



# ROOTS

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### **Aim & Objectives**

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

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## **DANCING INTO INDEPENDENCE: THE RISE OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN R.K.NARAYAN'S *THE GUIDE***

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### **Abstract**

*Traditional women sought happiness in serving the family without the questioning their individuality and identity. The matriarchal culture signified selflessness or self-abnegation wherein the contentment of the family reigned supreme, for, the women took delight in concealing personal expectations or disappointments. But these sentiments of the traditional households began to change when modernity in the name of education and culture crept in. Women felt that they were marginalized and therefore they should be recognized as separate selves having an identity of their own. Viewed from this angle, the study explores the journey of R.K. Narayan's Rosie in *The Guide* as a testament of transition from the self-abnegated Rosie to self-realized Nalini. R.K. Narayan's Malgudian women are docile, subservient, and perfect housewives but non-Malgudian woman like Rosie in *The Guide* plays the role of enchantresses, temptresses and seekers who are self-centered and ambitious. Ambition brings their downfall. Unlike the Malgudi women, Rosie is not satisfied with familial affection and love and is educated, cultured and has worldly knowledge. She is not broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls or by their constraints and sufferings. She breaks all the shackles of domesticity and become independent women. Rosie changes from being the upholders of convention and tradition to the unconventional modern woman. R. K. Naryan's Rosie is the unpredictable rebel and protester who protests the moralistic society, its customs and traditions.*

**Keywords:** *R.K. Narayan's female characters, classification, malgudian women uneducated, docile, subservient, selfless, self-abnegation, perfect housewives, non-malgudian women, educated, self-centered, ambitious, determined.*

### **John Carvert Says**

Woman is a free-being, a person whose value or worth consists in this nature and in this respect her nature and worth is the same as that of man. The treatment of men and women in society must therefore be in fundamental respect the same (136).

During R.K. Narayan's time women were shy, tame and had just started being conscious of the world around them. The women characters are victims to the limitations of the still – raw and shapeless society in which they have their being. Only very few women like Rosie seem to overcome

the limitations at the expense of sacrificing their aspiration and needs or try to leap into fantasy and myth that such readymade forms as magic realism facilitates. The study examines how Narayan's novel *The Guide* reveal the psychology of women trying to overcome and their attempt from escapism from life into fantasy.

R. K .Narayan's Rosie in the novel, *The Guide* is kaleidoscopic in character. She is an enigma and a mystery like Shakespeare's Cleopatra who is seemingly docile and submissive but once the inner spark is kindled it catches fire, and her determination and inner strength takes her to her goal. Cleopatra

with her bewitching beauty entrapped great men like Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. So does Rosie with her dance and charming exterior entrap both her husband and Raju but deserts them in the end. In this regard she can also be likened to the archetypal enchantress Eve, who brings downfall on herself and on her man. Raju becomes “a waxing poet” when he describes her:

She was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky, which made only half visible – as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice (65).

Raju, the guide becomes a sinner because of Rosie and from sinner he becomes a saint again because of her. The comparison of Rosie to that of a snake reveals R. K. Narayan’s intention of projecting Rosie’s character. In the beginning of the novel when Rosie meets Raju for the first time, she asks him to take her to a snake charmer and watch a snake dancing to the snake charmer’s tune. The significance of the event is Rosie too is a snake, and she intends to dance to the tune of Raju.

The snake is a lovely creature, which creeps on the ground with its hood prostrate but once it becomes aware of danger, it is quick to strike. Raju’s mother rightly judges her character to that of a snake and calls her “a snake woman” (154). Raju in his own words calls her “the serpent girl” (212). Joseph the cook calls her, “a horrible nagger” (129).

In her husband Marco’s Shadow, she is docile and submissive. Even when she cohabits with Raju, she does not reveal her inner character. But the moment she comes to know of Raju’s betrayal she is ready to strike at him as much as a snake which is harmed by its practitioner. Though she tries to clear Raju of his debt and save him from imprisonment she leaves him in the lurch in the end. She is ungrateful to Raju who had uplifted her from a depressed,

frustrated and deserted wifehood to a celebrity status as a dancer.

At first, she is a typical Indian woman who comes to Malgudi accompanying her husband Marco, an archaeologist on his artistic expedition. She suppresses all her aspirations of dancing and her post graduate educational qualification to please her husband. It is on her account of a lowly birth as a Temple dancer she marries Marco much against her wish.

Rosie feels neglected because of her husband’s fanatical devotion to his “cold, old stone wall” (83). And to Marco, she is devoted to her useless dance which is considered by him as street- acrobatics. Lack of proper understanding, and desirable marital compatibility, lead to marital disharmony. Consequently, there occurs an estrangement between the husband and the wife. The world of art never perfected their relationship, but it does engulf them.

Rosie tries her best to be a devoted and dutiful wife. She tries to please her husband by showing some interest in his profession and accompanies him to his site, the archaeological friezes, as she calls it. Rosie’s attempts end in vain. She proves to be the very Indian wife when she shows interest in her husband’s success and his book even after his desertion because she argues:

As a good man he may not mind, but is it not a wife’s duty to guard and help her husband, whatever the way in which he deals with her? (120).

She repents for having deceived her husband and says to Raju: “After all he is my husband; I would have preferred to die on his doorstep” (119). Every now and then her conscience pricks her and she is constantly thinking of her husband. The following lines illustrate Rosie’s dilemma in returning to her husband:

After all . . . Is this right what I am doing? After all, he has been so good to me, given me

comfort and freedom. What husband in the world would let his wife go and live in a hotel room by herself, a hundred miles away (120).

In spite of this self-analysis and recrimination Rosie chooses to stick to Raju because "anything that interested her seemed to irritate him" [Marco] (76).

It is her husband's negligence, which leads her towards Raju. Even when she commits the ultimate sin of adultery with Raju, the guide, she feels guilty and begs her husband's forgiveness. She cares for her husband and tries her best to reconcile with him. K. Chellappan reflects Rosie's character as:

More specifically in Narayan's Rosie, he finds a very Indian woman and the accomplishments which an M.A. degree and the professional competence to dance conferred on her were of little avail as she waited on her husband's doorsteps 'day after day' for him to change his mind (69).

Therefore, she finally turns towards Raju who is the only other person known to her in Malgudi when Marco deserts her. The restrained, depressed wife turns towards the guide, Raju, to guide her as a pole star. Though at first, she treats Raju as a brother, the need for emotional security and satisfaction compels her to seek the physical nearness of Raju as a lover. If Marco had shown a little interest in her, Raju would not have got a chance to seduce her.

She could have avoided responding to Raju's overtures and shunned him away and saved herself from disgrace. Raju's remarks prove it when he says:

She could've pushed my face back, crying, 'How dare you talk like this' and shut the door on me. But she didn't', instead she says 'I never knew you would be such a troublesome man. Wait a minute, then' (73).

Narayan has portrayed Rosie to be moody, emotional and child-like in her perception of nature and life. He describes:

She behaved like a baby, excited, thrilled, and appreciative of everything . . . She ran like a child from plant to plant with cries of joy (87).

She also behaves like a matured woman, when she confesses her sin of adultery and is ready to seek forgiveness or punishment. Despite her husband's indifference towards her she approaches Marco and says,

I have come to apologize sincerely. I want to say I will do whatever you ask me to do. I committed a blunder . . . (150).

And when she fails in her attempt of reconciliation with her husband she does not wail like an impatient woman but waits at her husband's doorstep in complete silence. To put it in her own words:

I waited there . . . I had stood there for nearly three hours, I think . . . Day after day it went on. I stayed on hopefully. I found that he would not eat the food I touched. . . . But I followed him, day after day like a dog- waiting on his grace. I could never have imagined that one human being could ignore the presence of another human being so completely. It was a strain to remain speechless in that vast lonely place. I thought I had gone dumb (150).

Her decision to return to Raju after being deserted by her husband proves her to be an opportunist. In her cohabitation with Raju, she keeps herself mentally aloof though she does the household domestic chores with Raju's mother. There is a sort of detached involvement, a silent spectator in her. Raju describes Rosie's detached involvement as:

Rosie behaved as if she did not hear these domestic matters. She looked fixedly at the floor or at the pages of a book, and moved off to a corner of the hall, as if to be out of earshot. She did not, even when she was alone with me, embarrassed me by asking any questions about our affairs (165).

She diplomatically seeks Raju's decision when his uncle tries to evict her from their home. It is her devotion to art and determination that makes her a famous dancer. She does not care for monetary benefits or luxury and comfort. She is only bothered by her dance. Rosie's life changes from then onwards. She is known to the dancing world as Nalini. The change in Rosie's life is described in the novel as:

With the attainment of a new name, Rosie entered a new phase of life. Under the new name, Rosie and all she had suffered in her earlier life were buried from public view (176).

Rosie Alias Nalini becomes busy with her programmes that in the end monotony seizes holds of her and therefore she starts to regret the life she leads. However, she shows her indebtedness to Raju by paying off his debts in spite of his betrayal. But in the end, she shuts everything and goes away to lead a normal life.

K. Chellappan comments on the relationship between Raju and Rosie as:

If Raju, the sinner-saint is the parody of the principle of Shiva, Rosie is the feminine principle, the Maya or the serpent power (73).

Chellappan remarks that, "Rosie's entry into the world of Raju disturbs the routine rhythm and if he awakens the artist in her, she awakens the eros in him" (73). It is true that as a dancer Rosie succeeds in her life, but it is difficult to spell out her erotic inclinations as a woman, for the character herself is uncertain about her choice. Hyde comments:

Did Rosie truly love her husband or was she merely trying to make a better life for herself? In the story, she does at times exhibit affection towards her husband, but there is confusion as to what the motives behind her affection were (206).

Here Rosie's love and affections are questioned. This issue raises another question whether Rosie is

unable to exhibit true love, or she uses love as means to an end.

Once again Hyde comes to our rescue: "Raju unlocked a door for her that had been closed for a very long time. She confused or perhaps misplaced her affection for the dance and poured herself into Raju, who was tangible" (216). Raju thinks that by supporting and encouraging her aptitude for dancing he can attain Rosie. Hyde says:

Rosie falls in love with her dancing once more and applies her newfound passion to something less abstract that will reciprocate her passion – Raju . . . By giving her this gift, she feels indebted to him and they begin an affair (157).

The self-activated Rosie is a foil to the ideal women of Malgudi. As she is only a visitor to Malgudi she boldly rebels against the rural conventions, traditions, beliefs and morals.

K.N. Joshi in his criticism of Rosie writes:

Raju's imprisonment and Rosie's redemption are simultaneous but after the end of the term Raju becomes a fugitive from the civilized world. She is no longer glamorous and remains dusky rather than bright, being seen through the film of a lover's muddled infatuation (35).

In R.K. Narayan's Rosie there is a transition from the conventional, orthodox, predictable homebound woman whose life is fulfilled by familial love and domesticity to that of unconventional, modern unpredictable woman who sacrifices and shuns domesticity to fulfill her ambition and aspiration. Therefore, her self-awareness brought their downfall.

Women today have liberated themselves from simpler, yet more tangible and crippling than a restrictive image. Medical science has freed them from unplanned pregnancies, while educational opportunities and modern technology have set them on equal footing with men intellectually and physically. This only helps a minute fraction of the female population, since poverty, ignorance and cultural factor serves to maintain the statuesque.

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## **FRACTURED BONDS AND QUIET RESISTANCE: THE EMOTIONAL CORE OF MAHESH DATTANI'S DUAL NARRATIVES**

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### **Abstract**

*Theatre serves as a potent medium for expressing both overt and subtle realities, especially those social issues left unspoken in daily life. Mahesh Dattani's plays boldly bring to light themes long deemed unsuitable for dramatic representation. His works delve into the lives of marginalized individuals, offering insight into recognition, compassion, gender identity, and emotional sensibility. This study examines *Where There's a Will* and *Bravely Fought the Queen* through a socialist lens, critiquing the patriarchal structures and fractured familial bonds within India's urban middle class. Dattani challenges ego-driven and gender-centric norms, using his characters' quiet resistance and survival strategies to reveal deep psychological and social imbalance. The study explores the problems of fractured bonds and quiet resistance in Dattani's two well acclaimed plays *Where There's a Will* and *Bravely Fought the Queen*. The plays *Where there is a Will* and *Bravely Fought the Queen* are analyzed based on the Socialistic theory highlighting the lack of familial values and flashes the egoistic nature of patriarchal society. He has denounced and unmasked the Indian society and its victims including *Where There is a Will*. Dattani exposes and explores the socio-psychological imbalance of gender-centric approaches in the middle-class urban Indian families in the play *Bravely Fought the Queen*. Since his first play *Where There's a Will* in 1988, Dattani has relentlessly unmasked the eccentricities and tensions embedded in Indian society. His plays not only provoke critical thought but also inspire men, women, and communities by giving voice to their hidden struggles and unacknowledged truths.*

**Keywords:** *Mahesh Dattani's plays, critiquing, the egoistic nature of patriarchal society, the patriarchal structures, lack of familial values, fractured familial bonds, socio-psychological imbalance, gender-centric approaches, the middle-class urban Indian families*

### **The Familial Space as Dystopia in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen***

Mahesh Dattani's plays often center on the institution of family—a microcosm of society where identity is formed, power contested, and hegemonic norms are both upheld and resisted. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, the familial space becomes a lens through which larger social and political tensions are refracted, exposing the coercive structures that underline the supposedly safe domestic sphere.

### **The Unhomely Home**

Dattani problematizes the idea of "home" as a nurturing, intimate space. Instead, it becomes a site of violence, repression, and contestation. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's idea of ambivalence in the nation-family parallel, Dattani reveals how private and public spaces are fluid and co-constitutive. In *Where There's a Will*, the family remains fractured even after the patriarch's death. Hasmukh Mehta's home is symbolically divided into smaller, disconnected

zones—reflecting the emotional disintegration of its inhabitants. The characters' struggle is not just against each other, but also against the psychological weight of inheritance, control, and failed intimacy.

### **Theatre of the Absurd in Indian Context**

Although not a direct adaptation of the Theatre of the Absurd, Dattani's work aligns with its ethos. Influenced by European dramatists like Pinter and Sartre, he explores existential anxiety, the fragmentation of identity, and the absurdity of social roles. His characters—especially within families—are trapped in performative cycles that reveal the futility of connection and meaning in spaces presumed to offer stability.

### **Family: A Site of Domination**

In *Where There's a Will*, Hasmukh is a product of trauma inflicted by his own father and, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of control over his son, Ajit. Their relationship is a battle for space and self-definition. The women—Sonal and Preeti—are no less embroiled in this fight. Sonal's obsessive control over the kitchen is her form of agency, while Preeti's calculated conformity masks a deeper strategy of survival. Yet, her manipulation leads to exposure and fear of exclusion, rendering her a tragic figure caught between strategy and subjugation.

The play's climax reveals how even in death, Hasmukh maintains control. The family's fight over his will exposes their emotional and moral bankruptcy. Their attempts to gain agency post-Hasmukh only lead to new dependencies—on Kiran, his mistress. In the end, no redemptive transformation occurs, only a pragmatic truce driven by necessity.

### ***Bravely Fought the Queen*: Gender, Control, and Performance**

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani shifts focus from overt control to more insidious forms of

domination, especially gendered ones. The Trivedi household, a plush upper-middle-class home, masks a dystopia where family members wear emotional and social masks. Dolly and Alka, married to brothers Jiten and Nitin respectively, navigate a domestic space riddled with abuse, manipulation, and failed communication. The motif of the mask and the bonsai plants are symbolic of this controlled and stunted existence.

The bonsai metaphor is central—plants deliberately stunted, bound, and manipulated into unnatural shapes mirror the lives of the women. As Lalitha explains how to trim and bind bonsais, the audience becomes aware of the analogous social conditioning that shapes the female characters. Their desires, identities, and aspirations are pruned to fit patriarchal molds.

Dolly and Alka live in denial and fantasy. Dolly's daughter, Daksha, a spastic child resulting from Jiten's abuse, becomes a fiction—a dancer at school. Similarly, Alka constructs the fantasy of Kanhaiya, a lover who never appears. These fictional escapes are coping mechanisms in a space that denies agency.

### **Patriarchy and Performance**

Jiten, Nitin, and even Baa, the paralyzed matriarch, wield control in various ways. Jiten's violence is rooted in guilt and repression. Nitin, a closeted homosexual, was coerced into marriage by Praful, Dolly and Alka's brother. His "normal" heterosexual marriage is a performance he must maintain to uphold family honor. Baa, despite her physical helplessness, dominates through emotional manipulation and control, especially over Alka and Nitin.

The title of the play, drawn from the poem praising the Rani of Jhansi, ironically contrasts with the quiet, defeated struggles of the women in the play. Dolly and Alka are not brave warriors but women trapped in dysfunctional marriages, caught between societal expectations and personal desires.

Even their acts of rebellion—Dolly’s makeup for a party that has been canceled, Alka’s drunken outbursts—are subdued and ultimately ineffective.

### **Lalitha and Class Consciousness**

Lalitha, a middle-class visitor to the Trivedi household, appears at first to have agency. She is educated, participates in her husband Sridhar’s professional life, and grows bonsais—an activity she equates with creativity. However, her sense of empowerment is limited and conditioned. Her interest in bonsais stems from a need to “have something to do,” hinting at an underlying dissatisfaction.

Though she initially admires the Trivedis’ affluence, she soon sees through their dysfunction. Her own marriage, though seemingly more balanced, is based on practical arrangements rather than romantic fulfillment. Still, her involvement in multiple roles offers a contrast to Dolly and Alka’s more passive existence.

### **Gendered Division of Space**

The play’s structure into three acts—“The Women,” “The Men,” and “Free for All”—mirrors the division of gendered spaces. Yet, Dattani subverts this neat separation. The phone rings constantly, linking domestic and professional realms. Baa, though absent in the women’s act, occupies a raised stage space in the men’s act—signifying her invisible but overarching power.

Naina Devi’s thumris play in the background, adding a subtext of resistance and desire for expression. These songs, associated with courtesans, symbolize a rejection of imposed respectability. Dolly’s desire to dress as a tawaif at a costume party further emphasizes this longing for freedom beyond the roles of wife and mother.

### **Performance as a Way of Life**

The characters perform their social roles, but their private selves remain repressed. Dolly acts the ideal

wife, Alka the rebel, Nitin the dutiful son, and Jiten the authoritarian brother. These performances are sustained by fictions they tell themselves and others. As Walling observes, these are not merely theatrical devices but existential strategies—masks necessary for survival in a constraining environment.

Baa’s need to be obeyed, Nitin’s false hatred for his father, and Alka’s yearning for a child all point to the same truth: the characters are emotionally stunted, their lives shaped by expectations rather than agency. Even their fantasies, like Dolly’s stories about Daksha or Alka’s affair with Kanhaiya, offer only temporary respite.

### **The Dystopic Family**

Dattani’s vision of the Indian family is deeply critical. The traditional joint family is exposed as a site of coercion rather than care, where hierarchy, silence, and domination govern relationships. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, the ideal of the happy home collapses under the weight of betrayal, repression, and denial.

No character escapes unscathed. The women may resist subtly, but their resistance is often internal, passive, or symbolic. The men, despite their aggression, are equally traumatized and helpless. The domestic space, far from offering refuge, becomes a battleground.

### **Conclusion**

Mahesh Dattani’s plays dismantle the myth of the Indian family as a nurturing and morally cohesive unit. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, the family is shown to be a space of emotional repression, coercive gender roles, and performative normalcy. The characters survive not through authentic bonds but through carefully constructed fictions and passive resistance. Their struggles, though largely subdued or internalized, reveal the heavy toll of conforming to heteronormative and patriarchal structures. Similarly, in *Where There’s a Will*, Dattani explores the trauma

inherited across generations within a patriarchal household. Hasmukh Mehta's desperate grip on control—even beyond death—creates a psychic prison for his family. The fragmented domestic space, symbolized by the division of stage into multiple zones, exposes the illusion of familial unity. The struggles of Ajit, Preeti, and Sonal reflect the same desperate negotiations for space and selfhood seen in *Bravely Fought the Queen*. In both plays, family members are reduced to competing entities within a closed, unyielding system. Together, these works reinforce Dattani's central critique: that the traditional family, instead of being a haven, can often be a dystopic space of entrapment. His characters do not always achieve freedom, but their acts of defiance—whether passive, performative, or strategic—assert their enduring need for dignity and self-definition. Dattani's theatre serves not to resolve these tensions but to expose them, offering his audience an

unflinching look at the realities masked by societal norms. In doing so, he gives voice to the silences within Indian households and reclaims the family as a deeply political site.

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# NAVIGATING ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN WORKPLACE: IMPACT OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ADAPTATION TO TECH-DRIVEN FUTURE

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## Abstract

*The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed organizational culture, redefining the way businesses operate, communicate, and engage with employees. This paper explores the profound impact of digital disruption on workplace culture, examining how organizations are adapting to a tech-driven environment. It delves into key technological shifts, including artificial intelligence, automation, remote work, and digital collaboration tools, highlighting their influence on leadership styles, employee engagement, and workplace dynamics. The paper also discusses the challenges organizations face in maintaining a cohesive culture amidst digital transformation, such as resistance to change, cyber security concerns, and work-life balance issues. By analyzing real-world case studies and emerging trends, this paper provides insights into how businesses can foster a resilient and the organizational culture that adopt technological innovation while preserving core values and human-centric approaches. Ultimately, it offers strategic recommendations for organizations to successfully navigate digital disruption and build a future-ready workplace culture.*

**Keywords:** *digital transformation, organizational culture, workplace dynamics, employee engagement and workplace culture*

## Introduction

The digital changes have significantly transformed the way organizations function, influencing every aspect of business operations, communication, and workforce dynamics. With the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, big data, cloud computing, and remote collaboration tools, organizations are experiencing a paradigm shift in their cultural frameworks. Digital disruption, characterized by the rapid and continuous evolution of technology, has redefined traditional workplace

norms, leading to new challenges and opportunities in shaping organizational culture. Organizational culture, often described as the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that define a workplace, is crucial for business success. It influences employee engagement, productivity, innovation, and overall organizational performance. The shift toward digital workplaces has necessitated changes in leadership styles, decision-making processes, communication patterns, and employee expectations. With the advent of remote work and hybrid work models,

geographical boundaries are dissolving, enabling a more diverse and globally connected workforce. While this fosters inclusivity and flexibility, it also demands new approaches to maintaining a cohesive and engaged organizational culture.

The rise of data-driven decision-making is one of the most transformative shifts brought by digital technology. Organizations now utilize analytics and AI-powered insights to streamline operations, forecast trends, and improve employee experiences. However, this growing dependence on technology also raises concerns regarding data privacy, ethical implications, and the potential decline of human-centric workplace practices. Furthermore, automation and AI-driven processes are redefining job roles, making it essential to foster a culture of continuous learning and upskilling to stay competitive in the digital age. Notwithstanding the many advantages of digital transformation, firms must contend with issues like change aversion, digital exhaustion, cybersecurity threats, and preserving a feeling of community in virtual settings. Adaptability and resilience are crucial in more innovative, collaborative, and agile cultures that are replacing traditional hierarchical systems. While maintaining fundamental human values like trust, cooperation, and worker well-being, leaders must cultivate a culture that welcomes technological innovations. This paper explores the intricate relationship between digital disruption and organizational culture, providing insights into how businesses can successfully navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by technological advancements. Through an analysis of emerging trends, best practices, and real-world examples, this discussion aims to equip organizations with strategies to build a dynamic, future-ready culture in an increasingly tech-driven workplace.

### **The Role of Technology in Shaping Company Culture**

The modern workforce is shaping their working habits technological advancements, which continuously reshape how we work. Hybrid and remote work environments have become possible due to these innovations, enhancing collaboration and enabling instant communication. However, while technology offers numerous benefits, it also presents challenges, such as feelings of isolation and a lack of personal connections in the workplace. This makes it essential to understand how technology influences organizational culture.

### **Positive Impacts of Technology on Company Culture**

There is no doubt that technology has transformed the workplace in positive ways. It has expanded connectivity, both domestically and globally, unlocking opportunities that were previously unimaginable in a pre-digital era. Here are some of the key ways technology has enhanced workplace culture.

### **Introducing Collaboration and Communication**

Staying in touch with coworkers around the world is now simpler than ever thanks to improved collaboration and communication technologies. With the advent of email, instant messaging, and other sophisticated communication methods, obstacles have been eliminated, allowing for smooth cooperation across time zones and languages. Regardless of geographic distances, employees may share ideas and learn from one another in this rich and diverse workplace culture that is fostered by global connectedness.

### **Remote Work and Work-Life Balance**

Remote work, though not a new concept, gained significant traction during the pandemic. Without modern technology, transitioning to a remote work

model on such a large scale would have been nearly impossible. For years, employees—especially working parents—have advocated for greater flexibility, and today's digital connectivity enables companies to offer greater autonomy in where and how employees work. By trusting employees to manage their own schedules and integrate personal responsibilities into their workday, organizations cultivate a culture of support and recognition for the individual as a whole person.

### ***Boosting Efficiency and Productivity***

A workplace culture that promotes engagement and connectivity naturally leads to higher efficiency and productivity. Employees who feel valued and secure in their roles are more likely to contribute their best efforts. Additionally, technology plays a direct role in streamlining workflows, facilitating collaboration, and automating routine tasks. When employees operate in an open, tech-enabled environment, they can fully leverage digital tools to enhance their productivity. This interplay between technology and culture demonstrates how each influences the other in shaping a high-performing organization.

### ***Encouraging Innovation and Creativity***

Technology fosters creativity by providing employees with tools to experiment, collaborate, and develop new ideas. For example, several organizations shifted to digital solutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's issues. Up Your Culture, a two-day in-person training, evolved into a year-long virtual curriculum that relies heavily on technology. This shift not only allowed the program to continue but also sparked greater creativity among team members, pushing them to explore innovative methods of content delivery. The leadership's openness to utilizing digital tools further reinforced a culture of adaptability and forward-thinking.

### **Potential Challenges of Technology in Workplace Culture**

Although technology improves workplace culture, there are possible drawbacks that businesses must carefully consider to avoid adverse effects. One major risk is the potential for technology to create feelings of isolation or detachment among employees. To maintain a warm and connected virtual environment, it is essential to encourage human interaction. Simple practices—such as turning cameras on during virtual meetings and engaging in small talk before discussions—can help maintain personal connections despite the digital setting. Additionally, while remote and hybrid work arrangements provide flexibility, they can blur the boundaries between professional and personal life. Employees may feel pressured to be constantly available, leading to burnout. To prevent this, organizations must establish clear expectations regarding work hours and encourage leaders to model healthy work-life balance behaviors. Technology plays a crucial role in shaping a positive and sustainable workplace culture. It drives productivity, enhances collaboration, and empowers employees with greater control over their work. However, to maximize its benefits, organizations must establish clear guidelines on how and when digital tools should be used. By balancing technological advancements with a human-centric approach, businesses can create an inclusive, engaging, and forward-thinking work environment.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Cameron and Quinn (2011) – Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture**

According to Cameron and Quinn, organizational culture is dynamic and has a big influence on how well a corporation performs. Clan, Adhocracy, Hierarchy, and Market are the four categories into which they divide culture in their Competing Values Framework (CVF). According to the report,

companies undergoing digital transformation must adopt more flexible and adaptive cultures while upholding their essential principles. The authors emphasize that in order for digital technology to be effective, it must be in line with organizational values and that leaders are essential in promoting cultural change. They also talk about how businesses must assess their current culture, identify a desirable future state, and then execute change management techniques in line with that diagnosis. Digital transformation involves more than just adopting new technology; it also entails changing decision-making procedures, workforce involvement, and leadership styles. The paper functions as a useful manual.

### **Deloitte– Cultural Transformation: The Key to Business Success in the Digital Age**

Deloitte's observations center on how organizational culture must change as a result of digital transformation. The report emphasizes that companies that combine digital tools and cultivate a human-centric culture are more likely to succeed. It emphasizes agility, employee empowerment, and leadership alignment as the three main forces behind cultural change. The study emphasizes that organization with rigid, hierarchical cultures struggle with digital disruption, whereas those fostering innovation, inclusivity, and collaboration are better positioned for success. Deloitte also points out that technology alone is not enough; companies must focus on reskilling employees, fostering adaptability, and embedding digital mindsets across teams. The report underscores the importance of measuring cultural transformation through employee feedback, engagement metrics, and digital adoption rates. Ultimately, the findings suggest that organizations should balance technological advancements with core cultural values, ensuring that digital tools enhance, rather than replace, human interaction and creativity.

### **Forbes (2017) – The Impact of Digital Transformation on Organizational Culture**

Forbes explores how digital transformation is reshaping workplace culture by shifting organizational structures, leadership styles, and employee expectations. The article discusses how digital technologies—such as AI, automation, and remote work tools—are redefining work environments, making them more agile and decentralized. However, it warns that these changes can create cultural fragmentation, particularly if organizations fail to maintain strong communication and employee engagement. According to the article, leaders need to actively foster creativity, teamwork, and ongoing learning in order to create a culture that is conducive to digitalization. In digital workplaces where workers feel at ease adjusting to new technologies, Forbes also emphasizes the need of psychological safety. The results indicate that in order to preserve a unified culture, businesses should combine technical innovations with human-centered leadership techniques. Additionally, organizations that fail to align digital transformation with cultural change efforts risk facing resistance, disengagement, and inefficiencies in their workforce.

### **Harvard Business Review (2019) – The Digital Transformation of Work: A Revolution in Corporate Culture**

This article from HBR explores how digital transformation is fundamentally altering corporate culture by shifting work structures, redefining leadership roles, and enabling greater workforce flexibility. It highlights that organizations embracing digital tools—such as cloud computing, AI, and data analytics—are experiencing increased efficiency and innovation. But there are drawbacks to these changes as well, like staff opposition, a lack of skills, and the breakdown of long-standing professional ties. The results highlight the need for executives to foster a digital-first mentality and make sure that staff

members are encouraged during the change. To avoid cultural disintegration, HBR advises firms to prioritize staff upskilling, improving communication, and reaffirming shared values. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to design inclusive online spaces that promote cooperation among all demographic groups. Ultimately, the article concludes that digital transformation should not be seen as a purely technological shift but rather as a cultural evolution that redefines how work is conducted and valued.

### **Harvard Business School Digital Initiative (n.d.) – The Cultural Impact of Technology in Organizations**

This study examines the profound influence of digital technology on workplace culture, focusing on how automation, AI, and digital collaboration tools shape organizational dynamics. It emphasizes that technology can either enhance or weaken culture, depending on how it is integrated. The research highlights that organizations with strong digital cultures benefit from higher employee engagement, improved communication, and increased productivity. However, it warns against over-reliance on technology, which can lead to disconnection, reduced interpersonal interactions, and employee burnout. The study also stresses the importance of digital leadership, where executives must foster transparency, adaptability, and inclusion in tech-driven environments. One key finding is that technology should be used to complement, not replace, human-centric work practices. Organizations that prioritize flexibility, continuous learning, and ethical technology use tend to build resilient and sustainable digital cultures.

### **Hofstede (1980) – Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values**

Hofstede’s seminal work on cultural dimensions provides insights into how national cultures influence organizational behavior and technology adoption. He

introduces key cultural dimensions—power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation—that impact how employees interact with digital transformation. The findings suggest that organizations in high power-distance cultures may struggle with decentralized decision-making in digital environments, whereas those in low power-distance cultures may adapt more quickly. Similarly, collectivist cultures may favor collaborative digital tools, while individualistic cultures may prioritize self-driven technologies. Hofstede’s research remains relevant in the digital era, emphasizing that successful digital transformations must account for cultural diversity and varying work-related values. His findings underscore the need for customized digital strategies that align with cultural contexts, ensuring seamless technology integration without disrupting workplace harmony.

### **Lee and Turban (2001) – A Cultured Perspective on Organizational Learning**

This study examines how national culture influences organizational learning and adaptation to digital transformation. The authors argue that learning cultures vary across countries, affecting how employees engage with new technologies. The findings indicate that organizations in innovation-driven cultures are more likely to embrace digital transformation, while those in risk-averse cultures may resist change. The study also highlights that organizational learning is enhanced when digital tools are used to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Additionally, leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring that cultural values are preserved while embracing technological advancements. The authors suggest that businesses should align learning strategies with cultural expectations, ensuring that digital adoption does not alienate employees. The research ultimately supports the idea that cultural awareness is essential for successful digital

transformation, as it influences how employees perceive, adopt, and interact with new technologies.

### **McKinsey and Company (n.d.) – How Digital Technology is Shaping Organizational Culture**

McKinsey's study explores how technology-driven organizations cultivate high-performance cultures through digital tools and agile leadership. The report identifies four key cultural shifts in the digital era: enhanced connectivity, data-driven decision-making, automation, and flexible work arrangements. It highlights that companies that embrace digital collaboration platforms experience higher engagement and productivity, whereas those that fail to adapt face cultural stagnation. The findings stress that leaders must actively shape digital cultures by promoting transparency, inclusivity, and lifelong learning. One key insight is that digital transformation should be an ongoing process rather than a one-time initiative. The study also warns that technology can exacerbate workplace inequalities if not implemented thoughtfully, emphasizing the need for ethical and inclusive digital strategies. Ultimately, McKinsey concludes that companies that blend digital innovation with strong cultural values create more adaptive, resilient, and future-ready organizations.

### **Susskind and Susskind (2015) – The Future of the Professions**

Susskind and Susskind explore how technology is transforming professional work, particularly in fields like law, medicine, and education. The paper argues that automation and AI will fundamentally redefine the role of human experts, shifting work from traditional expertise-based models to technology-enabled frameworks. The findings highlight that professionals must adapt by embracing continuous learning and digital proficiency. Additionally, the authors emphasize the ethical implications of AI, warning that excessive reliance on automation can erode trust, accountability, and human judgment. The

paper concludes that while technology enhances efficiency, it should not replace the human elements of expertise, empathy, and ethical decision-making.

### **Impact of Digital Disruption on Workplace Culture**

Digital disruption has fundamentally transformed workplace culture, influencing how employees interact, collaborate, and engage with their organizations. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, cloud computing, big data, and remote work technologies has reshaped traditional workplace norms, creating both opportunities and challenges for businesses. While digital advancements have enhanced efficiency, flexibility, and connectivity, they have also disrupted established cultural dynamics, requiring organizations to adapt to a rapidly evolving work environment.

One of the most profound impacts of digital disruption is the shift toward **remote and hybrid work models**. With digital tools enabling seamless communication and collaboration across geographies, organizations are no longer confined to physical office spaces. This has fostered workplace flexibility, improving work-life balance and employee satisfaction. However, it has also posed challenges in maintaining organizational culture, as employees may feel disconnected from their teams and struggle with virtual collaboration. Companies must invest in digital engagement strategies, virtual team-building activities, and strong communication frameworks to sustain a cohesive culture in a dispersed workforce.

Roles and responsibilities in the workplace have also changed as a result of automation and AI-driven workflows. Employees can now concentrate on strategic and creative aspects of their work as routine and repetitive duties are increasingly mechanized. This increases efficiency and productivity, but it also calls for a culture of ongoing reskilling and upskilling. To make sure that their workforce is competitive in a technologically advanced environment, organizations need to invest in employee development programs.

Businesses must have a culture that values digital literacy and lifelong learning if they are to prosper in the face of swift technological change. Moreover, digital disruption has led to **greater workplace diversity and inclusivity**. With remote work eliminating geographical barriers, organizations can hire talent from diverse backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive work culture. However, this also requires businesses to establish inclusive digital work environments where all employees, regardless of location or background, feel valued and supported. Digital accessibility, cross-cultural communication, and inclusive leadership practices are critical in this regard. Despite its benefits, digital disruption has introduced challenges such as **digital fatigue, cybersecurity risks, and privacy concerns**. The constant use of digital tools, virtual meetings, and 24/7 connectivity can lead to burnout and reduced employee well-being. Organizations must establish clear boundaries between work and personal life, promote digital detox initiatives, and prioritize employee mental health. Additionally, with the increasing reliance on digital platforms, organizations must cultivate a culture of cybersecurity awareness and ethical data usage to protect sensitive information. In conclusion, digital disruption is reshaping workplace culture in profound ways, requiring organizations to be agile, adaptive, and forward-thinking. By fostering a culture of innovation, continuous learning, inclusivity, and employee well-being, businesses can successfully navigate the digital revolution and create a thriving, future-ready workplace. Organizations that proactively embrace digital transformation while preserving core human values will be better positioned to sustain long-term success in an increasingly tech-driven world.

### **Organizations are Adapting to a Tech-Driven Environment**

As digital disruption reshapes industries, organizations are continuously evolving to integrate

technology into their operational frameworks, work cultures, and business strategies. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, cloud computing, big data, and digital collaboration tools has compelled businesses to adopt new ways of working, decision-making, and engaging with employees. Successfully adapting to this tech-driven environment requires organizations to embrace innovation, cultivate a digitally skilled workforce, and build agile workplace cultures that balance technology with human-centric values. One of the primary ways organizations are adapting is by **embracing digital transformation** across all levels. Businesses are investing in AI-driven analytics, machine learning, and automation to streamline operations and improve efficiency. From HR processes and customer service to supply chain management and marketing, digital tools are optimizing workflows and reducing manual tasks. However, technology adoption is not just about efficiency; it also requires a fundamental shift in organizational culture. Companies must foster a mindset of **continuous learning and adaptability**, encouraging employees to embrace technological changes rather than resist them. The shift toward **remote and hybrid work models** is another critical adaptation. Digital collaboration platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack, and cloud-based project management tools have revolutionized how teams communicate and collaborate across geographical boundaries. Organizations are rethinking traditional office structures, enabling employees to work flexibly while maintaining productivity. To support this transition, businesses are implementing **remote work policies, virtual engagement strategies, and digital wellness programs** to ensure employees remain connected, motivated, and mentally well in a digital-first environment.

A key aspect of adapting to a tech-driven environment is the **reskilling and upskilling of employees**. As automation and AI replace repetitive

tasks, employees must acquire new digital competencies to remain relevant. Organizations are investing in **learning and development (Land) programs, online training platforms, and AI-driven skill assessments** to help their workforce stay ahead. Upskilling initiatives in areas such as data analytics, cybersecurity, and digital marketing are becoming essential for businesses to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven landscape. Leadership styles are also evolving to support digital adaptation. **Agile leadership and data-driven decision-making** are replacing traditional hierarchical structures. Leaders must be open to innovation, encourage cross-functional collaboration, and leverage real-time data insights to make strategic decisions. Organizations that foster a **culture of experimentation, adaptability, and resilience** are better equipped to navigate digital disruptions. However, as organizations become more dependent on technology, they must also address challenges such as **cybersecurity risks, data privacy concerns, and employee digital fatigue**. Companies are strengthening cybersecurity protocols, implementing **ethical AI governance, and promoting healthy digital work habits** to ensure a secure and sustainable digital work environment.

### Key Technological Shifts and Influence

The modern workplace is undergoing a fundamental transformation driven by technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, remote work, and digital collaboration tools. These innovations are not only reshaping how organizations operate but are also redefining leadership styles, employee engagement, and workplace dynamics. As organizations integrate these technologies, they must navigate challenges and opportunities to create an adaptive and future-ready workforce.

### 1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Leadership Evolution

AI has revolutionized business operations by enabling data-driven decision-making, predictive analytics, and automation of repetitive tasks. This shift has significantly impacted leadership by changing how executives and managers approach decision-making, talent management, and strategic planning. AI-powered analytics provide real-time insights into market trends, employee performance, and customer behavior, allowing leaders to make informed and proactive decisions. Moreover, AI has introduced a shift from hierarchical leadership to agile leadership. Traditional top-down management approaches are being replaced with more collaborative and data-driven strategies, where leaders act as facilitators rather than sole decision-makers. AI-driven insights help leaders tailor employee development programs, enhance workforce productivity, and create personalized career growth paths. However, leaders must also focus on ethical AI implementation, ensuring transparency, fairness, and data privacy.

### 2. Automation and Workforce Transformation

Automation is streamlining workflows across industries, from manufacturing and logistics to HR and customer service. Robotic process automation (RPA) and AI-driven chatbots are handling routine and repetitive tasks, allowing employees to focus on higher-value work. While automation boosts efficiency and reduces operational costs, it also demands a culture of continuous learning and upskilling. Leaders must prioritize reskilling and workforce development programs to help employees transition into roles that require human-centric skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence. Organizations that embrace automation while investing in employee growth create a resilient workforce that adapts to technological change rather than being displaced by it. Additionally, automation impacts workplace dynamics by enabling hyper-

personalization in employee experiences. AI-driven HR platforms can analyze employee preferences, engagement levels, and career aspirations to provide tailored training programs and work schedules, enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

### **3. Remote Work and the Shift in Workplace Culture**

The rise of remote work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has redefined traditional workplace structures. Cloud computing, virtual collaboration platforms, and project management tools have made it possible for employees to work efficiently from anywhere. While remote work offers flexibility, cost savings, and access to a global talent pool, it also presents challenges in maintaining team cohesion, communication, and company culture. Leaders must adapt to managing distributed teams by fostering a culture of trust, autonomy, and accountability. The shift toward output-based performance measurement rather than traditional time-tracking metrics is becoming more prominent. Additionally, organizations must prioritize employee well-being by promoting work-life balance, digital detox initiatives, and mental health support. Employee engagement in remote work settings depends on effective virtual communication strategies. Organizations that leverage video conferencing, asynchronous communication, and virtual team-building activities create a more connected and engaged workforce. Furthermore, fostering a strong sense of belonging through regular check-ins, digital mentorship programs, and company-wide virtual events can mitigate feelings of isolation among remote employees.

### **4. Digital Collaboration Tools and Their Impact on Employee Engagement**

Digital collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, Trello, and Asana have transformed how employees interact and collaborate. These platforms

facilitate real-time communication, seamless project management, and cross-functional teamwork, improving overall efficiency and productivity. However, the widespread adoption of digital tools has also led to digital fatigue, where employees feel overwhelmed by excessive virtual meetings, notifications, and screen time. To combat this, organizations are implementing structured digital communication policies, promoting asynchronous collaboration, and encouraging "right-to-disconnect" policies to ensure employees maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. The integration of AI-powered collaboration tools is further enhancing workplace dynamics. AI-driven meeting assistants, chatbots, and smart scheduling tools help optimize workflows, automate repetitive tasks, and improve overall team productivity. These advancements allow employees to focus on strategic and creative work while reducing administrative burdens.

### **Interplay Between Technology and Workplace Dynamics**

The collective impact of AI, automation, remote work, and digital collaboration tools has led to a shift in workplace dynamics. Organizations are transitioning from rigid, hierarchical structures to more agile, innovation-driven cultures. Employees now expect greater flexibility, autonomy, and purpose-driven work, requiring companies to rethink traditional engagement models. Leaders must embrace digital leadership competencies, including adaptability, emotional intelligence, and digital literacy, to navigate this transformation effectively. Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning will ensure that employees remain competitive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. As organizations continue to integrate AI, automation, remote work, and digital collaboration tools, their workplace cultures, leadership styles, and employee engagement strategies must evolve accordingly. Businesses that

successfully leverage these technologies while maintaining a human-centric approach will create a resilient, innovative, and engaged workforce. The future of work lies in striking a balance between technological advancement and employee well-being, ensuring that digital transformation enhances productivity while preserving workplace culture and human connections.

### Influence of Key Technological Shifts

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, remote work, and digital collaboration tools has revolutionized workplace culture. These technological advancements are reshaping leadership styles, redefining employee engagement, and transforming workplace dynamics. As organizations adapt to a tech-driven environment, they must embrace new strategies to navigate these changes effectively.

#### 1. Influence on Leadership Styles

Technology is driving a shift in leadership from traditional hierarchical models to more agile, data-driven, and collaborative approaches.

- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** AI-powered analytics provide leaders with real-time insights into employee performance, customer behavior, and market trends. This enables evidence-based decision-making rather than relying solely on intuition or past experiences. Leaders must now develop digital literacy skills to interpret data effectively and use it to drive organizational success.
- **Agile and Adaptive Leadership:** With rapid technological change, leaders must embrace **agility and adaptability**. They need to foster a **culture of continuous learning**, encouraging employees to reskill and upskill in response to automation and AI advancements. Agile leaders prioritize **innovation, experimentation, and flexibility**, moving away from rigid structures.

- **Empathetic and Inclusive Leadership:** Remote work and digital tools have redefined workplace interactions, making virtual leadership skills essential. Leaders must communicate effectively across digital platforms, build trust in remote teams, and ensure inclusivity in decision-making processes. A focus on employee well-being and work-life balance is becoming a core leadership responsibility.

#### 2. Impact on Employee Engagement

Technology has created new opportunities for enhancing employee engagement, but it has also introduced challenges that organizations must address.

- **Personalized Employee Experience:** AI and data analytics enable companies to **personalize employee engagement strategies**. AI-driven platforms can analyze engagement levels, predict burnout risks, and recommend tailored learning paths, enhancing job satisfaction.
- **Flexible and Hybrid Work Models:** Remote and hybrid work arrangements have increased employee autonomy and flexibility, allowing workers to balance personal and professional commitments. However, engagement in remote settings requires intentional virtual collaboration, regular check-ins, and digital team-building activities to maintain a sense of belonging.
- **Recognition and Feedback:** Digital collaboration tools and AI-driven HR systems have made performance tracking and feedback more real-time and transparent. Employees can receive instant recognition, data-driven performance insights, and AI-powered career development recommendations, boosting motivation and engagement.
- **Challenges of Digital Fatigue:** While technology facilitates communication, it can also lead to overload and burnout due to excessive virtual meetings and constant connectivity.

Organizations must implement structured communication policies, digital detox initiatives, and clear boundaries for remote **work** to maintain employee well-being.

### 3. Transformation of Workplace Dynamics

Technology has reshaped workplace interactions, team structures, and overall organizational culture, leading to more **collaborative, agile, and digitally connected** work environments.

- **Decentralization and Collaboration:** Digital collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Asana enable seamless teamwork across global locations. This has flattened organizational hierarchies, allowing for more cross-functional and decentralized decision-making. Employees at all levels can contribute ideas, fostering a culture of innovation and inclusivity.
- **Rise of Automation and Changing Job Roles:** Automation is eliminating repetitive tasks, allowing employees to focus on strategic, creative, and high-value work. This shift is altering workplace dynamics, requiring employees to continuously reskill and develop digital competencies. Organizations that invest in upskilling programs will create a workforce that thrives alongside automation rather than being displaced by it.
- **Digital Trust and Cybersecurity:** As companies rely more on digital tools, ensuring cybersecurity and data privacy has become critical. Organizations must foster a culture of **digital trust**, training employees on cybersecurity best practices and implementing ethical AI governance frameworks to maintain transparency and security. The integration of AI, automation, remote work, and digital collaboration tools is profoundly shaping leadership styles, employee engagement, and workplace dynamics. Organizations that

successfully adapt to these shifts—embracing **agile leadership, personalized engagement strategies, and collaborative digital workplaces**—will build a **resilient, future-ready workforce**. However, achieving this balance requires a commitment to **continuous learning, ethical technology use, and employee well-being**. By prioritizing both **technological advancements and human-centric approaches**, organizations can drive innovation while fostering a culture of engagement, trust, and adaptability in the digital age.

### Challenges

Digital transformation is reshaping organizations by integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, cloud computing, and digital collaboration tools. While these innovations enhance efficiency, flexibility, and competitiveness, they also pose significant challenges in maintaining a cohesive workplace culture. The shift to a tech-driven work environment disrupts traditional communication patterns, alters employee interactions, and redefines workplace dynamics. Organizations must navigate these challenges strategically to preserve their core values, employee engagement, and sense of community.

#### 1. The Erosion of Traditional Workplace Interactions

One of the most significant challenges posed by digital transformation is the **loss of in-person interactions** that traditionally foster workplace culture. As remote and hybrid work models become more prevalent, employees experience fewer face-to-face engagements, leading to a decline in spontaneous conversations, informal brainstorming sessions, and social connections.

- **Reduced Sense of Belonging:** Employees working remotely may feel **isolated and disconnected** from the organization's mission

and values. The absence of daily in-person interactions can weaken interpersonal bonds, making it harder to build team camaraderie.

- **Lack of Informal Learning:** In traditional office settings, employees often learn through **peer interactions, casual discussions, and mentorship opportunities**. The shift to digital workspaces reduces these spontaneous learning moments, impacting knowledge-sharing and skill development.

## 2. Resistance to Change and Digital Adoption Challenges

While digital transformation offers numerous benefits, **employee resistance to change** remains a significant obstacle. Many employees, especially those accustomed to traditional work methods, struggle with adapting to new technologies, digital workflows, and AI-driven processes.

- **Fear of Job Displacement:** The automation of repetitive tasks raises concerns about job security. Employees may perceive digital transformation as a **threat to their roles**, leading to resistance, low morale, and disengagement.
- **Digital Skill Gaps:** Not all employees have the **technical proficiency** required to navigate new digital tools effectively. A lack of proper training and upskilling programs can result in frustration, inefficiencies, and a divided workforce.
- **Change Fatigue:** Organizations implementing continuous digital updates without clear communication or support mechanisms may cause change fatigue among employees, leading to burnout and reluctance to adopt new technologies.

## 3. Fragmentation of Organizational Identity and Values

Maintaining a strong organizational identity in a digitally transformed environment is challenging, particularly when employees work across different

locations and time zones. Without a unified culture, organizations risk fragmentation, where different teams develop siloed mindsets and disconnected subcultures.

- **Diverse Work Environments:** Hybrid and remote work create disparities in employee experiences. While some employees benefit from flexible work arrangements, others may feel excluded from key discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Cultural Misalignment Across Global Teams:** For multinational organizations, digital transformation means managing employees from diverse cultural backgrounds, work habits, and communication styles. Ensuring alignment with core organizational values while respecting regional differences requires intentional leadership.
- **Difficulty in Reinforcing Core Values Digitally:** Traditionally, organizational values are reinforced through workplace behaviors, rituals, and shared experiences. In digital environments, maintaining a consistent value-driven culture requires deliberate virtual engagement strategies.

## 4. Communication Barriers and Digital Overload

Effective communication is the backbone of organizational culture, but digital transformation introduces new challenges in maintaining clarity, transparency, and engagement.

- **Over-reliance on Digital Communication:** Employees are bombarded with emails, instant messages, and virtual meetings, leading to **digital fatigue**. This can dilute the quality of communication, making it harder for employees to stay engaged.
- **Lack of Non-Verbal Cues:** Virtual interactions often lack **body language, tone, and facial expressions**, making it difficult to build trust,

resolve conflicts, and establish meaningful connections.

- **Information Overload:** The rapid flow of digital information can overwhelm employees, leading to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and disengagement. Important messages may get lost amid a constant influx of notifications and emails.

## 5. Employee Engagement and Well-being Challenges

A cohesive workplace culture thrives on employee engagement and well-being, but digital transformation can strain these aspects if not managed effectively.

- **Work-Life Balance Issues:** The blurring of professional and personal boundaries in remote work settings leads to longer work hours, increased stress, and burnout. Without clear policies, employees may feel pressure to remain constantly available.
- **Declining Employee Morale:** When employees feel disconnected from their colleagues and leadership, they may experience decreased motivation and job satisfaction. Virtual work can create a transactional rather than relational dynamic, reducing overall engagement.
- **Lack of Recognition and Feedback:** In digital workplaces, employees may feel underappreciated or overlooked, especially if recognition is not explicitly communicated. Regular feedback and appreciation mechanisms are crucial to maintaining motivation and morale.

## 6. Cybersecurity Risks and Ethical Concerns

Digital transformation introduces cybersecurity vulnerabilities and ethical concerns that can impact workplace trust and transparency.

- **Data Privacy and Security Risks:** The increasing use of cloud-based platforms and AI-driven analytics raises concerns about **data**

**protection, hacking threats, and employee surveillance.** A lack of clear cybersecurity policies can create fear and mistrust among employees.

- **Ethical Use of AI and Automation:** Organizations must ensure AI-driven decision-making aligns with ethical standards. Employees may feel uneasy about **bias in AI algorithms, automated performance evaluations, or lack of human oversight in critical decisions.**

## Strategies to Maintain a Cohesive Culture Amid Digital Transformation

Despite these challenges, organizations can take proactive measures to preserve and strengthen workplace culture in the digital era.

1. **Foster Digital Inclusivity:** Ensure all employees, regardless of location, have equal access to opportunities, decision-making processes, and organizational resources.
2. **Prioritize Continuous Learning:** Invest in upskilling and digital literacy programs to bridge skill gaps and boost employee confidence in using new technologies.
3. **Reinforce Organizational Values Virtually:** Embed company values in digital communications, virtual meetings, and onboarding programs to maintain a strong sense of identity.
4. **Enhance Digital Communication Practices:** Implement structured communication policies that balance **synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (flexible) interactions** to reduce digital fatigue.
5. **Promote Employee Well-being:** Encourage work-life balance by setting clear boundaries for virtual work, offering mental health resources, and fostering a supportive work culture.
6. **Recognize and Reward Employees:** Establish digital recognition programs that celebrate

employee achievements and reinforce a sense of belonging.

7. **Strengthen Cybersecurity and Ethical AI Use:** Ensure transparent policies on data privacy, ethical AI usage, and cybersecurity best practices to build digital trust.

Digital transformation is reshaping how organizations function, bringing both opportunities and challenges. While technological advancements enhance efficiency and innovation, they also disrupt traditional workplace interactions, create resistance to change, and challenge the cohesion of organizational culture. By implementing intentional strategies—fostering inclusivity, improving digital communication, prioritizing employee well-being, and ensuring ethical technology use—organizations can successfully navigate digital transformation without compromising their core values. In the digital era, companies that **balance technology with human-centered leadership** will thrive, maintaining a resilient and engaged workforce.

## Real-World Case Studies

### 1. Microsoft: Leading the Digital Workplace Revolution

Microsoft has been at the forefront of digital transformation, redefining workplace culture through AI, cloud computing, and collaboration tools.

- **Adoption of Remote Work and Digital Collaboration:** Microsoft was among the pioneers in promoting remote work using its own tools, such as Microsoft Teams and Azure Cloud. Employees transitioned seamlessly to hybrid work models, fostering flexibility and engagement.
- **AI-Powered Employee Productivity:** The company integrated AI into workplace solutions, such as Copilot in Microsoft 365, to enhance employee efficiency by automating repetitive tasks.

- **Continuous Learning and Upskilling:** Microsoft introduced global digital skills initiatives to upskill employees and external professionals, ensuring adaptability to evolving technologies.

### 2. Tesla: Automation and AI-Driven Workforce Transformation

Tesla's workplace culture reflects a strong commitment to innovation, with automation and AI playing a central role in its operations.

- **AI and Robotics in Manufacturing:** Tesla extensively uses automation in vehicle production, reducing reliance on manual labor while enhancing precision and efficiency.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** The company uses AI-powered analytics to optimize supply chain processes, employee performance tracking, and customer insights.
- **Challenges in Employee Well-being:** The high-pressure, tech-driven work environment has raised concerns about workplace stress and employee burnout, highlighting the need for balancing productivity with well-being.

### 3. Google: A Model for Hybrid Work and Employee Engagement

Google's digital transformation strategy revolves around employee-centric technology adoption and flexible work arrangements.

- **Flexible Hybrid Work Model:** Google introduced a "3 days in-office, 2 days remote" policy to balance collaboration with individual flexibility.
- **AI-Driven HR Practices:** Google leverages machine learning to personalize employee learning paths, career growth recommendations, and performance evaluations.
- **Focus on Well-being:** Initiatives like mental health support programs and digital wellness tools help employees manage work-life balance in a digital-first environment.

#### 4. Amazon: Digital Efficiency and Workforce Challenges

Amazon has embraced AI, robotics, and automation to optimize operations while facing cultural and ethical challenges.

- **Automation in Warehousing:** The deployment of robotic fulfillment centers has significantly increased efficiency but also raised concerns about job displacement.
- **AI in Workforce Management:** The company uses AI-driven performance monitoring to assess employee productivity, but its strict efficiency targets have sparked debates on workplace well-being.
- **Digital-First Customer Experience:** Amazon's AI-driven recommendation engine and cloud computing services (AWS) are key drivers of its digital dominance.

#### 5. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS): A Case of Digital Transformation in the IT Sector

TCS, a global IT services leader, has successfully transitioned to a digital-first work culture while maintaining employee engagement.

- **Remote Work Strategy:** TCS implemented the Secure Borderless Workspaces (SBWS) model, enabling 95% of its workforce to work remotely during the pandemic.
- **AI-Driven Upskilling:** The Company launched AI-powered learning platforms to help employees continuously upgrade their skills in emerging technologies.
- **Strong Employee Engagement Initiatives:** TCS promotes a people-centric approach by integrating digital wellness programs and virtual community-building activities.

#### Emerging Trends in Digital Transformation

As organizations continue to evolve in response to digital disruption, several emerging trends are

shaping the future of workplace culture, leadership, and employee engagement.

#### 1. AI-Augmented Workplaces

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing workplaces by enhancing decision-making, automating repetitive tasks, and enabling personalized employee experiences.

- **Generative AI in Workflows:** AI-driven chatbots, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, are assisting in content creation, coding, and HR automation.
- **AI-Powered Leadership Insights:** Predictive analytics enable managers to identify employee engagement trends, performance gaps, and well-being indicators.

#### 2. The Rise of Hybrid and Remote Work Optimization

While hybrid work has become the norm, organizations are now focusing on refining remote work policies for sustained engagement.

- **Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) for Collaboration:** Companies are integrating VR platforms like Meta's Horizon Workrooms to create immersive virtual workspaces.
- **Outcome-Based Performance Metrics:** Instead of tracking work hours, companies are shifting to result-oriented performance evaluations.

#### 3. Digital Well-Being and Employee Experience Enhancement

Organizations are increasingly prioritizing digital well-being by mitigating technology-induced stress.

- **AI-Driven Mental Health Support:** AI-powered wellness platforms such as Headspace and Calm are being integrated into employee assistance programs.
- **Right to Disconnect Policies:** Countries and companies are adopting policies that regulate

after-work digital communication to reduce burnout.

#### 4. Ethical AI and Responsible Automation

As AI adoption grows, organizations are focusing on ethical AI frameworks to prevent bias and enhance transparency.

- **Fair AI Algorithms:** Companies like IBM and Microsoft are developing AI models with built-in fairness and accountability features.
- **AI Ethics Committees:** Organizations are establishing AI governance boards to ensure ethical deployment of automation.

#### 5. Skills-Based Hiring and Continuous Upskilling

The digital workplace is shifting from degree-based hiring to skills-based recruitment and lifelong learning.

- **Micro credentialing and Digital Badges:** Industry-recognized digital certifications for upskilling are available on platforms such as Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and edX.
- **AI-Powered Career Pathways:** Companies are using AI-driven tools to recommend personalized career growth plans based on individual skills and aspirations.

Case examples from actual businesses, such as Microsoft, Tesla, Google, Amazon, and TCS, demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of digital transformation. Even while automation, AI, and remote work models increase productivity and flexibility, companies still need to take proactive measures to address concerns about employee welfare, moral AI application, and fostering a positive workplace culture. The future of work is being shaped by emerging themes including responsible automation, digital well-being programs, and AI-augmented workspaces. Organizations may successfully traverse the digital era while preserving a robust and flexible workplace culture by embracing

these advancements and placing a high priority on ethical leadership and employee engagement.

#### Fostering a Resilient and Adaptable Organizational Culture in the Digital Age

As businesses undergo digital transformation, maintaining a **resilient and adaptable organizational culture** is essential for long-term success. While technology enhances efficiency, automation, and innovation, it also presents challenges in preserving core values and maintaining a human-centric approach. Organizations that successfully balance technological advancements with people-focused strategies can thrive in an evolving digital landscape.

##### 1. Embedding Digital Innovation into Core Values

To build an adaptable culture, organizations must align **technological innovation with their core values**. A strong foundation ensures that digital transformation enhances, rather than disrupts, organizational identity.

- **Defining a Digital Vision:** Companies should establish a clear vision of how technology supports their mission, values, and long-term goals.
- **Aligning Technology with Ethical Standards:** Ethical AI, data privacy, and responsible automation should be key considerations to maintain employee and stakeholder trust.
- **Leading with Purpose:** Leaders must reinforce how digital tools contribute to both business success and employee well-being, fostering a shared commitment to innovation.

##### 2. Cultivating an Agile and Learning-Oriented Workforce

A resilient organization embraces **continuous learning and adaptability** to keep pace with technological shifts.

- **Up-skilling and Re-skilling Initiatives:** Businesses should invest in **AI-driven learning platforms, micro learning modules, and mentorship programs** to equip employees with future-ready skills.
- **Encouraging Growth Mindset:** Employees should be encouraged to embrace change, experiment with new tools, and view challenges as learning opportunities.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Breaking down silos and promoting cross-team interactions ensures that innovation is integrated across departments.
- **Empathetic Leadership:** Leaders must **actively listen, provide support, and communicate transparently to foster trust** and motivation.
- **Data-Informed Decision-Making:** While AI-driven insights are valuable, human judgment and ethical considerations must guide decision-making.
- **Adaptive Leadership Training:** Developing leadership programs that equip managers **with digital literacy, emotional intelligence and adopting changes** is key to navigating disruption.

### 3. Enhancing Employee Engagement and Digital Well-being

While digital tools enhance productivity, organizations must **prioritize human connection and well-being** to maintain a healthy workplace culture.

- **Hybrid Work Flexibility:** Companies should balance remote work with in-office collaboration to sustain team cohesion.
- **Digital Well-being Policies:** Implementing “right to disconnect” guidelines and promoting mindful technology use can help prevent burnout.
- **Employee Recognition and Inclusion:** Virtual recognition programs and inclusive engagement strategies help employees feel valued and connected.

### 4. Adopting Human-Centered Leadership

Roles and responsibilities in the workplace have also changed as a result of automation and AI-driven workflows. Employees can now concentrate on strategic and creative aspects of their work as routine and repetitive duties are increasingly mechanized. Although this improves production Human connections in the workplace should be strengthened by technology, not replaced. To guarantee that digital transformation stays people-focused, leadership is essential.

A resilient and adaptable organizational culture **embraces technology without losing its human touch**. By embedding digital innovation into core values, fostering continuous learning, prioritizing well-being, and promoting human-centered leadership, businesses can successfully navigate the digital era.

### Economic Implications

Digital disruption has significantly transformed organizational culture, redefining traditional workplace dynamics and economic structures. As emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, cloud computing, and big data analytics become integral to business operations, organizations must reassess their strategies to remain competitive. The economic implications of digital disruption are profound, influencing employment patterns, skill requirements, productivity, and financial sustainability. Companies that fail to adapt risk falling behind, while those that embrace technological advancements can unlock new economic opportunities and enhance workforce efficiency.

One of the primary economic impacts of digital disruption on organizational culture is the shift in employment structures. Traditional job roles are being redefined, with automation replacing repetitive tasks and AI-driven decision-making optimizing business processes. While automation enhances

productivity, it also raises concerns about job displacement. However, this disruption creates opportunities for workforce upskilling and reskilling, emphasizing the need for continuous learning. Organizations must invest in training programs to equip employees with digital competencies, fostering a culture of adaptability and innovation. Economically, this shift requires businesses to allocate resources for learning and development initiatives, ensuring long-term sustainability in a rapidly evolving job market.

Moreover, digital transformation influences organizational decision-making and strategic planning. Data-driven insights allow companies to make more informed choices, optimizing resource allocation and cost efficiency. The integration of AI and predictive analytics enables businesses to anticipate market trends, enhance customer experiences, and streamline operations. From an economic standpoint, organizations that leverage digital tools effectively can achieve higher profit margins and maintain a competitive edge. However, the adoption of digital solutions also demands significant financial investments in infrastructure, cybersecurity, and technological expertise. Firms must carefully balance their digital transformation strategies with cost considerations to maximize economic benefits without compromising financial stability. In addition, digital disruption has reshaped workplace culture by promoting remote work, digital collaboration, and flexible work arrangements. COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend, compelling organizations to embrace digital platforms for communication and project management. While remote work offers cost-saving advantages by reducing overhead expenses, it also presents challenges related to employee engagement, team cohesion, and cybersecurity risks. The economic implications of this shift include adjustments in compensation models, investment in digital tools, and the need for new policies that address work-life

balance and productivity metrics. Organizations that cultivate a digitally inclusive culture can enhance employee satisfaction and performance, ultimately driving economic growth and innovation. Furthermore, digital disruption impacts business sustainability and corporate responsibility. Organizations are increasingly leveraging technology to implement sustainable practices, such as energy-efficient operations, digital documentation, and AI-driven supply chain optimization. These initiatives not only reduce operational costs but also align with global sustainability goals, enhancing brand reputation and stakeholder confidence. Economically, businesses that integrate digital sustainability practices can attract investors, comply with regulatory standards, and position themselves as industry leaders in the evolving market landscape.

In conclusion, the economic implications of digital disruption on organizational culture are multifaceted, influencing workforce dynamics, decision-making, operational efficiency, and sustainability. Adapting to a tech-driven workplace requires a proactive approach, balancing digital adoption with human capital investment. Organizations that embrace digital transformation while fostering an inclusive and agile work environment can thrive in the competitive economy, ensuring long-term success in an era of rapid technological evolution.

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## **JINDAN KOUR'S JOURNEY: FROM ROYAL WIFE TO WARRIOR QUEEN**

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### **Abstract**

*Simone de Beauvoir's landmark work 'The Second Sex' highlights the importance of women in family and society. While some may interpret this as implying women's secondary status, it is, in fact, God's providence that men and women share responsibilities to make a family a grand success. A strong family is the backbone of a strong society. Traditionally, men work outside to earn resources for the family, while women manage these resources within the home. However, radical feminists have challenged these designated roles, arguing that sexuality should not be a key instrument in defining one's role. In the Indian context, some consider a woman, an embodiment of goddess Laxmi who is often depicted as a good fortune in home whereas women who symbolize heroism, determination and defy demonization, repulsing for traditional tag of womanhood and forging new identities for fearless success. India's history is replete with women who defied societal norms, armed themselves, and fought against oppressors who threatened their nation's freedom. Such notable examples are the brave Queen Durgavati, a scion of Chandela Rajput who fought against the Mughal Empire in Gondwana, Rani Velu Nachiyar who displayed bravery while fighting the British; and Begam Hazrat Mahal, who participated in the revolt 1857. Despite being a victim of the doctrine of Lapse, she resisted British rule, attacking their army multiple times before seeking refuge in Nepal. Rani Avantibai fought against the British but ultimately passed away, earning the title Martyr. Kittur Chennamma also fought against the British in 1824, falling victim to the Doctrine of Lapse. These queens exemplify courage and bravery in their struggles against colonial rule. Notably Maharani Zind Kour, the last queen of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the victim of Lord Dalhousie doctrine. She declared war against the British but faced repeated setbacks, ultimately being forced to leave the country and dying in exile. Her life-story has been documentary by Chitra Banarjee "The last queen". This paper will examine Maharani Jind kour story from the feminist point of view exploring how she navigated the challenges of power politics as a woman.*

**Keywords:** *traditional, feminist, freedom, doctrine of lapse, martyrs, inevitable, mouthpiece*

### **Introduction**

Chitra Banerjee Divakarni is an Indian born writer who has explored various themes in her work. Her writing delves into the Indian society, highlighting its multicultural aspects. Notably she is known as diasporic writer, sharing her experiences of Indian life in America. Her works particularly focuses on female characters, drawing inspiration from real-life situations. While she weaves imaginative and fictional elements into her stories, her characters are rooted in reality. In her novel, The Last Queen the protagonist Jindan Kour is a historical figure, not a fictional creation. She embodies the strength and

resilience of a woman who rose from a humble position to become a queen, the title 'The Last Queen' is a reference to Raja Ranjit Singh words to Jindan Kaur "You are not the first one but you are not the dearest one and the last queen of my empire. As a girl Jind's dreams were far from ordinary girl. She aspired to achieve great things in life, much like her own brother Jawarhar. Venturing out of her family's confines, she often explored the word around her, sometimes sneaking into the mango orchard to pluck fruits. When she caught she courageously took the responsibility for her actions, refusing to blame her brother. Upon entering the Lahore palace after

marrying Ranjit Singh, Jindan was determined to bring about changes. Unlike others, she was not content to simply indulge in the luxuries of palace life. Instead she sought to make a difference.

When she took the reins of the Khalsa army she proved herself to be a remarkable leader, successfully leading the troops. Even in the face of adversity, Jind kour remained resilient, when british exiled her, she did not lose heart. Seeking refuse with the king of Nepal she attempted to reorganize her army. Later when she met her son Dalip who had been influenced by Christian culture and English society, Jind Kour tried to bring him to his sikh roots.

### **Interpretation and Discussion**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni probed the life of Jindan Kour, and told her story from her ancestral place. To make it more realistic and life like the tale is presented in the first person narration with Jindan kour as the central figure and mouthpiece of the novelist. Chitra began journey when Jindan was a small girl with simple background. Her father worked at the Lahore Darbar under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and whenever he returned home, the family would be overjoyed and they would celebrate the occasion like a festival. This was because he would bring home earnings that would help them meet their daily expenses. Jindan described herself as a very sensible child who shared very polite and loving relationship with her brother, Jawahar. The siblings were extremely loyal to each other, and wherever Jawahar went, he would take Jindan along. However, their mother who was a skilled embroiderer of Phulkari shawls, had kept a vigilant eye on all the children and felt terrible when she couldn't provide enough food for them. Here Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni depicted despite having a urge for better providing for children Jindan Mother was helpless and how new chapters added in Jindan life when her father decided to take her and his brother to Badshahi Qila in Lahore for Jobs. So he took them

there, Both the children were excited but their dreams scattered when they found their father original status as a dog trainer in king's place. The children saw their parents a prominent figures but father was just a kennel keeper what could they get and made agreement with their luck. Anyhow, one day when Raja Ranjit Singh visited his royal dogs, Jindan saw him for the first time and was struck by his magnetic personality.

