captivating, it is obvious that she will never use this garden as a model for what a garden should be. Similar to the gardens in the dunes, Laura's formal garden has old bones that have been restored by the presence of antique sculptures, its "wilder" areas, and the ancient botanical connections hidden behind its formality. We appear to be informed that this garden has indigenous roots as well. The novel starts and ends in the gardens in the dunes. Grandma Fleet told them the old gardens had always been here, so here's a peek. The elderly discovered the gardens flourishing, having been planted by Grandfather Snake's relative Sand Lizard, who had invited his niece to move in and raise her seeds.

The reason Old Sand Lizard insisted on reseeding her gardens in this manner was that people are not always reliable; they may forget to plant at the appropriate time or may not survive the following year. Indeed, these are hallucinogenic gardens, constituting the mythological and affective core of the book. The point of these gardens is precisely that they are not portrayed as being lost, as a source of nostalgia, or as something that must be painstakingly and possibly hopelessly pursued. They flourish. Even though they might suffer and that efforts may have been made to eradicate them, seeds and remnants of them can reappear and thrive in the right circumstances, including well-managed crops. This book consistently draws a connection between the survival of the earth and the survival of all sentient beings, so we are definitely welcome to interpret it as a metaphor for Indian survival rather than an allegory. In fiction, one may allude to the other, but signifier and signified are truly one

and the same. Indigo's path was one of growth rather than healing. She is also expected to be a change agent for the customs and garden maintenance. Bing is a resourceful and resilient person who pays close attention to everything around her and gathers information, seeds, corms, and some of Edward's orchids to plant.

The gardens are destroyed and the elderly rattlesnake that lived by the spring has been killed when Indigo, her sister, and her sister's infant return to the dunes. Using the dead snake's bones, Indigo and Sister Salt bury him next to their grandmother in a ritual. The novel comes to an end with the appearance of a younger snake at the spring.

Conclusion

In her New York Times review, Suzanne Ruta claims that *Gardens in the Dunes* "has agendas instead of voices" (Wikipedia). James Barilla talks about Silko's careful and considered adjustments regarding introduced species. "Silko" suggests that the worth of gathering and appropriation in general, is contingent on the trader's status, the author states (168). The substance of Silko's argument is found in small, easily overlooked details. For instance, Indigo gathers seeds and corms while Edward takes cuttings from his citrus medical plants, though she does keep one or two of Edward's orchids. Barilla states, "Cuttings represent the transformation of the plant into commodity; seeds are symbols of biological sovereignty and wildness" (168).

Furthermore, he contends that the book's overall perspective on invasiveness is wholly postmodern: However, the story offers an intense experience of novelty in both the postmodern and preservationist senses. It shows the garden's isolation from both the ideas and genes of the garden's murderous Euro-American settlers and their incorporation. The oasis is overrun with newness. An ambivalent, postmodern preservationist impulse shapes the narrative of the garden space. The desire for novelty demands that the process of maintaining native species and controlling invasive offer opportunities for newness and creativity to enter while also preserving a sense of the past. Barilla concludes that Silko's vision is "ironic" because it "shifts the focus to the validity of human cultures moving permanently out of their appropriate geographic ranges while accepting the traditional biological naturalisms of place." (172). This, in my opinion, is expressed in the "gardens in the dunes," which subtly bring the novel's many layers of meaning, which at first glance seem to be just surface and description together.

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Nuclear Psychic Fracture of Aisha in Kiran Manral's *Missing Presumed Dead*

P Sowbhagya & NS Vijayalakshmi

Abstract

Missing Presumed Dead by Kiran Manral offers a deep psychoanalytic examination of Aisha's nuclear psyche breakdown and the entire psychological collapse that is occurring among her secluded family. The novel follows Aisha's tragic journey from witnessing her mother's psychosis when she was nine years old, internalizing her father's betrayal through an affair while she was institutionalized, marrying emotionally distant Prithvi, and experiencing postpartum collapse after the birth of her son Aryan. Following Aryan, Aisha gets obsessed with pristine tiles, ignoring Maya and Aryan's hunger. Heer, her half-sister, steps in as the appropriate alternative following her husband's emotional withdrawal, effortlessly taking the roles of mother and wife. Nuclear psyche fracture explains twofold destruction: nuclear indicates that the confined family system exacerbates one person's mental illness, resulting in family-wide collapse without outside assistance; psyche fracture means that Aisha's personality is permanently shattered into unfixable bits. Contemporary marriages disintegrate due to emotional neglect, screen addiction, and corporate absence. Erich Fromm's Escape from Freedom in Mechanisms of Escape, perfectly explains Aisha's conscious survival strategies against isolation anxiety: sadomasochism as total submission to rejecting husband preventing abandonment fear; necrophilia as life-rejecting cleaning rituals loving dead objects over living children; destructiveness as children's phone addiction destroying family bonds; and automaton conformity allowing Heer's instant takeover. Fromm's paradigm depicts contemporary society's estrangement appearing as nuclear family disease. Capitalism's possessive drive develops escape mechanisms that ensure the repeating of childhood trauma. Manral demonstrates that family compassion avoids fragmentation, whereas judgment assures destruction listening without prejudice, praising household efforts, and physical affection may disrupt the course. Nuclear seclusion plus untreated mental fragility means unavoidable family destruction.

Key words: Nuclear, Psyche, fracture, sadomasochism, necrophilia, destructiveness and mental illness.

Nuclear Psychic Fracture of Aisha

Kiran Manral's *Missing Presumed Dead* (2018) expertly depicts Aisha's entire psychological collapse in nuclear psyche fracture a methodical process from childhood trauma observing to utter familial destruction within an isolated nuclear family structure. Erich Fromm's Escape from Freedom "Mechanisms of Escape," gives a precise theoretical foundation for describing Aisha's conscious neurotic tactics to escape modern separation anxiety, which is compounded by nuclear confinement. The rupture occurs at age nine, when Aisha sees her mother's deadly

mental collapse. She dared not speak about the whispers in her brain, which had been quiet for some time now. Talking about them could trigger the voices within her to scream for release once more. During her mother's hospitalization, Aisha's father had an affair with Heer's mother, instilling the painful childhood reality that insane wives lose husbands to ideal women. She focuses on the betrayal, “What kind of a person had Heer’s mother been? Had she been the calm, comforting refuge her father had needed, to escape from the chaos of Aisha’s mother’s insanity?” (Manral,11) Aisha's father has sent her to boarding school at the age of fourteen to protect her from frightening situations; therefore, her seclusion is permanent. According to Fromm, the paradox of contemporary freedom is that independence leads to existential isolation, necessitating pathological escape. Aisha's father has sent her to boarding school at the age of fourteen to protect her from frightening situations; therefore, her seclusion is permanent. According to Fromm, the paradox of contemporary freedom is that independence leads to existential isolation, necessitating pathological escape. Following this unconscious trauma pattern into marriage, Aisha anticipates a repeat of her mother's path. Her first marital stability with Prithvi closely resembles her mother's early phase before the madness. She closely observes her spouse for emotional retreat, which mirrors her father's distance during her mother's crisis.

Aryan's birth causes postpartum hormonal disruption, which, combined with inherited genetics from the witnessed parental disorder, triggers Aisha's pathology. She undertakes compulsive cleaning procedures that prioritize clean, shiny tiles over her kids, who are hungry, Maya and Aryan. "Sometimes, the children bore the burns of her unannounced rage. She could see herself reflected in their eyes, a feral creature when they began backing away from her, fear flooding their hearts." (Manral, 24). Fromm's necrophilia idea fully captures Aisha's life-denying orientation, in which she prefers inanimate objects to living interactions. The tiles provide the illusion of environmental control, compensating for childhood impotence in which human relationships proved disastrously dangerous. Her children experience the same parental rejection that Aisha did, resulting in direct familial transfer of pathology.

Prithvi replies with a methodical emotional disengagement, changing their marital bed, “The marital bed was now a no man’s land, a minefield of rejection, and distances that couldn’t be measured.” (Manral,19). Their move to isolated northern highlands under the guise of "protection" closely resembles Aisha's father's boarding school isolation tactic. Communication degrades into digital pieces, “They communicated through the impersonality of messages, which could abbreviate words into single letters and emoticons into afterthoughts.” (Manral,70). Aisha employs Fromm's sadomasochism: masochistic surrender to her rejected spouse provides illusory security against the abandonment dread caused by her age-nine witnessing of father betrayal. Prithvi shows the sadistic component by deliberate absence, controlling through emotional neglect.

The half-sister Heer appears as a perfect clone of her father. Heer chuckled, a deep, unfettered laugh. Despite realizing the existential threat posed by Heer's physical similarity to her betraying father, Aisha protects the alleged orphan via leftover humanism in the face of growing psychosis. Heer's pathological perfection rapidly usurps the biological mother's functions, and the children shift loyalties, with Prithvi eagerly fulfilling Aisha's childhood prophecy accurately. According to Fromm's automaton conformity, faultless, machine-like

performance flourishes exactly where the true self collapses due to escape mechanism overload.

Maya and Aryan show harmful behaviour through screen addiction and reject their "horrible thing" mother. Maya glared and returned to her phone. Snapchat. WhatsApp. She'd lost her kid in an alien realm, a flickering white-blue light behind a screen. This digital escapist duplicates Aisha's childhood mother's disavowal exactly, completing the three-generation pathological progression: maternal insanity drives Aisha's necrophilia, which leads to the children's technology rejection. Fromm describes it as the annihilation of unrealized relational potential.

Prithvi's absence represents systematic hypocrisy, “Prithvi was an absentee husband most of the time.” (Manral,19). Heavy sedation preserves surface functionality while gradually eroding agency, resulting in the power vacuum that allows Heer to take control seamlessly. The climactic monsoon-induced bridge collapse represents irreversible psychic rupture, which parallels nuclear family separation. Physical infrastructure breakdown mimics internal psychological collapse caused by excessive familial strain in the absence of external assistance. Daljeet's manipulative captivity and Heer's deceitful takeover complete the nuclear destruction.

Aisha's intellectual autonomy means she deliberately selects these escape tactics, ensuring childhood trauma recurrence rather than passively experiencing attachment traumas. The nuclear family constitutes pathology, with capitalist fathers, screen-addicted children, and virtual marital separation reproducing social alienation and ensuring pathological continuity across generations. Missed intervention chances support the Frommian theory. Nonjudgmental listening might correct Aisha's age-nine preconceptions are based on witnessing parental betrayal; true household appreciation goes beyond medication confinement; and physical hugs replace back-turned sleeping arrangements. Compassion is the solitary biophilic interruption mechanism that restores productive orientation, whereas systematic judgment enhances escape mechanism supremacy. Manral reveals contemporary nuclear seclusion as the ideal pathological incubator, assuring fracture completion absent active familial intervention.

Conclusion

Kiran Manral's *Missing, Presumed Dead* depicts how the tragedy of one family gradually kills each member. Aisha's mental illness began in childhood, when she witnessed her mother's mental breakdown. During this period, her father is having an affair with Heer. This encounter in stills in Aisha a strong worry that a woman who becomes mentally sick may lose her husband. As an adult, Aisha marries Prithvi, but their relationship is emotionally distant. Prithvi is frequently away for business; thus, they seldom converse well. After becoming a mother, Aisha develops an excessive fixation with housekeeping. She is more concerned with sparkling tiles than with her two starving children, Maya and Aryan. The children grow up feeling scared, lonely, and trapped between parents who frequently dispute but never genuinely communicate. When Aisha departs for five days, her half-sister Heer takes over the family. Heer acts like an ideal alternative and even intends to send the children to a boarding school they despise. At first, the kids miss their mother's food. Later, they discover a deeper pain: life without a mother is like "a knife cutting the heart with every beat." They lose confidence and are always concerned about their safety. Erich Fromm's idea in Escape from Freedom helps to understand

the breakup of this family. Modern living makes individuals feel alienated and worried. To avoid this dread, Aisha pursues harmful psychological routes. She likes lifeless cleanliness to human interactions (necrophilia). She is emotionally subservient to a husband who rejects her (sadomasochism). Heer substitutes her effortlessly by conforming to societal standards. Mobile phones and digital distraction (destructiveness) let the children escape their anguish. Aisha's breakdown might have been avoided. The family merely needed to listen to her without criticizing her past, recognize her achievements at home, and express physical affection through hugs and emotional presence. None of this occurs. Even a simple act of compassion may have prevented her mental breakdown. The novel's core message is simple yet powerful. When a family withholds affection and emotional support, one person's illness may kill everyone. Nuclear families, particularly those without family affection, exacerbate such circumstances. Kind listening, real appreciation, and human touch may rescue families, but judgment and neglect will destroy them completely. Kiran Manral presents Aisha's complete mental destruction as direct result of nuclear family isolation and neglect.

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Incestuous Bond and Father Figure: Understanding Cersei Lannister through Electra Complex

Supreeth Sudhakar K & Meera Kumar Menon

Abstract

This paper examines Cersei Lannister's incestuous relationship with her twin brother, Jaime in HBO's "Game of Thrones" through the lens of the Electra complex, a concept from psychoanalytic theory, which talks about a daughter's unconscious sexual desire for her father and rivalry with her mother. When viewed from this perspective, it opens up doors to Cersei's life, which experienced an emotional absence and dominance of her father, Tywin Lannister. This led Cersei to seek fatherly traits in her twin brother, Jaime. This study tries to analyse Tywin's emotional absence and whether Cersei's incestuous relationship with Jaime reflects an unconscious search for an unavailable father, and also how it explains her choice of Jaime over Tyrion.

This research employs close reading and textual analysis of HBO's "Game of Thrones" series, with a focus on certain episodes depicting Cersei's equation with Tywin, Jaime and Tyrion, along with other scholarly articles. The analysis reveals that Tywin Lannister, even though physically present, was emotionally unavailable, leaving Cersei with an unresolved Electra complex. Jaime, her twin brother, fills that void by displaying traits such as protection, authority, loyalty, bravery, etc., that are customarily attributed to a father. These findings demonstrate that there is more to Cersei's incestual relationship than the currently perceived reasons of power and ambition. This study helps understand that the Electra complex that Cersei possesses is based on fatherly traits and not the father himself.

Keywords: Electra complex, Psychoanalysis, Incest, Family dynamics, Emotional Absence.

Introduction

Incest in literature occupies a very powerful and alienating position as an extreme taboo that both intrigues and as well as repels readers. It contributes to bringing out complex psychological and familial dynamics. In the "Game of Thrones" series featured on HBO, the incestuous relationship between Cersei and her twin brother Jaime Lannister is not only a key component of the plot but also helps to explore deeper psychosexual behaviours. Through the lens of the Electra Complex, this paper tries to understand the psychological reasoning behind this relationship and also her rationale in choosing Jaime over her younger brother, Tyrion Lannister, as her sexual and emotional partner. Traditionally, the Electra complex describes a daughter's unconscious sexual desire for her father and rivalry with her mother (Khan and Haider 2). Applying this theory to Cersei Lannister gives us an insight into how Jaime, with the qualities of protection, authority and emotional availability, substitutes her father's role that she lacks in her life due to her emotionally distant father, Tywin Lannister.

This study aims to understand the Electra complex and its application to Cersei Lannister's character in Game of Thrones; to examine how Tywin Lannister's emotional absence contributes to Cersei's adult incestuous desires toward Jaime; to discover evidence that Cersei treats Jaime as a father figure using various sources including scholarly articles and episodes from the show; to explore how Tywin uses his paternal position to exert dominance over Cersei as a tool for maintaining Lannister power; to explore the possible reasons for Cersei's choice of Jaime over Tyrion; and to investigate how Cersei's relationship with absent or distant parental figures contributes to her adult attachment patterns and incestuous desires.

The research is guided by three key questions: How does Cersei's emotional distance from her father, Tywin, influence her unconscious choice of Jaime as her sexual and emotional partner? How does the Electra Complex explain Cersei Lannister's incestuous relationship with her twin brother, Jaime Lannister, in HBO's "Game of Thrones" series? And what psychological traits and emotional dynamics distinguish Cersei's relationship with Jaime from her relationship with Tyrion, particularly in terms of romantic attachment?

