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# Academic Research News

*Peer-Reviewed Journal*

## THE MADURA COLLEGE

An Autonomous Institution affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University  
Re-accredited (4th cycle) with 'A' grade by NAAC  
Vidya Nagar, T. P. K. Road, Madurai – 625 011.

**PG Department & Research Centre in English**

## SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURE

**Volume 4, Special Issue 1 - March 2026**

### **Guest Editors**

**Dr. Sheela P. Karthick**  
**Dr. A. Vigneshkumar**



The Madura College (Autonomous) stands as a prestigious institution with a legacy spanning more than a century and a quarter. Serving as a "Towering Titan" in the field of higher education, the college has demonstrated unwavering dedication to academic excellence across the decades. Its robust academic portfolio currently features 21 Under-Graduate, 13 Post-Graduate, 8 M.Phil., and 9 Ph.D. programmes. The college's history is defined by steady progress and the strategic introduction of diverse courses. In 1978, the University Grants Commission (UGC) conferred autonomous status upon the institution, recognizing its history of academic brilliance and community commitment. As one of the first colleges in the university area to receive this status, the achievement reflected the visionary leadership of its management and the dedicated efforts of its staff. Today, the institution is regarded as an academic inspiration that continues to set significant benchmarks in education. With an enviable reputation and a distinguished global network of alumni, The Madura College remains a beacon of scholarly achievement. Its ongoing commitment to advanced studies is exemplified by facilities such as the PG Department & Research Centre in English in Madurai.

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## Title Verso

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In preparing this volume of **Volume 4, Special Issue 1, March 2026** in **ARN** for the **“South Asian 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.

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## Preface

We are pleased to present this volume on “South Asian Literature,” a compilation of scholarly articles written by the students of the PG Department and Research Centre in English, The Madurai College (Autonomous), Madurai, Tamil Nadu. This publication marks a significant milestone for our department, as it is the first time we have undertaken the initiative of collecting and publishing the academic works of our students in the form of a journal issue.

The articles included in this volume are the result of careful reading, thoughtful analysis, and dedicated effort by our students. The majority of articles examine Indian authors whose writing depicts the regional, cultural, social and emotional complexities of their region. They invite readers to journey through diverse literary landscapes created by prominent South Asian writers, especially writers such as Aravind Adiga, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sudha Murty, Anita Desai, Ruskin Bond, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Anuradha Roy, Chetan Bhagat, Preeti Shenoy, and Mahasweta Devi. While one article examines the complexities of cultural identity and belonging through Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*, another turns its attention to the realities of social stratification portrayed in Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*. Certain articles reflect on the dynamics of family relationships and the subtle tensions between tradition and modernity as seen in Sudha Murty’s *Dollar Bahu* and Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day*, while other engages with questions of gender, memory, and the lived experiences of marginalized voices through works such as Mahasweta Devi’s *Breast Stories* and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai’s *Chemmeen*. In this way, each article approaches a distinctive work and concept, collectively offering readers a rich exploration of the cultural, social, and emotional landscapes that shape South Asian literature. Collectively, the articles invite readers to explore the richness, diversity, and complexity that characterize South Asian literary traditions.

The studies provide readers with pathways to discover how literature depicts various aspects of South Asian society which includes its conflicts, emotions, traditions and its changing social identities. The student body will benefit from this program because it creates a main path which leads them towards better academic research practices. The department provides students with a publishing platform which helps them develop confidence, critical thinking skills and academic writing abilities. Such initiatives greatly enrich the academic experience of students and contribute meaningfully to the literary and research culture of the department.

This publication has been made possible through the generous support and encouragement of the Management of The Madura College. We express our sincere gratitude to the Head of the Department, Dr. Sheela P. Karthick, whose guidance and leadership played a vital role in initiating and successfully completing this project. We also acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the faculty members of the department, whose encouragement and support have been instrumental in bringing this publication to completion.

We hope that the special edition of this journal will inspire students to continue exploring literature with enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity. May this be the beginning of many more such academic endeavours from our department in the years to come.

**Board of Editors**



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## **Journey of Self-Discovery in Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof***

**A. Asma Sameera**, II MA English, PG Department and Research Centre in English,  
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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the journey of the protagonist Rusty towards self-discovery, as portrayed in Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* (1956). The novel is set in the post-colonial India. An Anglo-Indian orphaned boy got into his journey of self-discovery with racial, financial, economic, and social struggles. Binding up with the restricting factors, enabling factors and driving forces, Rusty, the boy made his journey. The thrust area of the novel is the journey taken by the character of Rusty, from the stage of a confused and irresponsible teenager to a matured and responsible young adult. He has grown and achieved the purpose of life. Throughout the novel, Rusty's quest towards his self-identity leads him to come out of those struggles and attain the purpose of his life.*

**Keywords:** Self-discovery, Racism, Liberation, Ruskin Bond.

### **Introduction**

Self-discovery is nothing but gaining understanding of one's own personality. Literature promotes self-discovery by acting as a mirror that reflects the readers' emotions, thoughts and values. It also helps the readers to self-analyze and understand themselves by not feeling alone. Literature has the power of making oneself potential to prove their individuality through the journey of self-discovery. In literature, the readers can connect themselves with the book and feel the pain by comparing the story with their own life.

Indian literature helps self-discovery by gaining the balance between tradition and modernity, cultural heritage and emotional liberation. For example, Self-discovery is basically an inner, psychological journey characterized by isolation and solitude in Indian Writing in English. For example, in Anita Desai's works, she depicts self-realization in *Fire on the Mountain* as a quiet inner awakening rather than a dramatic act of resistance. Self-discovery is interconnected with memory, history, and postcolonial identity in Salman Rushdie's works. Saleem Sinai's personal search for identification in *Midnight's Children* suggests that the individual is created through collective historical experience, much like how contemporary India came to be. In Indian literature, the story frequently takes the shape of a journey, either literal or symbolic such as traveling from a rural to an urban setting or dealing with a personal loss that compels characters to face their actual wants.

Ruskin Bond is an Indian author and poet. He was born on 19 May 1934 in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab. He is a living author with 91 years old. He grew up in Jamnagar, Dehradun, New Delhi and Shimla. Ruskin Bond is the son of Aubrey Alexander Bond and Edith Clarke. Bond attended Bishop Cotton School in Shimla and graduated in 1951. Ruskin



Bond at his young spent four years in the Channel Islands and London. And then he returned to India in 1955. He presently lives in Landour, Mussoorie, with his adopted family. Ruskin Bond worked as a freelance writer for few years. His first novel is *The Room on the Roof*. Bond has authored more than 500 short stories, novels which include 69 books for children, essays and articles that have appeared in magazines and anthologies. One of his first short stories, “Untouchable”, was written by Bond at the age of sixteen in 1951. His other notable works are *Vagrants in the Valley*, *My Oliver’s Diary*, *A Flight of Pigeons*, *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, *The Blue Umbrella*, *Granny’s Tree Climbing*, *Angry River* and so on. He was awarded with John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957, Sahitya Academy Award in 1993, Padma Shri in 1999, Bal Sahitya Puraskar in 2012 and Padma Bhushan in 2014. Two of his novels namely *The Room on the Roof* and *Vagrants in the Valley* were written in 1956 and published by Penguin India as a sequel. These two novels were published in one volume in 1993. The following quote speaks about the skilful creative writing of Bond: “If there’s one name that is synonymous with children’s literature in India, it’s Ruskin Bond” (*Daily Mail*, blurb). *The Room on the Roof* is Bond’s first novel which won John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957. Bond wrote the book when he was seventeen years old. It was Bond’s semi-autobiographical story with the character Rusty who is being the protagonist of this novel. *The Room on the Roof* was originally written in English. In January, 2016, Ruskin Bond gave the preface to this novel at Landour, Mussoorie.

The novel *The Room on the Roof* revolves around the character named Rusty. Rusty is an orphaned sixteen-year old Anglo-Indian Boy living in Dehradun. He is not only feeling alone but also confused. He is under the control of his guardian named Mr John Harrison. Throughout the novel, Rusty undergoes many life challenges and struggles. He wants to feel the essence of the Indian culture and tradition, and achieve something of his own.

### **Self-Discovery**

Self-Discovery is the progression of self-reflection, exploration and growth that helps to gain a clear sense of purpose. The fundamental principle of the Delphic philosophy by Socrates is "Know thyself." The phrase “Know Thyself” was inscribed at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in Delphi. It is traditionally attributed to one of the Seven Sages of Greece, often Chilon of Sparta. The statement, "The unexamined life is not worth living," appears in Plato’s account of Socrates’ defense speech before the Athenian jury in 399 BCE. Self-actualization is the main focus of Aristotle, who defines the self as a rational person whose goal is to lead a morally upright and fulfilling life. According to philosophy, when someone lacks self-awareness, they are more likely to repeat negative behaviors, make poor decisions, and be influenced by other people. Self-discovery serves as the "roof" that shields against life's challenges.

### **The Journey of Self-Discovery**

The boy Rusty is very pale with blue-grey eyes and fair hair. His hands are kept always in his pockets. He looks down while walking with a tired appearance. He is an Anglo-Indian orphan boy. He meets a boy in Dehradun with his bicycle named Somi. He is one of the persons who travels with Rusty through his journey towards self-discovery. Rusty also



meets some strangers who became friends through the story. Rusty is not able to enjoy the beauty of Dehradun and he feels shy about the entire situation.

Rusty then meets his guardian named Mr John Harrison and missionary's wife while visiting their house. Rusty is afraid of his guardian. He is no one but the cousin of Rusty's father. Rusty wants to play with the sweeper boy and the missionary's wife restricts him to play with the sweeper boy. Rusty starts to feel alone. Rusty's freedom gets squeezed by his guardian who does not allow him to go out and explore new places of bazaar. Rusty is only sixteen and he is nervous while standing at the clock tower. He is hesitant and biting nails. Despite his fear and punishment, he becomes very curious to explore the world and eat gol guppas from the chaat shop. His guardian is very strict and wants to bring him up in English ways. After returning home, Rusty got beaten by his guardian with a supple malacca cane. The following quote describes the pain that Rusty undergone: "At the sixth stroke of the supple malacca cane, which was usually the last, Rusty let out a wild whoop, leapt over the sofa and charged from the room. He lay groaning on his bed until the pain had eased" (Bond 33). In the early morning, Rusty wakes up after hearing the drum beat which is slapped by another friend Ranbir. Rusty remembers his promise to play Holi with Ranbir and meet him in jungle. Rusty was very happy when he plays with Ranbir and exhausted while enjoying the pleasure of holi. Rusty does not want to go back to his guardian's home. Rusty returns to the home with fear and his guardian is waiting for him with the supple malacca cane. When he is again beaten by his guardian, Rusty burst out of his emotions and the following quote describes Rusty's brutal behaviour against Mr. Harrison:

Rusty hit the man again and again, wildly and awkwardly, but with the giddy thrill of knowing he could do it: he was a child no longer, he was seventeen, he was a man. He could inflict pain, that was a wonderful discovery; there was a power in his body—a devil or a god—and he gained confidence in his power; and he was a man! (Bond, 36) And he also says, "I'm no better than the sweeper boy, but I'm good as him! I'm as good as you! I'm as good as anyone!" (Bond 44). He hits his guardian and escapes from the bedroom window. After the escape from that house, Rusty suffers a lot with cold, discomfort and pain. Everything is dark and silent around him. Rusty stays in Somi's house comfortably for some time and feels safe and little happy. He attends a party where Rusty admiringly gazes at a woman and wants to compliment her. Life goes peacefully later and Rusty turns as schoolteacher for that woman's son Kishen Kapoor. In the bazaar Rusty meets Kishen and walks along with him to his home.

Rusty stays in the home of Kishen. He is given a room on the roof with lots of confusion. His first day as a teacher, is confusing as he thinks of Kishen's mother. However, Rusty feels a king in his room at Kishen's home. He is prepared to go on a picnic with the Kapoor's family. In that picnic, Rusty is mesmerized with beauty and sweetness of Kishen's mother named Meena. The quote that follows explore the affection between them: "Rusty intoxicated with beauty and sweetness, Meena with freedom and the comfort of being loved" (Bond 94). After returning home, Rusty terribly feels lovesick. After some days, Rusty comes to know that Meena is dead because of accident while she gets off from her house.



Rusty wants to scream because of Meena's death. His love towards Meena and the heaviness in his heart towards her death are expressed in the following quote: "Meena is dead, he told himself, Meena is dead; if there is god, then God will look after her; if God is Love, then my love will be with her; she loved me; I can see her so clearly, her face speckled with sun and shadow when we kissed in the forest, the black waterfall of hair, her tired eyes, her feet like jade in the lamplight, she loved me, she was mine..." (Bond 114) However, Rusty feels lonely, he enjoys storms and heavy rain. After the death of Meena, Kishen also moves away from Rusty. Now, he feels the room to be too small and uncomfortable. When he is with Meena and Kishen, their love and connection towards Rusty do not allow him to go with his loneliness. But after the separation, Rusty feels lonely and he says, 'Inside of me,' 'I am all lonely' (Bond 117).