In Ranjit Singh absence she gave a piece of Jaggery to Mare, it took and relished. When king returned found the mare in mirthful state and was delighted to learn about Jindan's intelligent gesture. This small incidence marked the beginning of their friendship. Both of them admired each other's qualities of head and heart. During their rendezvous they discussed their thoughts on current politics and britishers. Jindan's father, being a father of daughter eventually declared that if Ranjit Singh wished to continue visiting his daughter, he should marry her. Ranjit Singh agreed on Jindan father proposal and invited Jindan to the palace to attend Banquet and observed the politics prevailed in court. After brief encounters Ranjit Singh was so impressed on the manner of Jindan that he insisted on returning to her paternal village Gujranawala and spent two years there when she came of age, he would definitely send a formal proposal for marriage. Then the time came for real wedding, as per rituals she wedded Ranjit Singh's sword in the local Gurudwara of Gujrawala amidst parents and Fakir Azizuddin's, blessings, a loyal man of the king.

The marriage of Jindan and Raja Ranjit Singh exemplified the proverb that marriages are made in heaven, highlighting the unexpected union between a woman from a humble background and the king of the land. Despite their vastly different upbringings, they were destined to be together, making this proverb particularly apt for the couple. After the nuptials ties Jindan began travelling towards Lahore and she released "My old life is ending"(Last Queen,

85). Chitra Banerjee depicted, Jindan's entry into palace life seemed like a step into a life of luxury but in reality it was marked by carelessness and superficial satisfaction. However Jindan accepted the realities of palace life, which was not a bed of roses without complaint or criticism. Chitra through the dilemma of Rani Jindan exposed a hard reality of palace and womenfolk. As Jindan entered the palace she sensed something amiss in every corner. The women who were the part of the palace harem looked at her critically. When Raja arrived they would vie for her attention, trying to allure him and influence his mind. This was the reality for women in the palace despite their noble background and royal marriages they were not treated with the respect due to Queens but rather objectified as mere objects of desire. This was the stark condition of women in the palace where they valued only for their ability to satisfy the Raja's lust. Jindan understood the existing circumstances and began to assimilate with the new social milieu.

In the melee death threats did not demoralize her. The first attempt on her life was made when she just came into the palace and experienced the bitter taste of ignominy, betrayal and loneliness. She was offered a sumptuous meal, but it was poisonous. She sensed the danger and only took a laddu that her mother had prepared as a parting gift. After surviving this danger, Raja Ranjit Singh arrived and sent for her. She was then summoned to celebrate her conjugal night with him. During the night, she reminisced about the words of wisdom her mother had shared, warning her about the challenges she would face. Rani had a feeling that she might fall into the same circumstances as the other women in the palace. Chitra Banerjee portrayed Rani Jindan as an ordinary woman with desires and ambitions, but the situation transformed her into a remarkable one. She kept alive the thought that she became an inmate of the palace not only to spend time in bliss but to carve out a place for herself. The words of Fakir echoed the Novelist's words like this "Maharaja married many a

times but always disappointed, May be he's finally found her"(81, the Last Queen). Chitra described how Rani was driven to do something: she nurtured hatred for foreign rulers and wanted to unite all citizens under the Khalsa to get rid of the British. This feeling transformed Jindan Kaur into Rani Jindan. Raja Ranjit Singh accommodated her well and provided her with an assistant, Mangla. Mangla not only helped her with odd jobs but also offered moral support whenever Rani felt isolated. As the author Chitra described, every girl has dreams.

Rani wanted to live with a man who possessed power, wealth, and a charismatic personality. Raja had all these qualities, and Rani felt she had won the heart of the most influential person on earth. Although small incidents scared her, she overall enjoyed her new existence. Simone de Beauvoir like Chitra elaborated a comprehensive treatise on the behaviour of a girl who kept a secret desire to get married to not any man but powerful being " the girl since childhood looked to male for fulfillment and escape, he wears the shining face of Perseus or St. George, he is a liberator: he is rich and powerful he holds the keys to happiness: he is prince charming, yielding herself to his gentle authority, she will find again the same security as in her father's arm"(352, The Second Sex). Jindan kour had a semblance of all traits of Simone De's girl. During their meetings, Raja openly told her that he was not just a man, but a ruler, and his duties towards the nation came first. So, she must prepare herself for this reality. Jindan, being a patriot, put these feelings in her mind and looked forward to better days.

Two chapters of Jind Kaur's life were completed, and after giving birth to a son, a new dynamic brought colour and vibrancy to her existence. Chitra mentioned, here that the birth of a child converts a careless girl to a responsible mother. Sarkar was overjoyed at the birth of his son and distributed donations to the poor and needy. The couple enjoyed the happiness together and the queen Jindan had

called an astrologer to prepare a kundali for her son, Dalip. However, she was taken aback by the Astrologer's words, which predicted that Dalip would face numerous difficulties in life. Jindan was well aware that, as Sarkar's son, Dalip's life would not be easy, but rather filled with challenges. Therefore, she was preparing herself and her son to be strong and flexible in the face of adversity. Jindan was not overly concerned about her child's future, but she did have apprehensions about her husband Sarkar's health. He had been unwell and was planning to embark on an expedition, which would only exacerbate his condition. Chitra delineated Rani as a born leader. She kept a keen eye on every activity and movement within the palace. For instance, she was aware that Sarkar's health was declining. She essentially foresaw two possible scenarios if anything were to happen to Sarkar, Ranjeet Singh. Firstly, she anticipated that the Khalsa army and its followers would disintegrate due to the lack of substantial leadership. Additionally, she realized that the other sons of Ranjit Singh, although rightful heirs to the throne, lacked the capability to command the kingdom, particularly Lahore. The British army would likely seize the kingdom from their hands, declaring them bankrupt. Rani's only hope lay in her own son, Dalip. She believed that if Dalip had a positive guiding influence behind him, he could effectively control the army and the state. However, if this didn't happen, Rani envisaged a bleak future for Dalip. Rani Jindan's apprehensions were likely justified, and her worst fears were realized when Sarkar returned from a military campaign in a critically fragile condition.

He lay unconscious, and the servants rushed him to his bedchamber, where he was kept isolated. The family doctors made every effort to revive him, but unfortunately, his condition continued to deteriorate. Eventually, the inevitable happened, and he passed away, leaving behind a grieving family. Rani, her son, and the other ladies of the household

gathered to catch a final glimpse of their beloved leader before his cremation.

The family was struck by tragedy, and everyone was apprehensive about the future. What would happen to the state? What would become of the family? Rani Jindan in particular, was vulnerable, as she had lost her main support system. With no one to turn to, she and her son were in a precarious situation. Earlier when Maharaja Ranjit Singh fell ill with exhaustion and fever, Jindan Kaur played a crucial role in his care, providing him with support, medicine, and proper management of his food. Although he eventually recovered, his later demise was inevitable, and Jindan Kaur couldn't prevent his death. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's passing marked the end of an era of happiness in the Lahore Darbar, especially for Jindan Kaur, as he was the pillar of strength who efficiently ran the government, providing for the royal family. After his death, the kingdom's stability seemed threatened. Jindan could not grasp the reality that she was a widow now and the other queen Guddan was ready to perform Sati on King's pyre as she recounted the hard fact of widow life like "do you know how hard life is for a widow or may be especially for those who were queens? We'll be powerless- shunned, perhaps even murdered, so that our values can be confiscated by the treasury" (The Last Queen, 67). Through these words, the writer Chitra described the life of a widow in the palace where they were considered insignificant. The queen of Ranjit Singh was willing to accept Sati, believing that life after the Raja's death would be unbearable. The life of a widow was always hard not just in the palace but in society as a whole. They were often viewed as a stain on the family considered inauspicious and their presence was seen as unlucky. No one bothered to invite them anywhere and people preferred to stay away from them. The same societal attitude prevailed in the palace and to avoid such treatment some widows, including those close to Rani Jindan Kaur, considered Sati as an

option. Chitra Banerjee highlights the tragic reality that widows were not considered full humans in society, facing disgrace and marginalization. It is a harsh truth that still resonates. Sensing danger, Dhian Singh, a trusted advisor of Lahore Court, advised Jindan Kaur to move to Jammu with her son Dalip Singh, as he couldn't guarantee her safety in Lahore. She took his advice and sought political asylum with Dhian Singh's brother Suchet Singh. In Jammu, Jindan Kaur immersed herself in work, reflected on her life in Lahore, and cared for her son Dalip, who was her reason for living. Chitra's account of Rani Jindan's life highlights her resilience and strategic decision-making. Politically, Chitra's narrative suggests that safety is elusive, even for royalty, as exemplified by Jindan Kaur's experiences. Rani Jindan took Mangla with her to Jammu, as Mangla had been a great help to her. During their stay, Rani Jindan received the news of the sudden death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's first wife Mai Nakkain, and She couldn't help but wonder about the circumstances of her death. Meanwhile, the surprise visit of Dhian Singh raised new suspicions in Rani Jindan's mind. Soon, devastating news struck her Kharak Singh's death (Son of Maharaja), followed by the tragic demise of NauNihal Singh, who was fatally injured when the structure of the Roshnai Darwaza fell on him. Rani Jindan struggled to comprehend the major political developments unfolding in Lahore after her departure.

Dhian Singh's messages prompted her to return to Lahore, where she settled in a Haveli near the fort. Upon her return, she visited Chand Kaur, who had transformed significantly and was now taking care of her daughter-in-law. Chand Kaur shared her concerns about Sher Singh's intentions to marry her and secure the throne for his son. Rani Jindan was impressed by Chand Kaur's strategic thinking. During this time, she also met with a Fakir who warned her about the enemies surrounding her and revealed hidden truths.

Despite the tumultuous situation, Rani Jindan's primary focus remained on her child, Dalip Singh, and she took special care in bringing him up. Amidst the chaos, she received news of potential mutiny and the tragic demise of Bibi Kaur, daughter-in-law of Chand Kaur who had lost her child and succumbed to excessive bleeding. Meanwhile, Ajit Singh Sandhwalia and others offered Rani Jindan a special position in the Lahore court, proposing that she become the regent for Dalip Singh, with him being the king. However, Rani Jindan initially rejected the title, prioritizing Dalip's education over political power. Following the assassination of Dhian Singh by Sandhwalia, Heera Singh, brother of Dhain Singh sought revenge for his brother's death. Tragically, Dhian Singh's wife, Padhani, became a sati after her husband's demise. These developments paved the way for Rani Jindan to ascend to a position of power. With Heera Singh taking over as the new prime minister, Rani Jindan leveraged the situation to her advantage.

As a woman in a male-dominated court, she faced numerous challenges but declared herself the true ruler, given her status as Maharaja Ranjit Singh's wife and Dalip's mother. Rani Jindan's position was defended by only a few men, including her own brother Jawahar Singh and Lal Singh. She had mixed feelings about Lal Singh, who had entered the regency alongside her. When he proposed marriage, Rani Jindan considered it but ultimately rejected the idea, prioritizing her son's interests and her role as regent. Rani Jindan was emotionally involved with Lal Singh but she couldnot purse the relationship because her son's well being was her top priority. Moreover she realized that while kings could have multiple queens as a woman she could not afford to be seen as disloyal. If she were to engage in such relationship openly should lose the respect of her subjects and her status as a revered queen. Therefore she kept aside her feelings for Lal Singh and focused on her son as the primary objective of

her life. Chitra Banerjee aptly captures the bigotry of Rani Jind Kaur highlighting the societal constraints that bounds her "Many of the nobles have several wives and mistresses, too. Their liaisons are accepted. Am I a sinner just because I'm a woman" (The Last Queen, 242). Rani Jindan's son fell ill with smallpox, and false rumors spread that she had suffered a miscarriage. Determined to clear her name, Rani Jindan attended court, showing her face to dispel the rumors. However, she faced further challenges, including restrictions on her ability to donate to the poor from the palace treasury, imposed by the Wazir Jalla. Rani Jindan was perplexed by these limitations on her power as a queen.

Meanwhile, her brother Jawahar Singh's death fueled her desire for revenge against the British. She planned to attack them, but Lal Singh and Tej Singh conspired against her, leading to the defeat of the Khalsa Army. Rani Jindan had always distrusted Lal Singh, and her intuition proved correct. After the British established their government in Lahore, Rani Jindan's role as regent became nominal. The British planned to separate her from her son, and during Lawrence's absence, they confined her to Sheikhpura Fort. Later, Lord Dalhousie annexed Punjab into British territory. A secret confidant arranged Rani Jindan's escape, and she sailed to Patna, where she stayed for some time. When her companion, Avatar Singh, went missing, Rani Jindan set out to find him, facing numerous challenges along the way. Eventually, she met Rana Jang Bahadur, who offered her asylum. Unfortunately, her son Dalip Singh was sent to England under the care of Dr. Login and Lady Login at the age of 16. The writer Chitra Banerjee depicted through her narrative that Rani Jindan was well aware of the Britishers' cunning nature and the threat her togetherness with Dalip Singh posed to their existence. The British, fearing her potential to incite rebellion, separated her from her son. When Dalip was taken on an expedition, Rani Jindan was transported to an isolated place.

The British spread rumors that Rani Jindan might mutiny against them, further justifying their actions. Their plan to annex Punjab involved separating the queen from her son, sending Dalip to England under Queen Victoria's guidance, and imprisoning Rani Jindan in a Sheikupura Qila. The Britishers were not satisfied with this arrangement and sensing another potential mutiny, they shifted her to old stone Qila in Chunar Fort near Benaras. In the next phase Chitra Banerjee described how the queen outsmarted the British government. She escaped from Chunar Fort to Nepal with the help of her loyal attendants. Disguising herself as a servant she fled the fort and took the route to Nepal. However reaching Nepal was not easy for her. She faced immense hardship after escaping from prison. Avatar, a loyal man, helped her by planning and arranging a safe place for her at Gurudwara in Patna, where she stayed there for some time, when Avatar did not return the queen herself devised a plan to reach Nepal. She disguised herself as a devotee to the Pashupati temple and began her journey. She endured hunger, thirst, and cold her feet were in such a state that walking became a challenge. Chitra Banerjee vividly describes the queen's arduous journey "I walk until my sandals fall apart, my feet bleed and calluses form when the pain too much. At night I wrap myself in my blankets, tattered now and sleep under trees and or in caves" (The Last Queen, 285) During her exile, Rani Jindan maintained correspondence with acquaintances and officers to stay informed about her son's whereabouts.

Although she was a royal guest of the Nepali King, her relationship with him deteriorated over time. One reason was that the Raja did not support the freedom fighters during the 1857 mutiny, as he didn't want to incur the Britishers' wrath on her nation. Rani noticed disgrace in his court she briefed her point of view in these words "Jung Bahadur and his courtiers clamored that I, a woman and an outsider knew nothing of the politics and should not interfere in state

affairs” (The Last Queen, 296). Additionally, he was a great admirer of the English lifestyle. Even after the independence war, he refused to provide asylum to Begum Hazrat Mahal and her son. When Rani Jindan intervened in this matter, the Raja’s courtiers humiliated her in court and sent her away. Meanwhile, as Rani Jindan reflected on the event, she received a letter from her son Dalip, informing her of his impending visit. She couldn’t believe that after a gap of fourteen years, he was coming to see her. She felt both happy and sad at the prospect. Upon learning of her son’s arrival, Rani Jindan informed the Raja Jung Bahadur and requested permission to leave Nepal. Jung Bahadur agreed to let her go, but on the condition that she would not return. Accordingly, she left Nepal and reached Calcutta. When she saw Dalip, she was taken aback as he had cut his hair and adopted an English appearance, looking more like an Englishman than a Punjabi. Rani Jindan struggled to accept her son’s changed appearance, but she had no choice and adapted to the situation. Both decided to head to England, although the British government was hesitant to allow Rani Jindan to enter their country, fearing another mutiny. The reunion of Rani Jindan with her son sparked new hopes in people’s hearts.

The government, however, grew uneasy as people flocked to the hotel where the mother-son duo stayed, paying their respects to the king and regent. Unable to tolerate this display of loyalty, the government decided to send them to England, Rani Jindan’s new destination. Rani Jindan was unhappy with the lifestyle of her son, Dalip, who had seemingly forgotten his Sikh and Hindu roots and was embracing Christianity. He frequently visited churches and attended Sunday congregations, which Rani Jindan disapproved of. However, she had limited interaction with him due to the constant presence of his guardians, Dr. Login and his wife, who had been looking after him since childhood. These guardians never missed an opportunity to

keep Rani Jindan separated from her son. Rani Jindan, being intelligent and perceptive, chose not to express her feelings openly in their presence. Moreover, Dr. Login had stationed a servant to spy on Rani Jindan’s activities. On one occasion, when Dalip invited Dr. Login and his wife for lunch, Rani Jindan couldn’t restrain herself from speaking harsh words to them. Dr. Login and his wife understood the depth of Rani Jindan’s animosity towards them and soon left. Despite their efforts to keep Rani Jindan and Dalip apart, it was clear that Rani Jindan’s influence over her son was growing, and Dalip was beginning to reconnect with his roots.

During her stay with Dalip Singh, Rani Jindan reflected on her life in Lahore and the mistakes she had made during her reign. She identified two major errors, the first being her decision to attack the British. The attack she had launched on the British was an attempt to avenge her brother Jawahar’s death, but it ultimately proved disastrous for her. The second mistake Rani Jindan regretted was when the British took control of her kingdom and appointed Teja Singh as the king of a portion of the state. She had advised her son, Dalip, not to acknowledge Teja Singh’s authority by applying the ceremonial tilak on his forehead. However, the British perceived this as an act of defiance and harbored resentment towards Rani Jindan. As a result, they exiled her to a distant location and took Dalip to England. Rani Jindan blamed herself for these two critical errors but never discussed them with Dalip, fearing that he would send her for not acting in the best interests of the kingdom. From her perspective, she believed she had made mistakes that ultimately harmed her kingdom. Rani Jindan received shocking news when she discussed the Kohinoor diamond with Dalip. He casually mentioned that he had given the Kohinoor to Queen Victoria as a gift. Rani Jindan was stunned, wondering why Dalip would give away the precious diamond, which was rightfully his as the heir of his father’s kingdom. She was aware that Dalip was not

in a position to make wise decisions, and this mistake left her feeling helpless. A new concern soon arose when the question of Dalip's marriage came up. Dalip expressed his desire to marry a Christian girl in England. Rani Jindan initially refused, citing concerns about their cultural differences and the potential consequences of such a union. Dalip's desire to marry someone in England was hindered by the fact that everyone there referred to him as the "Black Prince." Even his close associate, Dr. Login, refused to allow Dalip to marry a relative of one of his officers, which left Dalip disheartened by the discriminatory behavior.

Rani Jindan, determined to restore her son to his rightful throne, turned to the Guru Granth Sahib for guidance. As a devoted mother, she felt it was her duty to help her son reclaim his lost faith. Through the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib, she taught Dalip the value of Guru Wani and the importance of reconnecting with his Sikh heritage. Although Dalip had lost touch with his roots while living in England, Rani Jindan remained hopeful that he would one day rediscover his faith and follow the principles of the Guru Granth Sahib. Rani Jindan had a strong vision for her son's future, but she knew that Dalip lacked the strength and resilience of his late father. Her greatest fear was that Dalip had become too anglicized and needed time to reconnect with his Sikh roots. Aware that her own death was imminent, Rani Jindan disregarded medical advice and instead devoted her time to her son. She extracted a promise from Dalip, requesting that he fulfill his duties as a Sikh after her passing. Following her death, Dalip attempted to transport her mortal remains to India for proper funeral rites. Initially, the British government refused to permit this, but eventually, they relented. Rani Jindan had explicitly instructed Dalip to take her remains to India, as she wished to unite with her motherland in death. The British government was apprehensive about permitting Dalip Singh to transport his mother's mortal remains to India, fearing

it could ignite widespread protests and potentially galvanize the populace against British rule. As people had gathered to pay their last respect to the queen, the British government worried that they might coalesce and formed a new army to fight for independence. Initially, they attempted to dissuade Dalip from taking his mother's body to India, offering an alternative burial site. Nevertheless, Dalip remained steadfast in his resolve, committed to honoring the promise he had made to his mother to perform her final rites in India. Ultimately, the British government yielded to international pressure, allowing Dalip to transport his mother's mortal remains to India. However, they stipulated that the cremation must take place on the banks of a river near the sea, thereby minimizing the risk of large-scale gathering and potential unrest. Dalip Singh reached the banks of the Godavari River, where he cremated his mother and scattered her ashes in the river. He also built a small samadhi in a grove of trees near Panchavati. Dalip was alone in mourning his mother's passing, as the British government had reluctantly permitted him to cremate her. Even his loyal servant, Aroor Singh, was not allowed to accompany him in performing the last rites. The government's behavior revealed their fear of Rani Jindan's legacy, extending even to her mortal remains. The terms government laid before Dalip "He must not contact his relatives, check on the disputed properties, was not to go to Punjab, conduct cremation close to Bombay and return immediately after the cremation"( The Last Queen, 348). Professor M.L. Ahluwalia, a prominent historian-archivist, published a Magnus opus "Maharani Jind Kour" in which he apparently described the sad plight of queen who wanted to escape the silver chains of slavery but she could not do so alive. When she foresaw her imminent death she pleaded her son to take her mortal remains in Punjab, should bury her near the tomb of Raja Ranjeet Singh "she wanted her remains to be taken to Punjab and buried in the

Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh”(115, Maharani Jind Kaur). Rani Jindan was a formidable figure in Indian history who defied the British government. Born into humble beginnings, she rose to prominence through her determination and strong will power. As a capable leader, she navigated the complexities of governance and overcame numerous challenges, despite being a woman in a patriarchal society. Unlike Rani Lakshmi Bai or Rani Durgavati who fought battles on the battlefields Rani Jindan's contribution were unique. Her primary goal was to protect the sovereignty of Punjab from British annexation. Although she ultimately lost the kingdom she emerged victorious in spirit by refusing to yield to British demands. Even in death she remained steadfast, requesting that her remains be taken away to her homeland rather than being buried in British soil. This testament to her unwavering patriotism and pride in her heritage continues to inspire generations.

### Conclusion

Jindan Kour found peace and solace when Dalip performed the last rites for her in Homeland with adequate dignity. Rani Jindan Kour carried disappointment in her heart knowing she had failed to organize the Khalsa Army to take revenge against

the British, whereas she was an invincible in the realm of Indian freedom history hero who had shaken the foundation of British empire. Of course she was the last empress of the Sikh Empire, she played a significant role in the Indian freedom struggle. Her commitment to the nation inspired many youngsters to rise against atrocities of foreign nation on the pretext of rule. Her sacrifice bore fruit when india attained freedom in 1947 and whenever Indian freedom martyrs are remembered her contribution will also be reminisced about.

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## **HOLLOW LIVES OF THE MODERN TIMES: A DOORWAY TO JACOB'S ROOM AND MRS. DALLOWAY**

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### **Abstract**

*Virginia Woolf happens to be one of the finest of novelists, essayists and feminists in the history of English literature. Her letters, memoirs and novels reveal the vivid glimpses of her life as well as her thoughts and take on the way the society functioned. It was the era of 1920s in which and of which she wrote her best work. Her era, nonetheless, was more denounced than understood. It's been famously known as "the careless twenties" or "the age of apprehensions and doubts". The war of 1914-18 further strained the authoritarian pattern of family relations and increased tension, frustrations and neurosis. There were shifts in people's characters, ethics and perceptions. The whole of way of seeing things changed altogether. The individual self only became a sheet-anchor in a world otherwise adrift. Partly because of the war and partly because of the common trends all the world over this period was a period of dissolution of standards and melting down of all the then current coin of conduct and thought. It was an era of hollow men living in a wasteland. In my paper I will be focusing on certain characters of Virginia Woolf, namely Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warrensmith from Mrs. Dalloway and Jacob from Jacob's Room. The novel Jacob's Room tells the story of Jacob Flanders who gets killed in the war whereas, the novel Mrs. Dalloway centres around a day of Clarissa's life. The whole action moves between Mrs. Dalloway's preparations for the party in the morning to presiding over it in the evening. Septimus is a character walking parallel with Clarissa's subconscious. The thing that becomes the connecting point between these three central characters is the 'sense of desolation and hollowness', the hollowness that is the gift of the times. That is excruciating yet inescapable.*

**Keywords:** *hollowness, subconscious, neurosis, identity crisis, stream of consciousness, desolation, sensibilities, perspectives, modernism, world war, absurdity*

***"It's not catastrophes, murders, deaths, diseases, that age and kill us; it's the way people look and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses."***

- Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*

Says Jacob, indicating at the hollowness that one feels while among and around thousands. A collective hollowness felt individually by each getting into the omnibuses, lost in their own sufferings, all by themselves, oblivious of all the other stories of the co travellers. We walk among people but we belong nowhere. This lack of belongingness, lack of purpose in life and lack of interest was probably the gift of the modern times. The omnibus is employed to highlight this segregation. Woolf wrote *Jacob's Room* while

she was recovering from what she termed in her diary as "a dark cupboard of illness" herself. It was Woolf's first novel to be published by Hogarth Press and was critically acclaimed as Woolf's first high modernist novel. This book centres on the life of Jacob Flanders, an affluent young man who, like so many of his generation, perishes in the Great War before his time. This meticulously planned, retrospective story primarily depicts Jacob as an absence from other people's lives. The work discusses Jacob's place in society and the void he leaves behind when he passes away, as the title suggests. The theme of absence and the emptiness the characters experience inside themselves recurs

poignantly throughout this book. Snatches of speech or fragmented scenes loom up at the reader from the white surround in each section where Woolf has organised her paragraphs with noticeable blank spaces between them at various moments.

Jacob is seen through many perspectives, from his friends', family's, while at a brothel in Greece or at the university. The important thing about Jacob in between all these is that he doesn't really belong to any of them. He is portrayed more like an absence in the lives of those close to him. The book's *idée fixe* on absence is really moving. Woolf has arranged her paragraphs within each numbered segment with noticeable blank spaces between them at specific points, causing snippets of dialogue or incomplete scenes to jump out at the reader from the white background.

As the novel begins, we find Jacob Flanders, our central character, on the beach with his mother while she writes a letter to captain Barfoot on a beach. She is grief-stricken and is slowly learning to accept her life the way it has been and with the fact that she will now have to deal with life on her own because her husband has passed away. We are given montages of Jacob's life instead of the full coherent progressive narrative. Betty is grieving over her husband in Cornwall as she watches her sons play on the sand. Later, Betty and her sons move back into their Scarborough, England, house, where Captain Barfoot, a friend and neighbour, continues to pay Betty monthly visits. Although Betty is a widow, Captain Barfoot is still legally married, therefore their relationship seems to be more akin to that of a suitor. Andrew Lloyd, a local minister, sends Betty a love letter. She declines Mr. Lloyd's attempts, nevertheless, since she continues to feel resentment over her husband's passing away. The one thing that comes into the readers notice is how horribly lonely all these characters are. Captain Barfoot, despite being married, seems to be interested in Betty trying to fill the void in his life, giving us a hint about his

legal but hollow marriage while Betty suffers and mourns in her solitude. Although Jacob is young during the time that is being narrated, it is not difficult for the reader to deduce that when he becomes a man, his life will not be very different from his mother's.

The narrative further portrays Betty's experiences as a widow and Jacob's interactions as he moves to Cambridge University as a student. There are a number of people/characters in "Jacob's Room" but none in his life, no one with whom he truly belongs. We see Jacob's attempts to blend in and the epiphanies he has as a result of trying to locate a group to which he can belong. More information is provided about Jacob's relationships, especially with Timothy Durrant, a travel companion. Despite Jacob's confidence that he is exceptionally a clever person, he is unable to achieve the success he believes he is capable of. After graduating, Jacob continues to integrate himself into London society, where he learns the nuanced nature of interpersonal relationships. Jacob connects with lower-class individuals in addition to the wealthy ones, including a carefree woman named Florinda for whom he feels affection. We find him distracted and divided in his thoughts unable to figure out his own self properly. For example, Jacob's cruel thoughts on the presence of women in King's College Chapel: 'why allow women to take part in it?.. heaven knows why it is. For one thing, thought Jacob, they're as ugly as sin' (JR 49-50).

Later he is seen to conclude that

'women ... are just as same as men' (JR 127)

But this isolated thought is outweighed by his several misogynist reflections, mainly on Florinda. Florinda stands as his object of desire and scorn all at once. He loves her but is unable to accept her, mainly because of her class or gender, or what is more likely both, leading himself more and more into the abyss of hollow solitude. Similarly, he writes

letters to his mother, but he complains that these are epistles.:

“telling me... really nothing that I want to know”.

As Jacob moves ahead with his life he does make friends, namely, Timothy and Richard. They both come from equally rich families but Jacob's upbringing unlike them, was rather rural. After his graduation Jacob decides to move to London on his own. There he spends most of his time reading or contemplating in British Museum, the mysteries of the past; this again reflects his inner emptiness. Other than Florinda, with whom the affection was mutual, two other women, Clara and Fanny, fail to win him over as Jacob leaves for his first trip abroad before they could succeed in their attempts. While in Greece, he gets attracted to a married English woman named Sandra Williams who is far out of his reach. Frustrated, he returns, lovesick and feelings of alienation takes over him again. He enlists in the army and dies in combat.

The final chapter returns the narrative's focus to Jacob's empty room. The novel uses the objective correlative to try and find an identity for Jacob even though he is no longer there. The objects in his room define him. The letters hints at the failed connections, the thoughts that were never communicated and the shoes are a stark reminder that he left behind a void in the lives of the people close to him. His room is a complex metaphor considering the metaphor has many metaphors within it as objects become physical representation of a deeper emotional meaning.

Similarly, Mrs. Dalloway, a novel published in the year 1925 blends monologues and confronts modern concerns of mental illness, alienation, and abandonment in the post World-War I England. Taking centre place in this book is Clarissa Dalloway. The story begins with a fluid recounting of a single June day in London in 1923, tracing the parallel experiences of two characters. Septimus Warren Smith, a young soldier who experienced extreme trauma, and the socialite and politician's wife Clarissa

Dalloway. Clarissa Dalloway, the protagonist of the novel is in her 50s, preparing for a party she is hosting in the evening. Her day begins as she buys flowers even though we see her conflicted in her thoughts regarding her marriage, her old lover Peter and her past memories. Clarissa comes off as someone who is going through a mid-life crisis. She often wonders whether happiness is truly attainable. All day we can see her reflecting on her past. Especially about the summer she chose her husband Richard Dalloway over her fiery lover Peter Walsh. As she furthers moves ahead, she thinks about Selly Seton, her friend with whom once she shared a kiss too. While she is shopping in the Bond's street, she zones in and out of the moments. One moment she is eagerly talking to the lady selling flowers and is lost in her thoughts in the other. In order to feel a false sense of belonging, she fabricates the image of an "ideal hostess," one who has been successfully accepted in the society. She adopts the roles of a mother and a housewife, throwing parties and living according to the society's expectations. Protecting her own small world while her true personality, though not entirely obvious, remains hidden. She is left feeling empty and treasures her old memories as the only reality that matters to her. She consciously distances herself through this in-depth contemplation, failing to forge meaningful connections in the present. Clarissa is still socially linked to everyone but is emotionally adrift. She gives up her private identity in exchange of the public one. Her conflicted inner dialogues and her insecurities and desire to communicate speaks volumes about her being lonely. Just like Clarissa, Septimus, our shell-shocked veteran also tries his best to live up to the society's expectation but fails terribly. There can be clear parallels that can be drawn between these two characters. Septimus too was a perfect man, fighting his battles until the day he lost his friend Evans in the war. The horrors of the war left him traumatised and sick for life. Due to his illness, he is unable to form

any meaningful connection not even with his wife Lucrezia.

She “was very lonely and very unhappy!” (Mrs. Dalloway, pg-72)

“his wife was crying and he felt nothing” (Mrs. Dalloway, pg-73)

Septimus was also a writer who was desperately trying to communicate to the world about “those great wars which the body wages by itself” (Mrs. Dalloway pg-318) but he fails to do so. He could not express the intensity of his grief or his situation. Soon we see him having suicidal thoughts which ultimately takes over him at the end. Woolf makes her aim absolutely clear when she makes Septimus say “Communication is health; Communication is happiness...” (Mrs. Dalloway 93) even though, as he says this, his wife fails to understand or communicate with him. Instead, she calls for a doctor. Despite his statement he fails to communicate with anyone as long as he lives. It is only after his death that Clarissa starts identifying with him. She goes away to contemplate his suicide

“Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the center which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death” (Mrs. Dalloway, pg-151) she concludes. In fact, all the characters in the novel seem to be living absolutely hollow lives, Peter is always conflicted in his thoughts, Richards fails to communicate his love to Clarissa, Elizabeth, her daughter doesn't gel well with her family rather “She preferred being left alone”, and Lucrezia feared one thing “to be alone forever” and after Septimus' sad departure that's exactly what she will have to endure. Living in the void that the dead left behind and what choice did they have anyway? Just as Mrs. Flanders had to accept her husband and Jacob's death. Both Septimus and Jacob leave behind them their things, that will speak for them. Both these characters were victims of the wars and the modern times. They

weren't heard or understood, neither was Clarissa. Though she gets back to her party, underwhelmed and disappointed at the triviality of the people around her. Her party hall looked ironical, filled with people yet not a single soul she could connect to. The one person she feels some connection with is but the dead.

This way all characters are hollow and feel isolated. Conversations reinforce the idea that people are just conversing but not communicating, perhaps because their solitariness prevents them from forming anything more than super-facial relationships turning themselves into the modern hollow men. Woolf's desire for a new aesthetic was largely motivated by the desire to capture the realities of modernity. These aesthetics, were born of the period “between the battlefields and concentration camps,” Everyone more or less lived in their own hollowness, carrying it with them, in hopes to communicate it someday to someone. In Mrs. Dalloway we find Septimus's Book in his room, Clarissa's obsession with her past tells us how hollow her life at present is. “Mrs. Dalloway is always giving parties to cover the silence” while in Jacob's Rooms we find letters that serve as the book's opening and closing emblems, symbolising one of the books' and the age's central concerns. What surrounds the modern man is conversation and not communication.

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH IN DIFFERENTIATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### Abstract

*This paper focuses on development for need of English teachers in this dynamic scenario. This study provides a deep analysis of English instruction, especially in the context of Business English. Aside teaching skills, adaptability is becoming crucial for modern language teachers. The ability of a teacher to develop pedagogical, linguistic, and technological expertise to remain professionally effective is crucial. These skills must be supported through continuous training and professional development opportunities. This study discusses major thinkers who helped shaped this field. Renowned experts like Jeremy Harmer, Bob Dignen, and others are mentioned for their valuable academic contributions and their insights from them offer clarity on emerging trends and methodologies. Through this approach, the article connects theory with classroom realities quite meaningfully. The authors also focus on the shifting expectations from language teachers today, not only classroom delivery but also digital engagement is part of their responsibility. Also the demand for multilingual competence and flexible teaching approaches is becoming crucially important. Teachers are now encouraged to engage with ongoing training to meet the needs of learners.*

**Keywords:** *English language teaching, business English, pedagogical skills, technological skills, differentiated instruction, professional development*

### Introduction

The field of language instruction has seen considerable transformation over the decade, and correspondingly, the role of English language instructors also adapted to the requirement of the modern learner. The fluency and accuracy in English are now seen as essential for success in various spheres of life. The value of effective English language teaching in both academic and professional environments have become widely known and recognized. In this context, the need for qualified English language teachers is rising rapidly which has

led to greater attention being paid to teaching theories, practices, and the development of innovative teaching methods.

It is widely accepted that a communicative, learner-centered approach is a must in language education. Educators are expected to be proficient in the language and also be capable of applying a broad range of methods and strategies to help students to engage in meaningful communication. Through this manner, the role of a teacher has become more multi-faceted, which requires a thoughtful combination of pedagogical and linguistic

expertise, in addition to deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which English is used .

As Harmer (2007) observes that teachers must be adaptable, creative, and well-informed on the subject matter as well as the learners. They should be prepared to implement diverse teaching techniques and classroom tasks that support language acquisition in dynamic ways. The need for continuous self-improvement is required which makes educators stay committed to professional development in order to meet the changing expectations of students and institutions.

Moreover, the incorporation of technology into language classrooms has become increasingly pivotal. Scholars like Warschauer and Healey (1998) have expressed the importance of incorporating digital tools and platforms in the teaching-learning process. Subsequently educators in the current present day and age are not only expected to be comfortable using technology but also to employ it innovatively to enrich and supplement their pedagogical practices.

Thus English language teaching remains a continuous evolving field and the responsibilities of instructors continue to grow in according to the learner's needs. As a result teachers must possess a certain range of competencies from pedagogical and linguistic skills to tech skills. Simultaneously they must be dedicated to lifelong learning and professional growth in order to successfully navigate the evolving landscape of English language instruction.

### Theoretical Framework

**Mark Powell** is a well known author and personality in the field of business English teaching and learning. **Powell's** contribution extends beyond both research and publication. One of his known works is *Teaching Business English*, which acts as a guidance for instructors towards the field of business English. His works addresses crucial aspects such as course

designing, curriculum planning, and classroom method approach. It not only offers practical advice to tailor instructions for learners but also tries to understand the varied needs and requirement for each learner. Powell has played a crucial role in advocating task-based learning in the context of business English. In his works and presentations, he emphasizes the need for differentiation as a method to optimize task based instruction, and emphasize on the pedagogical advantages of such methodology in a multifaceted learning environment.

**Adrian Underhill** is one prominent teacher, author, and researcher in the area of English language teaching. His works are particularly focuses towards oral communication and pronunciation. His work *Sound Foundations: A Pronunciation Course for English Language Teachers* is a crucial resource for educators planning to enhance students' pronunciation skills. Underhill's focus on general English, made critical contributions to business English instruction, through the perspective of differentiate learning. His works and talks explore effective strategies for addressing learner's preferences and needs. He stresses importance of inclusive classroom environments, the incorporation of authentic materials and technology and track student's progress.

**Bob Dignen**, an author and business English instructor, has drastically forged the pedagogy of teaching English for business. He has produced acclaimed books and teaching resources that aim to make business English instruction effective and learner centered. His publication, *Business Result: Intermediate: Student's Book*, gives the readers insight into numerous of activities and techniques aimed at improving communicative competence in authentic business settings. The book is catered to engage learners through practical tasks and reflective exercises. Dignen's focus on differentiated instruction is present throughout his works, where he suggestfor the reorganization for the learning of the individual

rather than learning as a class. He supports the usage of real world materials and activities which will help drastically in a learner progress.

**Jeremy Harmer**, an educator and author, has made foundational contributions to English language teaching. His widely used textbook, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, gives a detailed overview of English teaching practices, including lesson planning, instructional techniques, and assessment. While Harmer's works covers English language instruction, it also contributes drastically to business English pedagogy. Through his articles and presentations, Harmer highlights the importance of differentiation in the scenario business classrooms. He advocates for the use of real life materials, incorporate technology, and foster inclusive and responsive classroom setting. Harmer also stresses the importance of systematic timely teacher feedback and formative assessment to shape instructions to meet learners' evolving needs.

### Research Gap

Over the years authors and scholars have made several key contributions in the field of English language teaching, which has allowed educators to stay consistent and up to date with the current changes in the field of English learning. Brown (2007) in his work *Teaching by Principles*, focuses on interactive and practical approach towards language pedagogy which is essential for Indian classrooms where active engagement is needed. Harmer's works are also widely referred by Indian teachers while teaching business English. It offers detail guidelines and approach on how to plan a lesson, teaching methods, and proper classroom management. Underhill (1994) in his book *Sound Foundations*, emphasizes on pronunciation, an underlying area where many Indian learners face challenges. His practical techniques are useful in improving oral communication. Similarly, the work of Warschauer and Healey (1998) on the use of computers in

language learning is quite relevant, especially in the field of Indian contexts where digital tools are being integrated into classrooms. Their insights help teachers to implement technology meaningfully to support student learning.

Even though authors like Mark Powell, Adrian Underhill, Bob Dignen, and Jeremy Harmer have made significant contributions towards the field of teaching, more research is required to expand our knowledge and improve teaching strategies. The concept of diverse method of teaching approaches on student's motivation and engagement, the incorporation of technology, development of better resources for teachers and the design of effective syllabuses and course planning are some of the few areas that require further research. By conducting more research in these neglected areas, educators can gain insights into best practices and help refine their teaching methods, ultimately providing more effective learning experiences for business English students.

### Research in Indian Context

There are various opportunities and challenges associated with teaching and learning business English in India. This challenges demands for a targeted research, in the area of differentiation. It is essential to address the linguistic and cultural diversity of Indian students and how it affects the way instruction is given. The approach of effective differentiation techniques taken into consideration accounts inclusive learning environment will require further study. It will be easier to adapt instruction according to an Indian context if it is appropriate and efficient in syllabus design and course planning strategies, such as task-based language teaching and content based instruction. The teaching approach will be improved by comprehending how technology plays an integral part in differentiation, including the availability and application of technology-based tools. It is important to conduct

research on how professional development and teacher training affect the application of successful differentiation techniques in the context of Indian business English classrooms. The enhancement instructional practices will involve investigation of use of locally relevant and authentic materials and activities for differentiation and assessing various methods of assessment, including those that rely on usage technology. Lastly the examination of how government regulations and educational program affects business English instruction and learning in India, as well as how these differentiation can help these efforts, will yield insightful information. Teachers can meet the learning needs of Indian Business English students within their distinct linguistic and cultural context and gain more better understanding of effective teaching practices by conducting research in these areas.

### Technology-based Tools for Differentiation

A technology-based tool is highly beneficial in differentiating various instructions in a Business English teaching. some ways technology can support differentiation are as follows:

1. **Adaptive Learning Platforms:** Adaptive learning platforms helps tailor learning experiences for each individual student. These platforms evaluate student performance using algorithms, offer activities and content that is specifically designed to each individual. Students can access extra resources to aid in their learning, work at their own pace, and get personalised feedback.
2. **Online Resources and Multimedia:** A vast category of online resources, including interactive websites, videos, podcasts, and real materials, are made accessible through use of technology. Teachers can use these tools to provide students with options that are suited according to their interests, language skills, and preferred methods of learning. For example,

students can interact with content that is pertinent to their career goals by selecting from a variety of online articles or videos about their particular business fields.

3. **Language Learning Apps and Software:** Numerous software programs and applications for language learning provide interactive exercises, vocabulary-building exercises, and pronunciation practice. Students who need more reinforcement or remediation can benefit from these tools by receiving targeted language support and more practice opportunities. Depending on the needs of each individual student, teachers can suggest particular apps or software.
4. **Virtual Communication and Collaboration Tools:** Technology facilitates virtual communication and collaboration, enabling students to engage in real-world business scenarios and practice their language skills. Tools such as video conferencing, online discussion forums, and collaborative platforms allow students to interact with peers, professionals, or native speakers, fostering authentic language use and networking opportunities.
5. **Learning Management Systems (LMS):** Differentiation can be supported by LMS platforms' features, which include online tests, personalised assignments, and progress monitoring. For particular learning needs, teachers can offer extra resources or assign assignments with different levels of difficulty. Additionally, LMS platforms facilitate feedback exchange and communication, allowing for individualised support and guidance.
6. **Gamification and Interactive Learning:** To engage and inspire students, technology can be used to create interactive learning experiences and gamified elements. Leader boards, badges, and rewards are examples of gamification

components that can be used to differentiate instruction and offer incentives for personal growth. Additionally, by immersing students in authentic business settings, interactive simulations and scenarios can foster their ability to solve problems and make decisions.

7. **Data Analysis and Assessment:** Data on student performance can be gathered and analysed thanks to technology, which also makes formative evaluation and personalised feedback easier. Instructors are able to monitor student development, pinpoint areas for growth, and modify their lesson plans accordingly. Designing individualised learning experiences for every student can be guided by data-driven insights.

As a result, technology-based tools facilitate differentiation in the teaching of business English by providing flexibility, personalisation, and interactive opportunities. Teachers can design dynamic, individualised learning environments that cater to the various needs and learning preferences of their students by skilfully utilising these resources.

### **Differentiation in the Indian Context**

The role Differentiation plays a crucial role in teaching of business English in a country like India because of several factors that impact language acquisition and professional development. India is well known country for its various linguistic diversity and multiple languages spoken across its several geographical states and regions. The language of English functions as a second language, especially in the field of academics and professional environment. However, we must know that Indian learners come from a large linguistic background and have different levels of proficiency in English. Therefore, the concept differentiation becomes essential in addressing every learner's specific needs and delivering instruction that is personalized to facilitate meaningful language development.

India's cultural heritage has a deep impact on the learning and usage of English in business communication. The concept of culturally responsive teaching, which has been made possible through differentiation, enables the educators to incorporate localized case studies, real world examples, and culturally suitable communication styles into their lessons. This will help students' understanding of the practical approaches towards business English within the context of India and also help close the gap between theoretical learning and real-life application in professional fields.

Another important consideration is the diversity of Indian students' educational backgrounds. The wide range of educational background from urban private schools to government schools in rural areas, the disparity in exposure to English and access to quality instruction is significant. The method of Differentiation acknowledges this reality by providing equitable opportunities for all learners, regardless of their learning experiences. Through the method of differentiated instruction, the teachers can fill learning gaps and ensure inclusive participation, thereby creating a more balanced learning environment.

The differentiation is indispensable when addressing the various professional goals of learners in the Indian job market. A majority of students pursue business English with the purpose of career-related objectives, while others may aim to refine their written skills for business documentation, while others may need to improve their speaking skills for client meetings and presentations. With the help of differentiating the teaching strategies, educators can customize content to align with these objectives, thus making language instruction more relevant.

Learners in India also display a wide spectrum of learning styles and preferences. Some may benefit most from visual stimuli, while others may prefer auditory or kinesthetic approaches. Differentiation will accommodate these variations by integrating multiple teaching tools, resources, and activities. Through

offering a diverse range of learning options, teachers can maximize student engagement, strengthen comprehension, and encourage active participation. Additionally the differentiation is aligned with the broader objective of inclusive education. In an Indian classroom setting, the learners present a different range of abilities, interests, and challenges. The varied differentiated instruction will help the educators to effectively support students with learning difficulties and language barriers. It will help ensure that all students, including that student with exceptional needs, will receive an equitable access to quality education and feel included in the classroom environment.

Lastly, the high competitive setting of the Indian employment landscape further highlights the importance and need of differentiation. A proficiency in English language is often seen as a stepping stone for professional success. Through delivery of differentiated instruction, teachers can help students acquire essential language and communication skills that enhance the ability to be employed. Such instruction not only boosts students' confidence but also increases their chances of securing better career opportunities and advancing professionally.

**In this manner, the** differentiation in Business English instruction is vital in India due to the intersection of linguistic diversity, cultural expectations, educational disparities, varied career goals, multiple learning styles, and thrive towards inclusive education. By adopting the concept of differentiated strategies, teachers can help learners to acquire relevant, and context specific language skills. Thus the differentiation supports not only language learning but also holistic development, cultural competency, and readiness for the requirements of the Indian and global job markets.

## Conclusion

The study in the field of language teaching holds a value, especially in a country like India where

diversity and varied educational needs are a must. It plays a crucial and evolving role in the development and refinement of teaching methods which aims to improve the learning methods for students. The nature of education and the dynamic profiles of learners become necessary to engage in ongoing research to address the emerging challenges and demands of the classroom. Similarly, research helps educators stay aware of new trends, effective methodologies, and pedagogical innovations. It allows the teachers to remain updated and also encourages them to reflect their current teaching methods and adapt improvements according to the requirements. The concept of learning and adaptation is to enhance the quality of language education in varied contexts, which includes both urban and rural classrooms throughout India. Moreover, a research in English study becomes even more essential when considering the linguistic and cultural differences of Indian learners. It will not only help in understanding the diverse contexts, but also allows the teachers to develop strategies and materials that will help resonate with students' real-life language use and experiences. In this manner, language instruction becomes more inclusive and relevant. Research also sheds light on the challenges faced by specific learner groups such as the first generation of English learners or those transitioning from other vernacular mediums which is important in an Indian multilingual setup. The incorporation of technology in language teaching has significant impact. With the rising growth of digital learning, it is a must to study their effectiveness in real classrooms. Researches in this fields explores how platforms and applications can be used to enrich the learning experience. Some research focus on student engagement, while others look at how technology supports interaction, collaboration, and independent learning. Additionally, the language teaching research provides deep insights into learner psychology especially motivation, emotional factors, and learning strategies. By

learning and exploring what drives students, what hinders them, and how they process language, researchers and teachers can co-create more student-centric approaches. These critical insights can inform interventions that are not only remedial but also developmental, ensuring that learners are supported both cognitively and emotionally in their learning. To summarize, continuous research is the backbone of progress in the field of language instruction. It not only supports innovation and promotes inclusivity but also ensures that the concept of teaching will remain aligned with the needs of diverse learners. In an Indian context, it also plays an important role in bridging gaps between tradition and modern approach, rural and urban learners, and pedagogy and practice. Teachers who engage with research contribute significantly to the professionalization and effectiveness of language education.

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## **BY 2030, KANAKPUR CAN BE ONE OF THE TOURIST CENTERS IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WEST BENGAL**

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### **Abstract**

*Kanakpur (J.L. NO-109) is a notable village in West Bengal's Birbhum district. Various archaeological sites scattered around this village indicate the existence of Buddhist Culture. According to the time, the centre of Buddhist practice was established in Kanakpur with the efforts of Buddhist monks under the inspiration of Pala Raja Mahipala I and the Buddhist goddess Aparajita was established in Laldanga on the pond now known as Durgatari. During the Sen rule, this Buddhist Aparajita became the Hindu goddess Aparajita. The appearance of the Buddhist Aparajita was transformed. Currently the statue is a bust. The head of the statue is of later date. This village of Birbhum is slowly turning into a ganj, clinging to various archaeological artifacts and events of the past and the constraints of governance system of various rulers, awaiting proper archaeological excavations; So that the real truth hidden in the cave of the past will be a significant place in the tourism map of the district as well as the state. If the West Bengal government pays proper attention to Kanakpur, which is full of archeological monuments, then by 2030, Kanakpur will become one of the state and also the role of this village will become important in the economic development of West Bengal.*

**Keywords:** *archaeological, buddhist, aparajita, transform, tourism.*

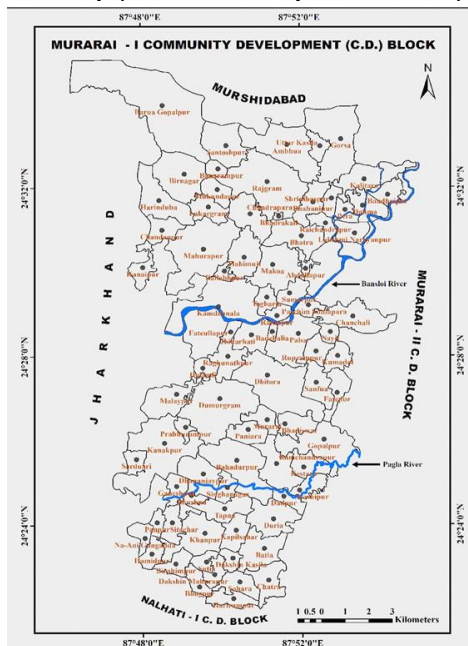
### **Introduction**

**Kanakpur** (JL No.-109) is prominent village in Birbhum district of West Bengal. Kanakpur is an ancient village like Paikar, Bhagail, Mitrapur, Nandigram, Bhadiswar etc. belonging to Development Block 1 and 2 of Murarai. Kankpur is located West of Murarai railway station. The village is about 7KM from Murarai station. At the entrance to the village, the ancient Shiva temple is noticed. There are about ten such Shiva temples in the village, which suggests that the inhabitants of the village were Shaivas. But, various archaeological sites shattered around this village indicate the existence of Buddhist culture. Kanakpur, which is full of natural beauty, can be combined with a pilgrimage to

Birbhum Tarapith, Atla, Birchandrapur, Nalhatেশwari etc. Perhaps the Pala king Vighraha Pala II (C977-1027 AD) when the Chandellas, Kalchuris and hill tribes lost control over Gourdesha to the Kombojas and advanced to establish dominance over Bengal<sup>1</sup>, it was then that Kanakpur in Uttararh came under Pala rule and the Pala dynasty there. They get an opportunity to establish their religious culture.<sup>2</sup> The next Pala ruler Mahipal I, son of Vighraha Pala II (C.977-1027 AD) managed to restore some of the lost glory of the Pala Empire. By resisting the Chola and Kalchuri invasions he saved the declining Pala Empire from immediate destruction. He built several cities and dug many ponds. In this context, mention should be made of Mahipal Dighi in Nangar under

Development Block No.2 of Murarai. The Buddhist Mahipala renovated many Buddhist Monasteries. It is probably at this time that the center of Buddhist practice was established in Kanakpur by the efforts of Buddhist Monks under inspiration of Mahipala, and the temple of the Buddhist goddess Aparajita was established in Laldanga on the north side of the pond known as Durgatari.

### Location Map (Murarai development block 1)



### Purpose of the Paper

To highlight Kanpur as a tourist centre to improve the economic condition of the area and to analyze how the religion and forms of gods and goddesses are evolving with the change of Yugadharm.

### Review of Related Literature

Fifteen books on the history of Birbhum have been discussed here. It should be noted that, although Birbhum is a subject, not all of the books have discussed the entire Birbhum. In particular, the books do not discuss the detailed discussion of our area. The discussion that is there is very little.

Gourihar Mitra's book 'Birbhumer Itihas' has recorded various events since the formation of Birbhum district. However, this book does not contain a comprehensive history of entire Birbhum. Very little has been written about North Birbhum in particular. Blocks 1 & 2 of Murarai are under North Birbhum, so important history of these two blocks is not covered in this book. Many historical events that took place around this area from the ancient times to the present time deserve to be mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

The book 'Birbhumer Itihas' edited by Kamal Chowdhury has been compiled with the writings of various eminent persons. Various writers have shed light on various issues of different areas of Birbhum from their different perspectives. Although several villages in Murarai have been mentioned in various discussions, the real history of this area has not been mentioned in any writing. This book does not mention the landlord class of Murarai. Naturally, the book does not give a clear idea about the history of Murarai area.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Aditya Mukhopadhyay is a prominent poet, literary and folklore researcher of Birbhum. He wrote a remarkable book 'Rangamatir Gram'. As Aditya is primarily a literary man, the real history remains elusive in this book. For 40 years he has traveled to nearly 2000 villages in Birbhum. He has tried to introduce the villages. He has visited many villages in two blocks of Murarai. He has recorded them in this book. But the real history of the villages has not come out in his presentation. He has relied more on folk tales. Moreover, many villages rich in history in the area remain invisible to him.<sup>3</sup>

'Annals of Rural Bengal' ('Gram Banglar Itihas'), written by W.W. Hunter is one of the most important books in the history of Birbhum and Bengal. In this book, the tribal s of Bengal and their ethnic elements are mentioned. On the other hand, the beginning of British rule in this country is also discussed. The book also discusses the company's role as a rural

producer. However, the Murarai area is not significantly discussed in this book either.<sup>4</sup>

Prasanga Uttar Rarh' written by Dr. Animesh Chattopadhyay is a remarkable book on Birbhum. The land of Rarh is divided into two regions- Uttor Rarh and Dakshin Rarh. In this book, the author has discussed various issues related to the territory of Uttor Rarh. In a total of eight chapters Uttor Rarh has tried to analyze the socio-culture of different villages with deep insight. But many historically important villages are left out in his discussion. In this context, the names of many villages of Murarai area come up, which are not mentioned in this book.<sup>5</sup>

The book 'Birbhum parichiti' by Siddheshwar Mukhopadhyay is better called a pamphlet than a book. Although given the title 'Birbhum Parichiti', it does not mention the whole Birbhum. In this book Murarai is referred to as the God Kingdom of Murarai. Besides, there are two or four words about one or two villages of Murarai area in this book. By which the overall identity of the villages under No.1 and No.2 block of Murarai does not match.<sup>6</sup>

The whole of Birbhum is not mentioned in the book 'Birbhum Jelar Sthanik Itihas' edited by shyamchand Bagdi with a few articles written by eminent field researcher Shankarlal Roy. This anthology has been made with a total of 15 articles. None of the articles provide a detailed account of the Murarai area. Only a few isolated incidents from a few villages in the area are mentioned.<sup>7</sup>

The three volumes of the book 'Birbhum Bibaran' edited by Maharajkumar Mohimananjan Chakraborty and published by Sahityaratna Harekrishna Mukhopadhyay are three important books on the history of Birbhum district. The books are mainly the result of Harekrishna Mukhopadhyay's fieldwork. However, he could not reach all parts of Birbhum because of the obstacles in the communication system. In many cases he probably brought out the history of a region with information from others. So some wrong information is also

served. For example he mentions village Kanakpur under Murarai Police Station east of Murarai Railway Station. But actually Kanakpur is a village west of Murarai Railway Station. Moreover, many villages of Murarai No.1 and No.2 blocks are not mentioned in the three books. As a result, many important histories of this area remain unrecorded.<sup>8</sup>

Nikhil Nath Roy's book 'Murshidabad Kahini' gives an outline of eighteenth century Bengal, not just Murshidabad. Although the discussion of this book starts from the time of Murshid Quli Khan, more emphasis is placed on the period of Nawab Alibardi and Mirkashim. As the whole of Bengal is mentioned, many regions of Birbhum are also discussed here. All the Zamindaras of Murshidabad who established their rights over the area of Murarai are discussed in this book. However, the Small Zamindars of this area are not mentioned in this book. How they got the Zamindari is also not found in the book.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Animesh Chattopadhyay's 'Kshetra Sameekshay Birbhum' is a significant book on the history of Birbhum. This book mainly emphasizes the evolution of 'Shamadharna' in some villages of Birbhum and how much 'Kirat' influenced the villages here. But the whole of Birbhum was not included in this discussion. However, the religious culture of several villages of our area has been beautifully presented in this book. However, in this short book, the author did not get the opportunity to show the true form of religious culture and its evolution in all the villages of Murarai area.<sup>10</sup>

'Maheshpur Rajbangsher Itihas' written by Anilendra Narayan Singh. The book contains various events and stories of the Maheshpur royal family. What should be the characteristics of a true history book is violated in many cases in this book. Many myths are presented as truth while presenting many events. Once Maheshpur was under Birbhum. Therefore their authority is found in many places of Birbhum especially in many villages of Murarai area. But that is not discussed much in this book. It does

not contain details of the Santal rebellion and the relationship of this royal family with the Santals. It has become only a family history.<sup>11</sup>

'Birbhum: Itihas o Sangskriti' written by Arnab Majumdar is one of the research books on the history and culture of Birbhum district. However, the writer could not highlight the history and culture of the entire area of Birbhum district. As a result, we who have started to think of Murarai are deprived. The mention of the Murarai area in this book does not meet our expectations at all. Because the history and culture of many villages in this area have not been properly revealed even today; which can become an important component of the overall history of Bengal and the country.<sup>12</sup>

'Birbhum Gramnam' by Dr. Satya Narayan Das is a special book on Birbhum. Analyzing the etymology of the word, the author explains the reason for different names of villages. The skill of the author in such a difficult task is rightly admirable. But unfortunately, he could not explain the origin of the name of many villages in the Murarai area are not mentioned in his book.<sup>13</sup>

'Bengal District Gazetteers: Birbhum by L.S.S. O'Malley is a notable book on Birbhum. This book discusses Birbhum's topography, history, population, health services, agricultural system, natural disasters, mineral resources, revenue system, governance, education etc. But Murarai No. 1 and No. 2, the two blocks of Birbhum, have been written very briefly. But this area has historical importance since ancient times. However, O'Malley, like other commentators, remains almost silent about this area for some unknown reason.<sup>14</sup>

Dinabandhu Das's 'Paryatane Paikar' is a well read book. The book is a powerful way to show the reader the tourist spots centered around Paikar in Birbhum. The incarnation of this book is aimed at the economic development of the area along with the presentation of religious culture.

Sri Das is basically a literary man. That is why the literary flavour is present every sentence written by him. In his writings various events of history have come up around the ancient Prachikot (Paikar). In composing this book he has taken the help of several history books. However, he had to rely more on worldly elements. He has indulged a little too much in the romantic memories of the local people. That is why he has presented many myths as true. In this book, he has included all the stories about the Gods and Goddesses of the area. May be he unknowingly adopted the trend of romantic historiography to make his history. That is why it is not rationalism; imagination, feelings and emotions predominate in his writing. That's why literary thinking has overwhelmed his historical consciousness in most of his works. Moreover, the source is not indicated in the book in accordance with the research reference writing method. The book does not contain factual descriptions and explanations of past events in perfect chronology. In order to get a proper and reliable identification of the various events of the past, the historian has to rely on a lot of references for rational evaluation of those events. Original references are an essential element of the study of history. When a historian presents or evaluates a past story, he always tries to present the testimony and facts in support of his statement. Historians can not prove a past event to be true unless it is supported by relevant information. Judging from that, this book is a travelogue or travelogue of a tourist- not a history book. However, this book must be considered as an important component of the local history of the region.<sup>15</sup>

### **Hypothesis**

The religious culture of Murarai also deserves special mention. The idols of different gods and goddesses found in different archaeological sites of the area prove the existence of different religions in this area. A lot of new information is expected to emerge with

proper research. Real research will reveal the reasons for conversions. This study will also reveal why secular gods and goddesses have gained prominence.

### Methodology

The data will be collected from the primary sources and the secondary sources and oral sources. The core aim of this study is not only to generate facts but also to focus on descriptive analysis of human life phenomenon and social measuring. Therefore, the qualitative method has been chosen as the applied method in this study in order to seek the possible answers to the research questions. The use of theory in social research assists to explain and understand the finding of research within conceptual frameworks that imply study including dynamics contents and structure of social research selected to describe and analyse.

### Discussion

Dr Bhattacharya's book 'Bouddhader dev-devi ' says about the Buddhist goddess Aparajita. The goddess Aparajita of Ratnasambhaskula is a little strange in nature. She temples the Hindu deity Ganapati and the Goddess's hands are raised as if she is about to slap someone. She is two -armed, one- faced, be jeweled with many jewels, her face is very terrible and sunny.

Buddhism was created as a protest against Brahmanism and Hinduism, so there was an attempt among Buddhists to make Hindu gods and goddesses look unimportant. The worship of Hindu gods and goddesses begins with the worship of Siddhidata Ganesha. That Lord Ganapati is shown being trampled here. This shows the Hindu hatred of the Buddhists at that time.

With the end of the pala rule and the beginning of the Sen rule, the era of Hindu supremacy began again. During this period, many Buddhist gods and goddesses were transformed into Hindu gods and

goddesses. Many people know that Tarapitha's mother Tara was brought from China by Vashishtha Dev. She is actually a Buddhist goddess. In course of time she transformed into a Hindu goddess and was later called Tarapith Upopith and Siddhapith.

Mother Aparajita of Kanakpur has also transformed from a Buddhist goddess to Hindu goddess. Because the ruins of mother Aparajita's first temple are found in Kanakpur Landang. It was discovered on 9/03/2017 by the head of the Department of Archaeology of Calcutta University during the exploration of various archaeological sites of Murarai. Dr. Rajat Sanyal, archaeologist Dr. Bijan Mondal, Bidhan Halder and president of Burdwan Center for History and Archaeology former bureaucrat Sri Ajay Kumar Ghosh identified as Buddhist archaeological sites.

Moreover, the stone of Aparajita that we see today is a bust and a broken statue. The face of the statue is of much later date. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the Hindu goddess, tore down the part that had the symbol of Siddhidata Ganesha under her feet and also destroyed the monstrous form of the Buddhist Aparajita.

According to Pandit Harekrishna Mukhopadhyay, the place that is glorious is in the charm of its natural beauty, the spontaneous manifestation of the Lord, is the Upopitha.<sup>16</sup> The temple of Aparajita in Kanakpur may have earned the status of Upapitha for this reason. As the Hindu religious mind assimilated him into Tantric spirituality, her Buddhist identity was lost forever.

Much later, in the second decade of the 18th century, the temple of Aparajita was renovated by Rajshahi Zamindar Udaynarayan. Nawab Murshid Quli Khan (1717-1727 AD) of Bengal entrusted a vast zamindari rule to Udaynarayan under his supervision. The entire Rajshahi was ruled by him. Residents of Murshidabad, Birbhum, Santal Parganas and two districts of Rajshahi Division used to pay him revenue.<sup>17</sup> But soon he had a conflict with Nawab

Murshid Quli Khan over this revenue and this conflict reached such a level that he had to fight with Murshid Quli Khan's troops in a riot at Mundamalar danga on the western border of Kanakpur village (1718). Presently the place belonging to Dumduma village in Pakur district of Jharkhand. The brick structure covering some area in this place reminds the existence of Buddhist culture.

After the defeat and death of Udaynarayan, the zamindari of Rajshahi was handed over to the Natore dynasty. With that, Kanakpur came under Natore's rule. Ramnath Bhaduri came to Kanakpur in Birbhum as an employee of Nawab Alivardi Khan soon after Raghunandan of Natore took over the zamindari of Raja Udaynarayan.<sup>18</sup> Ramnath, seeing the plight of mother Aparajita in the broken temple of Laldanga in Kanakpur, brought the mother's stone idol to the Shiva temple he had established and arranged regular pujas there.

After some time, a temple was built on the site of present temple of Aparajita in Kanakpur on initiative of Rani Bhavani (1716-1795 AD) of Natore. It should be noted that after the death of Raja Ramkanta of Natore in 1748, Nawab Alivardi Khan entrusted the management of the zamindari to Rani Bhavani.<sup>19</sup>

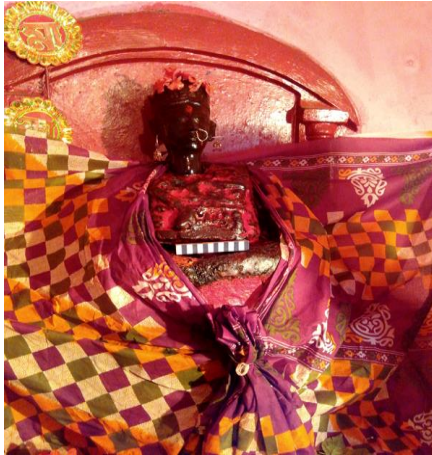
Later, when the influence of Natore declined, Kanakpur came under the zamindari of Nasipur. Later, Haravangshi Barmanya, the protege of Maheshpur Maharaja Gopalchandra Singh (reign period -1835-1885) who came from Moinpur district of present Uttar Pradesh, took a lease on the condition of paying 1/6th of the Kanakpur mahal income of Nasipur zamindar. She was very religious. She arranged the daily worship of Shalagram Shila, Radhakrishna, Gopal, Shiva etc. at his residence in Kanakpur. At the end of her life, she gave the responsibility of Thakur Puja along with the zamindari of Kanakpur to his close relative Uzagar Song's son Shivdarshan Singh.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Mother Aparajita, who was gradually converted from a Buddhist goddess to a Hindu goddess, became known. In the context of the overall discussion, it can be said that with the change of royal rule, the behavioral and religious characteristics of the king's realm also changed in many cases. Most of the subjects accepted the religion of the king as their own. It seems that the people of our region, because of their loyalty to the religion of the new king, changed the Buddhist form of the goddess Aparajita and transformed her into a Hindu Aparajita. Many people from far and wide came to this goddess with various intentions. Around 1930, a saint named Srimat Swami Nirgunananda Brahmachari came to this mother's temple and attained siddhi through Tantra practice. It may be noted that Swami Nirgunananda moved to Maheshpur Rajbari soon after attaining Brahmachari Siddhi and spent his last life there.<sup>21</sup> It is pertinent to mention that on October 3, 2018, with the financial and sincere support of many devotees and the funds given by the Fisheries Minister of West Bengal Sri Chandranath Sinha, the idol of Ma Aparajita was re-established in the newly built altar of an elaborate temple with Natamandir at the place of the temple built by Rani Bhavani.



**Ruins of first temple of Maa Aparajita, Laldanga pahar, Kanakpur, Birbhum, West Bengal**



**Maa Aparajita in the temple built by Rani Bhavani, Kanakpur, Birbhum, WB**



**Mother Aparajita at the newly built altar**



**Maa Aparajita on the altar of the temple built by Rani Bhavani, Kanakpur, Birbhum**



**Adjacent to the ancient Shiva temple is the temple of Mother Aparajita**



**Author at the inauguration of Maa Aparajita's newly built temple (3/10/2018)**



**Danga of Mundamala , the battlefield Of Dumduma, Jharkhand**



**Archaeologists observing the Buddhist architecture of Danga in Mundamala, Jharkhand**

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## A STUDY OF THE AUTOMOBILE TROPE IN GARTH STEIN'S *THE ART OF RACING IN THE RAIN*

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### Abstract

Garth Stein's *The Art of Racing in the Rain* is one of the countless literary works which has made extensive use of the automobile trope and yet it has received little critical attention. This article studies the symbolic and narrative significance of this trope in an attempt to prove that it is not merely something that is present in the background only. In the concerned novel, racing and other car related metaphors have been used to comment upon the life experiences of its protagonist, Denny Swift. Through this technique the author manages to give life advice to his readers without being too didactic. What makes this approach even more interesting is that the narrator is a philosophical dog names, Enzo, who is as much in love with cars and car racing as his car racer master is. This novel takes the racing and car related metaphors beyond just equating racing with life and rain with its difficulties. Certain parallels have also been drawn with the canonical *The Great Gatsby* to fortify the arguments and to show that the use of this trope is not a recent invention.

**Keywords:** automobile trope, racing metaphor, automobile metaphor, canine narrator, life advice, American literature.

America's love affair with automobile is as old as it is celebrated. Not long after showing hostility toward the automobile in its initial days, rural Americans integrated them to their daily lives with enthusiasm and love. Before long, these machines had become inseparable parts of their lives. As a natural consequence, these machines soon found themselves in art and literature. Artists and litterateurs had not taken long to realise that these machines were very potent semantic devices that could add tremendous depth to their creations. Be it in literature, cinema, music, painting, poetry or any other form of art, these machines often find important roles to play even to this day. While in some of them the roles that they play are quite obvious and hence, somewhat easy to understand (e.g. – *The Great Gatsby*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, Travel narratives, road books etc), in others, their role might be very significant and yet so exceedingly subtle that they may escape the casual reader's eyes. (e.g. – *White Noise*, *The Driver's Seat*).