This study employs a qualitative methodology using the Electra Complex, a concept developed by Carl Jung. With the help of this framework, Cersei Lannister's relationships are explored using primary data from select episodes of "Game of Thrones" that showcase Cersei's interactions across the series. These episodes and scenes are examined through close textual analysis, including examination of dialogues and character interactions. Secondary sources include scholarly articles and videos related to the Electra complex, character psychology, and general contextual findings.

Review of Literature

The concept of Electra Complex is a part of Psychoanalytic theory that discusses the unconscious feelings of attraction that a young girl possesses towards her father, while simultaneously showcasing a sense of rivalry towards her mother. This term was coined by Carl Jung at the beginning of the 20th century and is considered as the female-linked counterpart to Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex. A young lady initially has an adoration for her mother, but soon disdains her, who is physically similar to her and sees the mother as a competitor for her father's attention. This, therefore, establishes a sense of rivalry between the daughter and the mother (Khan and Haider 1).

According to Mahrukh Khan and Kamal Haider in their paper titled "Girls' First Love: Their Fathers: Freudian Theory Electra Complex", the Electra complex can develop due to an anomaly during the Phallic phase of psychosexual development. Under ideal circumstances, the girl grows up realising that she is different from boys and feels closer to her mother. In any case, the girl starts to fancy her father, whom she treats as a figure of strength and power in her life. This in turn causes her to perceive her mother as a rival for his love. This gives rise to jealousy and anger towards the mother. Normally, the girl outgrows this tendency as she accepts and reconnects with her mother. However, under some circumstances, possibly due to concerns related to the family relationships or other such problems, this healthy resolution fails to take place, leading to the development of the Electra complex. Since the girl never moves past a sense of rivalry with her mother for her father's love, she grows up looking for father figures. The article further argues that women with an Electra complex often look for men

resembling their fathers, either physically or in terms of personality. They may either end up becoming very oppressive as they look at winning the father that they never had as a child, or become very accommodating as they are in search of validation from this fatherly figure (Khan and Haider 2).

Research shows that a father's emotional absence during childhood can cause profound gaps in a daughter's psychological development (Ramatsetse and Ross 208). Emotionally absent or distant fathers can lead to daughters who often struggle with feelings of rejection and an inadequate sense of belonging and identity. The article also hints at the impact that a father's emotional absence can have an impact daughters' adult relationship patterns by prompting them to search for father figures in their partners. This absence creates a void in their psychological development that may even persist in their adulthood.

Present research shows that the patriarchal systems of society shape women's psychological and relationship choices. Hegemonic masculinity, which is a form of authority that is derived from power, control and domination. It is fundamentally used to "explain men's power over women" (Jewkes et al. 112). In the fantasy land of Westeros, these patriarchal structures become even more prominent by restricting women's will in marriage, reproduction and service to male heads.

The setting of Game of Thrones is in a fictional continent named Westeros, a world that is largely inspired by the medieval age, especially by the Wars of Roses (Eriksen 12). Also, the creator George R.R. Martin, in an interview with TIME, has mentioned the influence of historical events such as the Wars of Roses and the Hundred Years War on this fictional work of his (Martin). The series uses its own calendar system, which is based on Aegon Targaryen's conquest of Westeros. Here, years are dated 'AC' (After Conquest) and 'BC' (Before Conquest). The events in the series occur roughly after 298 years of the conquest (Dockterman). Some of the important characters in the series occupy important political positions. Cersei Lannister is the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms and subsequently, Queen Mother. Jaime Lannister is one of the knights in the Kingsguard, and their younger brother Tyrion Lannister is Hand of the King and also Master of Coin, handling the crown's finances. Their father, Tywin Lannister, is the Lord of Casterly Rock, Warden of the West and also Hand of the King. These roles give us a basis to understand the political framework and power dynamics Medieval age.

Research Gap

The existing research points to Cersei's incestuous relationship with her twin brother Jaime Lannister as an act of defiance of the strong patriarchal norms while simultaneously emphasising her ambitious personality, which is a result of being oppressed and merely used as a marriage pawn. There remains a significant gap in analysing Cersei Lannister's character with the help of the Electra complex, a concept of Psychoanalytic theory, in order to unearth the origins of her attraction towards Jaime. Although the Electra complex is defined as an adoration a daughter has towards her father and a sense of rivalry towards her mother, if unresolved, it can cause the girl to look for fatherly figures in her future connections. The existing research does not explore whether Cersei's attraction for Jaime was a result of her perceiving fatherly traits in him as a compensation for the emotional absence and lack of

parental warmth she experienced from her father, Tywin Lannister. While there is documentation available for Cersei's frustration with her upbringing, where she was taught to be socially pleasant while Jaime was being trained to fight, the attraction that Cersei has towards Jaime, perceiving him as a father figure is not investigated. Thus, focused research is necessary to look at this particular dimension of psychoanalysis of their relationship.

Cersei's Inner World

Tywin Lannister: The Architect of Fear and Legacy

Tywin is described as someone "who could see through the facade of honour, pride and bravery" ("Tywin Lannister" 00:00:10-00:00:14). He was very well aware of the aspects that matter the most when it comes to ruling the world. He believed that it was fear, practicality and perception that would help him build and maintain his family legacy for generations to come. He did not flinch to employ cruel and unethical means that often pushed the boundaries in order to project his power and protect the Lannister name ("Tywin Lannister" 00:00:17-00:00:52). He organised the Red Wedding that killed hundreds who were unarmed and defenceless. This is one of the compelling reasons to categorise him as someone who is Machiavellian. This shows that honour and dignity were never his concern, unlike true warriors. It also projects an image of Tywin that indicates that he is a person of loose morals. From the same source, we also come to understand that it was the feeble image of his father that motivated him to be ruthless, as he realised that the key to respect is fear. "Tywin had witnessed the harsh consequences of being seen as weak and it was a trauma etched into his very being" ("Tywin Lannister" 00:03:10-00:03:16). In a conversation with Arya Stark, a sense of pain can be noticed while speaking about his father who according to him was a weak ruler who almost destroyed the Lannister house and its name ("Old Gods" 00:35:00-00:35:10).

Tywin Lannister is believed to have been born in 242 AC ("Complete Timeline" 00:00:03-00:00:07). At a very young age, Tywin realised that people had begun to sense his father's inability and weakness. According to the video "Tywin Lannister: Birth to 20 Years Old", his father was a "terrible ruler". He was "far too trusting, too soft, too weak-willed and too indecisive to be a good ruler. He disliked war and instead of acting on insults and threats, he would laugh them away" (00:03:40-00:03:53). This made him determined to restore his family's glory. According to the video titled "The Rains of Castamere | ASOIAF Animated", in 261AC, he crushed his family's enemies, House Reyne of Castemere and House Tarbeck. He achieved this military success at the age of 19, reinforcing the idea that Tywin Lannister was always ambitious and determined to maintain the Lannister name since his teen years.

This approach of striking fear in order to maintain his position continued. He did not hesitate to use any means to exert his power and control to get his way. This path that Tywin Lannister chose came at a cost of emotional bonding with his children, including his daughter Cersei. In one of the episodes, while in a conversation with Sansa, Cersei says, "Jaime was taught to fight with sword and lance and mace, and I was taught to smile and sing and please. He was heir to Casterly Rock and I was sold to some stranger like a horse to be ridden whenever he desired" ("Blackwater" 00:33:05-00:33:20). This brings out the deep disconnect that Tywin had with his daughter Cersei, as she grew up. Tywin did not consider Cersei his daughter.

Rather, she was used as a diplomatic asset or a commodity in exchange for his will. This also reflects a sense of objectification and abandonment she experienced as her father's ambitions took the foreground, annihilating fatherly love and warmth. This deprivation forced Cersei to resort to manipulation and ruthlessness to assert herself. However, the void that was created due to a lack of parental bonding was always present.

Intergenerational Trauma among the Lannisters

According to the article "Are You Affected by Intergenerational Trauma?", intergenerational trauma is the transmission of trauma that a member of the family experiences to the future generations (Raab). Therefore, it can be deduced that the psychological, emotional, and even biological impact of one person influences their children, grandchildren and at times, numerous generations. As discussed earlier, Tywin's motivation to prioritise family name and power comes from his father, who exhibited weakness as a ruler, causing him to turn into the man he is. This was a result of the trauma caused by seeing ridicule directed towards the family through his father. He became obsessed with bringing glory to his pride he had witnessed being hurt, leading him to be vengeful, authoritative and ruthless throughout his life. This trauma of his eventually passes on to his children through his demanding and ambitious parenting style. He wished for his children to be the successors of his will and ambition to protect and carry forward the legacy of the Lannister house. He treats Jaime, his eldest son, as an extension of himself. His physical appearance and personality carry the essence of being the heir to Casterly Rock. This makes Tywin project his ideals onto Jaime, whom he believes is the closest fit and an extension of himself to carry forward his legacy. We further understand from the same source that Jaime was only interested in Cersei and being a great knight. In the book title "A Storm of Swords", the author further establishes the fact that Jaime only wanted to be a knight and nothing more than that (Martin 851). He also expresses a lack of interest in carrying forward Tywin's legacy. He says, "I don't want your Rock!", indicating that he is not interested in being the heir to Casterly Rock. Even though Jaime was the heir to Casterly Rock and the Lannister legacy, he did not find his purpose there. His rejection of Casterly Rock and Tywin's path shows that he has always been fundamentally unlike his father. On one hand, Tywin used fear and legacy as a weapon and on the other, Jaime sought honour and integrity. This is seen manifesting in his choice of being a knight rather than a lord. This departure from the ideals and path of his father made Jaime the embodiment of a father figure, motivated by loyalty and compassion that Cersei always desired.

Tywin's Parenting Style: Hegemonic Masculinity and Control

Tywin's parenting style was far from being what is called ideal. He embodies a form of Hegemonic masculinity that values power and control above all. Also, the research says that he derives the bulk of his economic and political power by subjugating other forms of masculinity and women (Berros 355). This is an indication that Tywin's authority is derived from enforcing a strict and rigid patriarchal order that believes in suppressing those who do not align with his rigid masculinity. Cersei was one of the victims of his striving for power and control. He merely uses her as a "marriage pawn, a tool to help him further perpetuate his

power and influence" (Bondi et al. 14). Such an attitude reveals a continuous detachment towards Cersei, as he prioritises his political power over parental care, leaving his daughter, Cersei, neglected. He remained neutral during Robert Baratheon's rebellion against the throne and calculated his moves. When he learnt about Robert's victory, he swiftly joined his side ("Tywin Lannister" 00:01:49-00:01:56). And in order to secure his position, Cersei "was forced to marry Robert Baratheon, who rose to kingship, under her father's orders, to serve his ambitions and consolidate his power" (Bondi et al. 13). Again, in the episode "Kissed by Fire", Tywin commands widowed Cersei to marry Ser Lores Tyrell, of Highgarden to secure his position in the Reach. "You are my daughter. You will do as I command and marry Lores Tyrell" is what he says to Cersei (00:52:50-00:53-28). This not only shows his disregard for her happiness, but it also highlights how Cersei's later bitterness and vengefulness can be traced back to a lifetime of emotional destitution due to her father.

Cersei's Emotional Dependence on Jaime

Throughout the series, Cersei portrays a pattern of relying on Jaime for emotional support in both personal and political crises. After her son Joffrey's shocking death in the episode "The Lion and the Rose", it can be noticed in the following episode, "Breaker of Chains", that Cersei withdraws emotionally from her usual state of calm and expresses emotions to Jaime alone, showing that during times of grief and anger, she depends on Jaime for emotional support. Again, in the first episode of Season 6, "The Red Woman", Cersei opens up about her deepest trauma about their mother's death to Jaime, following the discovery of her daughter, Myrcella's death.

Cersei's conversations with Jaime display the use of a linguistic style that is usually not observed in her interactions with others. She adopts a softer tone and uses more intimate language. She often frames questions that reveal her vulnerabilities and uncertainties. In private scenes, she seeks his advice and reassurance, positioning herself in a more dependent role than in public. Her body language, frequent touching, close proximity, and deep eye contact further highlight the trust and emotional connection that she possesses for Jaime.

Jaime's Protective Function

Jaime's protective instincts for Cersei bring out a very typical paternal trait of stepping between danger and the one he cares about. During a conversation with Ned Stark, when asked about Robert's slap, she replies, "Jaime would have killed him" ("You Win or You Die" 00:06:52-00:06:55), highlighting Jaime's willingness to kill someone, a king in this case, to defend his sister. This demonstrates that in Cersei's perspective, Jaime acts as her guardian, a role that a father would fulfil. Also, as mentioned earlier, Jaime's infamous line "The things I do for love" ("Winter is Coming" 00:57:53) speaks immensely about his strong commitment towards his love, another such paternal quality. Even though it is uttered as he pushes Bran Stark from the tower window, it shows his readiness to cross moral lines to protect his love.

Jaime's Idealised Masculinity

Jaime is also the first known character of the Lannister family to break the intergenerational trauma and carve his own path that is different from his father Tywin's. This becomes very evident when he clarifies that all he wants is to be a knight and nothing more than that. This departure from his father's ideals that Jaime has consciously chosen is a testament to his individuality and willpower to turn down a father who also happens to be one of the most powerful lords of Westeros. This also acts as a reinforcement to Cersei that Jaime possesses all those qualities that are contrasting to those of her father.

Cersei, in her conversation with Ned Stark, tells him "Jaime and I are more than brother and sister. We shared a womb. We came into this world together. We belong together" ("You Win or You Die" 00:07:10-00:07:18). This statement of hers indicates that she strongly believes that the bond she shares with Jaime is a special one and predestined. Also, Jaime, as he pushes Bran Stark from the tower window after being spotted in an intimate act, says "The things I do for love" ("Winter Is Coming" 00:57:53). It also projects an ideology that points towards a deep-rooted belief of "eternal commitment" among both of them (Sunder A 208).

Twin Bond and Intuitive Connection

The video titled "The controversial study that split up twins – BBC REEL", suggests that there exists a special intuitive and emotional bonding that identical twins share. Identical twins have expressed what can be closely considered as telepathic understanding, claiming that they can instantaneously understand what the other person is feeling. Even the twins who were separated in childhood and brought up in different environments have discovered upon reuniting that they share similarities in their personality, emotional responses and life perspectives. In the series, Cersei and Jaime were so much alike that even their father, Tywin, found it difficult to differentiate them ("Blackwater" 00:32:54-00:33:00). This gives us an insight into one of the rationales behind Cersei's choice of Jaime over Tyrion, her younger brother. She perceives Jaime as her male counterpart, the other side of the same coin, and considers herself similar to Jaime (Frankel 91). This deep identification has caused an erotic form of love to emerge, which is a projection of their own self-love. "The twins' love for each other is the eroticized projection and extension of their self, the treasuring of their own flesh and blood over everything else. The identification is so strong that Jaime has never had another lover" (Ardem 68).

Cersei and Tyrion: A Contrasting Dynamic

Cersei's equation with Tyrion, her younger brother, was entirely different. She bore within her a deep sense of hatred towards him since childhood. She was convinced that Tyrion was the reason for the death of her mother, who had died giving birth to him. Oberyn recounts his memory from the past speaking about how Cersei brutally mistreated Tyrion when he was just a baby. He narrates how she resorted to physical violence and cruelty, exhibiting a deep sense of hatred towards Tyrion from a young age ("Mockingbird" 00:38:07-00:38:24). This combination of her maternal loss and Tyrion's very existence drove her to harbour a lifelong

hatred and rejection for him. She considered him an abomination and unworthy of the family's love.

The Lannisters, particularly Jaime and Cersei are portrayed as someone possessing an idealised Lannister image. They were tall, fair and most importantly fulfilled Tywin's idealised Lannister image. Tyrion, on the other hand was a dwarf and shattered this ideal, resulting in a perception that made him seem like an obstacle in Tywin's vision for the Lannister family ("Tywin Lannister" 00:05:44-00:05:50). Through various instances from the show, there is an understanding that Cersei, even with all the hatred for her father, still internalises him. Her orchestration of the destruction of the Great Sept of Baelor shows her willingness to push moral boundaries to achieve her will, which matches the approach her father would employ. Cersei therefore viewed Tyrion in the same way her father did, as an "ill-made and spiteful little creature" ("Tywin Lannister" 00:05:04-00:05:08).