Rusty decides to leave Dehra and wants to go to England. He spends some hour by watching the dripping of water from the pipe outside the door before leaving that place. He asks certain questions to himself: "Where do I belong, he wondered, what am I doing, what is going to happen to me" (Bond 132). Rusty does not want today, rather than he wants tomorrow. He wants to break away from the life in that small room. Hence, he decides to move on towards his life with some brighter elements. On his way, towards England, he wants to meet Kishen again. He feels weakened and exhausted in search of Kishen. When he meets Kishen as a wanted thief in the alleyway, they both meet themselves with a greater silence. They walk towards Dehradun to settle their life. They walk towards the room on the roof. In that room they discuss their future: "One day you'll be great, Rusty. A writer or an actor or a prime minister or something. Maybe a poet! Why not a poet, Rusty?" Rusty smiles at himself and says, "Yes," "why not a poet?" (Bond 153).

Throughout the novel, Rusty wants to experience the freedom, friendship, love and explore the culture of India. He also faces the financial struggles, emotional growth, responsibility and love. The novel follows Rusty's journey from confusion and struggle to maturity and self-identity. Some of the persons like Somi, Kishen and Meena act as driving forces towards Rusty's self-discovery. From the beginning to end, Rusty feels the essence of nature. The nature also acts as a driving force in Rusty's journey towards self-discovery.

The beat from his guardian and the compulsion made by the white man that being Rusty as an English boy harm him a lot. So, he decides to self-identify himself with the life forces and the driving forces. In this novel, Rusty also restricted by the racial dominance. The same is reflected in the following source too: "The main object of the book is to convey the truth that life continues regardless of death, change and individual emotional trauma, and to invoke the magical charm of a hill station like Dehra. Life is really the quintessence of *The Room of the Roof*" (Iyappan)

### **Conclusion**

Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* remains his masterpiece of adolescence and coming of age fiction. The dreams and emotions that captivate youthful minds and hearts have been brilliantly described. By the time the story ends, Rusty has grown up and his adventure is over. He has discovered Kishen to be a brother and friend, and he has a future



ahead of him. He is no longer a mischievous adolescent. He has grown up and become a responsible adult after learning his lessons.

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## **Dollar Dreams and Diasporic Realities as Portrayed in Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the themes of materialism and diaspora in Sudha Murty's Dollar Bahu, situating the novel within the broader context of South Asian literature and post-globalization Indian society. The study explores how the symbolic power of the American dollar as magic wand reshapes familial relationships, gender hierarchy, and cultural identity within a middle-class Indian household in Bangalore. Through characters such as Gouramma, Chandru, Jamuna, and Vinuta, the novel portrays the transformation of moral values under the influence of economic aspiration and diasporic mobility. The American Dollar emerges not merely as currency but as a metaphor for prestige, power, and social superiority, creating emotional hierarchies within the family. Simultaneously, the narrative exposes the realities of diasporic life, including cultural displacement, generational conflict, and identity negotiation between Indian collectivism and American individualism. By contrasting the illusion of "Dollar Dreams" with the lived experience of migration, Sudha Murty critiques blind materialism and questions the assumption that financial success guarantees happiness. The paper argues that Dollar Bahu by Sudha Murty ultimately redefines prosperity by emphasizing emotional belonging, ethical values, and human relationships over economic wealth. Thus, the novel Dollar Bahu becomes a significant commentary on globalization, gender dynamics, and cultural hybridity in contemporary Indian society.*

**Keywords:** Materialism, Dollar, Diaspora, Cultural Identity, Gender Hierarchy, Sudha Murty

### **Introduction**

South Asian literature has long been concerned with themes of identity, migration, family structures, colonial legacy, economic aspiration, and cultural transformation. Writers from the region often explore the tensions between tradition and modernity, home and exile, and emotional belonging versus material success. In the postcolonial and globalized context, migration to Western countries—particularly the United States—has become a central theme in many South Asian narratives. The idea of the "American Dream" holds a powerful attraction for middle-class families, symbolizing financial prosperity, social mobility, and global recognition. However, South Asian literature also questions this dream by portraying the psychological struggles, cultural displacement, and emotional isolation experienced by migrants.



*Dollar Bahu* (2000) by Sudha Murty is a critique of modern India's rising obsession with financial prosperity. Within this literary tradition, Sudha Murty's novel *Dollar Bahu* offers a realistic portrayal of middle-class Indian aspirations shaped by global economic forces. The novel centres on an ordinary middle-class Indian family in Bangalore whose perception of success is transformed when their son Chandru migrates to the United States. The American dollar becomes more than currency; it becomes a symbol of power, prestige, and superiority within the household. The daughter-in-law living in America is admired and elevated in status, while the one residing in India is undervalued. Through this domestic framework, Sudha Murty exposes how economic migration reshapes family hierarchies and influences emotional relationships.

At the heart of the novel lies the concept of "Dollar dreams"—the belief that life in America guarantees comfort, respect, and happiness. For the family in India, the foreign land represents the land of opportunity and elevated social standing. Yet Sudha Murty carefully contrasts this dream with the lived diasporic realities experienced abroad. Life in America, though materially comfortable, is marked by loneliness, cultural adjustment, absence of extended family support, and emotional detachment. The novel reveals that the glamour associated with foreign earnings often hides deeper struggles of identity and belonging. Thus, *Dollar Bahu* becomes more than a family story; it is a social commentary on materialism, migration, and the redefinition of success in contemporary South Asian society. By juxtaposing economic aspiration with emotional truth, Sudha Murty questions whether financial prosperity can truly replace human relationships and cultural rootedness. The novel ultimately invites readers to reconsider the meaning of happiness in an increasingly globalized world.

### **Materialism and Diaspora**

Materialism and Diaspora emerge as the central theme in the novel *Dollar Bahu*. In *Dollar Bahu*, Sudha Murty presents materialism and diaspora as interconnected forces that reshape family relationships and moral values within a middle-class Indian household. The American Dollar currency becomes a powerful symbol of success, social prestige, and authority, influencing how individuals are treated within the family. Chandru's migration to the United States elevates his economic status, and consequently, his wife, who lives abroad, is admired as the "*Dollar Bahu*": "The Dollar is the most powerful financial instrument of modern times." (Murty 25) while Vinuta, who remains in India, is undervalued despite her emotional commitment and hard work. This unequal treatment reflects how material wealth begins to determine affection, respect, and hierarchy. The Magic Dollar becomes a symbol of respect, metaphor for aspiration and considered equal to goddess Lakshmi "The Dollar was like the Goddess Lakshmi, with a magic wand" (Murty 25). Sudha Murty critiques this materialistic mindset by contrasting it with the emotional emptiness and cultural isolation experienced in diasporic life. Although America appears glamorous from a distance, the reality of migration includes loneliness, absence of extended family support, and cultural displacement. Sudha Murty exposes the fallacy of the "Dollar dream" and the moral consequences of mindless materialism by demonstrating through the experiences and



changing viewpoints of her characters that genuine happiness is found in meaningful human connections rather than in foreign dollars.

The novel *Dollar Bahu* begins with a transfer of Chandra Shekhar, a civil engineer. He works as an engineer for a company in Bangalore and was given a promotion to work on a project in Dharwad, North Karnataka. America has long been a dream of his. Soon after, his employer offered him a position in America for a while. Similar to several Indian "skippers," Chandru vanishes in America without telling his Indian business. He breaches the arrangement he made with his Indian company by joining an American one. He gets a visa and after nearly six years in exile in America. He marries Jamuna, an Indian woman. In the book, Shamanna and his wife Gouramma stand in for two completely different perspectives on patriarchy: one is reasonable and logical, while the other is completely illogical and therefore unrealistic. The story's father eloquently embodies the virtues of tradition, while his wife shows complete disdain for it. Shamanna has a balanced approach to his three children's upbringing, education, and life settling. On the other hand, his wife Gouramma treats her daughter Surabhi with indulgence but acts hostilely against her daughter-in-law Vinuta.

### **Gender Hierarchy**

Gender plays a crucial role in Sudha Murty's exploration of materialism and diaspora. The title *Dollar Bahu* itself highlights how a woman's identity becomes linked to economic status. Jamuna's worth is elevated because of her association with foreign earnings. Her identity is defined not solely by character but by Dollar currency. This dynamic exposes the intersection of patriarchy and materialism. Women become symbolic carriers of economic prestige within the household. Vinuta, on the other hand, represents moral resilience. She embodies emotional depth and compassion, qualities that remain undervalued in a materialistic framework. Sudha Murty contrasts these two models of womanhood to question societal priorities. The obsession for Magic Dollar in *Dollar Bahu* is rooted in the belief that economic wealth determines social status and personal worth. Gouramma, the matriarch of the family, becomes the embodiment of this mindset. When her son Chandru migrates to the United States, she equates his success with familial prestige. The American dollar becomes more than currency; it becomes a symbol of superiority. Sudha Murty captures this attitude "It was the Dollar, not Indian rupees, which could elevate her into the elite circle" (Murty 25). This statement reflects how foreign income elevates Gouramma's position not only economically but socially in front of neighbours. Foreign remittances became indicators of advancement. The novel does not reject economic progress but warns against allowing wealth to dictate ethical judgment.

The symbolic power of the dollar creates an internal hierarchy between the daughters-in-law. Jamuna, who lives in America, automatically gains admiration because of her association with foreign wealth. In contrast, Vinuta, who remains in India and contributes emotionally and domestically to the household, is undervalued. Gouramma's admiration for Jamuna reveals how material wealth overrides moral virtues. The favouritism illustrates what Karl Marx describes as the commodification of human relationships, where social value becomes tied to economic exchange (Marx 139). The main character, Vinuta, suffers much



from the stifling influence of tradition in the shape of her mother-in-law Gouramma's cold, unfair, and even unwarranted hate. Mostly because she is an orphan and has not brought much in the way of dowry, she endures unspeakable suffering. She adapts to life in her in-laws' house, getting up early to assist her mother-in-law with domestic duties before heading to school, while her sister-in-law Surabhi indulges in some pretty unwarranted luxury. After Chandru marries Jamuna, the *Dollar Bahu*, Vinuta's emotional strain increases dramatically. Vinuta is often demoralised by the constant torrent of compromises. Later, when her baby is due in August, Surabhi's marriage is scheduled for that same month. Fortunately for Vinuta, however, she gives birth to a healthy boy two weeks prior to Surabhi's wedding. During Jamuna's pregnancy, the devoted Gouramma prays in many temples for the health and safe delivery of her *Dollar Bahu's* child, adding to her humiliation and suffering.

In the novel, affection and respect are unconsciously measured against monetary contribution. The material obsession extends beyond family comparison to consumer symbolism. Gifts sent from America are celebrated not for their necessity but for their foreign origin. Imported goods become markers of prestige. In *Dollar Bahu*, the dollar operates as a signifier of global superiority. The admiration for American goods reflects a psychological internalization of Western economic dominance.

### **Diasporic Realities**

Diaspora in *Dollar Bahu* is thus portrayed not merely as migration but as emotional displacement. Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity suggests that diasporic individuals negotiate between homeland memory and host-country adaptation (1990, 225). Chandru's life abroad reflects this negotiation. Although financially stable, he exists in a space of in-betweenness, balancing professional demands with cultural adjustment. The narrative moves between India and the United States, portraying the psychological and cultural adjustments experienced by first- and second-generation immigrants. Through characters such as Chandru, Jamuna, Shama, and Gouramma Sudha Murty examines how diasporic life produces tension between rooted Indianness and adopted Americanness. Chandru and Radhakrishna belong to the first generation—Indians by origin who move to the United States primarily for professional success and financial stability. Their migration reflects the economic motivations that characterize much of the Indian diaspora. However, their relocation results in gradual cultural absorption. Chandru himself admits this transformation when he tells his mother, "Amma, after staying here for so many years, we absorb this culture without realizing it" (Murty 112). "In this country, everyone loves the complete freedom of their private life. There is an invisible line in any relationship" (Murty 113). This statement illustrates the subtle yet powerful influence of American individualism on Indian migrants. The cultural difference between India and America becomes most visible in attitudes toward personal freedom and family structure. Traditional Indian society emphasizes collectivism, parental authority, and communal involvement in personal decisions. In contrast, American culture values autonomy and privacy. Chandru's explanation to Gouramma highlights this contrast. He discourages her from interfering in his friends' lives, emphasizing that advice or



intrusion is unacceptable in American society. This “invisible line” symbolizes the boundary between collectivist and individualist cultures.