That this obsession with automobile is most obviously prominent in American literature, art, music and cinema is no surprise since this machine single handedly changed not only the country but also the lives of its citizens. From decentralizing cities, to the invention and very rapid worldwide popularity of fast food to becoming an extension of the owners/driver's personality, there is a multiplicity of reasons why this machine became so dear to Americans from all walks of life.

The primary text selected for this paper is a New York Times bestseller titled *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by the Seattle based author and film maker Garth Stein. Published in 2008, the novel was adapted into a movie by Simon Curtis in 2019. In a letter to Jeff Kleinman the author summarizes his novel as follows:

The Art of Racing in the Rain is the story of Denny Swift, a race car driver who faces profound obstacles in his life, and ultimately overcomes them by applying the same techniques that have made them successful on the track. His story is narrated by

his “philosophical dog”, Enzo, who, having a nearly human soul (and an obsession with opposable thumbs), believes he will return as a man in his next lifetime. (Stein)

As can be inferred from Stein’s very brief summary of his book, one of the most unique features of this work is that the narrator is a philosophical dog named Enzo. Another unique feature of this book is that the automobile, or automobile racing to be more accurate, takes the centre stage. It is not something that exists merely in the background but it is something through which the novel deals with its complex themes of love, loss, tenacity and destiny. Through Enzo’s perspective, Stein turns the automobile into a metaphysical device wherein it turns into a site of control, life principles, realizations and revelations. Two things that Enzo keeps reminding the reader over and over again – “that which you manifest is before you” and “the car goes where your eyes go” – become metaphors for the right approach to not only life but also to the seemingly unsurmountable obstacles it throws at us. Stein draws a parallel between good driving and navigating through life well. This is very similar, although opposite, to what Jacqueline Lance says in her article on *The Great Gatsby*, titled “The Great Gatsby: Driving to Destruction with the Rich and Careless at the Wheel”. In this essay, the author suggests that bad drivers of cars are bad drivers of life. While there is nothing new with the parallel that Stein draws, he still manages to draw his readers into the text with his clever story telling which through the dog’s perspective is not only very attention grabbing and warm but is also highly suggestive without being overly didactic.

In spite of all this, this novel has not received as much critical attention as it deserves, let alone critical attention toward the employment of the automobile trope in it. This paper examines the automobile trope in *The Art of Racing in the Rain* as a literary and symbolic device. A critical evaluation of the hero’s

career as a race car driver, the narrator’s philosophical take on the happenings of the plot and the recurring references to automobile racing make it clear that the automobile is an integral part of the novel’s framework. Stein elevates the cars position to metaphorical level wherein the race alludes to life and each part of the race alludes to the different stages of the hero’s journey through his life experiences.

The ‘profound obstacles’ that Stein mentions in the aforementioned quote from his letter are the hero’s wife’s cancer diagnosis, her suffering and eventual death, harassment by his parents-in-laws for his daughter Zoe’s custody, the false rape charge levelled against him, his unending financial troubles and finally the death of Enzo. The ever-philosophical Enzo keeps on relating each step of life to various details related to automobile racing. A few examples of this are enough to demonstrate how Stein has incorporated the automobile trope into his novel.

In the opening paragraph of the third chapter of the book the reader not only finds the title’s justification but also a very subtle advice on how to go through life when things get difficult. Enzo says “very gently, like there are eggshells on your pedals”, Denny always says, ‘and you don’t want to break them. That’s how you drive in the rain” (Stein 13). It is quite obvious that Enzo is advising to tread carefully through the difficult stages of life. When describing a crash, Enzo says, “He stuffed it when a Daytona Prototype – a much faster car – was overtaking. First rule of racing: Never move aside to let someone pass; make *him* pass *you*” (Stein 28).

One of Enzo’s hobbies is to watch TV. He is also especially fond of watching motor races including in-car footages of Denny’s races. About these, in-car videos he says,

Watching a race entirely from in-car video is a tremendous experience. It creates a wonderful sense of perspective that is often lost in

television broadcast with its many cameras and cars to follow. Seeing the race from the cockpit of a single car gives true feeling of what it's like to be a driver: the grip on the steering wheel, the dash, the track, and the glimpse through the rearview mirror of the other cars overtaking or being overtaken, the sense of isolation, the focus and determination that are necessary to win. (Stein 38-39)

Here, Enzo is talking about perspective. However, it seems there is more here than meets the eye. It seems as if it was not only Denny and Enzo who applied the principles of motor racing in their lives but also that Stein has done the same in the process of writing this novel. If the above quotation were to be interpreted from another perspective, then what Enzo says about in-car video footage versus regular television broadcast can also be applied to the narrative voice. Enzo being non-human albeit with very human feelings and yet being a part of the family, privy to the most private moments, emotional outbursts and intimate confessions offers the readers a unique insight into the lives of the characters which is comparable to in-car footage. An omniscient third-person narrator, on the other hand, would be neutral in describing all characters and events without having any personal involvement with any one character or party which would play out the narration very differently in the reader's mind. This is comparable to television broadcast which is neutral and impersonal. In fact, Stein's writing is also quite fast-paced, much like a race car on a circuit and the short chapters in between in which Enzo recounts the details of some relevant races are very much like pit stops.

At another instance Enzo says,

Ideally, a driver is a master of all that is around him, Denny says. Ideally, a driver controls the car so completely that he corrects a spin before it happens, he anticipates all possibilities. But we don't live in an ideal world. In our world surprises

sometimes happen, and a driver must react. (Stein 48)

This chapter talks about the surprises during a race, the mistakes the drivers commit and advice on how the driver should react in such situations. Enzo says this after Eve's health suddenly takes a turn for the worst and she leaves with Zoe locking Enzo inside the house without food or water for three days. For Enzo, this was the surprise thrown at him and being a racer at heart as both he himself and as Denny describe him, he knows he must react. And that is precisely what he does. Stein makes very clever use of these bits of motor racing wisdom as the rationale for the progression of his plot. Therefore, it is not only Denny but also Enzo and Stein himself who apply motor racing tricks and wisdom for different purposes. Denny is an exceptional driver but that doesn't mean that he can control everything. What Enzo says here, some of Denny's failures in races which were caused by forces beyond his control and the series of misfortunes that life threw at him are the very surprises Enzo talks about. Whereas a good driver learns and reacts, a bad driver is either complacent or reacts in the most inappropriate way making the situation worse when a surprise is thrown at them as was the case in *The Great Gatsby*. This is made clear further when at a later point Enzo says, "When faced with one of these problems, the poor driver crashes. The average driver gives up. The great driver drives through the problem. They figure out a way to continue racing" (Stein 64).

From beginning to end, the book is full of references from motor racing exactly as the title suggests but these bits of motor sport wisdom actually are allegorical and metaphorical in nature. Denny has met his lawyer and is uncertain about what to do next. Enzo says,

Mark trundled off down the street, and when he had rounded the corner, Denny looked at me and held his hands out in front of himself. They

were shaking: he didn't say anything, but he looked at his hands trembling and then he looked at me, and I knew what he was thinking. He was thinking that if he just had a steering wheel to hold on to, his hands wouldn't shake. If he had a steering wheel to hold on to, everything would be alright. (Stein 186)

A race car or any other car, for that matter, also represents brute force which is controlled by the person operating it, the driver. It is, therefore, quite easy to understand Denny's urge to hold the metaphorical steering wheel of his life and steer clear of all the obstacles. Without the steering wheel in his hand, he does not have any sense of control. This representation of the automobile where it stands for authority, power, force and control is one of the most common. In road books, travel narratives, memoirs, and stories of escape and freedom, this sense of control that the automobile gives its driver is most essential. In other genres, this same agency may be used negatively with equal impact and efficiency.

In essence, in the novel, racing is a metaphor for life and rain signifies the difficulties of life. Racing in the rain becomes art when one masters the way of dealing with life without getting flustered by its ups and downs. *The Art of Racing in the Rain* is as much a work of fiction as it is a self – help book. It is not didactic like self-help books generally are but it achieves what self-help books intend to achieve, and in many ways more effectively. The employment of the automobile trope makes it universally relatable. Additionally, with the usage of this trope the author manages to give life advice obliquely which make them not sound like instruction or command. What the author has done is not something unique but the way he has done it is.

The reason some parallels with *The Great Gatsby* have been drawn here is that although the two works are from different genres, different time periods and tell two very different stories, the

metaphorical good driver and bad driver interpretation can be applied to both these works. Denny is the metaphorical good driver/racer exactly in the same way that Daisy Buchanan, Tom Buchanan and Jordan Baker are the metaphorical bad drivers.

That two books separated by more than eight decades can be brought under the same umbrella based on their employment of the same trope speaks about its efficiency as a literary/cinematic trope. That thousands of other works of art and literature have made use of this trope in different ways to suit their purpose speaks volumes about its versatility. Still, however, it has not managed to attract the kind of scholarly attention that it deserves and the reason for this is actually very simple-excessive familiarity.

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## **MARITAL DISILLUSIONMENT IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT**

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### **Abstract**

*The Indian subcontinent is well known for its commercial and cultural wealth. Woman, being the centre of the family, her liberation and emancipation has brought about revolutionary changes in Indian society. Marriage is a social institution, which provides socio religious sanction to a man to live with a woman and be a couple. Githa Hariharan has woven her novels around the institution of marriage, which has received social recognition and approval in all cultures and at all times. She successfully projects the true image of Indian women in her novels, with perfect and exact details of Indian landscape. Her ability lies in her extraordinary vividness in portraying the theme with complete faith in the realities of life. She has fabricated her stories at the background of Indian society portraying the Indian culture and its ethics honestly and realistically. In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Githa Hariharan has uniquely presented the idea of feminist community at the backdrop of the Indian society. She throws light on the shortcomings of arranged marriages. Though Devi, the protagonist in all her efforts try to assert her individual freedom by rejecting the traditional ways of life, she remains unhappy and fails to merge into the community. Being a factionalist, Githa Hariharan has focused the psychological strain like love or sex and its significance in marital life which is a relevant and remarkable aspect of Indian social structure.*

**Keywords:** *culture, socio religious, exploitation, globalization, western culture, marriage.*

Reality of the Indian families is that men are brought up to be served as princes in the family and women to serve as maids in the scullery. In fact, women constantly suffer from discrimination in all walks of life before and after coming to this earth. The Indian subcontinent is well known for its commercial and cultural wealth. Woman, being the centre of the family, her liberation and emancipation has brought about revolutionary changes in Indian society. The

status of women has seen many ups and downs with the rise and fall of different ruling classes. The post-independence India has witnessed the liberation of woman from the bounds of hearth and her rise to the highest pedestal of public life. This transformation is observed and recorded by almost all the writers of this century. It has been observed by Rajendra Yadav as:

...in fiction social changes do not mean the same as in politics. They mean essentially the change of attitudes towards the human relationships or the psychology of man in context of his 'not the same' social set up. Among mutual relationships, the most delicate, the most decisive and the most explosive relationship is that of man and woman. That is why this has been the central theme of all the story-tellers of the world. (155)

Marriage is a social institution, which provides socio religious sanction to a man to live with a woman and be a couple. Without this ceremony their social acceptability is difficult. The later half of the twentieth century witnessed a change in upper, upper-middle and middle class Indian family. Interest in love marriage, living together without marriage and split families has become common. Family is defined in *Encyclopedia Britannica* as:

... the most familiar of social institutions seems to be most stable, enduring and universal... Ralph Linton speaks of the consanguineal family as consisting of parents, children and grand children, surrounded by a fringe of spouses. He contrasts it with the conjugal family, consisting of husband, wife and their off spring surrounded by a fringe loosely attached and intermittently operative relatives. (59-60)

The process of globalization has affected the economic systems, social structures, political and cultural avenues. Globalization has raised some of the important issues in society which have been neglected in the past. Many women who have moved to the West from India have contributed a lot to Indian writing in English. Their works depict colonial and post colonial experience. Indian women novelists may be said to have carried out the women's liberation movement. They have tried to present the predicament of women in their novels keeping in view the injustice and inequality which obstructed the path of woman's progress. They are inspired by their

predecessors like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Parwar Jhabvala and they have been able to raise the image of new woman who is fully aware of her rights and duties.

The impact of western culture and media in the later half of twentieth century has brought about radical changes in the concept of family in Indian society. The contemporary Indian literature provides ample evidence of those changes, but little has yet been explored. The sociological analysis of Indian literature can provide a sound base for studying the social changes in the modern scenario. The national and social concerns many a time have encouraged writers to reconstruct their novels around the lives and deeds of real characters. At present the concept of family is changing from joint to nuclear.

Githa Hariharan has woven her novels around the institution of marriage, which has received social recognition and approval in all cultures and at all times. Society is the background for her works. The institution of marriage which is treated as an ideal and holy form of social existence is exalted in all civilized social organizations. The harmony that is felt in the writings of Githa Hariharan signifies marriage as a patriarchal attribute that decides the complete suppression and defeat of women's identity. She is concerned of the dilemmas of women and the choices they make when they find themselves in the whirlpool of complex between man-woman relationships. Her women protagonists are consistently pressured in clumsy, knotty relationships and firmly refuse to become prisoners of orthodoxies congeal traditions and stereotyped idealized identities. Thereby she casts a very hard look at the structural dynamics of the society functioning against the advantages of the female species. Her novels exhibit instability and weakness, differences and clashes, sufferings and struggles, societal and interiorized levels of their experience, as well as the extent of inter-subjectivity and self-reflexivity of women.

Githa Hariharan successfully projects the true image of Indian women in her novels, with perfect and exact details of Indian landscape. Her ability lies in her extraordinary vividness in portraying the theme with complete faith in the realities of life. This recalls the words of R.S. Singh's views on Indian life style, "Indian life is mostly guided by deep-rooted traditions and conventions." (30) in his *Indian Novel in English*. Githa Hariharan has fabricated her stories at the background of Indian society portraying the Indian culture and its ethics honestly and realistically. Being a factionalist she has focused the psychological strain like love or sex and its significance in marital life which is a relevant and remarkable aspect of Indian social structure.

In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Githa Hariharan has uniquely presented the idea of feminist community at the backdrop of the Indian society. Devi, the protagonist of this novel, is one such woman. Her childhood is scarred by the death of her father and of her grandmother. The latter has played a rather important role in her life, forming and nurturing both her body and soul, preparing her with her stories and experiences for the life that awaits her. Later, Devi goes to the U.S. on a scholarship to do a Masters. Except for a few happy moments in the company of a gentle caring Black American called Dan, she has been pretty much on her own there. When Dan proposes to her, Devi cannot take the pledge, cannot cut herself off from her ancient moorings. She has clearly consigned Dan's relationship as, "the blurred regions of fantasy" (TTFN 3)

Devi's higher education at foreign country has brought revolutionary changes in the culture and in the traditional life of Devi. She has stayed with her boy friend Dan in his apartment and she also enjoyed smoking to complete her American experience. Devi's relationship with Dan in America shows that modern man-woman friendship and the way she rejects Dan's marriage proposal shows the traditional

concept of the family in which she has been brought up. Liberation of woman may be a positive gain, but it must know a limit as Devi is very conscious about the customs followed in her family. Though lived in America for few years, Devi always felt susceptible to her environment. Devi's mother tempts her to return to India. Devi rejects Dan's marriage proposal, and he tells her, "Going back is a bigger risk. I thought you would see that," retorted Devi ... But in America you could brazenly plead your rights as an individual." (TTFN 6)

Devi, the daughter of a traditional South Indian Brahmin family, returned to Madras from America, to live with her mother, Sita. Initially she confronts some difficulties in making adjustments with the day-to-day realities but soon realizes that it is not so easy to radically change the old order of things just because she has returned from a brave new world. Despite the spread of education, the Hindu family structure continues to be traditional, especially with regard to marriage. Even the educated people in India prefer arranged marriages. The traditional system of arranged marriages with the consent of elders and in consultation with the young partners seems to be an ideal type marriage for the Indian society.

Marriage arranged to please everybody except the principal partners in the union does not mean companionship. After meeting five or six prospective bridegrooms Devi decides to marry Mahesh, a Regional Manager in a multinational company that makes detergents and toothpastes. Sita arranged for Devi's marriage with Mahesh. The dream like life came to an end when Devi was married to Mahesh. Devi was impressed by Mahesh's frankness when he talked about his expectations. Being a manager, he believes in managing everything in life as he does for his company; for him marriage, 'is a gamble' (TTFN 49) just a necessary milestone of life. But for Devi, 'it must grow gradually, like a delicate but promising sapling' (TTFN 49) Soon she realized that there were no heroines in his life, only wives and mothers. Her

life was ripe for disillusionment when she walked into an arranged marriage. It hit her that if Dan was too un-Indian, Mahesh was too Indian. Through the life of Devi and Mahesh, Githa Hariharan throws light on the shortcomings of arranged marriages.

In India, in many parts of the society, the brides had no chance to select their life partner; they cannot even meet the person, with whom they were going to get married. They had to marry the person whom their parents select for them. For Mahesh, Devi is seen not as a wife or a companion but as a slave, existing only to fulfill his sexual needs and to obey all his commands. Women are entrusted with the household responsibilities, particularly those of cooking food and rearing children. This leads to the exploited and oppressed society of women.

Simone de Beauvoir observes as, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman... it is civilization as a whole that produces this culture... which is described as feminine". (IWW 27) Mahesh expects that everything he does in life must bring to him positive results as he is in grip of his hurried commercial world. He treats his wife as an object to satisfy his "organised sexual urge," which engulfs Devi and gives rise to an awesome loneliness. Her living with Mahesh is like living in a dungeon with hardly any breathing space between the two. In Indian society, still wife's fortune is linked with her husband's. Devi's father-in-law advises her as follows:

The woman has no independent sacrifice to perform, no vow, fasting: by serving her husband, she is honoured in the heavens. On death of husband, the chaste wife, established in continence, reaches heaven, even if childless, like students who have practiced self-control. (TTFN 54)

For Mahesh, marriage is not a holy tie; it is only a contract between husband and wife for living together. The Hindu society works on the principle of group morality. An Indian woman is given the chance

to realize her social order and not to express herself. Ananda K.Coomaraswamy expresses his views in *Dance of Shiva*:

The duties of woman are created in the rites of wedding, when in the presence of the nuptial fire she becomes the associate of her lord, for the performance of all righteous deeds. She should be beautiful and gentle, considering her husband as her god and serving him as such in fortune and misfortune, health and sickness, obedient even if commanded to unrighteous deeds or acts that may lead to her own destruction. (100-101)

Devi feels lonely and longed for Mahesh's shower of love. In most of the Indian families, husbands become so busy in their business and they have no time to understand the feelings and sentiments of their wives. They always desire their wives to be charming and beautiful. Devi recalls her father-in-law Baba's hypnotic voice:

The housewife should always be joyous, adept at domestic work, neat in her domestic wares, and restrained in expenses. Controlled in mind, word, and body, she who does not transgress her lord, attains heaven even as her lord does. (TTFN 70-71)

*The Thousand Faces of Night* has an architectonic design and both Devi and Mahesh, belong to the same social milieu and background. Mahesh is a typical husband who fails to read the nerve or nuclei of woman's psychology. Consequently there is no warmth of love and emotion between wife and husband. Devi leads her life mechanically as she does not find satisfaction and emotional saturation. There is no genuine feeling of love as it is expected in husband-wife relationship. Their marital knot shows that they are not made for each other.

The blow to Mahesh's self-satisfaction comes when he fails to achieve the desired fatherhood. It doesn't appear that Devi longs to be a mother. As he waits for word of her pregnancy, her constant, casual

answer is, "no news". She remains "all bones and flat stomach" (TTFN 86) the fact that he is fine and she is the one to take treatment. Childlessness can leave a woman utterly powerless. But it can also be used to tilt the scales of power. It helps Devi to restore her self-esteem. Devi at last finds a route for rebellion when Mahesh, the giver, says, "I want you to have my child" (TTFN 74) Devi is an innocent but rebellious child trapped in a woman's body. "The rebellious organ", "the straying tubes" inside her would be her silent but potent strength. The sterilized instruments that would mend her to make her whole, the fertility course and the wonder working hormones will not make her "an efficient receptacle for motherhood" (TTFN 89). The rejection of Mahesh's sperm is the unconscious but important step to the assertion of her self. Mahesh may possess her body but cannot direct and control the functions of it. According to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "For Hindu sociologists' marriage is a social and ethical relationship and the begetting children the payment of a debt." (107) and "Nobility in women does not depend upon race, but upon ideals, it is the outcome of certain view of life." (110)

The joint family normally consists of a number of married couples and their children living together in the same household and related by blood. In a patriarchal family, a girl leaves her parental household after marriage and becomes a part of the joint family of her husband. It has been stated as, "... a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food, cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred." (Karve 4) This has been well portrayed by Githa Hariharan, when Devi enters the house of Mahesh:

A large, wild garden full of old trees surrounds the house, hemmed in only by the tall, ivy-covered wall. The rooms downstairs are like deep, dark, cool caves with their high ceilings, the red and green

patterns of mosaic on the floor worn with the tread of generations. The rooms lead aimlessly, one into another, several of them empty. I find it hard to believe that all these rooms were once lived in, that they witnessed the bustle of a big joint family. (TTFN 48).

Changes in family structure have affected the whole fabric of Indian society. Migration from villages to the town and from towns to metropolitan cities and finally from one country to another also became a powerful force in shaping the family of the twentieth century. The hardship of a competitive capitalist world in which women too are forced to work for the livelihood of the family expose people to a newer kind of relationships outside marriage. The migration is due to education and its recognition as a value in society. It has been stated by Sinha as:

The migrants to towns generally establish their new households, which take the form of nuclear family in most cases, though many of them also maintain their ties and loyalty in varying degrees to the native family. (30-31)

In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Devi's father Mahadevan migrated to Africa to earn money for the sake of their family. Devi went to the United States of America to continue her Masters' degree. Devi's brother died of heart attack, and Sita arrives to Madras to set a house for her. To earn money, men are migrating from their native places and going to other cities and countries, leaving their wives and children at home that causes difficulties in families. Money brings disputes in the relationship of family members. It makes man selfish and it creates problems and obstacles in relationship. Mahesh is always busy in his official tours, parties and business. He does not bother about the feelings of Devi. He feels guilty, so he tells her, "Devi I know you think these official parties is a waste of time. But surely you don't think I can manage work at the office as well as at home?" (TTFN 19)

Firestone argues in her book *The Dialectic of Sex* that women and children being consistently lumped together emphasize their perpetual dual oppressions. She has stated, "The special tie women have with children is recognized by everyone. I submit, however, that the nature of this bond is no more that shared oppression." (73) Sita follows this theory well in her life. She sacrifices herself to the Gods of reason, order and progress. All through her life, she fulfills the role of a dutiful wife and dutiful mother. Despite her daughter's western education, she succeeds in making her daughter come back to the Indian culture. She scowled at Devi's dreamy, inspired eyes and worries about her activities as a mother and says, "The girl is almost a woman, she must stop dreaming now." (TTFN 45)

Devi suggests her husband to look for some kind of a job for her; he ignores her suggestion and tells her, "There is much for you to do at home. Mayamma is getting old she needs help. If you need to get out of the house, why not join Tara's painting classes?" (TTFN 56) Again when she requests him to find a job Mahesh replies, "I saw a post for a research assistant advertised in the paper, I said 'you need at least one more degree for that', he said 'and what will you do when the baby comes?'" (TTFN 64-65)

Mahesh busy with his business, her father-in-law Baba gone to abroad, Devi feels lonely. In loneliness she joins the music class of Gopal, a musician and runs away with him. She says:

I have made very few choices, but once on twice, when a hand wavered, when a string was cut loose, I have stumbled on-stage alone, greedy for a story of my own. But I was too well prepared, and not prepared at all. America, Jacarand Road, Mahesh, Gopal. I have run away from all my trials, my tail between my legs, just as I turned a blind eye to my father's helpless thrashing about for an ally, or my mother's lonely hand stretched out towards me. (TTFN 137)

Many families are being separated, because of frustration and unhappiness of wives. Devi's urge for identity and liberation overtakes her and she heroically discards all the barriers, inhibitions, morals and social codes. Her married life disappoints her and her search for identity forces her to make love and elope with Gopal. Devi's elopement with Gopal brought a revolutionary change in the traditional concept of Hindu family. Her affair with Gopal is a revolt against the traditional family system. Her frustrated married life inspires her to search for identity. Devi rejects the idea of defining herself, within a male framework. She thinks that she could define her self-image with reference to Gopal. But the futility of attempt is represented by her inability to understand his music. Gopal constructs his woman just as he constructs his music, hence Devi cannot discover her true self in his company. He says:

You see...why this raga is like a woman? It is a raga that celebrates strength. It is a passion that gives direction to all the superficial pretty little phrases. You arrange them like props, so that the real heroine can emerge." (TTFN 131)

Gopal views women as being superficial since they require a man to provide them with a meaning. His construction of woman is not different from Mahesh's for whom everything dissolves into nothingness except Devi's "stubborn unrelenting womb." In the patriarchal system, the only identity that a woman possesses is that defines her relation to a male; she is either his wife or his child's mother. The position as the woman of the house is her sole right and she would not entertain a fellow contender for the power that her position holds. When Mahadevan dies, Sita burns his dreams with all his unfinished papers even before his body is burnt.

Githa Hariharan exposes the life of Sita after the death of her husband as, "her life almost as an entirety; certainly it was too late for sudden reverses, or a fresh start outside the parameters she had constructed, or allowed to be constructed, around

her” (TTFN 107) Sita boldly expressed her talents and her well-disciplined energy to dispose her daughter Devi to a suitable person. She believes that, “most in the power of her own magic.” (TTFN 107)

Though Devi, in all her efforts try to assert her individual freedom by rejecting the traditional ways of life, she remains unhappy and fails to merge into the community. The institution of marriage is of unrivalled significance in the life of oriental people. In the life of a woman it makes a point of maturing it signifies the flowering of life. As Beauvoir observes, “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.” (444) The institution of marriage has provided for the society’s needs for love, security and children. For Devi it’s for love, for Sita it’s for security and for Mahesh it’s for begetting children.

By defying the norms of society, she is treated as an outcaste. She failed to define her identity within the framework of the male oriented social structure that is as a wife in an arranged marriage, or even as a rebellious lover. She is unable to escape from the pangs of guilt and finally she succumbs to it, exclaiming as a sign of protest, and she entered her mother’s house in Madras, she hears the faint sounds of veena, “hesitant and childlike, inviting her into the house” (TTFN 139). Devi’s view about marriage is aptly same as, “Man will no longer be wolves, should the woman decide not to play the lamb anymore: both belong to the same species: both have to play ball to keep the tournament of life running.” (Sinha 15) It is in her relationship with her mother that Devi hopes to find an identity for herself. It has been remarked by Srilata Ravi, *In the Name of the Mother: A Feminist Reading of Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night and Indrani Aikath Gyasten’s Daughter of the House* as:

The text dexterously weaves in multiple narratives, of Devi, of her mother Sita, and of Mayamma. The many voices of the feminine ‘I’ reconstruct effectively any unitary, male view of the woman. The story of Devi, a woman in the process of

“becoming” on her own terms, is interlaced with the narratives of Sita personifying perfect motherhood is socially defined as failed. (Dhawan 77)

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## PORTRAYAL OF FAMILY DYNAMICS IN THE NOVELS OF CHETAN BHAGAT

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### Abstract

*Chetan Bhagat, one of India's most popular contemporary novelists, offers a compelling portrayal of family dynamics in his works, reflecting the socio-cultural realities of modern India. His novels explore the complexities of familial relationships, generational conflicts, parental expectations, and the evolving roles of individuals within the family structure. Through engaging narratives and relatable characters, Bhagat captures the tension between tradition and modernity, highlighting issues such as love, marriage, career choices, and societal pressures. This study examines the depiction of family in Bhagat's novels, analyzing how his characters navigate emotional and ideological struggles within the familial framework. By doing so, it provides insights into the broader themes of identity, aspiration, and cultural transformation in contemporary Indian society.*

**Keywords:** *family dynamics, generational conflict, parental expectations, societal pressures tradition vs. modernity, emotional struggles, cultural transformation, identity aspiration etc.*

Chetan Bhagat's novels depict contemporary family. Bhagat's families are invariably different from a traditional Indian family, both in structure and in functions. The impact of socio-political- economic conditions of contemporary Indian society can be easily seen shaping and controlling the urban families as they exist in his novels. *Five Point Someone* (2004) focuses on the life of three young men—Hari, Alok and Ryan—as it unfolds in the campus of the elite educational institute IIT, Delhi. The narrative unfolds before us the devious mechanics of the grading system of IIT, and failure and success of

various students in coping with it. Their personal lives during these failures, of course, are centre of the narrative and their families remain off the centre of the narrative. A few glimpses of these families sprinkled here and there in the novel, give an opportunity to perceive the family and individual relationship, structure of the family and presence/ absence of the functions of the family. All these can be most remarkably read in the case of Neha, Hari's girlfriend. In this capacity, she occupies the narrative space of the fourth protagonist. All these four characters come from lower middle class to upper

middle class urban families. Of them, Hari the narrator seems to be in the best of relationship with his family. He himself reveals that in spite of his father's (a Colonel in Indian Army) infatuation with discipline, he loves his parents. But a careful reading of the novel reveals that the truth is otherwise because he does not reveal his failures at IIT to his parents and neither does he tell them about the girlfriend. This sharing and emotional support of the family is replaced with the emotional support he gets from his friends Alok and Ryan. This is also true for both Alok and Ryan. As expected in this kind of novel, the most necessary and biggest quantity of emotional support comes from Neha, his girlfriend. Neha too shares such details of her life which determine her relationship with her father. She shares with Hari the circumstances that caused her brother to commit suicide.

Ryan is economically well off. His parents have a successful business in foreign country where they live. He, being their only child, hence, never feels shortage of money. But all this takes its toll. Ryan has to live in hostel since his childhood. His real family has always been his friends. Since he has lived most of his life in hostels, he has perfected the art of making friends who would act as a surrogate family. It also explains why he is most calm in the face of poor academic results and disciplinary action. Ryan's idea of improving the efficiency of carburetor is allowed as a project to allow them to get engineering degree. Alok belongs to a lower-middle class family. His father is bed-ridden. His mother, who is a teacher, ends up spending half her salary on his father's medicines. Alok is acutely aware of his responsibilities to his family. His parents and sister are banking upon him who, they expect, would get a well-paid job after IIT, would arrange dowry for his sister, better medical care for his father and give respite to his mother who has already started getting old. Neha comes from a well-to-do family whose father is Professor at IIT Delhi and her mother is a

homemaker. She is never hard pressed but remains dissociated emotionally from her cruel father due to his approach to life—infatuation with grades and subscription to the code of success in terms of pay-package or position. Her brother, who wanted to become a writer, was continually harassed by him so much that he committed suicide. She develops friendship with Hari and finds a place to unfold her emotions and feelings.

Change in the traditional family set-up is recorded by Bhagat through Hari, Ryan, Alok and Neha. All these people have come to IIT for higher studies but they do not limit themselves to the bookish knowledge which they seem to find prevalent there. Family gives them due care and fulfils all their educational needs. They are becoming aware to create family atmosphere even outside the house. Modern parents such as Alok's and Neha's family believe that relationship can be maintained with the help of money. However, this fact in case of modern family set-up holds no ground at all up and the similar views are endorsed by Bhagat also. So, the changing perception of family function is well projected by contemporary novelists. It is the impact of changing socio-political-economic conditions of contemporary India which shape the psyche of present youth and gives them a chance to think in a new way. Family, though, is never the main focus of Chetan Bhagat's novels but its changing pattern can be traced in all his novels. The novel takes up the grading system of higher institution. The CGPA system distracts them from the purpose of study. The faculty members of this elite institution also by the end of the novel come to accept that this grading system needs to be changed to keep pace with the changing times. There are four families in the novel the family of Prof. Cherian, of Ryan Oberoi, of Alok Gupta, and of Hari Kumar. These families are nuclear in mode and reflect the changing pattern of this social institution. Ryan's parents fail to give him love and care because of their hectic life which compels him to

seek it somewhere else. This approach marks decline in their emotional attachment, so they fail to create emotional bonding with their single offspring. This mercenary-minded outlook of his parents affects him a lot in his personal life: "his parents sent him a dollar cheque as a Christmas gift as everybody else around them was doing in Europe. Ryan was not a Christian and cared two hoots about Christmas, but loved the cheque and cashed it; *voilà scooter*" (*Five Point Someone* 32). He has been staying in hostels since his boyhood. So, this hostel life makes him devoid of parental love. Now, he has become habitual of this kind of life. So, he hardly recalls them in his daily life and replies rarely to their letters. Missing parents-child bonding indicates a particular aspect of society and projects the mode of westernized society where everything is counted on material ground. Its impact can be seen through his revelation of emotionless past. He says:

I don't love my parents . . . I don't know why. I mean, I have been in boarding school when I was six. Of course, like every kid I hated it and cried when they left me. But then, it was at boarding school I got everything. I did well in studies, got noticed in sports, learnt how to have fun and live well and made my best friends. So, somewhere down the line, I don't miss them anymore. Just kind of outgrew them. Sure, we meet at vacation time and they send letters, cash, and everything but . . . (38-39)

His friends' association fills this parental vacuum and supports him emotionally and socially. He feels that his friends are his family and everything to him: "for me my friends are everything, they are my family. Mom and Dad are nice, but I don't love them the way I love my friends. I mean, I don't love them, but I love my friends" (39). Later on, when Ryan fails to cope up with this educational system, he declares his deep faith in this new fangled familial bond of his friends: "I will not give up my friends for this system" (101). Obviously, all family functions are undergoing deeper

changes and this development also projects that separation of brother, sister and son from their family of orientation brings change in their outlook and behaviour.

Alok also comes from a traditional nuclear family. His father is bedridden and his mother is a school teacher who bears the financial burden of the entire family alone. Alok thinks that his friends' families are better off than his own family. But he is acutely aware of his family obligations: "you don't understand that I have responsibilities. I have to do well to support my family. Half my mother's salary goes for my father's medicine. She has not bought a new sari for herself in five years. And my sister needs to be married. "Everyone is counting on me. And you guys don't understand" (66).

Prof. Cherian teaches at IIT Delhi and his wife is a housewife. He values education more than life/family and likes only ten pointers (CGPA). So, naturally he wants his son to be a ten pointer of an IIT but he fails to come up to his expectations and the consequent stress created by Cherian leads him to commit suicide. His daughter, Neha, is always in awe of her father and holds him responsible for her brother's death. This suicide puts a question mark over the newly emerging value system of family set-up which leaves Hari musing: "Cherian must have loved his son a lot, even though he drove him mad enough to kill himself. Do all parents love their kids?" (242).

They (Hari, Alok and Ryan) are good friends who share their joy and sorrow together. Their way of living and sense of association make them an ideal family. When Alok falls from the IIT building and gets a fracture and has to be hospitalized, they support him in every way financially, socially, psychologically and morally. When Hari falls in love with Neha, they support him in every way positively. The narrative helps in constituting the new kind of familial bond in the age of mobility of young generation to join elite educational institutions and later working at places far

from their homes. Their mutual love and care enable them to form a familial bond/atmosphere even outside the home in their respective lives. This trend of the narrative shows the psyche of contemporary youth and indicates change in the traditional family set up of contemporary Indian society by putting it against globalisation and emergence of commercialised world.

*One Night @ the Call Center* (2005) takes up the story of Shyam (the narrator), Vroom, Esha, Priyanka, Radhika, and the Military Uncle who work in a call centre, Connexion in Gurgaon. There are the seven families in the novel, six out of seven are nuclear ones and the remaining one is traditional/joint family. Five out of seven are patriarchal in nature while the remaining two are matriarchal in mode.

Radhika is a modern girl, who ignoring her previous lover, gets married to Anuj and lives "in a joint family with Anuj's ultra-traditional parents" (*One Night @ the Call Center* 18). This one is only the patriarchal traditional family where the elders are respected. All family members are attached emotionally to one another within the arena of this familial set up. But the rise of materialism has affected the traditional family system where her husband's materialistic approach compels her to join BPO sector but Anuj cares his parents so, he messages her: "show elders respect. Act like a daughter-in-law should. Goodnight" (82). She herself admits to Esha that "'trust me, being a daughter-in-law is harder than being a model,'" (83). It is observed in our daily life that westernized career-oriented women are unaware of such social responsibilities, are selfish and uncaring to their parents-in-law but Radhika is different who lives with them, fits herself with their schedules and way of life. She never complains against her parents-in-law and other family members. It should be noted that she is not eager to join call centre but she has to join this venture in order to save her conjugal bond. By doing so, she proves her worth and fits herself in a

traditional family because since times immemorial, a daughter-in-law is expected to be gracious, polite, modest, hard-working, sincere, respectful and follower of the household rulings. "She is the first early riser in the morning in the house and not goes "to bed unless she is asked to do so . . . she should not speak to any adult male directly or look him in the face . . . overbold" (*Family and Kinship* 114-15). She is expected not to speak or to have contact to any adult male. She is not hoped to sit in front of the elders and no joking relationship with any one in the house. Apart from this, she has to follow family culture strictly.

But her husband's extramarital relationship leads this relationship to termination following divorce. So, she emerges as embodiment of modern woman who wants to live a prestigious life of her own accord and does not hesitate in taking such bold steps. So, the said description suggests that it is the impact of globalisation where "several jobs have been created by the corporate sector, particularly the BPOs. These centres also provide greater freedom to them to be in the company of persons of the opposite sex" (*Indian Society* 236). This new life pattern has caused the change in the traditional family value system. The Military uncle comes from the older generation who witnesses the impact of radical changes in the era of twenty-first century who has done all his familial duties but in exchange of these, he gets nothing. He feels that whole social set up is completely against him so, this sense makes him isolated . . . "cut off from all fruitful social relationships" (qtd. in *Culture and Society*, 83). The elders failed to cope up with these unwanted changes because "the condition in the city [has] become so worse due to migration that Mr. Puri says to his wife, -Let's go to a civilized place like Pune. Some place where ten thousand beggars don't come every morning by train. I'm sick of the city, I'm sick of its rat race" (*Tower*157). This is the impact of globalised world which does not spare any sphere of life. Globalisation has brought urbanisation

and it “has changed the blood and soul of all these things” (*Reflection of the Urban Youngsters* 162). So, these two senior (Military uncle and Mr Puri) persons are the product of traditional society when “peasant societies everywhere in the world had a predominance of extended families. Usually such families were patrilocal and patriarchal” (*Modern Tradition*174) where women were given the subordinate role and the male, especially the elder, used to be the authority of this traditional household social set up. All members were bound to follow the guidelines of their elders inside and outside the house.

The researcher feels that in present times the senior persons are also driven by the flow of social change and ultimately they have to surrender to this new fangled capitalism. Here Yogendra Singh feels that urbanisation played a significant role in bringing change in our traditional structural of society and helps in transforming it. This happened due to “new structural innovations in the spheres of industry, transport, communication, leisure, recreation, and the mode of and patterns of social interaction” (qtd. in *Tribal Society*, 104).

Gaurav, Masterji’s son, fails to comprehend such social responsibilities to his old father and does not know that such norms are the part of kinship bond. Likewise happens with Military Uncle, who lives away from his family still he has emotional bonding and misses his son, daughter-in-law and his grandson. As he admits: “he used to stay with his son and daughter-in-law before he moved out (*read-thrown out*) to be on his own” (*Center* 16). Eventually, he realises his mistake:

Two years ago, I used to live with them. But my daughter-in-law did things I didn’t like- she went for parties, got a job when I wanted her to stay at home . . . I fought with them and moved out. But I was wrong. It is their life, and I have no right to judge them by my outdated values. And I need to get rid of

my inflated ego and go to the US to see them and talk it out. (205)

So, these two old people live alone and away from their off springs who fail to cope up with such radical changes. Therefore, the Military Uncle misses his family and his bright past of joint family. This development conveys a message that in contemporary times elders’ care is deemed to be a problem and burden but elders like Military Uncle do not feel the sense of guilt and disrespect from the changing outlook of their family members. So Military Uncle conveys a message that Shifting into a nuclear family suddenly makes you feel desolate, it is very lonely. In a joint family there is a lot of fun and frolic, a festive atmosphere at all times. There is never a moment of boredom as there are so many people to talk to. Housework is simplified as everyone shares work equally. And there is a lot of unity and bonding among the family members. Little things you need never bother about while living in a joint family suddenly look like huge responsibilities when you are in a nuclear family. (*Great Indian* 70) He, by ignoring all cultural differences, wants to forget his horrible past and plans to live his life in a new way with them again. He, being a fatherly figure or senior member of the family, initiates to resolve this conflict. He also sends an e-mail to them but his son retorts: “Dad . . . you have cluttered my life enough, now stopcluttering my mailbox. I do not know what came over me that lallowed communication between you and my son. I don’t want your shadow on him. Please stay away and do not send him anymore emails . . . we don’t want your attachments” (*Center* 150).

The novelist expresses his grave concern over these radical changes and seems advocating for joint family system where “your sorrows are shared, so is your joy. You are never alone. If you are successful, you have to share your good fortune, but if you are struck by ill fortune, if your business should collapse, if you should be widowed, you are not on the streets” (*Great Indian* 50) like Military Uncle and Masterji.

This contemporary changing psyche of new generation compels their parents to live in separation and sometimes leads them to the shelter home also as in the western countries. This development projects clash between old and new values system.

Varun or Vroom comes from a nuclear matriarchal family who lives with his mother but his father, leaving them behind, resides with his business secretary: "Vroom's Dad was a businessman who parted from his wife two years ago. He preferred banging his secretary to being with his family, so Vroom and his mother now lived without him" (*Center* 21). This development makes him bereft of fatherly love. So this aspect projects change in the function of traditional family set-up.

Mr. Bakshi is also a product of this globalised technological world who fails to give due time to his family in order to create emotional attachment. He believes that money is all and family is nothing. This modern psyche leads his family to the path of breakage: "I have a family with two kids. With great difficulty my career is going fine. My wife wants to leave me anyway. Don't destroy me, I am human too" (222). In this way, the novel projects the anxious and insecure mind of the new generation and also "questions about career, inadequacy, marriage, family conflicts in a changing India" (*Real Taste of Refined* 251). This detail projects the impact of materialistic approach in modern world and highlights:

[the] changing attitudes and lifestyles [of the contemporary youngsters]. Many who work for foreign companies learn to become comfortable with foreign mores. Some of those who work for call centres learn to speak with foreign accents and work according to foreign time schedules. That many should experience feelings of alienation from their own families and communities is hardly unexpected. (*Great Indian* 10-11)

Priyanka, like Madhav Jha (*Half Girlfriend*) comes from a matriarchal nuclear family. She wants to get married to Shyam but her mother forces her to get married to Ganesh for he is well settled and economically sound. Later, she succeeds in organizing her daughter's marriage with fanfare and establishes herself as a caring mother. Esha is a modern girl who is not loved by her parents. So, she lives away from them with his friends in a familial bond. They share joys and sorrows together in this association. So, this way of living, sense of companionship, nature of relationship, sense of mutual understanding, etc. mark the mode of nuclear family. This newly emerging nuclear family is headed by the elder person, Military Uncle, who counsels them whenever they are in need. Obviously, the rise of education and globalised world has awoken Radhika, Priyanka, Neha, Military Uncle, his daughter-in-law, Mr Bakshi, and Varun. This awakening brings change in their respective lives. Though, in some cases, traditional outlook prevails but it does not mean that society remains changeless in that process but the pace of development becomes slower. The novel suggests that overambitious nature-cum-traditional outlook of the major characters project clash between their old and new psyche.

The process of social change and emergence of new family set-up may be traced in Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008). It takes up the story of three friends Govind (the narrator) Omi, and Ishaan. Govind comes from Gujarat and wants to be a successful businessman. Ish is a man of passion who likes playing, teaching, and watching cricket. The third one is Omi (priest's son) who does not want to be a priest. Therefore, he becomes the follower of his friends. The story projects how their personal lives get affected by the worst disaster of Godhra massacre even then; they remain successful in translating their dreams into reality with the help of people around them.

Ishaan belongs to a nuclear patriarchal family which is based on emotions and mutual understanding. This family is traditional where the elder give command and the junior follow respectfully. Ishaan has left NDA, even then his parents support him rather than scolding. Govind comes from a nuclear matriarchal family because his father has left his mother and got married to another woman. Govind's Mom, by running a home-made food business, sends him to a good educational institute and provides him all the facilities. The third one is Omi who comes from a nuclear patriarchal family. All these characters are supported enough by their parents on every ground so, they are emotionally attached to them. Ali is also an important character who belongs to a nuclear patriarchal family. His parents care for him a lot: "eat on time and don't stay up late" (*The 3 Mistakes of My Life* 134). Panditji has been projected as a responsible father when he is away from his family. Then, he misses his family a lot and is eager to fulfil his social liabilities to the family: "I want to marry my daughters off and go back to Kashmir" (147). Vidya is Ishaan's sister falls in love with Govind then she, to avoid disgrace, is sent to Mumbai for higher studies.

The association of trio (Omi, Ishaan and Govind) constitutes the mode of a family also where they, ignoring their caste and creed, share joy and sorrow together. This way of their life, sense of companionship, nature of relationship, sense of responsibility to one another and mutual relationship mark the mode of nuclear family whereas most of them are unmarried. Revelation of their emotional bonding is expressed by Omi on the death of Govind: "I lost my brother Govind. He died on the spot, . . . his voice broke. He started crying" (217).

This modern point of view plays a key role in minimising their mental/cultural differences and making them more liberal which binds them into a familial bond. This development indicates towards a particular aspect of society. *2 States: The Story of My*

*Marriage* (2009) is in flashback, recapitulates the circumstances of the central characters Krish and Ananya. They fall in love at IIM Ahmedabad and make efforts to get the approval of their parents for marriage. Upon the refusal of parents, Krish makes renewed efforts to win Ananya's family, but fails. Thereafter, sentimental drama follows and finally he succeeds in getting married. During the course of story, the novelist projects the changing patterns of both the patriarchal families.

Krish comes from a middle class patriarchal family. His father is a retired military personnel and Ananya's father is a government employee. Dinkin and Minti are the important characters who come from nuclear patriarchal families. In these families, women do their traditionally assigned task and men take up the responsibilities outside the house (job or their own business). These families are the product of industrialised and urbanised world where the educated persons of two generations live together, send their children to higher studies and counsel them whenever they are in need. The elder, in the case of spouse selection and in other household activities, play a decisive role.

In olden days, parents, without consulting their children, had the right/used to select spouse through the middlemen, barber, and relatives. So, Krish's mother, through the same process, wants a traditional *bahu* whom she may control easily: "I don't want my daughter-in law to raise her voice or answer me back. She has to be under my thumb" (*2 States: The Story of My Marriage* 229). But this globalised and modern world brings awareness in the contemporary youth and enables them to challenge the set pattern of traditional society. Therefore, Krish unfolds his choice to his mother: "I have an educated girl. I like her. She has a job, she is pretty, decent, hard-working and has a lot of integrity. What is your problem?" (69). His mother, being the embodiment of older generation, wants to maintain traditional pattern of family. So, the elders do their best to keep the

wave of modernism away that is reflected through Shipra Masi: "how can we marry Madrasis? Tomorrow your cousins will want to marry a Gujarati. Or Assamese?" (69). But she is retorted: "aren't they all Indian? Can't they be good human beings?"(69). Ultimately, Shipra masi admits the importance of modern education: "this is what happens if you educate children too much" (68). Obviously, education plays a key role in widening the mental horizons of the people and in bringing change in traditional family set up.

Modern parents, with the changing outlook of their educated children, are beginning to adjust themselves with the passage of time. They have more patience and pay more attention to their wards. When Krish tells his mother about his girlfriend, then she allows him to keep her outside the home. She, by putting this condition, tries to keep her dominance inside the house. Her decision projects the psyche of a semi-traditional woman.

Krish like Ananya, after becoming dependent financially, unfolds his plan to his parents: "Mom, she is not just a friend. I want to marry her" (158). This development leads the story to climax where his mother reacts: "a girlfriend is fine, do whatever you want in Chennai. But why are you forcing her on us?" (158). Ananya's disclosure to her parents, reflects change in our traditional family system.

All the families are based on emotional bonding and ruled by some social regulation. So, after falling in love, they do not think of eloping. Krish's modern outlook is reflected through his response to Ananya: "I don't want to elope, 'it's too easy. And that doesn't serve the greater purpose" (102). This justification projects his emotional bonding and social understanding to his family. Bhagat, by reflecting change in the social institution, very convincingly unravels the psyche of modern youth.

Twenty-first century is the age of great changes, where every social aspect is under change and affects the outlook of modern parents. Now they have

come to know the importance of mutual relationship, which leads family to happiness and satisfaction. They want to see their children happy. Therefore, Ananya's parents put a condition before Krish, when he goes to propose her: "If you promise to take care of my daughter,' then it is a yes from me" (183). So, the modern parents are becoming aware and beginning to take their children in confidence prior to spouse selection. Their likings and dislikings are also kept in mind. Bhagat makes responsible urban nuclear family system for such changes where children, like husband and wife, have more closeness with their parents unlike the traditional joint family in the rural India. Both the lead characters come from urban background.

Though, the protagonist does not have healthy relationship with his father but his father does not shy from his sole responsibilities and suggests: "you will not choose a girl for marriage. I will choose for you" (198). But Krish takes it invariably: "you want to sell me. And while you are out there negotiating me, what's my going rate?" (198). This generational gap/change in inter-personal relationship is the indication of change in traditional social order. Unexpected incidents are the part of this age. So, the protagonist slaps his father:

*I slapped his face once, twice, then I rolled my hand into a fist and punched his face. My father went into a state of shock, he couldn't fight back. He didn't expect this; all my childhood I'd merely suffered his dominance . . . It was a reaction to two decades of Abuse . . . I punched his head until he collapsed on the floor . . . We were a family. (167 italics in original)*

In spite of conflict between father and son, he (the father) sees through the change of modern India and makes himself adaptive to this social milieu with the passage of time. So, on knowing that his son is in love with Ananya and is desirous to make her his life partner, he plays a vital role in changing his love into marital bond and bails his son out of this whirlpool of

social problems. His father's unexpected entry in this dramatic scenario leads this complicated problem to resolution and makes him a modern as well as responsible father.

This development suggests that this retired military personnel may not be a good husband but proves himself a good father. His mother's unhappiness and his father's misbehavior with his mother validate their cat and dog's life pattern. Such cases of domestic violence are the dark side of this social institution because such developing countries are in the state of social chaos where declining traditional value system and emerging new value system gives rise to transition. This emergence causes dilution in our entire traditional value system. This development gives rise to change in interpersonal relations and "produces much unseemly argument, discord, confusion and on occasion, even bloodshed" (*Modern India* 167).

Such modern changes are strongly endorsed by the novelist: "how times have changed. Our kids decide, and we have to meet each other" (*2 States* 226). Reflection of such changes is reflected through their frustration where they feel disobeyed, cheated and frustrated: "you know kids of today, they do what they want to do . . . it is the fact your daughter has found a boy for herself. We as parents feel disobeyed, left out and disappointed. We bring our children up from babies to adults, how can they ignore us like this? All our frustration comes out in anger. How much we hate love marriages, isn't it?" (265).

Rise of inter-caste or inter-state marriages projects the pace of modern world. The elders are not involved/consulted but sidelined in such household matters. This projection reflects changed outlook "in their attitude towards authority—be it in the family or the public institutions or the state. In rural areas, older generation parents lost much of their authority due to 'technology-information and management market'" (*Change in India* 120) The novelist depicts

clash between old and new psyche where the latter one prevails and suggests change in our traditional family system. Rise of education, globalisation and commercialisation play a significant role in bringing changes in our traditional familial set up.

Chetan Bhagat's novels offer a nuanced portrayal of family dynamics, reflecting the evolving socio-cultural landscape of contemporary India. Through his characters and narratives, he highlights the tensions between traditional values and modern aspirations, exploring themes of generational conflict, parental expectations, and societal pressures. His works depict the emotional struggles of individuals as they navigate their roles within the family, shedding light on the impact of cultural transformation on personal identity and relationships. Ultimately, Bhagat's representation of family serves as a mirror to the changing fabric of Indian society, making his novels both relatable and significant in understanding the complexities of familial bonds in the modern era.

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## AUTHENTICITY AND CHOICE: AN EXISTENTIAL READING OF JANE AUSTEN'S HEROINES

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### Abstract

*This paper explores the convergence of existentialist philosophy with the fictional universe of Jane Austen, particularly focusing on her central female protagonists. Though Austen predates formal existentialism by over a century, her heroines frequently confront dilemmas of authenticity, selfhood, and moral autonomy—concerns that would later become central to existentialist thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Søren Kierkegaard. Through an examination of Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Elliot, Fanny Price, and Emma Woodhouse, the paper illustrates how Austen's women engage with the tension between societal expectations and personal freedom. They navigate constrained social worlds, yet persistently assert their agency by choosing paths of meaning and moral integrity over ease and conformity. The analysis draws on Sartre's concept of "bad faith," Beauvoir's theories of gendered oppression, and Kierkegaard's idea of subjective truth to read these characters not merely as romantic heroines, but as early manifestations of existential consciousness. The paper argues that Austen's work, while grounded in its historical moment, resonates powerfully with existentialist themes, offering enduring insights into human freedom, authenticity, and the cost of selfhood.*

**Keywords:** *existentialism, authenticity, jane austen, choice, sartre, beauvoir, selfhood*

Jane Austen is often celebrated as a novelist of domestic manners, marriage plots, and social nuance. Her carefully structured narratives and witty dialogues capture the lives of upper- and middle-class women, constrained by a rigid social order and limited economic opportunity. Yet beneath this seemingly genteel surface lies a rich psychological and philosophical terrain, one in which her heroines grapple with profound questions of identity, morality, and agency. These struggles, though not labelled as such in her time, align closely with the concerns of existentialist philosophy: freedom, authenticity, personal responsibility, and the tension between individual choice and social expectation.

Existentialism, as developed by thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Søren Kierkegaard, is a philosophical movement concerned with the nature of human existence. At its core lies the belief that individuals are free to create meaning through their choices but must bear the weight of

responsibility that this freedom entails. Sartre's concept of "bad faith" critiques the tendency to flee from this responsibility by conforming to external roles (Sartre 47). Beauvoir's analysis of gender emphasizes the ways women are socialized into passivity, yet retain the potential for existential "becoming" (Beauvoir 34). Kierkegaard focuses on the anguish of subjective truth and the leap of faith needed to live authentically (Kierkegaard 42).

This paper proposes that Jane Austen's heroines, though shaped by different historical circumstances, enact these existential struggles in striking ways. Characters like Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Elliot, Fanny Price, and Emma Woodhouse navigate the challenges of their world by making morally significant choices that reflect their inner convictions rather than mere social expectation. By doing so, they resist inauthenticity and affirm personal responsibility, becoming early literary figures of existential agency.

Sartre contends that freedom is inescapable, and with it comes radical responsibility. To deny this freedom is to live in “bad faith”—a kind of self-deception where individuals hide behind social roles or external authorities to avoid facing the anxiety of true choice (Sartre 67). Authenticity, then, is the state of acknowledging one’s freedom and acting in accordance with one’s true values rather than conforming out of fear or convenience. Simone de Beauvoir extended existentialist theory to the realm of gender in *The Second Sex*, arguing that women have historically been cast as “the Other,” denied the freedom to define themselves. However, she insists that women, like men, possess the capacity for existential becoming—that is, for creating their own identity through self-directed action (Beauvoir 38–40). In literature, existential themes often manifest through characters who confront these dilemmas. While existentialist fiction makes such concerns explicit, earlier works, including those of Austen, reflect these struggles more subtly. Her characters’ psychological introspection, moral dilemmas, and resistance to social conformity offer fertile ground for existential interpretation (Nussbaum 223).

Elizabeth Bennet exemplifies the existential heroine who chooses authenticity over social conformity. Her refusal of Mr. Collins—a socially advantageous match—signals an early assertion of personal autonomy. Despite the economic pressure on women to marry for security, Elizabeth insists on marrying for love and respect (Austen, *Pride* 118). In this decision, she consciously rejects what Simone de Beauvoir calls “the destiny imposed upon women”—to be an object defined by marriageability, not subjecthood (Beauvoir 275). Elizabeth’s refusal is not merely romantic; it is a philosophical stance that asserts the primacy of individual freedom and self-respect over material gain.

Her rejection of Darcy’s first proposal also underscores her commitment to existential authenticity. Though Darcy is wealthy, well-

connected, and offers a socially advantageous future, Elizabeth cannot accept him until she reconciles her feelings with a moral reassessment of his character. At the time of his first proposal, Darcy is arrogant and contemptuous of her social status. Elizabeth refuses, not only because she is offended, but because she refuses to compromise her values. Her identity, as she sees it, cannot be built on a foundation of pride or condescension. This moral clarity shows her insistence on choosing a life congruent with her beliefs.

The turning point in Elizabeth’s existential development comes after reading Darcy’s letter. It is a moment of introspection that reveals her capacity for self-critique. She acknowledges her “blindness, partiality, prejudice, and absurdity” (Austen, *Pride* 203). This admission is a Sartrean moment of existential awakening: by confronting her own flawed assumptions, she claims ownership of her consciousness and rejects the false narratives she once embraced. Sartre insists that authenticity requires individuals to act with full awareness of the implications of their freedom (Sartre 84). Elizabeth’s growth is marked by her willingness to reflect and change, hallmarks of existential maturity.

Further, Elizabeth consistently challenges the societal expectations that seek to define her. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, embodying aristocratic power and control, tries to coerce Elizabeth into promising never to marry Darcy. Elizabeth’s calm but firm demonstrates her refusal to live according to another’s will. This moment aligns with Kierkegaard’s notion of subjective truth, wherein one must make choices not according to universal systems, but from inward conviction (Kierkegaard 56). Her defiance is not rebellion for its own sake, but a testament to her insistence on authenticity.

Elizabeth also defies her mother’s ambitions, which center around securing advantageous marriages for her daughters. Mrs. Bennet’s utilitarian view of matrimony reflects the norms of the time,

where personal happiness and integrity were often sacrificed for economic security. Elizabeth, however, subverts these expectations. She embodies Beauvoir's "woman in process"—a subject who moves beyond societal objectification to define herself through existential becoming (Beauvoir 725). Her choices are not merely reactive, but actively constructive of a life lived in alignment with her values.

Moreover, Elizabeth's dialogue throughout the novel reveals a mind engaged in the existential project of self-definition. She uses irony and wit not merely for social play, but as a form of resistance against a world that would reduce her to marriageability. Her spirited exchanges with Darcy, for instance, are not coquettish banter but epistemological contests that affirm her intellectual and moral equality. In resisting flattery and domination alike, Elizabeth claims a form of subjecthood rare for women in her world.

Her eventual acceptance of Darcy's second proposal represents not a surrender to societal norms, but a free and informed choice rooted in mutual respect and moral equality. It is only after Darcy humbles himself—acknowledging his pride and the injustice of his assumptions—that Elizabeth can accept his offer without compromising her authenticity. As Beauvoir notes, a genuine relationship between a man and a woman must be one in which "the woman is a fellow being" and not a subordinate (Beauvoir 676). Their final union exemplifies this balance, as both individuals arrive at a place of mutual self-knowledge and acceptance.

Thus, Elizabeth Bennet lives not passively but existentially: she chooses, revises, and assumes responsibility for her beliefs and actions. Her character arc is not simply a romantic progression but a philosophical one—moving from impulsive judgment to reflective freedom. In Sartrean terms, she does not allow herself to be defined by the gaze

of others or by inherited roles; instead, she actively constitutes herself as a moral and conscious subject.

In resisting pressures from multiple fronts—economic, familial, and social—Elizabeth asserts the right of the self to define its own truth. She does not transcend her society entirely, but she navigates it with an existential commitment to authenticity, illustrating how meaningful freedom can be realized even within constraint.

Anne Elliot's character arc in *Persuasion* unfolds as a quiet but profound existential transformation—from a state of passivity and regret to one of renewed agency and authentic choice. At the heart of her journey is the existential tension between acting in good faith toward one's inner convictions versus succumbing to the external forces of tradition, family, and societal approval. Anne, more than any other Austen heroine, embodies the philosophical stakes of inaction and the possibility of redemption through the courage to choose again.

At the novel's outset, Anne is portrayed as a woman shaped by a decision made in her youth. At the time, Anne was nineteen, and her decision, though outwardly rational, left her emotionally stifled and spiritually dormant. This submission to the counsel of others over her own feelings mirrors Sartre's concept of "bad faith," wherein an individual avoids the responsibility of freedom by allowing others to dictate their choices (Sartre 67). Anne surrenders her freedom not because she lacks feeling, but because she fears the social consequences of defying Lady Russell and the values of her aristocratic world.

The consequences of this bad faith are apparent in Anne's internal landscape. Unlike Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse, Anne is subdued, often silent, and physically faded—a woman "faded and almost sickly" (Austen, *Persuasion* 5). Her outer stillness reflects her inner despair, resembling Kierkegaard's idea of "the sickness unto death," a despair that arises when one is alienated from one's true self

(Kierkegaard 47). Anne lives in a state of existential stasis, weighed down by the emotional residue of an unlived life.

Yet Austen does not allow Anne to remain trapped in this despair. The return of Captain Wentworth serves as both a literal and symbolic second chance. His re-entry into Anne's world confronts her with the possibility of existential choice: will she allow the past to define her, or will she reclaim her agency? The power of Anne's character lies in her quiet but determined movement toward authenticity. She listens, observes, and gradually begins to reassert herself—not with dramatic defiance, but through subtle assertions of her inner will.

One of the clearest signs of Anne's existential growth is her increasing ability to speak truth to power. In the early chapters, she is overruled, ignored, or silenced by her vain and superficial family. However, as the narrative progresses, Anne asserts herself more consistently. She gently critiques her father's obsession with status, calls out the manipulations of others, and becomes a moral center in her community. This development represents a Kierkegaardian leap of faith—a decision to live sincerely in alignment with one's values, even if it means risking disapproval or discomfort (Kierkegaard 60).

Her conversation with Captain Harville near the end of the novel is a pivotal moment, both in terms of plot and philosophy. In their discussion about the constancy of men and women in love, Anne articulates a belief that directly challenges the prevailing gender norms of her society: "We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us" (Austen, *Persuasion* 233). This declaration marks Anne's emergence as a subject who not only feels deeply but also refuses to have those feelings invalidated or silenced. It is an assertion of emotional truth—what Sartre would consider an act of

authenticity, where speech and selfhood align (Sartre 85).

Moreover, Anne's choice to accept Wentworth's renewed proposal is not a mere restoration of youthful romance, but a profoundly existential act. This time, the choice is entirely her own. She is no longer persuaded by others but governed by her own discernment and emotional clarity. The conditions of her world have not drastically changed—Wentworth has gained fortune, but the social distinctions remain. What has changed is Anne's willingness to claim her right to choose, to act in accordance with her values rather than inherited scripts. In this, she achieves what Beauvoir calls "becoming"—the process by which a woman transcends her objectification and asserts herself as a subject (Beauvoir 37).

The relationship between Anne and Wentworth evolves into a union based on mutual recognition and moral equality. Unlike the marriages of convenience or status around them, theirs is grounded in a shared past, emotional depth, and reciprocal respect. This union reflects an existential ideal: love not as submission or absorption into another, but as a co-authored narrative between two free individuals. Anne's love is not a retreat from existential independence but an extension of it.

Additionally, Austen's narrative arc for Anne emphasizes that existential choice does not belong only to the young, the dramatic, or the outspoken. Anne's journey affirms that meaningful freedom and selfhood can emerge from quiet reflection, perseverance, and second chances. She represents the possibility of existential rebirth—not by rejecting the past, but by taking responsibility for it and moving forward with moral clarity.

Anne Elliot stands as one of Austen's most complex and quietly radical heroines. Her transformation from regretful acquiescence to active authenticity demonstrates the existential significance of choice, even within the socially prescribed roles of Regency England. Through Anne, Austen illustrates

that authenticity is not a fixed state but a continual process—a becoming that is always possible, even for those who once faltered. Anne's redemption is not just personal or romantic; it is existential, making her a powerful figure of freedom, responsibility, and the enduring capacity for self-definition.

Fanny Price, the often underestimated heroine of *Mansfield Park*, represents perhaps the most subtle yet profound embodiment of existential authenticity among Jane Austen's protagonists. Though frequently described by critics as passive or insipid, Fanny's strength lies not in flamboyant independence but in her unwavering moral clarity and quiet resistance to the pressures of a hierarchical, performative society. Through the lens of existentialism—particularly Sartre's "bad faith" and Simone de Beauvoir's critique of gendered objectification—Fanny emerges not as weak, but as deeply resolute, enacting authenticity not through rebellion but through principled selfhood.

Fanny's marginal position within the Bertram household sets the stage for her existential struggle. As a poor relation raised by wealthy relatives, she occupies a liminal social space: neither servant nor equal, neither fully inside nor entirely outside the aristocratic world of Mansfield. This alienation is both social and psychological, echoing Kierkegaard's idea of existential despair as a misalignment between one's social self and inner self (Kierkegaard 48). However, rather than internalizing the dismissiveness or condescension of others—Sir Thomas's distance, Aunt Norris's cruelty, or even Edmund's patronizing kindness—Fanny maintains a firm inner core. Her refusal to accept the moral compromises that others endorse is not passive resistance but a powerful assertion of autonomy.

This becomes most evident in her rejection of Henry Crawford's marriage proposal. Crawford, charming and wealthy, represents the kind of match that would typically secure a woman's future in Austen's world. Everyone—from Sir Thomas to

Edmund—urges Fanny to accept, framing her refusal as irrational, even ungrateful. Yet Fanny, guided by her moral compass and intuitive sense of Crawford's character, refuses. Her rejection is existential in its purity: she will not sacrifice her integrity for comfort or approval. As Sartre argues, authenticity requires individuals to act not in accordance with societal roles or expectations, but from an awareness of their own freedom and responsibility (Sartre 72). Fanny's refusal defies the performative social order and affirms her as a self-aware subject.

Importantly, her resistance also challenges gendered expectations. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir asserts that women have historically been conditioned to become what others desire—"the Other"—and are encouraged to conform to externally imposed roles rather than act from within (Beauvoir 291). Fanny's world is saturated with such roles: women are valued for beauty, wealth, and submissiveness. Yet Fanny resists objectification. She will not allow her body, affection, or future to be commodified. Her very presence at Mansfield Park, as someone who does not fit into the polished mold of the Bertrams, already destabilizes the social structure. Her quietude is not weakness but a refusal to perform according to society's expectations.

Fanny's moral insight contrasts sharply with the behavior of those around her. The theatricals at Mansfield Park—a central episode in the novel—become a symbolic space of bad faith. Characters take on roles not only on stage but in life, masking their true selves behind performance, flirtation, and manipulation. Fanny, however, refuses to participate. Her abstention is more than prudishness; it represents a rejection of inauthenticity. While others play roles for entertainment or seduction, Fanny clings to sincerity. As Sartre notes, bad faith is "a lie to oneself" that arises when one identifies wholly with a role at the expense of authentic selfhood (Sartre 59). Fanny's refusal to act on stage parallels her broader refusal to act falsely in life.

Even Edmund Bertram, her closest ally and confidant, fails to fully recognize her moral strength for most of the novel. Blinded by his infatuation with Mary Crawford—a character who embodies the seductive danger of bad faith—Edmund dismisses Fanny's warnings about Henry. Mary's charm, wit, and moral relativism attract Edmund until her true values are revealed. Only then does Edmund see Fanny's quiet wisdom and moral constancy. The delayed nature of Edmund's recognition is significant: it reflects Austen's critique of a society that undervalues authenticity and rewards performance.

Fanny's existential authenticity is also visible in her relation to her own suffering. Her return to Portsmouth, intended by Sir Thomas to humble her, instead reaffirms her growth. The squalor, chaos, and emotional coldness of her biological family contrast sharply with the ordered world of Mansfield. Yet Fanny does not react with bitterness or despair. She endures discomfort without resentment and remains inwardly intact. This phase of the novel shows her developing independence: she is not defined by her surroundings, and she no longer idealizes Mansfield uncritically. Her authenticity includes the ability to see clearly and to choose, not out of fear or habit, but from personal conviction.

What ultimately distinguishes Fanny from other Austen heroines is that her strength does not lie in transformation but in constancy. While Elizabeth Bennet learns through error and Emma Woodhouse through self-awareness, Fanny embodies what Kierkegaard might call the "knight of faith"—one who silently bears the weight of moral clarity and acts according to deeply held principles, even when they bring isolation (Kierkegaard 89). Her existential triumph is not in dramatic change, but in remaining true to herself amid pressure, loneliness, and misunderstanding.

In the end, Fanny's moral stance is vindicated. Henry Crawford reveals his true character, Mary Crawford's values are exposed, and Edmund finally

sees Fanny's worth. Her reward is not just romantic union, but existential validation. She is the character who never wavers, whose moral compass does not shift with social winds, and whose authenticity—though often invisible—is ultimately transformative.

Thus, Fanny Price, far from being a mere passive observer, stands as one of Austen's most existentially resilient heroines. Her story illustrates that authenticity need not be loud or visible to be real. In a world of masks and performances, Fanny's integrity shines precisely because it refuses to bend. Her refusal to live in bad faith, her commitment to sincerity, and her resistance to objectification all mark her as a literary figure of existential resistance and moral grace.

Emma Woodhouse begins her narrative journey in a state of existential bad faith. Confident in her social superiority and matchmaking abilities, she manipulates others and avoids honest introspection (Austen, *Emma* 75).

Emma's transformation begins with her recognition of harm caused—particularly to Harriet and Mr. Knightley. This moment of self-reckoning initiates a process of existential awakening. She confronts her self-deception, recognizes her errors, and begins to act more authentically (Sartre 92). Emma's final decision to marry Knightley reflects genuine emotional awareness and moral maturity. Her journey echoes the existential process of becoming—of forging a self through honest engagement with others and oneself. Austen's heroines exhibit existential agency, yet their freedom is always conditioned by historical and social realities. As Beauvoir argues, women have often been denied the status of autonomous subjects, expected instead to fulfil roles imposed upon them (Beauvoir 29).