In contrast, Jaime has an image that fits into the framework of an ideal Lannister. He was physically perfect, shared her beauty and had protective instincts, all the qualities that Cersei craved for. Where Tyrion's dwarfism and association with her mother's death brought hatred and despise, Jaime's appearance and valour filled the void in Cersei. This dynamic explains why Cersei could never view Tyrion as a suitable partner.

Cersei's Relationship Dynamics

Cersei's interactions with her brothers demonstrate clear patterns of emotional transference. Her reliance on Jaime during moments of crisis, her softer linguistic register with him, and her protective idealisation of his character all align with psychoanalytic patterns of paternal transference. Conversely, her strategic distance from Tyrion, her use of formal language and accusatory tone, and her fundamental rejection of him mirror patterns of rivalry and rejection observed in unresolved Electra complexes.

The distinction between physical attractiveness and emotional availability becomes crucial here. Tyrion's deviation from Tywin's idealised Lannister image, his dwarfism, his intellectual rather than martial prowess, and his association with maternal loss make him unsuitable as a father-figure substitute. Jaime, conversely, embodies both the physical idealisation and the emotional availability that Tywin lacked, making him the perfect psychological stand-in for the father Cersei needed but never had.

Cersei's Psychological Choices

The study shows that Cersei projects paternal qualities onto Jaime, considering him as a protector, source of emotional support and most of all, a fatherly figure. Unlike her distant father Tywin, who was always emotionally absent, Jaime provided the much needed support and availability that Cersei lacked during her childhood. Her dependence on Jaime during situations of crisis, such as Joffrey's death, shows traditional Electra complex patterns.

Cersei's interaction with Tyrion lacked the emotional connection that was otherwise found with Jaime. It is also to be noted that Cersei perceives her interaction with Tyrion as intellectual rivalry, mutual hostility, and strategic operation. Tyrion's small stature does not

position him as a protective figure in Cersei's view. Rather, his personality and wit make him appear as an adversary, making him unsuitable for paternal transference.

Cersei's choice of Jaime as a partner comes from her deep psychological need rooted in her nearly non-existent emotional relationship with Tywin and the absence of a maternal bond. Her father's emotional distance, controlling nature and her use as merely a political pawn created wounds that she tries to heal through her bond with Jaime.

Perspective to Cersei's Relationship Dynamics

Rather than looking at Cersei's incestuous relationship with Jaime from a political standpoint, the Electra complex angle discovers its various underlying reasons. Her bond with Jaime fulfils her unconscious desires, and also offers her much needed emotional support.

It can be observed that, in the moments of crisis, Cersei retreats to already established attachments, which indicates that the core of her identity is strongly linked to a limited number of attachments. When these bonds are threatened, she resorts to desperation and authoritarian self in her.

Despite the existence of an emotional distance, similarities between the personality of Cersei and her father, Tywin, cannot be overlooked. Like Tywin, Cersei also resorts to crossing ethical and moral boundaries in order to protect anything that she desperately values. In the case of Tywin, the family name, power and control were his motivations. In the case of Cersei, however, it was her family and the position that motivated her to take stern decisions. Cersei's excessive dependence on a single character as an emotional anchor exposes a critical void in her relationships. This also indicates her rigidity, cold and hostile mindset.

Cersei's experiences with her father had a complex and varied impact on her. She underwent an emotional disconnect from her father, which also contributed to her deep disconnect from other relationships and people. Simultaneously, she absorbed and adapted more ways than she can think of, unconsciously, to handle threatening situations. Even though Cersei's equation with her father was stained, she is, to a large extent, a reflection of him.

Jaime, a knight, is an embodiment of power and authority in Westeros, a society that is deeply rooted in rigid patriarchal norms. In such a society, Cersei's relationship with him can also be seen as a way for her to feel powerful in a society like Westeros, which left no room for women to be independent, influential, and in decision making roles.

It can also be noted that Cersei is very rigid about showing her emotions. She exercises a strong control as to where, when and how she shows her feelings. This also plays a part in her restricted emotional access with the rest of the family.

Conclusion

This research paper explores Cersei Lannister's incestuous relationship with her twin brother Jaime through the lens of the Electra complex, uncovering deep psychological aspects that underline her choices. Cersei fulfils her unconscious needs of paternal emotions such as protection, emotional connection and reassurance that stem from a troubled childhood and distance from her father, by projecting them onto Jaime. In contrast, her hostile and strategic interactions with her younger brother Tyrion highlight the absence of her affection and

emotional trust due to his approach and short stature. To conclude, the study demonstrates Cersei's incestual relationship portrays a deep-rooted psychological desire to fill the void left by her father, combined with the need to feel powerful in a society where women undergo suppression.

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Écranisation and Emotional Sincerity in *Pride and Prejudice*: Ideological Translation from Jane Austen to Joe Wright

Tanveer Babar Ali Khan

Abstract

This article examines Joe Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* as a case study in écranisation, exploring how the film reshapes the ideological framework of Austen's novel. Rather than measuring the adaptation against the original text, it considers how Wright transforms Austen's ironic moral tone into a mode focused on immediate emotional impact. The study examines how cinematography, mise-en-scène, sound and performance turn narrative irony into something felt rather than just read. Through selective reductions, additions and modifications, the film changes the way class, gender and moral judgment are perceived, shifting attention from reflection to visible feeling. By placing the film within ongoing debates on adaptation, affect and cultural modernity, this article portrays how cinematic form actively shapes meaning rather than merely conveying it. This case study shows that adaptation does more than retell a story; it repositions the novel's ideas within the moral and emotional expectations of a modern audience. In this process, literary irony is translated into affective experience, revealing how adaptation participates in the cultural reorientation of canonical texts to suit modern sensibilities.

Keywords: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Joe Wright, écranisation, adaptation studies, screen ideology

Introduction

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is regarded as a pinnacle of English fiction, where narrative irony and free indirect discourse intertwine to dissect the rigid class structures, gendered expectations and economic imperatives of Regency England. While the novel's romantic arc captivates readers, its true distinction lies in the narratorial voice that balances empathy with incisive critique, unmasking social pretensions through verbal subtlety and calculated restraint. Joe Wright's 2005 film adaptation, starring Keira Knightley as the spirited Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew Macfadyen as the reserved Mr Darcy, translates this literary sophistication into a realm of vivid cinematic expression. Cinematography by Roman Osin employs natural light and fluid camera movements, while Dario Marianelli's piano-driven score underscores emotional undercurrents. The result blends pastoral beauty with intimate drama, achieving both box-office success and a place in adaptation discourse, though critics often debate its romantic emphasis against Austen's satirical bite (Cartmell and Whelehan 76). This article argues that such stylistic choices signal more than aesthetic refinement. Through the process of écranisation, as defined by Pamusuk Eneste, Wright's adaptation reconfigures the novel's ethical framework by replacing ironic distance with visual and emotional transparency. The film's emphasis on embodied feeling and expressive sincerity recasts Austen's social critique

in terms aligned with contemporary ideals of authenticity. While previous scholarship has often focused on fidelity or heritage aesthetics, this study contends that the film's formal strategies enact a deeper ideological shift, one in which moral judgment is increasingly mediated through affect rather than ironic discernment.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Écranisation forms the analytical foundation for this study. Drawing on Pamusuk Eneste's account in *Novel dan Film*, the term refers to the adaptation of a novel into film through deliberate reduction, addition of new elements and modification of existing material (Eneste 67). Rather than treating adaptation as a question of fidelity, this approach foregrounds the material and aesthetic conditions through which narrative meaning is reconstituted in a new medium. Thus, écranisation underscores adaptation as a form of medium-specific reinvention, where narrative voice yields to image, rhythm and sound. Linda Hutcheon's theorisation of adaptation complements this perspective. She describes adaptations as repetitions that are always inflected by difference and insists that they are inseparable from the cultural and historical contexts in which they are produced and received (Hutcheon 8). Broader theoretical strands enrich the interpretation of this shift. Raymond Williams reveals the function of pastoral imagery in masking class divisions, a pattern relevant to Wright's treatment of the English countryside (Williams 120–125). Pierre Bourdieu elucidates how aesthetic refinement legitimises privilege, a process visible in the visual sanctification of Pemberley (Bourdieu 54–57). Rosalind Gill traces postfeminist agency to confident physicality and self-presentation, a perspective that clarifies Elizabeth's cinematic recoding as a figure of embodied autonomy (Gill 149–52). Fredric Jameson documents the attenuation of irony in postmodern culture (Jameson 10–12), while Laura Marks explores haptic visuality, through which screen images evoke tactile response (Marks 163–66). Together, these perspectives frame Wright's formal choices as an ideological intervention.

This study integrates close textual reading of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Chapman edition) with detailed cinematic analysis of Wright's 2005 film, *Pride & Prejudice*. Selected chapters of the novel are mapped against corresponding sequences in the film to identify the operations of écranisation with precision. The analysis focuses on pivotal alignments such as the Longbourn opening, the Meryton assembly, the Netherfield interludes, the Hunsford proposal and the Pemberley visit, each chosen for its density of alteration and importance to character development and thematic articulation. Each pairing receives granular scrutiny. Reduction is traced through excised dialogue, compressed subplots and omitted characters. Addition is identified in sequences that have no direct counterpart in Austen's narrative. Modification is examined in reframings that retain narrative function while shifting emphasis. Formal analysis attends to mise-en-scène (set design, costume, props), cinematography (framing, movement, lighting), editing (montage, pace) and sound (diegetic and non-diegetic, including Marianelli's score). Timestamps anchor film references, for example, Wright 00:01:00 for the dawn sequence, 00:25:23 for the hand flex, 01:05:48 for the rain proposal and 01:13:40 for Pemberley. The interpretation is then placed in dialogue with the theoretical frameworks outlined above: Williams informs readings of landscape ideology, Bourdieu frames the aestheticisation of wealth, Jameson clarifies the cultural logic of affect and sincerity,

while Gill and Marks illuminate gendered embodiment and haptic viewing. This combined textual and cinematic approach makes visible how Austen's prosaic irony is transmuted into visual affect, and highlights the ethical stakes of that transformation.

Cinematic Techniques: Translating Irony into Sensory Presence

Joe Wright's adaptation systematically converts Austen's verbal sophistication into cinematic sensory experience. Four interlocking domains orchestrate this transformation: cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing and sound design. Each contributes to the substitution of narrative irony with affective immediacy and prepares the ground for the film's ideological realignment. Roman Osin's cinematography prioritises natural light and dynamic movement to striking effect. The dawn opening unfolds through a long tracking shot across mist-shrouded fields, immersing viewers in Elizabeth's contemplative solitude rather than confronting them with Austen's famous generalisation about marriage and money (Wright 00:01:00; Austen 1). Handheld camerawork vivifies Longbourn's domestic disorder, where poultry scatter and sisters cross paths in hurried movement, transforming genteel precarity into the appearance of organic familial vitality (Wright 00:02:15). At Netherfield, by contrast, steady wide shots establish crisp spatial hierarchy, framing Bingley's circle in balanced compositions that underscore their social standing. Close framing at the Meryton assembly proves especially revealing, as Elizabeth's dilated pupils and tightened jaw capture her fleeting embarrassment at Darcy's slight, externalising free indirect discourse through micro-gesture (Wright 00:09:45).

Mise-en-scène encodes class distinctions through textured materiality. Jacqueline Durran's costume design traces character evolution in subtle ways. Elizabeth's muddied hem during the walk to Netherfield signals purposeful defiance rather than the social impropriety emphasised in Austen's description of damp stockings and untidy hair (Austen 43; Wright 00:17:30). Pemberley's marble statuary, porcelain displays and sunlit galleries sanctify economic power through aesthetic plenitude, exemplifying Bourdieu's account of the aesthetic conversion of capital (Bourdieu 54–57; Wright 01:13:40). Longbourn's parlour, strewn with half-finished embroidery, scattered books and worn furniture, picturesques economic anxiety and gently underlines the family's precarious social position. Symbolic props further reinforce this work. Darcy's letter, for instance, becomes a haptic pivot, its material presence foregrounded as Elizabeth's fingers trace the paper during her anguished close reading (Wright 01:10:24).

Editing accelerates Austen's measured pacing into rhythmic intensity. The Meryton assembly montage intercuts Darcy's scanning gaze with Elizabeth's poised retaliation, condensing pages of social observation into thirty seconds of layered looks and movements (Wright 00:08:30–00:09:45). Cross-cutting heightens desperation during Lydia's elopement crisis, juxtaposing Mr Bennet's restless pacing with Elizabeth's anxious stillness and sudden resolve (Wright 01:42:45). Fades and dissolves lend a dreamlike character to certain transitions, particularly Elizabeth's contemplative walks, blurring temporal and spatial boundaries to suggest an interior process of reevaluation.

Dario Marianelli's sound design functions as a surrogate narrator throughout the film. Piano motifs assign character signatures, with light, playful figures attached to Elizabeth and more restrained, sombre notes associated with Darcy. These melodic patterns track shifts in

perception and emotion across the film. Diegetic elements deepen immersion, from the rustling silk and overlapping voices at the Netherfield ball to the wind-whipped downpour that engulfs the Hunsford proposal (Wright 01:05:48). Strategic silence, as in the churchyard moment when Elizabeth processes Wickham's revelations, amplifies moral and cognitive tension by withholding musical cues and foregrounding ambient sounds such as birdsong (Wright 00:34:16).

Taken together, these elements cohere in what Laura Marks terms haptic visuality, where images evoke tactile response (Marks 163–66). Darcy's brief hand flex after assisting Elizabeth into the carriage, a moment that occupies scarcely a second of screen time, distils suppressed desire more potently than any explicit confession (Wright 00:25:23). The rain-drenched proposal externalises psychological tumult; thunder and wind punctuate Darcy's strained admission where Austen keeps the exchange indoors and verbally controlled (Austen 237; Wright 01:05:48). The viewer, no longer held at ironic distance, is drawn into embodied proximity with characters' emotional states. Austen disciplines sentiment through linguistic control. Wright releases it through sensory orchestration, ensuring that cinematic form itself becomes a vehicle for ideological change. These patterns exemplify how Wright's film foregrounds intimate perception and affective response, preparing the way for the more overt operations of écranisation.

Table 1: Technique Distribution in Selected Key Sequences

Technique	Approximate frequency in key sequences	Primary Function	Example Timestamp
Close-up	47% of key shots	Psychological revelation	01:10:24 (Darcy's letter)
Tracking shot	32% of key sequences	Subjective immersion	00:01:00 (dawn walk)
Score motif	68% of emotional pivots	Emotional narration	Recurring Darcy theme
Strategic silence	22% of turning points	Moral and cognitive tension	00:34:16 (Wickham scene)

Écranisation Operations: Reduction, Addition and Modification

Wright's adaptation negotiates Austen's narrative through écranisation's three core operations: reduction, addition and modification. These processes do more than streamline the plot. They systematically shift the balance between social critique and emotional investment, altering the ideological profile of the story. Reduction most clearly affects those passages in the novel where institutional structures and social norms are examined at length. Caroline Bingley's calculated duplicity in Chapter VI, including her manipulation of Jane through letters and hints of her own aspirations toward Darcy, is largely absent from the film. What remains is a simplified antagonism conveyed through glances and a few pointed remarks, scaling back Austen's analysis of genteel hypocrisy. Mr Collins's elaborate reflections on the entail and his servile praise of Lady Catherine condense into brief moments of broad physical comedy at 00:28:08, reducing a complex figure of clerical pomposity into a more straightforward comic

type (Wright 00:28:08). Charlotte Lucas's careful reasoning about marriage as economic security, central to Chapter V, contracts into a short conversation followed by expressive close-ups at 00:55:48; the viewer must infer much of the pragmatic logic that Austen articulates explicitly (Austen 21; Wright 00:55:48). Post-assembly analysis of Darcy's character and Bingley's intentions similarly dissolves into quiet looks and minimal dialogue at around 00:13:40 (Wright 00:13:40). Mrs Hurst, who participates in and reinforces the snobbery of Bingley's circle in the novel, disappears entirely from the film's social world (Austen 45–51). Such reductions do not remove class and gender questions, but they do thin out the discursive framework that sustains Austen's satire and tilt the emphasis towards romantic narrative.