The second-generation diaspora experiences even deeper cultural transformation. Tayade discusses Shama as a representative of children who are “born in India but brought up in America,” facing identity conflicts. Shama’s character demonstrates the psychological consequences of cultural hybridity. Her parents attempt to preserve Indian traditions by arranging her marriage to an Indian man, hoping to maintain cultural continuity. However, when the marriage fails, Shama begins to reject Indian institutions altogether. In her confrontation with first-generation immigrants, she criticizes their dual identity: “You want the best of both the worlds, which is not possible” (Murty 98). This remark captures the central dilemma of diaspora—balancing cultural inheritance with adopted identity. Shama’s rejection of Indian marriage traditions reflects not merely rebellion but cultural alienation. Having been raised in America, her worldview aligns more closely with Western values of personal choice and independence. Children raised in multicultural settings often absorb the dominant culture more naturally than their parents. Shama’s preference for English over Kannada and her live-in relationship with Michael demonstrate her assimilation into American norms.

The tension between homeland and host land becomes especially evident in Gouramma’s perspective. Initially, she glorifies America from a distance, associating it with wealth and superiority. However, her visit exposes the emotional and cultural distance experienced by migrants. She observes the structured lifestyle, lack of spontaneous social interaction, and emphasis on privacy. This realization gradually dismantles her idealized image of America. Diaspora thus becomes a site of learning—revealing both opportunity and alienation. *Dollar Bahu* portrays cultural hybridization rather than complete assimilation. The characters embody varying degrees of transformation. The first generation adapts economically while attempting to preserve roots. The second generation negotiates identity more radically, sometimes rejecting ancestral customs. Sudha Murty’s narrative suggests that diaspora is not a simple shift from one culture to another but a continuous negotiation shaped by environment, upbringing, and personal experience.

### **Conclusion**

Sudha Murty’s *Dollar Bahu* presents a powerful exploration through the symbolic centrality of the American dollar; the novel critiques the growing obsession with wealth as a determinant of status, respect, and personal worth. Gouramma’s admiration for foreign earnings and her preferential treatment of the “*Dollar Bahu*” reveal how economic aspiration distorts familial relationships and moral judgment. The novel illustrates how affection and recognition become unconsciously measured against financial contribution, leading to emotional imbalance and suffering, particularly in the character of Vinuta. At the same time, *Dollar Bahu* offers a nuanced portrayal of diasporic realities. Migration to America initially appears as the fulfilment of dreams, representing prosperity and elevated social standing. However, Sudha Murty dismantles this illusion by exposing the emotional isolation, cultural displacement, and generational tensions experienced by immigrants. Through Chandru’s



adaptation and Shama's cultural rebellion, the novel highlights the conflict between Indian collectivist traditions and American individualist values. Diaspora is thus portrayed as a complex negotiation rather than a simple transition from one culture to another. The novel also foregrounds gender hierarchy, demonstrating how women's identities become linked to economic status. Jamuna's elevation and Vinuta's marginalization reflect the intersection of patriarchy and materialism. In summing up, Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu* challenges the myth of the "Dollar dream" by asserting that true prosperity lies not in foreign currency but in compassion, dignity, and cultural rootedness. Through its critique of material obsession and its sensitive portrayal of diasporic life, the novel offers a meaningful reflection on contemporary Indian society in the age of globalization.

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## **Impact of Agrarian crisis and Industrialisation in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the impact of agrarian crisis and industrialisation in Nectar in a Sieve, is written by Kamala Markandaya. The novel is set in post-independence rural India and portrays the lives of tenant farmers, who struggle against poverty, natural calamities, and migration. The study analyses how the agrarian crisis caused by land insecurity, dependence on monsoon, hunger, and debt collectively affects the lives of Nathan and Rukmani. It further explores how the arrival of the tannery represents industrial expansion that disrupts village stability, increases inequality, and forces migration. The novel is set within the historical context of the 1950s, happens to argue that agrarian crisis and industrial expansion together weaken rural society, displace families and erode traditional values. Through close textual analysis, the paper demonstrates that Markandaya presents development not as a simple progress but as a complex process deeply rooted to human consequences.*

**Keywords:** Agrarian Crisis, Industrialisation, Poverty, Flood, Drought, Migration.

### **Introduction**

Kamala Markandaya is a renowned Indian English novelist of the twentieth century. She wrote a time when India was undergoing such a rapid socio-economic transformation marked by agrarian crisis, industrial expansion, and cultural dislocation. She wrote nine novels; her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, was written in 1954. Her novels reflect a sensitive understanding of poverty, hunger, displacement, and the psychological trauma caused by social change. She does not romanticise rural life and also avoids rejection of industrial progress; instead, she presents its development as a complex force that brings both opportunity and destruction as well.

The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* narrates the life of Nathan and Rukmani. They were tenant farmers. In their initial days of being couple were filled with happiness, but soon they were affected by continuous births of children, frequent crop failures due to floods and droughts. The arrival of the tannery marks the turning point in the life of the villagers. It brings both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the villagers got job opportunities, but it also raised the living cost of people and made farmers lose their land due to its establishment and expansion. Natural calamities further worsen their condition; heavy rainfall and severe drought destroyed their fields.



There are a several tragedies affected the family, such as Ira being forced into prostitution due to poverty, the brutal death of Raja, and Arjun and Thambi abandoning agriculture for industrial labour. Nathan lost his land and was forced to migrate to the city. Due to a lack of city skills, he and his wife are struggled to survive. Finally, Nathan's death occurs due to illness and left Rukmani alone. Markandaya explains the interaction between agrarian crisis and industrialisation through the experience of these two major characters in fact. She portrayed that the industrialisation as a force that creates unequal outcomes rather than focusing on its good sides alone.

The study felt that the agrarian crisis and industrialisation together worsen the socio-economic condition, leading to the erosion of rural society. Hence, it focuses on the representation of agrarian crisis and industrialisation in *Nectar in a Sieve* and examines how these factors shape the economic, social, and emotional lives of the characters. The scope of the study includes analysis of tenant farming and land insecurity, study of poverty, hunger, drought, and flood in the novel, impact of industrialisation through migration and urban sufferings. The methodology adopted for this study is a qualitative and analytical approach. The primary source of the study is Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*. It is adequately supported to go with the secondary sources to strengthen the arguments. The research is limited to the historical context of post-independent era. The aim of the study is to understand how agrarian crisis and industrialisation created an impact on the rural set up of the society. Further it follows to examine the layers of an agricultural crisis and industrial transformation depicted in the novel, at the background.

### **Agrarian Crisis during the Twentieth Century**

Agrarian crisis refers to a prolonged condition of distress in the agricultural sector that affects farmers, rural communities and village economies at large. It is not a single event but a combination of economic, social and environmental cycle that do make farming unpredictable and unprofitable. The main reasons for the agrarian crisis are land insecurity and dependence on nature. It finally results in poverty, indebtedness and loss of moral behaviours. Farmers are the most affected section in society because they are often exposed to forces beyond their control. Agriculture has historically shaped Indian society, economy, and culture. For centuries, our rural life has depended on land, monsoon rainfall and community cooperation. They got significant changes during the mid-twentieth century after India's independence. Agrarian crisis in *Nectar in a Sieve* can be understood by knowing the socio-economic condition of India during its independence. The British land revenue system has left the farmers without the ownership rights of land. Tenant farming system prevailed in the country even after the government abolished the zamindari system. Most rural communities depend on farming even though it is marked by uncertainties due to natural calamities such as floods and droughts. Generally, farmers struggled to have a steady income. People during this period suffered due to poverty, famine and debt. At the same time, the government shifts to focus on industrial growth rather than agricultural advancement. Kamala Markandaya realistically portrayed the life of rural communities with honesty and emotional



depth. The village in the novel can be seen as a small representation of the larger Indian countryside.

### **Impact of Agrarian Crisis in the Novel**

Kamala Markandaya captures the realistic image of rural life through the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. She talks about the impact of floods and drought on agricultural society, which ultimately forced them into poverty, debt and decay of moral ethics. Dependence on nature is one of the main reasons for all to suffer. “Their survival depends entirely on agriculture, which is vulnerable to drought, floods, and unpredictable weather conditions” (Ponni 47). Nathan was a tenant farmer; he had seven children. His family dependence is only on the land for their survival. He and his wife Rukmani are struggled to feed their children due to frequent natural calamities. Rainfall is one of the important factors that determines the yield of a plant in a season. In the novel, the heavy rainfall brings devastating effect on the life of rural communities. It causes a severe consequence of flood in the village. Crops which are ready for harvest put submerged into the water. The flood destroyed the vegetables, corn fields and paddy fields. Farmers spend their whole efforts and work hard to raise the crops for months together. Natural calamities like heavy rainfall and floods affect their hard work and dreams of a good harvest to spoilsport. These natural forces beyond their control made them to accept the uncertainty of life. Nathan and his family became helpless and hopeless. Farmers do not have any other income apart from agriculture; their dependency on agriculture alone forced them to face poverty and debt when there is an agrarian crisis made inevitable also. After a severe flood, Nathan and Rukmani were disappointed about their condition; nothing remains in the field. Their house’s roof was damaged completely during the storm. They are forced to feed nothing until the next harvest. They have only a limited rice, so they are forced to buy rice for higher price from a money lender named Biswas, unfortunately.

Nathan’s family was faced by another problem of severe drought. The crops which gave the hope of a good harvest was dried due to lack of rainfall in the last stage of ripening. Nature is worshipped as God by farmers, its help and support are necessary for them in all stages of farming, from sowing to harvest. Even a small change in the pattern of nature leads to the failure of crops ultimately. Nathan and his family were disappointed due to the failure of crops. Sivaji, who is an agent of a landowner, came to collect the rent from the land possessors. The family was forced to sell their belonging to maintain the ownership of the land. Sivaji warned them about the loss of land ownership if they failed to pay the rent. They are only managed to pay half of the rent and promised Sivaji that they pay the remaining rent along with the next year's rent. They are struggled to maintain the land even though it was filled with a lot of uncertainties. Despite the fact that the land was full with uncertainty, they tried to manage it. “If the land is gone, our livelihood is gone, and we must thenceforth wander like jackals” (Markandaya 76). Poverty and hunger forced the people to lose their moral ethics. Ira, Rukmani’s daughter, was forced to make a moral sacrifice to feed her brother Kuti, who was affected by malnutrition. Finally, all efforts of the family failed to save Kuti; he died due to malnutrition. Due to hunger, Rukmani’s son Raja tried to steal the calf



skin from the tannery, and he was put to death by the tannery men. “Hunger is described as a relentless force that gnaws at both body and mind, leaving individuals physically weakened and emotionally shattered” (Ponni 47). Tannery men accused him of theft to his parents. “When the chowkidars caught him, they found he had stolen a calfskin” (Markandaya 93). They are helpless to voice against the violence committed against their son. They were not able to believe the words of the tannery men about the death of Raja. They were too weak to be concerned about their son’s death. “You have little enough strength, without dissolving it in tears” (Markandaya 91).

### **Industrialisation during the Twentieth Century**

Industrialisation refers to the transition from an agricultural-based sector to an industrial-based sector. It was dominated by manufacturing, machine production, and industrial labour. Many people are moved from farms to factories for better wages. People start to depend on industrial work rather than agricultural activities due to the guaranteed income. Industrialisation has both advantages and disadvantages. It is regarded as a symbol of progress and development. It brings job opportunities, infrastructure development and helps the GDP growth of the country. It also brings challenges like migration, environmental degradation, and creates profit centric society. The conflict arises when industrialisation surpasses its limit, without considering its impact on people and the environment. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya symbolises industrialisation through the arrival of the tannery.

For India, the middle of the 20th century was an important turning point. After gaining independence, India faced many challenges in rebuilding its economy and establishing itself as a self-reliant nation. The leaders of independent India believed that industrialisation was the key to the nation’s modernisation, economic growth and national strength. As a result, after 1950, the government promoted industrial development through state planning and policy reforms. The Government of India introduced five-year plans with a major focus on heavy industry, steel plants, machinery production, dams, and large-scale infrastructure projects. These initiatives were intended to reduce dependence on foreign goods and strengthen the domestic economy. Industrial sectors began to boom, and cities experienced rapid growth. Urban areas became the symbols of progress, opportunity and modern living. Despite industrialisation, there are encouraging developments in the country, and not everyone benefits equally. The benefits of industrialisation did not reach rural communities, and the majority of people living in rural areas continued to be economically isolated. Agriculture still heavily depended on monsoons and traditional methods; technological advancement in farming as limited before the Green Revolution. This situation created a sharp contrast between the expanding industrial cities and the struggling villages.