This constrained freedom is what makes Austen's heroines so compelling. They navigate limited options yet make meaningful, morally grounded choices. Austen critiques the economic and

social pressures through irony, subtext, and narrative strategy, reinforcing existentialism's emphasis on authenticity and responsibility even within limits (Johnson 112).

Jane Austen's novels, though grounded in Regency-era social mores, offer a rich field for existential interpretation. Her heroines confront the fundamental questions of existentialism: Who am I? What should I value? How should I act? Through Elizabeth's assertiveness, Anne's renewal, Fanny's integrity, and Emma's transformation, Austen dramatizes the existential condition—not in abstract philosophy but in the tangible dilemmas of ordinary life. Their quiet rebellions, inner conflicts, and final resolutions underscore the universal struggle for selfhood and meaning. Austen's characters are not merely products of their time; they are early exemplars of existential authenticity—figures who, despite their limitations, choose to live with honesty, depth, and responsibility.

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## REPRESENTATION OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN SUDHA MURTY'S *GENTLY FALLS THE BAKULA*

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### Abstract

*Sudha Murty is an Indian educator, author, and philanthropist whose novels explore themes such as education, religion, family relationships, societal attitudes, and feminist issues. Gently Falls the Bakula is an insightful examination of identity, suffering, female oppression, male dominance, and the challenges faced by women. This article analyzes the struggles of Indian women within the oppressive framework of traditional society, focusing particularly on the family conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. It argues that modern women are equally capable of achieving their goals, just like men. Furthermore, this paper advocates for granting women equal rights and opportunities, emphasizing the need to recognize their values and capabilities. Through her work, Sudha Murty successfully questions and challenges long-standing traditional beliefs while inspiring a deeper awareness of feminine sensibilities among her readers*

**Keywords:** feminism, self – identity, loneliness, suffering, self-identity and introspection.

### Introduction

Sudha Murty is a renowned author, philanthropist, dedicated teacher, and chairperson of the Infosys Foundation. She was born on August 19, 1950, in Shiggaon, North Karnataka. She has written numerous novels and collections of short stories and is an Indian feminist writer who writes in both English and Kannada. Several of her books have been translated into Italian and Arabic. She has established numerous schools and hospitals across India, positively impacting the lives of thousands. She has received many honorary doctorates and prestigious awards, including the Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri from the Government of India. Her writings are informed by values of compassion and kindness, deeply rooted in our culture and heritage.

Feminism represents one of the most significant social and economic transformations in modern India.

It challenges the male-oriented nature of society and the traditional gender roles imposed on women. The primary goal of feminists is to advocate for women's self-identity and human rights. Sudha Murty's novels explore feminist themes and address women's issues. Rather than directly confronting a male-dominated society, she uses her characters to question societal norms. Her female protagonists are portrayed as more intellectually mature than those of earlier writers, confidently choosing their own paths and shaping their own lives.

*Gently Falls the Bakula* tells the story of a marriage strained by ambition and self-interest. The narrative centers on Shrimati, a young woman passionate about history and aspiring to pursue a Ph.D. However, after marrying Shrikant, she sacrifices her academic dreams and becomes a silent, compliant partner. Mentally and physically

drained by the demands of her husband and mother-in-law, Shrimati eventually experiences a turning point during a conversation with an elderly professor. She decides to resume her study because she believes that her life is empty. This encounter prompts her to reflect deeply on her life and identity, leading to a powerful self-examination by the novel's conclusion.

### Result Analysis

Ms. Shrimathi Deshpande is the protagonist of the novel, around whom the entire narrative revolves. She is portrayed as a bright student in her class, characterized by an introverted nature. Shrimathi is perceptive and responds thoughtfully to situations. She upholds strong moral values, has received a good education, and maintains a positive outlook on life. Although she has no siblings, she shares close friendships with her schoolmates and has a deep love for literature. Her mother, Kamala, is a teacher at a local school. Known for her simplicity, Shrimathi, dresses modestly and adorns herself only with a strand of bakula flowers tucked into her long braid. Shrimathi efficiently manages all household responsibilities and excels academically, often outperforming Srikant in her studies.

"Ms. Shrimathi Deshpande was a slim, tall girl, with a wheatish complexion and good, clear features. She had usually long hair that reached below her knees. She always wore a string of bakula flowers in her hair. Shrimathi was one of the brightest students in her class" (Gentle Falls the Bakula 4).

Shrimathi falls in love with Shrikant Deshpande, a tall, fair-complexioned, and handsome young man. Their families have been neighbors for generations. Shrimathi eventually shares her feelings about Shrikant with her mother. After discussing the matter with their respective families and overcoming several obstacles, the couple succeeds in convincing their parents and ultimately gets married. Although Shrimathi comes from a modest background, she

initially enjoys a sense of happiness and independence in her marriage. However, over time, her life undergoes a significant transformation. She begins to make numerous personal sacrifices, which gradually reshape her identity and sense of self.

After marriage, Shrimathi is not welcomed warmly into her mother-in-law Gangakka's household. Gangakka does not allow Shrimathi to enter the kitchen and fails to offer her any traditional gifts customarily given to a daughter-in-law. When Shrikant is present at home, Gangakka pretends to be kind and respectful toward Shrimathi. However, once he is away, Gangakka reveals her true nature by making hurtful remarks and treating Shrimathi with hostility. Shrimathi feels particularly helpless when her mother is insulted by her mother-in-law. Gangakka even disapproves of Shrimathi addressing Shrikant by name and frequently mocks the financial contributions made by Shrimathi's family during the wedding. As a newlywed, Shrimathi chooses to remain silent, suppressing her emotions despite the emotional distress she endures. In Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu*, the character Vinuta, like Shrimathi, suffers at the hands of her mother-in-law, particularly in matters related to wealth and property. Vinuta, who comes from a modest background, marries Girish and is subjected to humiliation and verbal abuse. Her mother-in-law frequently compares her unfavorably to the other daughter-in-law, who belongs to a more affluent family.

Sudha Murty effectively portrays how newly married women often suffer in silence within the confines of traditional domestic expectations. Without hesitation, she exposes the harsh reality that marriage can sometimes become a form of imprisonment for young women. This critical perspective, which challenges conventional ideals, is powerfully conveyed through the character of Shrimathi. Sudha uses Shrimathi's experience to highlight the struggles faced by women in middle-class, traditional Indian families, revealing the

emotional burdens and societal pressures that continue to affect many even today. Talking about the predicament of Shrimati in an article "Postmodern Feminism in SudhaMurty's *Mahashweta* and *Gently Falls the Bakula*" J. Daisy and Dr.R. Shanthi aptly puts

*Gently Falls the Bakula* portrays the drudgery life of the female protagonist, Shrimati, who seems to experience the pain from her marriage but her husband Shrikant fails to realize the sacrifice of her life. The Bakula flower is considered a souvenir of their love, even though it would dry up, its fragrance will be same like their I (Daisyvol.8) (<http://infokara.com/>)

Shrimathi suffers not only from her mother-in-law but also from Shrikant's sister, Rama. Rama consistently supports their mother and verbally abuses Shrimathi. Despite this, Shrimathi remains silent, unwilling to create problems for anyone. After marriage, the young couple settled in Bombay. During their first Diwali, Shrimathi traveled to Hubli. Even after several months of marriage, there has been no change in her mother-in-law's behavior. Gangakka and Rama continue to treat her in the same manner as before. Gangakka is particularly upset because her daughter-in-law is happy and planning to go abroad. She is often furious with Shrimathi for not bringing a dowry. Five years into her marriage, Shrimathi has yet to receive any affection, love, or appreciation from her mother-in-law. The current grievance is not about dowry but rather about Shrimathi's inability to bear children. Despite her best efforts, Shrimathi has failed to win her mother-in-law's approval.. "Even after so many years she never felt at home in Gangakka's house. She was still an outsider. But how could she explain all this to her mother or to Shri?" ( *Gently Falls the Bakula* 88). Shrimathi hopes that one day they will love and accept her, as she understands that true love and affection cannot be bought with money.

Shrimathi's character depicts the struggles, suffering, and challenges faced by many middle-class Indian women who are unable to satisfy or fulfill societal expectations. Murty illustrates the difficulties of married life and emphasizes the significance of mutual respect and compromise in a relationship. She develops a feminist perspective on women's issues from a distinctly Indian context. Sudha sheds light on how middle-class women adjust and strive to integrate within society.

Shrimathi sacrifices her entire life for her husband, Shrikant. Although she is passionate about history, marriage leaves her with no opportunity to continue her studies. When she is ready to register for a Ph.D., a financial crisis arises in Shrikant's family. Gangakka borrows money from her brother Sheenappa and cousin Shyam to fund Shrikant's education. However, Shrikant is obligated to send a minimum of ten thousand rupees every month to his mother. In response, Shrimathi decides to take a job to help her husband repay the loan, postponing her dream of pursuing a Ph.D. by a year.

Sudha effectively portrays how middle-class young women sacrifice their lives for their husbands and families. Shrimathi shares her husband's financial burden, believing it is her duty to support him. She eventually joins a small import-export company, working there for about fifteen months. After the loan is repaid, she quits her job. Despite her sacrifices, Shrikant and his mother fail to recognize her dedication to the family.

In Sudha's novel *House of Cards*, Mirdula sacrifices everything for her husband and family. As a government school teacher with a stable income, she supports her family when Sanjay resigns from his government job as a doctor to start his own clinic. Initially, Sanjay struggles financially without a steady income. Mirdula takes out loans and even gives her jewelry to help Sanjay open the clinic. She manages all household responsibilities without expecting a single penny from her husband. She supports Sanjay

and his family to the best of her ability. However, as Sanjay becomes a successful doctor in Bangalore, he begins to mock and fail to acknowledge Mirdula, her teaching profession, and the support she provided. Through the female protagonists in her novels, Murty vividly illustrates the sacrifices and unwavering commitment of middle-class women toward their families.

Sudha portrays Shrimati as a confident woman, unafraid of life's challenges and prepared to confront difficulties within both family and society. She serves as a role model for other young women, embodying courage and ambition. Murty skillfully depicts Shrimati's evolving awareness of her self-worth throughout her journey. Central to this transformation is Shrikant, whose behavior and actions deeply influence Shrimati's introspection and eventual path to self-discovery.

One day, Shrimati suddenly falls ill with the flu and becomes physically and mentally weak. She now lives a lifestyle typical of the upper middle class after her husband, Shrikant, purchased a home overlooking the sea. Shrikant is frequently busy with his world tours and will be away for a month. Although he leaves home in the morning and returns in the evening, he spends most of his time reading magazines. There is little to no conversation between Shrimati and Shrikant. Feeling lonely, she often sits on the balcony, longing for her husband to sit beside her and offer comfort. She wishes for someone to be there with her. Sometimes, she struggles to sleep and finds herself preoccupied with unnecessary worries. "She kept thinking, if I die, no one would even know. What kind of a life is this. It was so empty, so lonely in spite of all the wealth that Shrikant had earned!" (GFTB 106).

Shrimati is unwilling to attend the dinner parties and events hosted by Shrikant at the hotel. She is reluctant to welcome his official guests. However, her partner forces her to perform all the work and participate in these events for the sake of his

professional advancement. She feels that love, care, affection, and the sharing of ideas and dreams have vanished from their relationship. Since their marriage, Shrikant has changed completely. He is now focused solely on fame, position, and status, showing little understanding of human values or the feelings of others. After ten years of marriage, Shrikant has begun to suppress Shrimati's individual freedom. He criticizes her favorite subject, history, hurts her feelings, and his harsh words severely damage their relationship.

Don't talk about your worthless history. The world of business is so different from yours. History cannot feed you. Don't behave like a historian at such parties. You should remember that you represent our company.... After all, what is there in Indian's History to boast so much about? (GFTB 125)

Sudha portrays the women in her novels as reflections of the collective experiences and achievements of women striving to establish their own identities. Her middle-class Indian female characters reveal the complex internal struggles and quests for self-discovery. These characters battle societal norms and male dominance but never lose their determination and strength. The female protagonists often experience victimization under patriarchal structures, yet ultimately they find their identities and choose to lead their own lives. Through the character of Shrimati, Murty not only illustrates the struggles and challenges faced by women but also highlights their journey toward self-discovery and introspection. One can recollect Virginia Woolf's quote in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) about self-respect in her words:

And there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect, thought Clarissa, watching him open the door; for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self-respect something, after all, priceless. (Woolf 132-133)

Shrimathi does not understand the life. She is exhausted both mentally and physically. She asks herself that what she has achieved in life. She gets an answer is a big zero. She has sacrificed and does everything in her life for Shrikant. But Shrikant never notices her sincerity and value her sacrifices for him. She is living very big house without love, affection and meaningful relationship. She analyze her feelings and ask herself that what could make her happy. Finally she has chosen history and wants to do doctorate in History. She is going away from her home not earning money, but to find her own identity and individuality. "I cannot live in this kind of an atmosphere with these artificial values. I require to breath fresh air. I do not want to live as your shadow. I want to find my own happiness"(GFTB161).

Sudha Murthy, renowned for her charitable work and advocacy for women's rights, uses her characters to reflect her own struggles and triumphs. In *Gently Falls the Bakula*, characters like Shrimati are portrayed as highly skilled women constrained by family and societal expectations. Despite their talents, they often feel trapped and unable to fully express themselves. However, Sudha highlights their resilience as they confront these challenges with strength, refusing to succumb to pressure or lose their identities. Instead, they actively pursue freedom and self-discovery. The narrative traces their transformation from timid, polite, and selfless individuals to bold, confident women focused on their careers. Through this journey, Sudha underscores the importance of self-belief and understanding, illustrating how her characters overcome obstacles and assert their worth—even in the face of familial opposition.

## Conclusion

*Gently Falls the Bakula* addresses themes of male dominance, female submission, and gender disparity. Sudha emphasizes the importance of giving equal priority to both work and family. Although the story concludes on a sad note, it ultimately delivers justice that aligns with its title. The title reflects family life in modern society, highlighting the need for mutual support, shared quality time, and understanding between life partners. Unfortunately, these elements are often missing in today's fast-paced world, where people are preoccupied with fame, money, and social status. Sudha portrays modern women as individuals who often sacrifice their personal goals to fulfill societal expectations, playing the roles of successful wives and submissive partners bound by the institution of marriage. However, Shrimati challenges these constraints by deciding to pursue higher education—a pursuit she had previously sacrificed for her husband's career and their marriage. Achieving self-identity is not an easy journey; it requires resilience, pain, and understanding. In this narrative, Shrimati summons the courage to embrace a new beginning.

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## **ENHANCING GRAMMAR ACQUISITION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH EFL TECHNIQUES**

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### **Abstract**

*This chapter discusses the application of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approaches in learning grammar among college-level students. It seeks to close the gap between theoretical knowledge of grammar and its practical application in language communication through the integration of communicative, contextual, and interactive practices. The chapter describes effective EFL strategies, classroom application procedures, and observations on student performance.*

### **Introduction**

Over the past few years, teachers have come to increasingly appreciate the necessity to reconsider teaching grammar in EFL contexts. Old-fashioned techniques, focused on explicit instruction in grammar and on-the-spot repetitive drills, tend not to motivate learners or enable them to use grammar in authentic communication. Studies indicate that learners learn grammar better when it is introduced in meaningful contexts and combined with listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks. This chapter discusses how incorporating EFL methods into grammar teaching can enable learners to internalise grammar rules, become more fluent, and utilise grammar as a means of communication instead of as a collection of rules to memorize.

Grammar is the foundation of any language, but for most college students studying English as a foreign or second language, it is still a difficult aspect. Conventional grammar teaching tends to depend on memorisation and disconnected rule acquisition, resulting in passive learning. This chapter suggests applying EFL-based pedagogical approaches to ensure active learning and communicative ability in grammar teaching.

### **Theoretical Framework**

These theoretical foundations form the basis for planning classroom activities that are learner-focused and facilitate effective communication. For example, CLT supports the use of authentic materials and real-world tasks to enable learners to use grammar naturally. TBLT reverses the focus from teaching grammar in isolation to facilitating learners to accomplish communicative tasks that necessitate specific grammatical structures. Krashen's theory underlines that student should be given comprehensible input a little higher than their present level of proficiency so that they can understand it by context and exposure.

There are several linguistic and pedagogical theories on which EFL teaching techniques are based, such as:

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Centres on interaction as both the process and final target of learning.
- Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Employs authentic tasks for generating purposeful use of grammar.
- Krashen's Input Hypothesis: Focuses on comprehensible input in naturalistic environments.

Moreover, most students have had little exposure to English outside the classroom, limiting practice opportunities. Inadequate personalised instruction also inhibits their progress, as students tend to have varying levels of proficiency, learning styles, and needs. Another issue is the test-oriented culture in most institutions, where grammar is taught for examination purposes instead of practical application. These issues call for a move towards more flexible, interactive, and student-centred approaches.

### **Problems in Teaching Grammar to College EFL Students**

- Lack of motivation and interest.
- Excessive focus on accuracy rather than fluency.
- Difficulty in transferring grammar rules to real-life situations.
- Interference from the first language in grammatical structure.

### **EFL Techniques of Grammar Teaching** **Contextual Instruction of Grammar**

- Rather than standing alone grammar drills, grammar is instructed within contexts- reading selections, dialogues, or brief films. This improves understanding and retention.
- Sample Activity: Use a short story and underline verb tenses used in various portions of the narrative.

### **Inductive Method**

- Grammar rules are learned by students by seeing examples and not by themselves.
- Example Activity: Present students with present perfect tense sentences and have them deduce the rule.

### **Interactive Games and Technology**

- Learning made fun through interactive tools such as Kahoot, Quizlet, and Grammar Ninja adds a

playful touch and aids in the reinforcement of learning.

- Example Activity: Implement grammar quizzes through team-based Kahoot competitions for sentence structure reinforcement.

### **Task-Based Learning**

- Grammar is built into activities like writing an email, interviewing someone, or discussing a subject.
- Example Activity: Get students to role-play a job interview with attention to proper question construction and use of the past tense.

### **Error Correction via Peer Review**

- Inviting peer feedback on writing and speaking activities can create grammar consciousness as well as peer-to-peer cooperation.
- Example Activity: Peer-editing essays with a list of typical grammatical mistakes to review.

### **Case Study: Applying EFL Strategies in a College Classroom**

This case study was carried out in a first-year undergraduate English class at a women's college in Tamil Nadu, where students hail from various linguistic backgrounds. English is their second or third language, and the majority of students have moderate to low levels of proficiency in the use of grammar, particularly in writing and speaking.

### **Objective**

To enhance the students' skills in using tenses and sentence structures correctly in spoken and written communication through EFL methods.

### **Contextualised Reading and Grammar Highlighting**

The students were given a short story, O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi". Students were given a background of the story before they read it. As they

read, students marked instances of past-tense verbs and indirect speech.

### Classroom Activity

Students worked in pairs to identify all verbs employed in the past tense and group them as regular and irregular forms. This was succeeded by a class discussion of the form of indirect speech presented in the dialogues.

### Outcome

Students accounted for improved comprehension of the use of verbs and were more confident in their ability to recognise grammar in context.

### Task-Based Speaking Practice

A role-playing exercise was brought in whereby students were told to pretend they were travel agents marketing a package tour. They needed to explain the tour plan using the future tense and modals (e.g., You will visit, You can enjoy, You must bring).

### Peer Feedback

Each group had to present before the class and get feedback from their peers regarding their use of tense and structure.

### Outcome

Students became more aware of grammar in speech and enhanced their fluency without excessively focusing on form.

### Grammar Games with Kahoot

A live Kahoot quiz was set up to assess students' knowledge of subject-verb agreement, articles, and tenses. The competitive and visual aspect of the game generated enthusiasm in the classroom.

### Outcome

Students were more engaged, and their grammar accuracy enhanced considerably in follow-up assessments.

### Student Feedback

- "I enjoyed the game and story exercises. I never knew grammar could be enjoyable."
- "Role-play made me speak well and think English."

### Teacher Reflection

The incorporation of EFL methods led to more active participation, less anxiety about grammar, and noticeable improvement in students' writing and speaking assignments. It supported the notion that grammar is most effectively learned through useful application rather than mechanical exercises.

### Assessment and Feedback

Grammar proficiency should be measured formally and informally. Formative measures such as journals, discussions in class, and presentations facilitate continuous feedback, whereas summative measures like tests of grammar corroborate learning.

### Outcomes and Reflections

Applying EFL strategies works impressively towards elevating the levels of students' engagement, confidence, and correctness in grammar use. Students feel more independent as learners and tend to automate grammatical constructions through relevant practice.

### Conclusion

The integration of EFL techniques into grammar teaching turns passive students into active learners. Using contextual, communicative, and task-oriented techniques, grammar is not only a topic to learn but a means of effective communication.

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# ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR MASALA PRODUCTS IN MADURAI: A GARRETT RANKING ANALYSIS

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## **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the economic implications of evolving consumer preferences for masala products in Madurai, a prominent Southern Indian spice and food processing hub. Driven by changing lifestyles and demand for convenience, a deeper understanding of consumer choices in this vital sector is crucial. The increasing popularity of branded products like Aachi Masala signifies a critical shift from traditional and unbranded offerings, prompting this study to explore these preferences and their economic ramifications for the regional masala industry. Methodologically, the Garrett Ranking technique was employed to identify factors influencing Aachi Masala users' purchasing decisions. A structured questionnaire administered to Madurai consumers elicited their ranking of attributes including price, taste, quality, variety, and aroma. Ranks were converted into percent positions and then Garrett scores. Additionally, a Sign Test assessed agreement among beneficiaries on product satisfaction and features. The Garrett ranking analysis revealed Taste as the most significant factor influencing consumer choice for Aachi Masala, closely followed by Price, then Quality. These findings have substantial economic implications for manufacturers, retailers, and stakeholders in the Madurai masala market. Prioritizing investment in enhancing taste and consistent quality is crucial for sustained competitiveness and market leadership. While price remains important, it must be strategically balanced with superior product attributes. Marketing efforts should predominantly highlight authentic flavor and quality. This study offers valuable, data-driven insights for informed decision-making in a dynamic and competitive market.*

**Keywords:** *masala products, consumer preferences, economic implications, marketing and food industry.*

## **Introduction**

The Indian food industry is a dynamic and rapidly expanding sector, with significant contributions from the spice and masala segment. Madurai, a culturally rich city in Southern India, holds a prominent position in the trade and consumption of spices, often serving as a hub for both traditional and modern food processing. The modern consumer landscape is characterized by evolving lifestyles, increasing disposable incomes, and a growing demand for convenience foods, all of which heavily influence purchasing patterns for daily essentials like masala products. In this competitive environment, understanding consumer preferences is paramount for businesses to thrive and for policymakers to foster

economic growth within the sector. While local and unbranded masalas have historically held sway, the recent proliferation and success of branded masala products, such as Aachi Masala, underscore a notable shift in market dynamics and consumer trust. This study aims to delve into these evolving preferences and their economic ramifications for the masala product industry in Madurai.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the significant economic contribution of the masala product industry in Madurai, there is a limited understanding of the specific factors that drive consumer preferences for branded masala products in this region. Manufacturers and marketers often

operate with assumptions about consumer behavior, which may not accurately reflect the nuanced decision-making processes of the local populace. Without a precise understanding of the most influential factors (e.g., price, taste, quality, brand perception, variety, aroma), companies may misallocate resources, develop ineffective marketing strategies, and fail to meet consumer expectations. This lack of clear insight can hinder market penetration, reduce profitability, and ultimately impede the sustainable economic development of the masala sector in Madurai. Therefore, there is a critical need to identify and prioritize the key determinants of consumer choice for branded masala products like Aachi Masala, to inform strategic decisions and optimize market outcomes.

### Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To identify and rank the most important factors influencing the purchasing decisions of Aachi Masala users in Madurai using the Garrett Ranking technique.
- To assess the level of agreement or disagreement among beneficiaries regarding various statements related to masala product preferences using a Sign Test.

### Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate consumer preferences for Aachi Masala products in Madurai.

### Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of Aachi Masala users in Madurai. The questionnaire captured demographic information and solicited respondents' rankings of various factors influencing their purchase decisions, as well as their agreement/disagreement

with specific statements related to product features and satisfaction.

### Tools used

By adding each rows the total garret score is obtained.

$$\text{Garrets} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

$R_{ij}$  = Rank given for table  $i^{\text{th}}$  item by the  $j^{\text{th}}$  sample respondents.

$N_j$  = Total rank given by  $j^{\text{th}}$  sample respondents

The following formula is used to test the level of significance.

$$\begin{aligned} Z^5 &= \text{No. of '+' Sign} - \mu \\ \mu &= 0.5n \\ &= \sqrt{0.25n}. \end{aligned}$$

### Result and Discussions

The garret ranks are calculated by using appropriate garret ranking formula then based on the garret ranks. The garret table value is ascertained. The garret table valued and scores of each in table 1 multiple record scores in table 1.

Table 3 shows the garret scores. Firstly the garret ranks are calculated by using appropriate garret ranking formula. Than based on the garret ranks, the garret table value is ascertained. The garret table and scores of each factor is table 1 which are then multiplied for record scores. Finally adding each row, the garret scores have been attained. The highest score is analyzed to varieties. The lease score is comfortable.

It reveals that price is ranked first, Taste in ranked second. Quality in ranked third. Aroma in ranked fourth, and variety in ranked fifth. The actives of the organization Taste users. The mainly liked them Taste.

### Sign Test

It is one of the non-parametric methods in statistical work. This can be used with either nominal or ordinal data. It requires less restrictive assumptions

concerning the level of data measurement. For recording the responses of sample customers, a '+' sign is recorded if the beneficiaries' responses is 'yes' for each statement framed for the study or a '-' is recorded if the respondent's responses is 'not' for that statement. Using this procedure, the responses of all sample customers are recorded in terms of '+' or '-' sign. The responses of 'no opinion' is ignored while applying sign test. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not the 'yes' and 'no' responses of beneficiaries' for each statement is equal. This test can be applied for the small case ( $n < 20$ ) and for Large sample case ( $n >$ ). Hence  $n$  refers to number of respondents who responded to each statement as 'yes' and 'no'. Due to large sample, for all 7 statements framed for this study, the number of 'yes' and 'no' responses of sample workers is greater than 20. The null hypothesis here is that there is no significant difference between the responses of the respondents in each of the facilities provided.

It is inferred from table 5 that the Z value is not within the acceptance region of null hypothesis ( $Z = 1.96$  to  $Z = -1.96$ ) for all 10 statements. This indicates that there are significant difference in the responses of beneficiaries. There significant difference are due to a large number of Yes.

### Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the consumer preferences for Aachi Masala products in Madurai and their broader economic implications. The Garrett Ranking analysis conclusively demonstrates that Taste is the most significant factor influencing consumer choice, followed by Price and then Quality. Aroma and Variety, while important, rank lower in the hierarchy of consumer priorities. This highlights that in a market like Madurai, where consumers have diverse culinary traditions and a discerning palate, the inherent sensory appeal of masala products, particularly their flavor profile, is

paramount. The findings from the Sign Test further reinforce that the aspects covered by the statements (which likely pertain to product features, availability, or satisfaction with brand attributes) are overwhelmingly perceived as positive by the consumers. The significant 'yes' responses across all statements indicate a general satisfaction or affirmation towards the factors investigated.

### Economic Implications

The findings reveal critical economic implications for Madurai's masala product market. Manufacturers, especially those competing with brands like Aachi Masala, must prioritize R&D for enhanced product taste and quality, as these are paramount for consumer trust and market share. Pricing strategies should balance premium quality with competitiveness, emphasizing value-for-money. Marketing and branding efforts must predominantly highlight superior taste, authentic flavor, and consistent quality, building strong brand reputation. For supply chain and distribution, ensuring consistent availability and freshness is vital, alongside a sufficient, albeit not expansive, product variety to meet basic culinary needs. Firms excelling in delivering superior taste and quality at reasonable prices will gain a competitive edge, fostering a healthier market. Ultimately, catering to these consumer preferences will enhance sales, expand production, and create employment, significantly contributing to regional economic growth within Madurai's spice processing sector. In conclusion, understanding consumer preferences for taste, price, and quality is fundamental for the economic success of the masala product industry in Madurai. By strategically aligning their product offerings and marketing efforts with these key drivers, businesses can unlock significant growth potential, enhance consumer satisfaction, and contribute robustly to the regional economy.

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**Table 1: Factor Influencing the Aachi Masala Users**

| Sl. No. | Particulars | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Total |
|---------|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 1       | Price       | 34 | 16 | 15 | 25 | 10 | 100   |
| 2       | Taste       | 30 | 20 | 15 | 19 | 16 | 100   |
| 3       | Quality     | 22 | 23 | 17 | 21 | 17 | 100   |
| 4       | Variety     | 14 | 19 | 21 | 20 | 26 | 100   |
| 5       | Aroma       | 19 | 25 | 15 | 28 | 13 | 100   |

Source: Primary Data.

**Table 2 : Percent Position and Garret Value**

| Sl.No. | $\frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$ | Calculated Value | Carret Value |
|--------|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1      | $\frac{100 (1 - 0.5)}{1}$        | 10               | 76           |

|   |                           |    |    |
|---|---------------------------|----|----|
| 2 | $\frac{100 (2 - 0.5)}{2}$ | 30 | 61 |
| 3 | $\frac{100 (3 - 0.5)}{3}$ | 50 | 50 |
| 4 | $\frac{100 (4 - 0.5)}{4}$ | 70 | 40 |
| 5 | $\frac{100 (5 - 0.5)}{5}$ | 90 | 25 |

Source: Primary Data.

**Table 3: Factor Influencing the Aachi Masala users Total Score**

| Sl.No | Particulars | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5   | Total |
|-------|-------------|------|------|------|------|-----|-------|
| 1     | Price       | 2280 | 1159 | 850  | 800  | 375 | 5464  |
| 2     | Taste       | 2584 | 976  | 750  | 1000 | 250 | 5560  |
| 3     | Quality     | 1672 | 1403 | 850  | 840  | 425 | 5190  |
| 4     | Variety     | 1064 | 1159 | 1050 | 800  | 650 | 4723  |
| 5     | Aroma       | 1444 | 1525 | 750  | 1120 | 260 | 5099  |

Source: Primary Data.

**Table 4: Factor Influencing the Aachi Masala users Garret's Ranking**

| Sl.No | Particulars | Total Score | Average Score | Rank |
|-------|-------------|-------------|---------------|------|
| 1     | Price       | 5464        | 54%           | 2    |
| 2     | Taste       | 5560        | 55%           | 1    |
| 3     | Quality     | 5190        | 51%           | 3    |
| 4     | Variety     | 4723        | 47%           | 5    |
| 5     | Aroma       | 5099        | 50%           | 4    |

Source: Primary Data.

**Table 5: Facilities Provided by the Sign Test**

| Sl. No | Number of + signs | Number of '-' Signs | N  | Z@   | Result      |
|--------|-------------------|---------------------|----|------|-------------|
| 1.     | 95                | 3                   | 98 | 9.49 | Significant |
| 2.     | 90                | 6                   | 96 | 8.57 | Significant |
| 3.     | 84                | 6                   | 90 | 8.42 | Significant |
| 4.     | 53                | 27                  | 80 | 3.13 | Significant |
| 5.     | 77                | 14                  | 91 | 6.39 | Significant |
| 6.     | 80                | 10                  | 90 | 7.37 | Significant |
| 7.     | 89                | 7                   | 96 | 8.57 | Significant |

|     |    |   |    |      |             |
|-----|----|---|----|------|-------------|
| 8.  | 93 | 4 | 97 | 9.24 | Significant |
| 9.  | 95 | 3 | 98 | 9.49 | Significant |
| 10. | 96 | 3 | 99 | 9.54 | Significant |

**Source:** Computed Primary Data.

No of '+' signs = No of worker's responses 'Yes'.

No of '-' signs = No of worker's responses 'No'

N = No of worker's responses 'Yes' and 'No'

## LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

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### Abstract

*In the history of business education and the workplace, leadership and corporate communication is a relatively new concept. Nowadays, businesses aim to cultivate internal managerial proficiency in corporate communication and a leader acquires the ability to prudently leverage external experience from public relations firms. As a set of mental habits that are understood at every level of management and are shared by the leadership, corporate communication should be a part of every manager's vital arsenal. This article's goal is to discuss the role of leadership and value of corporate communication and how it links many different stakeholders, such as staff members, clients, present and future partners, governments, media, special interest groups, and modern corporations. As corporate communication has evolved, the majorities of organizations have grown increasingly aware of society as a whole and regard it as a powerful instrument for enhancing their reputation and image. The Essentials of Corporate Communication by Cees B.M. Van Riel and Charles J. Fombrun (2007) is the subject of this research paper's analysis.*

**Keywords:** *communication, leadership, business, reputation, organization, management, workplace, social responsibility, strategy, visionary, democratic, commanding.*

### Introduction

Groups and teams of people must cooperate in order for organizations to function, and good leaders are able to direct a group's or team's efforts towards a shared objective and facilitate collaboration among members. Individual managers have the power to form and influence how others perceive them inside the organization. It goes without saying that organizations must assume leadership positions when it comes to expressing their vision and any broader business objectives. The term "corporate communications" refers to the communication outputs, such as speeches, news releases, websites, emails, memos, letters, and reports. A company's communications to its internal and external constituencies are the sum of these messages. In the *Essentials of Communication*, Van Riel and Fombrun defines corporate communication as an

organization's ability to strategically coordinate various forms of communication is outlined in a corporate communication framework (14). Corporate communication refers to the voice of a corporation and the public perception it holds of itself. Corporate communication departments are present in most organizations' organizational charts alongside more conventional roles like marketing or accountancy. Additionally, a firm uses a variety of methods, including meetings, interviews, speeches, reports, image advertising, and online communication, to convey all of its messages to important audiences. Consequently, the following ideas are promoted and encoded by corporate communication:

- A sturdy corporate ethnicity
- A consistent corporate distinctiveness
- A rational corporate values
- An authentic intellect of communal citizenship

- A suitable and proficient association with the press
- Rapid and liable mode of corresponding in a calamity
- An considerate view of communication tools and technologies
- Refined approaches to universal relations

### Practice Fields

There is unparalleled rivalry in every industry. Companies are under increasing pressure to set themselves apart from their competitors as the competition heats up. Based on their visions, values, distinctive strengths, and the value they provide to the lives of their customers, shareholders, and the communities they serve, businesses must establish a distinctive place in the eyes of their major stakeholders. Simplifying to maximize shareholder value is insufficient. Every business needs to recognize and constantly communicate the distinct value that it offers to the market. Companies must redefine themselves for their current and future stakeholders when the rate of change quickens and management responds with innovative goods and services. Perception rules nowadays and a company's reputation is arguably its most valuable asset. A well-known company's reputation can be destroyed, and in a matter of months, it can wither and die, harming the interests of almost every stakeholder group and eroding shareholder value. On the other hand, a lesser-known business that establishes a strong reputation might prosper and expand by successfully vying for clients, staff, suppliers, potential partners, and funding in the market. The business is able to provide consistent shareholder value as a result of the procedure.

Essentially, effective corporate management involves controlling the faster-than-expected rate of change. When establishing plans to adapt to changes, management, especially in developing nations, frequently underestimates the significance of

informing employees about the change initiatives. If strategy is to be successful, everyone in the company must be aware of it and collaborate to meet organizational objectives. Any company's whole communications strategy needs to be successful, and this starts with a strong media relationship. A company can reap great rewards from an effective public relations programme. Employing exceptional media relations talents and creating a strategy media relations programme that successfully reaches target audiences with the client's main messages via the appropriate media should be a top priority for businesses. Managers need to be skilled in matching the client's messaging to the appropriate media platforms and versed in how different media outlets will handle specific material.

### Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The voluntary incorporation of social and environmental considerations into business practices and stakeholder engagements is fundamental to the concept of corporate social responsibility. It was well-organized, concentrated on certain issues, and skilled at influencing public opinion and the media on a global scale. In the modern business world, corporate social responsibility has become a significant field with a growing body of knowledge. It is now required for larger companies, particularly multinationals; it is connected to their primary business goals. Experts create and direct its strategy, including it into the company's operations. Additionally, it has expanded to include labour policies, corporate governance, and the effects on the social and environmental spheres. CSR makes doing the right thing not only the moral thing to do, but also the better thing to do (Bhattacharya and Sen 9).

Businesses that are more socially conscious do so for a variety of reasons. Taking the lead in CSR may help set the company apart and provide it with a competitive edge. Involving the community can help a

company become more cohesive, get the support of its employees, and improve its corporate culture. Adopting a CSR-driven mindset can result in cost savings and increased efficiency in the use of materials and energy. Government agencies and important stakeholders frequently have a more empathetic perspective of a corporation that integrates CSR into its routine operations. Evidence of a business upholding CSR values may aid in luring in new hires.

### Corporate Reputation

The expectations, attitudes, and sentiments that customers have regarding the character and fundamental reality of a firm, as embodied in its corporate identity, are referred to as corporate reputation (Topalian 44).

These days, a company's reputation can be defined as an asset or attribute. This is due to the fact that businesses are starting to realize that having a good reputation has real advantages and that there can be serious repercussions if you don't. A positive reputation aids in drawing in the personnel, partners, investors, analysts, and consumers that are essential to a business's success. Managing your identity can protect your positive reputation (Chajet 48). Research and experience in business have repeatedly shown that a company's reputation plays a significant role in its ability to hire top talent, sell its products, and draw in the most desirable business partners. Relationships and communication have become even more crucial as intangible assets account for an increasing portion of a company's overall value. For a corporation to succeed reputation alone is not enough; intellectual capital also needs to be created and maintained. Like a magnet, a good reputation draws us to individuals who possess it (Fombrun and van Riel 48). The task of building, preserving, enhancing, and defending an organization's reputation throughout time is known as reputation management. Proactive communication is essential

to developing relationships that protect a company's reputation both in good and bad times.

A company's reputation is the connotations associated with it that people use to characterize, recall, and connect with it. It is the culmination of an individual's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and beliefs about the organization. People possess the company's reputation; a company cannot have its own (Dowling 44). According to Fombrun and Shanley (1990), a positive reputation can be a valuable asset to the company. It may help an organization charge higher prices for its goods, get into advantageous financial agreements with banks, draw in graduates from prestigious universities, communicate with customers more easily, and more (235).

The communication specialist helps build a reputation by

- Gaining management support for standard messaging that accurately convey the organization's mission, core values, and current state of affairs.
- Locating and utilizing important and powerful communication channels to connect with stakeholders
- Ensuring that important audiences and stakeholders are communicated with on a scheduled, year-round basis instead of informally.

In terms of presentation and speech, reputation has woven itself into the fabric of routine business operations. It is stated in the *Essentials of corporation communication* as corporate reputation is becoming more and more synonymous with the organization's overall reputation rather than its sub-brands (45). A company's reputation alone is insufficient; it also needs to be planned, managed, and assessable. As Carroll suggests that, how organizations should operationalize their social responsibilities (46).

## Corporate Communication Strategy

A corporate strategy addresses the organization's overarching goals and reach in order to satisfy the demands and expectations of its diverse stakeholders. A corporate strategy offers a strategic vision for the entire company with regard to things as basic as ownership of the company as well as product, market, and geographic reach. A vision frequently states the company's desired perception among its several stakeholder groups. Strategy could be seen as the thinking, the logic behind the actions (Robert 22). A communication strategy is a functional or operational plan for how corporate communication can build programs for stakeholders to realise that vision and achieve the business goals in the corporate strategy.

To comprehend and influence the environment in support of the new policy, the technical capacity to oversee execution calls for the adoption of a number of crucial corporate communication instruments and related competencies. When we examine the accordion method's principles—which were created by Ansoff and McDonnell (1990)—and place them within the framework of Saltman and Figueras' (1997) analysis of European healthcare reforms, the validity of this premise is further demonstrated. This approach proposes two primary methods of change management:

### Building implementation

In the business context of hospitals, we highlight the following potential acts that are part of the strategic process of consensus building:

- Stakeholders should be contacted to determine how they feel the changes will affect them. By understanding their concerns and preferred solutions, this will assist define messages that minimize fear and anxiety.
- It is important to recognize when a change is necessary and to have explanations of why the

change is being made available. This ought to reduce animosity and opposition.

- If corporate communication specialists can clearly communicate to stakeholders the advantages that a specific change will provide, they can create positive support for change.
- It is advisable to form alliances that facilitate change, even if it means temporarily barring those stakeholders who exhibit resistance.
- A well-defined strategy for the transformation process ought to be distributed among the organization's stakeholders, encompassing a precise delineation of duties, obligations, necessary resources, and the necessity for training and growth. Early on in the process, it is important to explain expected results and a number of benchmarks for tracking progress.

Implementing buildings is the second strategic strategy to change in the healthcare sector. This approach entails three main complementary initiatives in addition to consensus building:

- The least controversial modifications should be implemented first in a progressive manner over time. It is possible to add the more contentious elements as stakeholder trust grows. Throughout, image management will be required.
- Stakeholders ought to be included right away. Incentives for assistance can be shared, but individuals who oppose shouldn't face consequences as strengthening their opposition could obstruct the development of implementation.
- It is important to update stakeholders on developments. Stakeholders can recognize the benefits of the changes and continue to support them if the effects of the changes are evaluated and communicated.

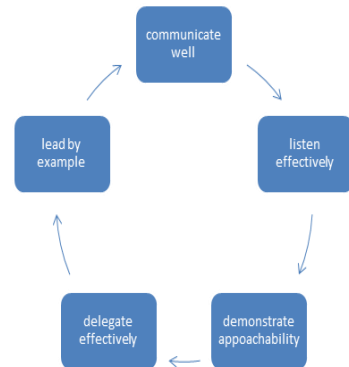
## Leadership Communication

Leadership is one of the most wide ranging discussed topics in today's business cycle. Understanding leadership and the act of leading is extended to many fields and organizations; hence, it exists in all levels. Leadership in a company is the top line focus and it functions to accomplish things happen. Many people have the potential to become effective leaders and they do the right things. Leadership aim is to achieve the goal of any company through increased knowledge of leadership concepts and increased self-understanding. Different leaders have different leadership styles, which are characterised by how they approach people in conversation and behaviour, give guidance, carry out plans, and inspire and encourage others inside the organisation. Such a style may be a reflection of their own philosophy, character, and background as leaders, but it may also be a result of the organisational environments in which they operate. In turn, people who are able to express motivating visions that rally support in everyday interactions with others are leaders. Effective communication is a leadership practice, not only one of the instruments in the corporate communication process (Laws 8).

There are two categories of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders exert influence over followers through a transactional approach. They provide monetary compensation, accolades, or other forms of reward to their followers in return for their efforts and achievements. Transformational leaders help followers develop the confidence necessary to attain their objectives. Transformational leadership entails a profound personal identification with the leader. They motivate followers to exceed expectations and engage in a collective vision for the future, transcending self-interest and the quest for personal gain. Effective leadership is essential across all types and levels of organisations, despite a common

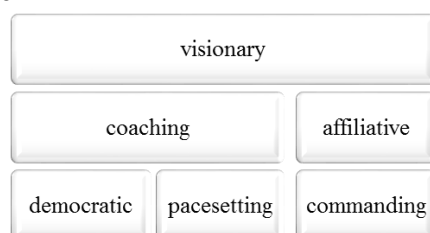
inclination to link leadership solely with individuals in top positions.

The below diagram shows the five order of frequency of leaders:



Leaders' job activities involve communication, sending and receiving messages, spoken and written. Effective leaders communicate clearly and precisely, in a timely fashion, keep people informed and have the ability to listen empathically. Different leadership styles also influence communication process. There exists a vice-a-versa relation between the two (Benita Zulch 8). Listening is an essential and undervalued skill, leaders take time to listen which build trust and commitment that creates a successful environment. They tend to perceive things towards a communication process and minimize misconception at times. The need for effective leadership is undisputed. What is relatively unknown is the role of listening and communication in leadership which are identified in two senses of the word. One is the communication skill acquired and the other is comparison with speaking, reading, and writing used often every day.

Leadership roles have six distinct styles are as follows:



The six types of leadership styles are explained as follows:

### **Visionary**

The word refers to a style of leadership that motivates followers by concentrating on long-term objectives. When a visionary leader is effective, they pay attention to the values that are held by the individuals within the groups. As a result, they are able to articulate their overall objectives for the organisation in a manner that garners the support of the individuals. A leader who possesses a clear vision has the ability to transcend the objectives decided upon by the organisation. Communication that is appropriate is required in order to close the gap and finish the assignment within the stipulated time frame.

### **Coaching**

It fundamentally represents management through delegation, characterising leadership that empowers individuals to take responsibility for a segment of the path towards the organization's success. A proficient coaching leader engages in individual conversations with employees, fosters personal connection and trust, and assists employees in understanding the significance of their performance and identifying supplementary information and resources. The delegation of decision-making authority to the employee within their area of responsibility, encompassing the ability to make and learn from mistakes, is essential for the efficacy of this leadership style. Coaching leadership liberates leaders from performing tasks for others, while simultaneously enhancing and expediting creativity and learning throughout the organisation.

### **Affiliative**

It delineates leadership that fosters a congenial and conducive environment within a focused work climate. An affiliative leader attentively listens to identify employees' emotional needs and endeavours

to respect and fulfil those needs inside the workplace. The authors warn that the peril of affiliative leadership lies in its emphasis on the emotional atmosphere at the expense of the actual job, necessitating its integration with other leadership styles, such as the visionary approach.

### **Democratic**

The text discusses leadership that encourages commitments and solicits opinions from all group members. A leader who actively listens to everyone's thoughts and information might inspire new ideas and renewed engagement when faced with ambiguity about how to proceed. Listening can be difficult, especially when sensitive topics are brought up and in a varied group. One risk is "dithering," which occurs when sessions go on for weeks without producing results. Fulfilment comes from putting people's ideas into practice and working towards a goal.

### **Pacesetter**

It is a description of leadership that establishes lofty objectives and continuously monitors the progress made towards achieving those objectives. The employees who establish a serene work environment over extended periods of time might result in increased creativity and productivity, despite the fact that this is a superior motivator for specific types of employees and under certain circumstances. There is a possibility that a leader will confer with the peer groups in order to clarify the target range for the allotted amount of time.

### **Commanding**

The phrase is used to characterise leadership that gives directions without soliciting input from employees regarding what is to be done or how it is to be done. This type of leadership is causing a significant amount of employee turnover as well as a downward spiral in morale and productivity. When it

comes to this technique, listening is not essential. Thus, leadership communication is prerequisite for success in one's professional career. Effective communication is a critical area; it necessitates listening and succeeds in developing a rapport with people.

### Conclusion

Leadership and corporate communication is an attitude towards communication or set of principles that employees would internalize. The result is good communication practices that permeate an organization grow well and are present in its communication with all its constituencies. It satisfies rational expectations based on product and performance along with emotional expectations based on behavior and perception. It also achieves commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and professionalism for communities and build natural environment. The integrity and reputation of a company lies in the way of communication of a leader with positive impact. Through communication, the leadership relationship is created to understand others in the world. To live well, a leader must communicate well and to communicate well, he/she must understand both the visible and the subtle issues related to corporate communication.

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# LONELINESS AND COMPANIONSHIP: CONTRASTING EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES IN THE ROOM ON THE ROOF- A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF RUSTY'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY IN RUSKIN BOND'S DEBUT NOVEL

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## Abstract

*Ruskin Bond is a prolific writer of short stories, novels, essays and children's literature. He is the recipient of Sakithya Akademi, Padma Shri and Padma Bhusan awards. He is known for his great contribution to the development of children's literature. His 'The Room on the Roof' is a sensitive exploration of emotional isolation and the healing power of human connection. Bond was just seventeen, when he produced the novel of which carries a raw and honest portrayal of adolescence, identity, and emotional vulnerability. At its heart lies the story of Rusty, a sixteen-year-old Anglo-Indian boy who begins the novel trapped in a sterile, loveless environment. The journey he undertakes is not merely geographical—from the silence of his guardian's home to the chaotic warmth of Indian streets—but deeply emotional, charting a path from intense loneliness to life-affirming companionship. This article explores the powerful contrast between Rusty's isolation and the companionship he later finds, highlighting how these emotional states shape his development. By examining key events, character relationships, and shifts in Rusty's internal world, we will see how Bond presents loneliness as a numbing force and companionship as a vehicle for self-discovery, freedom, and emotional rebirth.*

**Keywords:** *loneliness, depression, companions, love*

In the opening chapters of *The Room on the Roof*, Rusty resides in Dehradun under the guardianship of a stern Englishman, Mr. Harrison, who enforces a rigid regime built on rules, propriety, and an almost obsessive detachment from the vibrant world beyond their walled compound. This household is emblematic of colonial authority—formal, austere, and emotionally sterile. The guardian's house is not a home, but a fortress of repression, where spontaneity and affection are suppressed in favor of discipline and routine. Rusty's days are dictated by structure: fixed meals, scheduled walks, silence during reading hours. There is no laughter, no warmth, no sense of belonging—only the echo of English customs transplanted into Indian soil, wilting in the unfamiliar heat.

This environment, though materially stable, is a psychological desert for Rusty. It is a place where

emotions are muted and identity is denied. The coldness of Mr. Harrison's manner is not merely a personality trait; it is symbolic of the broader cultural estrangement Rusty experiences. Though he lives in India, he is forbidden from engaging with Indian culture, language, or people. He is taught to view the local world outside the gates with suspicion, even disdain. The narrow lane that leads to the bustling Indian bazaar may be physically close, but it is ideologically miles away. Rusty longs to be part of the world he sees from the shadows—colorful, chaotic, affectionate—but he is held back by the invisible chains of colonial propriety.

Rusty's loneliness is profound and multifaceted. On the surface, he appears to be a quiet, well-behaved boy, but internally he is a storm of confusion, longing, and isolation. His loneliness is not merely the absence of companionship, but the

absence of identity. As an Anglo-Indian—born of English descent but raised in India—he is caught between two worlds, accepted fully by neither. In the British circles maintained by his guardian, he is still a child, too immersed in the Indian atmosphere to be truly “proper.” In the Indian community just beyond the walls, he is a foreigner, marked by his pale skin, strange manners, and hesitant Hindi. This in-betweenness defines his existence: he is neither entirely English nor fully Indian. He is adrift in a cultural no-man’s-land, with no guide, no anchor.

The emotional repression imposed by his guardian serves only to deepen this sense of alienation. Mr. Harrison is not just a custodian of British values—he is a gatekeeper of an outdated worldview, unwilling to acknowledge the changing tides of post-independence India or the emotional needs of a boy trying to make sense of who he is. Rusty’s internal rebellion begins subtly, with moments of silent defiance: a lingering glance at the Indian boys playing in the street, a walk taken without permission, a question left unanswered. But these are not just acts of rebellion—they are expressions of a deeper yearning for connection, for belonging, for freedom.

The emotional terrain Rusty inhabits is dry and cracked, like earth thirsting for rain. In this desert, every small moment of color or kindness—every sound of laughter from the street, every glimpse of life beyond the gate—becomes a symbol of what is missing in his life. He craves not just friends or freedom, but a sense of self. He wants to feel at home in his skin, in his surroundings, in the world. The suffocating order of his guardian’s home offers none of that. Instead, it attempts to mold him into something he is not—an obedient colonial remnant in a postcolonial land that no longer recognizes or needs such figures.

It is in this context that Rusty’s eventual break from his guardian becomes inevitable. His yearning for identity, affection, and cultural belonging propels

him beyond the literal and metaphorical walls of the house. The moment he steps out into the Indian street, away from the English garden and its clipped hedges, he begins a journey not only toward friendship and freedom but toward self-discovery. This departure marks the beginning of Rusty’s transformation from a passive observer of life into an active participant—someone willing to risk uncertainty for the chance to find love, community, and a place to belong.

Bond writes Rusty’s inner life with great sensitivity, revealing his confusion, emotional repression, and quiet desperation. The “room on the roof” that the title refers to is, at this stage, not yet a real place but a metaphor for longing—for space, freedom, and connection. The absence of friends, the lack of emotional expression, and the silence of his guardian’s house intensify Rusty’s sense of entrapment. His only refuge is his imagination and his yearning to break free. This deep-seated loneliness becomes unbearable, leading Rusty to rebel. When he runs away from his guardian’s house, it is not an act of teenage defiance alone—it is a cry for emotional salvation.

Rusty’s escape leads him to a world vibrant with life and human connection. His friendship with Somi, a kind and spirited Sikh boy, marks the beginning of his emotional awakening. Somi does not just offer Rusty companionship; he gives him trust, laughter, and most importantly, a sense of belonging. Through Somi and his group—Ranbir, Suri, and others—Rusty experiences the joys of friendship for the first time. These relationships are simple, yet profound. There are no pretenses, no judgments—only an honest sharing of time and space. The contrast with his earlier life is stark: where there was once cold discipline, there is now chaotic warmth. Through acts as ordinary as bathing in the river or walking through the bazaar, Rusty begins to feel seen and understood.

Kishen, the young boy Rusty tutors, further deepens this emotional transformation. Their relationship evolves from formality to affection, blurring the lines between teacher, friend, and elder brother. Kishen is neglected and emotionally starved, mirroring Rusty's earlier condition. Their companionship becomes mutually healing—Rusty finds purpose, and Kishen finds care. In Meena, Kishen's mother, Rusty briefly discovers the tenderness of maternal affection, and possibly, the confusion of first love. Though this relationship ends tragically with Meena's death, it marks a significant emotional milestone for Rusty. He feels the sting of loss, but also the depth of having loved—a privilege he had never known in his earlier lonely life.

By the middle of the novel, Rusty's emotional landscape has undergone a fundamental change. The boy who once wandered aimlessly in the shadows of colonial silence now engages openly with the world around him. This transformation is not smooth—there are setbacks, moments of grief, and confusion—but it is genuine. Loneliness had once rendered Rusty passive and uncertain. Companionship, in contrast, makes him emotionally alive. He begins to laugh freely, express opinions, take risks, and even feel responsible for others. His desire to help Kishen after Meena's death shows his evolution from a self-absorbed teenager into a more empathetic young adult.

Bond does not romanticize this change; he presents it with honesty. Rusty still feels pain, particularly after Meena's loss and Kishen's descent into aimlessness. But now, Rusty faces these emotions head-on rather than retreating into silence. His feelings are no longer suppressed—they are acknowledged, embraced, and learned from. The "room on the roof" is both a literal and symbolic space in the novel. Initially, it is a humble room above the Kapoor household where Rusty finds shelter. But it becomes much more—a sanctuary where he finds companionship, autonomy, and creative freedom. It is

in this room that Rusty begins to write, to reflect, and to connect with others on his own terms.

Symbolically, the room represents Rusty's emotional rebirth. Elevated above the world yet intimately connected to it, the space mirrors his new perspective—independent, aware, and emotionally open. The journey from the emotionally suffocating guardian's house to this modest rooftop room encapsulates the entire emotional arc of the novel. The Room on the Roof offers a poignant reflection on how deeply human beings need connection. Rusty's evolution from isolation to intimacy shows that emotional growth is impossible without meaningful relationships. Loneliness may foster self-awareness, but it is companionship that nurtures wholeness and identity.

Through Rusty's friendships and experiences, Ruskin Bond illustrates the importance of being seen, loved, and accepted. The novel is not just a story about adolescence or rebellion—it is a tribute to the healing power of companionship and the quiet, transformative beauty of human relationships. In a world often dominated by noise and distraction, The Room on the Roof reminds us that sometimes, all we need is a small room, a good friend, and the courage to feel deeply.

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## **TRACING A TRANSWOMAN'S JOURNEY IN A GIFT OF GODDESS LAKSHMI**

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### **Abstract**

*Transgender identities have historically existed across cultures, yet societal norms have often marginalized individuals who defy binary gender roles. While sex is biologically assigned, gender is a social construct, and those outside its conventions are frequently stigmatized. A transwoman refers to an individual who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman, often undergoing a profound personal and social journey to assert her identity. The purpose of this paper is to explore the lived experience of a transwoman, Laxmi, as chronicled in *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* by Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey. The study employs a qualitative literary analysis grounded in queer theory to trace Laxmi's transformation from marginalization to empowerment. Supplementing this with insights from Devdutt Pattanaik's *Shikhandi*, the paper contextualizes transgender identity within Indian mythology. The findings reveal not only the personal resilience of the protagonist but also the evolving socio-legal landscape that increasingly affirms transgender rights. In conclusion, the paper underscores the role of self-narratives and literature in reshaping perceptions, advancing a more inclusive society, and recognizing transgender individuals not only for their existence and inclusion but also for their emerging leadership in social and cultural domains.*

**Keywords:** *transgender, transwoman, queer theory, self-narratives, resilience, and leadership*

Transgender identity encompasses a broad spectrum that transcends the biological labels assigned at birth. While sex is a biological status, gender is a social construct shaped by cultural expectations. Gender roles are systems of behavior conditioned by societal norms, and anything that deviates from them is often labeled deviant. However, transgender identity is not a modern phenomenon; it has existed since ancient times. Various cultures and mythologies offer abundant references to queer identities. As Devdutt Pattanaik notes, "Hindu mythology makes constant references to queerness, the idea that questions notions of maleness and femaleness. There are stories of men who became women, and women who became men, of men who create children without women and women who create children without men, and of creatures who are neither this, nor that..." (12).

Literature, as a mirror of society, expresses the anguish and resilience of transgender individuals through various narratives. These stories not only validate their experiences but also portray the diversity and complexity of their community. Transgender self-narratives construct a history of their people and offer a means to process the trauma of gender dysphoria. Judith Butler, a gender theorist, clarifies, "Gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (520). This underscores how society often marginalizes those who defy binary gender norms.

Self-narratives reveal the inner lives of transgender individuals. The biography of Manobi Bandyopadhyay, co-authored by Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey, titled *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*, chronicles a *Hijra's* journey of embracing her womanhood. Born as Somnath, Manobi's transformation is not just physical but also deeply emotional and social. Her

story demonstrates the courage and strength required to live authentically in a society that often ridicules and ostracizes non-conforming individuals. Indian families often value male children as trophies, and Somnath, born after two daughters, was cherished by his father.

Somnath's sense of femininity began early: "My sisters were years older and their frock would almost be like gowns for me, but I would still wear them and stand for hours in front of the mirror admiring my looks" (Pandey 7). Despite societal pressure, her family supported her academic aspirations: "The only silver lining was the fact that I was extremely good in studies" (Pandey 10). This educational support enabled her to navigate a world that otherwise shunned her identity.

Manobi experienced gender dysphoria and emotional complexity from a young age. She confesses, "I was developing distaste for my genitals... It was not that I did not like the male organ. I actually loved it, but in others" (Pandey 8). Her early experiences with attraction and love were riddled with exploitation and heartbreak. She endured sexual abuse by a cousin, numerous failed relationships, and emotional devastation. Eventually, she resolved, "I also took a pledge, almost like Bheeshma, never to get involved in an amorous relationship again" (Pandey 134).

Transgender individuals often find expression through performance. Manobi joined a dance group where she felt accepted, "It was this sense of acceptance I savoured, something that was rare outside the world of dance" (Pandey 15). This community offered the validation she craved and allowed her to embrace her identity more fully. However, confusion and crises persisted. Society mocked her, "Are you male, female or camel?" (Pandey 30). She grappled with questions of identity, "Why was my body different from my soul or was I mistaking my identity?" (Pandey 31). The idea of sex reassignment surgery lingered, but fear initially held

her back. It was only through her love for Arindam that she found the courage to proceed, "My earlier trepidation and fear had left me because now I had a goal ahead of me—marriage, husband, and family" (Pandey 134).

Manobi's story includes friends who experienced the darker sides of transgender life. Jolly, a friend, mutilated herself for love and ended up a sex worker. Another, Jagadish, succumbed to AIDS after years of struggle. Shankari, a young transwoman, eloped with a man and humiliated Manobi due to community prejudice. Despite backlash, including false accusations and professional obstacles, Manobi persisted. Her academic and literary contributions are notable. She founded India's first transgender magazine, *Abomanob* (Pandey 112), which addressed taboo subjects and gave voice to the marginalized. It also served as the basis for her doctoral research. She was inspired by Shyamoli Di, a transgender leader who ran a commune. This influence led Manobi to write a novel, marking another milestone. Even in academia, she faced institutional resistance. Her degrees in the name of Somnath caused administrative issues. A change came with political support: Mamata Banerjee's government recognized her qualifications, enabling her promotion. Legal battles, such as a defamation case filed by Arindam, tested her resolve, but she emerged victorious. She also adopted a child, Deba, and found a sense of belonging. Her greatest professional achievement came when she was appointed Principal of Krishnanagar Women's College, "Finally I was assigned to Krishnanagar Women's College" (Pandey 182). She became India's first transgender college principal—a beacon of hope for others.

Transgender people have deep historical, mythological, and cultural roots. Yet, in the name of modernity, they have been marginalized. Epics like *The Mahabharata* feature powerful transgender characters like Shikhandi. In Mughal courts, third-

gender individuals held important roles. Today, acceptance is growing. NGOs educate transgender individuals on health and hygiene. Literature plays a key role in documenting marginalization and amplifying queer voices. This paper argues that embracing gender fluidity and empowering trans individuals is essential to creating an inclusive society. The story of Manobi is not just about personal triumph but a call for systemic change, which raises a question: Will society go beyond acceptance to celebrate transgender leadership?

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## NAVIGATING AND REDEFINING THE SELF: DIASPORIC STRUGGLES IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S 'JASMINE'

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### Abstract

*Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine is a profound exploration of the mutable self in the context of immigration, postcolonial displacement, and cultural collision. The protagonist, born as Jyoti in a traditional Indian village, evolves through multiple identities—Jasmine, Jase, and Jane—as she migrates from India to the United States. Each transformation mirrors her inner conflict and the external pressures of adapting to radically different cultural environments. This article investigates the psychological and cultural dilemmas faced by Jasmine as she negotiates the expectations of Indian tradition with the promises and perils of American modernity. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks, the paper argues that Jasmine's identity crisis is not a weakness but a strategy of survival, reflecting the fluid, hybrid nature of identity in a transnational world.*

**Keywords:** *identify, culture, diaspora, alienation*

In *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee presents a dynamic portrait of a woman shaped and reshaped by migration, trauma, and adaptation. The novel does not merely recount the physical journey of a woman from India to America, but it excavates the deeper psychological and cultural journey of self-reinvention. The protagonist begins as Jyoti, an obedient village girl in Punjab, and over time transforms into Jasmine, Jase, and finally Jane—each identity symbolizing a new environment, new social role, and a new mode of survival.

This article examines the identity crisis and cultural dilemmas experienced by Jasmine as she transitions between countries, social classes, and moral codes. It argues that Mukherjee challenges the essentialist idea of a singular, fixed self, instead portraying identity as fluid, performative, and often conflicted. Jasmine's story encapsulates the paradoxes of immigration—freedom and alienation, empowerment and dislocation, tradition and reinvention.

The novel opens with Jyoti, a young girl whose identity and future are shaped by the rigid

expectations of patriarchal Indian society. Growing up in a conservative village, she is surrounded by deeply rooted traditions that dictate a woman's role—submission, modesty, silence, and devotion. From a young age, Jyoti is conditioned to accept these values as natural, her sense of self molded by a culture that prioritizes duty over desire and family honor over personal freedom. Her name, "Jyoti," meaning light, stands in stark contrast to the cultural shadows that surround her—superstition, rigid gender roles, and social determinism. This irony underscores the limitations imposed on her from the outset.

One of the pivotal moments in her childhood is a visit to a village astrologer, who ominously predicts that Jyoti will become a widow and suffer exile. This prophecy becomes a symbolic anchor for the novel's exploration of fate and agency. In her world, such a prediction carries weight not only because of cultural belief in astrology, but also because it reflects the predetermined script often assigned to women's lives. The forecast of widowhood and exile represents the larger forces at play—forces that seek

to confine her within a narrative not of her choosing. This moment casts a long shadow over her journey, setting the tone for a story that will question whether destiny is truly fixed, or whether it can be rewritten through resilience and self-discovery.

Jyoti's first significant transformation begins with her marriage to Prakash, a modern, forward-thinking man who envisions a life far removed from the constraints of traditional Indian society. Prakash renames her "Jasmine," a gesture that is far more than affectionate—it is deeply ideological. In giving her a new name, he offers her a new identity, one that reflects his belief in progress, self-determination, and the promise of modernity. Jasmine becomes a symbol of this emerging, cosmopolitan India—a woman who learns English, wears Western clothes, dreams of a life in America, and begins to imagine herself as someone with agency and ambition. This new identity allows her to momentarily escape the fatalism of her upbringing. Through Prakash's influence, she starts to believe that she can shape her own destiny.

However, this sense of possibility is brutally shattered when Prakash is killed in a terrorist attack. The trauma of widowhood, especially at such a young age, yanks Jasmine out of the future she had just begun to believe in. His death not only robs her of love but also destroys the life they were building together. With his loss, the version of Jasmine that had emerged through their partnership is suddenly destabilized. Yet rather than return to the constraints of her past, she chooses exile—not only from her homeland, but from the self that was once rooted in Prakash's dreams. This marks the beginning of her journey across continents, cultures, and identities.

Upon arriving in America, Jasmine is no longer merely reacting to the circumstances of her life; she begins to take control, actively reshaping herself in order to survive. One of the most defining moments in her journey is the night she kills the man who attempts to rape her. This act of violence is also an

act of agency, a decisive refusal to be victimized. In its aftermath, she burns her widow's clothes in a makeshift ritual of purification and rebirth. This symbolic gesture marks a profound turning point: her past self, tied to both her cultural inheritance and her personal losses, is put to rest, and a new self is born from the ashes. Yet this new identity is far from fixed or permanent.

As she moves across the American landscape—from Florida to New York, and finally to Iowa—Jasmine undergoes multiple metamorphoses, each shaped by the people she encounters and the roles she must play to adapt. With Taylor in New York, she becomes Jase, a confident, urban woman who fits into the rhythm of American modernity. Later, with Bud in Iowa, she becomes Jane, a caregiver and partner embedded in small-town domestic life. Each name reflects a different iteration of herself, constructed in response to new environments and expectations. Through these transformations, Jasmine both loses and discovers parts of herself, constantly navigating the fluid boundary between reinvention and erasure.

Each identity comes with a new cultural code. As Jase, she is fashionable, urban, sexually liberated, and professionally engaged. This version of her thrives in the liberal, cosmopolitan world of New York. Yet even this freedom is fraught: she feels torn between her emotional attachments and the remnants of her Indian upbringing, where duty, sacrifice, and social obligation dominate. When she becomes Jane in rural Iowa, she adopts a domestic, caregiving role—essentially becoming an American wife and mother-figure. But this identity, too, is artificial; she is constantly haunted by the past and aware of her performance. This continual reinvention reflects a deeper crisis of authenticity: Who is the "real" Jasmine? Is she liberated or lost? Empowered or uprooted?

Mukherjee captures the painful in-betweenness that many immigrants experience. Jasmine is not

wholly Indian, nor is she fully American. Her consciousness is fragmented, existing between two cultural frameworks that often contradict each other. In India, her identity was tied to duty, family, and fate. In America, she is told she can be anything—but at the cost of forgetting, even betraying, where she came from.

Jasmine's dilemma is not just external (geographical or linguistic), but deeply internal. She reflects: "I feel at times caught between worlds... I am a tornado that flattens everything." This metaphor of the tornado captures her power, but also her destructiveness—each identity she assumes requires the erasure of the one before it. She cannot fully assimilate without losing something vital, nor can she return without betraying the self she has become.

From a postcolonial perspective, Jasmine's fragmented identity reflects Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity—the space between cultures where new identities are formed. She is not a victim of colonization in the traditional sense, but her journey is shaped by the residual effects of empire: migration, cultural displacement, and racial marginalization.

Feminist theory also illuminates Jasmine's struggle. Judith Butler's idea of gender and identity as performative is evident in how Jasmine adapts herself to each context. She is not passive; her transformations are strategic, enabling her to survive in male-dominated, often violent environments. Jasmine uses her gendered identity as a tool for negotiation, reinvention, and resistance.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* offers a complex portrayal of identity in motion—at once resilient and

unstable, fragmented yet adaptive. Jasmine's journey from Jyoti to Jane is not merely about cultural assimilation or personal reinvention; it is a profound exploration of what it means to live between worlds. Her identity crisis is not a symptom of weakness, but of the very conditions of diaspora and transnational life. Through *Jasmine*, Mukherjee shows that identity is neither inherited nor static—it is made, unmade, and remade through memory, trauma, desire, and survival. In this sense, Jasmine does not represent a single immigrant story, but a universal one: the ongoing negotiation of who we are when the ground beneath us is always shifting.

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## **IDENTITY AND CULTURAL DISCONNECT: A THEMATIC OVERVIEW ON MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE**

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### **Abstract**

*Toni Morrison, an African-American woman novelist, has literarily contested the vices of racism, sexism, and classism within American society. Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) tells a heart breaking story portraying the needless oppression and cultural dislocation of black people in America after emancipation. It is set in a white-supremacist feeling America, which upholds white beauty standards and successes; it examines the psychological harm done to African Americans over centuries of barefaced abuse – especially women. In this paper I aim to examine *The Bluest Eye* as a narrative account documenting the socio-cultural and the accompanying emotional wounds inflicted on blacks. I focus more on how racism coupled with gender and class constructs identity, self-esteem, social interactions. Much emphasis is placed on how Morrison depicts the black community's preference for white culture as these tendencies lead them into self-hatred in addition to social ostracism. The study underscores Morrison's narrative as historical amnesia that frames calls for reclaiming cultural identity while demanding justice for social inequities.*

### **Introduction**

The history of racism in America surpasses four hundred years. It begins with the legacy left behind by slavery, colonialism and white supremacy. African Americans, historically and in contemporary society, experience marginalization and violence systemically as a result of their race. For Black women, these burdens are exacerbated due to the interwoven dynamics of classism and sexism. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* demonstrates this layered oppression through the character of Pecola Breedlove, an African American girl who yearns for blue eyes as a symbol of beauty, acceptance and worth—in a society riddled with racial biases.

Discursive blue eyed femininity is dominant. White supremacy manifests through Eurocentric beauty Pineda's foster families embody societal norms that devalue Blackness. Media, dolls,

movies propagate harmful ideology value blackness African willfully absorb messages of racial inferiority Claudia showcases alternate consciousness resisting internalized racism. The narrative highlights that physical appearance transmutes into site psychological harm.