Addition introduces moments and motifs that have no direct parallel in the novel but serve to fill the gaps opened by reduction. The film's opening sequence replaces Austen's "truth universally acknowledged" with Elizabeth's solitary walk through mist, accompanied by Marianelli's piano, establishing an introspective mood and aligning the viewer with her perspective from the outset (Wright 00:01:00; Austen 1). Darcy's hand flex after helping Elizabeth into the carriage is a now-famous addition; this small, wordless gesture condenses a surge of desire, discomfort and self-awareness into a fragment of embodied reaction (Wright 00:25:23). The Hunsford proposal relocates the confrontation from a drawing room to a ruined folly in a storm, where the elements echo the turbulence of the characters' feelings (Wright 01:05:48; Austen 237). The film's final reconciliation stages Elizabeth and Darcy's early-morning meeting in an open field at dawn, bathed in soft light, where speech is sparse and visual composition carries much of the emotional resolution (Wright 01:55:05). These additions provide a visual and affective grammar through which the film can convey interior states without recourse to extended dialogue.

Modification reorients ethical emphasis while preserving overall narrative structure. Elizabeth's walk to Netherfield, undertaken in the novel in disregard of propriety and resulting in her arrival with "dirty stockings" and a disordered appearance, becomes in the film a striking image of determined movement and independence; the mud on her hem appears as a badge of authenticity rather than a sign of impropriety (Austen 43; Wright 00:17:30). Pemberley, which in Austen triggers complex reflections in Elizabeth about wealth, character and status, is presented in the film with such aesthetic splendour that reservations about class privilege are muted beneath visual admiration (Williams 120–25; Wright 01:13:40). Mr Bennet, whose sardonic humour in the novel is tinged with a certain moral laziness, often appears in the film as a more gently melancholy father, his irony softened into affectionate resignation (Wright 00:04:10). Lydia, depicted by Austen as a cautionary emblem of unchecked appetite and folly, is rendered with a more sympathetic energy, her recklessness framed by a tone that invites indulgence as much as censure (Austen 59; Wright 00:14:30).

Taken together, these operations reveal a consistent logic. Reductions concentrate in sections rich in social and institutional commentary. Additions cluster around emotionally climactic moments, particularly the proposals and reconciliation. Modifications are most apparent at points where Austen's ethical stance is most explicit, subtly rebalancing tone and emphasis. Verbal irony's institutional critique thus yields, to a significant degree, to visual directness that privileges personal sincerity. Reduction tends to domesticate systemic analysis, addition elevates psychological interiority into visible form, and modification aestheticises

social contradiction, often refiguring it as romantic or emotional possibility. Thus, the film's governing ethic of transparency is advanced through the mechanics of écranisation.

Ideological Implications: Class, Gender and the Sincerity Ethic

The operations of écranisation culminate in a marked ideological realignment. Austen's irony-driven engagement with class and gender gives way in Wright's film to a visual regime governed by emotional sincerity. Class hierarchies become less objects of explicit critique and more constituents of an aesthetically unified landscape. Gendered agency manifests less through verbal precision and more through embodied spontaneity. Virtue moves away from reflective judgement and towards affective visibility. Class naturalisation is most evident in the film's spatial and visual organisation. Austen's moral geography, which carefully differentiates Longbourn, Netherfield, Rosings and Pemberley in terms of comfort, taste and social meaning, undergoes a degree of softening on screen. Longbourn's interior disorder, with its crowded rooms and overlapping conversations, appears warmed by gentle lighting and surrounded by a lively yard, so that economic anxiety often reads as homely vitality rather than precarity (Wright 00:02:15). Pemberley's marble halls and expansive grounds, by contrast, are framed in glowing long shots at 01:13:40, where natural light floods the space and invites admiration (Wright 01:13:40). Economic dominance therefore acquires an aura of beauty that complicates, if it does not entirely efface, the structural inequalities it embodies. Williams's account of pastoral's capacity to conceal social division helps to clarify this transformation (Williams 120–25). Bourdieu's analysis of how cultural and aesthetic capital can legitimise material advantage further illuminates the way Pemberley is positioned as both an architectural and moral pinnacle (Bourdieu 54–57).

Gender is transformed in a parallel fashion. In Austen's narrative, Elizabeth's primary weapons are her irony and her capacity for judgment; her dialogue and thought mark out a space of relative autonomy within patriarchal constraints. Wright's film maintains her intelligence but places greater emphasis on physical presence and movement. The muddy walk to Netherfield, for instance, foregrounds her readiness to defy social expectations for the sake of sisterly concern, and the framing invites admiration rather than disapproval (Austen 43; Wright 00:17:30). Charlotte Lucas's acceptance of Mr Collins, through which Austen explores the economic pressures shaping women's choices, becomes in the film a more personal and less discursively elaborated compromise, framed by a few lines and the contrast between her composed exterior and Elizabeth's stunned reaction (Wright 00:55:48). Gill's discussion of postfeminist media culture, where agency is often expressed through choice, confidence and style, helps to contextualise these shifts (Gill 149–52). Darcy's evolution is refigured in a similar register. The novel traces his self-revision largely through reported thought and the content of his letter; his growth is articulated as a change in understanding and behaviour. On screen, however, changes in posture, facial expression and voice carry much of this weight. The hand flex at 00:25:23, the more open demeanour in later encounters, and the emotional rawness during the rain-soaked proposal at 01:05:48 all situate Darcy's transformation in the domain of emotional openness (Wright 00:25:23; 01:05:48). Patriarchal authority is not dismantled, but it is softened through vulnerability and transparency.

The film adopts what may be termed a sincerity ethic. Austen's text presents feeling under the discipline of irony; it invites readers to weigh sentiments against wider considerations of judgment, propriety and consequence. Wright's film, in contrast, often presents sincerity itself as sufficient evidence of virtue. Darcy's gesture during the carriage scene or his visible distress during the storm carry substantial ethical weight on their own terms. Jameson's account of the weakening of irony in postmodern culture provides a useful backdrop: in such a context, the film's preference for immersion over distance appears culturally resonant (Jameson 10–12). Marks's haptic visuality further elucidates how the film's textures and gestures appeal to the viewer's embodied response rather than exclusively to analytical faculties (Marks 163–66). Critical and popular responses suggest that this ideological shift has found a receptive audience. David Wiegand praises the film's "thoughtful performances and carefully calibrated direction", extolling its emotional clarity and visual coherence (Wiegand). Cartmell and Whelehan note that the adaptation tends to foreground romance at the expense of Austen's sharper social satire, an assessment that aligns with the argument advanced here (Cartmell and Whelehan 76). The film's global box-office earnings, reported at approximately 121 million dollars, point to a strong cultural resonance with viewers who meet Austen's narrative primarily through visual and affective codes (*Pride & Prejudice* Box Office Mojo). Wright's adaptation thus operates as a form of ideological translation: institutional critiques of class and gender do not vanish, but they are mediated by and often subordinated to a prevailing emphasis on personal authenticity and emotional fulfilment.

Conclusion

Joe Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* demonstrates how écranisation operates as a form of ideological translation, turning Austen's irony-tinged realism into a cinema of emotional immediacy. The novel maintains distance and subtle moral evaluation through its narratorial poise and free indirect discourse. On screen, these qualities are reshaped. Reductions, additions and modifications shift ethical focus. Institutional hierarchies recede, while personal feeling moves forward. Class remains visible, but it is often harmonised with the pastoral setting. Gendered agency is expressed less through debate and more through confident, physical presence. Moral virtue is no longer measured by deliberation alone; it becomes perceptible through expressive action and emotional transparency. This transformation depends on careful formal strategies. Lighting, costume, music and performance work together to convey moral and social values in ways that the novel achieves through words. Subtle gestures and expressive movements condense psychological complexity into something audiences can see and feel. These formal choices do more than visualise the plot; they participate in an emotional economy in which sincerity and intensity signal ethical and social significance. Critical reception reflects this orientation. Wiegand highlights the film's precise direction and performances, while Cartmell and Whelehan note the prominence of romance over satire, underlining the adaptation's focus on affect. The film's commercial success, with global earnings of around 121 million dollars, indicates that this reconfiguration resonates with contemporary audiences.

This analysis contributes to adaptation studies in several ways. It positions écranisation as a tool for understanding adaptation not merely as fidelity but as a set of formal operations with ideological effects. Wright's film shows how screen aesthetics can reshape canonical

ethics for an audience attuned to feeling and authenticity. Situated within heritage cinema, it negotiates historical context alongside modern expectations of emotional engagement. Future research could explore how similar dynamics of irony and sincerity function in transnational Austen adaptations, digital serialisations or other literary screenings. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* illustrates how cinematic form can revitalise literary irony. It demonstrates that adaptation is not just retelling; it is a way of reimagining social and moral values. Austen's concerns with class, gender and judgment are translated into a language of feeling, offering audiences an experience in which emotion and critique coexist.

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Queer Lives in the Margins: Postcolonial Masculinity and Sexual Silence in *Kaathal: The Core*

Thippeswamy B M & N H Kallur

Abstract

This paper examines *Kaathal: The Core* (2023) as a significant intervention in South Indian cinema's engagement with homosexuality, masculinity, and social respectability. Situating the film within a postcolonial cultural context, the study argues that homosexuality in *Kaathal: The Core* is not represented as an individual identity crisis but as a structural tension produced by heteronormative marriage, patriarchal masculinity, and moral surveillance. Drawing on queer theory and postcolonial critiques of gender and power, the paper analyses how sexual silence functions as a disciplinary mechanism that regulates desire while preserving social legitimacy. Through a close textual and cinematic analysis of domestic spaces, legal discourse, and performative masculinity, the study demonstrates how the protagonist's public authority and private repression are sustained through silence rather than explicit denial. The film's restrained narrative and aesthetic minimalism resist sensationalist queer representation, instead foregrounding the everyday violence of invisibility and respectability politics. By centring middle-aged, married homosexuality within a conservative socio-cultural milieu, *Kaathal: The Core* disrupts dominant cinematic tropes that equate queerness with youth, spectacle, or urban modernity. The paper concludes that the film reconfigures queer presence in Malayalam cinema by exposing how postcolonial masculinity is upheld through the erasure of non-normative sexualities, thereby offering a critical framework for understanding queer lives as structurally marginalised within institutions of marriage, family, and public morality

Keywords: Queer representation; Homosexuality; Postcolonial masculinity; Sexual silence; Heteronormativity; Marriage; Patriarchy; Respectability politics

In recent decades, Indian cinema has witnessed a gradual yet uneven engagement with queer lives, often framed through narratives of revelation, confession, or spectacular transgression. While mainstream representations have tended to locate homosexuality within urban, youthful, and visibly expressive identities, regional cinemas have increasingly explored more subdued and structurally embedded experiences of queerness. Scholarly attention to these representations, however, remains limited, particularly where homosexuality intersects with marriage, ageing, and everyday respectability. Within this context, *Kaathal: The Core* (dir. Jeo Baby, 2023) emerges as a significant cultural text that reorients cinematic discourse away from visibility-centred paradigms and towards silence as a structuring condition of queer life.

Set within a conservative socio-cultural milieu in Kerala, the film centres on a middle-aged, married man whose long-suppressed homosexuality becomes publicly legible through legal and communal scrutiny. Rather than staging queerness as a personal crisis or moral aberration, *Kaathal: The Core* situates sexual difference within the intersecting institutions of

marriage, patriarchy, religion, and public reputation. The film's narrative restraint and aesthetic minimalism foreground not the act of "coming out" but the social mechanisms that necessitate concealment in the first place, shifting critical attention from identity-based readings of homosexuality to the institutional structures that sustain queer marginality.

This paper offers a reading of *Kaathal: The Core* in which homosexuality emerges as a structurally marginalised condition shaped by postcolonial masculinity and enforced through sexual silence. Drawing on queer theory and postcolonial critiques of gender and power, the study examines how silence functions as a disciplinary strategy that preserves heteronormative respectability while erasing non-normative desire. Marriage, within this framework, operates less as an intimate bond than as a regulatory institution that stabilises masculine authority, social legitimacy, and moral credibility. The protagonist's public stature and private repression thus illuminate a form of postcolonial masculinity sustained not through dominance, but through anxious performance and disavowal.

By focusing on middle-aged, married homosexuality within a regional cinematic context, this study intervenes in scholarship that privileges visibility, liberation, and resistance as primary markers of queer politics. Instead, it foregrounds the everyday violence of invisibility, respectability politics, and moral surveillance that govern queer lives in postcolonial societies, positioning *Kaathal: The Core* as a crucial contribution to contemporary debates on queerness, marriage, and masculinity in South Indian cinema.

Literature Review

Scholarly engagements with sexuality and cinema have consistently emphasised that sexual identity is not merely an individual attribute but a social and cultural construction sustained through repetition, regulation, and silence. Queer theory, in particular, has challenged the assumption that sexuality must be visible or confessed in order to be politically meaningful. Judith Butler's formulation of gender and sexuality as performative underscores how heterosexuality is repeatedly enacted as a norm rather than experienced as a natural or inevitable state. This insight is crucial for understanding marriage as a site where heterosexuality is not only assumed but actively produced through social expectation and moral discipline. In such contexts, homosexuality does not simply exist outside the norm; it is rendered unspeakable in order to preserve the appearance of social coherence.

The regulatory function of silence is further illuminated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's conceptualisation of the "closet" as an epistemological structure rather than a private secret. Sedgwick's work shifts critical attention away from acts of disclosure and towards the social arrangements that determine what can be known, spoken, or strategically ignored. Silence, in this framework, becomes a collective agreement that sustains heteronormativity while allowing queer existence to persist only in fragmented and precarious forms. This understanding is particularly relevant to cinematic narratives that avoid explicit representation, revealing how absence itself can function as a powerful mode of meaning-making.

Feminist critiques of heterosexual institutions further complicate this discussion by foregrounding marriage as a political and ideological structure. Adrienne Rich's articulation of compulsory heterosexuality exposes how marriage operates as a regulatory mechanism that organises desire, kinship, and social legitimacy. While Rich's intervention is rooted in feminist

analyses of women's oppression, its implications extend to male homosexuality, especially in cultural contexts where marriage serves as a public performance of normalcy and moral authority. Homosexuality, in such settings, is not simply marginalised but strategically absorbed into heterosexual frameworks through silence and compliance.

Postcolonial critiques of gender further deepen this analysis by situating sexuality within histories of colonialism, cultural anxiety, and moral nationalism. Ashis Nandy has argued that Indian masculinity is shaped by a complex interplay of repression, moral restraint, and social respectability, emerging as a compensatory formation in response to colonial domination. Masculinity, from this perspective, is less about overt power than about the careful regulation of desire and affect. The denial of non-normative sexuality thus becomes central to the maintenance of masculine authority, particularly in public and institutional spaces.

Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha's exploration of ambivalence within postcolonial cultures offers a framework for understanding how modern moral codes are simultaneously internalised and resisted. Postcolonial societies often reproduce normative sexual ideals under the guise of tradition and respectability, even as these ideals remain deeply unstable. Homosexuality, within this ambivalent moral economy, is cast as both invisible and threatening—acknowledged through silence yet disavowed through social regulation. This tension between recognition and denial provides a critical lens for examining how sexuality is governed in postcolonial contexts.

Existing scholarship on queer representation in Indian cinema has largely prioritised questions of visibility, stereotyping, and progressive inclusion, often celebrating moments of disclosure or resistance as markers of social change. While such studies have contributed significantly to understanding cinematic shifts, they frequently privilege urban, youthful, and expressive forms of queerness, thereby marginalising experiences shaped by marriage, ageing, and social respectability. Malayalam cinema, despite its reputation for realism and social critique, has received comparatively limited attention in this regard, particularly in relation to queer lives embedded within everyday institutional structures.