### **Impact of Industrialisation in the Novel**

Modernisation is a very significant one for the development of society. The development has both advantages and disadvantages. We want to ensure that the development will give more benefit to mankind. Both the benefits and drawbacks of industrialisation are portrayed in the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. In *Nectar in a Sieve*,



industrialisation has got its face into the village through the establishment of a tannery. Markandaya presents the tannery as both a promise of development and a source of deep social disruption. Before the arrival of tannery, the village life was closely attached to agriculture and nature. The tannery was built on the maidan land (open space, where people used to gather) of the village. Children who were played in the maiden lost their playground. “They had invaded our village with clatter and din, had taken from us the maiden where our children played” (Markandaya 30). The arrival of the tannery created the demand and raise of the price of essential goods. Even though Rukmani was managed to sell vegetables for a higher price, she found it difficult to feed her family. Traders and shopkeepers are benefited; poor farmers suffered more. Rukmani could notice that everything becomes expensive, making survival harder for families are already in struggle to overcome poverty. “there is a price hike, and the poor villagers are unable to buy things” (Preya 754). Thus, industrialisation deepens the suffering of rural communities instead of relieving it.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, industrialisation was not only shown as a destructive force, but also brought job opportunities for the villagers and provided temporary relief from agrarian sufferings. It offers wage employment to villagers who struggle to survive on agriculture alone. Kunthi’s sons were the first among the villagers to secure jobs in the tannery. Kunthi admired the tannery and rapid growth of the village into a town. “The tannery is a boon to us. Have I not said so since it began? We are no longer a village either, but a growing town” (Markandaya 48) Rukmani's sons, Arjun and Thambi, were later compelled to work in the tannery due to poverty. Wages from the tannery is benefited to Nathan’s family. They managed to have sufficient meals for the family. “With their money we began once again to live well” (Markandaya 54-55). The tannery is appeared to be a boon to workers only for a short period. Workers organised a strike demanding higher wages. The strike was put to an end by the tannery authorities, who threatened the workers about loss of their jobs if they failed to return to work. Arjun and Thambi lost their jobs, and they decided to migrate to Ceylon to work in a tea plantation. Nathan worried about his sons’ decision. They were not interested to work in the field due to its uncertainty; rather, attracted by the promises of industrialisation. The ultimate impact of industrialisation was revealed through forced migration in the novel. The landowner of Nathan’s land sold the land to the tannery. “The land is to be sold, he said. We are to move” (Markandaya 134). Rukmani and Nathan were compelled to migrate to the city. They did not have any other means to survive in the village. They lacked to their city skills instead rest to farming skills. This made their life in the city much harder. Their status was reduced to mere beggars. They struggled to find food for their daily needs. They found a job at a stone quarry, which was a very hard for their survival at this age. Finally, Nathan lost his life due to illness because of poor food consumption. The city's circumstances complicated their lives, threatened their status and identity at lost. They became helpless and hopeless and forced to be the victims of industrialisation, at large.

### **Conclusion**

This paper explores how the agrarian crisis and industrialisation shape the lives of people in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*. The novel sets in the historical framework



of India after independence, a time characterised by rapid industrialisation, environmental uncertainty, and agricultural stagnation. Markandaya's novel is a social document that documents the lived experiences of peasants rather than just a fictional story. The suffering of Nathan and Rukmani represents the millions of Indian farmers who are caught between natural calamities and economic transformation. Markandaya presents the agrarian crisis not as an economic static but as a human tragedy. Hunger and poverty force every individual to compromise dignity, morality, and even their family relationships. She does not completely reject the modernisation. Instead, she makes a distinction between destructive industrialisation and humanitarian growth. The tannery represents the expansion of industry, which was driven by power and profit. It pollutes the environment, damages agricultural land, raises living costs and views human life as a resource. To conclude, the study proves that the agrarian crisis and industrialisation together worsen the socio-economic condition, leading to the erosion of rural society, at last.

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## **Religion and Human Relationships in Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman***

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### **Abstract**

*The article looks at Perumal Murugan's One Part Woman as how religion and interpersonal relationships interact. The story, which is set in the small village of Tiruchengode, depicts a community where social standing, marriage, and personal identity are all strongly influenced by cultural customs and religious beliefs. The novel explores how religion serves as an important societal authority in addition to being a private faith through the experiences of Kali and Ponna, run a childless couple under immense social and ritual pressure. The research topic examines the ways in which religious and patriarchal ideologies contribute to infertility's societal stigma. Being a mother is portrayed as a necessary component of female identity, while not having children is seen as a moral failing. The chariot festival at the Ardhanareeswara temple, religious vows, and ritual activities are all promoted as religious remedies for infertility on the one hand, yet they really cause marital emotional strain and ethical challenges on the other. The study suggests that religion to investigate where tradition undermines trust and emotional harmony as part of interpersonal interactions when it takes precedence over empathy, consent, and human dignity. The work evaluates the ethical conflicts between faith and free will as well as the psychological changes of the main characters through close reading and qualitative textual analysis. Murugan criticizes that the misuse of religion as a societal controlled mechanism, although he does not completely reject it. In the end, the book advocates for striking a balance between morality and belief, arguing that interactions should be guided by human dignity and compassion rather than mindless devotion to tradition. By emphasizing how fiction captures the complex relationship between religion, social expectations, and emotional life as balances and advances South Asian literary studies of this work in particular. It highlights how crucial it is to challenge traditions that compromise personal autonomy and interpersonal ethics.*

**Keywords:** Religion, Human Relationship, Infertility, Social Authority, Cultural Rituals.

### **Introduction**

Perumal Murugan is one of the most significant contemporary voices in South Asian literature. His works portray the realities of rural Tamil society with honesty, simplicity, and emotional depth. Through realistic narration and complex characterisation, he explores the intersection of tradition, caste, gender, and other belief systems, and social expectations.



Murugan's fiction frequently examines how deeply rooted to cultural institutions shape personal identity and human relationships.

### **Religion and Human Relationship in the Novel**

*One Part Woman* occupies an important place in Murugan's literary career. The novel addresses sensitive and socially relevant themes such as infertility, religious faith, marital intimacy, and community pressure. Set in the culturally significant town of Tiruchengode, the narrative presents a rural society where religion functions not merely as private belief but as part of a collective social authority governing daily life. Customs, rituals, and traditions regulate where as social identity, and individuals find conformity without resistance. At the center of the novel one can find that the married couple Kali and Ponna, whose relationship is built on affection, companionship, and mutual understanding. However, their inability to conceive a child gradually transforms their personal struggle into a public concern. In their community, childlessness is not treated as a medical or private matter but as a social failure. Motherhood is considered essential to female identity, and fertility becomes a measure of social worth. As a result, the couple faces emotional distress and increasing pressure from relatives, neighbors, and religious authorities.

Religion becomes the primary framework through which their infertility is interpreted. Ritual vows, temple visits, fasting, and sacred ceremonies are proposed as solutions. The annual chariot festival at the temple of Ardhanareeswara plays a central role in this conflict. The belief that the divine intervention can resolve personal sufferings demonstrates how faith operates as a powerful and at the same time it is social mechanism. What appears as a spiritual devotion gradually reveals itself as a system of collective control. This situation creates a tension between faith and ethics. Ethics refers to values such as empathy, consent, trust, dignity, and emotional responsibility. These values are essential for sustaining healthy human relationships. However, when religion becomes an unquestioned authority, ethical considerations are often overshadowed by tradition and social expectation. The novel illustrates how external belief systems begin to dominate private emotional life, reshaping marriage and personal identity.

The study lies in examining how religion functions as a social authority that influences and transforms human relationships in *One Part Woman*. The study how infertility attempts to know becomes a socially constructed stigma rooted in patriarchal and religious ideology. It also explores how ritual practices and communal pressure affect marital trust, consent, and emotional stability. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the impact of religion and cultural rituals on personal relationships at any cost. By focusing on Kali and Ponna's psychological and emotional development, it seeks to resolve and to understand how belief systems regulate behavior and redefine moral boundaries. Hence, this study also aims to highlight Murugan's critique of blind faith and rigid tradition as an inherent pattern in the system. The methodology adopted for this study is qualitative textual analysis. The research tools employed as close reading of the novel, focusing on thematic representation, character development, and narrative structure. The interpretation of analysis is used to examine how religion, patriarchy, and social expectation interact within the text



invariably. The scope of this study is limited to analysing religion as a social authority and its impact on human relationships in the novel. While the text also addresses caste and rural socio-economic structures, so the primary focus remains on the tension between belief and emotional ethics as underlying aspect of it. The significance of this research extends beyond literary analysis. In many traditional communities, religion continues to shape personal identity and social behavior. Literature provides a space to question such practices whereas affect individual dignity and autonomy at large. Through its portrayal of emotional conflict and psychological transformation, *One Part Woman* invites readers to reflect on the balance between faith and compassion.

Thus, this study argues that while religion offers cultural belonging and moral structure, it becomes problematic when it overrides empathy, consent, and personal freedom. Murugan's novel ultimately encourages a re-evaluation of tradition and emphasises the importance of ethical awareness in sustaining meaningful human relationships.

### **Religion as Social Authority**

In Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman*, religion serves as a significant social authority in addition to being a system of personal beliefs in society. Kali and Ponna live in a civilisation wherein they are heavily influenced by interpersonal traditions and religious practices. There are rituals and holy traditions that govern every stages of life, including birth, marriage, fertility, and death. Religion is portrayed as the supreme moral authority, and it is regarded as unlawful to challenge it. Murugan demonstrates that how religion overcomes faith and turns into a societal control mechanism inevitably towards that. Religion establishes societal norms and moral standards in the work itself. In addition to representing supernatural power, the temple and its customs also stand for social control. Depending on the local communities, God's will influences fertility, fortune, and family reputation. It is automatically assumed that Kali and Ponna's situation is religious when they do not have children for a long time. The community has resorted to go for temple ceremonies, promises, vows and heavenly favours in place of seeking medical or personal explanation, whatever else the extension of religion by elders, families, and neighbors makes it a collective authority. Sacred traditions influence the opinions of the general public. This encourages in an atmosphere in which group beliefs are valued over the individual sentiments. According to Murugan, societal institutions utilize religion to uphold tradition and order.

### **Infertility and Ritual Pressure**

The main dilemma in the novel is infertility. Motherhood is seen as central to a woman's identity in the rural community of Tiruchengode. People believe that Ponna's infertility as a social and personal failing. Lakshmi notes that "Women, who are unable to bear a child, are often ridiculed and ostracized" (Lakshmi 1). This social stigma, rooted in religious and patriarchal belief systems, intensifies the ritual pressure placed upon Ponna. Despite the fact that Kali has the same issue, society silently blames the woman. This is an expression of a patriarchal attitude that has its roots in religion. The group suggests several practices, such as fasting, temple visits, vows, and spiritual sacrifices, to deal with the problem. Lakshmi noted that "Appeasing God by going around the dangerous varadikkal, the



barren women's rock, risking her life; gulping down bitter concoctions to kill the unwanted germs in her stomach and undertaking severe vows at nearby temples becomes a part of life for Poona" (Lakshmi 3). These rituals, instead of offering comfort, become instruments of emotional and social burden. It is said that these rituals result in divine intervention. At first, Kali and Ponna engage in these customs with optimism. But increase of the ritual turns into pressure instead of consolation. The chariot festival at the Ardhanareeswara temple is linked to the most important ceremony. Childless women are permitted to join forces with unidentified men during this yearly occasion, with the belief that God will bless the union. Such a marriage custom produces a child who is regarded as divine. Therefore, religion eventually lifts social constraints, but only within ritualistic bounds. Murugan draws attention to the inconsistency in this approach. On a typical day, sexual morality is strictly monitored. The identical deed, however, becomes hallowed on the night of the festival. This demonstrates how religion can reinterpret morality to suit societal norms.

### **Marriage, Consent and Emotional Ethics**

*One Part Woman* opens with a portrayal of Kali and Ponna's marriage as emotionally stable, loving, and caring. Unlike many traditional marriages in their rural community, their bond is built on intimacy and reciprocating attachment. They share an inner understanding of each other's needs, good humour, and intimacy. Their emotional closeness makes their marriage feel effective and comfortable. However, this harmony is gradually upset by the couple's inability to conceive. The reality of what begins as a private struggle eventually turns into a public issue as family members and the larger community influence on their private lives. The definition of marriage is beginning to change due to social norms. In this shifting dynamic, consent becomes a crucial issue. Ponna does not voluntarily choose to take part in the temple festival ritual. Instead, it is the outcome of ongoing social humiliation as well as pressure from family members and elders. As Lakshmi observes "Both Kali and Ponna are horrified at the suggestion but the societal expectation and pressure, Ponna is brought to the temple on the appointed day and left alone in the festival crowd," (Lakshmi 4). The current situation demonstrates how religious beliefs can take control over individual agency when it is imposed within the community. Ponna's decision is more influenced by her desire to overcome social shame and regain her dignity in a judgmental setting than by her faith. Kali's response to the ritual adds to the novel's emotional setting. At first, he rejects the idea, but when his social value and masculinity are repeatedly questioned, he starts to feel uneasy. His final acceptance is marked by internal conflict rather than belief. The ritual causes extreme psychological discomfort even though it is socially acceptable during the celebration. Kali and Ponna experience emotional turmoil as a result of what the community regards as priceless. Once the foundation of their relationship, trust begins to erode under the weight of religious obligation.

