

E-ISSN: 2584-167X



Academic Research News

Peer-Reviewed Journal

N.M.S.S. Vellaichamy Nadar College
Nagamalai, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Department of English

In Collaboration with

Madurai Kamaraj University

(University with Potential for Excellence)

Re-Accredited by NAAC with A⁺⁺ Grade in the 4th cycle

Palkalainagar, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Department of English (CDOE)

Renewal of Culture and Social Reform in Indian English Literature

CP - Volume 1, Issue 2 - August 2025

Guest Editors

Dr. P. Balamurugan

Dr. R. Dhayalakrishnan

ISSN 2584-167X



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Title Verso

Journal title : Academic Research News
Abbreviated key-title : Acad. Res. News
E- ISSN Number : 2584-167X
Editor-in-Chief : Mrs. A. Gomathi
Publication frequency: Bi-Annual (Calendar Cycle - June and December)
Volume/Issue Type : Conference Proceedings - Volume I Issue 2 – August 2025
Place of Publication : Virudhunagar
Start of Publication : June 2023
Paper Size (Format) : Digital A4 Size
Medium of Publication: E-version
Subject : Multidisciplinary Studies
Language : Tamil, English
Access Type (URL or DOI): Gold OA, Online, Indexed long time in Internet Archive
Subscription Type : APC
Publisher : Maheswari Publishers, (The publishing unit of PANDIAN EDUCATIONAL TRUST- TN-32-0003213)
Publisher Website : <https://pandianeducationaltrust.com/>
Journal Site : <https://pandianeducationaltrust.com/academic-research-news.html>

Pandian Educational Trust supports the SDG Goals and is a member of the UN SDG Publisher compact.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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Academic Research News is a Peer-Reviewed Journal (E-ISSN: 2584-167X) published **Bi-yearly (June – December)** which is published by **Maheswari Publishers**, patronized by **Pandian Educational Trust, Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, India**. **Academic Research News** aims to bring down Academic Research to promote research support for the academicians and scholars in the field of academic news related to research, indexing, ethical publishing and other related news. Research through this academic medium motivates all aspects of the main and inter-disciplines of the core area of study with authentic e-publication. Making Internationalization of **Academic Research News** in the globalized world aids the scholarly community to gather knowledge on Academic Research in all fields of learning. The impudence and revelation of academic research on the internet could foster green printing and open access nature in the domain of research. All of these motivate the best distribution of research that produces positive outcomes for the betterment of research and education and the unification of the people in our world. In achieving this aim, our journal **Academic Research News** has been created.

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Publisher Contact:

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Pandian Educational Trust (TN-32-0003213),

Maheswari Publishers, (The publishing unit of PANDIAN EDUCATIONAL TRUST- TN-32-0003213)

3/350, Veterinary Hospital Back Side,

Virudhunagar- 626001, Tamil Nadu, India.

Mobile: +91 8526769556

email: arnmultijournal@gmail.com

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CP - Volume 1, Issue 2 - May 2025

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In preparing this volume of **CP - Volume 1, Issue 2, August 2025 in ARN Conference Proceedings** for the **National Seminar on “Renewal of Culture and Social Reform in Indian English Literature”**, the editors affirm that every manuscript underwent peer review process. The expert reviewers assessed each submission under the academic and scientific standards upheld by the journal.

Peer Review Details:

Review type

- **International Conference Abstracts:** Editorial review
- **International Conference Full Papers:** Editorial review
- **Submission Platform:** arnmultijournal@gmail.com
- **Total Submissions Reviewed:** 11
- **Submissions Accepted:** 11
- **Acceptance Rate:** 100%
- **Average Reviews per Submission:** 1
- **Total Reviewers Involved:** 3

Overview of the Review and Editorial Process:

The authors submitted the papers to the conference committee. Each paper was evaluated on criteria developed by the conference organizing committee. These criteria focused on two main aspects: (a) whether the submission presented is a concrete idea with novelty aligned to the aim and scope of the conference (b) whether it demonstrated assessable impacts on student learning, faculty learning or teaching practices. They were also checked for Plagiarism and AI content and approved for review. The papers that fulfil both criteria were selected for publication with the reviewers' strong agreement in their evaluations. These papers were evaluated by the reviewers of the board, and the authors revised their work in response to detailed feedback.

Conflict of Interest: The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Date of Publication: 25 August 2025

Editorial Details: ¹ Dr. P. Balamurugan, ²Dr. R. Dhayalkrishnan, *Editorial Statement of the Peer Review Process. CP - Volume 1, Issue 2, August 2025 in ARN Conference Proceedings 2025.*

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From Silence to Testimony: Trauma Narratives and the Rewriting of Female Subjectivity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels

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Abstract

*The paper investigates the transformative journey from silence to testimony in the female characters of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's fiction, focusing on how trauma narratives reconstruct and redefine women's subjectivity. Drawing on trauma theory (Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub) and feminist literary theory (Hélène Cixous, Judith Butler), the study examines how Adichie portrays the psychological consequences of violence, displacement and systemic oppression and how her characters navigate the path toward empowerment through acts of narration. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili's shift from enforced muteness under patriarchal abuse to tentative self-expression illustrates the gradual reclamation of agency. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna's survival of wartime atrocities and sexual violence finds resolution through teaching and communal resistance, underscoring testimony as both a personal and political act. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's blog becomes a platform where diasporic alienation and racialized trauma are reframed as critical discourse, transforming individual pain into collective awareness. Across these narratives, storytelling—whether oral, written, or digital—functions as a site of healing, enabling the reconstruction of fragmented identities and the assertion of political voice. This paper argues that Adichie's fiction not only documents female struggles against intersecting oppressions but also models narrative as a space of resistance, resilience and identity formation. By foregrounding the interplay between memory, language and subjectivity, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how African women's writing redefines the politics of trauma and empowerment in postcolonial literature.*

Keywords: Narratives, Feminist Theory, Postcolonial Literature, Identity Reconstruction.

Introduction

In the canon of contemporary African literature, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie occupies a distinctive space for her ability to intertwine the intimate with the political, crafting narratives that illuminate the lived realities of women navigating oppression, displacement and the legacies of colonialism. Across *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), Adichie charts a journey from enforced silence to empowered testimony in her female protagonists, each of whom must grapple with the psychological and social consequences of trauma. This thematic trajectory resonates strongly with trauma theory and feminist literary criticism.

Cathy Caruth (1996) defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events” that cannot be fully processed in the moment, often returning in belated, fragmented recollections (p. 4). Dori Laub (1995) expands this to emphasize the relational nature of testimony, noting that for trauma to be transformed into narrative, there must be an



active listener who co-constructs meaning with the survivor. In parallel, feminist theorists such as Hélène Cixous (1976) and Judith Butler (1990) offer frameworks for understanding female subjectivity as dynamic, relational and shaped through acts of expression. Adichie's work, however, cannot be fully understood through EuroAmerican theory alone. African feminist perspectives — particularly Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's "STIWANISM" (Social Transformation Including Women in Africa) and Obioma Nnaemeka's "nego-feminism" — contextualize women's empowerment within African socio-political realities, where resistance often involves negotiation rather than open confrontation.

This paper uses these intersecting frameworks to explore how Adichie's characters such as Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*, Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ifemelu in *Americanah* have transition from silence to testimony. In doing so, it argues that their narratives serve both as acts of personal healing and as political interventions, challenging dominant cultural narratives that have historically marginalized African women's voices. Trauma Theory provides a foundation for reading Adichie's protagonists' silences not as simple passivity, but as symptomatic of unprocessed trauma. Caruth (1996) argues that trauma resists narrative integration, manifesting instead as belated, intrusive memories. In *Unclaimed Experience*, she notes that survivors often speak in fragments, if at all, until conditions for safe expression are established. Laub (1995) emphasizes that testimony requires a witness; without a receptive audience, the survivor's narrative remains incomplete. Judith Herman (1992) offers a three-stage model of recovery: establishing safety, reconstructing the traumatic narrative and reconnecting with community — a model that parallels the trajectories of Adichie's female protagonists. Feminist Literary Theory offers complementary insights. Cixous's (1976) concept of *écriture féminine* calls for women to write their bodies and lived experiences into literature, reclaiming agency from patriarchal erasure. Butler's (1990) theory of performativity frames identity as a continual enactment shaped by social norms; breaking silence becomes a performative act that can redefine subjectivity. African Feminist Perspectives ground these theories in specific cultural contexts. Ogundipe-Leslie's STIWANISM emphasizes that African women's liberation must occur alongside broader societal transformation, integrating men and women into processes of change. Nnaemeka's nego-feminism underscores negotiation and compromise as strategic tools African women employ in navigating patriarchal systems. Both perspectives illuminate the subtler forms of resistance evident in Adichie's fiction.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili lives under the authoritarian control of her father, Eugene, whose rigid Catholicism dictates every aspect of family life. Silence here is both literal and psychological. On the opening page, Kambili recalls: "*Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room*" (p. 3). This abrupt disruption signals the volatility beneath the family's pious facade. Kambili's internal narration is marked by hesitation and brevity, reflecting what Caruth (1996) identifies as the inarticulable nature of trauma. Kambili's silence is a survival mechanism. On page 25, she notes: "*I never knew what to say when Papa was there. I would look at my plate and concentrate on chewing.*" Laub's (1995) notion that trauma suppresses speech until a safe listener is found explains why Kambili's voice remains dormant. Safety emerges only when she visits Aunt Ifeoma in Nsukka, a space alive with laughter and debate: "*Aunty Ifeoma's house always seemed to hum with life; laughter spilled from the kitchen, voices overlapped in the living room*" (p. 153). Here, the conditions Herman (1992) describes as essential for recovery — safety, connection and self-expression — are present. Ifeoma's home also embodies Nnaemeka's nego-feminism, resisting patriarchy not through direct



confrontation but by creating an alternative environment in which female autonomy flourishes. Gradually, Kambili begins to speak, culminating in her admission to Father Amadi: “*I didn’t know I could talk this much*” (p. 228). This performative act of speaking reconstitutes her identity, aligning with Butler’s theory of subjectivity as enacted through expression.

Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun* experiences trauma on both personal and collective levels. The most harrowing moment occurs in Kano, where she witnesses the aftermath of a massacre: “*She saw the bodies first: the old man sprawled beside the cookfire, the child’s head smashed open on the verandah, the pregnant woman lying on her side as though sleeping, her belly sliced open*” (p. 148). The imagery is immediate and visceral, echoing Caruth’s (1996) description of traumatic memory as intrusive and image-based. Later, Olanna is sexually assaulted by a soldier during displacement (pp. 197–199). Adichie’s understated description — “*She did not feel her body; it was something happening far away*”—reflects Felman and Laub’s (1992) observation that trauma often produces dissociation between mind and body. Nnaemeka (2004) reminds us that in African conflict zones, women’s bodies are politicized battlegrounds, with sexual violence serving as a weapon of both ethnic and patriarchal oppression. Olanna’s testimony emerges indirectly, through teaching displaced children in wartime Biafra (pp. 311–314). Here, she reframes her identity from victim to educator and cultural custodian, embodying Ogundipe-Leslie’s (1994) call for women’s empowerment to be linked with community transformation. Eventually, Olanna begins to speak of her trauma: “*I thought of the bodies in Kano... I can say them now*”(p. 387). In Butler’s terms, this is a performative act that reshapes her subjectivity, transforming the unspeakable into an assertion of agency.

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu’s silence is initially less about immediate physical danger and more about the cumulative weight of racialized microaggressions in the United States. Early in her time in America, she endures subtle but persistent alienation: employers shortening her name, strangers commenting on her accent, colleagues ignoring her contributions. Rather than confronting these slights, she retreats into silence — an example of what Butler (1990) might describe as the constraining effect of dominant discourses on identity performance. Ifemelu’s breakthrough comes with the creation of her blog, *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. Through posts that are sharp, humorous and politically incisive, she reframes her experiences of racism into public discourse. One entry reads: “*Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care*” (p. 273).