By engaging with these theoretical debates, the present study positions *Kaathal: The Core* as a critical intervention that unsettles dominant frameworks of queer visibility. Rather than framing homosexuality as an identity awaiting recognition, the film exposes the structural conditions that render sexual silence both necessary and violent. This paper thus extends existing scholarship by shifting the analytical focus from representation to regulation, demonstrating how postcolonial masculinity and heteronormative marriage collaborate to confine queer lives to the margins of social legitimacy.

Marriage as a Site of Heteronormative Discipline

Marriage in *Kaathal: The Core* is not represented as a private or emotional bond but as a deeply institutionalised structure that regulates sexuality, masculinity, and social legitimacy. The film foregrounds marriage as a mechanism through which heteronormativity is normalised and sustained, revealing how sexual conformity is demanded not through overt coercion but through everyday expectations of respectability. In this sense, marriage operates less as an intimate relationship and more as a public performance that stabilises patriarchal order.

In *Kaathal: The Core*, the protagonist's marriage functions as a social alibi that allows queer desire to remain unspoken while preserving moral credibility. The absence of emotional

or physical intimacy within the marital space is not framed as failure or dysfunction; rather, it is rendered ordinary and socially acceptable so long as the outward form of marriage is maintained. This narrative choice underscores how heterosexual marriage does not require desire to be authentic—it only requires conformity to visible norms. Homosexuality, therefore, is not expelled from the institution of marriage but contained within it through silence and denial.

Drawing on Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality, marriage in the film can be read as a regulatory institution that organises not only sexual behaviour but also public authority and masculine legitimacy. The protagonist's social standing—rooted in community respect, moral reputation, and political visibility—is inseparable from his status as a married man. Marriage becomes the evidence of normalcy, a symbolic guarantee that secures trust and authority within the public sphere. In this framework, heterosexuality is less about desire and more about credibility.

The film's restrained depiction of domestic life further reinforces this argument. Interior spaces are marked by routine, distance, and emotional neutrality rather than conflict or confrontation. The lack of explicit dialogue about sexuality within the marriage does not signal ignorance but rather a shared, socially enforced understanding that certain truths must remain unarticulated. Silence thus becomes a tacit contract that sustains both the marriage and the social order it represents. By avoiding melodramatic exposure, the film highlights how marriage itself absorbs and neutralises sexual difference through disciplined non-recognition.

Importantly, the eventual legal rupture of the marriage does not function as a moment of liberation or confession. Instead, it exposes the fragility of the institution when silence is disrupted by public discourse and legal scrutiny. The law does not seek to understand desire; it seeks to categorise, stabilise, and restore moral order. In this moment, marriage reveals its disciplinary function most clearly—not as a space of emotional truth, but as a structure invested in preserving heteronormative legitimacy.

Through this representation, *Kaathal: The Core* challenges romanticised notions of marriage by exposing its role in sustaining postcolonial masculinity. Marriage emerges as a technology of social regulation that enables queer lives to exist only insofar as they remain invisible. Homosexuality is thus not positioned outside the institution of marriage but is rendered marginal within it, revealing how heteronormativity operates through inclusion without recognition. This reading reconfigures marriage as a central site where sexual silence is produced, enforced, and normalised, laying the groundwork for the film's broader critique of patriarchy and moral respectability.

Sexual Silence and the Politics of the Closet

In *Kaathal: The Core*, silence is not merely a narrative absence but a governing social logic through which sexuality is regulated and contained. The film departs from dominant queer cinematic tropes that privilege confession, disclosure, or visibility, and instead foregrounds silence as a collective, socially sanctioned practice. Homosexuality in the film is neither openly denied nor explicitly acknowledged; it exists within a shared understanding that is carefully maintained through restraint, avoidance, and moral tact. This dynamic situates sexual silence as a political condition rather than a personal choice.

The film's engagement with silence resonates strongly with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theorisation of the closet as an epistemological structure. Sedgwick argues that the closet is not simply a private space of secrecy but a public system of knowledge management, where what is known and what is spoken are governed by power relations. In *Kaathal: The Core*, the protagonist's sexuality is never framed as entirely unknown; instead, it is treated as something that circulates quietly through gestures, rumours, and social intuition. Silence thus functions as a mode of knowing that allows society to acknowledge queerness without granting it legitimacy.

This collective silence is sustained through social surveillance rather than direct confrontation. Neighbours, church authorities, and legal institutions participate in a moral economy where discretion is valued over truth, and reputation over emotional reality. The film suggests that the maintenance of silence is a shared responsibility, one that protects not only the individual but also the social structures invested in heterosexual normativity. In this sense, silence operates as a form of containment that allows queer lives to exist conditionally, provided they do not disrupt public narratives of normalcy.

Crucially, the eventual breakdown of silence in the film does not lead to clarity or liberation. When homosexuality becomes legible through legal discourse and communal scrutiny, it is immediately subjected to categorisation, judgement, and moral panic. The law emerges as a mechanism that transforms unspoken knowledge into explicit accusation, revealing how institutions respond to sexual difference only when silence fails. This transition from silence to speech does not humanise queer desire; instead, it exposes the violence inherent in forcing visibility within a hostile moral framework.

The film also resists portraying silence solely as victimhood. Silence is shown to be deeply ambivalent—both oppressive and strategic. For the protagonist, silence functions as a survival mechanism that enables participation in public life, political legitimacy, and social belonging. At the same time, this very silence perpetuates self-erasure and emotional isolation, underscoring the cost of respectability. The film thus avoids moralising silence, presenting it instead as a structurally imposed condition shaped by patriarchal and heteronormative expectations.

By centring sexual silence rather than disclosure, *Kaathal: The Core* challenges liberal narratives that equate speech with freedom and visibility with progress. It reveals how, within postcolonial societies, silence often becomes the only viable mode through which queer lives can be sustained. The politics of the closet in the film are therefore not about individual repression but about collective complicity, where social harmony is preserved through the systematic marginalisation of non-normative desire. This reading deepens the film's critique of postcolonial masculinity by demonstrating how masculine respectability is secured not through dominance alone, but through the disciplined management of what must remain unspoken.

Postcolonial Masculinity and Performative Respectability

Kaathal: The Core locates masculinity not in overt displays of power or aggression but in the careful maintenance of moral authority and social credibility. The protagonist's masculine identity is constructed through his public roles—as a respected community member, a church-going subject, and a figure of local political relevance—rather than through emotional

expressiveness or domestic intimacy. Masculinity here is less a personal attribute than a social performance, sustained through adherence to institutional norms and collective approval. The film thus foregrounds a distinctly postcolonial formation of masculinity, one that is anxious, restrained, and deeply invested in respectability.

Within the postcolonial context, masculinity is often shaped by histories of colonial regulation and moral discipline, producing what Ashis Nandy identifies as a form of masculinity grounded in repression and self-surveillance. In the film, this repression manifests not as internal turmoil alone but as an external performance calibrated to meet social expectations. The protagonist's authority depends on his ability to embody normative masculinity—married, controlled, morally upright—even as this embodiment requires the systematic erasure of his sexual self. Queerness, therefore, does not simply threaten masculinity; it exposes the fragility of a masculine identity built on denial.

The film's depiction of public space is crucial to this argument. The protagonist's interactions within the community are marked by restraint, composure, and moral neutrality. There is no excess, no transgression, and no visible conflict. This controlled exterior is not incidental but constitutive of his masculine authority. Respectability becomes a form of capital, enabling access to public trust and institutional legitimacy. Homosexuality, within this framework, is not feared for its difference alone but for its potential to destabilise the carefully curated image of moral normalcy on which masculine power depends.

This dynamic aligns with Homi K. Bhabha's notion of ambivalence in postcolonial cultures, where normative ideals are both internalised and anxiously guarded. Masculinity in *Kaathal: The Core* is marked by this ambivalence: it must appear stable and authoritative, even as it relies on continuous acts of concealment. The protagonist's queerness is not external to this masculine identity but constitutive of it, revealing how postcolonial masculinity is sustained through the management of contradiction rather than its resolution.

Importantly, the film refuses to pathologise the protagonist's masculinity or present it as inherently violent. Instead, it exposes how masculinity is produced through institutional alignment—with marriage, religion, and public morality—rather than through individual intent. This refusal complicates simplistic binaries of oppressor and victim, suggesting that postcolonial masculinity itself is constrained by the same structures that marginalise queer lives. The protagonist's silence, restraint, and emotional distance are not signs of personal failure but indicators of a social system that rewards conformity over authenticity.

By portraying masculinity as performative and contingent, *Kaathal: The Core* destabilises dominant cinematic representations of male authority. The film reveals that masculine respectability is not a natural state but an ongoing labour, one that demands the continuous suppression of non-normative desire. In doing so, it reframes homosexuality not as a deviation from masculinity but as a critical lens through which the contradictions of postcolonial masculine identity are laid bare. This reading advances the film's broader critique of patriarchy by demonstrating how masculine power is sustained not through visibility and strength, but through silence, discipline, and moral performance.

Marginalised Queer Lives and Ethical Resistance

Kaathal: The Core articulates queer existence not through moments of liberation or self-assertion, but through endurance, restraint, and ethical negotiation within constraining social structures. Queer life in the film unfolds at the margins of visibility, shaped by silence rather than speech and by accommodation rather than open resistance. This marginality is not presented as a temporary condition awaiting resolution, but as a lived reality produced by the intersecting forces of marriage, patriarchy, and postcolonial masculinity. By refusing redemptive arcs or dramatic breakthroughs, the film foregrounds the ethical complexity of surviving within systems that deny recognition.

Central to this ethical framework is the female protagonist's refusal to participate in the collective maintenance of silence. Rather than being portrayed as a passive victim of marital deception, she emerges as a morally grounded subject whose agency is expressed through withdrawal rather than confrontation. Her decision to seek divorce is not driven by revenge, spectacle, or moral outrage but by a quiet insistence on dignity and truth. This form of resistance disrupts dominant cinematic tropes that demand either sacrifice or forgiveness from women in patriarchal marriages. Instead, the film presents refusal itself as an ethical act—one that acknowledges structural injustice without reproducing its violence.

Importantly, this refusal does not translate into the exposure or vilification of queer desire. The female protagonist does not frame homosexuality as deviance, nor does she mobilise moral authority against it. Her ethical stance is marked by restraint, mirroring the film's broader aesthetic of minimalism. In this way, the film avoids constructing a binary between queer suffering and heterosexual moral superiority. Resistance is located not in public denunciation but in the refusal to continue sustaining an institution that demands emotional erasure from both partners.

The queer subject, meanwhile, is denied the narrative privilege of self-articulation. There is no climactic confession, no assertion of identity, and no claim to visibility as liberation. This absence is not a narrative oversight but a deliberate political choice. By withholding the language of self-disclosure, the film emphasises how queer lives in postcolonial contexts are often foreclosed from speaking positions that are recognised as legitimate. Speech, when it does occur, is mediated through law, gossip, and institutional authority rather than personal testimony. The queer subject thus remains structurally marginal even at the moment of narrative resolution.

Yet the film does not render queer life entirely without agency. Survival itself becomes a form of resistance, enacted through negotiation, adaptation, and strategic silence. The queer subject's continued participation in social life, despite its costs, exposes the contradictions of a system that relies on queer labour—emotional, social, and symbolic—while denying queer legitimacy. This endurance, though ethically fraught, challenges romanticised notions of resistance that privilege visibility and rupture over persistence and care.

By centring ethical refusal rather than heroic rebellion, *Kaathal: The Core* redefines the politics of resistance within queer cinema. It suggests that in contexts governed by respectability and moral surveillance, resistance may take the form of withdrawal, non-cooperation, and quiet assertion of boundaries. This reframing complicates liberal narratives of queer emancipation and foregrounds the lived realities of marginalised queer lives that must

negotiate survival within, rather than outside, oppressive structures. In doing so, the film deepens its critique of patriarchy by revealing how ethical agency can emerge even within conditions of profound constraint.

Cinematic Minimalism and Anti-Sensational Queer Representation

Kaathal: The Core adopts a cinematic language of restraint that is central to its political and ethical engagement with queerness. Rather than relying on melodrama, spectacle, or visual excess, the film employs minimalism as a deliberate aesthetic strategy through which sexual marginality and social repression are made legible. Long takes, subdued performances, muted colour palettes, and the careful use of silence work together to create a narrative space where meaning emerges through absence rather than articulation. This aesthetic choice resists dominant cinematic conventions that demand visibility and emotional excess as markers of narrative significance.

In *Kaathal: The Core*, queerness is never rendered as an event to be revealed or explained. There are no flashbacks, confessional monologues, or explanatory dialogues that translate queer desire into consumable narrative information. Instead, the film allows homosexuality to exist as an undercurrent—felt, inferred, and socially managed rather than visually demonstrated. This refusal to aestheticise queer desire disrupts voyeuristic modes of spectatorship that often accompany representations of marginalised sexualities, particularly in mainstream cinema.

The minimalist aesthetic also aligns with the film's critique of respectability politics. By situating key interactions within ordinary domestic and communal spaces, the film underscores how repression is embedded in everyday life rather than enacted through extraordinary acts of violence. Silence becomes an audiovisual presence: pauses linger, conversations trail off, and emotional tension is displaced onto routine gestures. These formal choices mirror the social conditions the film critiques, where queer lives are regulated not through explicit prohibition but through subtle, continuous discipline.

Importantly, this aesthetic minimalism refuses the redemptive arc often associated with progressive queer cinema. There is no climactic moment of affirmation, no visual catharsis that resolves tension through recognition or acceptance. Instead, the film ends with ambiguity and restraint, reinforcing the idea that structural marginalisation cannot be undone through narrative closure alone. By withholding emotional payoff, the film compels viewers to confront the discomfort of unresolved injustice rather than offering reconciliation as consolation.

Through its anti-sensational approach, *Kaathal: The Core* thus expands the representational possibilities of queer cinema. It demonstrates that political critique need not rely on spectacle, and that silence, when deployed thoughtfully, can function as a powerful cinematic language. This approach not only challenges dominant representational norms but also aligns form with content, ensuring that the film's aesthetics reflect the lived realities of queer marginality it seeks to depict.

Kaathal: The Core reconfigures queer representation in South Indian cinema by locating homosexuality within the intersecting regimes of postcolonial masculinity, heteronormative marriage, and sexual silence. Rather than framing queerness as an individual identity struggle or a narrative of liberation, the film exposes the institutional conditions that

render queer lives marginal yet socially functional within systems of respectability. Homosexuality appears not as an external disruption to social order but as a presence carefully managed through silence, moral discipline, and public legitimacy.

By privileging restraint over spectacle and silence over disclosure, the film challenges liberal frameworks that equate visibility with progress and speech with freedom. It reveals how, in postcolonial contexts governed by moral surveillance and communal authority, silence often becomes the only viable mode through which queer lives can be sustained. This refusal of sensationalism is not an aesthetic limitation but an ethical choice that aligns cinematic form with the lived realities of marginalised sexualities.

In centring middle-aged, married homosexuality within a regional cinematic landscape, *Kaathal: The Core* expands the representational possibilities of queer cinema beyond youth-centric and urban narratives. The film thus contributes to queer studies, postcolonial theory, and film studies by offering a critical framework for understanding how non-normative sexualities persist—quietly and precariously—within institutions that appear stable, moral, and unquestioned. In doing so, it compels a reconsideration of queer politics that accounts not only for resistance and visibility, but also for survival, silence, and ethical negotiation at the margins of social legitimacy.

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~English Language Teaching ~

An Introduction to Forensic Linguistics

Pinali Vadher

Abstract

The present research study focuses on the role of language in law and crime. It deals with the most interesting branch of Linguistics, which plays a crucial role in the legal system, that is Forensic Linguistics, which is an intersection of language, law and crime. The paper explores the role of language through forensic linguistics, exploring how language shapes legal and criminal narratives, meaning, and interpretation, not only in the coding of the law but also in the judicial system. The paper emphasises the significance of forensic linguistics, which has immense potential to divert the course of a case in court and to highlight the difference between the guilty and the innocent. Language is the most potent weapon used in the legal field. By providing highly relevant examples, the paper not only investigates but also firmly establishes the crucial role and significance of forensic linguistics in law and legal communication.