Murugan thus draws attention to the limit that separates moral values from beliefs in religion. Respect, trust, and free will are the ideal essential components of a marriage. But when societal ideologies interfere with private matters, these moral principles become unstable. In this situation, religion is not only a source of spiritual comfort but also a social



authority that shapes and sometimes manipulates interpersonal relationships. The book shows how tradition, as long as followed blindly can endanger the most relationships it is meant to protect. Murugan raises a broader ethical question through Kali and Ponna's emotional turmoil, frequently faith remain meaningful if it silences individual choice and emotional truth. The book makes the argument that mutual respect, empathy, and understanding rather than a fear of social rejection are the only things that can sustain relationships.

### **The Chariot Festival and Belief System**

The chariot festival represents the blending of social structure and religion. It is energetically and devotedly observed. It is thought that childless couples are blessed by God Ardhanareeswara, who symbolises both male and female qualities. Many families find optimism in the festival's inherent belief system. Murugan, however, presents the celebration as both a challenge and holy. The religious act has emotional repercussions even when it is justified as divine will. The kid was born out as a result of the ceremony by society as a blessing. It causes an emotional crisis for Kali and Ponna. The festival demonstrates how belief systems shape identity and morality. Religion creates a temporary space where norms are suspended, but after the ritual, society returns to its rigid moral codes. This inconsistency reveals the power structure is hidden within the tradition.

### **Psychological Impact on Kali and Ponna**

The novel's main focus is on the characters psychological development. Kali, who at first seems self-assured and affectionate, turns insecure and reclusive. Society challenges his manhood, which makes him angry and self-conscious. Ponna's emotional stability is upset by the idea of taking part in the ceremony. Onna, however, struggles with the balance of her desire for social recognition with her loyalty to her husband. Lakshmi remarks that “The socially ostracized women often feel insecure and resort all means to save their position and identity” (Lakshmi 3). Ponna’s participation can be seen and understood as an attempt to reclaim social acceptance rather than an expression of personal desire. Ponna absorbs her responsibility and starts to feel that being a mother is essential to. Faith is less important when compared to her emotions, distinguishing her status, tiredness, to go to the festival. The ritual causes psychological turmoil rather than bringing about peace. Despite the fact that the conduct was accepted by society, Kali feels deceived. Trust is undermined. Murugan meticulously illustrates that these are the ways in which religious pressure can undermine mental well-being and marital compatibility.

### **Murugan’s Critique of Blind Faith**

Murugan criticises that the blind religious practices and inflexible tradition become the tragic evolution of Kali and Ponna's relationship. As Poulami Halder observes, “The story well captures the nuances of the blind beliefs and reveals the role of myth as both the cause and the answer to the problems in the couple’s life” (Halder 73). This clearly shows that myth in the novel is not just a religious story but a social force that influences decisions and shapes personal relationships. The chariot festival ritual becomes both as a source of hope for Ponna and the cause of emotional rupture in her marriage with Kali. Murugan does not reject religion. Rather, he challenges its abuse as a controlled mechanism. Religion can be



consoling if it is practiced with compassion. But it limits human dignity when it takes on an unchallenged power. The book does imitate the argument that moral consciousness and empathy should coexist with faith. Traditions should not mindlessly be maintained, but rather questioned. Murugan challenges readers to consider if belief systems actually safeguard interpersonal connections and how do they influence social behaviour. Thus, the religion part demonstrates *One Part Woman* acts as a powerful social authority. It influences marriage, defines motherhood, controls sexuality, and shapes emotional life. While it promises hope, it also creates suffering when it overrides personal choice and emotional truth.

According to *One Part Woman* by Perumal Murugan, the interplay between religion and interpersonal interactions in a traditional rural society is clearly explored. This study is looked at how religion not only serves as a personal faith but also as a strong societal force that influences morality, identity, and marriage in the book. Through Kali and Ponna's experiences, Murugan explores how societal norms and cultural traditions affect individual feelings and choices. The analysis demonstrates that infertility is constructed as a social stigma rooted in patriarchal and religious ideology. Motherhood is treated as an essential to female identity, and childlessness is perceived as a moral and social failure. Ritual practices, vows, and the chariot festival are presented as sacred remedies, yet they intensify emotional conflict and ethical tension within marriage. What appears to be divine intervention gradually exposes the controlling force of communal belief. The psychological changes that Ponna and Kali experience serves as more evidence of the emotional impacts that religious pressure occurs. Initially based on friendship and affection, their relationship suffers as a result of societal pressures. The main individual decision with group tradition compromises consent, dignity, and trust. Thus, Murugan challenges the idea that strict commitment to belief systems actually protects interpersonal relationships or if it actually upsets emotional balance by any means. The work criticises that the abuse of religion as a social control mechanism, additionally it does not completely reject it. Murugan maintains that moral responsibility, empathy, and compassion must coexist with faith. Relational ethics and individual freedom are at danger when religion is accepted as the ultimate authority. To conclude, *One Part Woman* portrays religion as both a source of cultural identity and a force capable of destabilising intimate relationships. The novel ultimately calls for a balance between tradition and ethical awareness, emphasising that human dignity, consent, and emotional honesty would necessarily guide relationships more than blind adherence to inherited customs, at large.

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## **Relationship between Acceptances and Memory in Preeti Shenoy's *It happens for a Reason***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper deals with Indian Novel It Happens for a Reason explores how destiny, personal choice, and societal expectations shape an individual's life. Through its protagonist Vipasha original name called (Vee), the narrative reveals the struggles of early motherhood, identity negotiation, and resilience in the face of emotional adversity. My study analyzes the themes of fate versus free will, gender expectations, emotional resilience, and self-reconstruction. Drawing on feminist literary theory and intertextuality, this paper highlights how Shenoy's characters transcend traditional frameworks to assert individual agency. It also engages with secondary research that situates Shenoy's fiction within modern Indian narratives of identity and empowerment, demonstrating how personal crises catalyze self-discovery and transformation. It Happens for a Reason by Preeti Shenoy narrates the journey of Vipasha "Vee," who makes an unconventional decision to raise a child as a single mother, throwing her life into unexpected turmoil and transformation. This paper examines the novel's central themes—choices and consequences, resilience, social expectations, and identity through close textual analysis and critical perspectives. The narrative highlights how personal agency, cultural norms, and the unpredictability of life conjoin to shape the protagonist's evolution. Drawing from scholarly research on gender representation and feminist narratives, this paper argues that Shenoy's work redefines the contours of modern Indian womanhood. Quotations from both the novel and secondary research enrich the exploration of thematic depth and narrative strategy.*

**Keywords:** Destiny and Choice, Feminism, Identity Formation, Past Experiences, Resilience

### **Introduction**

In *It Happens for a Reason*, Preeti Shenoy introduces readers to Vipasha, a young lady whose life defies conventional paths and cultural norms. Vee's choice to maintain an unintended pregnancy at the age of eighteen shatters her relationship with her family and puts her promising modeling career in jeopardy. The novel uses this story as a prism to examine more general socioeconomic issues of autonomy, choice, and self-determination in modern Indian society. The novel suggests that "Sometimes life doesn't go according to plan but that doesn't mean it's the wrong plan" (52). Shenoy depicts the intricacies of a woman establishing her personality in the face of social constraints with her readable prose and emotionally stirring mosaic of events. Research on her writing indicates that her stories represent large trends in Indian literature towards empowering common voices. Her narrative



style, which is characterized by emotionally intimate and approachable prose, captures the realities of middle-class people juggling the demands of family and life's uncertainties. Her writings, such as *It Happens for a Reason*, have been analyzed in scholarly discourse using perspectives like intertextuality, feminist representation, and the psychological complexity of characters. According to Yadav, *It Happens for a Reason* is a part of a larger trend in Indian literature that presents a "new woman" as an independent person who defies social norms and makes unorthodox life decisions. Critical perspectives that emphasize changing gender relations and the significance of individual agency in modern narratives are consistent with this study. *It Happens for a Reason* both reflects and questions traditional narrative techniques in contemporary Indian English fiction.

### **Decisions and the Story of Fate**

The central theme of Vipasha's life journey in *It Happens for a Reason* is the interplay between fate and choice. Vee takes a pivotal decision at the beginning of the novel that she declines to end her pregnancy, even if it means losing her career goals and becoming estranged from her family. A major conflict in the text between social restrictions and autonomy is encapsulated in this point. According to one academic, Vee's experiences are crucially shaped by "the complex relationship between fate and free will," which frames her story as a battle that is both personal and cultural contexts.

### **Emotional Change and Buoyancy**

Shenoy portrays Vipasha's tenacity as the core of who she is, especially as she deals with an attitude of being a single mother. Vee's perseverance in parenting her son Aryan throughout the book demonstrates a deep inner strength that goes beyond social norms. "Aryan is my world. Nothing else matters as much as he does" (78). The emotional development of the protagonist also speaks to more general ideas of psychological fortitude "I may not have planned this life, but I will not let it defeat me" (214). The novel indicates that the author's involvement with identity, gender, and emotional fortitude as indicators of modern Indian womanhood. Her character is defined by her resilience. Vee does not minimize her errors or let them completely define who she is. Her ability to take accountability and proceed with dignity is what gives her strength. Her emotional development is enhanced by motherhood. It takes perseverance, selflessness, and emotional stability to raise Aryan on your own. She gains self-awareness, groundedness, and empathy because of this experience. Her resilience is quiet perseverance rather than outward rebellion. The book makes the argument that self-acceptance and emotional fortitude, not social acceptance, are the ultimate sources of strength.

### **Gender Norms and Social Expectations**

The story of *It Happens for a Reason* emphasizes how strongly gender norms and society expectations affect personal decisions. Vipasha faces stigma and estrangement as a result of her choice to be a single mother, which places her outside of conventional family systems. "I knew the world would not make it easy for me. But I was ready (96). Her work is consistent with modern feminist critique that emphasizes women who resist expected roles. Understanding how Vipasha's experiences celebrate individuality while challenging strict



gender standards requires a feminist interpretation. Behavior, relationships, and identity are shaped by gender norms and societal expectations. Although they offer structure, when enforced strictly, they can also impede personal development. To create a society that is more inclusive and egalitarian, it is crucial to comprehend and challenge these conventions. “Every choice has a consequence. You just have to decide if you can live with it” (129).

### **Narrative Resolution, Love, and Commitment**

*It Happens for a Reason's* story arc is further enhanced by love and the complexity of relationships. Vee experiences both new and old love opportunities after parenting Aryan on her own for years, particularly when her ex-partner Ankush returns to her life “Love isn’t always about grand gestures. Sometimes it is about staying, despite everything” (247). Questions of reconciliation, forgiveness, and the changing nature of love are brought to light by this rekindling. The conversations and events in the book provide a complex perspective on interpersonal relationships, showing that love is neither straightforward nor unchanging. *It Happens for a Reason* navigates love not as a sentiment but as an evolving commitment influenced by experience and progress, as evidenced by the blending of previous love, present resilience, and future possibilities.

### **Impact and Change**

Through the narrative of the novelist, consequences serve as indicators of change rather than punishment. Vee goes emotional upheaval, social rejection, and personal development after making a significant life decision. The story focuses on her psychological development rather than moralizing her decision. “Every choice with a Consequence. You just have to decide if you live with it (129). Consequence may be a means of creating meaning, according to psychological theories of narrative identity. noted by Such research backs up the idea that the repercussions. A deeper process of change is shown in this recognition of the consequences. Vee's challenges improve her independence and emotional clarity while progressively reshaping her sense of self. Instead of depicting her as a victim of social criticism, the book shows her as a changing person who discovers how to incorporate adversity into self-awareness. According to this perspective, consequences are significant turning moments that advance character growth and story resolution rather than tragic conclusions. “I have come too far to let fear decide my future” (214).

### **Choice and Fate in Cultural Context**

Beliefs of fate and free will coexist in Indian culture, frequently mediated by beliefs like karma and social conventions. Even though Vee's personal initiative propels the plot of *It Happens for a Reason*, characters' expectations and judgments are influenced by cultural presumptions about fate, as demonstrated when Vee's experiences within larger social contexts. Indian literary scholars have observed that modern Indian fiction balances tradition and modernity in many cultures, fate is employed to explain hardship or unforeseen circumstances, offering moral significance and consolation. The book does, however, make the argument that depending only on fate may impede personal development. Rather, it portrays choice as a powerful force that molds identity and possibilities for the future.



Despite social constraints, Vee actively creates her own path and does not solely blame her situation on fate. “I have come too far to let fear decide my future” (214).