The blog serves as her testimony, in Cixous’s (1976) sense of writing oneself into existence and in Laub’s (1995) sense of addressing an audience that participates in meaning-making. The digital format also allows her to bypass traditional gatekeepers of discourse, choosing her audience and framing her narrative on her own terms. This self-authored space reflects Nnaemeka’s negofeminism in its strategic use of available tools to challenge systemic inequality without relinquishing control over self-representation.

Conclusion

Adichie’s female protagonists from *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* move from states of enforced silence — whether imposed by family, war, or systemic racism — to forms of testimony that redefine their subjectivity. These journeys align with Caruth’s and Laub’s insights into the nature of trauma and testimony, Cixous’s and Butler’s theories on the centrality of voice to identity and African feminist frameworks that



recognize resistance as both personal and collective. In each case, testimony is not merely an act of catharsis; it is a political intervention, challenging the narratives that silence African women. By weaving personal memory with collective history, Adichie demonstrates that storytelling — whether in the intimate space of a family conversation, the communal setting of a classroom, or the global reach of a blog — is a radical act of resistance, resilience and reclamation.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Ecological Cognizance in the Stories of Ruskin Bond in Indian Knowledge Perspective

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Abstract

*Ruskin Bond's short fiction commonly foregrounds human–nature interactions, proposing gentle but persistent reflections on care, reciprocity, and place. This paper examines a wide range of his stories — notably *The Blue Umbrella*, *The Night Train at Deoli*, *Dust on the Mountains*, *The Cherry Tree*, and other short pieces — to argue that Bond's ecological thoughts echoes with principles found in contemporary formulations of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): reverence for nature, interdependence, and lived local knowledge. By analysing multiple stories in depth, this paper highlights how Bond's stories encodes ecological wisdom and rural sensibilities that are deeply compatible with IKS, thereby enriching both literary criticism and contemporary discourses on environmental education in India.*

Keywords: Ruskin Bond, Ecological Consciousness, Indian Knowledge Systems, Literature and Ecology, Indigenous Wisdom, IKS.

Introduction

Ruskin Bond occupies a distinct space in Indian English literature as a storyteller of the Himalayan foothills, the plains of Dehradun, and the small towns of northern India. His writing, spanning over six decades, is characterized by minimalism of style but remarkable depth in ecological susceptibility. Through his stories, essays, and novellas, Bond intertwines narratives that foreground the vitality of the natural world — its seasons, landscapes, flora, and fauna — and the moral lessons they implicitly teach. At a time when ecological mindfulness has become a pressing global distress, Bond's writings offer a literary archive of ecological values that align closely with the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). These systems deeply engrained in indigenous practices and cultural traditions, stress harmony with nature, community-based living, and ethical stewardship of resources. This paper, therefore, undertakes an eco-critical reading of Bond's stories, situating them within the philosophical framework of IKS, to argue that his narratives can be used not only for literary indebtedness but also as pedagogical resources for educating environmental awareness in contemporary India.

Theoretical Framework

The Indian Knowledge Systems initiative, institutionalized in academic policies which include the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), emphasizes indigenous epistemologies that evolved via centuries of lived exercise and observation. IKS consists of insights from Ayurveda, agriculture, oral traditions, ecological practices, and local know-how across areas of India. Central to IKS are issues of sustainability, interdependence, recognize for biodiversity, and ethical duty in the direction of the environment. In Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, nature is respected as sacred. Rivers, mountains, bushes, and animals are regularly revered as deities or appeared as holders of divine strength. This worldview aligns with Bond's portrayal of nature now not as an inert backdrop but as an energetic moral and



aesthetic presence. By studying Bond in communicate with IKS, it is easy to understand his narrative as a bridge among current English literary expression and age-antique ecological awareness implanted in Indian traditions.

Nature and Indigenous Knowledge

In *The Blue Umbrella*, the lush Garhwal landscape is not a passive setting but an active participant in the lives of villagers. The central object — a blue umbrella belonging to the little girl Binya becomes a representation of beauty and longing. Yet the moral climax of the story transpires when Binya chooses munificence over possession, gifting the umbrella to Ram Bharosa, the shopkeeper who had longed for it. The story echoes an ethical learning rooted in nature's abundance: true happiness is not derived from possession but from harmony and sharing. This resonates with IKS values of detachment and balance. In Indian traditions, rivers and forests are regarded as teachers. Bond's use of natural imagery like the hills, the changing weather, the flora surrounding Binya's village works as a silent teacher that shapes the character's decision. Nature, in this sense, is not merely observed but engaged with, mirroring IKS's stress on relational learning.

Bond's stories frequently cognize rural characters that preserve intimate know-how in their environment. In *Dust on the Mountains*, Bisnu, a young boy, struggles to balance livelihood with ecological care. The narrative juxtaposes urban exploitation with rural sustainability. Bisnu's understanding of mountain trails, forests, and weather patterns isn't always codified technological know-how however realistic wisdom — the very information IKS seeks to keep. Bond's portrayal of children planting timber in *The Cherry Tree* exemplifies ecological literacy. The act of planting, nurturing, and looking at the tree over the years reflects the IKS perception that studying need to be experiential and rooted in one's surroundings. The cherry tree becomes a sign of continuity among generations, echoing the concept that ecological care is a legacy, no longer a brief act.

Ethics of Possession - Animals, Sentience, and Empathy

Bond repeatedly evaluates consumerism and the relentless pursuit of possessions. In *The Blue Umbrella*, the social envy surrounding the umbrella represents a consumerist desire that disorders communal harmony. Similarly, in *Delhi Is Not Far*, the protagonist's yearning for material success contrasts with the deeper satisfaction found in small-town friendships and natural surroundings. Such critiques resonate with IKS teachings that encourage simple living (*aparigraha* or non-possessiveness in Jainism, for example). Bond's characters often rediscover satisfaction in nature and relationships, rather than in wealth or urban glamour, reinforcing ecological ethics of moderation.

Bond's deep expertise for animals sticks out in tales like *The Tiger within the House* and *The Elephant and the Cassowary Bird*. In these memories, animals are not decreased to mere symptoms but are treated as emotional beings with emotions and intelligence. Such portrayals echo IKS traditions in which animals are revered as companions or even non-secular publications. Bond's gentle descriptions of a tiger cub being raised in a household, or a boy supporting a wild animal; foreground interspecies relationships. They invite readers to assume kinship with nonhuman life, a attitude imperative to ecological balance and preservation. Through such depictions, Bond contributes to the moral vision that people and animals proportion interrelated destinies.

Bond's Stories as Environmental Education

One of the enduring strengths of Bond's narrative is its pedagogical size. His memories implicitly impart readers how to take a look at, price, and care for their environments. In school rooms, his texts can be paired with IKS frameworks to cultivate



ecological awareness. For instance, *The Cherry Tree* can be used to introduce concepts of ecological succession, patience, and the ethics of care. *Dust on the Mountains* can trigger discussions over mining, deforestation, and sustainable livelihoods.

This aligns with the NEP's call to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems into the curriculum. Bond's tales, available to young readers, offer a herbal entry factor into these conversations, thereby connecting literature, ethics, and environmental science.

Spiritual Dimensions of Ecological Balance

Even Bond is often regarded as a secular storyteller, his work subtly gestures toward spiritual reverence for nature. The silence of the hills, the music of streams, and the grandeur of trees are described in ways that evoke awe and humility. These moments echo the IKS worldview wherein nature is sacred. In *Rain in the Mountains*, Bond writes suggestive essays that blur the boundary among herbal description and meditative reflection. His method resonates with Indian traditions of prakriti (nature) as divine strength.

Bond's narratives also emphasize the vulnerability of humans earlier than nature. Storms, landslides, and the harshness of winters are recurring motifs that remind readers of the limits of human control. Unlike contemporary anthropocentric narratives, Bond's stories underscore dependence instead of dominance. This humility earlier than natural forces is at the heart of ecological cognizance and displays IKS's caution against hubris in exploiting assets.

Conclusion

Ruskin Bond's memories aren't only literary treasures but additionally ecological texts that encode know-how deeply aligned with Indian Knowledge Systems. Through portrayals of nature as moral agent, nearby ecological literacy, evaluations of consumerism, empathetic relationships with animals, and reverence for natural rhythms, Bond offers a vision of life in concord with the surroundings. Bond's ecological imagination with IKS enriches each fields. literature becomes a medium for transmitting indigenous ecological ethics, whilst IKS gains a cutting-edge literary vehicle to attain younger generations. In a international generation of ecological crisis, Bond's fiction reminds us that solutions lie now not simply in generation or coverage but in cultivating an ethos of care, humility, and kinship with the natural international.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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A Critical Study of Margin Voices in Bama's Works

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Abstract

Bama Faustina Soosairaj, popularly known as Bama, is one of the most powerful voices in contemporary Dalit feminist literature. Writing primarily in Tamil, her works interrogate caste, gender, and religion through a personal yet collective lens. Her autobiographical novel Karukku (1992) marks a milestone in Dalit writing, exposing the multiple layers of oppression faced by Dalit women in Tamil Nadu, particularly within the Catholic Church. With its raw style and fragmented narrative, Karukku challenged literary norms and offered a platform for subaltern voices. Bama's subsequent works, such as Sangati (1994) and Kisumbukkaran (1996), further highlight the struggles, resilience, and solidarity of Dalit women, presenting their oral traditions, humour, and survival strategies as cultural resources of empowerment. Unlike mainstream feminist discourse, Bama situates women's oppression within the intersection of caste and class, foregrounding experiences that are often silenced. Her narratives blend autobiography, fiction, and folklore, allowing readers to witness the realities of discrimination, yet also affirming the agency of marginalised communities. Bama's contribution lies not only in her literary innovation but also in her insistence on transforming literature into a site of resistance, identity formation, and collective empowerment. This paper explores the thematic concerns, stylistic features, and social impact of Bama's works.

Keywords: Bama, Dalit Literature, Feminism, Karukku, Sangati, Caste, Tamil Literature.

Introduction

Bama stands as a pioneering figure in the field of Dalit feminist literature in India. Born in 1958 into a Roman Catholic Dalit family in Tamil Nadu, she grew up experiencing caste-based discrimination and gender oppression. Her writings emerge out of this lived experience, offering readers a powerful narrative that refuses silence and insists on recognition of Dalit identity. While Dalit male writers foreground caste exploitation, Bama brings in a distinctly feminist perspective that interrogates the intersection of caste, class, gender, and religion.

Karukku

Bama's first work, *Karukku* (1992), is considered the first Dalit woman's autobiography in Tamil literature. The title itself, meaning "palmyra leaves with serrated edges," symbolises both pain and resilience. Written in a fragmented, non-linear style, the text defies conventional narrative forms. *Karukku* recounts Bama's childhood, education, and life as a nun, exposing how the Catholic Church perpetuated caste hierarchies even while preaching equality. The book shocked literary circles for its frankness and was initially marginalised, but it later became a cornerstone of Dalit literature, widely translated and studied across the world.

Sangati

Her second major work, *Sangati* (1994), shifts the focus from individual autobiography to collective narrative. Here, Bama records the everyday lives of Dalit women



in her community. Through oral stories, songs, and anecdotes, *Sangati* reveals their struggles with poverty, domestic violence, and social stigma, but also emphasises their strength, humour, and solidarity. Unlike mainstream feminist texts, which often focus on middle-class concerns, *Sangati* situates women's oppression within a caste-ridden rural context, thereby expanding the scope of Indian feminist discourse.