Key Words: Forensic Linguistics, Language, Law, Crime, Operation Sindoor

Introduction

Forensic linguistics is a fascinating interdisciplinary field that merges linguistics with legal contexts. It is an emerging area of research and study within Applied Linguistics, particularly in India. The field primarily involves analysing language used in legal settings. It plays a crucial role in law and justice because no law can exist without language. Forensic linguistics investigates how language can be used as evidence in crimes and critically evaluates language practices within the justice system. Furthermore, it aids in the analysis and interpretation of language in legal contexts, providing insights that may influence judicial outcomes.

History

The word “forensic” in Forensic Linguistics is derived from the Latin term “forensic”, meaning “of or before the forum”. In ancient Rome, legal cases were presented and debated in a public forum. In modern usage, the term refers to the application of scientific methods and techniques to investigate crimes or legal issues. It primarily signifies “related to or used in courts of law”. Forensic linguistics has significantly evolved since its inception in the late 20th century. Jan Svartvik (1968) is widely credited with initiating the discipline through his analysis of grammatical patterns in police statements, which highlighted discrepancies in authorship. Building on this foundation, scholars such as Roger Shuy (1993) and Malcolm Coulthard (1994) expanded the field's scope to encompass courtroom discourse, police interrogations, and

legal document analysis. Over time, forensic linguistics has developed into a multidisciplinary area, drawing from sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. More recent studies have concentrated on the role of linguists in authorship attribution, trademark disputes, and cybercrime investigations (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007; Olsson, 2008). These advancements reflect the increasing recognition of language as vital evidence in legal contexts. Despite the growing body of research, the field continues to grapple with issues related to methodological standardisation and the admissibility of linguistic evidence in court, prompting ongoing academic and legal debate.

Key Areas of Forensic Linguistics

Forensic linguistics covers a broad spectrum of activities. Here are some of its primary areas:

Authorship Identification: Determining the author of a text is a common task for forensic linguists. By examining a document's writing style, vocabulary, syntax, and grammatical patterns, experts can often identify its author.
Applications: Ransom notes, anonymous letters, and legal documents.

Voice Identification: Forensic linguists analyze speech to identify individuals, especially in cases involving audio recordings.
Factors considered: Accent, pitch, tone, and speech patterns.

Discourse Analysis: This involves examining how language is used in communication, such as in courtroom testimony, police interviews, or recorded conversations.
Goal: Identify inconsistencies, coercion, or manipulation in speech.

Translation and Interpretation Issues: Forensic linguists ensure accurate translations in multilingual legal cases to avoid misinterpretation.
Contexts*:* International disputes, immigration cases, and multilingual contracts.

Trademark Disputes: Analyzing the linguistic features of brand names and slogans to determine uniqueness or infringement.
Example: Deciding if a new product name is too similar to an existing one.

The Role of Forensic Linguists in Criminal Cases

Forensic linguists often assist law enforcement, lawyers, and courts. They contribute in the following ways by:

- Analyzing Threatening Communications**:** Identifying patterns in threatening letters or emails to trace the author.
- Examining Confessions**:** Ensuring confessions were obtained legally and without coercion.
- Deciphering Code Language**:** Breaking down coded or cryptic messages used by criminals.

- Assessing Witness Credibility**:** Analyzing linguistic clues to verify truthfulness in testimony.

Tools and Techniques in Forensic Linguistics

Forensic linguists employ a range of tools and techniques to analyse language. Some of these include:

- Corpus Analysis**:** Using large databases of text (corpora) to compare linguistic patterns.
- Stylometry**:** Measuring writing style through metrics like word frequency and sentence structure.
- Phonetic Analysis**:** Studying sound patterns in spoken language.
- Machine Learning Tools**:** Leveraging AI to analyze vast amounts of linguistic data quickly.

Forensic linguistics encompasses two significant aspects: the language of crime and the language of law

The language of crime centres on analysing language as evidence in criminal cases. It encompasses the pre- and post-investigation stages of crime, including authorship attribution, voice identification, discourse analysis, and threat analysis. For example:

Forensic Linguistic Perspective on the Burari Death Case

The Burari Death Case serves as a striking example of the application of forensic linguistics, especially the language of crime in unravelling complex criminal investigations. In 2018, eleven members of the Chundawat family were found dead in a case initially perceived as mass suicide. However, forensic linguistic analysis of eleven handwritten diaries discovered at the scene revealed that language had functioned as a tool of psychological control and ritualistic compliance over a period of eleven years.

From a forensic linguistic standpoint, these diaries constituted primary linguistic evidence. Through discourse analysis, researchers uncovered how the diaries employed directive, ritualistic, and prophetic language—ostensibly dictated by the deceased patriarch through his son, Lalit—to shape the family's beliefs and behaviours. The consistent patterns in syntax, tone, and semantic content reflected a delusional system embedded in everyday communication, reinforcing a shared psychotic disorder (*folie à plusieurs*).

Authorship attribution and stylistic analysis further revealed multiple contributors to the diaries, yet all under Lalit's influence, underscoring the manipulation of language to exert authority and fabricate divine legitimacy. Linguistic cues such as imperative structures, metaphoric religious imagery, and passive constructions served to depersonalise responsibility and reinforce obedience. Notably, the language avoided explicit suicidal intent, framing the fatal ritual—referred to as *Badh Puja*—as a path to spiritual salvation rather than death.

The Burari case demonstrates that forensic linguistics extends beyond document authentication or speaker identification. It plays a crucial role in decoding psychological states, revealing power dynamics, and interpreting latent meanings in criminal evidence. As in other notable

cases, such as the Unabomber investigation, linguistic patterns in written communication provided indispensable insights into motive, influence, and authorship, helping investigators reconstruct the narrative behind a seemingly inexplicable tragedy.

Another significant Indian case that underscores its importance is the 2008 Malegaon Blast Case. Forensic linguistic analysis was employed to scrutinise emails and messages allegedly sent by the accused. Experts examined linguistic features, including syntax and phraseology, to establish a link between the messages and the suspects, thereby reinforcing the prosecution's case.

The second aspect is the language of law. This aspect concerns the use of language within the legal system itself. It involves:

- Analysis of Legal Texts
- Courtroom Discourse
- Police Interviews
- Interpretation of Legal Language

For instance, Section 354 IA IPC on Sexual Harassment and Punishment states: “A man committing any of the following acts:”

1. To whom is it referring?
2. Is the phrase “a man” used in a general sense?
3. Whether the above statement in the section is applicable to females, to transgender individuals, or children as offenders, or is it targeted explicitly to “males only”?

In summary, the ambiguity of legal texts and language can lead to confusion and misunderstandings among the general public about legal norms.

Furthermore, in courtroom proceedings, where language can influence understanding and interpretation of evidence, forensic linguistics addresses potential miscommunication arising from varying language proficiency, dialects, or cultural contexts, thereby highlighting the importance of precision in the legal system. According to Guillen-Nieto & Stein (2022), when testimony is misunderstood due to linguistic diversity or discrepancies, forensic linguists play a pivotal role by clarifying intended meanings, elucidating ambiguities, and providing expert testimony that informs the court about the implications of specific language use.

The role of forensic linguistics extends not only to analysing confessions and witness statements but also to uncovering coercive questioning techniques that may influence the statements made by suspects, thus impacting the integrity of the evidence presented at trial, as emphasised by Alduais et al. (2023). Furthermore, linguistic analysis can aid in identifying authorship when disputed documents or communications are presented as evidence, thereby enhancing the overall credibility of legal arguments in courtroom trials.

According to Perkins (2021), the rise of digital communication and language analysis provides critical insights into various forms of communication, including written texts such as text messages, emails, and social media interactions, particularly in cases of data infringement, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation in cybercrime. This ensures that language remains a tool for justice rather than a source of obfuscation (Stein, 2022). Thus, the progressive

development and refinement of forensic linguistics techniques in this digital era solidify its prominent place in the landscape of legal studies and practice, attesting to its vital contributions in upholding judicial integrity and fairness within both the legal and judicial systems, as affirmed by Aluais et al. (2023).

The most relevant and influential example of forensic linguistics' impact is Operation Sindoor, carried out on the night of 7th - 8th May 2025. Operation Sindoor exemplifies the expanding scope of forensic linguistics across contexts such as security communication, legal discourse, and digital forensics. It serves as a significant case study for examining how language operates as a strategic and evidentiary resource in such contexts. For example, the title "Operation Sindoor", where the first word, "Operation", has a military, national security context, and the second, "Sindoor", i.e., vermillion, has socio-cultural contexts in which sindoor symbolises marriage, continuity, and harmony in the Indian context and is a Hindi word. Whereas, the red colour in the word sindoor represents "blood and bloodshed" of the innocent citizens. In total, its invocation in a military context transforms personal loss into collective grievance.

Conclusion

Forensic linguistics goes beyond solving crimes—it helps uphold justice, prevent fraud, and ensure fair trials. It also sheds light on how language can be weaponized or misunderstood in legal contexts.

The future of forensic linguistics is evolving rapidly, thanks to technological advancements. Machine learning and artificial intelligence are increasingly integrated into linguistic analysis, enabling faster, more accurate processes. As cybercrime and digital communication grow, forensic linguistics will remain a crucial tool in combating new-age crimes.

In a nutshell, Forensic linguistics bridges the gap between language and law, offering invaluable insights into complex legal cases. Its applications range from solving crimes to resolving civil disputes, showcasing its versatility and importance. With the continuous development of tools and techniques, the field promises a bright future in the pursuit of justice. It is a fascinating field which deals with the interaction and intersection of law and language. Any written or spoken text could, in theory, be used in a legal or criminal context as forensic evidence. In other words, language at times itself acts as evidence in civil or criminal cases. Language is often referred to as a double-edged sword in the legal field, where nuances in wording or speech acts can change the trajectory of the case entirely. In forensic linguistics, language is more than just communication because it is not only the interface between language, crime and law, but also a fingerprint. Meaning, one never realises that their speech or written text or writing style serves as a language fingerprint – one's own language signature, which is not by choice but mainly due to one's style. And it is this aspect that makes language unique in the legal field and forensic linguistics.

To conclude, wherever crime is committed in whatever form, there exists a language in any form. Where there is language, there is Linguistics in general and Forensic Linguistics in particular, states Dr. Shukla, an eminent Forensic Linguist in India.

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Understanding the Awareness of the Research Literacy of Indian ESL School Teachers: A Study

Ravi Kumar Perumalla

Abstract

This research article explores the understanding of the research literacy of Indian ESL school teachers, which is crucial in enhancing their instructional practices and promoting effective learning outcomes. Research literacy refers to the ability to critically evaluate and apply research findings to inform teaching practices (Thue, F. 2023). In India, English is the medium of instruction in many schools, ESL teachers play a vital role in shaping students' language proficiency. However, there is a scarcity of research on the research literacy of Indian ESL teachers. The study investigates the research literacy of Indian ESL school teachers, with a specific focus on classroom-based research. A mixed-methods approach is employed. The findings of the study reveal that Indian ESL teachers are not research literate, with a few teachers demonstrating a good understanding of research principles and methods, while the majority of them require further training and support. The study emphasises the importance of promoting a culture of research among ESL teachers, enabling them to design and implement classroom-based research that informs their teaching practices. By exploring the research literacy of Indian ESL teachers, this study offers insights on teacher research literacy and provides insights into the professional development needs of ESL teachers in India.

Key words: Research literacy, ESL teachers, classroom-based research

Introduction

The importance of research literacy in enhancing teaching practices and promoting effective learning outcomes has been widely acknowledged in the education settings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Henson, 2001). Research literacy is defined as the ability to critically evaluate and apply research findings to inform teaching practices (Mukherjee, 2013). In the English as a Second Language (ESL) context, research literacy is particularly crucial, as ESL teachers need to stay updated on the latest research and methodologies to effectively teach English language skills to non-native speakers (Burns, 2010). However, despite its importance, research has shown that many teachers, including ESL teachers, lack the necessary research literacy skills to effectively apply research findings to their teaching practices (Borg, 2009). English in India is used as a medium of instruction, the lack of research literacy among ESL teachers can have significant implications for the quality of education provided to students.

In India, the education system is facing numerous challenges, including inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and poor student outcomes (NCERT, 2013). The ESL education sector, in particular, is facing varied challenges, such as a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate teaching materials, and poor student motivation (Khanna, 2015). Against

this backdrop, it is essential to investigate the research literacy of Indian ESL school teachers, with a specific focus on classroom-based research. Classroom-based research refers to research that is undertaken by school teachers in their classrooms, with the aim of improving teaching practices and student outcomes (Hopkins, 2014). By exploring the research literacy of Indian ESL teachers, this study offers insights to the body of knowledge on teacher research literacy and provide insights into the needs of professional development of ESL teachers in India. The study also seeks to investigate the challenges faced by Indian ESL teachers in conducting classroom-based research and identify strategies for promoting research literacy among these teachers.

Review of Literature

Research literacy is a crucial aspect of teacher professional development, enabling teachers to critically evaluate and apply research findings to inform their teaching practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Research literacy is particularly important, as ESL teachers need to stay updated on the latest research and methodologies to effectively teach English language skills to non-native speakers (Burns, 2010). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of research literacy for ESL teachers, emphasizing its role in enhancing teacher confidence, improving teaching practices, and promoting student learning outcomes (Borg, 2009; Mukherjee, 2013). For instance, a study by Ramnarayan (2016) found that Indian ESL teachers who received research training demonstrated improved research literacy skills and were better equipped to design and implement classroom-based research projects.

Recent studies have highlighted the challenges faced by Indian ESL teachers in developing research literacy skills, including inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and limited access to research opportunities (Gupta, 2018; Kumar, 2019). For example, a study by Singh (2017) found that Indian ESL teachers reported limited opportunities for research training and support, which hindered their ability to develop research literacy skills. Another study by Rao (2018) found that Indian ESL teachers who received research training demonstrated improved research literacy skills, but faced challenges in implementing research findings in their classrooms due to inadequate resources and support.

Classroom-based research is an essential aspect of research literacy, enabling teachers to investigate teaching practices and student learning outcomes in their own classrooms (Hopkins, 2014). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of classroom-based research for teachers, including enhanced student learning outcomes and increased teacher confidence resulting in improved teaching practices (Borg, 2009; Mukherjee, 2013). For instance, a study by Kumar (2019) found that Indian ESL teachers who conducted classroom-based research projects demonstrated improved teaching practices and increased teacher confidence. Another study by Gupta (2018) found that classroom-based research enabled Indian ESL teachers to identify areas for improvement in their teaching practices and develop strategies for addressing these areas.

Despite the benefits of classroom-based research, recent studies have highlighted the challenges faced by Indian ESL teachers in conducting research in their classrooms, including inadequate resources, insufficient support, and limited access to research opportunities (Rao, 2018; Singh, 2017). For example, a study by Khanna (2015) found that Indian ESL teachers

reported limited access to research resources, including books, journals, and online databases, which hindered their ability to conduct classroom-based research. Another study by Ramnarayan (2016) found that Indian ESL teachers who received research training and support were better equipped to design and implement classroom-based research projects. Overall, these studies highlight the importance of research literacy and classroom-based research for Indian ESL teachers, while also emphasizing the challenges faced by these teachers in developing research literacy skills and conducting research in their classrooms.

Methodology

This study aims to investigate the research literacy of Indian ESL school teachers in the context of classroom-based research. The study attempts to meet the following objectives: to understand the awareness of classroom-based research of Indian ESL teachers, to understand the research literacy of Indian ESL teachers, to investigate the awareness of classroom-based research and to know the challenges faced by the school teachers. The study also attempts to answer the following research questions: Are the Indian ESL school teachers aware of classroom-based research? Are the Indian ESL teachers research literate? How research literate are our Indian ESL teachers? and What are some of the challenges faced by the school teachers in conducting research?