### **Conclusion**

In the context of modern Indian fiction, Preeti Shenoy's *It Happens for a Reason* is a gripping examination of decision-making, resiliency, social conventions, and emotional development. Shenoy explores what it means to establish one's own path in the face of societal expectations and unanticipated obstacles through Vipasha's journey. Feminist narratives in Indian literature can be critically analyzed to place the work in larger discussions of gender and autonomy (Rani and Kaur). In the end, the storyline of the book challenges readers to consider the complex relationship between fate and free will, confirming that life's upsets can spur significant human development. In *It Happens for a Reason*, fate is reframed as a narrative outcome of human choices interpreted via cultural and psychological lenses rather than as an unavoidable destiny. Vee's journey serves as an example of how agency and consequence interact to influence resilience, identity, and meaning. The story portrays fate as a reflecting construct that emerges via interpretation and lived experience, despite the title's suggestion of a fixed purpose for events. This study has demonstrated that fate is an interpretive framework rather than a set cosmic edict, and consequence in the novel is a transformational force rather than a punitive one. This study adds to broader discussions regarding autonomy, narrative meaning, and the function of cultural context in contemporary Indian literature. It is based on the text as well as pertinent critical ideas. The examination of consequence as transformational as opposed to punitive emphasizes how book contributes to current literary discussions regarding identity and autonomy. By placing Shenoy's work within larger cultural and feminist narratives that highlight individual agency in the face of social expectations, secondary study supports this viewpoint. *It Happens for a Reason* challenges readers to reevaluate how fate is expressed in fiction—not as predetermined destiny but as an interpretive result of lived experience by utilizing narrative approaches that emphasize retrospective sense-making. This change has important ramifications for comprehending modern Indian fiction, which emphasizes self-creation, resiliency, and meaningful consequence. The book concludes by pointing out that although life's turns may be unpredictably occurring, the explanations we give for them are shaped by our decisions, introspection, and continuous efforts to reconstruct the story.

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## **Childhood Abuse and Institutional Betrayal in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the representation of childhood abuse and institutional betrayal in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*. The novel foregrounds the traumatic experience of Nomita, who suffers sexual abuse within the confines of a religious ashram, a space that is conventionally associated with spiritual refuge and moral authority. Through a close textual analysis, this study argues that Roy not only portrays childhood sexual abuse as a deeply personal psychological wound but also exposes the larger structures that enable such violence. The paper explores how trusted institutions fail to protect vulnerable individuals and instead perpetuate silence and complicity. The research further investigates the psychological consequences of betrayal, including fragmentation of identity, dissociation, shame, and mistrust. Additionally, the study analyses the role of media and structural power in re-traumatizing survivors by sensationalizing abuse rather than ensuring justice. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates that *Sleeping on Jupiter* evaluates patriarchal religious institutions and reveals how systemic betrayal intensifies individual trauma. Roy's narrative suggests that childhood abuse is not merely a private tragedy but a structural failure embedded within institutional authority.*

**Keywords:** Childhood Abuse, Trauma, Patriarchy, Anuradha Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*..

### **Introduction**

The theme of childhood sexual abuse has emerged as a significant concern in contemporary literature, particularly in narratives that interrogate structures of authority and patriarchal power. In recent decades, Indian English fiction has increasingly addressed questions of gendered violence, psychological trauma, and institutional complicity. Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping On Jupiter* (2015) stands as a powerful contribution to this discourse. The novel centres on Nomita, a young woman who returns to the coastal town of Jarmuli, where she once lived in a religious ashram after being orphaned. Beneath the serene spiritual atmosphere of the ashram lies a history of abuse perpetrated by a revered guru. Roy's narrative exposes the dark underside of religious authority and examines how institutions that claim to protect the vulnerable can become sites of betrayal.

Childhood sexual abuse constitutes a profound violation of bodily autonomy and psychological security. When abuse occurs within a trusted institution, the damage extends beyond the physical act to include betrayal of faith and authority. Such betrayal intensifies trauma because the survivor must confront not only personal violation but also systemic



abandonment. In *Sleeping On Jupiter*, the ashram represents this dual failure: it is both the site of childhood abuse and the mechanism that sustains silence.

Roy's novel is structured through fragmented memories and shifting perspectives, reflecting the unstable nature of traumatic recollection. Nomi's return to Jarmuli activates suppressed memories, demonstrating how trauma resists containment within chronological time. The novel thus employs narrative fragmentation to mirror psychological disruption. Through silence, gaps, and restrained language, Roy conveys the difficulty of articulating experiences that exceed ordinary representation. The purpose of this study is to scrutinize how *Sleeping On Jupiter* represents childhood abuse not merely as an individual experience but as a manifestation of institutional betrayal. The research explores three central concerns: the portrayal of childhood abuse, the ashram as a site of systemic betrayal, the psychological consequences of institutional failure. By integrating trauma theory and betrayal trauma theory, this paper argues that Roy critiques patriarchal religious structures that prioritise reputation over justice. Ultimately, the novel reveals that abuse thrives in environments where authority remains unquestioned and victims are silenced.

### **Representation of Childhood Abuse**

Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* presents childhood abuse not as an isolated event but as a formative psychological rupture that shapes the protagonist's adulthood. Nomi, later known as Nomi, is sent to a religious ashram in Jarmuli after losing her parents. The ashram is publicly perceived as a sacred refuge, a space of spiritual discipline and moral guidance. However, Roy gradually exposes the hidden violence beneath this religious façade. The emotional consequences of the abuse are conveyed through subtle yet powerful imagery. At one point, Nomi's experience is reflected in the disturbing recognition that the ashram was "a place where devotion and fear walked hand in hand" (79). This line symbolically captures the contradiction between spiritual sanctity and hidden terror. Cathy Caruth explains that trauma resists immediate comprehension and returns later in fragmented recollections (Caruth 4). Nomi's memories surface indirectly, demonstrating how childhood abuse disrupts psychological continuity and remains embedded in the survivor's consciousness.

The power imbalance between the guru and the child intensifies the severity of the abuse. As a spiritual authority, the guru embodies moral legitimacy and unquestioned control within the ashram. Judith Herman argues that abuse inflicted by a trusted authority figure creates a deeper psychological wound because it destroys fundamental trust (Herman 52). Nomi's vulnerability is heightened by her orphaned status and emotional dependence on the institution. Roy reveals this imbalance when the guru's presence is described as one that "filled the room, leaving no space for doubt or refusal" (92). The violation is not merely physical; it undermines the child's belief in goodness, authority, and divine protection.

Silence plays a crucial role in Roy's representation of abuse. The novel does not portray immediate confrontation or exposure. Instead, Nomi internalises her suffering. This silence reflects the social and cultural mechanisms that discourage children from speaking against authority figures. In hierarchical institutions, obedience is valued over individual voice. The ashram's structure reinforces submission, making resistance nearly impossible.



Trauma theorists note that survivors often struggle with articulation because overwhelming experiences exceed language (Caruth 11). Roy mirrors this psychological reality through restrained narration, suggesting that the most painful experiences remain partially unspoken. Through Nomi's experience, Roy critiques not only individual wrongdoing but the larger structures that permit exploitation. Childhood abuse in the novel is inseparable from institutional power and unquestioned reverence. By situating violence within a sacred environment, Roy exposes the contradiction between spiritual purity and moral corruption. The novel demonstrates that when authority remains unchecked, vulnerability becomes a site of exploitation. Nomi's childhood thus becomes the foundation of a lifelong struggle with memory, trust, and identity. Roy's portrayal emphasises that the true horror of childhood abuse lies not only in the act itself but in its enduring psychological consequences.

### **The Ashram as a Site of Institutional Betrayal**

In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, the ashram functions as a symbolic representation of institutional betrayal. Institutional betrayal occurs when an organisation fails to protect those who depend on it or conceals wrongdoing to preserve its reputation. The ashram in Jarmuli is constructed as a disciplined spiritual community dedicated to moral purification. However, beneath this structure lies a system that protects authority rather than vulnerability. Roy subtly signals this contradiction when the ashram is described as a place where discipline was valued above all else and where unquestioning devotion was considered a virtue. Such an atmosphere discourages dissent and normalises obedience. Jennifer Freyd explains that institutions often prioritise self-preservation over justice, thereby intensifying the victim's trauma (Freyd 79). In Roy's narrative, the ashram's silence and lack of accountability transform it from a sanctuary into a site of systematic harm.

The guru's elevated position within the ashram illustrates how institutional power operates. He is not merely an individual perpetrator but a symbol of religious legitimacy. His authority is reinforced by ritual, hierarchy, and collective reverence. Questioning him would mean questioning the institution itself. At one point, his presence is portrayed as overwhelming, filling the space with an authority that could not easily be challenged. This description highlights how power is embodied and normalised within the institution. Judith Herman argues that betrayal becomes particularly destructive when it is embedded within systems that claim moral superiority (Herman 56). The ashram's public image as a sacred space prevents scrutiny, allowing abuse to remain hidden. Nomi's dependency on the institution deepens her vulnerability, as she has no alternative support system.

Roy also critiques the broader social environment that sustains institutional authority. The surrounding community participates in maintaining the ashram's reputation, valuing spiritual prestige over individual suffering. Visitors and devotees continue to revere the guru, reinforcing the idea that holiness cannot coexist with wrongdoing. This collective complicity transforms personal abuse into structural violence. Institutional betrayal is therefore not limited to the guru's actions but extends to the silence of those who refuse to question power. The ashram's failure lies not only in permitting abuse but in preserving the illusion of purity



while suppressing dissent. Roy thereby exposes how institutional structures protect themselves by silencing victims rather than confronting injustice.

By presenting the ashram as a site of institutional betrayal, Roy exposes the dangers of unquestioned authority. The institution's moral façade contrasts sharply with its hidden corruption. Nomi's trauma is intensified by the knowledge that the very space meant to protect her enabled her suffering. Through this portrayal, Roy suggests that institutions must be held accountable, especially when they claim spiritual or moral legitimacy. The novel ultimately demonstrates that betrayal within sacred spaces carries profound psychological consequences because it shatters both personal trust and collective faith. Roy's critique extends beyond one ashram, encouraging readers to reflect critically on all institutions that demand obedience while resisting accountability.

### **Psychological Impact of Institutional Betrayal**

In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, the ashram functions as a symbolic representation of institutional betrayal. Institutional betrayal occurs when an organisation fails to protect those who depend on it or conceals wrongdoing to preserve its reputation. The ashram in Jarmuli is constructed as a disciplined spiritual community dedicated to moral purification. However, beneath this structure lies a system that protects authority rather than vulnerability. Roy subtly signals this contradiction when the ashram is described as a place where discipline was valued above all else and where unquestioning devotion was considered a virtue (Roy 130). Such an atmosphere discourages dissent and normalises obedience. Jennifer Freyd explains that institutions often prioritise self-preservation over justice, thereby intensifying the victim's trauma (Freyd 79). In Roy's narrative, the ashram's silence and lack of accountability transform it from a sanctuary into a site of systemic harm.

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### **Conclusion**

Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping On Jupiter* offers a profound exploration of childhood abuse and institutional betrayal within the framework of religious authority. Through the character of Nomita (Nomi), Roy reveals how violence committed within sacred spaces carries psychological consequences that extend far beyond the moment of violation. The novel does not rely on graphic representation; instead, it emphasises silence, fragmentation, and memory to depict trauma. By situating abuse within a spiritual institution, Roy exposes the disturbing contradiction between moral purity and hidden corruption. The ashram, which outwardly symbolises discipline and sanctity, becomes a site where vulnerability is exploited under the protection of authority. The novel demonstrates that childhood abuse within institutional settings is not merely an individual act of cruelty but a systemic failure. The guru's authority is reinforced by hierarchy, ritual, and collective reverence, which discourage questioning and enable concealment. Institutional betrayal intensifies trauma because the victim is harmed by the very structure that promises safety. Roy suggests that such betrayal fractures not only personal trust but also faith in social and spiritual systems. The silence surrounding Nomi's experience reflects broader cultural tendencies to prioritise institutional reputation over individual suffering. Through this portrayal, the novel critiques the dangers of unquestioned authority and the social mechanisms that protect it. Psychologically, *Sleeping On Jupiter* presents trauma as an ongoing presence rather than a closed chapter of the past. Nomi's return to Jarmuli symbolises the persistence of memory and the difficulty of complete resolution. The narrative structure mirrors the nature of traumatic recall, where past and present coexist. Roy portrays survival not as dramatic revenge or public exposure but as endurance and self-awareness. Nomi's ability to confront the physical space of her trauma suggests a quiet assertion of agency. The novel therefore reframes healing as a gradual and internal process rather than a definitive cure. Ultimately, Roy's work challenges readers to reconsider the moral legitimacy of institutions that claim spiritual authority while concealing injustice. *Sleeping On Jupiter* becomes not only a story of individual suffering but also a critique of structural power. By highlighting childhood abuse and institutional betrayal, the novel urges greater accountability within religious and social systems. Roy's restrained yet powerful narrative affirms that acknowledging trauma is an essential step toward resisting



silence. In doing so, the novel contributes significantly to contemporary discussions of power, gender, memory, and institutional responsibility in modern Indian literature.