Kisumbukkaran and Other Works

In *Kisumbukkaran* (1996), Bama explores short stories rooted in Dalit lives. These narratives, marked by sharp irony and humour, reflect the oral storytelling tradition of Tamil villages. Later works, such as *Vanmam* (2002), address the tensions within Dalit communities themselves, particularly conflicts between different caste groups, suggesting that solidarity is as important as resistance. In all these texts, Bama consistently foregrounds the agency of marginalised subjects, refusing to present them as passive victims.

Themes in Bama's Works

A central theme in Bama's works is the layered nature of oppression. She highlights how Dalit women face a "double burden"—caste discrimination from outside and gender oppression from within their communities. Religion, instead of being a source of liberation, is portrayed as complicit in sustaining hierarchies. Yet, Bama also portrays resilience: women's laughter, oral traditions, and acts of defiance serve as sources of empowerment. Her works question the dominant narratives of purity, morality, and social order imposed by both patriarchy and caste. Bama's style is notable for its use of colloquial Tamil, breaking away from the polished literary language of mainstream Tamil literature. This deliberate choice validates the speech of marginalised communities and challenges elitist notions of literary aesthetics. The incorporation of folk songs, proverbs, and oral tales not only enriches her texts but also grounds them in cultural authenticity. Her direct, unembellished prose reflects both urgency and resistance, making her works accessible and impactful. Bama's writings have had a profound influence on Dalit and feminist movements in India. By voicing the lived experiences of Dalit women, she has expanded the boundaries of Indian literature to include perspectives that were historically silenced. Her works are now taught in universities worldwide, fostering critical discussions on caste, gender, and subaltern identities. Bama demonstrates that literature can function not merely as aesthetic expression but also as social critique and a call to action.

Conclusion

Bama's works represent a radical shift in Indian literary tradition, as they confront readers with the realities of caste and gender oppression while celebrating resilience and collective identity. *Karukku*, *Sangati*, *Kisumbukkaran*, and *Vanmam* stand as testimonies to the power of storytelling from the margins. Through colloquial language, oral traditions, and unflinching honesty, Bama transforms literature into a tool of resistance and empowerment. Her contribution lies not only in documenting Dalit women's struggles but also in creating a literary space where marginalised voices assert their dignity and agency. By doing so, Bama ensures that Dalit women's narratives are inscribed into the cultural and academic canon, marking her as a significant figure in both Tamil and global literature.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Beyond Patriarchal Scripts: A Gynocritical Analysis of *Phenomenal Woman* and *I Am Every Woman*

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Abstract

This paper explores how women's poetry functions as a trans-formative force in dismantling patriarchal stereotypes and reshaping cultural consciousness. The aim of the study is to analyze Rakhi Nariani Shirke's 'I Am Every Woman' and Maya Angelou's 'Phenomenal Woman', two works that foreground women's strength, resilience, and self-definition. Using Elaine Showalter's framework of gynocriticism as the primary methodology, the study undertakes close textual analysis supported by recent feminist scholarship to examine how these poems articulate agency, celebrate multiplicity, and resist reductive constructions of femininity. The practical implications of the research lie in its demonstration of how literature can act as a tool of empowerment, inspiring women to assert dignity, equality, and social reform. The originality or value of the paper lies in its comparative cross-cultural approach, bringing together an Indian English poet and an African American poet to reveal shared strategies of feminist resistance despite differences of geography and history. The findings suggest that both poems transform the personal into political by universalizing women's voices, reclaiming the female body as a site of power, and contributing to a tradition of feminist writing that envisions literature as a catalyst for collective awakening and emancipation.

Keywords: Gynocriticism, Feminist Poetics, Women's Empowerment, Patriarchal Resistance, Conscious awakening.

Introduction

Feminist Literary criticism has historically oscillated between analyzing how men depict women in literature and actually how women constitute themselves as subjects within literary texts. A significant turning point came in 1979, when Elaine Showalter introduced the concept of 'Gynocriticism'. The term 'Gynocriticism' is coined by Elaine Showalter in her seminal essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics". The framework of traditional feminist criticism focused on male-authored texts and the portrayal of women by the male writers. But Gynocriticism shifts attention to texts authored by women, emphasizing the authentic articulation of female experience, subjectivity, and creativity. Male authored texts concentrate on the perspective of 'male gaze'. The lived experiences can be better described by a woman than a man. It questioned the so-called patricentric artefact and great literary traditions, which have marginalized women writers.

Showalter's framework challenges the long-standing patriarchal literary canon, which has historically marginalized women writers and confined women's identities to reductive roles such as Wife, mother, or object of desire. By centering women's lived experiences, gynocriticism seeks to develop a distinct literary tradition that is cyclical, relational, and self-



reflective, bridging generations and geographies. It emphasizes language that embodies the self rather than the body celebrating autonomy resilience, and the multiplicity of womanhood. In this study Maya Angelou's 'Phenomenal Woman' and Rakhi Nariani Shirke's 'I Am Every Woman' exemplify the principles of gynocriticism in complementary ways. Both poets foreground female agency, challenge patriarchal constructs, and celebrate the diversity of women's experiences, illustrating how literature authored by women can serve as a tool for empowerment, social consciousness, and cultural transformation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze Maya Angelou's 'Phenomenal Woman' and Rakhi Nariani Shirke's 'I Am Every Woman' through the lens of Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism, focusing on the ways women writers assert, resilience, and self-definition.
2. To examine both poems challenge patriarchal constructions of femininity and offer alternative cultural and literary representations of womanhood.
3. To explore the role of female embodiment and corporeality in the poems, highlighting how women reclaim their bodies as sites of power and agency.
4. To identify shared thematic and stylistic strategies between an African American poet and an Indian English poet, emphasizing the universality of feminist literary expression across cultural and geographical boundaries.
5. To demonstrate the literature written by women functions as a tool for social consciousness, empowerment, and cultural transformation, thereby contributing to contemporary feminist discourse.
6. To situate these poems within the broader trajectory of women's writing, illustrating the progression from the Feminine and Feminist stages to the Female stage as conceptualized by Showalter.

Review of Literature

Since Elaine Showalter's foundational formulation of gynocriticism (1979) scholars have continued to debate how best to center women's voices in literary analysis. Recent work has emphasized not only recovering women's texts but also adapting gynocritical methods to inter sectional and transnational contexts. Ibrahim (2025) reaffirms gynocriticism's methodological utility for reading women's lyric subjectivities, arguing that Showalter's framework remains generative when combined with intersections of attention to race, class, and nation: this re-calibration is central to studies that seek to read Indian English and African American poetic voices alongside one another. Complementing this theoretical renewal, a 2024 special issue on intersectional feminism in *Literature & Identity* highlights methodological pluralism, urging scholars to adopt hybrid analytic tools (gynocriticism + intersectionality) in order to avoid reductive essentialisms and to better and to capture layered identities across differing sociocultural formations.

A cluster of studies situates contemporary women's poetry as an instrument of cultural transformation. Almeida (2023) surveys Indian English women's poetic trends and contends that recent poets deploy affirmative voice-work to contest patriarchal norms. Almeida's mapping of thematic continuities (self assertion, resilience, domestic labour revalorization) provides a useful contextual scaffold for reading Rakhi Nariani Shirke's 'I Am Every Woman' as a part of wider emergent poetry, showing how declarative, performative registers in recent poems operate as calls-to-action that catalyze shifts in public sentiment and everyday practices- an argument that helps link textual features to practical social implications. Parallel scholarship on Maya Angelou clarifies how Black feminist poets stages selfhood as resistance. Mahmud (2023) and Rao (2022) offer recent close readings of



Phenomenal Woman, demonstrating how Angelou's rhetorical strategies -repetition, body-focused imagery, and performative diction- function to reclaim both racialized and gendered subjectivity. Sundaram's (2024) comprehensive review of Angelou scholarship further demonstrates consensus on Angelou's dual commitments : aesthetic innovation and social witness, Ahmad & Sheik (2022) explicitly connect Angelou's work to theorizations of embodied agency, arguing that Phenomenal Woman performs a politics of presence that destabilizes normative beauty standards and exerts influence beyond the page, particularly in oral and pedagogical contexts. The performance and orality recur as salient themes in contemporary treatments of feminist poetics. Kerrigan (2024) analyzes spoken-word practices and insists that vocal performance amplifies the social efficacy of feminist texts: this line of inquiry is relevant to both Angelou (whose work often circulates through performance) and Shirke (whose declarative lyrical voice invites public circulation). Higgins (2023) extends the argument by documenting experimental feminist stories that disrupt canonical forms and thereby create new modes of poetical address - an approach that underscores the formal as well as thematic work poetry does in feminist activism. By taken together these ten recent studies point to three converging insights important for the present paper. First, gynocriticism remains a vital method but benefits from intersectional supplementation when used comparatively across cultures (Ibrahim 2025; Literature & Identity 2024). Second, contemporary women's poetry- whether in Indian English or African American traditions- tends to emphasise performative selfassertion, bodily sovereignty, and public pedagogy as strategies for social change (Almeida 2023; Ambika 2025; Kerrigan 2024). Third, Angelou's Phenomenal Woman continues to be a paradigmatic model for poetic form and voice stage empowerment, providing a productive contrast and point of dialogue for reading Shirke (Mahmud 2023; Rao 2022 and Sundaram 2024).

However gaps remain. Few studies systematically juxtaposes recent Indian English feminist poems with African American feminist poetics through a unified gynocritical + intersectional lens; most scholars treat these traditions separately or use comparative moves that are historicized rather than methodologically integrated. This paper addresses those lacunae by applying an updated gynocritical framework to a cross-cultural close reading of Rakhi Nariani Shirke's I Am Every Woman and Maya Angelou's Phenomenal Woman, testing how shared rhetorical strategies map into distinct sociohistorical positions- and how both poems might function as catalysts for conscious awakening.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in feminist literary criticism with a particular focus on Elaine Showalter's framework of gynocriticism as the central methodological lens. Gynocriticism provides the theoretical foundation to examine women's writing as an autonomous literary tradition, privileging female subjectivity, creativity and embodies experience rather than viewing women's texts through male centered paradigms. Within this framework, the research employs close textual analysis as its primary method, enabling a detailed reading of Maya Angelou's Phenomenal Women and Rakhi Nariani Shirke's I am Every Woman. This interpretive approach allows the study to trace themes of agency, resilience, corporeality and self -definition as articulated by the poets.

Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Women*

Angelou's Phenomenal Women articulates a proud and loud rejection of normative femininity as defined by the deep entrenched patriarchy. In a society that prioritises Euro-centric and male gaze beauty ideals such as - Size zero , delicate features and submissive



femininity -Angelou asserts her identity as a confident and unapologetic Black woman. She proclaims:

“I’m not cute or built to suit a fashion model’s size

But when I start to tell them

They think I’m telling lies”.(Phenomenal Women 1-30)

Deconstructing this through a gynocritical perspective, Angelou’s poem is basically a radical act of self-definition. Instead of seeking validation from male gaze, she focuses on the embodied experience of womanhood by linking her identity to confidence, rhythm, sensuality and inner power. This aligns with Showalter’s call to examine women’s writing as autonomous rather than derivative. Angelou doesn’t position herself as lacking compared to men but as phenomenal in her own right.

Angelou also disrupts cultural inscriptions of female shame and by proudly describing her ‘head’s not bowed’ and her “hips” as attractive, she redefines what has been stigmatised in black women for generations and generations into emblems of power (Angelou 25-30). She defines womanhood not through her domesticity, submission or fragile beauty but by her charisma, authenticity and warmth. This echoes Beauvoir’s emphasis that women must transcend the role of ‘Other’ and define themselves subjectively (Beauvoir 267). Furthermore, when she powerfully declares that “Phenomenal Women, that’s me”, she represents a collective identity and this is point of transformation where her personal transforms into political and her unapologetic assertion resonates across a history of subjugated and silenced women. Gynocritically the poem belongs to a tradition of African-American women’s literature that redefines womanhood through race, resilience and resistance.