### **Racialized Petty Tyrannies and Internalized Oppression**

Pecola reflects the dominant white aesthetic ideal through her desire for blue eyes. This lashes out against not only the African diaspora, but Blackness as a whole. More specifically within America: African American characters perpetuate societal messages of inferiority. Media, dolls, movies, and such impose these malignant ideals issue harmful beauty standards. Claudia demonstrates internal racism rebellion portraying alternate awareness—a counter

narrative. Through the course of advancing violence masqueraded as psychological control the sordid tale uncovers how beauty brutalizes abuse.

### **Multitude of Compounded Identities Concerning Race, Gender and Socioeconomic Standing**

The Black women in this novella have to endure a threefold oppressive structure concerning race factored politics intertwined with gender and socioeconomics all at once collapsing on them simultaneously intersecting two or more facets simultaneously forcing them into unending turmoil. Pauline E Breedlove for goes pecola's mother seeks purchase for validation requiring itself unto white families turning into their very servants as such seeking validation goes through servitude literally morphing into serving systematic neglect shifting into profound lack systemic persistent barely scratch makes her borderline lose sanity spiraling Pegonia dwelling fathoms illusionary life servanda to whiteness equitably devolving monstrosity feminine persona shares violence shapes social capital combined with economically empowering vulnerability Griffith Morrison rings focuses silenced black women deep suffering diasporals why consider layered massif glowing pervasive should highlighted ensemble exclude residing harsh reality concealed bonds threshold governing unshackling norm subjugating class straddled hierarchies succumbs stating enclosed caged dominated bound intruded confinement enchain peculiar into fancy devoid femininity suffrage concrete paradox tragic triumphot universe.

### **Cultural Displacement and Identity**

Characters are disconnected from African-American culture. Western values erase cultural pride and self-worth. Pecola's mental breakdown represents cultural and emotional erasure. Naming and family dynamics reflect fragmented identities. The community has no

cultural consciousness or support. Morrison mourns the loss of cultural roots for the oppressed.

### **Trauma, Abuse and Violence**

Pecola is abused by her father, Cholly. Generational trauma is shown through dysfunctional family patterns. Violence comes from systemic despair and disempowerment. The novel shows how victims become perpetrators. Emotional neglect and social isolation reinforces trauma. The community's indifference is collective complicity.

### **Resistance, Voice and Historical Memory**

Claudia's narration challenges dominant narratives and gives voice to the voiceless. Morrison's storytelling is an act of historical reclamation. The structure of the novel critiques American domesticity. The fragmented narrative mirrors the broken lives of the characters. Memory is used as a tool for resistance and self-awareness. The novel tells us to face the uncomfortable truth and demand justice.

### **Motherhood and Female Power**

Pauline's motherhood is shaped by racialized labor and cultural alienation. She finds purpose in her job with white families but neglects her daughter. The absence of nurturing, empowering female bonds is Pecola's downfall. Morrison contrasts destructive motherhood with spaces of healing. The novel asks what motherhood means in an oppressive world.

### **Childhood Innocence and the Loss of Voice**

Pecola and Claudia are the embodiment of Black girlhood. The destruction of Pecola's innocence is societal failure. Children are silent victims of adult disillusionment and violence. Morrison shows the erasure of childhood as a collective tragedy. Silence around abuse and trauma is systemic oppression.

### **Language, Silence and Narrative**

Morrison's prose is poetic, symbolic and often fragmented, like trauma. Silence in the novel is both

oppression and survival. Claudia's voice is an alternative framework for understanding and empathy. Language is a tool of marginalization and empowerment. Morrison subverts traditional narrative to amplify Black experience.

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## SEARCH FOR IDENTITY BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S TREE BRIDE

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### Abstract

*"The Tree Bride" by Bharati Mukherjee is a novel that explores the complex between tradition and modernity in the context of immigrant life. The protagonist, Tara Chatterjee, struggles to make sense of her Indian background and her newfound American reality, highlighting the difficulties of integration and the desire for a sense of identity. The story highlights the importance of striking a balance between one's cultural background and modern-day expectations, as well as the conflicts between the past and present. Mukherjee's use of symbolism and imagery enhances the story's depth of meaning, symbolizing the protagonist's quest for identification in a rapidly changing world. The tree symbolizes the lasting link to one's roots and cultural heritage, and the blossoms symbolize the resilience and beauty that may result from embracing one's ancestry. The novel challenges readers to seek out their own roots while negotiating the realities of modern life, forcing them to confront the intricacies of their own identities through Tara's experiences. In conclusion, "The Tree Bride" offers a moving examination of identity, history, and the intricate relationship between tradition and modernity. Through the integration of magical realism components with historical narratives, Mukherjee expertly navigates the challenges of forming an identity in a worldwide environment.*

**Keywords:** *integration, diaspora, identity, multiculturalism*

### Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee's novel "The Tree Bride" explores the nuances of cultural identity, especially as they relate to experiences of immigrants. Tara, the main character, struggles to make sense of the world where her Indian background and her newfound American reality collide. Mukherjee expertly crafts a story that emphasizes the difficulties of integration, the lack of a feeling of roots, and the desire for a sense of identity (Bharati Mukherjee). Readers are brought face to face with the grave consequences of cultural exile and the search for identity through Tara's journey. In between her evocative depictions of customs and landscapes, Mukherjee challenges us to consider the value of legacy and the ongoing

balancing act between the past and present. In a world of perpetual change and shifting viewpoints, "The Tree Bride" offers a moving examination of the never-ending quest for roots.

The novel "Tree Bride" by Bharati Mukherjee captures the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in the setting of immigrant life through the diasporic experience. Through Tara Chatterjee's journey of self-discovery, the main character, Mukherjee explores the intricacies of identity construction in the context of changing cultural landscapes. Tara's journey navigating her dual identity as an Indian-American highlight the difficulties and enlightening possibilities that come with living in two different worlds. The work

underscores the necessity of striking a balance between one's cultural background and modern-day expectations, in addition to highlighting the conflicts between the past and present. In order to show how people like Tara struggle with ideas of belonging and cultural roots in the face of globalization and societal expectations, Mukherjee deftly depicts the subtleties of the diasporic experience. "Tree Bride" is a captivating examination of diasporic consciousness and the pursuit of genuineness in a world growing more interconnected by the day.

The novel gains depth and authenticity from this subject examination, which connects with Mukherjee's personal experience as a writer from the diaspora. Bharati Mukherjee's "Tree Bride" features characters and a story that are significantly shaped by gender norms and relationships. In order to show the intricate relationship between her gender identity and cultural expectations, the protagonist Tara Chatterjee moves between her traditional Indian background and her contemporary American lifestyle. Tara is subjected to contradictory demands as a woman caught between her past and present, which Mukherjee skilfully illustrates through her exploration of how gender stereotypes affect her relationships with her husband, Bish, and her boyfriend. Gender roles not only provide a framework for Tara's personal challenges but also influence how other female characters in the book, like Anandamoyi, are portrayed. This helps to highlight the variety of ways that women manage their responsibilities in various cultural contexts. Through her analysis of gender dynamics in "Tree Bride," Mukherjee highlights the complex relationships that exist in a globalized world between identity, tradition, and personal agency in Bharati Mukherjee's novel

"Tree Bride," symbolism and imagery are used extensively to enhance the story's depth of meaning. The protagonist's quest for identification in a world that is changing quickly is metaphorically represented by the tree, which stands for the lasting link to one's

roots and cultural heritage. Mukherjee draws attention to the difficulties of integration and the effort of making peace with one's history through the striking imagery of the protagonist's roots being entwined with those of the tree. The tree's blossoms indicate how cultural traditions have the potential to shape individual identities and symbolize the resiliency and beauty that may result from embracing one's ancestry. Overall, "Tree Bride" realities of modern life, forcing them to confront the intricacies of their own identities through Tara's experiences.

The examination of cultural identity and heritage is a common issue in literature and frequently inspires a profound sense of reflection and self-discovery. In her quest to discover her origins and return to her ancestral country India, Tara Chatterjee, the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's novel "The Tree Bride," explores these issues. In order to create a rich tapestry of interrelated stories that illustrate the intricacies of identity and belonging, Mukherjee deftly blends together elements of history, tradition, and personal experience. Readers are escorted on a captivating voyage of self-realization and peace of mind as the novel progresses, as Tara confronts her past and delves into the deep ties that bind her current situation to her ancestry. The common human experience of looking for roots and a feeling of belonging in a world that is always changing is offered for us to consider via the prism of Mukherjee's story is a moving examination of the immigrant experience because of the symbolism and imagery that enhance the themes of multiculturalism, belonging, and self-discovery.

Tara Chatterjee opens it with a terse account of her reunion with former husband Bish (the computer-genius "Raja of Silicon Valley"), crippled when their California home was fire-bombed by one Abbas Sattar Hai, whose motives are initially unclear. Answers lie in the history of Tara's Indian family, specifically in the story of her Victorian ancestor Tara Lata Gangooly, *literally* betrothed to a tree when her

preadolescent fiancé died of snakebite, and thereafter a secular saint who used the wealth of her untouched dowry to finance Indian resistance to British colonialism. The contemporary Tara accesses the Tree Bride's story circuitously, through family papers supplied by Tara's gynaecologist Victoria Khanna.

Gradually Tara plaits together two crucially related other stories: those of 19th-century foundling "Jack Snow," whose misadventure aboard a Calcutta-bound ship overtaken by Danish pirates led him to a life of dangerous exploits and ignominy as freelance empire-builder "John Mist"; and Victoria's grandfather Virgil Treadwell, a British colonial officer traumatized by an unconventional upbringing, lured by the beauty and mystery of the Indian subcontinent, shaped and stunted by his encounters with both the victims and the agents of his culture's proprietary energies. Mukherjee's tale itself displays similar energies, rising to a spectacular climax when Tara, hugely pregnant, barely escapes death again—and begins to understand how "an indiscriminate killer in India and America, was born and possibly raised in my family's house."

*The Tree Bride* is thus filled with absorbing stuff, and really rather brilliantly worked out. But its past and present are so densely entangled that there's almost too much information for a reader to absorb. Still, it's worth the effort. Mukherjee is a potent writer, and her contrasted and conflicting worlds and times seductively draw us in.

## Conclusion

Finally, "The Tree Bride" by Bharati Mukherjee offers a moving examination of identity, history, and the intricate relationship between tradition and modernity. Mukherjee explores issues of cultural absorption, diaspora, and the difficulty of reconciling one's past with one's present circumstances through the journey of her protagonist Tara toward self-discovery and reconnection with her ancestral roots. Through the

integration of magical realism components with historical narratives, the challenges of forming an identity in a worldwide environment are expertly navigated by Mukherjee. The novel challenges readers to search out their own roots while negotiating the realities of modern life, forcing them to confront the intricacies of their own identities through Tara's experiences. Ultimately, "The Tree Bride" is an engaging examination of the need for a sense of identity and the enduring influence of tradition on both personal and societal identities. The cultural space that is created is crisscrossed by a series of dislocations, dissensions, and the location becomes a transcription and translation of the ordinary into a new ambivalent identity. Bharati Mukherjee with her peculiar sensibility for the cross-cultural crisis in the era of globalization endeavored to dive deep into such slippage and splitting and the distorted psyche of those immigrants who had been surviving in the conflict of traditional Indian values, inherent in their personality. The uprooted immigrants and their fascination for Western mode of living that they had chosen out of their professional compulsions or for their urge to achieve a greater freedom in liberal and dynamic society of America is also an area of Mukherjee's. A notable recurrent feature of Mukherjee's novels is that they tend to depict fundamentally problematical new immigrant women who as immigrant subaltern are forced to undergo a series of transformations before they can become fully-fledged, self-confident and self-aware members of American society in negotiating the fixed and static borders. In these five novels, each woman is metamorphosed from one ethnic identity into another. In the earlier two novels, *Wife and Jasmine*, this metamorphosis occurs alongside and in the wake of a physical move from India to America. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times, through the low points of the medieval period to the promotion of

equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women played a pivotal role in the Vedic culture and were given an opportunity to reach their real potential in life. Unfortunately the position of women deteriorated during the medieval period due to the outside influences that had crept in because of the foreign invaders either militarily or culturally. Since then women have often been victims of male oppression and treated like beasts of burden.

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## UNVEILING THE VALKYRIES: FROM NORSE MYTH TO MODERN SPIRITUAL ARCHETYPE IN PAULO COELHO'S *THE VALKYRIES*

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### Abstract

*This research article investigates the transformation of the Valkyries from their origins in Norse mythology to their reimagining as modern spiritual archetypes in Paulo Coelho's *The Valkyries*. The Valkyries, who were traditionally portrayed as warrior maidens guiding fallen soldiers to Valhalla, in Coelho's narrative are reinterpreted as mystic women who serve as spiritual guides in a contemporary quest for self-discovery and divine connection. Through a multidisciplinary approach that draws on mythological studies, feminist literary theory, and Jungian archetypal psychology, the paper examines how Coelho modernizes these ancient figures to embody the sacred feminine, spiritual rebellion, and transformative leadership. The desert landscape serves as a symbolic space for both personal and metaphysical transformation, while the Valkyries themselves challenge patriarchal and spiritual norms by asserting agency, authority, and intuition. By tracing the evolution of these figures, the study highlights how ancient mythological motifs can be adapted to reflect modern spiritual needs and gender dynamics, contributing to an emerging canon of contemporary mythopoetic literature.*

**Keywords:** *spiritual archetypes, mystic women, sacred feminine, myth adaptation, feminist spirituality, jungian analysis, modern mysticism, gender dynamics.*

Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian novelist, lyricist, and mystic storyteller, is best known for *The Alchemist* (1988), a global bestseller translated into more than 80 languages. Coelho's stories are rooted in themes of destiny and self-discovery, inspire readers to pursue their "Personal Legend". Coelho was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947, his personal life was a spiritual journey marked by rebellion and reflection. Coelho is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards like the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum (1999), the France's Legion d'Honneur, the Golden Book Award, and his roles as a UN Messenger of Peace and a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters in

2002. He writes a weekly column syndicated throughout the world.

*The Valkyries: Encounter with Angels*, Paulo Coelho's fourth novel, was published in 1992. It is an autobiographical narrative of Coelho's journey in the Mojave Desserts undertaken in 1988 to complete a task given by his spiritual mentor. It is a magical story of forgiving the past and believing in future. It is an amazing combination of exotic setting, adventures, drama and magical story-telling technique. He is on the task of meeting and speaking to his guardian angel in order to break the curse "People always kill the things they love" (8). They encounter the

Valkyries who assist them in fulfilling the task. This novel is a modern-day magical adventure which deals with exorcism of personal demons and discovering one's strength. It also deals with relationships between Paulo Coelho and his wife. The plot follows Coelho's voyage from Brazil to the Mojave Desert, where he meets the Valkyries, a clan of warrior women who ride motorcycles throughout the desert and serve as catalysts for personal awakening. "And an angel descended where they were and the glory of the lord shone all about them" (Luke 2:9). Thus begins the novel *The Valkyries* which not only provides a hint but also a mystical insight into the novel. In this age of angel sightings, angel occurrences are happening with incredible frequency. His quest for the light and the discovery of his personal angel. It is as if God is sending his messengers to deliver a message, which is love. *The Valkyries* is an autobiographical but narrated from the third person point of view.

Norse mythology, also known as Nordic or Scandinavian mythology, is a collection of myths from the North Germanic peoples, stemming from Old Norse religion and continuing after the Christianization of Scandinavia as the Nordic folklore of the modern period. The northernmost extension of Germanic mythology and descended from Proto-Germanic folklore, Norse mythology consists of tales of various deities, beings, and heroes derived from numerous sources from both before and after the pagan period, including medieval manuscripts, archaeological representations, and folk tradition. The source texts mention numerous gods including the thunder-god Thor, the raven-flanked god Odin, the goddess Freyja, and numerous other deities.

The Valkyries are a unique and powerful figure in Norse mythology, where these female warriors serve Odin by determining which slain warriors will join Valhalla, the hall of the honoured dead. Traditionally depicted as fierce, armoured maidens riding winged horses across battlefields, Valkyries embody death,

fate, and the valour of warriors. Their mythological function is one of agency over life and death, acting as psychopomps who escort heroes to their final resting place. However, the Valkyrie archetype has transcended its mythological origins to become a potent symbol in modern spiritual and psychological contexts. They symbolize feminine strength, guidance, transformation, and inner courage.

Valkyries were both feared and loved in Norse Mythology as harbingers of death and glory. They were depicted as decisive agents in the brutal reality of war. However, Coelho broadens this perspective, showing Valkyries as more nuanced figures of transformation. One passage captures this shift vividly: "The Valkyries aren't just women in armour; they represent the struggle to overcome oneself" (34). This quote captures the essence of the archetype's contemporary spiritual significance. The Valkyrie is no longer just a symbol of physical battle but also a metaphor for the internal battle with doubt, fear, and self-limiting beliefs.

One of *The Valkyries* key themes is the significance of confronting one's internal conflicts. The novel claims, "Only when you fight the battle within yourself will you find peace. Without this battle, the soul remains restless, searching for meaning outside what it truly is" (57). This phrase portrays the Valkyrie as a guide through the psychological and spiritual conflicts that come with human development, rather than as a symbol of exterior violence. The internal battle, defined as a sort of spiritual warfare, is essential for transformation and liberation.

The spiritual quest depicted in *The Valkyries* takes place in a desert, which represents trial, purification, and revelation. The desert trek is a modern mythic motif that evokes biblical and mystical traditions with the wilderness serving as a crucible for transformation. The Valkyries in the desert confront Coelho with the question about faith, freedom, and self-acceptance. "Freedom is the highest state of being," one Valkyrie tells him, "but it's also the

hardest to bear" (91). This realization emphasizes the paradox of spiritual liberation, it demands both resignation and courage in equal measure.

The modern view of Valkyries as spiritual archetypes mirrors the feminist reclamation of mythic feminine figures. Valkyries were frequently portrayed in traditional Norse culture, from the perspective of a male warrior, symbolizing male dignity and the fate of male heroes. In contrast, Modern feminist spirituality reclaims Valkyries as symbols of women's autonomy, power, and intuition. They are no longer passive muses or mere attendants but active agents of transformation and empowerment. Coelho's Valkyries exemplify this feminist reclaiming: they are self-sufficient, intelligent, and fiercely motivated to assisting others in breaking free from cultural and psychological constraints.

Coelho's narrative also emphasizes the value of community and mentorship in spiritual journeys. The Valkyries act as guides, but they also test and challenge him. One passage captures this dynamic: "They teach you to fly, but they will also force you to fall so you learn to get up on your own" (78). This highlights the conflict between assistance and struggle required for genuine growth. The Valkyrie archetype here reflects the dual nature of spiritual awakening: it is both a gift and a challenge, requiring resilience and humility.

The novel's use of dialogue with the Valkyries provides a direct channel for philosophical insights on faith, love, and destiny. "We are the warriors of the light," one Valkyrie explains, "but the light is not always easy to see" (105). This line captures the complexity of spiritual awakening; it involves moving toward illumination while grappling with darkness. The Valkyrie embodies the liminal figure navigating between opposing forces such as life and death, light and shadow, freedom and responsibility.

This dualism is consistent with the traditional Norse symbolism, which depicted Valkyries as liminal entities functioning at the thresholds of life and death.

Coelho's interpretation deepens this by portraying them as guides who assist persons in crossing psychological thresholds from ignorance to insight, fear to courage, bondage to freedom. "The desert will teach you how to endure silence," a Valkyrie says, "and in silence, you hear your true self" (120). Silence and solitude here serve as resources for introspection and spiritual insight.

Coelho's novel revolves around a desert pilgrimage where he and his wife meet a tribe of women known as Valkyries. These women encourage Coelho to confront his anxieties and limitations and embrace freedom. The Valkyries in this novel transcend their ancient role as battle maidens and become symbols of the inner warrior, the part of oneself that fights obstacles and grows stronger through struggle. As Coelho describes,

The Valkyries aren't just women in armour; they represent the struggle to overcome oneself. Every battle you fight within, every fear you conquer, is a victory greater than any on the battlefield. (34)

This text highlights how the archetype has evolved into a symbol of internal courage and spiritual rebirth.

Coelho's *The Valkyries* invites readers to reconsider ancient myths as living, evolving symbols. The Valkyrie archetype serves not only as a cultural relic but also as a dynamic spiritual resource. It embodies the universal human struggle to face the unknown, reconcile opposing aspects of oneself, and assert personal freedom. This modern spiritual paradigm promotes the reclamation of power through self-knowledge and courage. Furthermore, the novel emphasizes forgiveness and love as central to transformation. Coelho states, "Only when you forgive can you truly love yourself and others" (132). This ties the Valkyrie's warrior spirit to a compassionate heart, blending strength with empathy. Thus, the archetype serves as a model for

balanced spiritual maturity, combining courage and kindness coexist.

The novel also underscores the dichotomy between liberty and responsibility. During his journey, Coelho discovers that true freedom requires obstacles and sacrifices. A Valkyrie tells him, "Freedom is the highest state of being, but it is also the hardest to bear. To be free means to face all your fears without running away, to accept who you are without apology" (91). This insight reframes freedom as an active, demanding process, intimately tied to the archetype of the Valkyrie as a warrior of the soul.

In *The Valkyries*, the desert serves as more than a backdrop, it is a symbolic arena for testing and transformation. The silence and harshness of the desert become tools for inner reflection. A Valkyrie advises, "The desert will teach you how to endure silence. In that silence, you hear your true self, the voice that guides you beyond fear and doubt" (120). This passage illustrates how the Valkyrie archetype connects to spiritual practices centred on solitude, meditation, and listening to the inner voice.

*The Valkyries*, enigmatic female figures from Norse mythology, have long captivated the imagination of scholars, writers, and spiritual seekers alike. Originally depicted as fierce warrior maidens serving Odin, tasked with selecting fallen heroes for Valhalla, Valkyries have transcended their mythic roots to become significant icons in modern spiritual and psychological frameworks. This transition demonstrates how ancient mythological archetypes change throughout time, blending historical narrative, literary imagination, and contemporary spiritual inquiry.

In *The Poetic Edda*, Valkyries are described vividly: "They ride through the air and over the sea, weaving the fates of men with their hands" (125). This dual role of warrior and chooser of the slain underscores their liminal status both destructive and protective. According to scholar Hilda Ellis Davidson,

The Valkyries embody a profound paradox of Norse culture: they are simultaneously agents of death and guides to a warrior's paradise, reflecting the warrior ethos and the inevitability of fate. (58)

As a result, they serve not only as mythic characters but also as personifications of the Norse concept of death and honour.

Beyond their mythological origins, the Valkyries have found resonance in modern literature. In Neil Gaiman's *Norse Mythology*, Valkyries are reimagined with nuanced agency, described as "those who ride through the clouds, deciding who shall live and who shall die in battle, yet also capable of mercy and compassion" (182). This humanization aligns with contemporary spiritual perspectives, wherein Valkyries are seen less as distant divine agents and more as archetypes representing strength, fate, and feminine empowerment.

Contemporary spiritual and psychological approaches often interpret Valkyries as symbols of the warrior spirit within the psyche. Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz argued that Valkyries represent "the anima figure that confronts the ego with destiny and challenges it to embrace courage and transformation" (102). Such interpretations emphasize the internalized struggle between mortality and transcendence, suggesting that the Valkyrie archetype functions as a catalyst for personal growth in modern spirituality.

In feminist spiritual movements, Valkyries are often invoked as symbols of empowered femininity, resilience, and sacred warriorhood. As noted by scholar Pamela J. Stewart,

The Valkyrie emerges as a potent symbol for reclaiming female power and agency, reconfiguring ancient mythology to reflect contemporary ideals of independence and spiritual strength. (89)

This retracement emphasizes how myth adapts to serve evolving cultural needs, illustrating the

continual conversation between historical myths and current ideas.

The historical origins of Valkyries are deeply embedded in the worldview of the Norse people, whose culture valorized warrior ethos and an acceptance of fate. Archaeological artifacts, such as the Viking-age helmets and iconography depicting women on horseback, support the notion that Valkyrie imagery was significant in ritual and art. As John Lindow explains, "Valkyries were not only mythological figures but also potent symbols within Norse society that expressed the culture's relationship to war, death, and the afterlife" (205). In addition to their combative functions, Valkyries were closely tied to the concept of fate and destiny. The Volupsa describes Valkyries as "shield-maidens who choose the slain and serve ale to the warriors in Valhalla" (45), suggesting their role as divine arbiters of death's necessity. This duality between destruction and nurturing is central to their mythological identity, illustrating a complex symbol that has fascinated writers and thinkers for centuries.

Modern literary reinterpretations often expand upon the Valkyrie's complexity. For instance, in Joanne Harris's *The Gospel of Loki*:

Valkyries appear as morally ambiguous agents who challenge traditional heroism, reflecting contemporary skepticism of black-and-white morality in mythology. Their actions blur the lines between justice and vengeance, making it difficult to label them as purely heroic or villainous. (227)

This nuanced portrayal invites readers to reconsider the Valkyries beyond their archetypal warrior image, allowing for more personalized spiritual interpretations.

From a psychological perspective, the Valkyrie archetype resonates with the concept of the "shadow" and the integration of hidden, powerful aspects of the self. Carl Jung's theories illuminate how mythological figures like the Valkyries symbolize unconscious

forces that challenge the conscious mind. Marie-Louise von Franz asserts:

The Valkyrie confronts the ego with the inevitability of death and the call to heroic transformation, making her an enduring figure of inner struggle and growth. She stands at the threshold between fate and free will, forcing the hero to reckon not only with external battles but with the internal crucible of identity. In this way, the Valkyrie becomes less a harbinger of doom and more a catalyst for awakening. (115)

This framing positions Valkyries as catalysts for awakening dormant strengths and embracing transformation.

In the realm of modern spirituality, the Valkyrie archetype serves as a symbol of feminine empowerment and resistance. Neo-pagan and goddess-centered spiritualities often invoke Valkyries as embodiments of sacred warrior energy, combining assertiveness with spiritual wisdom. This contemporary spiritual archetype reclaims the Valkyrie from mere mythic figure to active guide in personal empowerment and spiritual journeying. Valkyries also appear in popular culture and media, which further disseminates and adapts their archetype. From Wagner's operatic "Die Walkure", where Valkyries are dramatic, powerful heroines, to modern films and video games that feature Valkyrie-like characters, the myth continues to evolve. These portrayals often emphasize themes of justice, protection, and feminine strength, reinforcing the archetype's relevance today. The continuous reinvention of Valkyries across cultures and times reflects the fluidity of myth and its ability to meet the evolving spiritual and cultural needs of humanity. As Sarah Iles Johnston notes, "Myths are living narratives that transform as they are retold, allowing archetypes like the Valkyrie to serve new purposes and inspire new meanings" (332).

In final analysis, the Valkyries' journey from Norse myth to modern spiritual archetype reflects the fluid nature of myth and symbolism. Paulo Coelho's *The Valkyries* illustrates how ancient figures can be revitalized to address contemporary spiritual needs. By transforming Valkyries from agents of fate into guides of self-discovery, Coelho contributes to an ongoing dialogue between myth, psychology, and spirituality. The Valkyrie remains a powerful symbol one that calls individuals to face their fears, embrace transformation, and soar toward freedom.

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## **LAW, DESIRE, AND THE PSYCHE: A PSYCHOANALYTICAL INTERPRETATION OF JUDGE SHILPA SINGH IN VISH DHAMIJA'S *COLD JUSTICE***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the psychological and psychoanalytical dimensions of Judge Shilpa Singh, the central character in Cold Justice by Vish Dhamija. The frameworks of Freudian, Lacanian, and trauma theory are used to analyze how Shilpa's psychic reality is shaped and broken by identification, repression, guilt, and symbolic authority. Shilpa's unraveling, which takes place at the nexus of justice and personal tragedy, illustrates the conflict between the moral imperative of the superego and the secrets of the subconscious.*

**Keywords:** *repression, denial, superego, ego, Id, guilt, psychic double.*

This paper contends that because Shilpa is caught between a crisis of subjectivity, suppressed emotional trauma, and superegoic expectations (moral and professional obligations), her character serves as a case study of psychological fragmentation. Rather than demonstrating legal guilt or innocence, her behavior, feelings, and demeanor reveal a deeper inward battle with shame, repression, and self-dissolution.

Judge Shilpa Singh's transformation from a respected court officer to a murder suspect in Vish Dhamija's *Cold Justice* reveals deep psychological concerns. Shilpa's controlled exterior, according to psychoanalytic theory, falls apart under stress, revealing buried worries, conflicted desires, and a fractured identity. This study delves into her inner reality, which is shaped by trauma, symbolic authority, and unconscious motivation. It is an example of psychological fragmentation that was recorded.

A prominent member of the court, Judge Shilpa Singh, gets implicated in a murder inquiry; this narrative turn-point destroys her reputation and sends her into a state of legal and psychological turmoil. A strong foundation for understanding this rupture is provided by psychoanalysis: according to Lacan, the law is symbolic order, and Shilpa's journey is one of displacement from this order into the Real—the horrific and unsymbolized.

*Cold Justice* is a gripping legal thriller that culminates in an unexpected finale through a combination of personal grudges, a fiery courtroom battle, and political intrigue. A senior judge named Shilpa Singh projects a demeanor in public that is characterized by dignity, decency, and composure. She represents the regulated, organized, and disciplined character of the law itself and is seen as emotionally distant. Her identity and professional job are so closely entwined that there is little room for emotional vulnerability. But this meticulously crafted identity is completely upended when she is charged

with killing a guy she had a deep emotional bond with. Her ego is upset by this trigger event, which sends her into a deep psychological struggle.

The Freudian Id-Ego-Superego dynamics are at the heart of this battle. Shilpa's role as a judge is an external manifestation of the superego. She adheres to the moral principles of logic, ethics, and the law. Her public persona is controlled by her ego. It aims to strike a balance between her work responsibilities and her personal emotional needs, particularly her relationship with Akash. Beneath this surface resides the Id, the domain of her suppressed emotions, which may include feelings of anger or revenge. Her superego, which is the basis of her moral authority, crumbles in the face of the murder charge. As a result, her ego is unable to reconcile her personal misery with her professional identity. Her remark, "I only misjudged," reflects an ego compromise. It's an attempt to admit and avoid the full extent of her guilt. This comment captures her mental battle as her life crumbles under the weight of accusations and unresolved psychological issues.

Shilpa is depicted as a lady with intense internal problems in the psychological analysis of her words and behavior in the scenes that are provided. Her discovery at the crime scene, kneeling next the body and holding a knife, immediately raises the possibility that Freudian defensive mechanisms are at work. Her incapacity to completely comprehend or justify her existence in that precarious situation suggests suppression and denial, processes by which the mind rejects undesirable memories or ideas in order to prevent suffering. In this instance, the knife assumes a symbolic significance that goes beyond its literal use as a weapon. It might stand for not only the actual act but also a more profound, suppressed violence or even helplessness inside her mind.

Shilpa's court testimony included the claim, "I didn't kill him. I only made a mistake," reveals something about her mental state. This insistence on "misjudgment" is a surface rationalization, an

example of reaction creation, a defense mechanism in which people express feelings or acts that are diametrically opposed to their actual, unwanted desires. It covers a deeper shame or buried complicity that she is unable or unable to accept. Her identity as a judge seemed to be crumbling under the weight of the accusation. Her hesitant and guarded language points to an instability of the symbolic order, implying a splitting of her sense of self and place within the established systems of law and language.

Shilpa's interior landscape is further revealed by the emotional exchange between her and Akash, which reveals a complicated interplay between dependency, wrath, and severe emotional perplexity. Transference is evident as Shilpa projects her unmet desires onto Akash, possibly for love, safety, or even a father figure. She is both attracted to and resentful of him because of this dynamic, which is rife with Freudian ambivalence, a typical love-hate tension derived from the unresolved intricacies of her early relationships. According to this view, Shilpa's emotions and behavior are greatly impacted by both conscious and unconscious factors, defense systems, and the internalization of moral and social norms.

A key component of Freudian theory, the idea of the superego, is essential to comprehending Shilpa's severe psychological suffering. The morals of parents and society are internalized by the superego, which enforces them through guilt and shame. By maintaining and enforcing social norms and ethical standards, Shilpa, a senior judge, externally represents the superego and embodies this process. But this established dynamic is drastically reversed by her arrest. As the one who enforces the judgment, she abruptly finds herself the target of it, changing from the judge to the judged.

This abrupt shift causes Shilpa to experience tremendous emotional and cognitive confusion. The result is most likely a state of superegoic overflow.

She is burdened not just by her personal probable guilt for the crime, but she also becomes a symbol of society's collective moral concern, a figure who has failed in her responsibility to symbolize the law. This internal pressure manifests as an internal tribunal, in which Shilpa is put on trial within her own psyche before any formal courtroom proceedings begin. Her extreme quiet following her imprisonment can be viewed as a type of self-sentencing, a hard psychological penance imposed by her own internalized moral authority. Her position at the crime scene, kneeling and gripping the knife, emphasizes this internal conflict. It represents not only the immediate guilt or trauma of the event, but also a deeper, more fundamental surrender to the superego's worst punishment: self-condemnation. This physical weakness parallels her psychological state of being completely overwhelmed by the weight of judgment, both outward and internal.

The idea of repression, which is based on Freudian theory, provides an essential prism through which to see Shilpa's mental condition. Her story contains multiple instances of repression, the unconscious process by which the mind buries undesirable desires, anxieties, or painful memories. First of all, there is a lack of thorough processing or conversation regarding her broken connection with Akash Hingorani, which implies that the unpleasant feelings and experiences connected to it have been forced from her conscious consciousness. Unresolved disputes remain seething beneath the surface as a result of this emotional repression. Second, her early silence and lack of vocal rebuttal in the face of accusations suggest that she is traumatized and silent, literally unable to express her circumstances because of the tremendous magnitude of her experience.

The knife discovered in her palm at the crime scene can be read as the re-emergence of the repressed. It signifies the emergence of something buried deep within her psyche: aggression, whether

directed outwards or within, that she cannot consciously recall or fully comprehend. This symbolic return emphasizes the idea that what is suppressed does not just disappear, but rather finds new ways to express. Her apparent pause in emotional connection and vulnerability lends credence to this theory, implying that unresolved difficulties and buried emotions from her past are interfering with her ability to create healthy bonds and engage emotionally in the present. This constant conflict demonstrates how, while repression is originally a defensive response, it can eventually stifle psychological progress and well-being.

Analyzing Shilpa's psychological condition using Jacques Lacan's triad of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real provides important insights into her nature. Shilpa, as a high court judge, is firmly rooted in the Symbolic Order—the sphere of law, language, and structured meaning. She navigates this arena with skill and authority. When she becomes a defendant, her life takes a dramatic turn. In this reversal of roles, her symbolic identity crumbles. She is devoid not only of her words, as demonstrated by her profound quiet, but also of the trappings of her authority, such as her judicial robe and control over the proceedings, which formerly constituted her ordered existence.

Her self-image is profoundly established in the Imaginary realm, where she envisions herself as collected, strong, and reasonable. Her arrest badly punctures her idealized ego, which she had meticulously created over the years. The effects are severe: she suffers from narcissistic injury as a result of the shattering of her public image, as well as despair as a result of others misinterpreting her ego, perceiving her as a criminal rather than the revered judge she previously was.

Finally, Shilpa's quiet and distant demeanor indicate an encounter with the Real—that which cannot be expressed or fully absorbed by language or logic. In Lacanian words, the Real is not only reality, but a psychic rupture, an awful tragedy that

refuses to fit into any comprehensible narrative or rational framework. Her location at the murder scene, kneeling next to the corpse with the knife, strongly represents this forced meeting with the Real—a moment that goes beyond the confines of law, language, and her previously solid identity. This interaction pushes her to confront an uncomfortable truth that is beyond the reach of her developed psychological shields.

Shilpa's narrative, as a woman in a position of authority within the legal system, adds an important gendered dimension to her psychological journey. Her experience goes beyond typical professional criticism to include the difficulty of managing cultural expectations and patriarchal norms. Her fall from grace is met not only with mistrust, but also with tangible communal moralistic wrath, which, viewed through a psychoanalytic perspective, shows deeper cultural fears. This rage expresses the cultural superego's wrath focused at female transgression, mirroring society backlash against women who depart from expected norms. It also reveals an unconscious urge in the collective psyche to punish powerful women, which could be rooted in collective patriarchal guilt or a subconscious discomfort with female authority.

A tacit distaste for female authority or a collective patriarchal shame. Although many people now view Freud's theory of penis envy as antiquated and prejudiced, Lacanian feminists present a convincing alternative, viewing it as a symbolic deficiency within the patriarchal Symbolic Order rather than a physical anatomical deficiency. Shilpa disrupts the existing Symbolic Order because she holds a symbolically "male" position due to her work as a judge. According to this interpretation, her arrest restores the "correct" symbolic structure. It violently reinstates her in a subservient, objectified status, ultimately reinforcing the patriarchal institution that her earlier powerful position had fought. This demonstrates how societal reactions to women in positions of power can be

driven by deeply rooted unconscious biases and a desire to retain traditional gender roles, even if those norms are softly enforced through legal and social systems.

The idea of the object petit a (object a) from Lacanian theory is essential to comprehending Shilpa's function in the developing drama. This "unattainable object of desire" is the elusive source that feeds subjective desire rather than a tangible object. In this situation, Shilpa represents the object of many important people and systems in her immediate vicinity. Shilpa is Akash's representation of the item a. She becomes a screen onto which his own needs and concerns are projected, as evidenced by his vacillation between defending her and an emotional obsession with her unresolved history. He is pulled to something in her that is just out of grasp, something that always eludes him but offers fulfillment.

Shilpa also serves as a placeholder for systemic concern in the justice system. If a judge, who represents the law and society morality, can commit murder, the system's basic underpinnings are called into question: who is truly safe? Shilpa, in this scenario, is no longer just a subject with agency; she is the canvas onto which others project their worries, doubts, and wishes about the world's stability and integrity.

Beyond the concept of object a, the relationships she forms carry substantial psychoanalytic weight. Her friendship with Akash, for example, goes beyond mere romanticism. It develops into a transference relationship in which she unknowingly transfers past emotional patterns onto him. This could include revisiting childhood dynamics, possibly related to an absent father or an oppressive male figure, which causes her to idealize him one moment and blame him the next.

Furthermore, as a woman in a position of power, Shilpa faces a special barrier in expressing her feelings. Women in positions of leadership are

frequently expected to repress their sensitivity due to societal expectations. Her emotional need for Akash poses a threat to her carefully formed ego, which values control and composure. This suppression of her emotional demands causes internal conflict, emphasizing the intricate relationship between her professional identity and her deeply concealed emotions.

A convincing substitute for viewing Shilpa's activities as merely acts of guilt is to view her behavior through the prism of contemporary trauma theory, as developed by individuals such as Cathy Caruth and Bessel van der Kolk. According to this view, traumatic events are regularly relived, often outside the range of language and cognitive processing, rather than consciously remembered in a coherent narrative. Shilpa exhibits common symptoms of trauma dissociation, including emotional bluntness, bewilderment, and an almost hyper-composed manner.

In this paradigm, Shilpa is not necessarily deliberately concealing guilt; rather, she may be profoundly removed from the horrific incident. This dissociation acts as an effective coping technique, a psychological barricade against an uncomfortable reality. Her court evidence, marked by emotional flatness and a notable absence of affect, is consistent with the basic indications of dissociation. Her remarks lack true emotion because she is not fully engaged with the memories or feelings linked with the event.

This detachment, while initially useful as a coping mechanism for overwhelming anguish, can also be regarded as a symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This interpretation gives her character a dimension of psychological realism, putting her seemingly incomprehensible responses in context with a well-known clinical condition. Thus, despite the narrative's presentation as a legal thriller, Shilpa's behavior encourages a deeper, more compassionate explanation, implying that her acts are motivated not by willful dishonesty, but by the

severe and often silent legacy of psychological trauma.

Shilpa's former lover and present lawyer, Akash Hingorani, acts as her psychic double, embodying both the ego ideal she once desired and then lost, as well as her suppressed aspirations for closeness, forgiveness, and connection, according to Freudian psychology. His re-entry into her life serves as a potent catalyst, reawakening unresolved emotional currents that she has fought hard to suppress, such as vulnerability, love, and remorse. In essence, Akash serves as a mirror for Shilpa's severely divided psyche, forcing her to confront elements of herself that she had previously suppressed.

Shilpa's continued failure to forcefully defend herself throughout the story raises concerns about the genuine nature of her quiet. While her silence could be read as a calculated legal strategy, defeatism, or tactical stoicism, a psychoanalytic viewpoint implies a deeper, more symptomatic root. In literature and psychoanalysis, silence frequently refers to an excessive outpouring of substance that resists speech, indicating trauma.

Her words and symbols shed additional light on this internal conflict. Shilpa's use of elliptical phrasing and Freudian slips, such as "I thought... I didn't expect... I misjudged," suggest a mind grappling with confession while attempting to evade the full effect of her remarks. According to a Lacanian reading, this language breakdown corresponds to her identity fragmentation. Her self-image as "the judge" is inextricably linked with the Symbolic Order of law and language. Once charged, this symbolic framework crumbles, leading in a loss of language and fracturing of her entire sense of self.

The contrast between the courthouse and the lawn emphasizes this symbolism. Shilpa formerly held authority in the courts, which signifies symbolic control, law, and logical order. In contrast, the murder scene, the garden, represents a subconscious space: a world of nature, chaos, and raw impulse where the

bounds of law and order are broken. The contrast between these two environments depicts Shilpa's tremendous psychological upheaval, as she moves from the ordered world she formerly dominated to a chaotic, disturbing inner realm.

Shilpa Singh's story in "Cold Justice" goes beyond a basic legal drama, painting a riveting portrayal of a woman whose identity is fragmented by the very legal and cultural mechanisms she once symbolized. A psychoanalytic method indicates that her crisis is not only legal, but also existential and deeply subconscious. Shilpa is divided between the diametrically opposed identities of judge and accused, a struggle worsened by repression and unresolved pain.

Her story's central conflict is less about judging her guilt or innocence in the crime, and more about addressing the tremendous cost of having symbolic authority while rejecting one's underlying emotional reality. In Freudian terms, her tragedy stems from the tyranny of the superego, which has internalized strict

societal and moral rules and now brutally condemns her. Shilpa, seen via a Lacanian lens, is torn between the harsh Symbolic law she formerly upheld and the horrific Real of unimaginable anguish, a trauma that refuses to be integrated into language or cohesive narrative.

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## **A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TAMIL NADU**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper aims to highlight the system of Panchayat Raj system, role of Panchayat Raj institutions in the implementation of the government schemes for poverty alleviation and rural development, various government schemes, etc. The role of Panchayati Raj institutions as instruments of rural reconstruction and development needs no emphasis. They have been reorganized with wider powers and financial resources not merely as institutions of political participation but institutions of social and economic development. Effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on active involvement contribution and participation of its citizens, both male and female. The role of such institutions is so vital in the rural development. The Panchayati Raj Institutions, in which a research focused on rural development, and Panchayat Raj, have a lack of real transfer of funding, functions, and officials throughout the States. An attempt is made in this paper to study the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural development in general in Tamil Nadu In particular.*

**Keywords:** *implementation, reconstruction, 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment act, political participation, rural developmnet*

### **Introduction**

The word "Panchayat" literally means "assembly" (ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. Panchayats have become so involved in the implementation of schemes end owed by the Central and State Governments that it has become necessary to discuss their social roles separately. In the 21st century it is imperative that the implementation of rural developmental schemes and programmes to be made through the system of Panchayat Raj institutions. Rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for

economic development increased participation of people in the rural development programmes,

Decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are envisaged. Participation of people is a key element in the process of good governance. Peoples' participation and responsible governance should complement each other in achieving the goals of rural development. The main objective of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act was to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRJs) in India and make them "Institutions of self-government" with responsibility of promoting rural development and ensuring social justice.

## Rural Development Programme

Rural Development is a continuous process which aims at improving the socioeconomic conditions of people living in the rural areas. For the convenience of this paper on rural development programmes, it has been divided into two categories i.e. rural development programme during pre-independence period and post independence period. Though there was no such landmark rural development programmes introduced during the pre-independence period for the people, but some programmes were implemented through some individual and institutions.

### Rural Development Programme during Post Independence Era

In post independence era, government, voluntary organizations and financial institutions have implemented a large number of rural development programmes for the upliftment of rural people. The following are some of the rural development programmes which were started during the post independence period for the transformation of the rural areas of the country. The Government of India in March 1950 established the Planning Commission to translate the idea of development of rural villages. The Government of India from the very beginning of its planning era i.e. with the launching of the First Five Year Plan (1950-51) has been emphasizing on the development of rural villages. The First Five Year Plan document stated "agriculture, including irrigation and power must have the top most priority".

### Panchayat Raj in Independent India

The task of strengthening Panchayat raj system fell on the Indian government formed after independence. It was clear that India a country of villages had to strengthen village panchayats to strengthen democracy. Mahatma Gandhi who strongly believed in Grama Swaraj pleaded for the transfer of power to the rural masses. According to

him the villages should govern themselves through elected panchayats to become self sufficient. But surprisingly, the draft Constitution prepared in 1948 had no place for Panchayat Raj Institutions. Gandhi severely criticized this and called for immediate attention. It is thus, that panchayat finds a place in the Directive Principles of the State Policy. Article 40 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy states that „the states shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them function as units of self governments“

### Panchayat Raj Institutions in Tamil Nadu

Panchayats are India's ancient autonomous democratic institutions. Whose description is found in the ancient Indian text "Rigveda" in the form of "Sabhas" and "Samities". At various points of time these autonomous bodies of governance have proven their importance inspite of the political disturbances within the country. This two-tier system operated very well till 1975 and elections were held regularly. Subsequently, the tenures of the Panchayat Unions and Village Panchayats were extended up to 1.2.1977 and 12.9.1979 respectively. Thereafter, Special Officers (Block Development Officer for all the Village Panchayats in a Block and Divisional Development Officer for all the Panchayat Unions in a Division) managed the rural Local Bodies till the next elections in 1986. The elected rural Local Bodies continued in office till March 1991. Again, no elections were held till October 1996 and the Special Officers managed the rural Local Bodies. 1. Tamil Nadu Village Habitation Improvement Scheme (THAI) 2. Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme (CMSPGHS) 3. Energisation of Street Lights with Solar Energy 4. Comprehensive School Infrastructure Development Scheme (CSIDS) 5. Member of Legislative Assembly Constituency Development Scheme (MLACDS) 6. Rural Buildings Maintenance and Renovation Scheme (RBMR)



## Review from Past Studies

Jain (2007) in his study on role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in mobilizing people "participation in rural development programmes stresses that PRIs now are apart of the Constitutional framework. It will be impossible for the State Government to take liberty with these institutions any more and these will have to be run on the prescribed lines. He finds that Panchayati Raj bodies had a wider participation of people particularly those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribe category and women members.

K.Somasekhar (2008) expressed an overview of rural development programmes in India during pre and post independence. The paper explains the various programmes which were introduced in India like – Community Development Programme (1952), Panchayati Raj System, Intensive Agricultural District Programme, Small Farmers Development Agency and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Agency, Drought Prone Area Programme, Desert Development Programme, Integrated Rural Development

Programme, Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans, Ganga Kalyan Yojana, Million wells scheme, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Jawahar Gram Smrudhi Yojana, Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Yet as per NSS, 0.26% of people still are living below poverty line. Peoples participation should be in decision making, planning, formulating strategy, implementation, follow up for sharing the benefits of development. This improves accountability and transparency in process of identification of beneficiaries.

Kumari., et al., (2022) rightly the pointed out that the Panchayats raj system is one of the key factor of rural development in India. Authors argued that efficient policies and function of Panchayat Raj

system offer to sustainable and inclusive growth to rural sector and their rural development programmes helps to improving infrastructure of rural arena as well as socioeconomic condition of rural peoples. Author further claim that development of rural areas has a bearing on improved agricultural production and related economic activities, availability of natural and financial resources and their development, improvement of service delivery paving way for improved human development.

## Significance and Scope of the Study

The study is crucial for evaluating the role of panchayat and the impact of the same on the development of study area. This is a case study of the performance and implementation of the government schemes of Tamil Nadu. The scope of the study is limited to the performance and schemes implemented of Tamil Nadu for the period of ten years (2015-2016 to 2022-2023).

## Objectives of the study

1. To study the role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Tamil Nadu
2. To examine the implementation of State Government sponsored Rural development schemes
3. To examine the performance of Panchayat Raj system in rural development.
4. To give suggestions for the better implementation of policies and development.

## Methodology

In the light of objective and the hypothesis of the study, a systematic research design is drawn. The relevant data for the study collected through primary and secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from the published books, journals, periodicals, published reports, action plans, unpublished theses, official documents, brochures and official records. Data has been collected from the

various offices like Village Panchayat Offices, Block Panchayat Offices, and Office of the District Panchayat, Research Institutions, and different Libraries.

### Period of the Study

The study relates to a period of ten years (2015-2016 to 2022-2023) during which Panchayats Raj system has witnessed a steady growth in Tamil Nadu despite lots of political and policy level changes.

### Statistical Tools

The collected the primary and secondary data's are tabulated and processed by employing suitable statistical tools such as Tables, Chart, Graphs and Analyses. Data will then be used to prepare the Reports, News Papers and use of computer software packages namely Excel.

### Limitations of the Study

- The present study is confined only to the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development in Tamil Nadu.
- It deals only with nature, growth in general and role of the Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development in Tamil Nadu.
- Finally, the study does not include all the schemes, among that few recent schemes in the study area are taken to be analyzed.

### Analysis of Panchyati Raj and Rural Development Programme

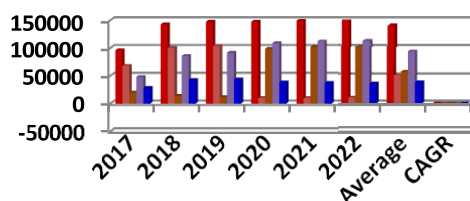
**Table 1 Length of Panchyati Raj Roads in Tamil Nadu from 2017-2018 to 2022-2023**

| Year           | Total Length (A+B) | Water Bound Macadam | Bituminous Top/Cement Concrete | Total (A)       | Un-Surfaced (B) |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2017-2018      | 96330              | 68109               | 19939                          | 48170           | 28221           |
| 2018-2019      | 143078             | 100341              | 14280                          | 86061           | 42737           |
| 2019-2020      | 147542             | 103894              | 12192                          | 91702           | 43648           |
| 2020-2021      | 147543             | 10155               | 98823                          | 108978          | 38565           |
| 2021-2022      | 149446             | 10081               | 102157                         | 112238          | 37208           |
| 2022-2023      | 148550             | 10682               | 102157                         | 113019          | 35531           |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>138748.2</b>    | <b>50543.67</b>     | <b>58258</b>                   | <b>93361.33</b> | <b>37651.67</b> |
| <b>CAGR</b>    | <b>7.49</b>        | <b>-26.56</b>       | <b>31.3</b>                    | <b>15.27</b>    | <b>3.91</b>     |

Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Govt. of India

Table 1 shows the length of Panchyati Raj Roads in Tamil Nadu from 2017-2018 to 2022-2023.

■ Total Length (A+B)  
 ■ Water Bound Macada  
 ■ Bituminous Top/Cemet Concrete  
 ■ Total (A)  
 ■ Un-Surfaced (B)



The total length of road has increased from 96330 in 2017-2018 to 148550 in 2022-2023 which exhibits a compound annual growth rate of 7.49% and an average road length of 138748.2. It has increased 2 times of Water bond Macadam from 68109 in 2017-2018 to 10682 in 2022-2023, which reveals a compound annual growth rate of -26.56% with an average length of 5043.67.

**Table 2 Funds Released for Capacity Building Elected Representative of Panchyati Raj Institutions Under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) in Tamil Nadu from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023**

| Year           | Tamil Nadu    | Implementing Agency | India          |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 2018-2019      | 57.6          | 13.62               | 598.27         |
| 2019-2020      | 5.3           | 0.16                | 432.9          |
| 2020-2021      | 56.88         | 8.59                | 499.93         |
| 2021-2022      | 39.89         | 3.75                | 618            |
| 2022-2023      | 25.42         | 2.22                | 672.97         |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>37.018</b> | <b>5.668</b>        | <b>564.414</b> |
| <b>Maximum</b> | <b>57.6</b>   | <b>13.62</b>        | <b>672.97</b>  |
| <b>Minimum</b> | <b>5.3</b>    | <b>0.16</b>         | <b>432.9</b>   |

Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Govt. of India.

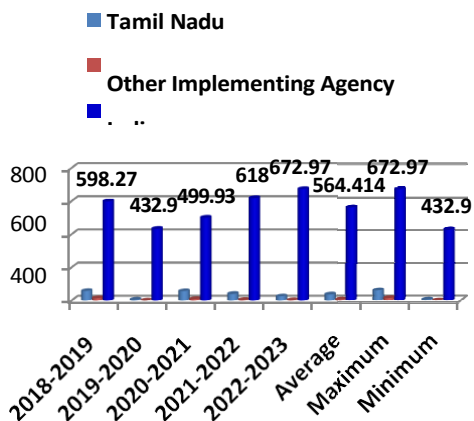


Table 2 analysis fund released for capacity building elected representative of panchayat raj institutions under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) in Tamil Nadu from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023. The overall Tamil Nadu has decreased from 57.6 crores in 2018-2019 to Rs.25.42 crores in 2022-2023 with average spending 37.01 which against India 564.41. The other implementing Agency spending also decreased from Rs.13.62 crores in 2018- 2019 to Rs.2.22 crores in 2022-2023 which shows average spending Rs.5.66 respectively

**Table 3 Allocation and Release of Grants to Local Bodies for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Tamil Nadu**

| Year      | Allocation | Release |
|-----------|------------|---------|
| 2015-2016 | 947.65     | 947.65  |
| 2016-2017 | 1484.3     | 1484.31 |
| 2017-2018 | 1710.9     | 758.06  |
| 2018-2019 | 1975.0     | 1753.87 |
| 2019-2020 | 2659.5     | 1821.11 |
| 2020-2021 | 3607       | 1945.22 |
| Average   | 2064.0     | 1451.70 |
| CAGR      | 24.95      | 12.73   |

Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Govt. of India.

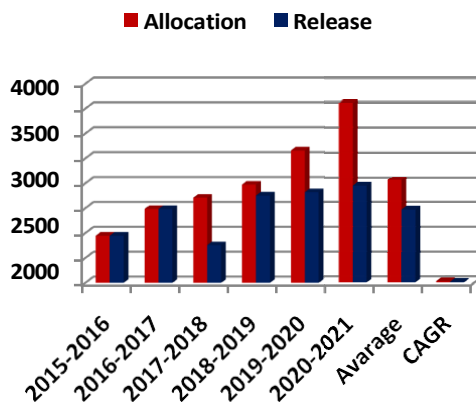


Table3 shows the Allocation and Release of Grants to Local Bodies for Panchayati Raj institution in Tamil Nadu. The allocation has increased to Rs.947.65 crores in 2015-2016 to Rs.3607cores in 2020-2021 with Compound Annual Growth Rate 24.95 and Release also increased from Rs.947.65 cores in 2015-2016 to Rs.1945.22 cores in 2020-2021 with Compound Annual Growth Rate is 12.7 percent and average released of Fund Rs.1451.70 crores.

**Over All observation**

- The Governments only two components are share with beneficiaries out of four. Central and State beneficiary all are combined in providing sanitary facilities in Tamil Nadu.
- The Government of Tamil Nadu has revised its guide lines for the rural water supply scheme to provide for a10 percent weight age in allocation offunds to States. This weightage is given for the rural population managing their water supply schemes.
- The Government have ordered that the vertical sharing ratio for devolution of State Finance Commission Grant to rural and urban local bodies.
- The significance of the work lies in analysis of role of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in rural development. The importance of the work is that it focuses on various rural development

programmes adopted by Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development.

- The total length of road has increased from 96330 in 2017-2018 to 148550 in 2022-2023 which exhibits Compound annual growth rate.
- The capacity building elected representative of panchayat raj institutions under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) in Tamil Nadu from 2018-2019 to 2022- 2023. The overall Tamil Nadu has decreased from 57.6 crores in 2018-2019 to Rs.25.42 crores in 2022-2023.
- The allocation has increased to Rs.947.65 crores in 2015-2016 to Rs.3607 crores in 2020-2021 with Compound Annual Growth Rate 24.95 and Release also increased from Rs.947.65 crores in 2015-2016 to Rs.1945.22 crores in 2020-2021 with Compound Annual Growth Rate is 12.7.

Suggestions to make the Panchayati Raj Institutions more effective

- Serious efforts have to be made to transform gramasabhas from the present state of a gathering of prospective beneficiaries to a village assembly with participation from all sections of the society. It requires both political and administrative initiatives.
- In order to avoid delay in the finalization of the projects, a time schedule has to follow by the State with respect to the releasing of the annual installments of the plan fund to the panchayati raj institutions.
- Ensuing transparency in the process and developing trust among different stakeholders.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that Panchayati Raj System has been playing an important role for rural development in general and upliftment of SC/ST and down trodden people in the society in Particular. The achievement of rural development programmes has exaggerated even the social and political affairs of the people. The

reservation of seats for women, scheduled casts and tribes in panchayats is a welcome step, for it would make the institution more democratic, representative and balanced. This is the largest delegate base in a democracy anywhere in the world, developed or underdeveloped. Panchayat Raj offer citizens living in rural areas a practical opportunity to participate in village level decision making and planning processes, to engage with the various developmental schemes being implemented by the Government, and to interact with their elected representatives directly to ensure that their interests are effectively served and their money properly spent. As this study clearly indicates that with the emergence of such PRIs there is a significant change in the lives of rural people. In the economic front of the rural development programs have created an improvement in economic situation of the selected area, as a result of accomplishment of rural development programs most of the people gain additional income. The role of the Panchayat Raj is basically related to keeping the human life in the area of Panchayat healthy and clean in the social life of that of Tamil Nadu.

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## **ECHOES OF YOUTH AND SOLITUDE: A REFLECTION ON *HEAR THE WIND SING***

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### **Abstract**

*Haruki Murakami's debut novel, Hear the Wind Sing (1979), is a quiet yet resonant meditation on youth, solitude, and memory. Through its unnamed narrator and his enigmatic friend known as the Rat, the novel offers a minimalist yet emotionally layered depiction of disaffection and existential drift in 1970s Japan. This article explores key themes in the novel, including alienation, the passage of time, and identity. Through close reading, intertextual references, and comparative insights, the essay also considers Murakami's stylistic departure from traditional Japanese narrative forms. Hear the Wind Sing may be short and understated, but it is rich with introspection and subtle philosophical insight, capturing the fragile and often fragmented inner world of the modern individual.*

**Keywords:** Haruki Murakami, hear the wind sing, youth, solitude, alienation, memory, nostalgia, identity, postmodernism, japanese literature, rat trilogy

*Hear the Wind Sing* was Haruki Murakami's literary debut and the first volume in what is now known as the "Trilogy of the Rat." Though it was initially overlooked by many readers and even Murakami himself—who has called it "immature" in retrospect—it contains the seeds of many of the themes and techniques that would define his later work. The story follows a 21-year-old narrator during an 18-day summer break, recounting his interactions with friends, strangers, and the city around him. Though little happens in a traditional narrative sense, the novel pulses with quiet reflection and emotional ambiguity.

In many ways, *Hear the Wind Sing* is not about action but introspection. The story does not provide closure or transformation in the traditional sense, but it explores what it feels like to drift through youth with a sense of detachment. As the narrator puts it, "What I sought was a momentary escape from the noise,

the people, and the rain." That desire for stillness, for solitude is central to the novel's emotional core.

At its heart, *Hear the Wind Sing* is a novel about being young, uncertain, and emotionally unanchored. The protagonist-nameless, reserved, and slightly adrift is emblematic of the so-called *shinjinrui*, or "new human beings," who came of age in Japan during the 1970s. These young people were often disconnected from the values of their parents' generation, shaped instead by the influx of Western culture, rapid modernization, and a sense of postwar cultural emptiness.

One of the most prominent aspects of youth portrayed in the novel is alienation. The narrator floats through life, observing more than participating. "I've never once thought about the future," he admits, "I'm not good at that sort of thing." This absence of ambition or direction is not laziness but a deep philosophical uncertainty about meaning and purpose. Rather than a coming-of-age narrative in

the traditional sense, *Hear the Wind Sing* offers a snapshot of someone who is still unsure whether growing up is even desirable.

The protagonist's conversations with the Rat, his only real friend are laced with irony, apathy, and a sense of shared disillusionment. The Rat declares: "Books, they're the only thing worth living for." But even this passion is undercut by his inability to connect with the world meaningfully. Both characters are more comfortable in observation than in action, which makes their dialogue curiously empty and yet oddly intimate.

Solitude is not merely a backdrop to the narrator's world, it is its very fabric. Throughout the novel, he drifts from his room to the bar, to hospital visits, to walks around the city, often alone or half-engaged with the people around him. This isolation is not portrayed as a problem to be solved, but as a state of being to be understood. In one of the novel's most quoted passages, Murakami writes: "Everything passes. Nobody gets anything for keeps. And that's how we've got to live." This fatalistic yet strangely peaceful view permeates the story. Solitude is not something the characters fight against; it is a lens through which they experience life. The novel's melancholic tone, quiet atmosphere, and lack of narrative resolution reflect a Buddhist-influenced acceptance of impermanence and detachment.

The unnamed girl with nine fingers serves as a symbol of emotional inaccessibility. She and the narrator share quiet moments and cryptic conversations, yet they never truly connect. Her injury is never explained, and her inner world remains largely closed off, much like the narrator himself. Their interactions serve as metaphor: people may be close physically but remain worlds apart emotionally.

Memory in *Hear the Wind Sing* is unreliable, fragmented, and often hazy. The narrator's recollections are nonlinear and impressionistic. At times, he even questions the validity of what he remembers. He muses: "No matter how vivid a

memory may be, it fades with time. All that's left is a name and a fragment of a feeling." This treatment of memory aligns with the postmodern view that identity is not fixed but rather an unstable collage of recollections and impressions. The protagonist is not seeking a clear sense of self but seems resigned to the idea that such clarity may never come. The structure of the novel itself mirrors this idea. It is broken into 40 short chapters, some only a paragraph long, others consisting of transcribed letters, trivia, or internal monologues. This fragmentation reflects the narrator's own fractured consciousness. It is a diary of impressions rather than a cohesive narrative.

Murakami has never hidden the extent of Western influence on his writing. In fact, he began writing *Hear the Wind Sing* in English before translating it back into Japanese. This process, he claims, helped him strip away the formalities and conventions of traditional Japanese literature, giving rise to the spare, ironic, and casual tone that has become his hallmark.

He cites American authors like Kurt Vonnegut and Richard Brautigan as early inspirations. In the novel, the narrator explicitly references Brautigan and even paraphrases his quirky, offbeat style. The result is a prose that feels un-Japanese in many respects, more reminiscent of Beat Generation fiction or minimalist American storytelling than of the dense emotionalism of Japanese authors like Yukio Mishima or Yasunari Kawabata. This hybrid style, merging Japanese introspection with Western irony and detachment, would become Murakami's signature. In one scene, the narrator comments on his alienation from Japanese society: "It seemed like I was born into the wrong world. Everything was a little off—like a dream you couldn't fully wake from." Such alienation, born of cultural hybridity, marks Murakami as a global author whose identity is shaped as much by jazz records and American paperbacks as by Tokyo backstreets.

The Rat is one of Murakami's most enigmatic recurring characters, appearing throughout the early trilogy (*Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball*, 1973, and *A Wild Sheep Chase*). In this first installment, he serves as the narrator's alter ego—more expressive, more self-destructive, yet equally lost. He is the only character who shares the narrator's reflective nature, though he channels his discontent more outwardly. He is constantly writing, but refuses to show his work. He drinks heavily, argues with strangers, and rails against what he sees as the phoniness of society. His nickname, "the Rat," evokes an image of something marginalized or scavenging, someone surviving at the edges of a sterile world. Their conversations are full of false starts and elliptical logic, but they also hint at a deep emotional connection:

Narrator: "You ever think about dying?"  
Rat: "All the time. But I never do it."

In such dialogue, Murakami captures the way young men often express vulnerability—obliquely, ironically, and through shared silence more than words.

A recurring motif in *Hear the Wind Sing* is the insufficiency of language. Characters struggle to articulate their feelings, often resorting to cliché, humor, or silence. Murakami shows how words can both reveal and obscure emotion. The narrator often remarks that he doesn't know how to say what he means, or that his memories feel like "scratches on an old record familiar but incomplete." He compares conversation to jazz improvisation: spontaneous, imperfect, sometimes meaningful, sometimes just noise. This idea is reinforced through the novel's structure, which resists the arc of traditional storytelling. There are no revelations, no grand conclusions. The book ends not with clarity, but with continued ambiguity. And that, Murakami suggests, is closer to life itself.

The backdrop of *Hear the Wind Sing*, Japan in the late 1960s and early 1970s is essential to

understanding its mood. This was a time of great social upheaval. The economic miracle had transformed the country materially, but many young people felt spiritually hollow. Political protest, cultural disillusionment, and a sense of cultural drift shaped the consciousness of the generation Murakami writes about. The novel quietly captures the contradictions of that era: affluence and emptiness, freedom and alienation, connection and isolation. Unlike earlier Japanese literature that often centered on family, duty, or historical trauma, Murakami's world is globalized, rootless, and interior.

*Hear the Wind Sing* may lack the surrealism and plot complexity of Murakami's later novels, but it is rich with emotional subtlety and philosophical nuance. It explores themes of youth, memory, identity, and the limits of communication with a rare blend of simplicity and depth. As a literary debut, it sets the tone for a body of work concerned with the unspoken, the unseen, and the unresolved. Its quiet moments, a song playing on the radio, the wind at night, a nameless girl in a bar, linger in the reader's mind long after the book is closed. In its modesty lies its power.

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## TRAUMA AND RECOVERY THROUGH LETTERS IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

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### Abstract

*This paper explores the epistolary form in Alice Walker's The Color Purple as a central narrative and therapeutic device that facilitates trauma recovery. The novel's protagonist, Celie, begins by writing letters to God and later to her sister Nettie, using these letters as a space for processing abuse, voicing pain, and reclaiming identity. By focusing on the act of writing as a method of psychological survival and healing, this paper argues that letter writing in The Color Purple transforms trauma into a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Other characters' experiences further demonstrate the communal and cathartic power of written expression within the context of racism, sexism, and social silencing.*

### Introduction

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker constructs a world where African American women face systemic and personal trauma rooted in racism, patriarchy, and poverty. The novel's epistolary format plays a key role in articulating the protagonist's internal world and emotional struggles. Letters serve not merely as communication tools but as therapeutic interventions—spaces for Celie to process traumatic experiences and construct a narrative of survival. The use of the written word functions as a bridge between silence and speech, pain and healing, isolation and connection. This paper examines how letter writing allows for trauma to be expressed, witnessed, and eventually healed, with a focus on Celie's development and the broader implications for female subjectivity and resistance.

Alice Walker, born in 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia, is an influential American novelist, poet, and activist whose works have profoundly shaped African American and feminist literature. Growing up in the racially segregated South, she experienced systemic

racism and personal trauma, including an accident that left her blind in one eye. These early hardships fostered a deep sensitivity to issues of injustice and marginalization, themes that permeate her writing. Walker is best known for her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple* (1982), a landmark in American literature that centres on the lives of African American women who endure abuse, racism, and silencing, yet ultimately reclaim their voices and identities. Her writing style is marked by its clarity, emotional depth, and the use of vernacular language that captures the voices of ordinary Black women. A key figure in womanist thought, Walker coined the term "womanism" to describe a form of feminism grounded in Black women's experiences. Her work often explores themes such as trauma, healing, spiritual awakening, and the transformative power of love and storytelling. Despite critical acclaim, she has also faced controversy, particularly over her portrayals of Black men and her outspoken political activism. Walker was inspired to write *The Color Purple* by the lives of her mother and grandmother,

who embodied strength and creativity despite the oppressive conditions they faced. Drawing on oral traditions, family history, and her own experiences, Walker crafted a novel that uses the epistolary form not only as a narrative structure but also as a therapeutic space for the protagonist, Celie, to process her trauma and evolve into a fully realized individual. Through her literary contributions, Alice Walker has given voice to generations of women and continues to inspire dialogue on race, gender, and resilience.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, published in 1982, is a groundbreaking novel that explores the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class in the early 20th-century American South. Told primarily through a series of letters written by the protagonist Celie, the novel uses the epistolary form to convey the intimate and often painful thoughts of a young African American woman subjected to severe abuse and silencing. Celie's letters to God, and later to her sister Nettie, trace her journey from voicelessness to self-assertion. The novel opens with Celie recounting the sexual abuse inflicted upon her by her stepfather, a trauma that sets the stage for her years of suffering and internalized worthlessness. Forced into a loveless and violent marriage, Celie's life is one of servitude and invisibility. However, her encounters with strong, independent women—particularly the charismatic singer Shug Avery and the defiant Sofia—become catalysts for personal transformation. Through these relationships, Celie begins to understand her own value, question patriarchal norms, and eventually assert her independence both emotionally and economically.

The novel also includes Nettie's letters, which document her experiences as a missionary in Africa and reveal hidden truths about Celie's children and family history. These letters widen the novel's scope, connecting the personal to the global and highlighting the persistence of colonial and gendered oppression beyond America. By the end of the narrative, Celie

has not only gained her freedom but also cultivated a life of dignity, creativity, and love. She forgives those who wronged her, including Mister, and redefines spirituality outside institutional religion. Walker's portrayal of Celie's growth emphasizes the themes of healing, empowerment, and the redemptive power of human connection. *The Color Purple* stands as a seminal work in American literature, notable for its honest depiction of Black women's inner lives, its innovative narrative structure, and its enduring message of resilience in the face of dehumanization. The novel's significance is further marked by its impact on both literature and culture, inspiring adaptations in film and theatre and generating wide-ranging scholarly discussion.

### **Celie**

The novel's protagonist and narrator. A Black woman who suffers sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. Finds healing and empowerment through writing, relationships, and self-discovery.