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## Death, Human Body, and Social Ethics in U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara*: A Health Humanities Perspective

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### Abstract

*This paper examines U. R. Ananthamurthy's Samskara (1965) from the perspective of health humanities, focusing on death, the human body, social ethics, and moral responsibility. The novel presents a crisis that occurs in a traditional Brahmin community after the death of Naranappa, a man who violates caste and religious norms. His uncremated body becomes the center of social conflict, revealing the tension between strict ritual practices and basic human compassion. Through close analysis of the text, this study argues that Samskara portrays death not only as a religious event but as a deeply ethical and human issue. Using concepts from health humanities that emphasize dignity, empathy, and moral care, the paper explores how cultural beliefs influence attitudes toward the body and death. The community's fear of ritual pollution leads to neglecting Naranappa's corpse, showing how social prejudice can override responsibility. The novel also highlights moral failure through characters like Praneshacharya, whose reliance on religious texts prevents ethical action. In contrast, Chandri embodies proper moral awareness through her compassionate efforts to ensure a respectful funeral. This study further examines the symbolic significance of bodily decay as a reflection of social and moral decline. It shows how caste hierarchy and ritual authority weaken human values and cause ethical paralysis. Combining literary analysis with health humanities theory, the paper argues that Samskara calls for a more humane and responsible approach to death. Ultimately, the novel advocates for compassion over tradition and moral courage over blind obedience, making it relevant to current debates on dignity, social justice, and health ethics.*

**Keywords:** Health Humanities, Death, Dignity, Human Body, Caste, Ethics, Morals.

### Introduction

*Samskara* (1965) is an important work of modern Indian literature that critically explores orthodox Brahmin society. Ananthamurthy depicts a community that looks disciplined on the surface but is actually fragile and fearful inside. The novel focuses on the death of Naranappa, whose unconventional lifestyle unsettles the moral comfort of the aghraha. Even while he was alive, he was seen as "a defiler of tradition" (Ananthamurthy 11). After his death, this hostility grows even stronger. According to tradition, funeral rites must be done quickly to ensure spiritual peace. However, the villagers hesitate because they fear ritual pollution. As the narrator notes, "no one dared to take responsibility" (Ananthamurthy 29). As a result, Naranappa's body remains uncremated, gradually



decomposing. The villagers are forced to face the harsh reality of death, which they try to deny by making excuses for the ritual. The body becomes “cold like a dead rat” (Ananthamurthy 37), suggesting how human dignity is reduced to waste. From a health humanities perspective, this neglect reflects a failure of ethical care. Health humanities emphasizes that illness and death require empathy and social responsibility (Dias 42). In this context, literature becomes a space for examining moral attitudes toward vulnerability. *Samskara* shows how cultural beliefs can undermine ethical judgment when tradition is valued above humanity. This paper argues that the novel presents death as a moral test. The community’s inability to respond compassionately reveals its ethical weakness. Praneshacharya’s hesitation, the villagers’ fear, and Chandri’s courage represent different moral choices. Through these characters, Ananthamurthy demonstrates that true morality requires action, not mere religious knowledge.

### **Significance of the Title: “Samskara”**

The title *Samskara* has deep cultural and philosophical meaning. In Hindu tradition, *samskara* refers to life-cycle rituals, especially death rites that purify the soul and society. In the novel, however, these rituals are delayed and disputed. The villagers ask repeatedly whether Naranappa “deserves *samskara*” (Ananthamurthy 41). This question reveals their narrow understanding of morality. At one level, the title refers to the failure of funeral rites. The community believes that ritual purity is more important than human sympathy. As a result, “the corpse was left to rot” (Ananthamurthy 36). This shows how religious formalism replaces ethical feeling. At a deeper level, *samskara* suggests inner transformation. Praneshacharya believes that scriptural knowledge will guide him, yet he confesses, “I know the texts, but I do not know what to do” (Ananthamurthy 35). His moral confusion shows that learning without empathy is incomplete. In contrast, Chandri represents proper moral purification. She offers her gold chain for the funeral and insists that Naranappa must be cremated with dignity (Ananthamurthy 10). She transforms death into a moment of humanity. Thus, the title operates symbolically. It questions whether rituals alone can create a moral society. The novel suggests that real *samskara* lies in compassion, courage, and responsibility. Through this layered meaning, Ananthamurthy invites readers to rethink the relationship between tradition and ethics in modern life.

### **Death and Ritual Crisis**

In *Samskara*, death is seen not as a private or emotional event but as a public and social crisis. Naranappa’s death causes confusion because it questions established religious rules. Usually, Brahmin society follows strict funeral rituals like cremation, pinda dana, and shraddha. These rituals are believed to bring peace to the soul and protect the living. However, in Naranappa’s case, the villagers hesitate because he broke caste and moral codes. The narrator notes that “no one was ready to touch the corpse” (Ananthamurthy 28). This reflects the community’s fear of ritual pollution. Instead of showing sympathy, they remain passive. The funeral, which should bring closure and peace, becomes a source of anxiety. The villagers keep debating religious texts instead of taking responsible action. Praneshacharya spends days searching the scriptures for guidance, but fails to make a decision



(Ananthamurthy 54). From a health humanities perspective, this delay symbolizes ethical failure. Death demands immediate and respectful care. According to Dias, “dignity after death is a moral obligation” (45). The villagers’ inaction reveals how rigid tradition weakens moral sensitivity. Their fear of impurity overrides human duty. Therefore, the ritual crisis highlights a deeper moral crisis. The community knows what should be done but lacks the courage to do it. Death exposes the weakness of religious authority when it is disconnected from empathy.

### **The Human Body and Physical Decay**

The treatment of Naranappa’s body is one of the most disturbing aspects of the novel. After his death, his corpse is left unattended in his house. No one cleans it, guards it, or prepares it for cremation. The villagers behave as if the body itself is dangerous. As the narrator remarks, “it lay there like an unwanted burden” (Ananthamurthy 5). Over time, the body begins to decompose. The smell spreads, insects gather, and fear grows in the village. The narrator describes the corpse as “cold like a dead rat” (Ananthamurthy 37). This simile reduces a human body to waste material. It shows how social prejudice destroys dignity. In health humanities, the human body is seen as deserving respect in life and death. Scholars emphasize that bodily care reflects ethical maturity (Dias 43). However, in *Samskara*, the villagers refuse to recognize this principle. They see the corpse only as a source of pollution. The decaying body also symbolizes moral decay. Just as the corpse rots physically, the community’s values collapse morally. The villagers’ fear increases as the body deteriorates, yet they still refuse to act. This demonstrates how denial of biological reality leads to ethical blindness. Ananthamurthy uses physical decay to confront readers with uncomfortable truths. Death cannot be hidden behind rituals. It demands practical responsibility. By ignoring the body, the villagers deny both science and humanity.

### **Moral Paralysis and Ethical Failure**

The central conflict of *Samskara* is ethical rather than religious. The villagers know that cremation is necessary, yet they remain inactive. This condition can be described as moral paralysis. They are trapped between tradition and conscience. Lakshmanacharya and Garudacharya, who are close relatives of Naranappa, refuse to take responsibility. Their resentment and caste pride influence their decisions. The narrator notes that “personal hatred replaced moral duty” (Ananthamurthy 7). Instead of acting as family members, they behave as social judges. The most complex figure in this crisis is Praneshacharya. He is respected as a great scholar and moral guide. People call him “the crest-jewel of Vedic learning” (Ananthamurthy 16). However, when faced with a real ethical problem, he becomes confused. He admits, “My learning has failed me” (Ananthamurthy 54). Praneshacharya’s internal struggle shows the limits of textual knowledge. He searches for rules instead of listening to his conscience. During this period, he enters into a physical relationship with Chandri, which increases his guilt and confusion (Ananthamurthy 82). His moral authority collapses. From a health humanities viewpoint, ethical care requires timely action. Delaying responsibility harms both individuals and communities. The villagers’ paralysis demonstrates how institutions can destroy moral agency. Ananthamurthy suggests that morality cannot be



reduced to scripture. It requires courage, empathy, and decision-making. Without these qualities, knowledge becomes useless.

### **Caste Hierarchy and Denial of Funeral Rights**

Caste plays a decisive role in denying Naranappa a dignified funeral. Although he was born a Brahmin, his lifestyle places him outside the bounds of social approval. The villagers fear that cremating him will lower their status. They remember the fate of Parijatapura, whose people were expelled for breaking caste rules (Ananthamurthy 31). This fear controls their behaviour. Social survival becomes more important than moral duty. Even Sheshappa, who belongs to another religious community, refuses to help Chandri because he fears caste punishment (Ananthamurthy 61). This shows how deeply caste ideology influences all sections of society. In *Samskara*, caste prevents individuals from acting humanely. It creates fear, silence, and submission. From a health humanities perspective, social inequality directly affects dignity in death. Studies show that marginalized groups often face discrimination even in burial practices (Dias 47). The novel reflects this reality. Naranappa's body becomes a victim of social hierarchy. By denying him funeral rites, the community denies his humanity. This reveals how caste turns people into objects of exclusion. Ananthamurthy strongly criticizes this system by showing its cruel consequences. Thus, the novel demonstrates that death, bodily neglect, caste hierarchy, and moral paralysis are interconnected. Together, they expose the failure of institutional religion and social authority. The novel argues that without compassion, traditions become instruments of cruelty.

### **Chandri and the Practice of True Ethics**

Among all the characters in *Samskara*, Chandri stands out as the only person who responds to Naranappa's death with genuine compassion and responsibility. Although she belongs to a marginalized community and lacks formal education, she displays moral clarity that the educated Brahmins fail to achieve. When the villagers refuse to act, Chandri takes initiative. She approaches different people for help and finally offers her gold chain to arrange the cremation (Ananthamurthy 10). This act represents self-sacrifice and ethical courage. For her, dignity in death is more important than personal loss. Chandri's behaviour contrasts sharply with that of Praneshacharya and the other Brahmins. While they engage in endless discussions, she focuses on practical care. She recognizes that a corpse requires respect, not debate. From a health humanities perspective, Chandri embodies the ethics of care. This approach emphasizes empathy, attentiveness, and responsiveness to suffering. Chandri represents this principle through her actions. Importantly, Chandri's moral authority does not come from caste, education, or religion. It comes from humanity. Ananthamurthy suggests that ethical wisdom often exists outside dominant structures. Through compassion and sacrifice, she transforms death into a moment of dignity. Her character demonstrates that moral renewal is possible even within oppressive systems.

### **Health Humanities Framework and Ethical Interpretation**

Health humanities provide a valuable lens for understanding *Samskara*. This interdisciplinary field connects literature, medicine, ethics, and social science, and focuses on how societies experience illness, death, and care. Central to this field are values such as



empathy, dignity, justice, and moral responsibility (Dias 42). Through this framework, *Samskara* can be read as a critique of social systems that ignore human vulnerability. In the novel, death becomes a test of ethical values. The villagers' failure to care for Naranappa's body reflects moral breakdown. Instead of responding with sensitivity, they hide behind religious rules. As Dias argues, "ethical care requires recognizing the humanity of the dead" (44). However, the Brahmins treat the corpse as an object of pollution rather than as a human presence deserving respect (Ananthamurthy 33). The novel also shows how social institutions damage ethical judgment. Caste hierarchy, ritual authority, and religious fear restrict individual conscience. People act out of anxiety rather than moral conviction.

### **Contemporary Relevance and Social Reflection**

Although *Samskara* was written in 1965, its themes remain relevant in contemporary society. Discrimination in death practices continues in many parts of India. Incidents from real life demonstrate how caste still influences funeral customs in India. Opposition from the dominant caste villagers in Uttar Pradesh prevented a Nat woman from using the village cremation ground. In a similar vein, institutional caste discrimination is reflected in Odisha's "Brahmin-only" crematorium. Caste-based denial of cremation grounds and burial rights show that social inequality persists even after death (NDTV 2020; SabrangIndia, 2020). These incidents resemble the situation in the novel, where fear of pollution prevents dignified funerals (Ananthamurthy 49). From a health humanities perspective, such realities demonstrate how social injustice affects dignity and well-being. Literature like *Samskara* helps readers understand how cultural practices influence ethical behaviour. The novel also speaks to modern debates about professional and institutional ethics. In medical and social care systems, delays, negligence, and discrimination continue to harm vulnerable groups. Furthermore, *Samskara* encourages readers to examine their own attitudes toward tradition and authority. The villagers' blind obedience to custom mirrors contemporary social practices that discourage questioning (Ananthamurthy 54). The novel asks whether people follow traditions out of moral conviction or social fear. Thus, the text serves both as social criticism and as an ethical guide. *Samskara* remains relevant to discussions on dignity, justice, and human rights.