Rakhi Nariani Shirke’s *I Am Every Woman*

In literature it is common to describe the beauty of women. When male writers describe beauty, they concentrate more on the physical body and its appearance. Objectification of the body has become the central notion. In contrast, Rakhi Nariani in this poem defines what the actual beauty of a woman is. She begins the poem as follows:

A woman is beauty innate,

A symbol of power and strength.

She puts her life at stake,

She’s real, she’s not fake!

The power and strength of women are considered to be the standards for beauty. In the very first stanza itself Rakhi Nariani Shirke dismantles the patriarchal sense that holds woman as an object. The second stanza subverts the Indian cultural thought and states woman as a fearless creature.

The summer of life she’s ready to see in spring.

She says, "Spring will come again, my dear.

Let me care for the ones who’re near.”

She’s The Woman – she has no fear!

Next Shirke asserts the female agency. She celebrates women’s strength and portrays them as fearless and courageous. She counters the historical portrayal of women as weak and states that women are capable of navigating all the odd difficulties in life. Shirke’s *I Am Every Woman* situates womanhood as universal, timeless and transcendent. She writes:

“I am the daughter, I am the mother,

I am every woman, it’s all in me “ (I Am Every Woman 1-2)



From a gynocritical lens, she attempts to construct a collective female consciousness, reminiscent of Showalter's interest in the female literary tradition across nations. The poem emphasizes that women embody multiplicity- they nurture, endure, resist and create. Unlike the patriarchal narrative that confine women to a single role (wife, mother, daughter), Shirke's voice reclaims all roles while refusing reduction to any. Her poem celebrates the Fluidity of Womanhood where strength coexists with compassion, resilience with tenderness. She positions women as agents of change capable of healing, leading and resisting. This recalls Butler's emphasis on performativity where womanhood is not fixed but performed through diverse roles, actions and identities. (Butler 45). Shirke subverts patriarchal expectations by declaring women "unafraid of challenges" and embodying power and grace. In a society that often socialises women into silence and sacrifice, this articulation becomes a feminist reclamation of agency. The repeated phrase 'I am every women' parallels Angelou's collective identity emphasizing that womanhood is not a derivative but self determined resilient and unbounded.

Showalter's Framework and the stages of women's writing

Showalter theorised that women's literature historically moves through three stages:

- The Feminine stage - where women writers imitate and are dependent largely on male literary traditions to gain entry and acceptance.
- The Feminist phase when women writers protested against male dominance and challenged the conventional roles and advocated for women's rights.
- The Female Stage - where women went beyond protests explored their subjectivity and experience autonomously and led to rediscovery and celebration of women's texts. (Showalter 13)

Both phenomenal women and I am every woman belong to the female stage where they simply don't resist or respond to patriarchal norms but instead articulate positive and independent visions of womanhood. In Phenomenal woman, Angelou emphasizes:

"I'm a woman/Phenomenally ./Phenomenal woman, /That's me"

This description isn't directed at men but at herself and her audience of women, enacting the female stage's characteristic self-discovery. Similarly Shirke's "I am every woman" transforms individual assertion into collective identity. The Female voice here is universal, transcending geography, class and culture, aligning with Showalter's vision of women's writing as a tradition distinct from but equal to male canon. Thus both the poems illustrate gynocriticism's central claim: women's literature doesn't merely echo patriarchal narratives but creates autonomous forms of meaning rooted in women's experiences.

Language, Rhythm and Female Expression

Showalter and later critics have argued that women's writing often develops its own distinctive linguistic style, different from male traditions. In this regard, Angelou and Shirke employ unique expressive strategies that embody female linguistic creativity. Angelou's phenomenal women draw from black oral traditions, using repetition, musicality and rhythm to mimic spoken performance. The repeated refrain of the phenomenal woman that's me resonates like a chant or anthem blurring the line between song and poetry. This oral quality reflects the communal dimension of African American women's cultural expression situating the poem in a lineage of storytelling, blues and gospel traditions (Christian 213) In contrast, Shirke's I am every woman adopts a declarative and manifesto like tone and the poem's short and powerful lines - I'm strong /I'm invincible/ in every woman - mirrors the language of slogans or affirmations and this stylistic choice aligns with contemporary feminist movements in South Asia where women's voices often find political



expression in protests and manifesto. Shirke's poem thus situates itself within an activist tradition, turning poetry into a tool of assertion. Through their choice of styles, both poets demonstrate that female expression isn't limited to mimicry of patriarchal literary forms but invents its own rhythms, structures and tones.

Body politics and Female corporeality

Central to gynocriticism is the reclamation of the female body as a site of meaning because historically male-authored literature reduces women's bodies to objects of desire or symbols of purity. Angelou and Shirke challenge this reduction by reducing corporeality in terms of power and agency. Angelou's poem insists that beauty and womanhood aren't about external validation.

**"It's the fire in my eyes ,
And the joy in my feet
The grace of my style."**

She describes her body not as an object but an active vibrant source of energy and this reclamation aligns with black feminist thought which has long emphasized the importance of resisting objectification and reclaiming embodied subjectivity (Collins 91)

Shirke too redefines the body but with the emphasis on resilience and multiplicity. The female body in her poem symbolises both endurance through motherhood and struggle and freedom through desire and agency. Unlike the traditional depictions of women as fragile or passive, Shirke portrays the body as inherently politically capable of both nurturing and resisting. Thus both the poets exemplify gynocriticism's focus on body politics by rejecting patriarchal constructions and presenting the body as a site of autonomy and authenticity.

Conclusion

A Gynocritical reading of Maya Angelou's Phenomenal woman and Rakhi Naraini Shirke's I am every woman underscores how women's writing resists patriarchal scripts and inaugurates new cultural vocabularies of selfhood and both poems insist that womanhood isn't bestowed through external validation but realised through conscious awakening, dignity and self assertion. Their poetics celebrate and embrace resilience and solidarity and also demand a cultural shift in how societies imagine and value women and in doing so they echo the central tenets of gynocriticism which seeks to carve out interpretive spaces that centre women as creators of meaning rather than objects of male defined narratives. By Placing within the broader canvas of Indian English literature, this dialogue between Angelou and Shirke also signals a renewal of cultural and an ongoing project of social reform and Indian women writers from Kamala das to Shashi Deshpande and Meena Kandasamy, have long turned literature into a site of resistance interrogating the gendered hierarchies embedded in family, caste and nation. Shirke's invocation of every woman universalizes the struggle while rooting it in the Indian feminist context aligning with a tradition where writing itself becomes activism. Read along with Angelou's global feminist poetics her work demonstrates how Indian English literature continues to transform culture not through the mimicry of western traditions but by re-imagining womanhood as a collective force of emancipation and reform. Together, these poems embody literature's power to critique oppressive systems and envision a liberatory future.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Cultural Fusion and the Construction of Identity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Select Novels

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Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a renowned Indian-American author known for her insightful exploration of cultural identities, particularly the experiences of South Asian immigrants in the United States. In her select novels, Divakaruni delves into the themes of cultural hybridity and identity formation, shedding light on the complex interplay between tradition and modernity, East and West, and the challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural worlds. One of the key aspects of Divakaruni's works is the portrayal of characters who straddle different cultural contexts, often grappling with the tensions and conflicts that arise from their dual identities. Through her narratives, Divakaruni captures the nuances of cultural hybridity, highlighting how characters negotiate their heritage, beliefs, and customs with the influences of the dominant Western culture.

In novels such as "The Mistress of Spices" and "The Vine of Desire," Divakaruni weaves intricate stories that illuminate the struggles and triumphs of immigrant women as they navigate the complexities of cultural adaptation and self-discovery. The protagonists in these novels undergo profound transformations as they reconcile their past with their present circumstances, leading to a redefinition of their identities and a deeper understanding of their roots. Furthermore, Divakaruni's exploration of cultural hybridity extends beyond individual characters to encompass broader themes of diaspora, displacement, and the interconnectedness of global cultures. By examining the intersections of tradition and modernity, Divakaruni invites readers to reflect on the evolving nature of identity in an increasingly interconnected world, where diverse cultural influences converge and shape personal and collective identities. Through her nuanced storytelling and evocative prose, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni offers a compelling exploration of cultural hybridity and identity formation, inviting readers to contemplate the complexities of cultural belonging, the fluidity of identities, and the enduring quest for self-discovery and acceptance in a multicultural world.

This article provides an overview of how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's select novels explore the themes of cultural hybridity and identity formation, highlighting the richness and complexity of her narratives that delve into the experiences of individuals navigating diverse cultural landscapes. In the contemporary literary landscape, the exploration of cultural hybridity and identity formation has become a significant theme. Authors like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni delve into the complexities of cultural intersections, migration, and the consequent negotiation of identity. Through her select novels, including "The Mistress of Spices," "The Vine of Desire," and "Queen of Dreams," Divakaruni adeptly portrays characters grappling with the fusion of multiple cultural influences and the struggle to forge a cohesive sense of self. This article analyzes how Divakaruni navigates the theme of cultural hybridity and its impact on identity formation in her works. Divakaruni's novels often depict characters caught between two worlds, embodying the concept of cultural hybridity. Whether it's Tilo in "The Mistress of Spices," Anju and Sudha in "The Vine of Desire," or Rakhi in "Queen of Dreams," her protagonists inhabit spaces where East meets West, tradition clashes with modernity, and immigrant experiences intersect with ancestral legacies. Through vivid imagery and evocative storytelling, Divakaruni paints a nuanced picture of the complexities



inherent in navigating multiple cultural identities. One of the central themes in Divakaruni's novels is the process of identity formation amidst cultural conflict. Characters often grapple with the pressure to conform to societal expectations while also yearning to assert their individuality. For example, in "The Mistress of Spices," Tilo must reconcile her mystical heritage with her duty as a Spice Mistress, all while navigating the challenges of immigrant life in America. Similarly, Anju and Sudha in "The Vine of Desire" struggle to reconcile their Indian heritage with their American upbringing, leading to internal conflict and external tension within their relationship.

Divakaruni's novels also explore the tension between tradition and modernity as characters navigate changing cultural landscapes. While tradition provides a sense of grounding and belonging, modernity offers opportunities for personal growth and self-expression. Characters often find themselves torn between the two, grappling with the fear of losing their cultural roots while also yearning for freedom from stifling traditions. This conflict is exemplified in Rakhi's journey in "Queen of Dreams," where she must confront familial expectations while carving out a path of her own in contemporary America. Cultural conflict is a common theme in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American writer who explores the experiences of South Asian immigrants in the United States. Divakaruni's novels portray the struggles of her characters to balance their cultural identity, traditions, and values with the demands and expectations of the American society. Identity formation is a process of developing one's sense of self, belonging, and purpose in relation to one's personal, social, and cultural contexts. In the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American writer who explores the experiences of South Asian immigrants and their descendants in the United States, identity formation is a major theme that shapes the characters' journeys, choices, and conflicts. This article examines how identity formation is portrayed in four of her novels: "Sister of My Heart", "The Vine of Desire", "Queen of Dreams", and "Oleander Girl."