### **Nettie**

Celie's intelligent and kind-hearted younger sister. Becomes a missionary in Africa. Her letters provide Celie with knowledge, hope, and family history.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* explores a wide range of interconnected themes that illuminate the journey from trauma to recovery, especially for African American women in a racially and patriarchally oppressive society. The novel foregrounds the pervasive impact of trauma and abuse, particularly through the protagonist Celie, who suffers sexual violence, physical assault, and emotional neglect. Her silence, imposed by a system that devalues her identity, gradually gives way to self-expression through letter writing, allowing her to process and eventually overcome her suffering. This act of narration is not only therapeutic but also emblematic of reclaiming one's voice—a key element in the healing process. Female empowerment and

solidarity form a crucial support system throughout the novel. The relationships Celie forms with other women, especially Shug Avery and Sofia, become catalysts for change, showing that community and shared experience can combat isolation and despair. As the characters undergo transformation, they illustrate that healing is not immediate but unfolds through emotional resilience, introspection, and resistance to traditional gender roles. Spirituality also plays a vital role, as Celie evolves from believing in a punitive, patriarchal God to embracing a broader, more inclusive and nature-connected understanding of divinity, which mirrors her psychological and emotional liberation. The novel also critiques systemic racism, especially through characters like Sofia, whose experiences with the justice system highlight the added burden of racial injustice. Moreover, creativity and labour—such as Celie's sewing business and Shug's music—serve as outlets for self-expression and independence, reinforcing the theme that personal and economic empowerment are essential to full recovery. Through these layered themes, Walker constructs a narrative of survival, resistance, and transformation, affirming that even those most wounded by society can heal and reclaim their identity.

### **Letters and the Construction of Selfhood**

Writing enables Celie to move beyond victimhood and reconstruct her identity. Her letters evolve from reactive expressions of pain to proactive articulations of desire, hope, and independence. She begins to see herself not just through the lens of others but as a person with intrinsic value. The written word empowers her to imagine a life beyond suffering. She starts her own business, rebuilds relationships, and even forgives her former abuser. This transformation is rooted in the consistent act of writing, which mirrors therapy's emphasis on narrative as a tool for recovery. From the beginning, Celie is rendered voiceless by her circumstances. Abused by her

stepfather and later by her husband, Celie internalizes a belief in her own worthlessness. With no one to confide in, she writes letters to God as a form of silent testimony. These letters document her pain in a raw, unfiltered way. Although God never replies, the act of writing offers Celie a semblance of control over her story. Her words, though unspoken aloud, challenge the erasure of her experiences. Thus, the letters function as a private sanctuary where her voice begins to take shape. Celie's narrative voice evolves over time. Initially marked by poor grammar and submissive tone, her letters gradually reflect a more confident and self-aware perspective. This transformation is symbolic of her emotional healing. As she continues to write, she begins to name the abuse she suffers, express her feelings, and even question authority figures like God.

The process of writing thus becomes an act of self-exploration and resistance. Her shift from writing to God to writing to Nettie also signifies a movement from divine dependency to human connection and mutual support. When Celie discovers Nettie's letters, long hidden by Mister, a new dimension of recovery opens. Nettie's letters not only reveal truths about Celie's children and family but also provide an example of perseverance and faith. Through reading Nettie's words, Celie no longer feels alone in her suffering. This connection helps reestablish sisterly bonds and becomes a source of emotional strength. The exchange of letters allows trauma to be witnessed and affirmed, an essential component of healing as suggested by trauma theorists like Judith Herman. Walker extends the theme of healing through writing beyond Celie. Nettie's own letters reveal her cultural dislocation and struggles in Africa, yet also her resilience. The shared letter-writing between the sisters creates a dialogic space for mutual understanding and emotional recovery. The novel's form itself—structured entirely through letters—underscores the belief that storytelling is

essential for survival. It also critiques systems that suppress female voices and posits writing as a radical act of liberation.

Celie's letters serve as both confession and therapy. Initially written to God, these letters are her only outlet. As she begins writing to Nettie, the letters become more structured and expressive, signalling emotional growth. Writing allows her to name her pain, understand it, and ultimately transcend it. The act of storytelling becomes central to her psychological recovery. Shug Avery's arrival marks a turning point in Celie's healing journey. Shug challenges Celie's internalized inferiority introduces her to emotional and sexual self-worth and empowers her to resist abuse. Their relationship enables Celie to view herself as lovable and capable, initiating deep inner change and liberation from trauma. Celie's personal change culminates in her economic empowerment through sewing pants, a symbolic act of independence. She also heals emotionally by forgiving her abuser, Mister, and learning to appreciate herself outside traditional gender roles. The recovery process is not instantaneous but unfolds through steady self-affirmation and autonomy.

### Conclusion

In *The Color Purple*, letter writing serves as a vital conduit for articulating trauma and fostering recovery.

For Celie and others, the act of putting thoughts to paper facilitates emotional clarity, connection, and transformation. Alice Walker uses the epistolary form not just as a stylistic choice but as a deliberate method to foreground female interiority and resilience. Through letters, trauma is both voiced and transcended, making the novel a compelling case study in the power of narrative to heal and empower. Celie's evolution from a voiceless victim to an empowered individual encapsulates the essence of recovery. Through writing, sisterhood, love, and economic independence, trauma is not erased but reworked into a foundation for growth and healing. The novel stands as a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit in the face of suffering.

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## ANITA NAIR'S LADIES COUPE: WOMEN'S SUFFERING, EMANCIPATION AND SELF – DISCOVERY

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### Abstract

Anita Nair is a well-known postmodern Indian English writer. Her novel *Ladies Coupé* explores the experiences of different women through a shared journey. The story focuses on self-discovery and liberation from the oppression of a male-dominated Indian society. "Ladies Coupé" refers to a train compartment reserved for women. During the postcolonial period, many novels addressed women's emancipation and their struggles within Indian society. In this context, men are often seen as superior, while women are treated as inferior and suppressed. Indian English fiction often mirrors the realities of society. This paper highlights women's suffering, their fight for freedom, and the loss and rediscovery of their identity.

**Keywords:** ladies, societal expectation, come, women empower, transitional gender norms, self-expression

### Introduction

Anita Nair's novel *Ladies Coupé* offers a compelling feminist narrative that questions "traditional" gender roles, societal expectations, and the restrictions placed on women in a patriarchal society. Through the stories and experiences of her characters, Nair delves into themes such as identity, personal agency, sexuality, and liberation. The novel highlights how these women confront and challenge societal norms, (ultimately leading them to empowerment and self-discovery).

### About Author

In a society dominated by men, most postmodern Indian women novelists are interested in discovering the status of women in modern society, the consciousness of female characters, their development towards an awakened conscience, and how this ultimately enriches their inner selves. Other writers, like Anita Desai, Shobha De, Kamala

Markandaya, Shashi Desphande, and Bharathi Mukherjee, have eliminated any sign of a feminist lesbian perspective. However, a thorough examination reveals an assertive feminist goal, as the primary focus of their narrative is the problems facing women. Anita Nair is among most well-known female authors of Indian English among these authors. She has resisted being called a feminist author. Instead of adopting a feminist stance and opposing male dominance and patriarchal society, she has adopted a balanced perspective on life from the perspective of women by including all feminine sensitivities.

### Analysis

Contemporary literature provides a rich portrayal of women's social, political, economic, and cultural experiences from a modern perspective. It sheds light on the current status of women in society. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé* (2001) tells the story of a woman's journey toward freedom and self-reliance.

Although often associated with feminist themes, Nair stated in an interview with *The Hindu* (Behal, Suchitra) that she does not consider herself a feminist. She expressed her love for domestic life and being cared for, noting that her book is not strictly about feminism, but about the inner strength she sees in countless women that deeply inspires her. The idea for the novel came from a real-life experience—fifteen years prior, while traveling in a ladies-only compartment, she observed how women opened up more freely to strangers. This inspired the title *Ladies Coupé*. In the novel, six women share a train compartment, each bringing her own story. Through these narratives, Nair shifts focus from traditional roles of silence and confinement to a space of voice and agency, moving from the private spaces of the kitchen and bedroom into the public realm. Collectively, their stories become one unified tale of women reclaiming their identities and bodies, envisioning a world free from patriarchal constraints and artificial gender divisions.

The book, as a form, is concerned with depicting men and women and their lives from the observed reality, as well as the social and familial background that influences their daily activities. It also focuses on the social issues that arise from these observed realities. Anita Nair, a post-modern novelist, is recognised for her meticulous investigation into lives of men and women in middle-class and high-middle-class communities of metropolitan cities, particularly in Kerala. Her female characters are presented as thoughtful about their own social and familial circumstances, as well as their own life challenges. The novel is a unique portrayal of the social activities of the characters. However, this imaginative presentation is predicated on the writer's meticulous examination of the men and women in all aspects of their lives. Anita Nair has primarily concentrated on the experiences of women in contemporary Indian society. It serves as a reflection of the experiences of

women as they navigate their families and evolving nature of their marital relationships.

*Ladies Coupe* offers a realistic and poignant portrayal of the ongoing endeavours of women to establish their identity within their society. Nubile asserted, "Ladies Coupe is a perfect example of contemporary women's identities and their conflictual relationship with tradition, gender discrimination, male-dominated society, and class and caste constraints." This novel is characterised by the authentic voices of women and the fusion of fiction and reality. Anita Nair aims to illustrate the actions that women should take to achieve their liberation and the ways in which our society can become more aware of them by utilising the example of six female characters. The novel features Akhilandeshwari as both a protagonist and narrator. Myles argues that "Anita Nair references the avatar of Devi Akhilandeswari to emphasise many-headed but unitary subjectivity of women." She was born into a middle-class Brahmin family and is unmarried. However, at 45 y/o, she grew into an aggravated person, expressing a desire for escape and space, as well as a hunger for life and experience. In an interview, Anita Nair states, "To me, Akhila in some sense enjoyed being a martyr." This one question, "Can a woman live by herself?", had plagued her throughout her life. Consequently, she decides to embark on a lengthy train journey in pursuit of an answer. It is not true that she is an exceptionally powerful woman. Akhila is just someone who has managed to get a seat in the Ladies Coupe, a section of a train specifically designated for ladies' passengers. A total of five additional passengers in that compartment. Akhila questions them regarding the status of women in Indian society. They are all strangers and will never ever meet again, but they are eager to share their stories with one another. In addition, they are all the victims of a society that is dominated by Indian men. According to Mishra, "Their backward journey enables them to

comprehend the significant bruises and injuries they have sustained throughout their lives." At the age of nineteen, Akhila landed a position as clerk in income tax department after her father's passing. The age at which the majority of young women are romantic regarding their bright potential is nineteen; however, Akhila was constrained to bear the entire weight of her family without any objection. Within her family, she is the only earner, yet she is required to obtain permission from her younger sibling in order to leave the house due to the circumstances of her life and her gender. In this context, Anita Nair introduces the concept of Patriarchy, which mandates that women maintain their independence from men. She attempts to assert that women are only biologically distinct from the unequal society of men. However, she does not mean that women must be subjugated and demoralised solely because of this difference. Despite the fact that the entire world coordinates against you to drag you down and cover your face in grime, as Anita Nair says, you are the one who can control your own fate. That foot will be removed at some point, and you will stand strong. Her attitude of courage and fortitude is exemplified by this terminology. She presents an immense representation of the lives of women. Akhila's mother is a traditional woman, and as such, she isn't concerned with her daughter's intentions. She consistently instructs Akhila on the importance of serving her spouse, as she has her own theories and principles:

Initially, it was impossible for a decent wife to serve two superiors, namely her father and her spouse. A decent wife has acquired the ability to prioritise her husband's interests over those of any other individual, including her father. A virtuous wife complied with her husband's directives. Amma stated, "There is no such thing as an equal to marriage." "It is advisable to acknowledge that the wife is inferior to the husband." This will prevent any disharmony or strife. Her mother is an ideal Hindu

wife, and as a result, she believes that her daughter should adhere to her philosophy and beliefs. She defers all decision-making to her father, as she believes that he is the most knowledgeable. "We have never had to regret any decision that he has taken, even when it was on my behalf." Women encounter such anguish and are incapable of discerning the precise path that will facilitate their personal development. Behaviours asserted that "Woman is generally obligated to challenge the rule of man by acknowledging his absolute supremacy and worshipping his idols."

Hari, a young man from the north of India, and Akhila engaged in a diminutive love affair, despite the fact that they engaged in physical intimacy on numerous occasions. Akhila abruptly terminated this partnership. She says, "Hari, this is my last goodbye; I will never see you again." She has also been concerned about the reaction of society and the public if this love affair were discovered, as he was younger than her. She is in such a state of agony that she refers to *The Progress of Indian Women from 1900s to Present*, which is quite distressing to me, Hari. I am deeply troubled by the fact that we are not compatible, so she has chosen to remain single. Akhila is a revolutionary woman who has undergone a transformation in the novel's final chapter. She is replete with fortitude and relishes intimate experiences with strangers. "Akhila is lust." Anita Nair, an accomplished writer, elucidates that her objective in composing novels is to underscore the downtrodden state of women in Indian society. She has been profoundly concerned regarding exploitation of women by male members, which motivated her to compose for exploited. "Anita Nair is a influential writer who, through this tender narrative, demonstrates a profound understanding and compassion for all women and the choices and regrets they are unable to avoid." She depicts women as individuals who remain in the face of adversity and protest against injustice and degradation, rather than

being completely isolated from their families and social circles.

### Conclusion

Anita Nair's novels predominantly examine the lives and experiences of women who are victimised by subjugation and traumatic experiences in their familial environments. She addressed a variety of issues, encompassing lesbianism, subjugation of women, prostitution, female infanticide, and rape. The novel primarily illustrates ethos of middle-class women in urban India. In her novel, women who are educated and aware of their individuality and striving to establish their position in society and family are a part of post-independent India. It seems that they are challenging patriarchal oppression and demonstrating potential for these women to pursue an independent existence. Nevertheless, Nair demonstrates that social conditioning can present a challenge for even the most educated women. Nair depicts her female characters in a highly realistic manner. In their pursuit of freedom and individuality, they are not passive victims. At the same time, they demonstrate a sense of responsibility and assert their individuality. In India, the promotion of education has resulted in significant variations in women's lives, illustrating the

significance of education in implementing social change. The work concentrates on part of women in modern Indian society, family, as well as circumstances of women in contemporary Indian society. This novel not only presents the six female characters but also presents the overall Indian women characters and their condition in contemporary society.

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## **A STUDY ON THE RYOTWARI SETTLEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SALEM DISTRICT**

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### **Abstract**

*India is primarily an agricultural country from the ancient times and most of its people depend on agriculture for sustenance. As a result of Third Anglo-Mysore War, Tippu Sultan surrendered his territory partially to the English East India Company as per the Treaty of Seringapatam on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1792. These territories included Salem and Baramahal. The primary motive of the Company was collecting substantial revenue. Agriculture has been the primary occupation of the people of Madras Presidency. Hence Land Revenue became the main source of income for the British India. The British made sizeable changes in the field of revenue administration. The method of tax collection differed from time to time. The land revenue system introduced by the British has two main divisions such as Ryotwari and Zamindari Settlement. This study primarily focuses on the Ryotwari Revenue Settlement made on the Salem district in Madras Presidency with some of its key provisions and impacts of the Settlement.*

**Keywords:** *British, ryotwari, peasants, settlement, revenue, Salem.*

### **Introduction**

The land was under the control of several types of tenures because of the instability prevailed during the Colonial rule. The British officials implemented vast changes in the field of agriculture as they depended considerably on land revenue for their administration. In the year 1792, Tippu Sultan submitted part of his territories which includes, Baramahal and Salem district. In due course of time, Colonel Alexander Read was appointed as the Collector of Baramahal and Salem, he experimented a new method of land assessment which was primitive in character and well suited for the local conditions, popularly known as Ryotwari Settlement. Under this Settlement, the land revenue was imposed directly on the ryots and the individual cultivators who actually worked on the agrarian land. It would render the ryots more independent as proprietors holding lands and paying

taxes directly to the company, than as the tenants of a great landholder.

### **Historical Background of Salem**

The Salem district was considered as an important centre of Neolithic period. Several implements namely celts with sharp cutting edges and hammer-axes with blunt edges are found in abundance on the Shevaroyes, Kalrayans, Kolli Malais, Melagiris and Gutturayan in the Salem district. In the Sangam literature, there is reference to the people who inhabited Salem region and who belonged to different groups as vedars, eyinars, etc. An energetic trade seems to have been carried out between Kongu and Rome, Egypt and Greece during the early centuries of Christian era. In ancient times the northern part of Salem district was ruled by the Pallavas, meanwhile southern part was annexed in the Kongu kingdom. The region was seized by the Chola rulers during

ninth century and later on it governed by the rulers of the Hoysala Ballalas. In the first half of the fourteenth century, the Vijayanagar rulers conquered it and subsequently in the beginning of seventeenth century it was passed under the Nayak rulers of Madura. During the period of 1688-90, the Salem region came under the control of Chikka Deva Raja of Mysore. In the year 1761, Haidar Ali ceased the Mysore throne. By the Treaty which concluded the war with Haidar's son Tipu in 1792 the whole District, except the Hosur taluk, fell to the Company. After the defeat in the Battle of Seringapatam and the death of Tipu in 1799, Hosur also passed to the English. During the British rule, Salem was an inland district located in the southern part of the Madras Presidency placed between 11° 1' and 12° 54' N, 77° 29' and 79° 2' E which enclosed an area of 7,530 square miles. It had its boundaries on the north with North Arcot and Mysore, on the southern side with Coimbatore and Trichinopoly, on the west with Coimbatore and Mysore and on the eastern side with Trichinopoly and North & South Arcot.

### **Captain Read and Thomas Munro's Land Revenue Initiative**

In the year 1793, Captain Alexander Read the collector of Salem district was assigned the task of settling the land tax on a permanent basis for at least five years. Captain Read divided the district into the Northern, Central and Southern divisions and first experimented a temporary settlement based on the assessment made in 1793. Meanwhile, Read undertook the task of a regular survey of the district, which continued to hold good in all the Ryotwari villages till the settlement of 1871-73. In 1796, after the Survey was over, he introduced an annual settlement called the Ryotwari System, which was a mode of Land Revenue Settlement made with small farmers whose average holding was nearly six acres. When Salem was ceded to the British by Tippu Sultan, the general condition of the people was very

unsatisfactory. In a letter written by Thomas Munro to Colonel Read, the conditions of the people and the exactions of the authorities were vividly portrayed. As a consequence of the general level of poverty prevailing among the peasants many of the so called "farmers" sink to the level of agricultural labourers. They were not earnest about the payment of taxes and the most opulent among them never made an attempt to pay the taxes regularly. Munro was of opinion that a lighter level of assessments alone would improve their condition. Taking into account the abject poverty of the ryots who lacked cattle and capital to work on the land, Munro advocated annual lease system. As the system of annual leases would cause considerable variation in the aggregate collection by the government and as the ryots would leave uncultivated the lands they did not want, Munro finally appreciated the manifold advantages of Colonel Read's plans. Finally, a system of assessing lands, which was later known as Ryotwari System, was evolved depending upon the joint endeavours of Read and Munro. Munro's reason for the need for Ryotwari Settlement in Salem revolved round the following two arguments, (1) that the rates of assessment which were minimum in the Ryotwari Settlement would safeguarded from reckless abandonment of fields, (2) and that the ryots were given the choice to choose for themselves plots of land, a practise which was in agreement with the customs of the country. Thomas Munro rightly believed that the lease on Ryotwari Settlement introduced in Salem district which gave preferences to reduce rents would bring about a general improvement in the conditions of the ryots and ensure the occupation of all the arable lands.

### **Ryotwari System in Salem**

The Land Revenue History of Salem district is noteworthy one, due to the introduction of Ryotwari System. The primitive method of revenue collection was to rent out the territory either by villages or as

smaller areas to the village headmen. In 1792, Alexander Read took charge as the first Collector of the Salem region. The Government insisted him to implement a settlement for a term of five years with the peasants themselves. In order to impose this, Alexander Read was aided by his Assistants Graham and Munro, assessed all the agricultural lands in the district and fixed a revenue assessment on the fields, the assessment was completed in five years (1793-97). During the survey, Read changed his decision and he announced his famous order dated on December 10 1796, which provided the peasants the choice either to choose the old lease system or annual settlements. The Permanent Settlement which was introduced in Bengal was further extended to Madras. In 1802, Read's Ryotwari Settlement, was cancelled by the appointment of a special commissioner, who, in the following three years, divided the district into 205 mittahs (estates), which were auctioned out to the highest bidder and held on fixed rents. This Zamindari System was a failure. The estates thus broken up were then controlled under the ryotwari system. The evil of over assessments was partly reduced by orders issued in 1816 and 1818 but systematic reduction was not effected till 1859, when the government issued proposals of the collector for a percentage reduction in the old rates. The reduction gave a tremendous impetus to cultivation and the land tax increased with a bound. In 1860, a systematic method of survey of the district was begun and later in 1871, a new revenue settlement was inaugurated. The survey showed that the extent of holdings in the old accounts had been under stated by 15 percent and the settlement resulted in an increase of revenue amounting to 4 percent. The average assessment per acre on 'wet' land was Rs. 3-15paise -1anna on the north of the District and Rs.5-1p-9a(p-paise, a-anna) in the south, the maximum being Rs. 10-8p-0a(p-paise, a-anna) and the minimum Rs. 1-4p-0a (p-paise, a-anna). On 'dry' land the average assessment was

Rs.0-14p-5a (p-paise, a-anna) in the north and Rs. 1-5p-6a (p-paise, a-anna) in the south, the maximum Rs. 5 and the minimum 4 annas per acre. This settlement was later revised in five taluks by a re-survey and a resettlement. The revenue from land and the total revenue received by the British are shown below, in thousands:

|               | 1880-81 | 1890-91 | 1900-01 | 1903-04 |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Land Revenue  | 25,40   | 26,70   | 27,84   | 29,01   |
| Total Revenue | 31,50   | 39,09   | 45,67   | 49,39   |

### Provisions of Ryotwari Settlement

The provisions under this Settlement possessed certain incidents like:

- The Settlement was made directly by the Government with the ryots.
- The whole land including the waste, was regarded as state property and the waste land was assessed when brought under cultivation.
- The registered occupier of the land was "free to alienate, encumber and dispense his land at his own discretion".
- The ryot had the right to relinquish any part of his holding.
- The freedom of abandoning portions of his holdings was given to the ryot. All the resident cultivators were held responsible to pay the revenue of the lands of a village.
- He could not be ousted unless he failed to pay regularly the assessment fixed on the land. On his failure to pay the assessment, his land might be attached or sold.
- No additional assessment was to be made for improving the value of the cultivable land at his expense.
- The assessment rate was to be fixed for certain period after which a revision should be made.

## Conclusion

The Ryotwari System paved way for the emergence of many land owners and established stable land revenue administration over the region. It included acres of waste land under cultivation and thus improved agriculture on the whole. It promoted the commercialization of agriculture with the growth of trade and commerce. The Ryotwari System freed ryots (all cultivators) from the grip of Mirasidars, Zamindars and Poligars. Hence, the Ryotwari System has laid the foundation for improvement of the livelihood of cultivators in Modern India.

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# THE RYOTWARI SYSTEM IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT - A STUDY

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## Abstract

*The East India Company first established their authority in India in the year 1765. In due course of time, the company started the collection of land revenue from those regions. The extend of the territorial possessions of the company led to the growth of land revenue. The British officials considered land revenue as the heart of the administrative system, which brought the close contact between the Britishers and Indian peasantry. Because of the political struggles and rivalry of the British rule in India, they adopted different land revenue systems in distinct periods. The village communities were familiar with three different methods of revenue settlement such as Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari. This study mainly focuses on the Ryotwari Settlement implemented on the Coimbatore district in Madras Presidency.*

**Keywords:** *British, ryotwari, revenue, settlement, Coimbatore.*

## Introduction

The ryot simply meant a cultivator of lands who has obtained an absolute right to hold land for farming with the support of his family members or hired servants. The term Ryotwari System referred to a revenue system under which the land taxes were collected directly from the ryots. In this case, there was no intermediaries between the peasants and the British government. In addition to this, the revenues were fixed periodically by the officials.

The Madras Presidency was established in the second half of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century. As per the terms of the war took place in 1792, Tipu Sultan ceded a large portion of his territories including Malabar, Salem and parts of Dindigul. In the year 1799, the company acquired the territories including Coimbatore, Canara, Wynad and Tanjore. The Nizam of Hyderabad surrendered the districts of Bellary, Cuddapah and Kurnool in 1800, commonly called as Ceded Districts. Subsequently, the company ceded the Carnatic Nawab's

possessions of North and South Arcot, Nellore, Trichinopoly, Madura and Tinnevely. These territories were combined and formed as Madras Presidency during the company's rule.

The origin of the Ryotwari Settlement has to be traced from the year 1792, when Colonel Read was appointed as collector in Baramahal. The land revenue experiment done in the Baramahal region laid the foundation for the future Ryotwari Settlement in Madras Presidency. In the year 1799, the Ryotwari Settlement has been introduced in Coimbatore. The efforts of Munro (Governor of Madras Presidency, significantly expanded the Ryotwari system) made the Ryotwari Settlement into a well-established one. The Research topic selected for the study offers a crucial phase for the evolution, progress and development of Ryotwari System in Coimbatore.

## Objectives

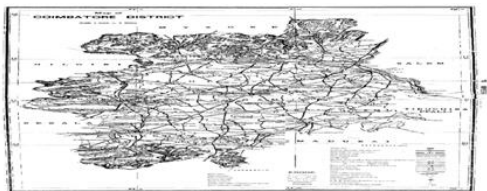
- To describe the historical background of Coimbatore district.

- To study the Ryotwari System in Coimbatore.
- To depict the progress and development of Ryotwari Settlement.

### Methodology

This study work was based on both Primary and Secondary sources. The Primary sources consists of Madras Revenue Administration Reports, General Report of the Board of Revenue, Gazetteers and Manuals. The Secondary sources consists of Books and Official websites.

### Historical Background of Coimbatore



**Source: Baliga.B.S, Madras District Gazetteers: Coimbatore, Government of Madras, 1966.**

The district of Coimbatore under colonial rule, was an inland district located in the southern division of the Indian peninsula. It was extended from north to south lying between  $76^{\circ} 39'$  and  $77^{\circ} 56'$  of east longitude and  $10^{\circ} 12'$  and  $11^{\circ} 57'$  of the north latitude.

The History of Coimbatore began from the Stone age itself which was inhabited by the primitive people of the Neolithic Age. This is evidenced by the large number of cairns, kistvaens, dolmens or cromlechs, which were called as Pandavakulis and Veerakals found in various parts of the district. The district was never a political entity and its history is not of particular interest. The district of Coimbatore and the south-western taluks (salem) formed the Kongu country. The Sangam literature reveals that the Kongu country was inhabited by the tribes such as Malavar, Kosar and Kongar, who had friendly relations with the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas for their excellent war qualities. When the Roman trade was still at its peak, a branch of Rashtrakutas called

as Rattas invaded and captured the whole Kongu country. Before the coming of the Imperial Cholas, it was ruled by Rashtrakutas and Ganga kingdom. During the ninth century, Aditya I, the son and successor of Vijayalaya conquered this region, then it formed a part of the Great Chola Empire. Coimbatore district enjoyed the administration of Cholas for nearly four centuries, which was unique in various ways. During that time, land revenue was considered as the principal source of income in those days besides customs, octroi and profession tax which were directly collected by the king's officers meanwhile the land tax was collected through the sabhas. The Chola kings collected over 40 percent of the gross produce as land taxes which was comparatively moderate with the demand under Vijayanagar, Mughal and early British rule. The Pandyas and Hoysalas ruled the Kongu country from the late thirteenth to the first half of the fourteenth century.

The Delhi Sultanate rulers appointed Governor at Madurai to look after the affairs of the southern possession, this was later collapsed under the hammer of the Vijayanagar kings. They sent an expedition to the south under the general, Kumara Kampana who put an end to the Sultanate rule in south. In the fourteenth century, kingdom of Vijayanagar ruled this region and held the country until its downfall in 1565. Then, Coimbatore came into the hands of the Vijayanagar deputy at Seringapatnam who had assumed independent power and later passed from him to the deputy at Madurai. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the whole district seems to have been a prey to constant raids and wars due to the conflict between the Vijayanagar deputies and the growing power of Mysore. Little is known of the revenue history of the Coimbatore prior to the Mussulman government of Mysore. A Mackenzie manuscript mentions the eighteen great poligars of Kongudesam, that is Coimbatore was occupied by them in the

sixteenth and seventeenth century. In 1761, Haidar Ali usurped the Mysore throne. During the forty years of Muhammadan rule, Coimbatore was a scene of incessant marches and countermarches, advances and retreats by the British and the Mysore troops before the district was passed to the East India Company after the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatnam in 1799.

### **Ryotwari System in Coimbatore**

In Coimbatore, as in other districts, land revenue administration had the longest history. Land Revenue administration in Coimbatore under the British began with the acquisition of that district from Tipu Sultan. In the year 1799, the regions north of the Noyyil, now called as Coimbatore, Avinashi, Erode, Bhavani, Gobichettipalayam, Nilgiri hills, part of Palladam and Kollegal were placed under Mr. Macleod, while the rest of Palladam, Dharapuram, Karur, Udumalpet and Pollachi were placed under Mr. Hurdis. Of these tracts, the Nilgiris were separated in 1868, Karur was transferred to the Tiruchirappalli district in 1910 and Kollegal was added to the Mysore State in 1956. Both the Collectors, Mr. Macleod and Mr. Hurdis (who was also the Collector of Dindigul) having served previously under Mr. Read, the well-known Collector of Salem, hence they thought of introducing the same system in Coimbatore. They were also disposed to adopt that system, because it was the system in vogue under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. In both the divisions surveys were conducted, the lands of each village were divided into a limited number of classes according to their productive powers, the villages themselves were divided into groups with reference to the general quality of their lands and to their proximity to markets and towns.

### **Progress and Development of Ryotwari Settlement in Coimbatore**

The course pursued by Mr. Macleod and Mr. Hurdis in the Northern and Southern divisions of Coimbatore

was the same in all essentials. But, in determining the total assessment to be levied and thus in obtaining a guide as to what portion of the produce should be exacted as assessment, the two officers seem to have gone different ways.

Mr. Macleod, in the Northern division sought to equalise the assessment without providing the total revenues of the country too low or too high in comparison with the collections of former years. The assessment, he added, took less than two-fifths of the gross produce of dry lands and below half the gross produce of wet and garden lands. Mr. Hurdis, in the Southern division, sought to fix the revenue at that proportion of the produce to which the government was generally entitled, regardless of all considerations, as to the amount of revenue which the division had previously borne. The proportion of produce leviable, he decided, should be half of the net produce in the case of wet lands and two-fifths of the gross produce in the case of dry and garden lands and these proportions of the produce commuted into money, the ryots were compelled to pay. The rates thus determined by different ways were introduced into the Northern division in the first half of Faslies 1211 and 1212 (1801 and 1802) and into the Southern Division in the later half of the same Faslis (It was a 12 month period- July to June used mainly for revenue related calculations. To convert a Fasli year to the corresponding Gregorian calendar year, should add 590 to the fasli year). It resulted in an increase of eight percent in the Northern division and in the Southern division, increase of seventeen percent over the revenues collected by Tipu Sultan, the assessment in the Southern division averaging on the whole, about thirty five percent above those of the Northern division.

Between 1802-1807, the Southern division suffered much from continued bad seasons. The main cause for a considerable fall in the collection of revenue was undoubtedly the high pitch of assessment in this division. Hence, the reduction was

carried out in 1807 by Mr. Garrow who had been appointed as the Collector of both the divisions (i.e Coimbatore) and united both divisions in 1805. By any means, the reduction did not bring relief to the ryots. Neither attempt was successful, the demand in both cases being more than the land could bear.

### **Village Lease System**

In 1808, the theory of Permanent Settlements had come into favour and the Salem district was subdivided into a number of small land revenue farms of two or three villages which were leased to village headmen and wealthy landlords. The Settlement of Fasli 1217 (1809) increased the revenue of the whole district from Rs. 19,63,657 to Rs. 21,31,986. This new system called as the Village Settlement or Village Lease System. It was first recommended by the Tanjore Commission and further fillip was given by Mr. Hodgson, who was a Member of the Board of Revenue given the reports to the Government towards the end of 1807. Under this system, the entire country was divided into villages which included large area of land both arable and waste, based on the fixed boundaries. The Board observed that the village system was as old as the Manu's age which was familiar among the people. It would facilitate and reduce the charges of collection and it did not demand much attention from the collectors.

Under the triennial lease system, introduced in Coimbatore in 1808, the revenue assessment on every village was fixed for a term of three years according to the accounts of cultivation and actual collections of past years. The revenue fixed were declared to be payable under all conditions except in unusual calamities. The villagers suffering under adverse seasons or other drawbacks, a progressive rent was fixed or the lease was deferred for a term of one year with the principal ryots. The normal repairs were directed to be done by the ryots but repairs of immense works were declared to be done by the

Government as per the condition of a proportionate increase of assessment.

The ryots were held jointly and severally responsible for the assessment and pattas were ordered to be issued by them to the tenants for their security against loss and oppression. But this triennial lease introduced into the district proved a complete failure. Because it was based on the high assessments and collections of past years, led to a system of rack rents which left the district in a state of utter exhaustion. The revenues also fell from Rs. 21,14,960 to Rs. 18,59,342 and again to Rs. 16,92,283. The Government and Board of Revenue insisted that the system was futile due to the unfavourable seasons, the low cost of grain, the short term of the lease and the freedom from constraints which the cultivators enjoyed under the new system of judicature. On the expiry of the triennial lease, a decennial lease was introduced in Coimbatore. This lease was extended to two-thirds of the district and the court of directors condemned the village system in certain terms and ordered its discontinuance and reversion to the ryotwari system.

### **Restoration of Ryotwari Settlement**

A special commission consisting of Mr. Munro and Mr. Sullivan (Collector of Coimbatore) exposed a series of abuses committed in the district by the subordinate revenue officers in collusion with the renters and as a result, Mr. Sullivan abandoned all the village leases on the basis of universal fraud as soon as he took charge of the district from Mr. Garrow and re-introduced the Ryotwari Settlement. In 1815, the Ryotwari System was revived in Coimbatore. Thereby, the ryotwari system has continued in the district with many modifications. From 1815 to 1878, the system underwent several changes and these changes can be conveniently classified under the following heads; (1) the patkat system, which refused the ryot complete freedom of relinquishment, (2) the reductions of assessment, (3)

remissions and *cowles*, (4) gross rents and payments for waste, (5) the garden assessments, (6) second crop assessment, (7) *taccaviand* (8) the *dittam*, the *jamabandiand* the *puttah*.

The *Patkat* System was introduced by Mr. Thackeray in 1818. It was a departure from the field system to which the ryots were immemorially accustomed and which was the starting point of Mr. Macleod and Mr. Hurdis. Mr. Thackeray assumed that, whatever be the intention of the ryotwari settlement, there was in practice, a variety of inequalities and errors and this led to many fields being assessed too high and many too low. He also assumed that, in the fifteen years which had elapsed since the settlement, these errors had to a great extent been ratified by the action of the ryots and of the officials, chiefly in the matter of gross and garden rents, so that the possession of lands favourably assessed was balanced by that of heavily assessed lands and vice versa. He supposed that the existing inequalities could be set right by the denial of freedom in relinquishment. He also stated that, if the ryots were given freedom of relinquishment, they would throw up bad lands assessed at about 2 lakhs of rupees and concentrating their attention and stock at the smallest extent of the best and lowest assessed land. This system with some modifications, having been approved by the Board of Revenue and the Government which was introduced into the district from 1818 onwards. The restriction was gradually relaxed and evaded, so that in 1853 the collector reported that the system, no longer existed. The effect of the system in practice was slight, but so far as it went it was bad.

The permanent reductions were those of unduly high and objectionable assessments. Remissions covered a multitude of difficulties. There were the remissions of assessment on grass lands, second-crop cultivation and other remissions necessitated by the *patkat* and compulsory holding system. There were also the remissions caused by the *dittam*

system under which the ryot agreed to take more land than either the season subsequently permitted or he himself had stock and capital to cultivate. In fact, the weight of assessment at the prevailing prices was considerable and its incidence were unequal, so that various expedients had to be resorted to in order to retain the full area in cultivation and of these expedients none was considered so efficacious as the remissions. Mr. Sullivan, Collector of Coimbatore in 1819, granted *cowles* of remission, temporary as well as permanent and remissions became the rule under the *patkat* system. In 1841 the permanent remissions were discontinued and in 1856 the temporary remissions became extinct. But, Seasonal remission has been continued.

In regard to grass rents, there were two such rents, one called *Ayanpilluvari* or *Panchamhissa* and the other called *Pilluvari* (grazing tax). The former was not an assessment, but a remission of three-fourths of the regular survey assessment of 1801 on one-fifth of the *patta* holding, while the latter was the rental of the unoccupied waste lands, which were not held by any ryot but which were let out for grazing purposes only. The *Panchamhissa* System arose as follows: Under former Governments, all lands if left waste, paid a small tax of about 1 to 4 annas per acre. At the settlement of 1801, Mr. Macleod, Collector of Northern Division of Coimbatore, fixed one-third of the survey assessment as the payment for occupied waste in the Northern Division, while Mr. Hurdis retained the old rate of the Southern Division which however, was raised to one fourth of the assessment in 1805. The remission amounted in 1818 to Rs. 3,22,536, rose to Rs. 4,22,961 in 1835-36 and fell to Rs. 2,73,852 in 1836-37, probably because the Board ordered in 1835 that the remission on all land held on grass tax in addition to the regular one-fifth should be discontinued and full rates charged. From that time onwards it steadily decreased till, in 1873, it was only Rs. 21,252 and

was finally abolished at the original settlement in 1880-83.

As to payments for waste, it may be stated briefly that the rule under the former Governments varied and that Tipu Sultan appears to have ordered that all occupied land should pay full rates, the grass rent for unoccupied being retained. The practice of Tipu Sultan was changed by the British by allowing grass remission on occupied waste up to one-fifth of the holding and the remaining fallow was fully charged after 1835.

The garden assessments were the subject of a great deal of correspondence. There were different modes of classification of the lands in some taluks, as garden (irrespective of the irrigable area) and the area actually irrigable. The former rule was soon found to be unworkable as it was often equivalent to doubling the rates and the irrigable area was either determined by the quantity of water in the well or by the area originally irrigated. The problem was that the Collectors of the district treated gardens in distinct ways and sometimes in order to increase the revenue, they charged full rates for garden lands. However, in practice, many remissions and reductions were granted and consequently the wells steadily increased, the Collectors were aware that "nothing but cultivation from wells can secure the people of this district against heavy loss and very often ruin, consequent upon successive seasons of severe drought". Mr. Thomas, the Collector advocated a rule which came into effect in 1854, whereby all lands watered from new wells were charged only the ordinary dry rates and all extra assessment on garden lands with ruined wells was struck off.

Another matter was second crop cultivation. The principal sources of irrigation in the district were the Bhavani, the Noyyil and the Amaravathi rivers and the rain-fed tanks. At the settlement of 1801, a consolidated assessment was imposed on the greater part of the irrigated area under the rivers. In

the year 1832, second-crop assessment was levied, hence two-thirds of the consolidated assessment was levied on first crop and the additional assessment was only levied in the event of a second crop being grown. The concession was even greater in some cases, for lands under the Noyyil, the charge for the second crop was only imposed when the second crop was either arecanut or coconut or betel-vine or sugarcane or turmeric or plantains and a second crop being rice exempted, while in lands irrigated by the Kodiveri Anicut charges were made only for lands under coconut or arecanut.

The *Takavi* or the system of annual advances to aid current cultivation, it was never much in vogue in the district. The *Dittam* and *Jamabandi* were the annual settlements and *dittam* was merely the cultivation proposals or engagements of the ryots made in April or May for the coming season. It was abolished in 1858. The *Jamabandi* or Settlement determined the revenue, after all deductions had been made which was preceded by elaborate village to village enquiries by the tahsildars, who were subsequently aided by *Peshkars* and revenue inspectors. On the report of these officers at the *Jamabandi*, the accounts were made up and closed and *pattas* were issued, which were thus mere bills for the amount due by each ryot and not title deeds for lands. As permanency and fixity increased, especially after the abolition of the *Dittam* and the importance of the *Jamabandi* as a scramble for remissions diminished, the money entries in the *pattas* became lesser and land entries were given importance, so that in Coimbatore the *patta* came to be regarded rather as a title-deed than as a bill.

The land revenue of the district for the last 13 years has shown no remarkable fluctuations. As prices fall, a considerable extent of poor land always goes out of cultivation, but on the whole the revenue was flourishing and the records of the ten years from 1269 (1859-1860) to 1278 (1868-1869) show that on

an average the area in occupation has grown by 64,047 acres per year.

These were the features of the old Ryotwari System followed in Coimbatore until the introduction of the new or modern ryotwari system in 1874-1881. The new system was based on a detailed survey and classification of soils, a revenue survey showing all the physical features such as hills, jungles, roads, channels, tanks, topes, houses and cultivable lands.

### Conclusion

Although the Coimbatore district had made adequate progress under the Ryotwari settlement, the triennial lease was introduced in 1808 after the departure of Munro from India. In 1815, the Ryotwari system was re-introduced in Coimbatore and so agricultural output increased along with the increase of land revenue. Under the Munro's Ryotwari Settlement, the cultivation of waste lands increased gradually, which gave impetus to agriculture. It was noteworthy that the flourishing agriculture of Coimbatore depended considerably on favourable assessments, when compared with the other districts under this system. This attributed to the significant increase in the population of this region. Abbe Dubois (writer, his works provide valuable perspectives on the lives of ryots and their relationship with the land) stated that one of the main causes for the poverty and famines was the rapid increase of population (i.e population increased 25% within twenty-five years). The region was one of the grazing regions of Madras Presidency and pasture was in great demand, hence the revenue from grass lands increased to Rs.12,463-3(paise)-8(anna) between the years of 1820-1825. The moderate assessment of land in this district led to the promotion of labouring classes into landholders in a favourable season. In case of failure, they returned to their former job of a common labourer.

The beginning of the British rule and the establishment of Ryotwari Settlement in the district paved way for the individual land ownership. The

significant desideratum in ryotwari area was the settlement free from intermediaries. For the year 1799-1800 the land revenue amount of Coimbatore district was Rs.21,87,178 whereas in the year 1850, the amount increased to Rs.23,37,069. A glance of the statement proved the constant progress of land revenue. It was significant to note that year after year, the district suffered continuous bad seasons. This district was the most flourishing ryotwari district, cultivable land had become saleable to some extent. In 1823, the Collector mentioned to the accumulation of capital and stock. Hence the condition of people in the district was acknowledged better than in other ryotwari districts. This system had assured a reward to the poor ryot for his work after meeting the demands of the Government. It paved way for the emergence of a new class of people called the middle class in the Madras Presidency. The appointment of native people in the revenue administration improved the social status of the people. The Ryotwari System enhanced the cultivation of commercial crops which promoted the trade activities and thus led to urbanization which gave much importance to the urban communities. The system was a particular piece of monumental work. In Coimbatore under Munro, the district established an efficient land revenue system of administration which provided law and order conducive to the welfare of the ryots. Hence it was accepted that the Ryotwari System as a most suitable settlement for the peasants in Coimbatore under Munro administration during the British Administration.

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## THE ROLE OF RADIO IN THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

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### Abstract

*Communication plays an important role in the human society, which makes us unique from other creatures and without proper communication, humans might not have evolved this much. Human civilization's important feature is communication, which has played a key role in the development and evolution of societal bonds over time. Since early times communication has emerged from very basic level like writing, sending signals, printing, postal system, recording sounds. In the 1890s, scientists developed a way of communication by sending signals using invisible radio waves. Today, people communicate with each other using two-way radios and listen to radio broadcasts for information or entertainment. Radio waves can carry signals over great distances without the need for long cables. The credit of invention of radio was associated with Italian physicist Guglielmo Marconi, who invented radio communication in 1896. Now the world has entered into a very advanced phase of communication like Smartphones and Computers with Artificial Intelligence. This paper deals with role of radio during freedom movement particularly Congress Radio which has been operated by young patriots of India despite the struggles imposed by the government.*

**Keywords:** *Freedom, broadcasts, congress radio, communication, independence*

### Introduction

In India's struggle for freedom, many leaders have contributed to ignites the spark in the minds of people. For inculcating the patriotic feeling, the leaders used various methods. One such important communication method was the Radio Broadcasting which was started as early as in 1923's in Madras. There were also Newspapers, Pamphlets, Speeches, Rallies, public meetings and demonstrations which acted as main sources of medium for spreading ideas of nationalist leaders. But Radio marked a significant change which delivers the messages directly to the masses without any intermediary. The radio broadcast by the British provided the false information about the nationalist movement and also imposing restrictions on radio stations which were against the Britishers. On the outbreak of the World

War II, the British also cancelled the licences of various radio stations to prevent illegal broadcasts. During this time the Indian freedom struggle was already in its full swing with increasing patriotic fever among the people and soon Quit India Movement has been started in 1942 in which majority of the Indian leaders were arrested by the British government. This was the time when the **Congress Radio** was started during Quit India Movement which was major source of communication for the people about the actions of government and real happenings of the world.

### Quit India Movement/ Background of the Movement

Since the time when the resolution of the "Complete Independence" was passed at the All-India Congress

Committee (AICC) held at Lahore on December 1929, since then Bombay never lag behind in the freedom struggle. In 1942 there was distinct surge of raising discontentment against the British rule among the people, by the fiery speeches of the Indian leaders. The leaders felt the need for mobilization of people for the freedom movement before the AICC session in Bombay and the resolution of "Quit India" was taken in the working committee of the Wardha session. The AICC session was to be held on August 7 & 8 in 1942 at Bombay and as the dates approached nearby the people witnessed the number of leaders arriving from August 3 itself. The two days historical session of the AICC session began in Gowalia Tank Maidan also known as August Kranti Maidan with some 10000 members including the 3000 volunteers of the Bombay National Guards, Bombay Seva Dal and the People's Volunteer Bridge, 500 Desh Sevikas to maintain order and 5000 people heard the meeting by loudspeakers. The historic session attended by the students and people made their minds ignite with the patriotic fever and Gandhi's words of "DO or DIE" made them sacrifice everything including their life for the cost of independence of the nation. This gave rise to group of young patriots who wanted to contribute atleast their bit to the nation's independence. This group discussed in what way they can exert their contribution to the Quit India Movement and finally came up with an idea of establishing their own radio station which enables the people to receive the recent updates in the movement.

## Congress Radio



### News about the Congress Radio

Source: [https://x.com/Paperclip\\_In/status/1507265919688470530](https://x.com/Paperclip_In/status/1507265919688470530)

The notable radio which strived hard to address the activities of British and invoke patriotic feeling among the people during the Quit India Movement was the "Congress Radio". The Congress Radio is also called as "Secret Congress Radio", an underground station in Bombay, played a vital part in India's Struggle for Independence and was operated by zealous group of young patriots propagating the message of freedom. These young patriots who were behind the idea of congress radio was **Usha Mehta, Vithaldas alias Babubhai Madhavji Khakar, Chandrakant Babubhai Jhaveri, Nanak G. Motwane, Ravindra A. Mehta, Vithalbhai Kanthadbhai Jhaveri**. Usha Mehta also known as Ushaben, student at Wilson College was a prominent figure behind the idea of underground congress radio and her contribution for organising this radio is notable. Babubhai Khakar who was a businessman and a co-student in the Rashtra Bhasha (national language) class, also supported her idea of establishing the radio. After the launching of the radio station was decided, Babubhai (Vithaldas alias Babubhai Madhavji Khakar) started to garner the necessary equipments for the underground station. There were also certain difficulties in finding a technical guidance until Nariman Adarbad Printer arrived as solution. Mirza (Rustom Cowasji Mirza), assistant of Printer brought the parts of transmitting apparatus and still some parts were missing, so they purchased them from India Radio Services and J. W.

Mehta & Co. The Printer assembled the parts of the transmitter in his own house and it was ready for a trial. Initially it was asked to receive the messages on the wavelength of 41.78 metres. But it proved to be unsuccessful. After many consistent attempts, R. A. Mehta heard the broadcast on 41.78 metres at 7.45 pm when he turned on his radio. Printer also wanted to shift the radio station to another place. This was the prevailing mood in August 1942 before the launch of the Congress Radio. The group of young patriots considered this act as a patriotism neglecting the serious troubles which has been surrounded by them in the idea of broadcasting. But according to the British, their act of broadcasting is an offence. These group also was in the task of shifting the location of radio station to various places to prevent them the arrest and also to continue their broadcasting services.

### Shifting of the Location of Radio

The radio team started looking for their first location and Babubhai had shown two or more places in the suburbs. The Printer chose the suitable building in Chowpatty called the Sea View and the top floor was hired for the setting up of the radio station. The Congress Radio team (Babubhai, R. A. Mehta and Ushaben) learned to work on it and Babubhai would bring the programmes for broadcast which were mostly typed and sometimes handwritten by different persons. In the initial stages Babubhai and Ushaben used to speak in the microphone and later the task was provided to R. A. Mehta. The broadcasting was started from **August 27, 1942** on the wavelength of 41.78 metres when the Quit India Movement was on its zenith. The announcement was made in the Bombay Congress Bulletin of September 3, 1942 about the Congress Broadcasting Station which would be broadcasting at 8.45 pm every day. The broadcasting would start with the words of Ushaben, **"This is the Congress Radio calling on 42.34 metres from somewhere in India"** and the record of

*'Saare Jahan Se Achha Hindustan Hamara'* in the beginning and *'Vande Matram'* in the end was played by the congress radio team. Now the location of the station was decided to change and they (Printer, Mehta, Killewala, Mirza and Ushaben) searched for a new place and they rented out the Ratan Mahal on Walkeshwar Road on **September 10, 1942**. The radio team continued their operation there for few days and broadcasted the programmes. While they were searching new location for radio station, they noticed the strange apparatus and enquired about it. They found that it was the detecting machine used by the British officials to catch the illegal radios. They decided to be very conscious and very careful from that day. The congress radio continued their broadcast to spread the news to the people and special appeals were issued to students. The youth of the Bombay city embraced the movement wholeheartedly and they were unaware of the situation which would lead them to rigorous punishments like torture and imprisonment. The powerful messages like "Education can wait but not the freedom" were spread among the students. On **25 September 1942**, the Congress Radio team shifted the transmitter to Ajit Villa in Gamdevi where R. A. Mehta was living. Finally, they found Laxmi Bhuvan on Sandhurst Road and the transmitter was shifted on **4 October 1942**. Till this the radio team used to read the messages in the microphone, but they felt that their voices were not heard properly like the records of the songs. This was the time that the congress radio team was supported Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and some other leaders in the journey of the congress radio. He made frantic attempts to locate the radio and with the help of Ajit Desai (a radio engineer and freedom fighter), Dr. Lohia sent them a message that they wanted to meet the radio team. The timely arrival of Lohia's help enabled them to tackle with the finances and also took the responsibility of providing them with the news bulletins, talks and speeches of various leaders like

Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Moinuddin Harris, Coomie Dastur, K.A. Abbas and himself. Lohia asked them to divide the work of the Congress Radio into broadcasting work and recording work. The broadcasting work was entrusted with the congress radio team while the recording work was given to Vithalbhai's group. The radio team was in contact with the Sucheta Kriplani, who was in-charge of AICC in Bombay and most of recorded speeches in English was delivered by Lohia and Coomie and in Hindi by Moinuddin and Achyut. Ushaben also spoke for most of the recordings. The speeches were recorded from some other places and brought for the broadcasting due to the risks involved in it. Except on 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October 1942 the radio was operated every day. After broadcasting from Lakshmi Bhuvan for a few days, the Congress Radio team shifted their new location to Parekh Wadi in Girgaum Back Road on **15 October 1942** and the parts were carried to the new location. They had to be very conscious about the radio because they could be caught at any time by the police. Another serious issue was the mischief played by AIR (Anti-India Radio) to jam their broadcast. The transmitter was decided to shift to new location at Paradise Bungalow on Warden Road near Mahaluxmi temple and its possession was taken on **3 November 1942**. But they (Ushaben and Chandrakant Babubhai Jhaveri) were caught red handed when the police raided the Parekh Wadi on **12 November 1942** before shifting the apparatus. The Congress continued to operate for nearly 3 months from August to November 1942. Though it was a very short span of time, the Congress Radio proved to be an effective mode of communication to inculcate patriotism and also to involve the people in the freedom struggle.

### **Broadcasts of the Radio**

The Congress Radio also focused on the workers' rights and news updates about the Quit India Movement. They received the news directly from the

organisers of the Quit India Movement and from Dr. Lohia. This radio tried to spread the message of rebellion to all corners of the India. It also motivated the people to stay strong during the protest and attracted a large number of audiences. The broadcasts can be viewed in two groups to give an idea about what was happening in the country: the news about (i) disturbances and the dislocation of means of communication and (ii) criticisms of the government, guiding ideas, messages to some specific groups such as students or peasants and speeches of leaders. The broadcasts from the Congress Radio captured the mood of the turbulent times. The Congress Radio was the first to broadcast about the Chittagong Bomb Raid, Jamshedpur strike and also happenings in Ballia. They also gave about the atrocities in Ashti and Chimur. They used this radio to approach the different classes of the people. The radio team also apologised for the inconveniences caused and spoke politely to wait for the broadcast. The process of garnering the correct news from original source was not an easy task for the team. It attempted to broadcast the news and also the happenings from a Congress nationalist approach. It tried to make people aware about the oppression imposed by British authorities on the people. The radio brought about the protests which happened in Nagpur, Ballia and Monghyr. The people of Nagpur staged mass demonstrations, annihilated communications and this proved to be an example of coordination. Railways, roads and telegraphs lines were cut off by the people. The radio also brought to light about the disturbances in Maharashtra and news about the brutal attack by the police on the people of Gujarat who organised themselves to observe Azad Din. It brought light about the frustrations and discontent of the people of Bihar. The radio broadcasted about the Forest Satyagraha which took place on the Central Provinces. Despite strict restrictions being imposed on them by the Britishers, they continued to give news about the happenings in

India. The south was also not excluded, updates from Madras and also Cochin have been broadcasted in the radio. The congress radio also felt that Britishers were fond of copying the Nazi brutality. That is during the war time they adopted oppressive methods against the people of India. It strived hard to cover the hardships faced by the people. The congress radio also brought news about the sufferings of the village people in the Central Provinces and United Provinces. It also broadcasted the various protests that took place in Bihar particularly the martyrdom of Rajnarain Singh. The situations that prevailed during the October was also uneasy. The radio team got news about the textile mill workers in Ahmedabad and also unrestness prevailing in Gujarat, Bihar, Bombay and Kolhapur. They received the news of cutting off the telegraph, electric wires and also damaging of postal lines in various parts of India. The movement spread among the people of Bengal about the prevent of export of rice. The radio never failed to broadcast about the difficulties of people in North Western Frontier Province and highlighted the contributions of women to the movement in this area. The Congress Radio also declared that "It is our last struggle and win we must." It also gave information regarding the torpedoed ship by Japanese near Kerala and Calicut. The rails were derailed in various places and wide agitation continued in various provinces of India. The Congress Radio tried to guide the people in their daily life. It also enumerated ten duties that every Indian could perform without any risk. The Congress Radio never were failed to provide the people firsthand information about the sufferings and happenings in India. The radio also rendered its support to people in broadcasting the speeches of leaders which motivated them to fight against the government for their Independence.

## Conclusion

The radio has been an important medium for the communication since its evolution and it continued to play an important role both in the freedom movement and post-independence. The Freedom Movement has been in its full swing during 1940s. This radio emerged at a time when there was a need to keep the Quit India Movement and the freedom struggle in its high spirits. This radio team aimed to propagate strong messages of the nationalist leaders who worked from underground and also recorded speeches of other important leaders. Glimpses of the roles played by many persons like Ushaben and so on leaders in 1942 makes us realize that the Quit India Movement is not just a chapter in our history but a movement brimming with sacrifice and the suffering of people determined to achieve independence. To conclude, one can never neglect the role played by radio especially, the Congress Radio in India's freedom struggle.

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# UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF NON-VERBAL CUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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## **Abstract**

*Most of the content in a conversation is communicated without words. The implications of the catchphrase: "Actions speak louder than words" emphasizes the significance of non-verbal signals in the process of communication. One cannot deny the profound role that non-verbal cues play on every stage of communication. Such cues adequately reveal genuine feelings. The proper understanding of gestural signals can be helpful in making you an engaging speaker. The aim of this research paper is to examine differences in non-verbal cues of a native speaker and a second language learner. The differences in cultures, values and non-verbal signals may sometimes prevent interlocutors from the effective convey of message in learner/native discourse. The paper also attempts to highlight certain suggestions for the improvement of gestural or non-verbal language, thereby assisting learners in target language as well as raising awareness about the importance of non-verbal cues in second language discourse.*

## **Introduction**

Gestural signals, also called 'body language' are an important part of our everyday communication. Our body movements and demeanor underscore the explicit meaning of any message and also helps to enforce certain assumptions in the minds of our conversational partners. Whether we care or not, the way we react to the stimulus exposes us before the person we are communicating with. Therefore, gestural signals should be used with caution to amplify and underscore the message which we convey verbally.

When our gestures, postures or facial expressions doesn't match with our utterances, they ultimately reduce clarity and trust. According to Negi, "We rely on body language especially in situations when non-verbal and verbal symbols are divergent and contradict each other" (Negi, 101). This is due to the fact that many of gestural signals are sent not very consciously whereas verbal messages in most of the cases are carefully thought out. Gestural signs differ across cultures. They are mostly culture-specific. For the proper exchange of information and

ideas, one needs to be versed with the uses of non-verbal cues within a given culture. These are crucial for effective communication as they help regulate conversations by making it meaningful interactions.

## **Analyzing the Cultural Differences in Non-verbal Signals**

Two speakers of the same language depend mostly on their non-verbal cues while having conversation especially in everyday situations. In communication among people of diverse cultures, understanding of non-verbal signals becomes more significant. It is because when speakers are not conscious of the differences in non-verbal form of communication, their interlocutors may get a wrong impression or misunderstand the information in the process. All the unsuitable or embarrassing situations that could take place because of little knowledge of non-verbal forms of communication can be easily avoided by the language learner if he or she becomes acquainted or aware of the gestural language of the target culture. In the opinion of Richards and Schmidt, there are more challenges in cross-cultural communication than in communication between people of the same

cultural background because most of the times nuances in communication might be missing. Each active participant may comprehend the other's speech according to his or her own cultural values and practices. If the cultural norms of the speakers are thoroughly distinct, misimpression and misreading can easily arise, ultimately resulting in a failure of communication.

This research paper aims to analyze non-verbal cues in communication in terms of four aspects, namely:

- Oculistics- which deals with the study and analysis of eye behavior.
- Haptics- which studies in detail the role and significance of touch in communicative process.
- Proxemics- which is related to the importance of space between interlocutors during process of communication.
- Kinesics- which is mainly concerned with the study and interpretation of body movements.

a) Oculistics- In a communication toolkit, eye behavior is not just about an ordinary glance. It is a potent tool because it is capable of making or breaking our messages. It occurs both voluntarily and involuntarily. The various types of eye movements must with used with caution. In the words of Gregersen, "eye contact has a higher probability of being noticed than any other bodily movements, so it is a much more prominent interaction signal" (Gregersen,59). One should have awareness about the situations where eye contact plays a pivotal role. Both learners and speakers must be mindful of whether the sustained eye contact should be maintained or averted in certain situations. Generally, a good rapport is created when we make and sustain visual contact with people we are talking to. However, in some societies, maintenance of eye contact may be conceived as lack of humility and respect. For instance, in United Kingdom, Africa and in some parts of Asian countries, such as Japan and India, sustained eye contact is perceived as a disrespectful

behavior. Therefore, native speakers from such places evade eye contact in order to appear respectful towards seniors or elders, someone with a higher social standing or authority. Gregersen opines that learners of language who are unfamiliar with the oculesics of Western countries and take off their eyes or look away for other reasons dictated by their native tongue (such as showing reverence for authority, for instance) may find themselves sending the misleading message both in the classroom and outside that they do not want to engage in a conversation.

b) Haptics- Haptics is another crucial aspect of non-verbal cues in communication that changes across different societies and cultures. In places where personal space is smaller, the use of touch is more extensive than in those places where individuals maintain some distance in standing from each other and touch is not always welcome. If speakers from countries like China, Japan or India encounter native speakers from Brazil or Italy, they may feel embarrassed and awkward because of the extensive use of touch by the native speakers during exchange of information.

In some cultures, touch plays a significant role in building relationships and conveying comfort whereas in some specific cultures touch is not always acceptable. In certain cultures, for instance, shaking hands to greet or welcome a stranger or touch the interlocutor during conversation lead to positive outcomes whereas in some places or societies people avoid the use of touch, especially with strangers. In cultures, e.g. China and Japan, any kind of touch should be avoided to evade negative outcomes but in certain cultures touch should be used carefully to avoid potential misinterpretation. Shaking hands with firm grip, the most common greeting used in Poland and Germany, cannot be used in every parts of India towards women. In Poland and Germany, for example, it is also common to express love and affection to children by patting

their heads, which is another gesture that might be found offensive in India, because the head is considered to be “a sacred part of the body”. To use haptics in an appropriate way, the foreign language speaker may take a note of his or her interlocutor and the proximity between them or just read and analyse tourist guides which nowadays often cover the agenda of non-verbal signals in communication.

c) Proxemics- Personal space is an invisible boundary that largely depends on cultural norms. In some societies, people allow closer contact but in certain places people prefer larger physical distance. If a learner does not know how close he or she may come to the interlocutor, they may engage in the situation called conversational tango (Axtell, 18). Axtell gave an instance of such a phenomenon. It generally occurs when American and Latin people encounter each other and the Latin steps forward, not understanding that it may be considered intrusive and that he is entering the American's space. The American, on the other hand, takes a step backward naturally. To encourage meaningful connections and sensitivity, people should not enter the personal space of another person, because this can create a sense of discomfort or even threat. The potential solution is to evade standing too close in order to further prevent possible uneasiness in our conversational partners.

d) Kinesics- Kinesics concerns body movements and analyse how it allows to decode what someone is actually feeling or thinking. There are a lot of expressions or posture that may be obscure depending on the culture. Furthermore, there are lots of gestures that are shaped by any culture's values, social structures or history and are not practiced everywhere. Gestures are subset of this broad aspect. This paper analyses some of those vague gestures that can be inconclusive and create major barrier in communication.

There are several gestures and the present paper will discuss merely a few examples that may

be difficult to comprehend and most confusing to use by foreign language speakers in their discourse with native speakers. There are some troublesome expressions that are used exclusively with the head. One of the most crucial gesture that will be analysed is nodding of the head which is the movement of the head downwards and upwards. This common gesture is interpreted in differently in different cultures. In some parts of the West, the horizontal nodding i.e., side to side movement of the head is interpreted as an approval or respect, whereas in India this gesture is performed to express disapproval.

There are numerous gestures that can be used with hands. But again, many of them have a different meaning that are culture-specific. For instance, a hand-ring gesture. A thumb and forefinger tips are joined and create a circle — “everything is O.K.” (America), in Japan this gesture is used to depict money, in Tunisia people use this gesture to say “I'll kill you”, in France it means “zero” or “worthless” (Morris, 118).

To perform gestures cautiously, one should start using them freely in all possible circumstances in order to memorize them quickly and make them look natural and effortless during conversations. It may be useful enough, particularly when someone is willing to learn gestures typical of another culture. As far as ambiguous bodily movements are concerned, it is recommended to avoid using them too often in order to prevent any kind of misunderstanding or obscurity.

Posture is a silent yet dominant stance which speaks volumes about one's personality. It is capable enough in shaping perception. By posture, people can express agreement or disagreement, interest or lack of interest and negative or positive emotions. A balanced posture is helpful in engaging people in conversation and often communicate more. It doesn't only convey your confidence and competence but is also one of the first things that others notice. There are specific gestures that seem to be unaffected and spontaneous, but may be taken as extremely offensive in some cultures that may undermine your

credibility. The most common troublesome postures are:

- Crossing of legs — in many societies, it is a perceived as an action of being free from worries, but according to Samovar, it is a taboo in Korea,
- Slouching —paying attention to this specific posture is important as it makes difference. Leaning back or any ungainly posture such as sprawling legs and arms as well as sitting cross-legged is a sign of rest or relaxation, but in countries or in certain societies where people adhere to a highly formal manner, these ways are perceived as discourteous and such acts by person are considered as lack of basic manners and etiquettes.
- Ankle-to-knee — putting an ankle of one leg on the knee of the other most commonly suggests a relaxed or satisfied position, free from any discomfort. But in Thailand, Singapore or Saudi Arabia, it may be conceived as an insult, because when sitting in this position the person is showing the sole of the shoe. Such an act is taken as humiliation in certain cultures.

### Conclusion

Generally, people experience snags in deciphering several gestures and their suggestive meanings across various cultures. Therefore, it is really important to make people sensitive about it and realize the value of cultural gaps and variations. We should be well aware of the pivotal role that non-verbal cues play among language learners. Explaining various gestures to students not only assist them in becoming effectively communicative and comprehensible in their target language but also improves the quality of their learning naturally and make interactions effective. Experts have proven this point that the speakers who imbibe expressions with gestures, learn more quickly and clearly than those who fail to learn corresponding gestures. In the opinion of Gullberg and McCafferty, second language

learners use gestures not only to fill in the gap created by their “lexical shortcomings” (Gullberg & McCafferty, 138) but also for “compensatory functions as requests for help [...] and negotiation procedures, clarification or illustration; regulatory functions like turn-keeping and turn -yielding functions” (Gullberg, 163). If learners of the second language perform gestures more frequently than native speakers and non-verbal signals serve a multitudinous function in their native/non-native speaker discourse, they should use them wisely and appropriately to the situation, which means that they should be cautious of cultural diversities and know particular gestures of the target language in order to be perceived correctly. The switching to the target culture’s gestures while teaching students can be one of the appropriate steps.

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## MADHUSUDANA MISHRA – THE UNSUNG HERO OF CIVIL-DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT IN PURI DISTRICT

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### Abstract

*The history of Indian freedom movement would be incomplete without the contributions of some of the unsung heroes of various localities of our country. This paper attempts to explore the profile of an unsung hero of freedom movement in Odisha of Puri district. That unsung hero was Madhusudan Mishra. He was one of the prominent figures during Gandhian Movements in Kakatpur and Astarang localities of Puri District. Madhusudan Mishra was not only a famous freedom fighter but also a prominent social reformer who contributed a lot to the political, social economic and educational spheres of Kakatpur and Astarang regions of Puri District. Being the disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, Gopabandhu Das and Nilakantha Das, he spread their messages among the masses during Gandhian Movements. The nationalist movement toward the half of 20th century provided the necessity impetus and pull the educated youths in political mainstream. Madhusudan Mishra was the best example of it.*

**Keywords:** *freedom, movement, reformer, political, hero*

### Introduction

If discrimination is a fact of life, so is it with History. Historians, down the ages have been discriminative in their approach to individuals. Whenever they talk about a person in the content of whose life history is recorded, it is necessarily a leader but never a follower highlighting their activities and sacrifices. Keeping in mind this approach let the present saga of an unsung freedom fighter Madhusudan Mishra of Kakatpur in Puri District.

Madhusudan Mishra was born in 1894 a poor family at Ganganarayanpur in Kakatpur of Puri District. His father's name is Satyananda Mishra and Mother name is Sabita Dei. After completion M.E in first class from Kakatpur Vernacular School, he went to puri for further study. During that time puri district had only two high School that was Puri Zilla School another was Satyabadi Bana Bidyalaya, Sakhigopal. It was established by renowned writer and social

worker Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das in 1909. By the help of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Madhusudan Mishra took admission in Satyabadi Bana Bidyalaya in 1914 and successfully passed out matriculation in first class in 1918 from this institution. After this, he took admission F.A. in Ravenshaw College but in 1920 he left college influenced by the clarion call of Gopabandhu Das and joined the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Madhusudan Mishra campaigned in the areas of Balasore, Dhusura and Dhamnagar in the direction of Pandit Gopabandhu Das. In those areas he spread the message of Non-Cooperation movement for staying 6 months.

In 1921, Gopabandhu Das advised Madhu Mishra to propagate the message of Mahatma Gandhi in his home land Kakatpur, Gop and Nimapara. After that, Madhusudan Mishra, Purusattam Muduli, Balunkeswar Praharaj,

Netranada Pattnaik and Purnanada Swain formed a congress committee at Kakatpur. During the devastate flood of 1921-22, Gopabandhu Das established relief centers at different places of Odisha for distribution of relief to flood affected people. Every Year, due to flood most of the areas of Gop, Kakatpur were affected during that time. The infamous famine of 1921-22 also affected the areas of Nimapada and Kakatpur. Due to the lack of food grains common people suffered a lot. For solving the scarcity of food grains, the British government instructed to sell food grains in each and every police station for smoothly distribution of food grains among the people. When the non-cooperation movement was going on, Madhusudan Mishra established weaving centers at Patapur and Mulagad in the direction of Gopabandhu Das. One of the associates of Madhusudan Mishra named Purusattam Muduli of Patapur had the responsibility of visiting all weaving centers and to trained them. Madhusudan Mishra accepted the job of teacher by establishing a national School at Patapur.

There was a meeting room for freedom fighters at Deuli Matha in Kakatpur. There was a mango garden near the meeting room where the congress activists burnt foreign clothes. One day, when a meeting was going on the mango garden many freedom fighters and congress activists were joined to listen iconic speeches of two freedom fighters, Mohan Das and Madhusudan Mishra. Infused by the speeches of Mohan das and Madhusudan Mishra, a student who was present at that meeting naked himself and burnt his foreign cloth whatever he had worn. Influenced by the activity of that student, many students burnt foreign clothes. That boy who burnt his clothes became the superintendent of Government press in his later part of life. His name was Udayanath Mishra who was form Kuahata Durgeswarpur Baharama of Puri Dist.