This study employed a mixed-methods research design. The study explored the research literacy of Indian ESL school teachers and their experiences with classroom-based research. The setting for the study was private and government schools in India, as English is taught as a second language. The sample consisted of 50 ESL teachers from different schools in India, selected through a combination of snowball and purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2015). The sample included both male and female teachers, with varying levels of teaching experience and qualifications. To collect data, a survey questionnaire was administered to the participants, which included both closed- and open-ended questions (Dörnyei, 2007). The questionnaire gathered information on the teachers' research literacy skills, their experiences with classroom-based research, and the challenges they faced in conducting research in their classrooms.

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants to gather more in-depth information on their experiences with classroom-based research. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was analyzed using both inferential and descriptive statistics, and the findings were presented in tables, figures, and thematic categories.

Data

Data were collected from a questionnaire, which was administered to nearly 100 Indian ESL school teachers, out of which only 50 teachers responded. The questionnaire was administered through google forms. The following charts present their responses followed by a discussion and the data is analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Awareness of research literacy

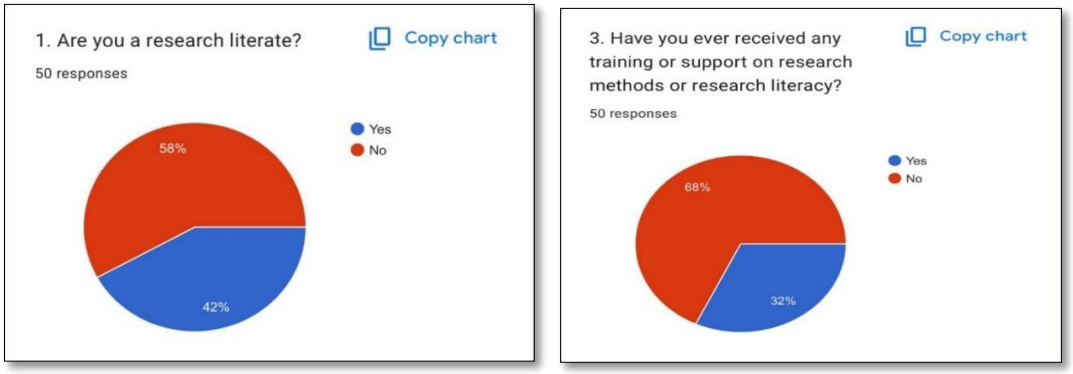

Figure 1.1&1.2 Awareness of Research Literacy

From the figure above, it's evident that the majority (58%) of the teachers are not research literates. Some of them (42%) mentioned that they are research literates. This reveals that the majority of the ESL teachers are not research literates. Hence, it's important to make the teachers aware of the research literacy so that they can understand the classroom-based problems and find a feasible solution to them. The second figure above also reveals if the ESL teachers received any training or support on research methods or research literacy. The majority of the teachers (68%) stated that they haven't received any training or support on research methods or research literacy. Some of the teachers (32%) responded that they have received some amount of training and support. It's, therefore, important that the ESL teachers be given training in research method and research literacy so that they understand the day-today challenges of the classroom and enhance their teaching-learning process in the classroom.

Awareness of classroom-based research

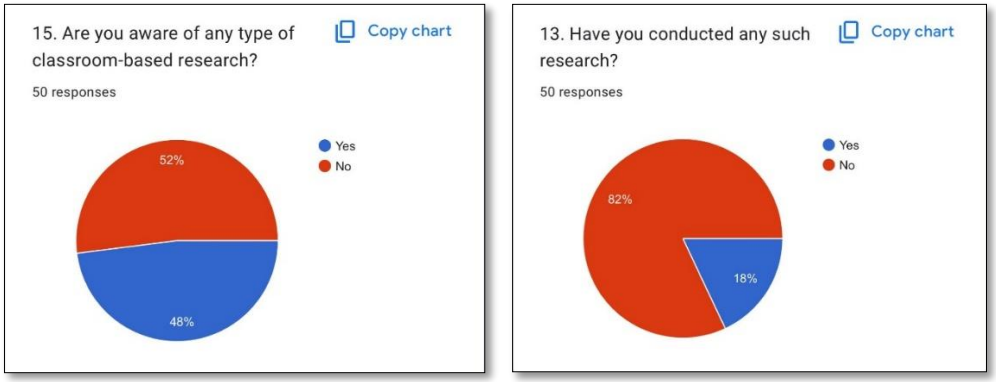

Figure 1.3&1.4 Awareness of Classroom-based Research

From the figure above, it's evident that the majority (52%) of the teachers are not aware of any type of classroom-based research. Some of them (48%) mentioned that they are aware of the classroom-based research. This reveals that the majority of the ESL teachers are not aware of the classroom-based research. Therefore, it's significant to make the teachers aware of the

classroom-based research for them to know and understand their students, classroom dynamics, materials, textbook better and thereby make the teaching-learning process outcome oriented.

From the second figure above, it is evident that the ESL teachers haven't conducted any research. The majority of the teachers (82%) stated that they haven't conducted any research. Some of the teachers (18%) responded that they have conducted some amount of research. From the data, it's evident that the ESL teachers don't have any research exposure, they should be made aware of the importance of research literacy and classroom-based research for their ongoing professional development.

Challenges Faced in Conducting Classroom-based Research

Responding to the open-ended question on some of the challenges the ESL researchers face to conduct, the following are some of the statements made by the teachers:

- I faced many challenges
- Changing rules frequently
- Lesson planning and sometimes dealing with limited resources and time management.
- Rural environment lack of infrastructure
- Students are not cooperating properly
- Heads of institutes don't support your work
- No equipment and in sufficient funds
- Attention span of the students

The responses above clearly indicate that the Indian ESL teachers do not have the facilities required either to be research literates or to conduct classroom-based research dues to various challenges such as training, infrastructure, funds, time, etc. This expresses a concern that the teachers be taught to be research literates.

Findings

The findings from the study revealed that Indian ESL school teachers are not aware of the research literacy and most of them are not research literates. The survey results showed that 58% of the teachers are not research literate, while 68% of them have not received any training in conducting classroom-based research. The results of study highlight some of the challenges faced by Indian ESL teachers in conducting classroom-based research, including lack of support from the management, scarce resources, and limited access to research opportunities. The teachers also reported lack of time and resources as major barriers to conducting research, a few of them stated lack of support from school administrators and colleagues. Overall, the study highlights the Indian ESL teachers should be research literate and should be exposed to training and supporting research literacy and promote classroom-based research.

Discussion

The results of the study highlight the significance of research literacy for Indian ESL school teachers. The study has implications for professional development programs and teacher education in India. The study suggests that these programs should prioritize research literacy and provide teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to design and implement classroom-based research projects. By promoting research literacy and classroom-based research, these programs can help enhance teacher professionalism, promote student learning outcomes, and improve the overall quality of education in India.

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English Language Teachers' Perceptions on the Curriculum Development Process at UG level: An Analytical Study

K. Shreeraghuram, G. Suvarna Lakshmi & C. Ramamuni Reddy

Abstract

Teachers play a vital role in implementing the curriculum in the classroom to enhance learners' language proficiency. Teachers need to understand the curriculum development process to effectively and efficiently deploy the curriculum, plan instruction and delivery more effectively, tailor the content to learners' needs, and optimally achieve its objectives. Though English language teachers are qualified and receive CPD training to hone their classroom teaching techniques, they fail to envisage the process of achieving the stated curriculum outcomes in specific courses, as they lack knowledge of the curriculum development process. The study aims to understand the English language teachers' knowledge of the elements of curriculum development and the order that is to be followed to implement it in the classroom. For this, the researchers analysed various approaches to the curriculum development process and deduced a ten-step approach. This approach, in the form of a questionnaire, was administered to the English language teachers in Andhra Pradesh who teach at the undergraduate level in order to seek their opinions on the process of curriculum development. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to document and analyse their perspectives on the curriculum development process. The findings emphasised the dire need to train English Language Teachers to improve their knowledge of the curriculum development process to help them achieve the desired outcomes. The study implies that the professional development training should include the curriculum development process.

Keywords: Curriculum development, teachers' perceptions, awareness to align outcomes and assessment, professional development

Introduction

The role of a teacher has been constantly changing with the various shifts in the paradigms of teaching and learning processes. These developments are influenced by the various needs of the industry as well as students, affecting the roles, responsibilities, and teaching techniques of the teachers in the classroom. The teachers are expected to implement the curriculum in the class, apart from being a counsellor, a mentor, a facilitator, a mediator, a negotiator, and play many more roles. Another important role a teacher plays is to plan and effectively deliver the designed curriculum to achieve the set objectives, which requires understanding the underlying philosophy of curriculum and education.

If a teacher wants to be a part of the curriculum development process, s/he need not reinvent the wheel. According to Ken (2019, p: 1), "Teachers who give some time to design units before they start to plan instruction can simplify and streamline the planning process and

increase their students' self-efficacy." Ken also distinguished the three terms design, planning, and preparation that every teacher does in their teaching and learning environment. This also reveals that the curriculum is not a rigid document to be strictly implemented, but allows the teachers to explore and innovate in the classrooms as per the needs of the learners.

Effective teaching is deeply connected to teachers' active involvement in curriculum development and deployment. This understanding ensures that educational programs are relevant, practical, and tailored to the diverse needs of students. Integrating insights from various educational theorists highlight the significance of teachers' engagement in this process. According to Richards (2017, p. 112) "When teachers actively participate in ELT curriculum development, they bring valuable insights that help tailor learning experiences to diverse student populations and improve outcomes." So, it would be more helpful in attaining the desired outcomes by involving the teachers in the curriculum development process. At present, in English Language Teaching, the curriculum focuses on learner-centeredness. For this, teachers' involvement in the curriculum is essential. It also helps the teachers to develop professionally by involving them in curriculum development.

Rationale and Context of the Study

From the discussion in the above section, it is established that teachers should have an important role in curriculum development and deployment. The purpose of this study is to understand and analyse the basic knowledge of the teachers of English in various Engineering colleges, including affiliated, autonomous and private (deemed to be Universities) in Andhra Pradesh, India, in the curriculum development process. The faculty members who teach at these colleges are well qualified, with all holding an MA in English (mandatory) and some, a PhD in English (desired qualification). These teachers bring a wealth of knowledge to classroom pedagogy that includes student engagement, and use of appropriate materials (prescribed as well as supplementary) in the classroom. However, while they have the educational qualifications and classroom teaching experience, many of them are not fully conscious of their roles in realising the objectives of the curriculum they execute.

The teachers of these colleges are to adhere to a curriculum set by the university, which hardly involves the teachers in the curriculum development process. If the teachers are aware of the process of curriculum development and deployment, they would cater to the needs of the engineering students' English language proficiency, which should converge with the needs of the industry. The industry needs are the decisive factors that qualify the quality of the English language education outcomes. Their limited awareness of curricula being developed, revised, or aligned with learning outcomes limits their agency to provide feedback, or make suggestions, stemming from their experiences in the classroom, which can affect the quality of curriculum deployment. If educators do not contribute or refrain from using their curriculum knowledge to critically evaluate a curriculum to identify the gaps and make necessary changes through tasks and supplementary materials, they fail to align their classes with students' needs as well as curriculum objectives.

The percentage of engineering students who get placements is very low as their communication skills are low or not up to the expectations of the industry, there is a dire need to relook at the process of teaching and the teachers awareness of their role in executing the

curriculum designed for the benefit of the students or adapt the curriculum, make necessary changes as per the needs to the learners groups they teach. This study attempts to understand the teachers' awareness of the curriculum development process and its stages that in turn reflect on their knowledge and mindfulness of their roles in the classroom as executors of the curriculum.

This need emerged from the importance of being relevant to contemporary English language educational needs - Outcome-Based Education, relevance to Industry, and Interdisciplinarity - to higher education curricular design and development. Teachers being at the forefront of implementation in curriculum processes, must also be placed at the forefront, or at the minimum be provided access to the curriculum process if they are to enact the curriculum.

Literature Review

For almost a century, the functioning of teachers in curriculum development has been the focal point of educational research. Early theorists highlighted the central position of teachers in the learning process. As Caswell and Campbell (1935) expressed, the curriculum was "all experiences children have under the guidance of teachers" (p. 66), implying that teachers influenced students' learning. This was a significant early acknowledgment of teachers' role in educational reform and views teachers, not only as education practitioners but also as designers of curriculum.

The conventional framework provided by Tyler (1949) depicted curriculum design as a series of four questions concerning objectives, experiences, organization, and evaluation. Tyler's principles implied that "the real objective of education is to effect substantial variations in pupils' patterns of behaviour" (p. 5), while teachers were responsible for connecting the objectives to the real-time teaching through their decisions. This model acknowledged teachers as important intermediaries between the construction of ideal objectives and the actual learners.

Later, Stenhouse (1975) developed the idea of teachers as curriculum developers, stating, "Teachers, not curriculum packages, are the agents of change" (p. 142). He operationalized this view in his teacher-as-researcher model of reflective practice, innovation, and local adaptation to meet the needs of the local context and involved the educator as the focal point for critiquing and redesigning the curriculum. In support of this, Fullan (2007) pointed out that "sustainable change depends on teacher's ownership... Educational change depends on what teachers do and think - and it is as simple and complex as that" (p. 129).

Current orientations establish teachers as active agents of curriculum making as opposed to passive agents of implementation. Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2015) furthered this idea by suggesting that teacher agency develops as a result of the interaction between professional beliefs, contextual circumstances, and collective purpose. They assert that "teachers develop agency through the interaction of their individual capacities, their working conditions and their professional purposes" (p. 25).

Pyhältö et al. (2012) provided empirical evidence in their study by demonstrating that teachers collaborated to build curricula that could be enacted contextually and be innovative in their pedagogy. For instance, the OECD (2020) stated that "curriculum reform is most effective when teachers have the professional space to interpret and adapt it" (p. 18). Global perspectives

also highlight that the success of any curricular framework relies on the ability of teachers to adapt it within their own classrooms.

In English language education, many studies have examined the role of teachers as interpreters and adapters of the curriculum. Likewise, Galloway and Numajiri (2019) observed that teachers adapting Global Englishes frameworks made important curricular decisions about materials, assessment, and the focus of pedagogy.

Teachers are best positioned to design curricula that build on prior knowledge and promote active learning where learners construct knowledge through experiences. Teachers' involvement in curriculum development ensures that content is appropriately challenging and supportive. Teachers play a crucial role in integrating real-world experiences into the curriculum.

Modern educational researchers continue to stress the importance of teacher involvement in the process of curriculum development. Carl (2009) emphasized that empowering teachers in curriculum design fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, enhancing the educational process (p. 125). Handler (2010) noted that teachers' participation in curriculum development leads to more effective implementation and better student outcomes (p. 35). Ornstein and Hunkins (2013) highlighted that teachers' insights are invaluable in creating curricula that are both theoretically sound and practically applicable (p. 304).

However, the systems infringe on teachers' authority through high-stakes assessments and uncertainty about fulfilling prescribed syllabi, inconsistent policies, and curricular expectations. In a nutshell the literature reviewed above reflects a pattern in history: recognition of teachers as guides of learners' experience, to realizers of curriculum objectives. As Ramparsad (2000) observed there are many teachers who lack the necessary skills and knowledge for effective curriculum development, which compels targeted professional development programs (p. 12). Teachers often face significant time limitations, balancing instructional responsibilities with curriculum development tasks (Handler, 2010, p. 40). Institutional structures may not always support or encourage teacher participation in curriculum design, limiting opportunities for meaningful involvement (Carl, 2009, p. 130). Hence it can be concluded that professional development, time constraints and system support remain as challenges for the teachers to actively participate in the curriculum development process.

The above review of literature helped us understand the importance of teacher involvement in the curriculum development process. The next section presents the stages of curriculum development.

Various Approaches to Curriculum Development

There are various approaches to curriculum development, which are based on how one focuses on the elements of curriculum development and the implementation of the curriculum. However, the aim is to develop a curriculum that is functional, where the approach, design, or model is insignificant. Furthermore, the ultimate goal is to develop a curriculum in the technical institutes to complement their academics with various skills related to cognitive and analytical domains through improved learners' overall language proficiency.