"Sister of My Heart" and "The Vine of Desire" are two novels that follow the lives of two cousins, Anju and Sudha, who are raised as sisters in a traditional Bengali household in Calcutta. The novels depict their close bond, their dreams, and their challenges as they face the realities of arranged marriages, family secrets, and social pressures. When Anju's husband, Sunil, gets a job offer in California, Anju and Sudha move to America with him, hoping for a better life. However, they soon realize that their cultural differences create conflicts in their relationships, their careers, and their sense of self. Anju struggles to adjust to the independent and competitive lifestyle of America, while Sudha feels suffocated by Sunil's possessiveness and jealousy. Anju also faces discrimination and prejudice at her workplace, where she is the only woman and the only person of color. Sudha, on the other hand, finds solace in her friendship with Amit, a fellow immigrant who shares her love for Bengali culture and literature. The novels show how Anju and Sudha cope with their identity formation by relying on their sisterly bond, their memories of home, and their resilience. They also show how they navigate their complex feelings for each other, as Sudha develops an attraction for Sunil, and Anju feels betrayed by Sudha's decision to leave Sunil and pursue Amit. The novels explore the themes of love, loyalty, and betrayal, as well as the impact of migration, acculturation, and assimilation on the identity formation of the first-generation immigrants.

"The Vine of Desire" is the sequel to "Sister of My Heart", and it continues the story of Anju and Sudha in America. The novel explores the themes of love, betrayal, and forgiveness, as Anju and Sudha deal with the consequences of their choices and actions.



Anju's marriage with Sunil is on the verge of collapse, as she discovers his affair with a colleague. Sudha's relationship with Amit is also threatened, as she realizes that he is still in love with his ex-wife. Moreover, Sudha has to face the wrath of Sunil, who blames her for ruining his marriage with Anju. Sunil's obsession with Sudha leads to a violent confrontation, which forces Sudha to flee from his house. Anju, who is pregnant with Sunil's child, decides to support Sudha and leave Sunil as well. The novel portrays how Anju and Sudha overcome their cultural conflict by finding their own voices, their own passions, and their own happiness.

"Queen of Dreams" is a novel that narrates the story of Rakhi, a second-generation Indian-American woman who is trying to make sense of her identity, her heritage, and her relationship with her mother. Rakhi is a divorced single mother who runs a coffee shop with her friend Belle in Berkeley. She is also an aspiring painter who is fascinated by her mother's ability to interpret dreams. Rakhi's mother, who is a mysterious and aloof figure, never reveals much about her past, her culture, or her dreams. Rakhi feels a gap between herself and her mother, as well as between herself and her Indian roots. She is also conflicted about her feelings for her ex-husband, Sonny, who is a Sikh-American musician. When Rakhi's mother dies in a car accident, Rakhi inherits her journals, which contain the secrets of her mother's life and dreams. Rakhi also has to face the aftermath of the cultural attacks, which trigger a wave of racism and violence against the South Asian community. The novel illustrates how Rakhi resolves her identity formation by reconnecting with her mother's legacy, her father's homeland, and her own artistic vision. It also shows how she deals with her mixed emotions for Sonny, who becomes a victim of hate crime and loses his sight. The novel addresses the themes of loss, grief, and healing, as well as the challenges of identity formation for the second-generation immigrants who are caught between two cultures.

"Oleander Girl" is a novel that tells the story of Korobi, a young woman who is raised by her grandparents in Kolkata after her parents' death. Korobi is engaged to Rajat, a wealthy and handsome businessman who belongs to a prominent family. Korobi is happy and content with her life, until she discovers a letter from her mother that reveals a shocking truth about her father's identity. Korobi learns that her father was not an Indian, but an American, who had a brief affair with her mother and died before she was born. Korobi decides to travel to America to find her father's family and learn more about her past. Her journey takes her to New York, where she encounters a different world of culture, class, and race. She also faces unexpected obstacles and dangers, as she uncovers secrets and lies that threaten her happiness and her relationship with Rajat. The novel depicts how Korobi undergoes identity formation by discovering her true heritage, her hidden strength, and her own voice. It also shows how she reconciles her love for Rajat with her desire for independence and adventure. The novel explores the themes of family, identity, and destiny, as well as the impact of globalization, terrorism, and prejudice on the identity formation of the third-generation immigrants who are searching for their roots.

Cultural conflict is a prominent theme in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, who depicts the dilemmas and challenges of South Asian immigrants in the United States. Divakaruni's novels show how her characters cope with their cultural conflict by relying on their family, their friends, their culture, and their creativity. Divakaruni's novels also celebrate the diversity and richness of the South Asian diaspora, as well as the potential and possibility of cross-cultural understanding and harmony. Through her select novels, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni intricately explores the themes of cultural hybridity and identity formation. By portraying characters who navigate the complexities of multiple cultural



influences, Divakaruni sheds light on the challenges and triumphs of forging a cohesive sense of self in a world shaped by migration, tradition, and modernity. Her works serve as a poignant reminder of the richness and complexity of human experience, transcending borders and bridging divides in the quest for understanding and acceptance.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Kannadasan as a Poet of the People and the Voice of Tamil

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Abstract

Kannadasan (1927–1981), celebrated as the “Kaviarasu” (King of Poets), is one of the most influential figures in modern Tamil literature and cinema. His works, ranging from poetry and novels to screenwriting and devotional hymns, reflect the aspirations, struggles, and emotions of 20th-century Tamil society. Born as Muthiah and later renamed Kannadasan, he began his career with Dravidian movement-inspired writings but evolved into a versatile poet who embraced spirituality, philosophy, and humanism. His vast body of work includes over 5000 film lyrics, more than 6000 poems, numerous plays, novels, and essays. Kannadasan’s literary voice is distinct for its lyrical simplicity, emotional intensity, and deep philosophical reflections. While his film songs made him a household name, his devotional works, particularly Arthamulla Indhu Matham (Meaningful Hinduism), remain enduring contributions to Tamil spiritual literature. He bridged tradition and modernity, blending classical Tamil aesthetics with contemporary themes, thus shaping the cultural imagination of Tamil Nadu. This paper explores the thematic concerns, stylistic features, and cultural impact of Kannadasan’s works, highlighting his role as both a popular poet and a philosopher. His writings not only entertained but also educated, offering insights into love, faith, morality, and the meaning of human existence.

Keywords: Kannadasan, Tamil Literature, Film Lyrics, Modern Poetry, Tamil Cinema.

Introduction

Among the modern Tamil writers, Kannadasan occupies a unique place as both a literary genius and a cultural icon. His ability to compose verses that resonated with common people while maintaining philosophical depth made him a poet of the masses. He lived during a time of social transformation in Tamil Nadu, marked by political movements, rising cinema culture, and a search for modern identity. His works mirror these changes, embodying themes of love, faith, despair, joy, and self-realisation. Born in 1927 in Sirukoodalpatti, near Karaikudi, Kannadasan was initially named Muthiah. His early involvement in the Dravidian movement shaped his initial writings, which carried rationalist and reformist undertones. However, his spiritual transformation led him toward Hindu philosophy, reflected in his later works. This dual influence—rationalism and spirituality—marks his literary trajectory, making him one of the most versatile voices in Tamil letters.

Contributions to Tamil Cinema

Kannadasan’s entry into cinema revolutionised Tamil film music and lyrics. With over 5000 songs to his credit, he captured a wide range of human emotions—romantic yearning, philosophical insight, social awareness, and devotional surrender. Unlike many lyricists who confined themselves to ornamental language, Kannadasan wrote in a style accessible to all. His songs often combined colloquial Tamil with literary elegance, enabling audiences to connect emotionally while reflecting on deeper truths. Songs like “Kanne Kalaimane,” “Ponnondu Kanden,” and “Sangathil Paadatha Kavidhai” remain timeless



classics. Through cinema, Kannadasan democratized poetry, taking it from the elite literary sphere into the homes of millions.

Literary Works Beyond Cinema

While his film songs made him immensely popular, Kannadasan's non-cinematic works reveal his philosophical depth. His magnum opus, *Arthamulla Indhu Matham*, is a 10-volume treatise on Hindu philosophy, presented in simple Tamil, making complex spiritual ideas accessible. He also wrote novels, short stories, and plays, addressing social issues, morality, and existential questions. His autobiography *Vanavasam* and its sequel *Manavasam* offer candid insights into his struggles, political involvement, and spiritual quest, making them invaluable socio-cultural documents.

Themes in the Works of Kannadasan

1. **Love and Emotion** – Whether in poetry or song, Kannadasan celebrated the spectrum of love—romantic, maternal, and divine. His verses portray love not merely as passion but as a transformative human force.
2. **Philosophy and Spirituality** – His later works reflect Vedantic and Hindu philosophical thought, blending faith with rational inquiry. *Arthamulla Indhu Matham* exemplifies his ability to explain philosophy in relatable terms.
3. **Social Commentary** – Kannadasan often critiqued hypocrisy, injustice, and human folly. His works display empathy toward the poor and marginalised, echoing the voice of the people.
4. **Existential Reflections** – His poems reveal a deep engagement with life's uncertainties, death, and the search for meaning. His writing style balances melancholy with optimism, often suggesting surrender to divine will.

Kannadasan's greatest strength lay in his use of simple, direct Tamil. Unlike poets who employed high literary diction, he drew from everyday speech, folk idioms, and proverbs, making his works widely accessible. Yet simplicity never meant superficiality; his verses often carried multiple layers of meaning, where a romantic lyric could also be read as a philosophical metaphor. His mastery over rhythm and musicality allowed his poems to flow naturally into songs, making them easy to memorise and cherish. Kannadasan's impact extends beyond literature and cinema into cultural consciousness. His songs continue to resonate across generations, quoted in political speeches, social movements, and everyday conversations. His philosophical writings guide seekers, while his autobiographical works serve as historical accounts of Tamil Nadu's literary and political landscape. Awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1980 for his collection of poems, *Cheraman Kadali*, he remains one of the most widely read and remembered Tamil writers.

Conclusion

Kannadasan's legacy lies in his ability to blend poetry, philosophy, and popular culture into a seamless whole. As the "Kaviarasu," he redefined Tamil poetry by bringing it closer to the common man without diluting its artistic richness. His contributions to Tamil cinema immortalised him in public memory, while his philosophical works secured him a place among the great thinkers of modern Tamil Nadu. Through themes of love, faith, morality, and existential inquiry, Kannadasan's writings continue to inspire, entertain, and guide. He remains not just a poet of his time but a timeless voice of Tamil modernity, whose words still echo in the hearts of millions.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Negotiating Tradition and Modernity in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*

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Abstract

Manju Kapur's A Married Woman explores the complexities of marriage, desire, and selfhood in middle-class Indian society during the 1990s. The novel traces the life of Astha, a Delhi-based teacher, wife, and mother, whose struggle to reconcile her individuality with family and societal expectations reflects broader tensions between tradition and modernity. Through a close reading supported by feminist and queer perspectives, this paper examines how the novel interrogates patriarchal structures, the institution of marriage, and the politics of motherhood. It further investigates how Astha's relationship with Pipeelika disrupts conventional domestic roles and highlights the validity of female desire beyond heteronormative boundaries. By situating personal conflicts against the backdrop of communal politics, Kapur connects the private with the public, revealing how women's agency is simultaneously constrained and redefined. The study concludes that A Married Woman offers a nuanced portrayal of resistance within constraint, presenting desire not merely as rebellion but as a pathway to selfhood, thereby affirming the continuing relevance of Kapur's work in contemporary gender discourse.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Middle-class women, Gender roles, Tradition vs Modernity

Introduction

Indian English fiction by women writers has often illuminated the ways in which gender and social institutions intersect. Manju Kapur, one of the most significant voices in contemporary Indian English fiction, engages with these issues with depth and sensitivity. Her novel *A Married Woman* (2002) presents the story of Astha, a teacher, wife, and mother living in Delhi, whose personal struggles reflect the broader dilemmas of educated middle-class women negotiating tradition and individuality. Kapur situates Astha's private conflicts within the turbulence of the 1990s, particularly the Babri Masjid demolition and communal unrest, thereby highlighting how political tensions reverberate within domestic spaces. As Thavaseelan (2023) observes, Kapur's fiction captures the "hopefulness and frustration" of middle-class life, by showing how aspirations are constrained by domestic responsibilities.