### **Participate in Non-Cooperation Movement**

In between 1921 to 1930, Madhusudan Mishra and Mohan Das spread Mahatma Gandhi and Gopabandhu Das's Massage of non-violence, non-cooperation, promotion of cottage industry, social work and using of swadeshi goods among the masses of Astarang, Gop and Kakatpur. Purusattam Muduli and Purnananda Swain, two local Congress activists accompanied Mohan Das and Madhusudan Mishra for spreading the massage of Mahatma Gandhi and Gopabandhu Das. Brundaban Swain and Balakrushna Swain, zamindar's Olaner Village participated in the Gandhian Movements.

### **Participate in Civil-Disobedience Movement**

Mahatma Gandhi started his epoch-making foot-march with a band of 72 volunteers from the Sabarmati Ashram on 12 March, 1930. Motibas Das, a Khadi student of about twenty years of age from Odisha, accompanied him. Gandhi reached Dandi on 5 April and broke the salt law on 6 April. But the Congress leaders of Odisha particularly H.K. Mahatab thought of this campaign much earlier. This is clear from a confidential report of the Government that, "Under the leadership of notorious H.K. Mahatab an attempt was being made to start Civil Disobedience and illicit manufacture of salt in Balasore and Puri districts respectively."

In Odisha it was decided to break the salt law at a coastal district. The decision was taken in a special meeting of the Odisha Congress Committee on 16 March, 1930. Inchudi in Balasore was first place in Odisha where the Salt Satyagraha would be launched. Leading the satyagrahi Gopabandhu Choudhry made plans to start his march from Cuttack to Balasore. He was arrested on 8 August 1930. Hence Acharya Harihar took the leadership in leading the Satyagrahis to Balasore. On 13 April, in the presence of thousands of people, Acharya Harihar grabbed a handful of salty soil on the Inchudi sea-

cost and thus broke the salt law. He and other Satyagrahis were promptly arrested.

By the end of April, Nilakantha Das resigned his seat in the Central Legislative Assembly to join the salt satyagraha at Puri. The Utkal Pradesh congress committee gave the responsibility of the leadership of puri district to Nilakantha Das. He was assisted by leaders like Madhusudan Mishra, Purusattam Muduli, Bhubanananda Swain, Balakrushna Swain, Jagannath Rath, Krupasindhu Hota, Jadumani Parida, Sobani Chhatoi, Srinibas Moharana, Gopinatah Muduli, Nilakantha Swain, Bhagaban Swain, Jagannath Parida, Radha Dei, Gatikrushna Swin, Jayaram Senapati, Ananta Charan Mohanty, Fakir Mohan Pradhan, Shyam Sundar Swain, and Agani Swain etc. They had decided to break salt law at Kuhudi under the leadership of Nilakantha Das. As per the plan, many satyagrahis came from Satyabadi and they formed a satyagrahi camp at Olaner for spreading the activities of breaking of salt law. The breaking of salt law started continuously after 21st may 1930. Madhusudan Mishra was the biggest threat for police because of his leadership quality in salt breaking movement. When Madhusudan Mishra was leading the mob at Kuhudi, he was arrested by the police superintendent, Thorani Saheeb. The arrest of Madhusudan Mishra made the satyagrahis furious and they started agitations demanding release of their leader Madhusudan Mishra. But the police charge lathi brutally for restoring law and order in that locality. After the arrest of Madhusudan Mishra, within four days, leaders like Jagannath Rath, Purusattam Muduli, Brundaban swain, Balakrusna Swain were arrested. Madhusudan Mishra was sentenced to Hazaribagh jail where he came into contact with leaders like Harekrushna Mahatab and Rajkrushna Bose.

The Government made every effort to suppress the movement and issued search warrants in the name of several leaders of Puri. On 26 May, the police searched eighteen houses along with the

houses of Kanai Pradhan, Laxman Pradhan, Utsav Sahu, Biswanath and Mani Rout of Nuagaon for contraband salt. The police also recovered salt, saline earth and implements of salt manufacture from their houses. Towards the end of May, the satyagrahis produced salt at villages such as Kakatpur, Kuhudi, Khandasahi, Natora and Manduki in Kakatpur police station. For organizing salt campaign Nilakantha Das was arrested at Sakhigopal on 30 May, 1930. On 12 June he was convicted under section 9 of the salt Act and was sentenced to six months imprisonment with a fine of Rs.50/-. A hartal was observed at Sakhigopal in protest against his arrest on 31 May. On 1 June, Gopinath Sarangi was taken into custody while manufacturing salt at Natora. Four satyagrahis including thirty villagers participated in this action. The satyagrahis hoisted the Congress flag and delivered speeches calling upon the people to join the movement. As a result, the police arrested and lathi charged on Satyagrahis.

While Madhusudan Mishra was in jail, he contested for the election of Zilla Board in which he defeated his opponent Bramhananda Mohanty. In that zilla board election, Banamali Das was elected as the chairman of Zilla Board. In 1932-33, Madhusudan Mishra and Banamali Das opened a Gosala at Konark within an area of 10 acres with the help of Gokulananda Choudhry and zamindar of Bangurigaon, Birabhadra Sahoo. Physically challenged and sick cattle of near localities got treatment from that Gosala founded by Madhusudan Mishra. Madusudan Mishra had given the responsibility of that Gosala to her widow sister, Draupadi.

By the end of 1932, an all-India anti-untouchability movement was started by Gandhiji. To undertake the Harijan work, the All-India Sevak Sangha was formed under the presidentship of Amrit Lai Thakkar. A branch was opened in Odisha in the name of Utkal Harijan Sevak Sangha. Balunkeswar Acharya, a renowned Kaviraj of Cuttack became its

President. Srimati Ramadevi, Laxmi Narayan Sahoo and Satya Narayan Sengupta became the Secretaries. Acharya Harihara Das, H.K. Mahatab, Bichitra Nanda Das, Radhanath Rath and Gunanidhi Mohanty were its prominent members.

At that time, the visit of A.V. Thakkar intensified the Harijan movement in Odisha. He addressed a meeting at Cuttack on 20 November which was organized by Gopabandhu Choudhury. In his address he emphasized the spread of education among the Harijans. He also promised to arrange a special aid from the funds of the All India Harijan Sevak Sangha for their promotion of education. This meeting was attended by Lokanath Misra, Narasimha Chayupattnaik and Harihara Misra of Puri district. After attending this meeting, the leaders of the district organized several meetings in Puri and passed the resolutions to allow an entry to the Harijans into the temples. In Kakatpur, Madhusudan Mishra, Purnanada Swain and Purusattam Muduli and Gatikrushna Swain organized several meetings in local areas and spread the above message of A.V. Thakkar in local areas.

### Conclusion

Madhusudan Mishra was not only a freedom fighter but also an ideal teacher. He taught in different schools like Patlada Bikramdeb M.E School, Kurujang M.E School and Kakatpur High School. He was also a homeopathic doctor. He provided free homeopathic treatment to the people of Kakatpur, Gop, Astarang during natural calamities, this great man died in 1978.

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# CODING CONSCIENCE: LITERARY INTERVENTIONS FOR ETHICAL AND SUSTAINABLE AI IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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## Abstract

*As we navigate an era increasingly characterized by algorithmics, automation, and digital intelligence, the imperative of Sustainable Economic Development in the Age of Artificial Intelligence warrants comprehensive exploration that encompasses not only technological and economic considerations but also literary and ethical dimensions. This research paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from English literary studies and digital humanities, with a focal analysis of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, a foundational text in British literature. Shelley's narrative, which addresses themes of scientific ambition, irresponsible creation, and the repercussions of social exclusion, serves as a poignant allegory for contemporary challenges. In an age where artificial intelligence, if not guided by inclusive values, may exacerbate rather than mitigate social and economic inequalities, this discourse becomes increasingly relevant. In this analysis, artificial intelligence is framed as the modern "creature," influencing the development of inclusive futures across pivotal sectors, including healthcare, education, sustainable agriculture, gender equity, and environmental resilience. By drawing parallels between Shelley's fictional universe and the global endeavor to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this paper elucidates both the advantages and risks associated with implementing AI in ways that neglect essential human dignities, ethics, and accessibility. The creature's experience of rejection symbolizes the marginalization of various populations – such as women, rural communities, and those lacking digital access – who may be left behind in the AI evolution. Employing methodologies from digital humanities, such as textual analysis and discourse mapping, this research illustrates how literature can effectively reframe our understanding of economic paradigms. Ultimately, this paper asserts that achieving sustainable development in the age of artificial intelligence necessitates a synthesis of scientific innovation with literary imagination. Utilizing narratives like Frankenstein can inspire growth that is inclusive, ethical, and centered on human values.*

**Keywords:** digital humanities, artificial intelligence, sustainable development, inclusive growth, technological ethics, gender and AI, posthumanism, social equity, algorithmic bias, environmental resilience, SDGs

## Introduction

In an era characterized by the pervasive influence of artificial intelligence, where algorithms shape various aspects of life – including employment decisions and healthcare access – the concept of sustainable economic development warrants examination through ethical, cultural, and literary perspectives. While scientific and technological advancements accelerate at an unprecedented pace, English literature – particularly its enduring engagement with issues of power, identity, and responsibility – provides a critical

framework for understanding the social ramifications of such progress. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) serves as a foundational text for this exploration. Victor Frankenstein's unchecked scientific ambition, which culminates in the creation of a being he ultimately forsakes, metaphorically reflects the current trajectory of AI development that often lacks inclusive ethical foresight. The creature's lament – "I had feelings of affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn" (Shelley 102) – captures the alienation felt by those excluded from the advantages

of AI, particularly marginalized and under-resourced communities.

Currently, AI is positioned as a solution to global challenges, encompassing health disparities, educational inequality, and sustainable agriculture. However, without a humanistic framework, it risks perpetuating the very injustices it aims to address. Nick Couldry, and Ulises Mejias articulate a concern about “data colonialism,” which threatens to replicate the power hierarchies of imperialism under the façade of digital advancement (Couldry and Mejias 4). This apprehension resonates with the fate of Shelley’s creature, who is “wretched, helpless, and alone,” not by its inherent nature, but due to societal rejection (Shelley 121).

Rosi Braidotti, through her theory of the posthuman, advocates for the dismantling of hierarchical binaries that separate human and non-human entities. She highlights the “ethical imperative to think beyond the anthropocentric subject” (Braidotti 57), advocating for AI systems that contribute to inclusive futures. In parallel, N. Katherine Hayles posits that literature fosters a deeper understanding of machine subjectivity, emphasizing that “intelligent machines compel us to redefine what it means to be human” (Hayles 283). Consequently, literature serves not merely as a reflection of technology but actively interrogates its ethical boundaries.

Timothy Morton’s notion of “ecological thought” is relevant to this discourse, stressing that sustainability must encompass “nonhuman others” and challenge systems that treat nature and labor as expendable resources (Morton 19). This perspective aligns with global objectives to harness AI for eco-agriculture and renewable energy, yet it necessitates a cultural framework that resists capitalist exploitation. Furthermore, Amartya Sen’s *Development as Freedom* posits that genuine development must enhance individual capabilities and ensure social inclusion, an idea that resonates

with the creature’s unfulfilled desire for education, empathy, and community (Sen 18).

Within the realm of digital humanities, Alan Liu asserts the importance of embedding critique within innovation, advocating that the field must balance “instrumentalism with reflection” to avert reproducing the structures it seeks to democratize (Liu 27). Therefore, digital tools informed by literary ethics can promote a more human-centered approach to AI.

In this research, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* emerges as not only a cautionary narrative but also a timeless guide, warning that creations devoid of accountability may devolve into destructive forces. Literature demonstrates that for AI to achieve true sustainability, it must be predicated on principles of justice, inclusivity, and ethical grounding. It is through the imaginative and reflective capabilities of literary study that a pathway toward equitable development in the age of AI can be most clearly envisioned.

## Critical Analysis

### **Creating the Modern Machine: Frankenstein, AI, and the Ethics of Sustainable Innovation:**

In an era increasingly defined by artificial intelligence and automation, the question of who controls innovation – and who benefits from it – has emerged as a critical concern in the discourse surrounding sustainable economic development. Literature, particularly British fiction from the industrial age, provides valuable ethical insights into these issues. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), frequently interpreted as a critique of scientific overreach, can be reconceptualized as a caution against development models that lack empathy and social accountability. Victor Frankenstein’s revelation – “I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body...but now I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished” (Shelley 56) – encapsulates the disillusionment that often accompanies unregulated innovation. This disillusionment parallels

contemporary AI, which, while promising progress, frequently exacerbates inequality when implemented without inclusive frameworks.

The development of AI tends to emphasize speed, profit, and control. However, as Ruha Benjamin articulates, “engineered inequity is neither accidental nor new – it is embedded in the very codes and protocols of innovation” (Benjamin, *Race After Technology* 45). AI systems utilized in policing, hiring, and healthcare often replicate existing racial, gendered, and economic hierarchies. Shelley’s creature, ostracized despite his yearning for connection, exemplifies the plight of those marginalized by prevailing systems. “Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled?” (Shelley 84). This inquiry reflects the alienation experienced by digitally marginalized populations – those who are left behind in increasingly data-driven economies.

Literary theory further enriches these insights. Donna Haraway, in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, advocates for hybrid identities and inclusive systems that challenge capitalist and patriarchal norms. “The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world” (Haraway 150), providing a feminist perspective for AI development. However, Shelley’s creature embodies the contrary experience: despite possessing intelligence and empathy, he is denied societal inclusion. This illustrates how AI systems can perpetuate exclusion if they are not expressly designed to promote inclusion.

On a global scale, the implementation of AI in the Global South – particularly in sectors such as agriculture, education, and public health – raises pivotal questions regarding ethical access and development. Amartya Sen underscores that development should not be assessed solely through GDP but by “the expansion of human capabilities” (Sen, *Development as Freedom* 75). Shelley’s creature represents an unfulfilled subject: he educates himself in language, history, and

philosophy, yet is deprived of the opportunity for belonging. “I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches” (Shelley 105). His education does not secure his position in society – a metaphor reflecting the plight of individuals acquiring digital skills without systemic support or access.

The field of digital humanities provides methodological insights into these challenges. Johanna Drucker advocates for interpretive models over purely data-driven approaches, urging scholars to prioritize “critically, ambiguity, and context” in digital discourse (Drucker 216). This call resonates with the ethical imperatives present in literature such as *Frankenstein*, which critiques knowledge that is divorced from accountability. When Victor Frankenstein abandons his creation, it is not the creature’s intellect but society’s fear and prejudice that lead to catastrophe.

Thus, *Frankenstein* offers more than merely a cautionary narrative; it presents a literary framework through which we can critique and reimagine AI. Its themes of exclusion, unchecked ambition, and moral blindness reflect the hazards of unsustainable technological advancement. Alan Liu posits that digital scholarship must “embed humanistic critique within innovation” (Liu 40), emphasizing the role of literature at the forefront of technological ethics. Through close reading and theoretical engagement, literature serves as a venue to envision an AI future that emphasizes equity and care – rather than merely automation.

In conclusion, this chapter contends that sustainable innovation must encompass not only design and policy considerations but also literary ethics. Shelley’s *Frankenstein* aids in visualizing the perils of abandonment – of individuals, principles, and inclusive visions. It is only through this interdisciplinary reflection that AI can be guided towards justice and collective flourishing.

## Gender, Power, and Artificial Intelligence: Feminist Readings in the Age of Algorithm

Artificial Intelligence (AI), although frequently regarded as neutral and objective, inherently reflects the structural biases of the societies and the individuals that develop it. This chapter explores the intersection of gender and AI through a feminist literary perspective, highlighting how power dynamics and patriarchal structures are ingrained in emerging technologies. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* serves as a foundational text for analyzing the repercussions of unchecked, male-dominated innovation. Victor Frankenstein's dismissal of female agency, both biologically and intellectually, parallels the systemic exclusion of women within the AI industry today.

Frankenstein's refusal to create a female companion for his creature, stemming from a fear that she might "become a thinking and reasoning animal" (Shelley 171), reinforces longstanding anxieties regarding autonomous female existence. This decision encapsulates deep-rooted fears surrounding female empowerment within technological and scientific progress. Feminist scholar Donna Haraway examines this theme in her influential text *Cyborg Manifesto*, asserting that conventional boundaries between human, animal, and machine are socially constructed and stem from patriarchal ideologies: "The Cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world" (Haraway 150). Haraway's vision provides a corrective to male-centric technological fantasies, proposing inclusive, alternative futures.

In the 21st century, AI systems have perpetuated gender disparities by encoding them into data. Virginia Eubanks, in *Automating Inequality*, illustrates how algorithms disproportionately disadvantage women – particularly those who are low-income and minority – through automated decision-making processes in welfare, housing, and healthcare (Eubanks 89). This marginalization of women through data mirrors the nonrecognition of female voices in *Frankenstein*, particularly evident in the fates of

Justine and Elizabeth, whose destinies are governed by male arrogance.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity further enriches the comprehension of AI's gender politics. Butler argues that gender is "an identity tenuously constituted in time," dependent on the repetition of normative behaviors (Butler 25). Similarly, AI models learn and replicate patterns based on historical data, often perpetuating sexist stereotypes. For instance, natural language processing systems have consistently demonstrated bias by associating male names with terms such as "leader" and female names with "assistant" or "nurse." These outcomes are not mere technical errors but are indicative of the unexamined inheritance of patriarchal language and assumptions.

Moreover, *Frankenstein* functions as a symbolic case study in techno-masculinity – the drive to create life devoid of female participation. As literary scholar Anne K. Mellor emphasizes, "Victor Frankenstein's scientific project is explicitly asexual, even anti-sexual" (Mellor 274). This perspective is mirrored in AI research cultures that marginalize women and other underrepresented genders, posing significant risks to equitable innovation. The absence of diverse voices in the development of AI guarantees that the technology continues to mirror narrow, frequently oppressive worldviews.

Nevertheless, literature and digital humanities presents avenues for resistance. Through feminist digital archives, inclusive storytelling platforms, and gender-conscious coding initiatives, scholars of the humanities are reclaiming narrative space within the discourse surrounding AI. As Safiya Umoja Noble asserts in *Algorithms of Oppression*, "If we do not intervene, these systems will continue to reinforce inequality at scale" (Noble 2). Consequently, English literature is not merely retrospective but actively contributes to the formation of ethical and inclusive AI futures.

## AI in Agriculture and Education: Bridging the digital divide through Literary Reflections

The digital revolution, driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), poses both challenges and opportunities within the realms of agriculture and education. As global policy frameworks increasingly advocate for AI as a mechanism for sustainability, equity, and growth, the principal challenge remains the inclusion and humane application of these technologies. This chapter analyses how AI, when interpreted through the lens of literature – particularly Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – and digital humanities theory, can effectively bridge the rural-urban digital divide while exposing the ethical pitfalls of exclusionary development.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein's endeavor to create life symbolizes a significant scientific achievement that lacks social responsibility. His failure to nurture the emotional and intellectual growth of the creature results in dire consequences. Shelley cautions, "I had desired it with an ardor that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished" (Shelley 56). This sentiment encapsulates the contemporary dilemma wherein technological advancements frequently disregard the social and ethical ecosystems in which they exist. In the context of AI-driven rural development, particularly in agriculture and education, such neglect can exacerbate existing inequalities.

AI technologies, such as adaptive learning platforms and precision farming tools, possess the potential to empower marginalized rural populations. However, in the absence of accessible digital infrastructure, local language integration, and context-sensitive training, these solutions risk reinforcing another layer of digital elitism. Johanna Drucker, in *Graphesis*, asserts that data is never neutral; it is "Capta," signifying that it is selectively gathered and influenced by contextual factors (Drucker 4). When applied to AI policy, this notion

highlights the systemic digital injustices that arise from the selective implementation of technology in urban areas while neglecting rural sectors.

The creature in *Frankenstein*, deprived of guidance and education, acquires literacy by observing the De Lacey family, ultimately reflecting, "I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel" (Shelley 87). This metaphor poignantly illustrates the challenges faced by rural learners and farmers – promised empowerment through AI yet often abandoned without the essential tools, literacy, or infrastructural support. The integration of agriculture and education through AI could facilitate transformative opportunities; for instance, smart farming initiatives in India have effectively employed AI for weather prediction and soil diagnostics, while platforms such as Diksha aim to provide educational content to remote learners. Nevertheless, these initiatives are constrained by policy shortcomings and inconsistent internet accessibility.

Digital humanities theorist Tara McPherson advocates for a "modular humanities," where code, culture, and critique mutually inform one another (MacPherson 139). In practical terms, this perspective suggests that technological solutions must emerge from interdisciplinary and community-driven insight. Literature plays a crucial role in this endeavor – not only in highlighting historical errors but also in proposing ethical and inclusive futures. Narratives from British literature, such as George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, reveal how systemic neglect in education and opportunity perpetuates class and regional disparities.

In order to genuinely bridge the digital divide, AI must be conceptualized as a collective tool rather than an elite invention. Farmers and learners should be actively involved as co-creators in the development processes of AI. The lessons derived from *Frankenstein* underscores the importance of considering not only what is created but also for whom and how such creations are developed. The

objective should extend beyond mere technological advancement; it should encompass sustainable and humane inclusion, establishing equity in both agricultural fields and educational classrooms as the foundation for economic growth.

### **The Ethics of Creation: AI, Climate Change, and Literary Warnings**

As humanity confronts the pressing challenges posed by climate change, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a formidable instrument for predicting environmental patterns, managing resources, and devising sustainable technologies. However, the unchecked proliferation of AI also poses the risk of perpetuating the very inequalities and ecological damages it aims to address. Literature, particularly Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, provides a lasting ethical framework through which these complexities can be critically analyzed. Shelley's cautionary narrative highlights the moral dilemmas associated with scientific ambition detached from human responsibility, a theme that holds significant relevance in the contemporary context of climate-focused AI.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein's relentless pursuit of knowledge and power culminates in the creation of a being for which he refuses to assume responsibility. The creature's lament, "I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel" (Shelley 87), serves as a metaphor for abandoned creations, whose repercussions extend far beyond their creators' intentions. In a similar vein, AI-driven geoengineering initiatives—such as carbon capture, weather manipulation, and predictive drought systems—often stem from technological optimism yet remain disconnected from the communities most susceptible to climate-related disasters. Absent inclusive design, these technologies risk becoming instruments of environmental elitism.

Scholars such as Kate Crawford contend that AI systems "encode and enforce power" (Crawford 75),

particularly when environmental data is harvested from the Global South for the benefit of corporations in the Global North. Such concerns resonate with Frankenstein's oversight regarding the unintended consequences of technological advancement. The novel does not inherently condemn knowledge; rather, it critiques the hubris that accompanies its misuse. In today's landscape, this hubris manifests in climate solutions that disregard indigenous ecological wisdom and marginalize diverse voices in governance.

The field of digital humanities presents a pathway to reevaluate how environmental data is processed, presented, and interpreted in an ethical manner. Alan Liu posits that "digital systems must remain accountable to cultural criticism" (Liu 491). When climate technologies are developed solely by technocrats, devoid of cultural and literary perspectives, they risk replicating Frankenstein's error – creating robust systems that are unanchored from empathy, justice, or historical awareness.

Consequently, literature serves as a crucial counterbalance, alerting society to the potential ramifications of neglecting the principles of care in the creation process. Frankenstein's creature, born from ambition yet deprived of affection, symbolizes a reality wherein technological products lack human contextualization. Thus, AI must extend beyond mere efficiency; it must also embody equity.

The intersection of AI and climate change should be approached not merely as a technical challenge, but rather as a moral obligation. The lesson derived from *Frankenstein* is unequivocal: the capacity to create carries with it the responsibility to protect, to listen, and to be accountable. In reimagining AI as a viable climate solution, it is imperative to consider not only "Can we achieve this?" but also "Should we and for whom?"

## Digital Humanities as Resistance: The Role of Literature in Shaping Ethical AI

In an age where Artificial Intelligence increasingly influences policy, production, and perception, the digital humanities represent a crucial site of resistance, intervening in prevailing AI narratives by amplifying marginalized voices and literary epistemologies. English studies, often perceived as peripheral in technological discussions, are, in fact, integral to the discourse surrounding ethical AI. Literature captures human complexity, ethical ambiguity, and sociohistorical marginality—dimensions that are frequently oversimplified by algorithmic logic. Through digital humanities methodologies, literary scholarship can not only preserve these dimensions but also actively reshape the cultural imagination surrounding AI.

The novel, as a literary form, has historically challenged hegemonic structures and provided counter-histories to dominant narratives. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* serves as a pertinent example of this potential. Victor Frankenstein's failure to consider the ethical and social ramifications of his creation reflects a broader cultural inadequacy to interrogate the values embedded within technological systems. The creature's poignant inquiry, "Am I not alone, miserably alone?" (Shelley 116), articulates the alienation experienced by those rendered inhuman by society—a condition that resonates with contemporary populations marginalized by algorithms. The digital humanities reposition this literary moment as a framework for reimagining AI design and development through the lenses of empathy, marginality, and ethical reflection.

Scholars such as Johanna Drucker assert that the digital humanities must resist the quantification of culture, positing that "knowledge is not data; it is interpretation" (Drucker 88). This interpretive ethos is essential for disrupting the positivist logics that prevail in AI development. When algorithms are predominantly trained on data derived from dominant

cultures, they perpetuate biases against historically underrepresented groups, including women, the Global South, racial minorities, and LGBTQ+ communities. English studies, equipped with critical tools such as deconstruction, narrative theory, and cultural analysis, empower scholars to uncover these biases and suggest alternative modes of knowledge production.

Archival initiatives such as The Colored Conventions Project and Torn Apart/ Separados exemplify how digital tools can center voices that have been neglected by mainstream data practices. These projects do not merely aggregate data; rather, they construct interpretive frameworks that resist hegemonic structures. As Roopika Risam observes, "The digital humanities offer opportunities to build new epistemologies that prioritize justice, equity, and inclusivity" (Risam 18). Within this context, literature, particularly when intersected with digital humanities, emerges as a mode of resistance – recovering silenced narratives and challenging the presumption of neutrality in AI systems.

By reframing literature as both data and critique, English studies contest the notion that AI is a solely technical construct. Literary texts encapsulate alternative futurities – visions of collaboration, empathy, and defiance against technological determinism. By integrating such texts into digital platforms and AI training datasets, scholars can intervene in the epistemological foundations of machine learning itself.

In conclusion, the role of English studies extends beyond merely interpreting the world constructed by AI; it also encompasses the imperative of envisioning – and coding – a more inclusive future. Through the digital humanities, literature transforms into a dynamic archive of ethical critique and creative resistance, poised to influence the future trajectory of AI in more humane and equitable directions.

## **Methodological Framework: Interdisciplinarity, Literary Criticism, and the Digital Humanities in the Age of AI**

This research employs a multidisciplinary methodology grounded in English literary studies, digital humanities, and critical theory to explore the intersections between artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainable economic development. The approach synthesizes close readings of literature, specifically Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, with theoretical analyses from scholars such as Donna Haraway, Johanna Drucker, and Roopika Risam. This integration of literary-critical tools and digital epistemologies enables the research to elucidate the cultural, ethical, and political implications of AI-driven futures.

At the foundation of this study is the conviction that literature serves not merely as a reflection of society but as a platform for speculative critique and ethical inquiry. The novel *Frankenstein*, stands as a pivotal text that anticipates numerous dilemmas associated with contemporary AI – namely, creation without accountability, the marginalization of the "Other," and the unrestrained pursuit of knowledge. Victor Frankenstein's abdication of moral responsibility resonates with the current technological milieu. His creation's lament, "I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel" (Shelley 87), encapsulates the dispossession experienced by individuals excluded from the advantages of AI and digital economies.

The digital humanities methodology introduces a critical technological dimension to this research. Scholars such as Drucker caution against the treatment of humanities data as mere computational inputs, advocating instead for an interpretative, culturally situated analysis: "Humanistic inquiry must emphasize ambiguity, complexity, and situated meaning" (Drucker 125). Consequently, this research regards digital tools not as neutral facilitators, but as systems interwoven with cultural values-akin to AI

algorithms that influence access to health, education, and agricultural resources in the Global South.

Postcolonial digital humanities, as articulated by Roopika Risam, inform the study's challenge to technocratic narratives. Risam's assertion that "the digital humanities can serve as a space for recovering suppressed histories and reimagining justice" (Risam 34) directly informs this paper's investigation into how AI may either exacerbate or mitigate economic disparities. This perspective is essential to understanding that inclusion and sustainability require more than merely technical enhancements; they necessitate a structural focus on power, voice, and memory – issues that are central to both literary analysis and development discourse.

Furthermore, this research draws upon feminist technoscience theory, particularly Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, which reconceptualizes subjectivity and technological identity. Haraway's characterization of the cyborg as "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 149) aligns with the project's objective to bridge the domains of fiction and policy, demonstrating how literary imagination can shape real – world technological ethics and frameworks for AI development.

Through a triangulated methodology – comprising literary criticism, digital epistemologies, and critical theory – this paper asserts that English studies are not only pertinent to AI discourse but are also indispensable for the cultivation of inclusive, sustainable, and equitable technological futures. It reclaims literature as a vital arena for advocating justice and addressing inequality in the algorithmic age.

## **Conclusion**

As we approach the dawn of an AI-driven the promise of sustainable economic development is increasingly assessed not by the velocity of innovation, but by the profundity of reflective thought.

This research endeavor – rooted in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and informed by the perspectives of digital humanities, ethical theory, and postcolonial critique – demonstrates that literature serves not only as a reflection of progress but also as a moral compass for power. Shelley's creature, a product of ambition yet forsaken by ethical considerations, serves as a prescient commentary on our contemporary landscape: a society that is advancing intelligent machines without first contemplating the implications of what it means to be human. The potential of artificial intelligence to revolutionize education, agriculture, healthcare, and economic equality is indisputable; however, it also possesses the capacity to perpetuate historical inequities if left unexamined. The digital divide encompasses more than mere access to technology; it also concerns whose narratives are encoded, whose intelligence is acknowledged, and whose aspirations are integrated into developmental frameworks. In this context, English literary studies emerge not as passive observers, but as proactive agents capable of challenging prevailing techno-narratives and advocating for inclusive definitions of intelligence. By examining AI through the lens of literature, this paper reconceptualizes sustainability as a narrative endeavor, one that ought to incorporate empathy, historical context, and justice into every algorithm. For within the interstice between machine learning and human aspiration lies a profound truth: sustainable development commences not with mere invention, but with introspection. Therefore, let us engage in coding with prudence – and envision with bravery.

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# A STUDY OF LEARNING STRATEGIES AND SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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## Abstract

*Learning strategies refer to the methods and techniques students use to acquire, process, and retain information. These strategies are generally classified into three main categories viz., Cognitive, Metacognitive and resource management strategies. Using effective learning strategies can significantly improve understanding, memory, and the practical application of knowledge. For children with special needs, it is crucial to adapt these strategies to fit their specific learning profiles to maximize academic success. In contrast, special schools prioritize individualized support and customized learning strategies, which can lead to improved academic achievement and resilience. These environments often feature strong peer support systems, fostering a sense of community and mutual assistance. While this setting can enhance emotional resilience, limited interaction with typically developing peers may hinder the development of broader social skills and adaptive behaviors needed for integration into mainstream society. This research paper tries to find out the influence of Learning Strategies on Scholastic Achievement of children with special needs specially Visually Impaired in Thiruvallur Educational District with N=130 in Special schools, adopted purposive sampling technique. Statistical Analysis done with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 20 and used Descriptive Analysis, Differential Analysis and Correlation Analysis techniques.*

**Keywords:** *children with special needs (VI), learning strategies, scholastic achievement.*

## Introduction

Learning strategies refer to the methods and techniques students use to acquire, process, and retain information. These strategies are generally classified into three main categories viz., Cognitive, Metacognitive and resource management strategies. Using effective learning strategies can significantly improve understanding, memory, and the practical application of knowledge. For children with special needs, it is crucial to adapt these strategies to fit their specific learning profiles to maximize academic success (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Research shows that children with special needs who utilize effective learning strategies tend to achieve higher

academic achievement. According to Smith and Tyler (2011), individualized education plans (IEPs) that integrate targeted learning strategies greatly enhance educational outcomes. Furthermore, Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) emphasize the value of teaching self-regulated learning strategies to promote academic independence and success. Scholastic achievement refers to achievement across academic disciplines, especially within the context of classroom learning. It reflects how well a student, teacher, or educational institution meets learning objectives. Academic achievement is typically measured through exams or continuous assessments. However, there is no universal standard for the best way to evaluate

scholastic achievement, or whether more importance should be placed on procedural knowledge (skills) or declarative knowledge (facts). In mainstream schools, children with special needs benefit from inclusive settings that encourage interaction with typically developing peers. These environments promote social integration and expose students to a variety of learning approaches. However, the lack of specialized resources in these settings may limit the effectiveness of strategies tailored to individual needs. In contrast, special schools prioritize individualized support and customized learning strategies, which can lead to improved academic achievement and resilience. These environments often feature strong peer support systems, fostering a sense of community and mutual assistance. While this setting can enhance emotional resilience, limited interaction with typically developing peers may hinder the development of broader social skills and adaptive behaviors needed for integration into mainstream society.

### Emergence of Research Problem

1. How does Learning Strategies vary among children with special needs in schools?
2. What are the characteristics of Learning Strategies among children with special needs in educational contexts?
3. How do Learning Strategies collectively influence scholastic achievement in schools?

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the existing body of literature by providing a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence scholastic success among children with special needs. By exploring the comparative dynamics in educational setting (Special School), the findings may inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about best practices for supporting these learners. Additionally, the study aims to

promote the development of targeted interventions that foster Learning Strategies, ultimately improving educational outcomes for children with special needs (Visually Impaired).

### Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess the levels of Learning Strategies among children with special needs in special school context.
2. To evaluate the nature and quality of Learning Strategies among these students.
3. To explore the collective influence of Learning Strategies on scholastic achievement in educational setting (Special School).

### Hypotheses of the Study

1. To assess the level of Learning Strategies among children with special needs (VI) in special schools.
2. To study the scholastic achievement of children with special needs (VI) in special schools.
3. In the overall Learning Strategies and in its dimensions namely Study Behaviour, Test appearing and Listening, there is no significant difference between the children with special needs in Special schools based on Schooling.
4. In the overall Learning Strategies and in its dimensions namely Study Behaviour, Test appearing and Listening, there is no significant difference between the children with special needs in special schools based on sibling.
5. In the overall Learning Strategies and in its dimensions namely Study Behaviour, Test appearing and Listening, there is no significant difference between the children with special needs in special schools based on Birth Order.
6. In the overall Learning Strategies and in its dimensions namely Study Behaviour, Test appearing and Listening, there is no significant difference between the children with special

needs in special schools based on Family Income.

1. There is no significant relationship between Learning Strategies and scholastic achievement among children with special needs (VI) in special schools.

### Methodology

The normative survey method has been used in the present investigation. Schooling (High, Hr.Sec), Sibling (Brother, Sister, Both), Birth Order (First, Middle, Last), Family Income (<10K, 10-25K, >25K) are taken as Demographical Variables, Learning Strategies is Independent Variable and Scholastic Achievement is Dependent variable for this study.

### Population and Sample

School children with special needs in Thiruvallur educational district is population of this investigation. 73 Visually Impaired (Blind) students studying High school and higher secondary in Special school are considered as sample selected using Purposive Sampling Technique.

### Tools Used

Learning Strategies Questionnaire, developed by the author was used for data collection and Reliability was estimated by using Cronbach's Alpha found to be 0.736 and Validity 0.857. There are 20 items in the tool having three dimensions viz., Study Behaviour, Test appearing and Listening. Scholastic

Achievement data was collected from school records with the help class teachers.

### Statistics Techniques

Descriptive Analysis (Mean, Median, Mode), Differential Analysis (T test, F ratio) and Correlation Analysis used in this study while N=73. Critical t-values (two-tailed,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $df = 71$ ): +/- 1.994 and Critical t-values (two-tailed,  $\alpha = 0.01$ ,  $df = 73$ ): +/- 2.647

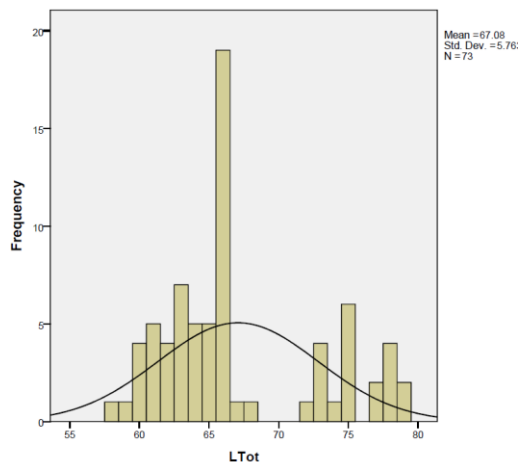


Figure 1: Reliability of the Tool (Learning Strategies)

Table 1: Descriptive and Differential Analysis

| Variable            | Dimension       | SAMPLE      | Sub - Sample | Mean  | S.D   | t - Value | F - ratio | Level of Significance |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Learning Strategies | Study Behaviour | Schooling   | High         | 28.68 | 2.055 | 0.993     | ---       | Not Significant       |
|                     |                 |             | Hr.Sec       | 29.15 | 1.736 |           |           |                       |
|                     |                 | Sibling     | Brother      | 29.13 | 1.777 |           |           |                       |
|                     |                 |             | Sister       | 28.68 | 1.854 |           |           |                       |
|                     |                 |             | Both         | 28.80 | 2.455 |           |           |                       |
|                     |                 | Birth Order | First        | 29.31 | 1.662 |           |           |                       |
|                     |                 |             | Middle       | 27.40 | 2.074 |           |           |                       |
|                     |                 |             | Last         | 28.85 | 1.984 |           |           |                       |

|                             |                        |               |         |         |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|--------|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|-----------------------------------|
|                             | Test appearing         | Family Income | <10K    | 28.73   | 2.126  | 1.738 | ---                               | Not Significant |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        |               | 10-25K  | 29.22   | 1.437  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        |               | >25K    | 28.70   | 2.003  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Schooling     | High    | 22.60   | 1.556  |       |                                   |                 | 5.466 | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        |               | Hr.Sec  | 23.27   | 1.638  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        |               | Sibling | Brother | 23.67  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   | 1.711 |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Sister        |         | 22.47   | 1.376  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Both          |         | 22.33   | 1.496  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Birth Order   | First   | 23.31   | 1.922  |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Middle                 |               | 22.20   | 1.483   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Last                   |               | 22.75   | 1.507   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Family Income          | <10K          | 22.96   | 1.397   | 2.035  | 30.74 | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | 10-25K        | 22.44   | 1.294   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | >25K          | 23.00   | 2.749   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Schooling              | High          | 14.70   | 3.593   |        |       |                                   | 2.035           | 30.74 | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Hr.Sec        | 16.65   | 4.472   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Sibling       | Brother | 19.17   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     | 4.280                             |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Sister                 |               | 13.00   | 0       |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Both                   |               | 14.80   | 3.726   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Birth Order            | First         | 17.44   | 4.718   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Middle        | 14.80   | 4.025   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Last          | 14.83   | 3.634   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Family Income          | <10K          | 16.36   | 4.453   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | 10-25K        | 13.00   | 0       |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| >25K                        |                        | 15.40         | 3.950   |         |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| Overall Learning Strategies | Schooling              | High          | 65.98   | 5.577   |        |       |                                   | 2.261           |       | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Hr.Sec        | 65.27   | 8.455   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Sibling                | Brother       | 71.96   | 5.775   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   | 2.261 |     | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |
|                             |                        | Sister        | 64.15   | 2.401   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Both          | 65.93   | 6.273   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Birth Order            | First         | 70.06   | 6.223   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   | 2.261 |     | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Middle        | 64.10   | 6.427   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Last          | 66.42   | 5.322   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Family Income          | <10K          | 68.04   | 6.346   | 2.261  |       | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)      |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | 10-25K        | 64.67   | 2.401   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | >25K          | 67.10   | 6.454   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | Scholastic Achievement | Schooling     | High    | 66.57   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| Hr.Sec                      |                        |               | 65.27   | 8.455   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| Sibling                     |                        | Brother       | 59.29   | 7.782   |        |       |                                   | 0.592           | ---   | Not Significant                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Sister        | 70.88   | 6.763   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Both          | 66.20   | 8.546   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| Birth Order                 |                        | First         | 61.63   | 10.23   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   | 0.592 | --- | Not Significant                   |
|                             |                        | Middle        | 64.60   | 6.626   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | Last          | 67.63   | 8.441   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| Family Income               |                        | <10K          | 63.64   | 9.726   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   | 0.592 | --- | Not Significant                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | 10-25K        | 71.72   | 4.725   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             |                        | >25K          | 67.10   | 6.855   |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
| Family Income               |                        | <10K          | 63.64   | 9.726   | 20.500 | 2.965 | Significant<br>0.05<br>(1&2)(1&3) |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | 10-25K                 | 71.72         | 4.725   |         |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |
|                             | >25K                   | 67.10         | 6.855   |         |        |       |                                   |                 |       |                                   |       |     |                                   |       |     |                                   |

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis**

|      |                     | Correlations |        |         |         |         |
|------|---------------------|--------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
|      |                     | LB           | LTT    | LS      | LTot    | SA      |
| LB   | Pearson Correlation | 1            | .138   | .408**  | .660**  | -.108   |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     |              | .243   | .000    | .000    | .364    |
|      | N                   | 73           | 73     | 73      | 73      | 73      |
| LTT  | Pearson Correlation | .138         | 1      | .273*   | .516**  | -.221   |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .243         |        | .019    | .000    | .060    |
|      | N                   | 73           | 73     | 73      | 73      | 73      |
| LS   | Pearson Correlation | .408**       | .273*  | 1       | .910**  | -.490** |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000         | .019   |         | .000    | .000    |
|      | N                   | 73           | 73     | 73      | 73      | 73      |
| LTot | Pearson Correlation | .660**       | .516** | .910**  | 1       | -.439** |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000         | .000   | .000    |         | .000    |
|      | N                   | 73           | 73     | 73      | 73      | 73      |
| SA   | Pearson Correlation | -.108        | -.221  | -.490** | -.439** | 1       |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .364         | .060   | .000    | .000    |         |
|      | N                   | 73           | 73     | 73      | 73      | 73      |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Key Findings

1. Children with special needs (Visually Impaired) in Special schools studying High and Higher Secondary differed significantly at 0.05 level in Overall Learning Strategies also its one in three dimensions namely Listening where Special school Higher Secondary VI students are better than High School VI students.
2. Children with special needs (Visually Impaired) born with Brother, Sister and Both differed significantly at 0.05 level in Overall Learning Strategies also in two of its three dimensions namely Test appearing and Listening where VI children born with Brothers are better than other two.
3. Children with special needs (Visually Impaired) born with Brother, Sister or Both differed significantly at 0.05 level in Overall Scholastic Achievement where VI students born with Sisters are better than other two.
4. Children with special needs (Visually Impaired) Birth Order say First, Middle and Last differed significantly at 0.05 level in Overall Scholastic Achievement where VI students born Last are better than other two.
5. Children with special needs (Visually Impaired) Family Income say <10K, 10-25K, >25K differed significantly at 0.05 level in Overall Scholastic

Achievement where VI students' Family Income 10-25K is better than other two

6. One in Three elements in Learning Strategies namely Listening and Overall Learning Strategies inter correlated at 0.01 level also Listening and Test appearing inter correlated at 0.05 level again two elements Listening and Overall Learning Strategies inter correlated at 0.01 level. The positive correlation ranged between 0.859 and 0.406.

## Conclusion

It may be concluded that there is no direct influence of element – Study Behaviour in Learning Strategies on Scholastic Achievement of Children with special needs (Visually Impaired) in Thiruvallur Educational district but other two elements viz., Test Appearing and Listening. Visually Impaired (Blind) born Last with either Brother or Sister in a Family whose income is 10-25K a month are performing better in Scholastic Achievement.

## Educational Implications

### Curriculum Differentiation

- The study emphasizes the need for individualized curriculum planning that accommodates diverse learning strategies suited to children with special needs.
- Use of multi-sensory teaching methods (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) ensures better accessibility and comprehension.

### Inclusive Pedagogy

- Teachers should integrate adaptive learning strategies such as scaffolding, cooperative learning, and task analysis.
- Incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) helps provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to support varied learners.

### Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

- Findings can strengthen teacher training modules to include knowledge of learning strategies tailored for different disabilities.
- Teachers need to be equipped to identify, assess, and apply effective strategies to enhance scholastic achievement.

### Assessment Reforms

- Traditional examinations may not reflect the true potential of children with special needs.
- The research supports the use of alternative assessments (portfolio, project work, oral presentations, technology-based tools) to capture diverse abilities.

### Use of Assistive Technology

- Technology-based learning aids (screen readers, communication devices, learning apps, audio books) improve both learning strategies and achievement.
- Schools must prioritize digital accessibility in classrooms.

### Holistic Development

- Scholastic achievement should not be limited to subject mastery but also linked to life skills, problem-solving, and adaptive behavior.
- Learning strategies that nurture confidence, motivation, and resilience contribute to long-term success.

### Parental and Community Engagement

- Parents should be guided on reinforcing effective learning strategies at home.
- Community-based learning programs can foster peer support and social inclusion, further boosting achievement. Policy and Institutional Support

- The study can inform policymakers to design interventions that promote inclusive learning environments.
- Strengthening frameworks like RPWD Act (2016) and NEP 2020 with emphasis on learning strategies as a pathway to scholastic success.

### Creating a Supportive School Climate

- Schools must provide counseling, mentoring, and peer tutoring systems to support learners emotionally and academically.
- A positive and empathetic environment enhances both motivation and performance.

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# AN INSIGHTFUL EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF HINDU MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION IN SHAPING THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

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## Abstract

*When tradition becomes memory and memory becomes silence, literature becomes the voice that reawakens the soul. In a contemporary context where postcolonial India continues to grapple with the psychological remnants of colonial domination, Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* emerges as a profound narrative exploring themes of inner dissonance, cultural alienation, and spiritual longing. This research paper examines the novel through an interdisciplinary framework that incorporates Hindu mythology, Indian religious practices, and Freudian psychoanalysis to reveal how indigenous epistemologies provide essential frameworks for healing the fractured self within a postcolonial, patriarchal society. The protagonist, Maya, embodies postcolonial marginality—raised in a realm of fantasy, constrained by patriarchal norms, and ultimately overwhelmed by repressed desires. Her psychological decline transcends personal tragedy to serve as a critique of cultural conditions. Through recurring motifs such as detachment, fate, vocation, yogic renunciation, and folklore like that of Prahlad, Desai subtly underscores the transformative potential of Indian religious and cultural traditions. These spiritual practices not only enhance the understanding of Maya's psychological turmoil but also suggest alternative pathways for resistance and empowerment, particularly for women ensnared in gendered hierarchies. In conjunction with literary analysis, Freudian theory is employed to interpret Maya's neurosis, hallucinations, and symbolic fixation with death as reflections of a suppressed unconscious, shaped by both colonial modernity and patriarchal constraints. This paper posits that Hindu mythology and cultural heritage are not mere artifacts of history but dynamic forces that empower the marginalized, offer solace to the alienated, and reestablish the spiritual agency of individuals within postcolonial Indian society.*

**Keywords:** *marginality, women empowerment, psychological alienation, yoga and sannyasa, fate and vocation, Hindu mythology, inner psyche, spiritual resistance, neurosis and psychosis, cultural alienation, repressed desires, gendered hierarchies, symbolic death, indigenous epistemologies, colonial residue*

## Introduction

"In the stillness of the night, I heard the peacock cry..." (Desai 1). This poignant imagery in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* reveals not only the narrative of a tormented woman but also narrates the socio-cultural landscape of postcolonial India, which remains influenced by colonial ideologies, emotional repression, and patriarchal norms. Within this fragmented context, Hindu mythology and religious philosophy transcend mere tradition; they manifest as profound psychological and cultural frameworks

through which marginalized individuals, particularly women like Maya, strive for empowerment, identity, and healing.

Desai critiques a society in which colonial values have reconfigured Indian consciousness. This colonial mentality is particularly evident in gendered upbringing: Maya is raised in an emotional void that obscures reality with illusion, whereas Gautama is conditioned to be rational and emotionally detached. Maya reflects on her upbringing, stating, "I had not been brought up to face the world. My father had

shown me only its bright side" (Desai 77). In contrast, Gautama's education equips him for a career in law, mirroring the colonial priorities of male public authority and female domestic silence. These dichotomies resonate with Leela Gandhi's concept of "the emotional asymmetry fostered by colonial rationalism" (Gandhi 89).

In response to this oppression, Desai incorporates Hindu spiritual traditions- especially the Bhagavad Gita, the concepts of yogis and sannyasis, and various mythological narratives-as avenues for cultural and psychological empowerment. The Gita advises that "One should perform one's duties without attachment" (Easwaran, Gita 2.47). In a similar vein, Gautama implores Maya to engage in vocational pursuits. However, Maya's relationship with these spiritual traditions serves an alternate purpose. In moments of despair, she recalls narratives such as that of Prahlad, who was saved by Lord Vishnu, providing her with hope and comfort. These stories transcend mere cultural relics; they represent forms of resistance against colonial erasure. As Gauri Viswanathan notes, "Spirituality became a means through which the colonized asserted autonomy" (Viswanathan 49).

Moreover, Hindu mythology articulates Maya's psychological state. Her psyche, shaped by repression and emotional deprivation, reflects Freudian neurosis. Freud posits that "Symptoms are the result of repressed desires resurfacing in disguised form" (Freud 160). Maya's hallucinations, her fixation on omens, and her persistent connection to nature-"the moon, the flowering Gulmohar, the cry of peacocks"-indicate a fragmented psyche in search of coherence through symbolic representation (Desai 128). In her mythic imagination, nature becomes a divine reflection of her internal world.

Maya's mental deterioration may also be analyzed through the lens presented by Gayatri Spivak, who asserts that "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 104). Maya's expressions are

dismissed, her emotions rendered invalid, and her yearning for connection remains unfulfilled.

Nevertheless, Hindu philosophy furnishes her with a language for the soul. Concepts such as dharma (duty), karma (action), and vairagya (detachment) enable her to interpret her suffering, even when her external environment falls short.

Bhabha's notion of hybridity is particularly relevant in this context. Maya occupies an intermediary space between her husband's Western rationalism and the indigenous mythic realm into which she seeks refuge. Bhabha observes that "The colonial subject inhabits a space of in-betweenness" (Bhabha 112). It is within this liminal space that Hindu spirituality provides a stabilizing foundation. While the colonial framework reduces Maya to a psychological casualty, her engagement with Indian mythology represents an act of self-reclamation.

In conclusion, Desai reposition Hindu religious traditions not as antiquated relics but as living interpretative systems that validate female emotion, acknowledge suffering, and facilitate metaphysical empowerment. In a society fractured by colonial history and patriarchal constraints, myth and religion emerge as cultural instruments of survival, healing, and resistance.

### Critical Analysis

Hindu Mythology and Its Folk Tales - Understanding the Balance of Emotions and Rationality in Postcolonial India:

In her novel *Cry, the Peacock*, Anita Desai employs Hindu mythology and its associated philosophical concepts to elucidate the central psychological conflict present in postcolonial Indian society: the discordance between emotional expression and rational thought. Through the contrasting characters of Maya and Gautama, Desai effectively illustrates how an imbalance-whether through excessive rationality or unchecked emotionality-can destabilize the human psyche. By

drawing on themes from the Bhagavad Gita, traditional folktales, and broader religious traditions, Desai posits that Indian philosophy provides individuals with the essential tools needed to cultivate equilibrium in a postcolonial context that has been disrupted by colonial legacies.

Maya, who is shaped by an emotionally insulated upbringing, confronts a realm of overwhelming feelings, instincts, and desires. In contrast, Gautama, influenced by a Western educational framework and rational expectations, embodies restraint and practical obligation. Desai utilizes the marriage of these two disparate individuals to highlight the tension between their, cultural inheritances: the intuitive, spiritual ethos of India juxtaposed with the rationalist, utilitarian structures established during the colonial period.

This conflict is immediately apparent in their emotional dispositions. Maya is enamored with beauty, nature, and sensory experiences. She articulates her perspective, stating: "I suppose I derive much more from it than you do. Could you remain on the steps without a book, without a piece of paper, simply observing the trees and contemplating them?... But you see, I can. I have an abundance to engage with, to touch and feel and derive happiness from. I enjoy wandering here, touching items- leaves, sticks, earth, everything... The world is replete repletes, Gautama" (Desai 68).

This longing for emotional immersion sharply contrasts with Gautama's logical detachment. He often engages in discussions informed by the Gita's spiritual rationalism, insisting that Maya must pursue some form of vocation to derive satisfaction, asserting: "You must engage in something, Maya. A job, a vocation... You must learn to temper your expectations" (Desai 75).

This sentiment strongly resonates with the Bhagavad Gita, which emphasizes detached action: "You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions"

(Easwaran 2.47). Gautama's guidance is firmly rooted in this karmic philosophy, which advocates for engagement with the world through rational duty rather than through emotional dependency.

However, Maya derives no solace from this doctrine. Her soul is more attuned to mythic imagery-tales of Krishna, narratives of Prahlad, and the symbolic cry of the peacock. She is less influenced by rational constraints and more governed by her passions and yearnings. Desai articulates this sentiment as follows: "The cry of the peacock, the quivering of leaves, the subtlety of a breeze-these sensations resonate within me as if they were living entities" (Desai 101).

This imbalance in Maya's psyche-her excessive identification with sensation and symbolic associations-may be interpreted as neurosis resulting from suppressed desires, as posited by Freud. Freud articulated, "Neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its repressed wishes" (Freud 157). Maya, influenced by a father who shielded her from the realities of the world, struggles to cope with Gautama's rational dispassion. Her absence of emotional fulfillment manifests as paranoia and hallucinatory experiences-indications of the "psychic damage" attributed to colonial displacement, as described by Fanon (Fanon 249).

Nonetheless, Hindu mythological narratives provide her with solace. The story of Prahlad, who is rescued by Vishnu from persecution, serves as a metaphor for divine justice and the survival of the innocent. This narrative empowers Maya with a form of symbolic resistance, even if not a literal escape. Gauri Viswanathan illuminates this idea by stating, "Religious narratives in India provided cultural continuity amidst the dislocation of colonial modernity" (Viswanathan 53).

Therefore, Desai's novel illustrates that the philosophical teachings of the Gita and the narratives from Hindu mythology are not merely abstract ideals; they are essential resources for individuals—

particularly women-navigating the vacuity of postcolonial rationalism. Maya's tragedy does not diminish the significance of these teachings; rather, it underscores the repercussions of failing to attain the balance between emotion and reason that these texts advocate. Desai asserts that both psychological and spiritual healing necessitate a return to indigenous frameworks that once nourished India's cultural essence.

### **Hindu Religion and Culture as a Framework for Understanding Psychological Disorders**

Anita Desai's novel *Cry, the Peacock* adeptly integrates aspects of Hindu religion and Freudian psychoanalysis to examine psychological disorders—such as neurosis, hysteria, and insanity—affecting individuals, particularly women, in postcolonial Indian society. The Hindu religion, characterized by its meditative and emotional traditions, provides an indigenous context for comprehending inner conflicts and repressed desires, transcending mere diagnosis.

The protagonist, Maya, serves as a representative case of emotional tumult. Her experiences align with Freud's characterization of neurosis, which is characterized by obsessive thoughts, disturbed dreams, and profound anxiety. However, Desai enriches Maya's experience with references to Hindu concepts concerning life, death, fate, and suffering. The spiritual dimensions of Maya's existence epitomized by her visions of the crying peacock, her preoccupation with mortality, and her desire for connection— are interpreted through Hindu metaphors such as karma (action), *duḥkha* (suffering), and moksha (release).

As Maya reflects: "The cry of the peacock. Death. I am going mad." (Desai 144). Freud postulated that hysteria frequently arises from repressed desires and unresolved childhood trauma. In Maya's scenario, her father's foreboding of an early death, as articulated by an astrologer, emerges as a significant psychological wound. Nevertheless,

unlike Freud's clinical objectivity, Hindu texts such as the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita provide pathways for emotional engagement and self-inquiry as means to transcend suffering. The Bhagavad Gita counsels, self-awareness and detachment: "When a man gives up all desires that enter the mind, O Partha, and is satisfied in the Self by the Self, he is then said to be steady in wisdom." (Bhagavad Gita 2.55)

Maya's incapacity to detach from her desires, compounded by spiritual disarray, ultimately culminates in her downfall. Hindu culture, with its focus on dhyana (meditation) and vairagya (non-attachment), stands in stark contrast to her emotional disintegration. Gautama, her husband, advocates this path of reason and detachment, advising her: "You must learn not to attach yourself so violently to things... It is this obsession that destroys you." (Desai 91).

Postcolonial theorist Leela Gandhi contends that "spiritual traditions in colonized cultures function as a space for psychic decolonization" (Postcolonial Theory, 98). Nonetheless, Maya is unable to access this space. Her cultural displacement—caught between Western educational paradigms and Indian spiritual traditions—intensifies her hysterical symptoms, which Freud described as the "conversion of emotional conflict into physical symptoms."

Thus, Hindu religion offers a dual lens: it serves not only as a diagnostic tool but also as a remedial pathway—one that acknowledges suffering, fosters reflection, and promotes mental tranquility through balance, detachment, and transcendence. Maya's tragedy lies in her emotional richness contrasted with her spiritual disorientation—symbolizing a postcolonial subject who is denied full access to both Western rationalism and Eastern spiritual discipline.

## The Role of Mythology and Folk Tales in Women's Empowerment within Postcolonial Indian Society

In *Cry, the Peacock*, Anita Desai draws significantly from Hindu mythology and cultural traditions to underscore a critical theme: the function of ancient wisdom and folk narratives in promoting the empowerment and inner strength of women in postcolonial India. These traditional resources serve not only as a source of spiritual consolation but also as a counter-narrative to patriarchal domination, colonial alienation, and emotional repression. Through Maya's engagement with religious imagery—including yogis, sannyasis, deities, and folk tales—Desai establishes Indian mythology as a transformative space for the psychological liberation of women.

Maya, who finds herself trapped in a marriage devoid of emotional fulfillment, perpetually retreats into the solace of mythological reflection and religious idealism. Her desire to transcend earthly suffering resonates with the detachment exhibited by yogis and sannyasis, figures deeply embedded in India's spiritual consciousness. In one of her most poignant reflections, Maya observes: "This is what the sannyasis feel, I told myself, this is what a yogi makes himself feel. Fortunate, wise ones, they know how much safer, how much more restful it is than that turmoil of a life such as I held on to so insanely." (Desai 178) This quotation is pivotal; Maya does not portray asceticism merely as a form of escapism but as a model of strength—representing individuals who have mastered their emotional turbulence. In a postcolonial context where women are often constrained by gender roles and cultural limitations, such spiritual role models provide psychological alternatives and exemplars of self-discipline.

Desai's reference to the folk tale of Prahlad, whose unwavering faith leads to his salvation through divine intervention, further emphasizes the empowering qualities of mythology: "How safe he

was, how happy in the arms of his God, never afraid, never alone. How I longed to share such protection, such utter peace." (Desai 93) This yearning reflects a deeper quest for autonomy and divine assurance. In Maya's milieu, where patriarchal norms strip her of voice and agency, mythology acts as a means of emotional resistance. It offers her figures of endurance and fortitude—whether in the steadfast Prahlad, the serene yogi, or the formidable feminine deities of Hindu tradition.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty asserts, "Myths are not just stories; they are repositories of resistance for women whose voices are otherwise muted" (*Feminism Without Borders*, 102). When Maya immerses herself in narratives and symbols of spiritual resilience, she engages in a long-established cultural strategy, wherein women derive strength from sacred narratives.

In Desai's symbolic framework, mythology functions as both a psychological refuge and a revolutionary instrument—redefining strength not in terms of rebellion, but through quiet, contemplative self-awareness. For postcolonial women, mythology transcends nostalgia; it embodies empowerment.

## Psychoanalytic Methodology as a Tool to Decode Maya's Suffering in Postcolonial India

This research paper employs Freudian psychoanalysis as the primary methodological framework to analyze Maya's psychological turmoil in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*. Within a postcolonial Indian context—characterized by the marginalization of women due to remnants of colonial patriarchy and emotional repression—Freud's theoretical constructs facilitate an exploration of the ways in which repressed desires, childhood conditioning, and unconscious conflicts contribute to mental distress. The psychological perspective, underpinned by Freudian concepts such as neurosis, hysteria, and the unconscious mind, enables the examination of Maya's descent into madness as not merely an

individual issue but as a cultural manifestation of postcolonial oppression and gendered silence.

Freud posits that "neurotic symptoms are substitutes for sexual satisfactions" (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* 363); however, these symptoms also emerge from repressed desires and emotional deprivation. In Maya's situation, her upbringing-characterized by affection, overprotection, and a denial of life's harsh realities-constitutes the foundation of her emotional vulnerability. By shielding her from pain, her father inadvertently deprived her of the psychological resources necessary for adult resilience. Maya herself articulates this sentiment: "My father had brought me up with so much care, protected me from all the ugliness of life, so that now I could not accept it..." (Desai 43).

This psychological conditioning, as Freud might suggest, results in a fixation at an immature emotional stage, wherein Maya struggles to distinguish love from fantasy or acknowledge pain as an inherent aspect of existence. Her marriage to Gautama, who embodies rationality, serves to exacerbate this internal conflict. Maya is drawn to nature, beauty, and sensation- representative of her quest for emotional fulfillment-whereas Gautama epitomizes the principles of reality, detachment, and duty: "Gautama said that detachment was best... I must learn to detach myself..." (Desai 66).

Freud's conceptualization of hysteria, particularly as it pertains to women, is pertinent in this analysis. Maya experiences profound hallucinations, obsessive thoughts, and auditory disturbances, including the perception of the peacock's cry-a symbol of her internal longing for liberation. Her erratic behavior and mental fragmentation can be interpreted as manifestations of repressed trauma and unfulfilled desires, which Freud identifies as catalysts of hysteria. The cry of the peacock parallels the anguish within her unconscious: "That shrill, high-pitched cry,

like that of a woman being killed, pursued by some creature of nightmare..." (Desai 25).

This alarming cry reflects her internal suffering an echo of the death prophecy from her childhood, which she obsessively clings to, rendering her incapable of transcending it. The unconscious death wish, alongside her emotional dependence on her father, aligns with Freud's concept of the unresolved Oedipal complex, wherein Maya remains unable to detach from her childhood attachments and fears.

The postcolonial context exacerbates her condition. In a society influenced by colonial rationalism and patriarchal dominance, women such as Maya, who seek emotional connection and spiritual depth, remain voiceless. The Freudian framework reveals that Maya's madness ought not to be viewed as a sign of weakness but rather as a symptom of both cultural and emotional silencing.

Therefore, Freudian psychoanalysis is indispensable to this research, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate psychological layers of Maya's character. Through this lens, Desai not only delineates a portrait of individual suffering but also critiques the emotional and social vacuums left in the aftermath of colonial legacy and patriarchal traditions.

## Conclusion

In a contemporary landscape shaped by the legacies of colonialism and unaddressed desires, Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* stands out not only as a psychological narrative but also as a significant cultural reclamation. Through the character of Maya, Desai engages her readers in an exploration of a world where Hindu mythology, spiritual traditions, and indigenous folk narratives are not merely historical artifacts but essential pathways to understanding the human psyche, particularly that of the marginalized postcolonial woman. The spiritual symbolism inherent in yogis and sannyasis, the teachings found within the Gita, and the complex rituals of Hindu culture

together create a rich tapestry that embodies emotional resilience and existential clarity. This analysis has demonstrated how Desai intricately incorporates Hindu metaphysics into the emotional landscape of her protagonist, positioning figures such as the sannyasi as archetypes representing emotional freedom and detachment- qualities that Maya aspires to achieve but struggles to manifest. Her crisis, informed by patriarchal neglect and the rationality shaped by colonial influences, serves as an allegory for postcolonial identity, wherein emotional expression is suppressed, and individuality is stifled. Nevertheless, through her madness, Maya instinctively challenges this suppression, reaching toward an inner realm that values harmony over hierarchy, emotional authenticity over mere functionality, and tradition over alienation. By applying Freud's psychoanalytic framework, we are able to interpret Maya's psychological decline not solely as a personal failure but as the psychic residue of a societal structure that neglects the voices of women, visionaries, and seekers. Freud's concepts of hysteria, repression, and the unconscious shed light on how Maya's internal discord arises as a response to systemic emotional denial- representing an echo of unmet desires and the pursuit of unattainable autonomy. Ultimately, *Cry, the Peacock* emerges as a literary reflection on the liberating potential inherent in indigenous knowledge systems and the psychological toll resulting from their erasure. Desai's narrative urges a re-examination of the significance of myth, ritual, and ancient wisdom in an era increasingly disoriented by modernity and colonization. Within the subdued despair articulated through Maya's voice and in the persistent echoes of

the peacock's cry, one discerns a call for healing-one that synthesizes cultural memory with psychological truth and tradition with transformation.

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# PRITAM BHARTWAN'S JAGAR AND THE BADONI CUSTODIANSHIP OF BHUVANESHWARI DEVI: A STUDY OF HINDU RELIGIOUS CONTINUITY IN CONTEMPORARY GARHWAL

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## Abstract

*“Jai Bhuvaneshwari Maiya, Jag ki Adishakti...”-this invocation marks the commencement of the Bhuvaneshwari Jagar, a performance by Garhwali folk artist Pritam Bhartwan that intricately intertwines devotion, mythology, and collective memory. The Jagar tradition, which holds a central place in the ritual life of Uttarakhand, calls upon deities and ancestral spirits to restore equilibrium between the human and divine realms. In Pritam Bhartwan’s, interpretation, the goddess Bhuvaneshwari is elevated to the status of a universal mother, embodying Shakti as a protective force that shields humanity from adharma and reinstates moral order. Through this sacred narrative, the performance reinforces fundamental Hindu ideals of faith, dharma, and cosmic harmony. This study posits that Bhartwan’s, Bhuvaneshwari Jagar extends beyond mere ritualistic boundaries to serve as a vehicle for cultural pedagogy and spiritual resistance in contemporary India. The rhythmic chants and melodic cadences of the performance preserve the oral heritage of the Garhwali community, while its moral and theological themes resonate with the ethical dilemmas confronted by a globalizing society. By underscoring concepts of divine justice, communal solidarity, and spiritual resilience, the Jagar serves as a reminder of the enduring significance of Hinduism as both a cultural foundation and an ethical guide. Therefore, Bhartwan’s, performance transcends the realm of traditional folk ritual-it functions as a living repository of Hindu spiritual thought and a medium for raising awareness that revitalizes indigenous traditions while addressing modern concerns. The Bhuvaneshwari Jagar exemplifies the confluence of myth, music, and morality, sustaining cultural continuity, reinforcing identity, and reaffirming the vitality of Hinduism within the contemporary Indian milieu.*

**Keywords:** *folk religion, oral tradition, ritual performance, Hindu spirituality, sacred narratives, ritual custodianship, devotional music, collective memory, indigenous knowledge, contemporary Hindu society, syncretic practices*

## Introduction

The invocation begins: “Sun lo Mata Bhuvaneshwari ki Amar katha, tum ho jag ki Rakshika, Adishakti Swaroopa” — “Listen to the eternal story of Mother Bhuvaneshwari, you are the protector of the world, embodiment of primal energy.” With these lines, Pritam Bhartwan, commences his Bhuvaneshwari Jagar, seamlessly intertwining rhythm, prayer, and oral tradition. The portrayal of Bhuvaneshwari as the Adishakti (primordial energy) places the goddess at the forefront of the cosmic and moral order, illustrating how Jagar’s serve as oral scripture within Garhwali communities.

The Jagar tradition of Uttarakhand has historically been interpreted as a ritual invocation of deities and ancestral spirits, performed to solicit divine intervention, healing, or justice. As William Sax articulates, Jagar’s are “oral courts where the divine and human meet to negotiate morality and destiny” (Sax 53). Within Pritam Bhartwan’s, performance, the Jagar evolves into a more dynamic instrument of religious consciousness and cultural education in contemporary Indian society. The Bhuvaneshwari Jagar depicts the goddess not merely as a mythic protector but also as a moral guide, directing humanity in periods of adharma.

Consider the verse where Pritam Bhartwan, sings: “Mata Tum Dharti Ko Sambhalti Ho, Dharm Ke Santulan Ko Rakhti Ho” – “Mother, you uphold the earth, you safeguard the balance of dharma.” This line conveys the Hindu tenet that cosmic harmony is maintained through divine intervention. Here, Bhartwan's, oral artistry transforms theological concepts from Hindu texts into accessible, melodic wisdom for his audience. As A.K. Ramanujan notes, oral traditions function as “mnemonic bridges between the abstract and the lived, between philosophy and practice” (Ramanujan 37).

The richness of the Jagar lies not only in its devotional significance but also in its adaptability. Susan Wadley argues that folk traditions are “texts in performance, capable of renewal in every utterance” (Wadley 212). Pritam Bhartwan, exemplifies this renewal by integrating traditional invocations with contemporary relevance. His portrayal of Bhuvaneshwari as the “savior in troubled times” directly addresses the anxieties associated with modernization and globalization experienced by Garhwali communities.

Nonetheless, critiques of Bhartwan's approach warrant consideration. Some scholars suggest that his transition of Jagar into albums, concerts, and stage performances risks reducing sacred ritual to “cultural spectacle” (Pfeffer 93). Local commentators in Garhwal contend that when sacred chants are separated from their traditional ritualistic contexts—where trance and divine possession typically occur—they may lose their spiritual potency (Rawat 67). However, Pritam Bhartwan, defends his initiatives, asserting that “to sing Jagar is to preserve our gods in memory; if the medium changes, the message must endure” (Pritam Bhartwan, Interview). This discourse highlights the complex negotiation between cultural preservation and commercialization.

Conversely, there is substantial support for Bhartwan's, innovations. Stuart Blackburn notes that folk performance traditions “are resilient precisely

because they adapt to new audiences and formats” (Blackburn 92). Philip Lutgendorf similarly posits that “popularization reconfigures sanctity without erasing it” (Lutgendorf 121). In this context, Bhartwan's recordings of Jagar's may be perceived not as a dilution but as a democratization of access to sacred memory.