For the purpose of this study, the following models are reviewed to note the important stages of curriculum.

The following are the different models (steps) in the process of curriculum development:

1. Giles, McCutchen and Zechiel (1942) developed a four-step model of curriculum development, that inlude:1. Selection of objectives 2. Selection of learning experiences 3. The organisation of learning experiences 4. Evaluation
2. Kerr (1968) also developed a four-step approach where the first and last steps are the same as Giles et al. (1942) model: 1. Selection of objectives 2. Selection of content 3. Selection of learning experiences 4. Evaluation
3. Nicholls and Nicholls (1978) developed a five-step approach that begins with 1. Situation analysis 2. Selection of objectives 3. Selection of content 4. Selection of methods 5. Selection of evaluation
4. Wheeler's (1967) five-step cyclic approach which is not very different from the previously suggested models: 1. Selection of objectives 2. Selection of content 3. Selection of learning experiences 4. The organisation of content and learning experiences 5. Evaluation
5. Taba's grassroots model with seven significant steps stated by Francis and Allen (2016): 1. Diagnosis of needs 2. Formulation of objectives 3. Selection of content 4. Organisation of content 5. Selection of learning experiences 6. The organisation of learning experiences 7. Evaluation
6. John Hopkins University's approach presented by Kern, Thomas, Howa and Bass (1998): 1. Problem identification 2. Needs assessment of target learners 3. Goals and objectives 4. Educational strategies 5. Implementation 6. Evaluation 7. Feedback
7. Graves' (1996) approach: 1. Needs assessment 2. Determining goals and objectives 3. Conceptualising content 4. Selecting and developing materials 5. Selecting and developing activities 6. Organisation of content 7. Organisation of activities 8. Evaluation 9. Consideration of resources constraints

From the above models of curriculum development, it is observed that, there are many common stages across different models and time periods. The following 10-step process of curriculum development is deduced from the above models to seek English language teachers' opinions on the curriculum development process.

1. Convert the student's needs into course objectives
2. State the clear and achievable objectives
3. Choose the appropriate content
4. State the methodology in detail
5. Select and use appropriate materials
6. Make the class student-centred
7. State and follow the assessment rubrics
8. Give constructive feedback
9. Set the model question paper to test the skill of the students, not the content.
10. Common assessment rubrics to all in the same organisation and the same course

This study aims to know the relative importance of the different elements/factors as perceived by the teachers of English who teach the undergraduate engineering students. The reason

behind this is to identify and objectively prioritize elements based on the opinions of the English language teachers along with establishing and documenting their roles in the process.

Methodology

Tools

The tools that are used for this study are:

- Phase 1:A semi-structured interview with the teachers in order to gather preliminary opinions on the existing curriculum (JNTUK English course for B.Tech I semester students).

- Phase 2: A questionnaire to collect the data on the curriculum development process to analyse the teachers' perceptions.

- Phase 3: An open-ended questionnaire with three questions to understand the rationale behind the choices of the teachers. The analysis, presented in the next section, focused on the answers given in the questionnaire (Phase 2), and the other data (Phases 1 & 3) were used to corroborate the inputs received from the questionnaire.

Respondents

The respondents are 30 teachers from various engineering colleges, deemed to be universities, autonomous engineering colleges, and engineering colleges affiliated to the state government university, with a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience. The English teachers in all the engineering-affiliated colleges, autonomous colleges, and deemed university either develop their own curricula or implement the JNTUK-prescribed curriculum in their classrooms.

Garret's Ranking Technique

Considering the focus of this study, Henry Garrett's ranking technique was used to identify the most important constraints and analyse them. Accordingly, the ranks on constraints for each respondent were converted into a score value using the procedures outlined below.

Analysis and interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of survey data are discussed in this section. The data were examined using one of the most popular and effective ranking techniques for rated data. The study involves ten items relating to designing a course; these items and their corresponding codes are listed in Table 1. Table 2 shows the results of a survey with ten items (TQ1-TQ10) with 30 respondents. Each item was rated on a scale from 0 to 10. The numbers in the table represent the frequency of responses for each rating. The percent score and Garret score of each rank are shown in Table 3.

Table 1: Showing the Items and codes

S.No	Item	Code
1	Convert the student's needs as course objectives	TQ1
2	State the clear objectives which are achievable	TQ2
3	Choose the appropriate content	TQ3
4	State the methodology in detail	TQ4
5	Select and use the appropriate material	TQ5
6	Make the class student-centred	TQ6
7	State and follow the assessment rubrics	TQ7
8	Give constructive feedback	TQ8
9	Set the model question paper to test the skill of the students, not the content.	TQ9
10	Common assessment rubrics for all in the same organisation and the same course	TQ10

Table 2: Summary of Responses of Teachers on Items

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
TQ1	15	3	4	4	1	1	1	0	1	0	30
TQ2	4	10	7	2	1	2	0	1	3	0	30
TQ3	4	5	10	3	3	1	3	0	1	0	30
TQ4	0	2	3	10	7	2	3	1	0	2	30
TQ5	2	2	2	6	9	5	1	1	1	1	30
TQ6	3	6	0	0	3	11	3	3	0	1	30
TQ7	1	1	0	3	2	4	10	4	3	2	30
TQ8	0	0	4	1	1	0	8	9	5	2	30
TQ9	1	0	0	0	3	2	2	6	10	6	30
TQ10	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	5	6	16	30

Table 3: Percent and Garret Score of Rank

Rank	Per cent	Score
1	5.00	81
2	15.00	70
3	25.00	63
4	35.00	57
5	45.00	52
6	55.00	47
7	65.00	42
8	75.00	36
9	85.00	29
10	95.00	18

The scores for ten different items (TQ1-TQ10) were completed by the teachers' group. The scores are ranked in order of average score, with the highest average score at rank one and the lowest at rank 10.TQ1 has the highest score, with an average of 207.5, followed by TQ2, with

an average of 184.8 and TQ3, with an average of 183.3. TQ10 has the lowest score, with an average of 79.3, followed by TQ9, with an average of 102.9 and TQ8, with an average of 120.2. The remaining tasks are ranked in the middle, with TQ5 in fourth place with an average of 159.8, TQ6 in fifth place with an average of 158.8, TQ4 in sixth place with an average of 155.5, TQ7 in seventh place with an average of 130.1.

Discussion

Through the data analysed above the following inferences can be drawn.

- On an average, only 30-35% of the teachers gave importance in ranking the elements of the curriculum development process in the correct manner as it is implemented in the curriculum development process.
- When it comes to converting the students' needs into course objectives (TQ1), only 50% of the teachers seem to possess the right awareness. Similarly, Common assessment rubrics for all students in the same organisation and the same course (TQ10) are accepted to be correct by 50% of the teachers.
- 30% of the teachers could organize 7/10 items (seven out of ten) of curriculum development process such as state the clear and achievable objectives (TQ 2), choose the appropriate content (TQ 3), state the methodology in detail (TQ 4), select and use the appropriate material (TQ 5), state and follow the assessment rubrics (TQ 7), give the constructive feedback (TQ 8) and set the model question paper to test the skill of the students, not the content (TQ 9) .
- However, teachers felt 40% importance on making the class student-centred (TQ 6)
- Overall, to summarize the preferences of the teachers, one element (TQ1) was ranked the most important category by giving the highest importance. And, two elements (TQ2 and TQ3) were ranked higher but had a moderate impact. Similarly, the other elements are ranked middle for preference, indicating moderate performance, and some elements were given lower importance and no preference.

The analysis of the data indicated that the gaps in the teachers' experiences were bridged in various ways that supported their understanding and overall engagement. Firstly, 33% of the teachers expressed that systematic professional development workshops should focus on curriculum design to ease their pressure. The professional development programmes would provide an initial opportunity for them to explore the aspects of curriculum development through practical experiences in needs analysis, setting course objectives, backward mapping, and aligning assessment to outcomes.

Teacher-participants showed marked change from Phase 1 to Phase 3. The semi-structured interview in Phase 1 attempted to elicit their implicit knowledge on the curriculum development and the execution process. They could perceive the key aspects/stages of the curriculum development process as they started thinking about the process with the questionnaire provided. They said they began to understand curriculum not simply as a document handed over to them by external regulatory authorities, but as a fluid and changing structure that they can be involved with pedagogically. They became clearer in their

understanding of the learning outcomes, distribution of credits, and structuring of the course. They said that having become aware of developing course materials would positively influence teaching and learning experiences. To sum up, the importance of supporting a responsive, contextually-appropriate English curriculum in higher education, it is essential to build bridges between teachers' knowledge of teaching with their understanding of curriculum development.

In addition, 68% teachers felt that platforms for collaboration between both senior faculty in language teaching and curriculum developers would create space for mentoring and facilitate collaboration in the discussion of curriculum development. This amalgamation would provide the knowledge and tools to engage in curriculum development; they become partners in creating quality education — and not mere content deliverers. Finally, 84% teachers opined that the inclusion of teachers in Board of Studies meetings and syllabus revision committees offers active participation in curricular decisions, which develops teacher ownership and accountability to curricular considerations.

The other strategies suggested by the teacher-participants were: a. frequently providing training sessions to the teachers in curriculum design and delivery that equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge; b. Allocating dedicated time for teachers to collaborate on curriculum development fosters a sense of community and shared purpose; c. Creating policies that encourage and facilitate teacher involvement in curriculum decisions ensures systemic backing for such initiatives. Addressing these requirements and implementing supportive strategies will further strengthen the role of teachers in curriculum development.

Conclusion

Interesting insights revealed by the teachers in this study are summed up here.

- A comprehensive understanding of the curriculum by the teachers leads to meaningful implementation of the curriculum in the classroom, in which teachers engage with the curriculum in a purposeful and meaningful way, while fully understanding the rationale and reasoning behind it. This supports a strong link between instructional delivery and the outcomes of the curriculum.
- The enhanced ability of the teachers will help them to adapt and select appropriate materials and teaching strategies according to students' needs, contexts, and learning styles. This could encourage students to learn English better as it meets their needs. This would also assist teachers in critically evaluating resources that support innovative, contextually based, and appropriate teaching practices in their classrooms.
- Teachers' participation in the curriculum development process increases the opportunity for teachers' professional growth and contribution to decision-making related to curriculum. It will facilitate strong ownership and motivation in the teachers and contribute to a better teaching and learning environment.
- There will be an enhancement in the overall programme effectiveness if there is a strong alignment of the learning outcomes, distribution of credits, and structuring of the course.
- Creating and implementing appropriate assessment rubrics that accurately measure students' progress ensures that the assessment process aligns with the intended learning outcomes and curricular aims.

In summary, it is necessary to connect teaching expertise with awareness of curriculum development in order to promote a responsive and contextually relevant English curriculum in higher education. The initiative to build teacher capacity in this area needs to be systematic, continuous, and inclusive. With the knowledge and skill set to engage in curriculum development processes, English faculty can be co-creators of academic excellence and not just conduits of knowledge delivery. This shift has the potential to affect teaching practices and scholarship related to student learning in a meaningful way.

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~Author Profile~

Dr Abdulghani Al-Shuaibi is a Saint Lucian poet, researcher, and educator based in the Gulf. He writes on themes of resistance, identity, and language in Arab contexts. With a background in English language teaching and linguistics, his poetry blends academic sensitivity with deep emotional resonance. His creative and scholarly works have been inspired by the voices of the marginalized and the hope of the unheard.

Dr Arun Kumar Yadav is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Swami Shukdevanand College, Shahjahanpur

Mr Deepak Mishra works as an Assistant Professor in English at Paschimanchal Campus (Institute of Engineering), Tribhuvan University, Pokhara, Nepal. He completed his MPhil in English from Tribhuvan University and pursuing his PhD from the same University.

Ms Janani.M is a PhD full-time research scholar at PG and Research, Department of English, Govt. Arts College, affiliated to Bharathidasan University at Trichy.

Dr N S Vijayalakshmi is an associate professor and research advisor at PG and Research, Department of English, Govt. Arts College, affiliated to Bharathidasan University at Trichy.

Ms Josephine Ashalatha Samuel is an Assistant Professor at MIT Degree College, Belavadi, Mysore, specializing in literature and language, with research interests in literary studies and linguistics and interdisciplinary humanities education.

Ms Ketaki Pawar is an Assistant Professor & Ph.D. Research Scholar at Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University.

Dr Liss Marie Das is an Associate Professor of English at St. Xavier's College for Women (Autonomous), Aluva. Her research interests include postcolonial studies, cultural memory, cinema, nationalism and diaspora.

Ms Priya Kumari is a Research Scholar in the Department of Languages, School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Presidency University, Bangalore, India.

Dr Ahmed Shabin KK is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Languages, School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Presidency University, Bangalore, India.

Mr Rahul More is a Ph.D. Research Scholar in V G Vaze College, Mulund, affiliated to University of Mumbai and poet too. His research interest is Animal Emotions and Zoo-Criticism. He had presented a research paper on: Deconstructing the "Other": An Ecocritical Study of Anthropocentrism in Jack London's White Fang.

Dr Rhitabrata Chatterjee is an Assistant Professor in English at West Bengal Education Services. He has experience of teaching at different government colleges in the state. He has presented papers in many national and international seminars/conferences/workshops and has also been published widely.

Ms Siliva Dash is a PhD Research Scholar at Department of English, FACIS, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha.

Dr Narayan Jena is an associate professor in English, FACIS, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha, India

Ms P Sowbhagya, Ph.D. Full-Time Research Scholar, PG &Research Department of English, Government Arts College, Tiruchirappalli Affiliated to Bharathidasan University.

Dr NS Vijayalakshmi is an Associate Professor and Research Advisor, PG & Research Department of English, Government Arts College, Tiruchirappalli, Affiliated to Bharathidasan University.

Mr Supreeth Sudhakar K, is a student of M.A. English at Jain (Deemed-to-be University), Bangalore. His current research focuses on applying psychoanalytic concepts to character development in contemporary television, with particular attention to HBO's Game of Thrones.

Dr Meera Kumar Menon is an emerging scholar working at the intersection of literature, psychology, and consciousness studies. She serves as an Assistant Professor of English Literature at JAIN (Deemed-to-be University). Her areas of interest are indigenous healing systems, embodied experience, and narrative consciousness, contributing to health humanities and decolonial knowledge studies.

Ms Tanveer Babar Ali Khan works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Guru Nanak University, Telangana. She has submitted her PhD thesis. Her areas of interest are adaptation studies, contemporary media aesthetics and psychoanalytic criticism.

Mr Thippeswamy B M is an Assistant Professor of English at Government First Grade College, Magadi, Bangalore South (D).

Prof N H Kallur is one of the leading scholars and works at Department of PG Studies and Research, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

Dr Pinali Vadher is an Assistant Professor at Baroda School of Legal Studies (B.S.L.S.), Faculty of Law, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat. Her areas of interest include Discourse Analysis, Indian Knowledge System, Indian English Literature, Forensic Linguistics, Gender Studies and Educational Technology.

Dr Perumalla Ravi Kumar is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, the École Centrale School of Engineering, Mahindra University, Bahadurpally, Hyderabad. His research interests include teaching of LSRW skills, teacher professional development, and material development.

Mr K Sreeraghuram is an Asst. Professor in the Dept. of English and Indian and Foreign Languages, Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology and Research University, Guntur. He has more than 25 years of teaching experience that includes teaching English for various ESP courses, trainer in Induction programmes. He presented research papers at international and national conferences.

Dr G Suvarna Lakshmi is a Professor, Department of ELT, engaged in teaching on teacher education and research programs for over two and a half decades. Her specializations include critical thinking and methods & materials for language teaching. She has wide publications in national and international journals and books.

Dr C Ramamuni Reddy is an Assistant Professor in the Dept. of ESL studies, at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He has completed his PhD from the EFL University and his research interests include Teacher education, Alternate learning initiatives, Inclusive Education. His work experience includes academia, corporate as well as non-profit initiatives.