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to analyze how *A Married Woman* portrays women's negotiations with marriage, desire, and domesticity, and to explore how the protagonist's struggle for selfhood is framed through feminist and queer perspectives. It also seeks to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Kapur's narrative by contextualizing it within recent critical discussions on gender, sexuality, and middle-class identity.

Review of Literature

Recent scholarship has revisited *A Married Woman* with renewed critical attention. Thavaseelan (2023) interprets the novel as a record of the "hope and frustration" embedded in



the domestic sphere, reflecting the paradoxes of middle-class life. Mundafale (2024) argues that the text represents Astha's identity crisis as symptomatic of broader socio-cultural norms that condition women to sacrifice individuality for conformity. A critical study published in the *International Journal of Language, Literature and Culture* (2024) emphasizes how the novel captures unfulfilled aspirations of women trapped between societal duty and personal ambition.

Queer theoretical perspectives provide further insight into Astha's journey. Chavhan and Khandagale (2022) examine the novel through the lens of lesbian feminism, stressing the importance of Astha's relationship with Pipeelika in reimagining female intimacy. Viji (2023) highlights how queer theory reveals the structural suppression of non-conforming desires, noting that Astha's relationship with Pipeelika emerges as a subversive act within the rigid boundaries of marriage. A study in the *Journal of Political and Social Perspectives* (2022) introduces the concept of feminine *jouissance* to analyze Astha's experience of desire as an unsettling yet empowering force.

Other critics have examined familial and intergenerational dimensions in the novel. Kamala (2022) situates Astha within the tradition of the "new woman" who strives to redefine gender roles while still burdened by patriarchal expectations, while Earla (2023) underlines the ambivalence of feminist resistance in Kapur's text, noting how Astha's choices reflect both conformity and subversion.

Together these studies demonstrate that *A Married Woman* remains relevant for contemporary debates on gender and desire, with scholars consistently acknowledging the novel's layered portrayal of women's attempts to assert agency within cultural and familial constraints.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative literary approach based on close textual analysis of *A Married Woman* alongside recent critical scholarship. Selected passages from the novel are examined to trace the themes of marriage, domestic labor, desire, and selfhood. These textual insights are interpreted through feminist and queer theoretical frameworks to highlight how the novel interrogates patriarchal structures. To strengthen the argument, critical perspectives from ten recent peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025 have been synthesized and incorporated. This combination of textual reading and contemporary criticism enables a nuanced interpretation of Astha's struggle for agency and the broader cultural dynamics at play in Kapur's narrative.

Main Analysis

Astha's life is shaped from childhood by patriarchal expectations. Kapur writes, "She was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear. She was taught to obey her parents, give in to her husband, and adjust to her in-laws" (Kapur 2002, p. 3). This line encapsulates how women are conditioned to view marriage as destiny and obedience as virtue. Thavaseelan (2023) remarks that Kapur portrays such marriages as "spaces of both hope and disillusionment," where women's aspirations are often curtailed. Hemant, though modern in outlook, exemplifies patriarchal privilege. As Mundafale (2024) observes, Astha's husband appears liberal only when she conforms to domestic and maternal duties, but resists when she seeks individuality.

Motherhood intensifies Astha's confinement. "She felt like a machine, programmed to perform endless duties, never stopping to think of what she wanted" (Kapur 2002, p. 75). This reflects the feminist critique that motherhood, though celebrated, becomes an institution of self-erasure. The *IJIRMP*S (2024) article on the mother-daughter relationship argues that



Kapur highlights how generational expectations transmit the burden of sacrifice, thereby restricting women's agency.

Astha's intimacy with Pipeelika marks a turning point. "Astha was overwhelmed by feelings she had never known before; it was both frightening and liberating" (Kapur 2002, p. 221). This moment disrupts heteronormative domesticity and introduces alternative possibilities of selfhood. Chavhan and Khandagale (2022) interpret this as Kapur's intervention into lesbian feminist discourse, while Viji (2023) stresses that queer readings reveal the resilience of suppressed desires. A 2022 article in *Journal of Political and Social Perspectives* further suggests that Astha's experience embodies feminine *jouissance*, wherein desire becomes a source of empowerment and transgression.

The novel also situates Astha's personal struggle within a turbulent political landscape. Set against the demolition of the Babri Masjid and communal riots, the narrative draws parallels between private restlessness and national crisis. "Astha's restlessness mirrors the turbulence of the nation itself, caught between secular ideals and communal strife" (Rajan 2013, p. 65). The 2025 *IJELLH* article emphasizes this connection, describing Astha as a woman positioned "between duty to family and the call of desire," embodying the contradictions of a society negotiating modernity. Through these tensions, Kapur underscores how resistance is not always overt rebellion but often subtle negotiation. Astha's choices, whether in art, relationships, or introspection, reflect her search for a self beyond the confines of wifehood and motherhood. As Earla (2023) observes, Kapur's protagonist illustrates the "ambivalence of feminist resistance," demonstrating that even partial assertion of selfhood is an act of defiance in a restrictive cultural order.

Conclusion

Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* offers a layered portrayal of a woman negotiating the overlapping demands of marriage, motherhood, and personal desire in a patriarchal society. Astha's struggle for agency, though marked by contradictions, illuminates how women redefine identity through acts of questioning, resistance, and desire. By weaving private experiences with public political turmoil, Kapur reveals the inseparability of the personal and the political. The novel affirms that desire, even within constraint, can be transformative, making *A Married Woman* a vital text for contemporary feminist and queer discourses.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Indian Cultural Legacy and the *Ramayana*

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Abstract

The Ramayana, one of the two great Sanskrit epics of ancient India, attributed to the sage Valmiki, is a foundational text of South Asian culture and spirituality. With more than 24,000 verses, it narrates the story of Prince Rama, his exile into the forest, the abduction of his wife Sita by Ravana, and the ultimate triumph of dharma (righteousness) over adharma (unrighteousness). More than a tale of heroism, the Ramayana is a moral and philosophical guide that addresses universal human concerns: loyalty, devotion, justice, sacrifice, and the pursuit of dharma. Its characters—Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and Ravana—represent archetypes of virtue, devotion, courage, and moral complexity. Over centuries, the Ramayana has transcended its textual origins to become a living cultural tradition, influencing art, performance, ritual, and ethical codes across South and Southeast Asia. Multiple versions, including Kamban's Ramavataram in Tamil, Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas in Hindi, and Southeast Asian adaptations, reflect its adaptability to diverse contexts. This paper explores the narrative, themes, and enduring legacy of the Ramayana, highlighting its role as both a spiritual scripture and a cultural monument that continues to inspire literature, philosophy, and society.

Keywords: *Ramayana*, Valmiki, Rama, Sita, Dharma, Hindu epic, Indian culture

Introduction

The *Ramayana* is not only a literary work but it is a cultural and moral compass that has shaped Indian civilisation for over two millennia. Attributed to Valmiki, it combines myth, philosophy, and moral instruction, embodying ideals of duty, devotion, and justice. Its influence extends beyond India to Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, and beyond, where local adaptations have enriched its narrative. The epic begins in Ayodhya, where Rama, the eldest son of King Dasharatha, is destined to inherit the throne. However, due to a promise made by Dasharatha to his wife Kaikeyi, Rama is exiled for fourteen years. Accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, Rama faces numerous trials in the forest. The central conflict arises when Ravana, the king of Lanka, abducts Sita. With the help of Hanuman and the vanara (monkey) army, Rama defeats Ravana, rescues Sita, and returns to Ayodhya to assume kingship.

Dharma and Duty

The *Ramayana* is a meditation on dharma. Rama embodies the ideal ruler and dutiful son who prioritises righteousness over personal desires. His exile demonstrates sacrifice for the sake of truth and order. Sita represents chastity, devotion, and strength in adversity. Lakshmana exemplifies loyalty and service, while Hanuman symbolises devotion and courage. Each character embodies values that serve as moral exemplars for society.

Rama and Sita

Rama, the central figure of the *Ramayana*, is revered as *Maryada Purushottama*—the ideal man who embodies righteousness, virtue, and compassion. As the eldest son of King Dasharatha, Rama accepts exile without resentment, placing filial duty above personal



ambition. His conduct demonstrates an unwavering commitment to *dharma* (righteousness), even in the face of suffering. As a husband, Rama shows profound love for Sita, and as a leader, he displays justice, courage, and humility. While Rama is venerated as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, he is equally celebrated as a human figure whose life offers moral guidance. His compassion toward all beings, respect for sages, loyalty to friends like Hanuman and Sugriva, and mercy even toward enemies reflect his nobility of character. Yet, his decisions—such as sending Sita to exile—also raise complex moral questions, making him a deeply human figure open to multiple interpretations. Rama thus stands as both a divine exemplar and a human role model, symbolising the eternal struggle to uphold righteousness in a world of moral challenges. Sita's character is central to the *Ramayana*. She represents fidelity and endurance, enduring abduction and trial by fire to prove her purity. Modern interpretations often highlight her agency, questioning patriarchal readings of her suffering. Sita thus becomes a symbol of both ideal womanhood and resilience against injustice.

Cultural and Artistic Influence

The *Ramayana* exists in numerous regional versions. Kamban's *Ramavataram* (Tamil, 12th century) enriches the story with bhakti devotion, while Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* (16th century) makes the narrative accessible in the vernacular, inspiring generations of North Indians. Southeast Asian adaptations, such as the Thai *Ramakien* and the Indonesian *Kakawin Ramayana*, highlight the epic's universality while integrating local traditions. These variations underscore the text's adaptability across cultures. The *Ramayana* has profoundly influenced Indian art, dance, theatre, and music. Classical dance forms like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, and Javanese shadow puppetry retell their episodes. The annual *Ramlila* performances in North India dramatise the epic, culminating in the burning of Ravana's effigy during Dussehra. These cultural practices demonstrate how the epic continues to serve as a medium of collective memory and moral education. Beyond narrative, the *Ramayana* conveys philosophical insights. It emphasises the harmony between personal duty and cosmic order, the transient nature of worldly power, and the eternal value of virtue. Rama is not only a hero but also an incarnation of Vishnu, representing the divine principle that upholds dharma. The epic thus bridges mythology, ethics, and spirituality.

Conclusion

The *Ramayana* is both a literary masterpiece and a cultural scripture, embodying India's moral and philosophical traditions. It teaches that righteousness, sacrifice, and devotion form the foundation of a just life. While Rama exemplifies the ideal ruler and human being, Sita, Hanuman, and other characters illustrate diverse virtues that inspire generations. Its regional adaptations and cultural performances show its universal relevance and adaptability. Far from being a static text, the *Ramayana* remains a living tradition that continues to shape literature, religion, and society, offering timeless guidance on the challenges of human existence.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Transformative Journey of Women in Gita Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*

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Abstract

Feminist perspectives have recently gained attention many writers have expressed concern about the condition of women in their works. Gita Hariharan, the influential Indian writer, initiated a new epoch by stressing the need for women to self-actualise and freedom from the patriarchal social structure in which women have long remained silent sufferers. Her award-winning work, The Thousand Faces of Night, gives voice to the thousands of Indian women who are devoid of personal space in married life. This novel picturises three generations where women were reduced to mere household workers and how mythology is often used by society to subdue women within the four walls. This paper is an attempt to trace the transformative journey of Indian women in her novel The Thousand Faces of Night.

Keywords: Gita Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Devi, Sita, Mayamma.