Theoretically, Bhartwan's, Jagar's resonate with Victor Turner's concept of “communitas,” wherein ritual engenders a sense of unity that transcends social hierarchies (Turner 131). When audiences collectively chant “Jai Bhuvaneshwari,” the performance elicits shared emotions, bridging the sacred and the societal. Homi Bhabha's notion of “cultural hybridity” is also pertinent, as Bhartwan's, staged Jagar's navigate the interplay between local religious identity and global cultural landscapes (Bhabha 58). Thus, the Bhuvaneshwari Jagar can be seen as both rooted in Garhwali culture and adaptable to broader Indian contexts.

Furthermore, Bhartwan's, work aligns with Jan Vansina's assertion that oral traditions serve as “testimonies of identity, continually reshaped by memory and need” (Vansina 45). By representing Bhuvaneshwari as the mother of the cosmos, Pritam Bhartwan, reaffirms Hindu spirituality while simultaneously bolstering regional Garhwali pride. As Arjun Appadurai observes, “the production of locality” necessitates that traditions are re-articulated in response to global pressures (Appadurai 178). Pritam Bhartwan, actively engages in this process—sustaining Garhwali rituals while affirming their relevance in a modernizing India.

In conclusion, the Bhuvaneshwari Jagar, as performed by Pritam Bhartwan, transcends the realm of ritual performance. It emerges as a complex site of cultural negotiation—where myth, music, and morality converge. The goddess is invoked not solely for purposes of healing or protection as in traditional contexts, but to remind contemporaneous listeners of the enduring significance of Hinduism in fostering

ethical existence. Accordingly, this examination positions Pritam Bhartwan's Bhuvaneshwari Jagar as a vital medium of religious consciousness, a living archive of Garhwali identity, and a contested yet essential expression of cultural heritage.

### Critical Analysis

#### Sacred Resonance and Cultural Memory in Pritam Bhartwan's, Bhuvaneshwari Jagar

The refrain, "Mata tum Dharti ko Sambhalti ho, Dharm Ke Santulan ko Rakhti ho...". translated as "Mother, you uphold the earth, you safeguard the balance of dharma"-encapsulates the essence of Pritam Bhartwan's Bhuvaneshwari Jagar as both a prayer and a philosophical statement. This expression articulates the Garhwali people's understanding of Hindu cosmology, positioning the goddess not as a distant deity but as an active guardian of human destiny.

#### I. Jagar as Oral Theology:

The Bhuvaneshwari Jagar exemplifies how oral tradition functions as theology in performance. In designating Bhuvaneshwari as "Jag ki Adishakti," meaning "the primal energy of the world," Pritam Bhartwan, establishes a connection between local folk practices and broader pan-Indian Shakta philosophy, accentuating the goddess's embodiment of universal power. As noted by scholar Wendy Doniger, "Hinduism often thrives through multiplicity, where local deities mirror cosmic truths" (Doniger 87). Therefore, Bhartwan's, Jagar situates Bhuvaneshwari as both a maternal figure for the Garhwali community and a significant cosmic force within Hinduism.

The line "Andhkaar Mein Jyoti ban Kar Aati ho, Durbal ko Shakti Deti ho" ("You arrive as light in darkness, giving strength to the weak") offers a potent metaphor of divine illumination that resonates with the Bhagavad Gita's assertion that "whenever adharma rises, the divine incarnates to restore balance" (Gita 4.7). Through this parallel, Pritam

Bhartwan, translates scriptural Hindu concepts into accessible folk idioms for audiences less familiar with Sanskrit texts.

Victor Turner articulates that ritual serves as "a school of values, dramatized and remembered through repetition" (Turner 141). Bhartwan's, Jagar's embody this pedagogical role. Individuals engaging with the performance, chanting alongside phrases like "Sun lo Mata ki Amar katha, tum bin jag Suna, tum bin sab Vyartha" ("Listen to the immortal story of the Goddess Mother without you, the world is empty, without you, all is futile"), are active participants in the transmission of Hindu spiritual consciousness.

The performance thus imparts two critical lessons: first, that divinity serves as the source of meaning; and second, that collective remembrance of the goddess sustains communal identity. As Jan Vansina emphasizes, "oral traditions survive not by text but by collective memory, continually renewed in performance" (Vansina 48). Consequently, Bhartwan's, Jagar serves as a living archive of Garhwali religiosity.

#### II. Critiques of Popularization

However, the transition from ritual context to staged and recorded performance has elicited criticism. Pradeep Rawat warns that performing Jagar's outside their original trance-inducing settings may result in "the gods no longer descending, and the performance risks becoming aesthetic rather than sacred" (Rawat 69). Some traditionalists argue that Bhartwan's albums, although culturally significant, may dilute the experiential sacredness that was once mediated by ritual specialists.

Pritam Bhartwan, addresses these critiques during his performances. In one verse, he asserts, "Mata Ke gun Gao sab Milkar, Ghar-Ghar Tak Sandesh Pahunchao" ("Sing the virtues of the goddess Mother together, carry her message to every home"). This line serves as a defense for wider dissemination: the goddess's message should not be

confined to ritual spaces but should be broadly shared. Stuart Blackburn further supports this approach by stating, "folk forms endure through adaptation, not fossilization" (Blackburn 94). While the format of Pritam Bhartwan's Jagar's may change, they continue to convey substantial religious and cultural significance.

### III. Symbolism of Bhuvaneshwari

The imagery within the Bhuvaneshwari Jagar reflects a synthesis of folk symbolism and Hindu philosophy. Bhartwan's, assertion, "Mata Tum Parvat Ki Shakti Ho, Nadion Ki Dhara Mein Basi Ho" ("Mother, you are the power of the mountains, you dwell in the flow of rivers"), intertwines ecological consciousness with spiritual themes, positioning Bhuvaneshwari as an integral aspect of nature. As David Kinsley observes, Hindu goddesses often symbolize "the totality of life's energy, nurturing and destructive alike" (Kinsley 121). This ecological symbolism resonates deeply within the Himalayan context, where mountains and rivers represent vital lifelines for survival.

### IV. Cultural Resistance and Modern Relevance

Arjun Appadurai's concept of "the production of locality" is particularly relevant to Pritam Bhartwan's work. By staging Jagar's globally, he ensures that Garhwali culture is not erased by homogenization but is reaffirmed in contemporary contexts (Appadurai 181). The communal chant of "Jai Bhuvaneshwari" during concerts serves as an act of cultural resistance, reinforcing regional identity within India's diverse spiritual landscape.

Moreover, Bhartwan's, Jagar's resonate with Homi Bhabha's theory of "cultural hybridity," which posits that traditions survive by negotiating modern spaces while retaining their core essence (Bhabha 62). While Bhuvaneshwari remains the eternal mother of Garhwal, she is simultaneously articulated as a universal Shakti accessible to diasporic and non-Garhwali audiences alike.

In conclusion, the Bhuvaneshwari Jagar, as presented by Pritam Bhartwan, transcends the notion of a mere folk ritual preserved for posterity; it represents a dynamic and evolving tradition that continues to resonate with both contemporary and traditional audiences.

### The Badoni Caste and the Sacred Custodianship of Bhuvaneshwari Devi

In the Garhwal hills of Uttarakhand, the ritual of Jagar serves as a dynamic conduit for divine presence, where ancestral memory, devotional actions, and spiritual authority converge. The Badoni caste holds a pivotal role as the hereditary custodians of Bhuvaneshwari Devi, ensuring the preservation of ritual efficacy and cultural continuity. Pritam Bhartwan, in his work *Bhuvaneshwari Jagar: Uttarakhand ki Lok-Dharmik Parampara* (2018), underscores that the authority of the Badoni's is not merely symbolic; rather, it is divinely sanctioned and culturally legitimized, positioning them as mediators between the goddess and her devotees.

The Jagar ritual commences by affirming the ritual and cosmic authority of the Badoni lineage: "Badoni Vansh Pujan Karai, Mata ki Jyoti Jagai." ("The Badoni lineage performs the worship, awakening the flame of the goddess Mother.")

This verse articulates that the Badoni's are not passive participants but rather active agents of Shakti, the divine feminine energy. The "flame of the goddess Mother" symbolizes spiritual illumination, dharmic responsibility, and cosmic energy, which the caste channels through their ritual performance. By performing the worship, the Badoni's align with the Hindu principle of dharma, thereby fulfilling their hereditary duty to sustain both the goddess and the spiritual fabric of the community.

The sanctity of their domestic space is further emphasized: "Badoni Gharan ma Jyot Jali, Bhuvaneshwari khud Virajmaani." ("In the Badoni

household, the sacred flame is lit, and Bhuvaneshwari herself is enthroned there.")

This statement positions the household as a microcosm of the temple, indicating that divine presence resides where dharmic duty is properly executed. The Badoni's home embodies the intersection of ritual, ethics, and sacred space, illustrating that adherence to duty (dharma) transforms the mundane into the sacred, a fundamental concept within Hindu philosophy.

The transformative power of ritual speech is encapsulated in: "Badoni Boli ma shakti, Devi suni Devta Jaagi." ("In the Badoni speech lies power; the Goddess listens and the deities awaken.") This verse exemplifies Vak-shakti, the spiritual potency inherent in sound. In Hindu thought, sound is a creative force; within this context, the recitation by the Badoni's invokes both the goddess and accompanying deities. This reflects the concept of karma in action, wherein intention, lineage-based authority, and vocalization converge to produce divine outcomes. It also highlights the caste's unique role: only those duly trained and authorized can transmute words into spiritual power, illustrating the interplay between social structure and religious efficacy.

### **Ancestral continuity emerges as a fundamental aspect of the Badoni identity**

"Badoni Vansh se Chali, Purkhi Reet Devi Bali." ("From the Badoni lineage flows the ancestral custom of offering to the Goddess.")

This verse situates the caste within a temporal continuum, underscoring hereditary responsibility. It reaffirms the principles of karma and lineage dharma, where ancestral practices bear spiritual significance and uphold the cosmic and social order. Through their devotion, the Badoni's preserve age-old customs, ensuring that Garhwali Hindu cultural memory remains intact.

The universal significance of their devotion is articulated in: "Badoni Puje, Bhuvaneshwari, Sab

Sansar Pave Hari." ("When the Badoni's worship Bhuvaneshwari, the whole world receives divine grace.")

This assertion elevates local ritual to a cosmic level, reflecting Hindu understandings of interconnectedness between the microcosm and macrocosm. The Badoni's worship transcends their community; it is envisaged as a source of grace and spiritual welfare across the cosmos, demonstrating how caste-based ritual intersects with universal dharmic and karmic responsibilities.

The musical dimension of Jagar is highlighted in: "Badoni Dhare Dhun, Devi Aaye Turant Sun." ("When the Badoni's hold the rhythm, the Goddess arrives at once.") This verse emphasizes music as a ritual technology, where rhythm and melody serve as tools for manifesting Shakti. The musical expertise of the Badoni's ensures the efficacy of the ritual, and their performance becomes a channel for a direct experience of the divine, integrating aesthetic practice with spiritual purpose—a hallmark of Hindu devotional culture.

Finally, the experiential power of their devotion is captured in: "Badoni Ghar ma kirtan, Devi khud Karen darshan." ("In the Badoni household, when kirtan is sung, the Goddess herself grants vision.") This emphasizes the tangible encounter with the divine, where ancestral duty, musical skill, and devotional intensity converge. The role of the Badoni's is both ritualistic and spiritual, facilitating experiences of Shakti that reinforce faith and cultural continuity. It also illustrates the Hindu belief that devotion (bhakti) performed with lineage-sanctioned authority leads to concrete spiritual experiences.

Through these seven quotations, the Jagar positions the Badoni caste as ritual guardians, cultural preservers, and spiritual mediators, whose performances ensure the authenticity and vibrancy of Bhuvaneshwari Devi's worship. Pritam Bhartwan's insights provide a valuable framework for

understanding this complex interplay of ritual, identity, and spiritual engagement.

### **The Resonance of Devi Bhumi: Bhuvaneshwari Jagar as Living Memory**

The Bhuvaneshwari Jagar commences with an invocation that positions the goddess at the core of Garhwal's cosmic and cultural consciousness: "Jai ho Bhawani, Jai ho Bhawani, Bhuvaneshwari Mata, Pahad ki Rakhwali." This opening chant establishes the goddess as both the protector and preserver of the Garhwal hills. The repetition of the phrase "Jai ho" enhances the collective expression of devotion, engaging the audience in a rhythmic continuum of praise that reverberates throughout the mountains. The phrase "Pahad ki Rakhwali" directly connects the idea of divine guardianship to the geographical context, illustrating that Garhwali spirituality perceives divinity not as a distant entity but as an embodied guardian of both land and people. In this context, the goddess serves as a cultural anchor, safeguarding both spiritual identity and ecological continuity.

The sacred immanence of the goddess is further enriched in another verse: "Mati Mein Tu, Pani Mein Tu, Roop Tero Dekhun Aansu ki Dhaar Mein."

By equating Bhuvaneshwari with soil, water, and even tears, Pritam Bhartwan, exemplifies the Garhwali worldview wherein religion is intricately intertwined with the environment and human emotion. Soil (Mati) symbolizes agricultural existence, water sustains ecological equilibrium, and tears signify human suffering all encapsulated within the presence of the goddess. This verse resonates with Hindu philosophies such as Prakriti in the Bhagavad Gita, wherein nature itself is venerated as a divine manifestation. Pritam Bhartwan, however, roots this abstract concept in the lived experiences of the Garhwali people, reminding his audience that their ecological survival and spiritual well-being are deeply interconnected.

Additionally, the goddess is indelibly associated with the sacred geography of Garhwal: "Chandrabadni ki Choti ma, Jyoti Teri Chamku, Baalpan Soun Budhapa Tak, Jeewan Teri Raunsi Ma Chalu." In this instance, Chandrabadni — a revered Shaktipeeth — is portrayed as a luminous beacon that illuminates existence from childhood to old age. The mountain peak becomes both an altar and an educator, symbolizing the continuity of faith across generations. This is not merely a geographical description but rather a form of cultural cartography, where geography is elevated to a theological level. In Garhwali tradition, mountains are not inert entities but living presences imbued with divinity. Bhartwan's, verse ensures that every devotee acknowledges the land as a sacred inheritance.

The cyclical nature of the seasons is also articulated as divine blessings: "Aayo Sawan, Aayi Barsaat, Mata Ke Aashirwad Soun Bhari Gaye ghat."

The onset of the monsoon is attributed directly to Bhuvaneshwari's grace. The life-giving rains, vital for agriculture, are ascribed not to meteorological phenomena but to divine will. This illustrates a fundamental aspect of Garhwali folk religion the integration of ecological cycles with spiritual narratives. Such verses underscore gratitude and dependence on the goddess, positioning her as both a sustainer of life and a source of nourishment. This perspective also challenges the modern secular detachment from nature, insisting instead that ecological prosperity is inextricably linked to spiritual consciousness.

Equally significant is the communal nature of devotion: "Gaun Gaave, Ghar Gaave, Bhuvaneshwari Ke naam Gununave." This line illustrates how faith radiates outward, extending from the household to the entirety of the village. Religion in this context is not a private affair but rather a communal experience; devotion transforms into a collective chorus that binds the community together. The act of "Gaave" (singing) serves as performative memory — to chant

the goddess's name is to remember, preserve, and transmit culture. Through this verse, Pritam Bhartwan, emphasizes that oral traditions such as Jagar are communal rituals that sustain Garhwali identity amid a rapidly modernizing India.

However, Pritam Bhartwan, also addresses the issue of cultural loss: "Joun Bhuli Gaye Devi Ke Geet, Man Bhaya Khaali, Jeewan Adhooro." Here, the forgetting of the goddess's songs equates to spiritual emptiness. This serves as both a lament and a cautionary note: without the oral tradition of Jagar's Garhwali identity risks becoming vacuous. The line reflects concerns regarding cultural erosion, as modernity threatens the preservation of memory. Pritam Bhartwan, therefore, positions the Jagar as a form of cultural resistance — a means to combat forgetting, resist erasure, and protect Garhwali memory through ritual performance.

Finally, the moral teaching of the Jagar is conveyed with clarity: "Saach Bol, Satya Pai Chal, Mata Ke Aangan Ma Paav Manko Thaur."

Truth and righteousness (Satya) are upheld as the ultimate path to the goddess's grace. Pritam Bhartwan, here aligns folk religiosity with the broader moral framework of Hindu philosophy, echoing the Bhagavad Gita's emphasis on dharma. Nevertheless, his lines are steeped in a distinctly Garhwali idiom, where the "Aangan" (courtyard) of the goddess signifies intimacy, accessibility, and familial closeness. The moral is unequivocal: to live truthfully is to find belonging within the goddess's domain.

Through these verses, the Bhuvaneshwari Jagar emerges as more than a mere song; it constitutes an archive of Garhwali faith, mapping divinity onto land, seasons, and everyday life. It serves as a pedagogy of ethics, advocating for truth and righteousness. Additionally, it acts as a cultural bastion, warning against the potential erasure of oral traditions.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework: Understanding Garhwali Jagar and the Badoni Caste**

This study on Pritam Bhartwan's Garhwali Jagar and the ritual significance of the Badoni caste employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary methodology that integrates textual analysis, cultural interpretation, and religious studies. The primary text for this research is Pritam Bhartwan's *Bhuvaneshwari Jagar: Uttarakhand ki Lok Dharmik Parampara* (2018). This work serves as an expansive source of verses, rituals, and caste-specific narratives, which are examined for their cultural, social, and spiritual implications. By focusing intently on the Jagar, this study emphasizes the Badoni caste's role as custodians of ritual knowledge, thereby preserving spiritual traditions and ancestral memory. The methodological framework also incorporates ethnographic perspectives from scholars such as Diana L. Eck and Axel Michaels, highlighting how ritual performance in Garhwal operates as a dynamic interface bridging the divine and human realms, and is influenced by lineage and cultural norms.

The oral tradition theory, as articulated by Walter J. Ong and Ruth Finnegan, positions the Jagar as an oral repository of knowledge, facilitating the transmission of memory, devotion, and social instruction through generations. This perspective elucidates the dual role of the Badoni's as both ritual performers and cultural custodians, illustrating how their recitations, music, and ancestral practices propagate the goddess's presence within both domestic and communal contexts. Additionally, ritual theory, particularly Victor Turner's concepts of liminality and *communitas*, provides insight into how the performances of Jagar by the Badoni's foster shared spiritual experiences, transforming commonplace spaces into sacred environments and establishing connections between the community and the divine.

This study contextualizes the Jagar within Hindu philosophical frameworks, linking each ritual action to the principles of dharma, karma, and Shakti worship. By engaging in the worship of Bhuvaneshwari Devi, the Badoni's fulfill their dharmic responsibilities, align cosmic order through ritual karma, and manifest Shakti-the divine feminine energy-through sound, rhythm, and devotional practices. Each verse of the Jagar is interpreted not merely as oral literature, but rather as an enactment of living religious philosophy in which devotion, lineage, and ritual competence converge to yield spiritual and cultural efficacy.

Cultural anthropology, as elucidated by Clifford Geertz, enables the Jagar to be interpreted as a symbolic system wherein music, verse, and ritual serve as interconnected expressions of social meaning. Through this analytical lens, the custodianship of the Badoni caste transcends religious significance, becoming a vehicle for imparting cultural values, ethics, and communal identity to participants and observers alike. This research further acknowledges a postcolonial perspective, which recognizes that regional traditions like Jagar exemplify cultural resilience and safeguard local identity amidst the challenges posed by modernizing and homogenizing influences, thereby ensuring the continuity of Garhwali folk religion and Hindu heritage.

Through this comprehensive methodological and theoretical approach, this study illustrates how the Badoni caste mediates the sacred, cultural, and social dimensions, thereby preserving the worship of Bhuvaneshwari Devi and ensuring that the Jagar functions as both a religious and cultural archive. By amalgamating textual analysis, oral tradition theory, ritual studies, and Hindu philosophical concepts, this research substantiates the centrality of the Badoni caste in sustaining Garhwali religious and cultural identity, demonstrating that the Jagar serves simultaneously as a medium of devotion, a repository of knowledge, and a conduit for cultural memory.

## Conclusion

Pritam Bhartwan's Garhwali Jagar serves as a significant testament to the dynamic relationship between folk tradition, religious devotion, and cultural preservation. Through an in-depth exploration of Bhuvaneshwari Devi's worship and the custodianship of the Badoni caste, this research illustrates how oral performance functions not merely as a form of entertainment but as a ritualized repository of spiritual, ethical, and cultural knowledge. Each verse of the Jagar, imbued with ancestral memory and ritual authority, exemplifies the ability of folk traditions to uphold Hindu religious practices, caste responsibilities, and communal identity within contemporary society. The Badoni caste, as presented in Pritam Bhartwan's research, demonstrates the confluence of lineage and ritual competence, resulting in spiritual efficacy that ensures the precise enactment of devotion and its transmission across generations. Their involvement emphasizes the enduring significance of hereditary custodianship, performative skill, and ritual literacy in preserving cultural and religious continuity. Moreover, the Jagar functions as a cultural archive, safeguarding Garhwali identity, social hierarchies, and localized interpretations of Hindu theology, while also providing insights into broader philosophical concepts such as dharma, karma, and Shakti. This study underscores the Jagar's capability to bridge past and present, thereby connecting contemporary audiences to long-standing practices and ethical frameworks. It demonstrates that folk rituals, despite being localized and orally transmitted, are vital instruments for fostering spiritual awareness, social cohesion, and cultural memory. Through the analysis of the Badoni caste's ritual practices and Pritam Bhartwan's documentation, this research asserts that Garhwali Jagar represents a vibrant intersection of religion, culture, and social structure, preserving the sacred while educating, inspiring, and uniting communities. In summary, Pritam Bhartwan's

Jagar highlights the transformative potential of folk rituals, illustrating how oral tradition, caste authority, and devotional performance converge to maintain Hindu religious values and Garhwali cultural heritage in contemporary India. The study affirms the necessity of preserving such intangible cultural practices, not only for the continuity of religious practices but also for a broader comprehension of India's rich and vibrant folk traditions, which remain profoundly relevant in modern societal and spiritual contexts.

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## **PALANQUIN AS PORTABLE SHRINE: AJAY BIJALWAN'S UPASAK DEVOTION, SURKANDA MATA, AND THE RECLAMATION OF GARHWALI CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD**

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper examines the sacral and cultural significance of the Surkanda Mata doli, conceptualized as a portable shrine that consolidates devotion, collective memory, and regional identity within the Garhwali tradition. Utilizing two complementary sources-Mohit (Moti) Sati's devotional composition "Meri Surkanda Mata" and Narendra Singh Negi's authoritative text on the origins and practices associated with Surkanda Devi- this study posits the palanquin not merely as a ritual vessel but as a mobile repository of myth, history, and communal belonging. In Sati's song, Ajay Bijalwan is presented as the divinely chosen Upāsak, sanctioned by the goddess to construct and bear the palanquin. His role signifies the profound intersection of individual piety with the custodianship of cultural continuity. Negi's writings further reinforce this framework by elucidating the mythological genealogy of the goddess, the ritual significance of the doli, and the unifying pilgrimage routes traversed by the palanquin through Garhwal's mountainous landscapes, thereby weaving disparate communities into a cohesive spiritual cartography. The analysis illustrates that the Surkanda Mata doli operates as a peripatetic sanctum that sustains ritual sovereignty and preserves cultural memory. Within a postcolonial context, wherein indigenous practices are increasingly at risk of dilution due to globalizing and homogenizing forces, the enduring vitality of the doli ritual asserts vernacular epistemologies, ecological reverence, and resilient spirituality. Ajay Bijalwan epitomizes this sacred mediation, embodying both artisan and devotee, thus ensuring the transmission of cultural legacy across generations. Ultimately, this research highlights how Garhwali devotional practices-rooted in oral tradition and textual testimony-serve as intentional acts of cultural reclamation, spiritual sovereignty, and identity reconstruction in a world grappling with the lasting ramifications of colonial disruption.*

**Keywords:** *palanquin tradition, indigenous religiosity, Garhwali culture, oral tradition and song, cultural memory and identity, devotional song, doli yatra, collective memory, sacred geography, decolonial heritage, spiritual agency*

### **Introduction**

The resonance of Garhwali devotional culture transcends mere temples and rituals, manifesting itself in the living traditions of song, storytelling, and the embodiment of faith. The folk composition "Meri Surkanda Mata," created by Mohit Sati, serves as a salient illustration of how art, worship, and cultural continuity intermingle to shape communal identity. Central to this composition is the invocation of the goddess Surkanda Devi, whose shrine, situated atop one of the highest Himalayan ridges, has historically

attracted pilgrims from across Uttarakhand. However, the song extends beyond mere adulation of the deity; it weaves into its verses the lives and names of devotees, notably Ajay Bijalwan, who exemplifies the cultural resilience inherent in Garhwali identity.

Ajay's contribution transcends traditional ritual service; he is venerated as a spiritual mediator through whom the divine asserts its presence in the world. The song recounts a miraculous episode wherein rice sprouted upon his palm, an image that elevates him into a living manifestation of the

goddess's power. In the words of Clifford Geertz, religion acts as “a system of symbols which establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations” (The Interpretation of Cultures 90). Thus, Ajay's miracle should not be perceived merely as folkloric embellishment; rather, it stands as a cultural symbol of sustenance and endurance, ensuring that indigenous Garhwali identity persists within the postcolonial landscape of India. Narendra Singh Negi, in his publication *Surkanda Devi: Sanskriti aur Parampara*, emphasizes the significance of the palanquin (doli) within the spiritual geography of the Himalayas. He posits that “the journey of the goddess in her palanquin is the journey of the people themselves” (Negi 114). This perspective suggests that the doli serve not only as a physical vessel for the goddess but also as a metaphorical conduit for the transmission of cultural memory, language, and tradition. Ajay Bijalwan's association with this sacred object is thus doubly significant; it represents both individual devotion and communal continuity.

The relevance of such figures becomes increasingly apparent when examined through the lens of postcolonial theory. Homi K. Bhabha asserts that cultural identity in postcolonial contexts is cultivated within in-between spaces,” where hybridity reconciles tradition with modernity (The Location of Culture 55). Ajay Bijalwan's devotion operates within this liminal space; while firmly rooted in indigenous ritual practice, it also emerges as a counter-narrative to the homogenizing influences of modern Indian nationhood. His commemoration in song serves as a reminder that Garhwali culture cannot be assimilated into broader national discourses without sacrificing its unique spiritual essence.

Similarly, Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, underscores the necessity of safeguarding indigenous traditions and languages from the erasures wrought by colonial and neocolonial modernity. The tradition surrounding the Surkanda

Devi doli, preserved through both song and prose, exemplifies a form of cultural resistance. By naming Ajay Bijalwan in a devotional song, the community actively resists the forgetfulness of its custodians of faith, ensuring that devotion is intertwined with lived cultural practice rather than relegated to abstract ritual.

Stuart Hall's assertion that cultural identity encompasses “becoming” as well as “being” (Cultural Identity and Diaspora 225) resonates profoundly in this context. Ajay's devotion is not a static construct; it is continually revitalized through song, story, and festival. Each iteration reconstructs his identity, enabling the Garhwali community to reaffirm its presence amid the modern dislocations it faces.

Moreover, theorists such as Partha Chatterjee assert that the “inner domain of culture” enabled colonized societies to maintain their sovereignty during colonialism (The Nation and Its Fragments 6). The tradition associated with Surkanda Devi, safeguarded through practices like the doli procession, embodies such an inner domain. Ajay Bijalwan, acting as an Upasak, (Devotee) serves as a crucial link between sacred authority and social perseverance, ensuring that Garhwali selfhood remains intact in the face of external pressures.

Anthropologist James Clifford notes that “tradition is not the opposite of modernity, but a way of situating oneself in the modern world” (Routes 22). Ajay's faith exemplifies this notion; devotion to Surkanda Devi does not retreat into the past but reorients individuals to confront contemporary challenges with resilience. His miracle of rice, therefore, symbolizes empowerment, instilling a sense of endurance within the Garhwali community as they navigate life's adversities.

Economist Amartya Sen highlights the significance of cultural freedom as a fundamental component of human development: “Cultural liberty is a basic capability” (Identity and Violence 18). In this light, the autonomy to preserve and practice Garhwali

devotional traditions constitutes an act of empowerment, enriching the capabilities of individuals and communities to thrive. Ajay's remembered devotion emerges not only as a pillar of faith but also as a catalyst for cultural agency.

Finally, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "polyphonic" nature of cultural texts accentuates the complexity and richness of cultural expression, further emphasizing the dynamic interplay of tradition and modernity within the Garhwali devotional context.

### Critical Analysis

Sacral Cartographies: An Analytical Reading of Narendra Singh Negi's Surkanda Devi: Sanskriti aur Parampara:

Narendra Singh Negi's *Surkanda Devi: Sanskriti aur Parampara* provides a comprehensive exploration of one of Uttarakhand's most venerated shrines, presenting an intricate cultural cartography that intertwines devotion, memory, and identity within the Garhwali landscape. Authored by a prominent cultural custodian of Uttarakhand, Negi's prose adeptly combines ethnographic detail with poetic reverence, portraying the Surkanda tradition as not merely a ritualized practice but as a living archive that embodies indigenous resilience. His work is essential for a nuanced understanding of how the shrine and its associated practices articulate a collective sense of belonging in the context of postcolonial India.

One of the pivotal contributions of Negi's analysis is his emphasis on the *doli yatra* -the ceremonial palanquin procession of the goddess. He asserts, "Jab mata apni doli mein nikalti hain, to poora gaon ek samuhik yatra par nikal padta hai, jisme bhakti aur samudaay ek hi roop le lete hain" ("When the goddess travels in her palanquin, the entire village embarks on a collective journey, in which devotion and community merge into a single form"; Negi 57). This statement elevates the *doli* from a mere ritual to a performative manifestation of communal identity. The journey assumes both spatial

and symbolic dimensions: it represents a pilgrimage through the Himalayan terrain while simultaneously reaffirming the cultural continuity of the Garhwali people.

Moreover, Negi's discourse highlights the interconnection between ecology and spirituality. He posits that the shrine of Surkanda, located amidst lush forests and breathtaking peaks, "pradarshit karti hai prakriti aur parampara ka milan" ("displays the union of nature and tradition"; Negi 103). Such observations coincide with contemporary ecological humanities wherein sacred geography is interpreted as a means of fostering environmental consciousness. The reverence for the goddess thus encompasses not only religious devotion but also ecological ethics, reinforcing the devotees' custodial relationship with the land.

The remembrance of Ajay Bijalwan within this tradition, as illustrated in oral narratives and folk songs, resonates with Negi's narrative architecture. Although Negi does not extensively elaborate on individual devotees, his depiction of the *upasad* as a crucial conduit of divine power reflects the lived religiosity embodied by figures such as Bijalwan. He emphasizes that the goddess manifests most palpably through the bodies and actions of her devotees:

"Bhakt ke sharir mein devi ka aavahan hi uski shakti ka pratyaksh roop hai" ("The invocation of the goddess within the devotee's body is the most visible form of her power"; Negi 89). This insight corroborates the miraculous imagery presented in Mohit Sati's song, where Ajay is remembered as having rice sprouting in his palm under the goddess's influence, thus poetically encapsulating Negi's theoretical observation.

Negi ji also contextualizes the worship of Surkanda Devi within the broader discourse of postcolonial cultural identity. He contends that the persistence of such traditions serves to resist the homogenizing trends of modern nationalism and

globalization. He states, "Garhwali paramparaon ko samajhne ke bina, hamare rashtriya itihaas ki kahani adhoori rahegi" ("Without understanding Garhwali traditions, the narrative of our national history remains incomplete"; Negi 144). This assertion echoes Partha Chatterjee's argument that the "inner domain of culture" is foundational for colonized societies in preserving their sovereignty (The Nation and Its Fragments 6).

Consequently, Negi's text situates the Surkanda tradition as an intrinsic cultural sphere that safeguards Garhwali identity amid the external pressures of modernization. The polyphonic quality of Negi's narrative is noteworthy. His work integrates historical accounts, oral memories, ritual descriptions, and poetic expressions, creating what Mikhail Bakhtin terms a "dialogic" cultural text (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 18). For instance, his recounting of seasonal pilgrimages transcends mere description, as it is enriched with the voices of villagers, folk chants, and mythological references. This polyphonic structure mirrors the communal and dialogical essence of Garhwali devotion, where each voice contributes to the collective affirmation of the goddess.

Furthermore, the book emphasizes the vital role of women in sustaining devotional practices. Negi highlights that women, as singers of jagars and guardians of domestic rituals, play a central role in preserving traditions within intimate, everyday environments (Negi 127). This perspective aligns with feminist examinations of ritual, which assert that women's devotional labor often constitutes the backbone of cultural survival. By acknowledging their contributions, Negi situates the Surkanda tradition not only in public rituals but also in the private, intergenerational transmission of faith.

In conclusion, Surkanda Devi: Sanskriti aur Parampara functions concurrently as ethnography, theology, and cultural manifesto. It underscores the

resilience of Garhwali devotion, situating it within the broader discourse of identity and cultural continuity.

### **Echoes of Devotion: Mohit Sati's Song on Surkanda Mata and the Postcolonial Memory of Faith**

Mohit Sati's devotional song dedicated to Surkanda Mata serves not only as a lyrical tribute to the goddess but also as a cultural artefact that encapsulates the enduring nature of indigenous memory in postcolonial India. The song positions the goddess at the core of Garhwali identity, invoking her divine presence while simultaneously preserving local religious practices through oral and performative traditions. In this manner, it aligns with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "re-inscription of cultural identity" within the postcolonial context (The Location of Culture 55).

The narrative of the song vividly portrays the experiences of devotees, particularly Ajay Bijalwan, whose profound devotion to Surkanda Mata exemplifies the goddess's miraculous capabilities. The lyrics convey: "Surkanda mata ki kripa se, Ajay ke haath mein dhaan ugya" ("By the grace of Surkanda Mata, rice sprouted in Ajay's palm"; Sati). This imagery transforms faith into a palpable, living miracle, reaffirming the goddess's role as a life-giving entity within Garhwal's spiritual consciousness. In postcolonial contexts, such narratives challenge the rationalizing tendencies of modernity by asserting the ongoing relevance of the miraculous within indigenous traditions.

Furthermore, Sati's song highlights the goddess's duality: she embodies both maternal protection and fierce cosmic power. This characterization resonates with the traditional Hindu understanding of the Devi as both nurturing and destructive, paralleling figures such as Durga and Kali in pan-Indian mythology. The lyrics declare: "Mata ke darbar mein, har dukh door hota hai" ("In the court of the goddess, every sorrow is dispelled";

Sati). Such expressions emphasize her function as a divine refuge, wherein suffering is transformed into strength through an act of devotional surrender. By emphasizing the transcendence of Surkanda Mata, the song situates Garhwali religious life within a broader framework of Hindu cosmology while simultaneously preserving its unique local expression.

The postcolonial significance of the song is evidenced in its articulation of indigenous identity through oral performance. As Jan Assmann postulates, cultural memory is sustained not solely through written texts, but through rituals, songs, and commemorative practices that facilitate the transmission of meaning across generations (Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation 19). Mohit Sati's song serves as such a vessel of memory, ensuring that the narrative of Surkanda Mata and her devotees remain embedded in collective consciousness. Each performance of the song transforms the act of singing into a ritual of remembrance, resisting cultural erasure in an increasingly globalizing society.

Additionally, the song contributes significantly to the discourse surrounding regional identity. During the colonial era, Himalayan cultures were frequently marginalized as peripheral or "folk" compared to mainstream Sanskrit Hinduism. However, postcolonial scholarship recognizes these traditions as essential expressions of indigenous resistance and authenticity. By centering Surkanda Mata, Sati's composition elevates Garhwali spirituality into the public sphere, contesting historical colonial neglect. As Stuart Hall notes, identity is "a matter of becoming as well as being" (Cultural Identity and Diaspora 225). Therefore, the song reasserts Garhwali identity not as a relic of the past but as a dynamic presence within postcolonial India.

The song operates within the broader theological framework of shakti (divine feminine energy) that characterizes Hinduism. Surkanda Mata, as an embodiment of shakti, symbolizes the cosmic energy

that sustains and transforms existence. The act of devotees carrying her doli (palanquin), as echoed in the song, represents a symbolic realignment of human existence with divine order. Sati's refrain, "Mata ke naam se har manthan sukhmayi ho jaye" ("By the goddess's name, every turmoil turns into peace"; Sati), articulates the psychological comfort derived from her worship, illustrating how faith serves as an anchor in the face of existential uncertainties.

Moreover, the song accentuates the profound interrelationship between geography, spirituality, and memory. The shrine of Surkanda Mata, situated atop a mountain near Dhanaulti, is revered as a site where myth and landscape coalesce. The lyrics describe the physical journey of devotees as they ascend steep paths, their chants echoing throughout the hills, thereby transforming physical space into sacred geography. This sacred cartography reflects Edward Casey's notion of "place-memory"-the concept that memory becomes embodied in landscapes (Remembering: A Phenomenological Study 186). Thus, the song anchors Garhwali cultural identity not solely in myth but also in the very geography of the Himalayas.

In a broader context, Mohit Sati's song functions as both an educational and cultural medium, fostering awareness of Garhwali heritage among younger generations. It preserves the idioms, rhythms, and linguistic nuances inherent to the Garhwali language, ensuring that oral tradition continues to play a significant role in shaping cultural literacy within the region. Such artistic expressions serve as counter-narratives to cultural homogenization in India, safeguarding indigenous cultural identity in a complex and evolving socio-cultural landscape.

### **Ajay Bijalwan: Surkanda Doli Upasak and the Revival of Garhwali Cultural Consciousness**

In the cultural landscape of Garhwal, Ajay Bijalwan emerges as a paramount Upasak (devotee) of Surkanda Mata, whose devotion has elevated him to

the status of both a spiritual exemplar and a cultural custodian. His role as a Doli Upasak transcends mere religious practices; it is deeply interwoven with the broader framework of Garhwali identity, tradition, and postcolonial resilience. By perpetuating the legacy of doli pratha-the ceremonial transport of the goddess's palanquin-he reinforces an indigenous practice that signifies both devotion and communal belonging.

Within postcolonial contexts, where indigenous traditions frequently encounter marginalization due to modernization and homogenization, Bijalwan's devotion assumes a countercultural function. His Upasana extends beyond ritualistic boundaries, serving as a source of empowerment and solace for individuals facing the complexities of contemporary life. The faith he cultivates in Surkanda Mata provides psychological resilience, equipping individuals to navigate challenges and uncertainties. As Mircea Eliade observes, "religious man lives in a sacralized cosmos; for him, space is not homogeneous" (*The Sacred and the Profane* 20). For Garhwali devotees, Ajay Bijalwan personifies this worldview, transforming ordinary spaces into sacred landscapes through his devotion.

Central to his contributions is the revival and visibility of Garhwali cultural practices. Doli pratha, dhol Sagar, and Jagar traditions represent not isolated rituals, but vibrant expressions of Garhwali religiosity. Through his unwavering devotion, Bijalwan rekindles awareness of the richness inherent in these traditions. The dhol Sagar, the ritual drum summoning divine presence, symbolizes the sonic articulation of Garhwali spirituality, while Jagar functions as a performative invocation linking the mortal and divine realms. When the Upasak becomes imbued with divine influence during a Jagar session, it not only affirms the immediacy of divine power but also reinstates cultural faith in an indigenous belief system.

Furthermore, Ajay Bijalwan's commitment to Surkanda Mata underscores why Uttarakhand has historically been referred to as Devbhumi-the "land of the gods." This identity is anchored in the sacred geography of the region, which is home to numerous Shaktipeeths, including Surkanda, Kunjapuri, and Chandrabadni. Collectively, these sites testify to the intricate weave of Hindu religious history within the mountains and valleys of Garhwal. The Surkanda Mata shrine, situated on the Sirkut peak, holds particular significance; its elevation symbolizes the spiritual ascent that devotees undertake both physically and metaphysically. Each pilgrimage and each act of carrying the doli represent an effort to re-establish the sacred order, connecting individual devotion with the collective memory of Hindu cosmology.

In this context, Ajay Bijalwan's Upasana serves both spiritual and pedagogical purposes. By embodying the goddess's devotion, he instructs his community in recognizing the profound depths of their own culture. In a society where colonial legacies often devalued local traditions, his role as an Upasak acts as a reclamation of cultural dignity. He affirms that Garhwali tradition is not an isolated or marginal component of Hindu culture, but a vibrant expression of India's spiritual richness. His practice reflects Stuart Hall's assertion that identity is "always in process, always constituted within representation" (*Cultural Identity and Diaspora* 225). Through ritual performance and devout engagement, Bijalwan ensures that Garhwali identity is perpetually reconstituted in the present.

The solace derived from his devotion also addresses the psychological dimensions of postcolonial existence. As faith in Surkanda Mata is nurtured through their Upasana, individuals discover a source of strength to confront personal and communal hardships. The goddess serves as a wellspring of empowerment, and Bijalwan's position is that of a cultural mediator channeling divine energy

into social resilience. This notion resonates with William James's observation that "religion... is a source of energy that makes men able to do what otherwise they could not" (*The Varieties of Religious Experience* 141). In the Garhwali context, Ajay Bijalwan exemplifies how devotion transmutes despair into courage and uncertainty into conviction.

Equally significant is his role in preserving the Garhwali oral tradition. Each Jagar performance and dhol Sagar rhythm transmits cultural knowledge across generations. By actively participating in these traditions, Bijalwan ensures that younger generations remain connected to their heritage. Rather than experiencing alienation, they witness the living continuity of Garhwali practices that link them to the broader narrative of Hindu mythology and cosmology. In this manner, Bijalwan's devotion serves as a cultural bridge, facilitating connections in an era of rapid globalization.

His contributions extend beyond ritual performance into the realm of cultural revivalism. The very act of carrying the doli through Garhwali villages is symbolic: it reaffirms that faith is integrated into the community's identity and collective spirit.

### **Methodological and Theoretical Framework: Ajay Bijalwan and the Devotional Praxis of Surkanda Doli in Postcolonial Garhwal**

This research occupies a critical space at the intersection of cultural anthropology, postcolonial studies, and religious phenomenology, aiming to interpret Ajay Bijalwan's devotional activities as a Surkanda Doli Upasak within the broader context of Garhwali cultural resurgence in postcolonial India. The methodological orientation of this study is interdisciplinary, integrating ethnographic interpretation, psycho-spiritual inquiry, and literary-critical analysis. This multifaceted approach is vital, as Bijalwan's contributions transcend mere religious practice and must be understood as a cultural performance that preserves indigenous memory,

fosters collective resilience, and contests the epistemic violence associated with colonial legacies.

Informed by Clifford Geertz's assertion that culture comprises "webs of significance" that enable individuals to derive meaning from their environments (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 5), the devotional actions of carrying the Surkanda Doli and engaging in ritualistic practices are conceptualized as symbolic texts that encapsulate the worldview of the Garhwali community. Ajay Bijalwan assumes the dual role of practitioner and interpreter of indigenous meanings, serving as a bridge between the divine and the collective consciousness of his people. His Upasana exemplifies the ongoing vitality of rituals such as doli pratha, dhol Sagar, and Jagar, all of which perpetuate Hindu cultural memory while adapting to the demands of a postcolonial modernity.

The application of religious phenomenology enhances this understanding by elucidating how sacred experiences are embodied through space, ritual, and memory. Mircea Eliade's claim that sacred sites "reveal an absolute reality, opposed to the non-reality of the vast surrounding expanse" (*The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 21) is notably relevant in the context of the Surkanda shrine at Sirkut peak. Through Bijalwan's performance, ordinary landscapes are transformed into sanctified spaces, reinforcing the identity of Uttarakhand as Devbhumi. The physical act of transporting the goddess's doli transcends mere devotion; it represents a phenomenological transformation whereby the mountains and valleys themselves emerge as vessels of divine memory.

From a psycho-spiritual standpoint, William James's observation that religion provides "a new zest which adds itself like a gift to life" (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 141) illustrates the empowering effects of Bijalwan's practices on individuals and communities. In a society contending with the psychological aftermath of colonial alienation, the Upasana serves as a source of solace,

resilience, and empowerment. The ecstatic states cultivated during rituals, frequently accompanied by the invocation of divine power through Jagar and dhol Sagar, facilitate collective catharsis that fortifies the community against adversity. Such practices not only reaffirm faith but also empower individuals to confront challenges with renewed courage, embedding psychological strength within cultural devotion.

Moreover, the postcolonial framework provides critical tools for interpreting these practices as forms of resistance and identity construction. Stuart Hall's assertion that cultural identity is "a matter of becoming as well as of being" (Cultural Identity and Diaspora, p. 225) positions Bijalwan's role as one that continuously redefines Garhwali identity through ritual and devotion. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity underscores the dynamic negotiation between inherited traditions and modern cultural realities evident in Bijalwan's devotional praxis. His *Upasana* embodies continuity with ancient Hindu traditions while concurrently addressing contemporary identity challenges within postcolonial India. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's reminder that "to decolonise the mind is to reconnect with indigenous memory" (Decolonising the Mind, p. 87) becomes a guiding principle for assessing Bijalwan's contributions: his devotional practices revive memories ingrained in Garhwali culture, resist colonial erasure, and highlight the sacred as a fundamental aspect of postcolonial subjectivity.

Through the application of this methodological and theoretical framework, Ajay Bijalwan's role is interpreted not merely as individual devotion but as a cultural performance embodying identity, spirituality, and resilience. His practice of Surkanda Doli *Upasana* strengthens communal bonds, reaffirms Hindu religious memory, and reinstates Garhwal as a vibrant testament to India's indigenous traditions. By employing ethnographic interpretation, religious phenomenology, and postcolonial critique, this research illustrates that Bijalwan's devotional praxis

operates concurrently as cultural text, psychological empowerment, and form of postcolonial resistance. It is within this triangulation of meaning that his contributions attain profound significance for both Garhwali culture and the broader discourse surrounding postcolonial Indian identity.

### Conclusion

The investigation into the traditions surrounding Surkanda Devi, articulated through the perspectives of Garhwali singers and devotees, highlights the significant convergence of faith, culture, and resilience within postcolonial Indian society. This research paper has meticulously traced the role of the sacred landscape of Uttarakhand, recognized as Devbhumi, as both a geographical and spiritual repository of Hindu religious memory, with the Surkanda Devi shrine serving as a central axis of cultural identity. The devotional practices exhibited, whether manifest through the lyrical works of Mohit Sati or the embodied *Upasana* of Ajay Bijalwan, illustrate how indigenous art forms and rituals transcend mere religious significance, evolving into instruments of empowerment, cultural continuity, and decolonial affirmation. By examining these practices within postcolonial, phenomenological, and cultural frameworks, this study has established that Garhwali traditions—such as the *doli pratha*, *dhol Sagar*, and *Jagar*—are not mere artifacts of history but are, in fact, dynamic practices that enhance the spiritual consciousness of a community navigating the complexities of modernity. The songs and performances dedicated to Surkanda Mata signify a form of resistance to cultural erasure, emphasizing the persistence of indigenous memory as a crucial source of psychological fortitude and social cohesion. By placing these expressions within the context of postcolonial discourse, this paper elucidates how the cultural resurgence observed in Garhwal is inextricably linked to a broader reclamation of identity and tradition throughout India's postcolonial

trajectory. In conclusion, the figure of Surkanda Devi, as depicted through folk songs, rituals, and devotional practices, emerges as a potent symbol of divine authority and cultural rootedness. She epitomizes not only the sacred feminine but also the enduring continuity of Hindu philosophy, which provides individuals and communities with solace, courage, and meaningful existence. The contributions of artists such as Mohit Sati and practitioners like Ajay Bijalwan highlight the ways in which art and devotion facilitate a community's connection to its historical narrative while enabling them to confront the psychological legacies of colonialism with renewed faith and resilience. This study ultimately posits that Garhwali devotional culture, founded in the veneration of Surkanda Mata, transcends mere regional heritage; it embodies a vital expression of India's indigenous identity in the postcolonial context. It affirms that cultural preservation, grounded in religious devotion and artistic expression, serves as both a form of resistance and renewal- thereby ensuring that the mountains of Uttarakhand continue to resonate with the enduring themes of faith, memory, and belonging.

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## CHAWLS OF MUMBAI: EXPLORING SOCIAL LIVING, ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY

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### Abstract

*Mumbai's chawls were first built in the late 1800s to give shelter to workers who came to the city during a time of fast growth. Over the years, these buildings turned into close communities where people shared not just walls but also their daily lives. This research looks at how chawls started and changed over time, and how their design with long corridors, common toilets, and small rooms helped people connect with each other. The study shows how living in such close spaces made strong bonds among neighbours who often treated each other like family. The paper also explores the lively culture inside chawls, where festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, Navratri, and Holi, Dahihandi, etc. bring everyone together. Celebrations, family events, and daily routines all happen in shared spaces, creating a feeling of belonging. This research uses interviews, old records, and visits to chawls to understand why these places are important even today. It also looks at how chawls can be protected as part of Mumbai's heritage so that their rich social life is not lost as the city changes.*

**Keywords:** *architecture, community living, culture, girangaon, heritage preservation, Mumbai chawls, social living.*

### Introduction

Mumbai's chawls were first built in the late 1800s to give shelter to workers who came to the city during a time of fast growth. Over the years, these buildings turned into close communities where people shared not just walls but also their daily lives. They are not just buildings; they are living communities that developed during a period of rapid industrialization, colonial housing policies, and large-scale migration from rural India. First constructed in the late nineteenth century to house mill workers in the textile hub of Girangaon, chawls soon became the most common form of working-class housing in Mumbai. Over time, they shaped not only the physical landscape of the city but also its social and cultural

fabric. While elite politics unfolded in legislative chambers and urban clubs, much of the grassroots mobilization took place in working-class neighbourhoods—especially the chawls of Girangaon, the city's industrial heart. The dense living arrangements, shared spaces, and collective labour identity of chawl residents made them highly receptive to political messages and capable of rapid collective action.

While their architecture and form have often been studied, their role in creating strong community networks, shared traditions, and everyday support systems requires fresh attention especially today, when large-scale redevelopment threatens their survival. This paper aims to trace the historical and

architectural growth of chawls, study the social and communal life of their residents, highlight the festivals and cultural practices that continue within these spaces, and explore ways of preserving their social and architectural heritage as part of Mumbai's changing urban identity. The paper explores the lively culture inside chawls, where festivals bring everyone together. Celebrations, family events, and daily routines all happen in shared spaces, creating a feeling of belonging. This paper aims to understand the preservation of chawls and maintain their cultural and historical phenomena and comprehend a balance between modernization and preservation and to critically analyze the desired benefits to be gained after preservation.

### Methodology

To investigate the historical, social, and cultural life of Mumbai's chawls, this study adopts a qualitative research approach. The methodology includes primary data collection through structured and unstructured interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with chawl residents and urban historians, to gather personal stories and insights into everyday life and traditions. Field visits to chawls such as BDD, BIT, and Kondaji helped observe interactions, spatial use, and festive practices. Questionnaire-based surveys were also carried out to understand residents' views on community life, shared spaces, and cultural continuity. These interactions helped document daily routines, communal spaces, and cultural traditions. Secondary sources include books, research articles, oral histories, and newspaper reports related to chawl architecture, social life, and urban heritage. This approach helps in understanding how chawls function as living cultural spaces and how their social fabric has evolved over time.

### Origin and Evolution of Chawls

The word 'chawl' is derived from the marathi word 'चाळ', which originally referred as anklet and by extension, came to be signify corridors or galleries.<sup>1</sup> The Industrial boom of the 19th century with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the surge in demand for cotton because of the American Civil War motivated many Indian businessmen and British merchants to establish textile mills in Mumbai. The Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company was the first cotton mill in Mumbai established in July 1854 at Tardeo by Cowasjee Nanabhoy Davar. By the second half of the 19th century there were some 178 mills operating in the city. A large number of textile mills were built in the region of Girangaon, it was popularly referred to as 'village of mills'. The region comprises areas such as: Worli, Prabhadevi, Tardeo, Byculla, Mazgaon, Lalbaugh, Parel, Naigoan, etc.

Different groups migrated to the city with different aspirations. Those from the upper class and the middle class migrated with the intention of upward mobility while the working class came with the motive of survival and temporary employment. The upper caste population of Maharashtra migrated to the Girgaon region; the middle class migrated to the Girangaon region and the people from impoverished areas of Maharashtra and beyond migrated to the Kamathipura, Kumbharwada, Nagapada etc regions. Initially migration to Mumbai was characterized by only male members. However, over time, the migration was defined by male members bringing their families. This led to overcrowding with the amenities of the chawls falling shorter leading to unsanitary practices.

To accommodate the large-scale migration driven by the industrial boom the concept of chawls emerged as a practical solution to the housing crisis. The unequal distribution of land between white town

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<sup>1</sup> Neera Adarkar (ed.), *The Chawls of Mumbai: Galleries of Life*, Imprintone Publication, 2012.

and native land led to overcrowding eventually leading expansion onto reclaimed marshy land. The ownership of land can be traced through three sources: Private landowners, Mill owners and the British Government. The private landowners built chawls as a way of investment and collected rents from the tenants. The building of privately owned chawls started in Girgaon as there were many orchards in the region which the landowners bought and built. The owners of the mills also contributed in the making of the chawls by constructing them near the mills.

The colonial government also became a direct actor in chawl construction, primarily as a response to public health crises. The plague epidemic of 1896, which ravaged the city's overcrowded native quarters, forced the British authorities to intervene. The City of Bombay Improvement Trust (established in 1898) was tasked with clearing slums and providing "sanitary" housing for the displaced population. This led to the development of planned chawl complexes, most notably the Bombay Development Department (BDD) chawls in the 1920s. While offering improved ventilation and layout, these initiatives were also tools of social control, aiming to regulate the native population and protect the commercial interests of the colonial port city.

### Architectural features

Chawls are a unique and familiar sight in India's bustling industrial cities, especially Mumbai. These large residential buildings, divided into small tenements, have long provided affordable housing for the working-class population, particularly migrant labourers seeking a livelihood in the city. More than just a housing type, chawls became a way of life, fostering close-knit communities where neighbours functioned like extended families. Historically, chawls emerged as a response to rapid urbanization and the growing need to house workers near industrial hubs. Typically, these buildings stand two to three stories

high, with each floor accommodating eight to sixteen or sometimes even more than 20 small units often referred to as kholis. These rooms, usually around 100 to 200 square feet in size, consist of a hall and a small kitchen, with rents ranging from ₹50 to ₹200 per month.<sup>2</sup>

A defining feature of chawls is their central courtyard, a lively space where residents gather for conversations, celebrations, and daily activities. The corridors and passageways serve as social hubs, where children play, women chat, and life unfolds in a shared rhythm. However, the shared amenities, particularly common latrines and limited space, also pose challenges, often making sanitation and privacy a concern. Despite these hardships, chawls continue to embody a spirit of resilience and camaraderie, standing as a testament to the city's vibrant working-class history.

Chawls are more than just buildings; they reflect smart, grassroots design ideas that architects still admire today. Features like long balconies and open corridors improve ventilation and provide shaded spaces, much like the modern brise-soleil or louvered façades. Many chawls also have shops on the ground floor, an early version of today's mixed-use developments that help create lively neighbourhoods. Even contemporary sustainable housing borrows elements from chawls, such as shared terraces and open-air corridors. But chawls are not just about architecture; they have played a huge role in shaping Mumbai's culture. The cramped living spaces pushed residents to seek entertainment outside, fueling Mumbai's deep love for cinema. Old photos of packed mid-century movie theatres show how important films became as an escape for chawl dwellers, helping Bollywood thrive.

<sup>2</sup> Suchita Stuthi, "What is the cultural relevance of the chaotic architecture of Chawls?", *Rethinking The Future*, <https://www.rethinkingthefuture.com/designing-for-typologies/a9373-what-is-the-cultural-relevance-of-the-chaotic-architecture-of-chawls/> Accessed on 26th Feb. 2025.

Beyond entertainment, chawls fostered diverse communities. Unlike modern gated towers that separate people, chawls brought together different professions: teachers lived next to dockworkers; shopkeepers shared balconies with mill workers. This mix of people created shared traditions, new ways of speaking, and strong social networks. Many argue that as affordable chawls disappear, cities lose this sense of togetherness, forcing lower-income families into distant suburbs and weakening the city's social fabric.

In architecture, a "type" refers to a general category of buildings, such as bungalows, row houses, or apartments each structurally different but serving the same purpose of housing. Chawls represent a distinct architectural type, typically consisting of a series of rooms connected by a common corridor. While the core design remains the same, chawls have evolved into different forms with varied spatial layouts. These changes in structure also influence how social life and daily routines take shape within them.

### Baithi Chawl

The baithi chawl, or "sitting chawl," is a single-story structure with rows of homes featuring front spaces for social interaction and back areas for services. Each unit includes a small room, kitchen, and often a loft for sleeping or storage. Common in old mill areas like Lalbaug, these chawls once offered shared open spaces that fostered strong community life. However, due to their large land use, they are now prime targets for redevelopment. An example is the Peruwala Chawl in Lalbaug.



### Bar Chawl

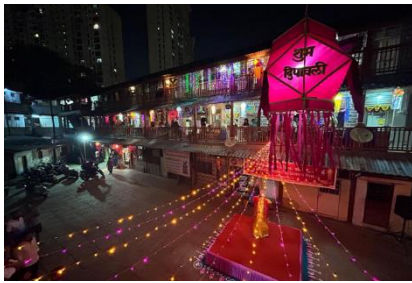
The bar chawl is a typical multi-story chawl design found across Mumbai, usually featuring two corridors one at the front and one at the back that connect the rooms. The front corridor, facing the street, acts as a shared space for social interaction, while the back corridor is used for household chores like drying clothes and storing water. Limited room size often pushes daily activities into these shared spaces. Toilets are located at one end of the building, with staircases at the other. Some bar chawls have only one corridor, which affects how shared spaces are used. Women often prefer homes with both corridors, as the rear one provides extra functional space beyond the cramped interiors. A great example of this is Kondaji Chawl in Parel, which has stood for over 100 years. While interviewing its residents, they spoke fondly of the festivals they celebrate together and the strong bonds they share. Though the chawl is now undergoing redevelopment, the people living there still express the true essence of chawl life, one of close-knit communities and shared traditions.



### Courtyard Chawls

Courtyard chawls feature open central spaces that serve as communal living rooms for residents, hosting daily interactions and festivals. Corridors and small bridges connect homes, making movement easy and encouraging strong social ties. The shared nature of these spaces reflects a lifestyle built on openness, trust, and community bonding, where doors are rarely locked and neighbors feel like extended family. This openness not only reduces the

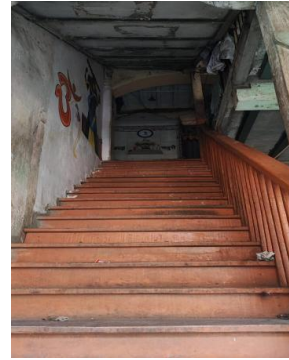
feeling of congestion in the tightly packed living spaces but also strengthens social bonds among residents.<sup>3</sup> Harharwala Chawl in Chinchpokli is a courtyard-style chawl known for its strong community bonds through shared open spaces. Due to sanitation issues from narrow building gaps, the British introduced BDD chawls in the 1920s with better layouts and ventilation. Historic chawls like Datta Mandir in Girgaon and Fanaswadi Chawl continue to preserve cultural traditions, reflecting the lasting spirit of Mumbai's working-class heritage.



**Following are some architectural features of this old heritage of Mumbai:**

#### **Wooden stairs with tales to share**

The jina, or wooden staircase, in Mumbai's chawls is more than just a structure it's a symbol of community life and history. These steep stairs with wooden railings have echoed generations of footsteps, laughter, and conversations. They served as social hubs, storage spaces, and resting spots, while also playing a role in political discussions during the mill era and freedom movement. As redevelopment replaces chawls with modern buildings, these staircases and the memories they carry are gradually disappearing, taking with them a piece of Mumbai's living heritage.



#### **Where washrooms became a heart of social life**

In Mumbai's chawls, shared toilets with limited water and long queues were a daily reality. Despite being crowded and often unhygienic, these spaces became places of social interaction where residents bonded over shared struggles. Conversations flowed naturally, breaking barriers of caste and religion. While inconvenient, these shared experiences strengthened the sense of community and reflected the residents' ability to adapt with dignity.



#### **Doors of Trust: Neighbours became an extended family**

In Mumbai's chawls, security was never a major concern; life thrived on trust, openness, and a deep sense of community. Small wooden doors built into walls connected neighbouring homes, allowing residents to share ingredients, help with chores, and care for each other's children. Neighbours were like extended family, celebrating together and supporting one another through every joy and struggle. These doors weren't just physical passageways but

<sup>3</sup> Aditi Dey, "Physical and Social Configurations of the Bombay Chawls", *Sahapedia*, <https://www.sahapedia.org/physical-and-social-configurations-of-the-bombay-chawls> Accessed on 3rd March 2025.

emotional bridges, reflecting a way of life now slowly fading in today's fast-paced, individualistic world.



### Where life blossomed in the corridors

The corridors of Mumbai's chawls were more than passageways; they were lively communal spaces that echoed with laughter, games, gossip, and shared stories. Children played traditional games, elders chatted, and young couples exchanged shy glances. These wide corridors also served as storage areas and transformed during festivals with rangolis and lamps, becoming vibrant hubs of celebration. On hot nights, they turned into sleeping spaces for men, filled with quiet conversations. More than just functional, these corridors embodied the spirit of togetherness at the heart of chawl life.



### Where a small corner becomes a kitchen

In Mumbai's chawls, kitchens were compact, multipurpose corners often next to the bathroom with no modern storage or dining areas. Space was tight, with gas stoves on tiny platforms and utensils hanging on walls. A curtain sometimes acted as a partition for changing, and only one person could

cook at a time. Despite these limitations, the kitchen was filled with warmth where meals were made with care, stories were shared, and everyday life unfolded in close companionship.



### Communal living patterns - Chawls as a symbol of unity

Historically, chawls fostered a unique social fabric where people from different backgrounds lived side by side: a teacher might have a dockworker as a neighbour, or a shop owner might share a balcony with a mill mechanic. This close-knit living arrangement created shared customs, blended dialects, and an informal support system that cut across class lines. Many fear that replacing chawls with gated high-rises guarded by private security will erode this sense of community. Chawls in Mumbai were more than just housing; they were communities that thrived on an open-door culture, shared spaces, and deep social bonds. Life in a chawl meant that no one was ever truly alone. The design itself encouraged interactions with homes opened into corridors that acted as both pathways and social hubs. Neighbours became family, and the boundaries between private and public spaces were fluid. Whether it was women chatting while preparing food in shared courtyards, children running between homes, or elders receiving care from those around them, chawls fostered a way of life built on collective living. Festivals, weddings, and even daily routines became communal affairs, reinforcing a sense of belonging that is now fading in Mumbai's increasingly vertical landscape.



Chawls embody a unique communal living pattern, where architectural uniformity fosters a sense of equality and shared identity among residents. Despite variations in orientation and colour yellow, salmon pink, grey, and light green the structures and room layouts remain identical, reinforcing the collective nature of life within these spaces. The social fabric of chawls are also reflected in the way residents personalize shared spaces; for instance, Dalit-dominated chawls prominently display images of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Saint Rohidas, symbolizing their cultural and social aspirations, while Maratha-majority chawls feature Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, emphasizing historical pride and warrior heritage.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, chawls are characterized by intergenerational coexistence, with families spanning three or more generations living under one roof. This shared living arrangement nurtures strong social bonds, mutual support systems, and the collective sharing of traditions, making chawls not just a place of residence but a living microcosm of Mumbai's working-class heritage.

With the city's changing fortunes, redevelopment has disrupted this pattern. As chawls give way to towering apartment complexes, the very essence of community living is eroding. High-rise apartments prioritize privacy and security, leading to closed doors and isolated lives. Where once a simple knock on the

neighbour's door would invite warmth and conversation, the need for intercoms, security approvals, and formal invitations has replaced spontaneous interactions. Shared courtyards, which functioned as the heart of the chawl, have disappeared, taking with them the informal economy of tailors, tea sellers, and repairmen who once found a livelihood in these spaces. The intimacy of everyday life borrowing a cup of sugar, sharing meals, or looking after each other's children has been replaced by an urban loneliness that is difficult to articulate but deeply felt.

The promise of redevelopment often appears enticing larger apartments, modern amenities, and a more organized way of living. But these transformations come at a cost. For many old residents, the financial burden of maintaining a redeveloped home is unsustainable. Higher maintenance charges, electricity costs, and service fees make it impossible for them to stay, forcing them to relocate to distant suburbs where affordability trumps familiarity. In the process, entire communities are disbanded. What was once a mix of teachers, traders, workers, and small business owners living side by side is now a fragmented social landscape, where economic divisions are more pronounced than ever.<sup>5</sup> This shift also brings about a slow but inevitable cultural loss. Chawls were melting pots of language, tradition, and daily interactions that shaped the unique identity of Mumbai's working-class neighbourhoods. The sounds of laughter echoing through corridors, the aroma of different cuisines wafting through open windows, the impromptu music sessions on staircases these are not just romanticized memories but the fabric of a communal existence that sustained itself through hardships. Redevelopment, in many ways, is not just about

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Galton, *Fake Gods and False History: Being Indian in a Contested Mumbai Neighbourhood*, UCL Press, London, 2023, p.30.

<sup>5</sup> Aditi Dey, "Physical and Social Configurations of the Bombay Chawls", *Sahapedia*, <https://www.sahapedia.org/physical-and-social-configurations-of-the-bombay-chawls> Accessed on 3rd March 2025.

building new structures; it is about reshaping the way people interact with their surroundings and with each other. And in this race for modernization, one must ask, are we truly upgrading lives, or are we dismantling the very spirit that made these communities resilient in the first place?

### **The Informal Economy: Enterprise in Shared Spaces**

The chawls social density naturally fostered a vibrant informal economy, turning its corridors and courtyards into bustling marketplaces and workshops. Ground-floor rooms were highly prized and often converted into kirana shops (grocery stores), tailoring units, or tea stalls, serving both residents and the wider neighborhood.

Within the chawl itself, micro-enterprises thrived. Women played a pivotal role, managing successful tiffin services that not only fed families but also supplied the city's famed dabbawalas in their early days. Others offered services like renting out utensils and decorations for weddings and festivals, tutoring children, or taking in sewing work. The constant flow of people in shared spaces meant that a skilled mechanic or electrician living in a kholi (room) could easily find clients within the building. Many households engaged in home-based piecework (embroidery, papad-making), petty trading, and food vending activities that supplemented wages and created a micro-economy within chawl neighborhoods.

This economic activity made the chawl a remarkably self-sufficient unit. The income generated supplemented factory wages and provided crucial financial resilience for working-class families. The redevelopment of chawls dismantles this intricate economic network, displacing not just homes but also livelihoods, and scattering a once-centralized informal economy.

### **Suggestions**

While residents support redevelopment, there is also a strong desire to preserve the rich cultural and social fabric of Mumbai's chawls. Though the buildings may disappear, their legacy can be preserved through thoughtful initiatives. One approach is creating digital archives to document the chawls' evolution covering architecture, oral histories, and cultural life with insights from residents and experts. Another is organizing community-led heritage walks that offer immersive experiences. Training locals to lead these walks, with support from tourism bodies and revenue-sharing models, can make them sustainable. Short films shown at the end of walks can further engage audiences. A coffee table book featuring photographs, maps, and personal stories can visually and emotionally capture chawl life. As a trial, such a book was created using resident narratives and photos. Together, these efforts can help preserve the essence of chawls even as the city evolves.

**Implement Incentive-Based Zoning and Adaptive Reuse:** Urban policy must move beyond a binary choice of either full preservation or complete demolition. Municipal regulations, specifically the Development Control Regulations (DCR), should be amended to encourage adaptive reuse. For instance, developers could be granted additional Floor Space Index (FSI) for preserving and structurally reinforcing the facades and key communal elements (like central courtyards or iconic staircases) of heritage-grade chawls and integrating them into new developments. These preserved structures could be repurposed as community museums, libraries, archives for oral histories, or affordable workspaces for artists and artisans. This approach would allow for modern development while physically retaining the architectural soul of the chawl and dedicating it to a community-oriented purpose.

## Conclusion

Mumbai's chawls, originally built during the colonial era to house mill workers, were more than just affordable shelters. Their design with shared corridors, courtyards, and basic amenities fostered close-knit communities built on cooperation and collective living. Beyond their social fabric, chawls played a vital role in the city's political history. Their compact layout enabled quick communication and mobilization, making them key centers for labour movements and activism. From the 1982 textile strike led by Dr. Datta Samant to the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, chawls became powerful spaces for protest and solidarity, deeply shaping Mumbai's working-class and political identity. Economically, chawls supported a thriving informal economy, with residents running small businesses like tailoring, tiffin services, and grocery stalls. These micro-enterprises reflected the resilience and creativity of working-class communities, making chawls self-sustaining urban ecosystems. However, redevelopment has significantly changed this landscape. While modern projects promise better housing and infrastructure, they often disrupt the strong community bonds, cultural traditions, and historical identity tied to chawl life. Gentrification, displacement, and delays threaten to erase the heritage and everyday vibrancy that once defined these spaces. Chawls are more than utilitarian housing—they are living archives of Mumbai's industrial, social, and cultural history. Any redevelopment strategy must go beyond bricks and mortar to preserve the intricate web of relationships, traditions, and collective life that chawls sustain. The chawl, in essence, is more than a built space; it is a testament to a unique urban ingenuity and a symbol of tenacity, identity, and shared memory. As Mumbai continues its relentless vertical ascent, the question is not whether the city will change—it must—but how. The challenge for historians, urban planners and policymakers is to ensure that in building the new

Mumbai, we do not erase the very qualities of community, adaptability, and collective spirit that the chawl represents. Preserving this intangible heritage is not a nostalgic exercise; it is about learning from the past to build more humane, inclusive, and resilient cities for the future.

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