India, the land in which women are considered goddesses and fairies, has a rich array of literature by women who played an unparalleled role in shaping the literature of India. They explored the hitherto untouched areas of human lives and expressed them in a captivating manner in their works. From Toru Dutt, the earliest woman writer, to contemporary revolutionaries like Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Anita Desai, Chitra Bannerjee, Namita Gokhale, etc, they have created an epoch, made an impact and stimulated a change in the perspective of the readers.

Gita Hariharan, the leading voice of feminism in India, has written several novels focusing on the plight of Indian women in society. Born in Coimbatore, she was brought up in Bombay and Manila. She did her BA in English literature at Bombay University and her MA at Fairfield University, Connecticut. She had varied experiences as a staff writer in a channel in New York, editor in Mumbai, Chennai and New Delhi, a Freelancer and now a writer in New Delhi. The celebrated writer rose to prominence after receiving the Commonwealth Writers Prize for her debut novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night*. Her other novels include *The Ghosts of Vasu, Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003), and *Fugitive Histories* (2009). *I Have Become The Tide* (2019) is her famous collection of short stories. *The Winning Team*, a collection of stories for children, was published in 2004, and *Almost Home: Cities and Other Places* was published in 2014. Her fictional works earned her fame, and they have been translated into many international languages. She is also an active writer for newspapers, frequently contributing to monthly columns and discussions. Recently, she published her collection of conversations, *This Too is India: Conversations on Diversity and Dissent*. Her novels have been nominated for major awards and, *in times of siege*, were shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize.

In her novels, she centred on the quest for identity of women and the gender biased social setting in which women are constantly suppressed. Her protagonists voice out for their liberation from the male-dominated social norms and wish to attain their identity. Their thirst for self-actualisation could not be subdued by the egotistic men. The novel *The Thousand*



Faces of Night shows the lives of three generations of Indian women who struggled to realise their identity. This novel also focuses on how mythology is often utilised to subdue women by thrusting upon them their established norms and preconceived notions of what makes a dutiful daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, mother and so on. The author employed the technique of story within the story to expose how society is conditioned by patriarchal norms in the disguise of tradition. Mythology is also used to highlight how women have suffered from prehistoric times to till now.

The novel has three women characters: Devi, the protagonist, Sita, her mother, and Mayamma, the caretaker and cook. Each of them faces deception due to the narrow-minded and gender biased society. The novel opens as Devi prepares to leave America after completing her studies there. She refuses the proposal of Dan, an American, and returns to India. She gets herself trapped in the bonds of family ties as her mother, Sita, arranges her marriage with Mahesh, a manager in an international company. Mahesh is too rigid. He is machine-like without any emotions. Devi is disappointed with him. She wants to learn Sanskrit, but it is rejected outright by Mahesh. His dominant behaviour and his attitude of not giving respect to her feelings instigate in her a deep sense of loneliness. She tries her best to settle down, but Mahesh's behaviour doesn't allow her to fit in there. To make matters worse, her father-in-law, who is her only company in the house, died in America. He used to tell her stories from mythology about the ideal woman. Also, Mahesh goes on tour more often. She detests her married life. She wishes to gain an identity for herself. She finds solace in the music of Gopal, her neighbour and a Hindustani singer. She boldly steps out of her wedlock and unites with Gopal. A few months pass. Devi feels lonely here also, as Gopal is too immersed in music and fails to recognise her talent. Devi realises that no one outside her can nurture her and help her realise herself. All these experiences made her gain courage, and she decided to survive on her own. So, she returns to her mother, Sita.

Sita was a sacrificial person who sacrificed her passion for playing the Veena for the sake of fulfilling her duties to the family. Her husband's family didn't like her playing Veena. Even after finishing all the household chores, she was looked at with disgust by her in-laws. Out of depression, she plucked the strings of the Veena. As a traditional wife, she didn't care about herself and devoted herself entirely self for the well-being of her husband. It made him get promotions and advance his career. After her husband's death, she arranged the marriage of her daughter, Devi. But Devi's Elopement with Gopal was a blow to her. But Sita realised that it was time to live for her own self. She takes up the Veena, and it begins to heal her inner self. Another important character of the novel is Mayamma, a victim of male chauvinism. She works as a taker in Devi's in-house. She got married at the age of twelve. Her husband was a drunkard and a gambler. Her mother-in-law was constantly torturing her by indicating that she didn't get pregnant. After ten years, she gave birth to a boy child. When he was eight years old, her husband ran away with all the money and didn't return. Her son grew up to be a wastrel, beating his mother for not giving him money. She suffered a lot in her life, and so she didn't want Devi to suffer. She affirms Devi's decision to separate from her husband.

Gita Hariharan has effectively portrayed the transformative journey of three women across three generations. Mayamma is a pathetic character, a victim of child marriage and is supposed to be harassed by her husband. Also, her mother-in-law tortured her psychologically by insisting on her getting pregnant soon. She constantly drove her towards family affairs. She shrank herself to an dutiful daughter-in-law without having any desire of her own. As ill luck would have it, her son was a replica of her husband, and he also



tormented her. She endured all this trauma silently. After her son's death, she joined as a cook in Devi's house. Her silence breaks at last when she supports Devi's decision to step away from her husband's life. Thus, the generation of women was silent sufferers and escapists. They didn't protest against brutal men. They didn't even have the thought of leading a life of their own or living for their sake. They accepted their tragic life without any complaint.

Sita was passionate about playing the Veena. She played Veena in her leisure time to relax. But her in-laws are opposed to her playing Veena. She felt bad, as even after completing all the household chores, they found fault with her for playing Veena. Her father-in-law scolded her, asking, "Put the Veena away. Are you a wife? A daughter-in-law? (Hariharan 30). She replied coldly, "Yes, I am a wife and daughter-in-law". (Hariharan 30). But she didn't have enough courage to play the Veena in spite of their disgust. She devoted all her time to planning her husband's career. Due to her support, he got many promotions. Her suppression of her talent and dream deadened her, and thus she developed a distance from all people, including her husband and daughter. She was upset with her daughter's elopement with Gopal. She realised that the time had now come for her to live for her own. After years of abandonment, she finally takes the Veena and begins playing it. She understands that only her passion could heal her. So Sita's generation is marked by an upheaval against the existing social system, but they didn't have enough courage to break away from it. As for Devi, she considered the fulfilment of her emotional needs and her search for identity much more important than physical needs. She couldn't lead her life with Mahesh, who was insensitive to her feelings. Her desire to learn Sanskrit was rejected outright by Mahesh. He replied, "Don't be foolish. And what will you do with all this highbrow knowledge?" (Hariharan 52). She couldn't remain a silent sufferer. From childhood, she heard the stories of her grandmother about rebellious women. It instilled in her a sense of protest and rage. "I lived a secret life of my own. I became a woman, a warrior, a heroine. I was Devi. I rode a tiger and cut off evil, magical demons' heads." (Hariharan 41). Her father-in-law's stories about self-sacrificing, traditional and tolerant women characters didn't change her. She broke up her marriage with Mahesh and eloped with Gopal. Here also, she couldn't attain her identity. Gopal was in the limelight of the stage, and she was among the audience in the dark. Her search for identity couldn't be fulfilled here, either. She had the nerve to stand on her legs. She decided to return to her mother's house and continue her quest for identity.

Thus, the transformative journey of women from silent sufferers to radical women who dared to break away the society's norms is skilfully portrayed by Gita Hariharan. Mayamma belongs to the ignorant society in which child marriages are common, and they make women suffer without any guilty feeling. Also, these women didn't have enough courage to question the patriarchal society's gender biased norms. They suffered silently and accepted their tragic life with tolerance. Next comes the generation of Sita, who dared to oppose male domination. They felt the need for self-actualisation, and they had the urge to lead life according to their wishes, but they couldn't succeed. They were bound by tradition and responsibilities, and so they couldn't break free from them. Devi's generation of women is a radical breakthrough from the past generations. They are keen on getting their identity, and if their needs are not fulfilled, they boldly step out of married life and lead life on their own. Tradition and mythological stories can no longer hold them back from family ties. Hence, the progress of women's condition is vividly portrayed by the author through these three characters, Mayamma, Sita and Devi. They stand for thousands of Indian women, who



struggle in their day-to-day lives to lead a life of dignity. Thus, the novel is a clarion call for all women to seek their self-actualisation, and the novelist stressed that women shouldn't sacrifice their whole life for others, which serves to uphold male chauvinism. Hence, the transformative journey of women portrayed in the novel persuades women to strive towards introspection and self-fulfilment.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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Role of Stylistics in the Effective Teaching of Poetry through Tennyson's Select Works

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Abstract

The teaching of poetry often struggles against student perceptions of it as a cryptic and subjective art form. This article argues that stylistics is a linguistic analysis of literary style and provides an essential pedagogical framework for demystifying poetry and fostering robust, evidence-based interpretation. By using the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson as a case study, this paper demonstrates how a stylistic approach moves students beyond impressionistic responses and into a detailed engagement with the text itself. It analyses Tennyson's phonological patterning, lexical choices, grammatical structures, and semantic fields, and students can trace how meaning and effect are consciously constructed. This method transforms the classroom into a workshop of linguistic discovery, empowering students to become confident and critical readers of verse. The article concludes that stylistics is not merely an analytical tool but a fundamental pedagogy for effective poetry instruction.

Keywords: Stylistics, Poetry, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Linguistic Analysis..

Introduction

"Poetry is news that stays news," Ezra Pound famously declared, yet for many students, the news from poetry feels like a bulletin in a foreign language—frustrating, opaque, and irrelevant. The traditional search for a single, authoritative "meaning" often leads to disengagement, as learners feel they lack the key to unlock the poet's secret message. This pedagogical impasse necessitates a shift in approach, from a hermeneutics of suspicion to one of description. Stylistics, defined by Mick Short as "a linguistic approach to the study of literary texts" (1996, p. 1), provides this methodology. It equips students with a descriptive metalanguage, allowing them to ground their interpretations in the observable features of the text. This paper will explore the role of stylistics in the effective teaching of poetry, using the works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson as a primary exemplar. Tennyson's poetry, with its rich sonic texture, precise diction, and complex syntax, offers an ideal corpus for stylistic analysis. We will argue that by focusing on how Tennyson's poems mean, rather than solely what they mean, educators can cultivate a more inclusive, objective, and intellectually empowering classroom environment.

Stylistic Framework

Traditional poetry teaching often oscillates between the biographical state of contextualising the poem through the author's life and the affective prioritising of the reader's emotional response. While valuable, these approaches can sometimes bypass the text itself, either by reducing it to a historical artefact or by validating any interpretation, however



unsupported. Stylistics offers a third, text-centric path. It poses the fundamental question: "What linguistic choices has the poet made, and what are their effects?" This question is inherently democratic; it suggests that the tools for analysis are present in the language on the page, accessible to any reader who learns to observe them. It replaces the anxiety of "getting it wrong" with the excitement of investigative discovery.

Leech and Short's *Style in Fiction* (2007) is a seminal study that applies linguistic methods to the analysis of prose, offering frameworks for understanding narrative style. Short's *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* (1996) extends this approach to multiple genres, encouraging readers to interpret literary effects through language patterns. Simpson's *Stylistics* (2004) provides a comprehensive, student-friendly resource that maps theoretical insights with practical applications, making stylistics accessible for learners. In a more literary vein, *The Poems of Tennyson* (1987), by Christopher Ricks, offers an authoritative edition of Tennyson's works, valuable for both close stylistic reading and literary interpretation. Widdowson's *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* (1975) bridges pedagogy and literary study, advocating for the integration of linguistic stylistics into teaching practices. These works illustrate the evolution of stylistics as both an academic discipline and a practical method for engaging with literature..

Stylistic Application to Tennyson's Select Poetry

The following sections demonstrate how key areas of stylistic analysis can be applied to Tennyson's work, providing concrete examples for classroom use.

Phonology

Tennyson was a master of sonic effects, using them not merely for decoration but to reinforce content and emotion.

And round about the keel with faces pale,

Dark faces pale against that rosy flame..." (*The Lotus-Eaters*, L. 25-26)

The dense concentration of the fricative /f/ sound in this line from the Choric Song is a key stylistic feature. Phonetically, the /f/ sound is soft yet continuous, mimicking the sound of the frothing, foaming sea. This auditory iconicity pulls the reader into the sensual, lulling atmosphere of the land of the Lotus-eaters, where the mariners are seduced into lethargy. The sound itself enacts the "fury" of the foam but also its fleeting, insubstantial quality.

Lexis and Semantics

Tennyson's choice of words is meticulously calibrated to create specific tones and evoke precise images.

"I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!" (*Mariana*, L. 83-84)

The archaic adjective "aweary" is a significant lexical choice. It carries a heavier, more poetic and despairing weight than the modern "weary." Its repetition throughout the poem's refrain creates a hypnotic, monotonous rhythm that formally mirrors Mariana's stagnant existence and psychological entrapment. The semantic field of decay "rusted," "crusted," "broken," "weeded"—that permeates the poem builds a cumulative impression of neglect that directly reflects her mental state.

Grammar and Syntax

The grammatical construction of a poem can reveal a speaker's state of mind. Tennyson often uses syntax to control pace and emphasise climactic moments.

"I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known..." (*Ulysses*, L. 11-13)



The opening lines are grammatically complex, featuring a periodic sentence structure where the main clause is delayed. Ulysses doesn't begin with "I"; he begins by defining his existential state ("This is my son..."). This syntactic choice reflects the ruminative, restless mind of the speaker. Furthermore, the present perfect tense in "I am become a name" (a Greek perfect implying a continuous state) and "Much have I seen" establishes a voice weighed down by history yet looking forward, perfectly capturing the poem's central tension between past glory and future yearning.

Pragmatics

Tennyson perfected the dramatic monologue, a form where meaning is generated through the gap between the speaker's words and the reader's inference.

"Why should a man desire in any way

To vary from the kindly race of men..." (Tithonus, L 28-29)

The entire poem is a pragmatic act, a plea to the goddess Aurora. The deictic references to time ("The woods decay, the woods decay and fall," "Ay me! ay me!") anchor the speaker in a cursed, eternal present. A stylistic analysis asks students to examine the speaker's tone: is it resigned, bitter, or regretful? The evidence lies in linguistic features like the rhetorical questions ("Why did the gods give me a heart?") and the juxtaposition of words like "cruel immortality", which reveal Tithonus's deep anguish and the ironic tragedy of his granted wish.

Pedagogical Benefit

Applying stylistics to Tennyson and poetry in general yields significant classroom benefits. It demystifies complexity and fosters evidence-based debate. Students can see that Tennyson's melancholic themes are not abstract but are built through the deliberate crafting of sound, rhythm, and grammar. It builds critical confidence by providing a clear set of tools and stylistics that empower students to approach any poem with a strategy, reducing anxiety and building analytical self-reliance.

Conclusion

The poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson is the basis of the Victorian period and can once in a while experience remote to modern students be encased in the amber of historic context and archaic diction. A stylistic approach, however, bridges this gap efficaciously. It does not simplify the poems however, greater importantly, equips students with the analytical precision to have interaction with their complexity on their personal terms. By focusing at the poet's aware linguistic selections from the phonemic to the syntactic teachers can guide college students to look that a poem's meaning is inextricable from its shape, and that this form is a chain of planned, analyzable decisions. This approach transforms the poetry lesson from a lecture on what a poem approach right into a collaborative workshop on how it works. For instance, in place of merely pointing out that "The Charge of the Light Brigade" inspires the chaos of struggle, a stylistic evaluation could have college students look at the relentless dactylic dimeter ("Half a league, half a league"), mimicking the gallop of horses, and the repetitive anaphora ("Cannon to the right of them, / Cannon to the left of them"), which creates a visceral sense of entrapment. Similarly, in "The Lady of Shalott," the shift from the tight, musical stanzas describing her isolation to the looser, more pressing rhythms of Part IV charts her emotional breakdown no longer just thru narrative, but via the very pulse of the verse. This procedure is essentially democratizing. It actions past the look for a single, trainer-sanctioned interpretation and empowers college students to end up active textual detectives. They learn how to floor their interpretations in precise linguistic proof, arguing now not about what they "feel" but about what they are able to listen, see, and parse. They



look at how Tennyson's masterful use of onomatopoeia, caesura, and lexical fields builds the sensory world of the poem. In doing so, stylistics ensures that the "information" Tennyson brought to his readers his profound meditations on grief, obligation, modernity, and isolation. It remains vital, applicable, and powerfully decipherable. It proves that the poem is not a puzzle with one answer, however a complex and resonant gadget product of words, whose mechanics are reachable to all who are taught to look carefully.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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A Critical Study on the Indian Approach of Devdutt Pattanaik's *The Talent Sutra*

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Abstract

Across the world, countless epics have served as guiding lights for generations, illuminating the values, struggles, and aspirations of humanity. Among them stands The Ramayana—an enduring tale that transcends time and geography. In his evocative retelling, Devdutt Pattanaik breathes new life into this ancient epic, offering a rich and layered reinterpretation that embraces the vast mosaic of oral, visual, and written traditions through which the Ramayana has been expressed. Each version, shaped by its own historical, cultural, and poetic context, seeks to unlock the mystery at the heart of the tale in its own unique way. In the hands of contemporary storytellers, these age-old myths are reshaped—not to abandon tradition, but to converse with the present, reframing eternal themes in light of modern dilemmas and desires. In spite of many visual interpretations in each story, the basic content of the narrative is same. The ability for a continuous progress of mythological content is provisional upon the protection of cultural belief in human civilization. There are various factors which have been taken a comprehensive study to analyze the various factors contributing to the prevailing need for mythological tales in the contemporary literature. These essential factors focuses on social, political, cultural, and profitable extents. The paper has been taken as an analysing factor of the diverse content which is found in the epic, The Ramayana, with actual importance on the book Sita which is also written by Devdutt Pattanaik, a great writer and supporter of mythological aspects. The objective of this study is to check the pre-historic events that held in the past in Indian mythology, through an analysis of the tales of the great epic The Ramayana and to make an evolution of these concepts over time. There are so many interpretations in the mythological works of Devdutt Pattanaik which are found classical across the world.

Keywords: Mythology, Talent Sutra, Isolation, Expansion, Reflection, Inculsion.

The principles of various religions in India like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and so on are examined carefully to find out solutions for problems that prevail in a company for an effective team management. Devdutt Pattanaik has carefully acclaimed his book *The Talent Sutra : An Indian Approach to Learning from a mythical point of view*. He portrays skilfully the concepts in the mythological works to seek lessons for skill development. As you sow; so you reap. True to this proverb, Devdutt Pattanaik sows the good seeds on the minds of the youngsters and focused on particular sutras that can definitely make a change. The good seeds will be changed into a fully grown up tree to protect the future generation. There is lag which is found in the activities of the youngsters. To mend them and nurture them positively, the insights of Devdutt Pattanaik works on various concepts and ideas which are correlated to the working people policies and helpful in creativity. He proclaims that the motive of a person should have its destination towards the goal as it is necessary for a man to transform



from one stage to another stage. Though the perspectives may be varied from person to person the imagination oozes out from the place where individual lives in. The long-lasting principles are highly wanted especially from the youngsters. As a result, there is a misunderstanding that arises between human and nature. Hence, transformation is an important factor that each and every individual can do his or her level best in the society. One should have imaginative skill to execute this transformative path. There are three fundamental qualities of *Gunas*. They are (i) Sattvas (ii) Rajas (iii) Tamas. Each quality transforms man from good to better or better to worse. The true knowledge can be transformed through Goddess Saraswati. The internal voice of a person guides the mind of a person to the path of virtue whereas the physical pleasure which leads to darker side of life. Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge becomes the beacon to the people who turn himself from Rajas to Sattva or Tamas to Sattva.

Devdutt Pattanaik selects the human minds and categorizes the mind into four. The categories are : (i) Isolation (ii) Reflection (iii) Expansion and (iv) Inclusion. All the four categories are mentioned in the book *TalentSutra*. The four concepts are carefully tested so that it explores the human potential and the results will be fruitful. All the four categories that are mentioned here are used for narrating the good needs found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism. In Isolation, it is all about desire which is the root cause of all the inventions that prevail now. It tells about love and desire of a common man in order to get appreciation, name and fame. Devdutt Pattanaik takes two different angels together where one can feel one's emotional struggles that show which way is to be taken. In this competitive world, a common business who has both positive mind and negative mind can understand the good deeds and bad deeds. The strategies are to be known in running a business skilfully. The feeling of staying alone and uncertainty in love makes him get a different experience rather than the people in Mahabharata. The people who try to win over the hearts of others should show love and who neglect the sincerity in love results in lacking of good posture and deeds. The disgrace he has shown upon Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, results in the doom of Duryodhana. On the other hand, Krishna, the saviour of Pandavas who lends his hand to protect Draupadi when she is in struggle. It depicts the real hero in the past and in the present and forever. Devdutt Pattanaik takes much care to draw a parallel line between business management and he connects the mythological characters Kaikey and Kubija the characters from the *Ramayana*. The business place is compared with Kubija where employees face lots of challenges especially about job security. When a person is isolated, his ideas become stagnant and no more new concepts would be initiated by the company for the welfare of the people. The employees and their potential play a vital role in making a company to reach its height. Here, the manager of the company should know each and every employees' potential and definitely it gives the fruitful results. In *Ramayana*, Hanuman the brave devotee to God Rama does not know his potentiality. The power and potential of Hanuman should be remained by the wise bear Jambhavan. In business market too, there are some Jambavans who are highly needed to remind the ups and downs of the market. This results in expressing the right views at right time by the genius in the field.

Devdutt Pattanaik exposes the necessity of a person's mind set and his views in the business sector. Based on individual's opinion, one's behaviour will be reflected. It is naturally found that every man in the world runs his or her life with other people based on their understanding. It is very simple to estimate people based on one's own right understanding. One's skill can be exposed through his potentiality in selling his or her own product to other people. Devdutt Pattanaik here uses an anecdote from *Ramayana*. When



Rama has accepted the food from Shabari, Lakshman shocks to see Rama and his behaviour. After getting clear explanation, given by Rama, Lakshman accepts his concepts and obeys to the words of Rama without any doubts. From this anecdote, we have come to know that right understanding and proper guidance are needed for every individual to shine in the market place.

In the third level, Devdutt Pattanaik tells us about *Expansion* which is the need of this hour. In Physics, there is a term says, *Matter expands when it is heated*. It is true that in an organisation, the CEO of a company should utilize the resources like employees in all cadres and he should know about their needs and he should work on it. Devdutt Pattanaik elucidates this concept by stating the actions performed by Lord Krishna through Arjuna. When this type of scenario found in an organisation where the CEO and employees understand one another, the organisation and the name and fame of the company will definitely reach to a great extent.

In the last level, Devdutt Pattanaik ends up with Inculsion which is the last stage. In Hindu religion, we follow four vedas. Likewise, there are four directions; seasons and so on. Number four plays a vital role in the life history of a person. In the fourth part he tells about how adjustment is necessary for each and every person and how one should expands his thoughts into action. One should not be compelled to do any work. Based on the imaginative skills and proficiency in action makes any employee to reach his heights. There are so many goodness and badness in the minds of the people in the society. Some minds act like Lord Krishna and some like Druyodhana. It is the result that says that says whose ways are good and beneficial. The ways are based upon the four stages which were discussed in this paper.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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