### **Conclusion**

This study has examined *Samskara* from the perspective of health humanities, focusing on death, the human body, caste, and moral responsibility. The analysis shows that Ananthamurthy presents death not merely as a religious event but as a serious ethical challenge. When Naranappa dies, the villagers do not respond with sympathy or urgency. Instead, "no one was ready to take responsibility" (Ananthamurthy 13). This statement reflects the moral weakness of the community, which prefers safety and tradition over human duty. Through the neglected body of Naranappa, the novel exposes the failure of ritual-based religion. The villagers delay the funeral because they fear pollution. The community's concern for purity leads to emotional detachment and ethical paralysis. Praneshacharya represents the limits of intellectual authority. Although he is highly respected, he fails to guide the villagers. Without empathy and courage, learning becomes ineffective in moments



of crisis. In contrast, Chandri represents proper moral awareness. When everyone else hesitates, she acts. She offers her gold chain and insists on arranging the funeral. Unlike the Brahmins, she understands that dignity in death is more important than social approval. Her actions reflect the core values of care and responsibility emphasized in health humanities. The physical decay of Naranappa's body symbolizes the moral decay of the community. The comparison of the corpse to "a dead rat" (Ananthamurthy 37) is especially significant. It shows how caste prejudice strips a person of humanity even after death. This imagery forces readers to confront the consequences of social cruelty and indifference. From a health humanities perspective, the novel demonstrates that ethical care must extend beyond life into death. Respect for the human body reflects respect for human value. By presenting death as a moral test, Ananthamurthy urges readers to rethink blind obedience to tradition. The novel shows that rituals without compassion become instruments of injustice. Through characters like Praneshacharya and Chandri, *Samskara* contrasts moral failure with moral courage. While fear and hesitation dominate most of the community, compassion and responsibility emerge through Chandri. This contrast suggests that social change begins with individual ethical awareness. In conclusion, *Samskara* remains a powerful critique of caste hierarchy, ritual rigidity, and emotional detachment. By integrating literary insight with principles of the health humanities, the novel advocates a humane social order grounded in empathy, dignity, and justice. It calls upon individuals and communities to place humanity above hierarchy, conscience above custom, and moral responsibility above fear. In doing so, Ananthamurthy offers a timeless message that continues to guide contemporary debates on ethics, social justice, and human dignity.

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## **Representations of Women as Complete Beings Beyond Gender Stereotypes in Sudha Murty's *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree***

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### **Abstract**

*The present study examines how Sudha Murty's *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree: Unusual Tales about Women in Mythology* (2019) portrays women as whole individuals who transcend gender norms. The study looks at how Sudha Murty questions patriarchal representations that limit women to submissive daughters, selfless wives, or mute victims. Sudha Murty emphasises women as independent beings with agency, bravery, intelligence, and moral strength in both mythical retellings and modern stories. This paper examines how her female characters overcome socially established gender norms by utilising a feminist literary perspective. According to the study's findings, Sudha Murty reinterprets womanhood as multidimensional, proving that women are whole human beings with the power to influence their own lives.*

**Keywords:** Sudha Murty, South Asian Literature, Indian Women Writers, Women's Identity.

### **Introduction**

Women in traditional Indian society are often depicted through rigid stereotypes: the submissive daughter, the selfless wife, and the protective mother. These images reduce women to submissive roles and overlook their individuality, intelligence, and independence. Additionally, women in mythology are usually shown as minor characters. Sudha Murty, a renowned Indian author and social worker, was disappointed when she decided to write a book about women in mythology. She expressed her views by saying, "I found that there is minimal literature that highlights the important roles that women have played" (Murty ix). This reflects her concern that history and mythology often overlook the strength and contributions of women. To provide perspective, Sudha Murty depicts women as complete individuals in her stories—intellectual, ethically strong, emotionally resilient, and socially autonomous. She retells mythological and cultural stories, emphasizing women's bravery, independence, and practical knowledge. By rewriting these stories, as this study explores, she aims to portray women as complex individuals who reject patriarchal norms and redefine what it means to be a woman.

### **Preference for Sons and the Girl Child**

A common issue in patriarchal society is the desire for male offspring. While daughters are often viewed as financial, social, and emotional burdens, sons are seen as heirs and as carriers of the family line. Sudha Murty challenges this perspective by depicting girls as resilient, kind, and intelligent. The young girl in the story "*The Daughter from a Wishing*



*Tree*” defies patriarchal assumptions by showing courage and intelligence. Ashoka Sundari, Parvati’s daughter, is symbolized by the title, “The Daughter from a Wishing Tree.” Parvati yearned for a daughter with whom she could share her feelings. She longed for a daughter even though she had the most powerful sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya. Sudha Murty describes Parvati’s wish as “She had a desire to ask for a daughter who would take away her grief and loneliness” (Murty 47). Murty portrays daughters as blessings that strengthen family bonds, challenging the traditional view and to show the potential of girl children.

### **Sudha Murty’s Perspective on Women’s Roles**

Sudha Murty frequently demonstrated criticism of how women are portrayed in literature, saying, “The literature that does exist is frequently repetitive, and women are usually cast as subordinate or minor characters and remain underappreciated” (Murty ix). Her issue is that women are often limited to stereotypical roles that ignore their uniqueness and strength, such as “obedient wife” or “sacrificing mother.” Sudha Murty centers her stories around women in *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree*, giving them active roles that influence events rather than just responding to them. Sudha Murty depicts women who take charge of their lives rather than waiting for help. They exhibit bravery, intelligence, and resilience, whether queens or goddesses. They make audacious decisions and challenge injustice.

### **Intelligence, Strategy, and Female Agency**

Another important aspect of Sudha Murty’s feminist viewpoint is her emphasis on women’s intellectual capacities. Patriarchal stories often portray women as emotional and irrational, while men are associated with logic and authority. Sudha Murty challenges this stereotype by depicting women as thoughtful and strategic individuals. She reinterprets mythological characters, such as Shurpanakha, highlighting emotional depth. Shurpanakha’s resentment of Ravana arises from grief, betrayal, and repressed pain. Additionally, Shurpanakha’s sole aim is to seek revenge on Ravana. Sudha Murty describes this as “Her thirst for vengeance against her brother only grew greater”(Murty 63). In contemporary settings, women apply practical wisdom to resolve conflicts, manage finances, and protect their families.

### **The Divine Partnership: Women as Equal Strength**

In Hindu mythology, Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvati are the consorts of the Trimurti, which are Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. These goddesses supply vital vitality, wealth, and knowledge; they are not secondary. Brahma gains wisdom from Saraswati. Lakshmi maintains the preserver role of Vishnu. Parvati gives Shiva the energy to act. This collaboration serves as a symbol of equality, underscoring the importance of women in preserving societal and cosmic harmony. This idea is reflected in Sudha Murty’s works, where women often serve as pillars of strength, both practically and emotionally. For example, Goddess Lakshmi stands as a pillar for her husband, Vishnu, in killing the asuras, saying, “Lord, I will accompany you in a few avatars in my different forms” (Murty xii).

### **Women beyond Stereotypes in Murty’s Stories**

In *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* by Sudha Murty, women are shown as key facilitators of change rather than as supporting characters. Traditional gender preconceptions



that have historically limited women to emotional, domestic, and submissive positions are broken down by her storytelling. Sudha Murty reimagines women as whole human beings with the capacity for independent cognition, moral judgement, leadership, and strategic action, rather than just as quiet victims or sacrificial figures. The arguments are organized into five aspects, each of which is discussed in detail.

### **Autonomy and Decision-Making**

Autonomy occupies a central position in Murty's portrayal of women. Sudha Murty's female characters consistently demonstrate the ability to make informed, independent choices about education, marriage, career, and family responsibilities. These decisions are not impulsive acts of rebellion but carefully considered responses to social constraints. Sudha Murty emphasises that true freedom lies in conscious self-direction rather than mere resistance to authority. Sudha Murty's women, like Damayanti, made their own decisions about whom to marry, a practice no longer common. Damayanti boldly opposed and said, "I will decide whom I will marry, please do not interfere" (Murty 81). By foregrounding autonomy, Sudha Murty challenges the stereotype of women as dependent or indecisive. Instead, she presents them as rational subjects capable of shaping their destinies. Autonomy thus becomes both a personal virtue and a social necessity in Murty's feminist framework.

### **Emotional Strength and Ethical Maturity**

Sudha Murty redefines emotional strength as an essential component of ethical maturity. Contrary to traditional stereotypes that associate emotion with weakness, her narratives portray emotional sensitivity as a source of resilience. Women in her stories confront adversity such as poverty, discrimination, and family conflict with patience and moral clarity. Their ability to regulate emotions enables them to respond constructively rather than destructively. Moreover, Goddess Parvati turned her tears into full-fledged rivers to end the famine on earth.

### **Compassion and Power**

Sudha Murty's feminist perspective does not reject traditionally feminine qualities such as empathy and nurturing. Instead, she integrates these traits with confidence and authority. Compassion in her narratives functions as a form of ethical power rather than passive submission. Women exercise influence through understanding, negotiation, and moral persuasion. Their ability to empathise enables them to build trust and resolve conflicts effectively—this synthesis of care and leadership challenges binary oppositions between strength and tenderness. Sudha Murty suggests that sustainable authority arises from moral credibility rather than coercion. Female characters who combine firmness with empathy emerge as respected figures within families and communities. Such portrayals broaden conventional definitions of power. Compassion becomes a strategic resource that enhances social cohesion while preserving individual dignity. Through this integration, Sudha Murty reimagines leadership as inclusive and relational.

### **Cultural Reinterpretation**

A distinctive feature of Sudha Murty's writing is her reinterpretation of cultural and mythological traditions. Rather than rejecting tradition as inherently patriarchal, she critically



engages with it to recover suppressed narratives of female strength. By revisiting mythological figures and legends, Sudha Murty exposes selective interpretations that privilege male dominance. Her retellings emphasise women's intelligence, courage, and moral insight. This approach transforms cultural heritage into a source of empowerment. It also resists the binary between tradition and modernity by demonstrating their potential compatibility. Sudha Murty's strategy reflects a culturally grounded feminism that seeks reform from within rather than through wholesale rejection. By reclaiming tradition, she enables women to assert authority within familiar cultural frameworks. Cultural reinterpretation thus becomes a means of negotiating continuity and changes in feminist discourse.

### **Redefining Womanhood as Wholeness:**

In the end, femininity is redefined as fullness in Sudha Murty's stories. Marital status, parenthood, or male acceptance do not define a woman in her tales. As Simone de Beauvoir famously remarked, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (2011, 14). Sudha Murty's stories exemplify this idea by showing that women define themselves through their choices, courage, and actions, rather than through roles imposed by society. Women are thinking, feeling, and acting persons whose identities go beyond the roles imposed on them. The perception that women are "other" or secondary is challenged by this concept of completeness. Sudha Murty portrays women as independent individuals whose value is immutable. In this aspect, Mordia and Karkun observe that River Ganga "can be seen as an independent person who is moving toward her destination and fulfilling her responsibility to humanity" (2023, 556). This explanation supports Sudha Murty's broader feminist theory, which holds that self-reliance, moral responsibility, and intentional action, rather than reliance or relational identity, define womanhood. As a result, the female figure is shown as a whole person who can influence fate rather than react to it. Sudha Murty creates a literary environment in which gender preconceptions are demolished and replaced with complex, empowering representations. Her stories serve as both societal commentary and narratives, challenging readers' preconceived notions. By portraying women as independent, strong, wise, kind, and deliberately sensitive, Sudha Murty maintains that women are whole human beings. Her work redefines womanhood beyond limiting cultural constraints, making it a vital contribution to the current South Asian feminist discourse.

### **Conclusion**

Sudha Murty's *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* offers a compelling reinterpretation of womanhood in contemporary Indian literature. Through mythological and modern stories, Sudha Murty challenges stereotypes that confine women to submissive, passive roles. She depicts women as intellectually aware, emotionally strong, morally grounded, and socially active individuals. The study shows that Sudha Murty opposes patriarchal assumptions on many levels. She questions her son's preferences, highlights her daughters' potential, and presents women as strategic thinkers and ethical leaders. By reinterpreting tradition, she transforms cultural heritage into a source of empowerment. Most importantly, Sudha Murty redefines womanhood as completeness. Her female characters are



not dependent on male approval for their identity. Instead, they gain strength from self-awareness and moral clarity. Therefore, *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* functions not only as a collection of stories but also as a consistent critique of gender inequality. Together, these women characters form a clear feminist vision that resists limiting stereotypes. Daughters show dignity, mothers practice strategic resistance, mythological women regain voice, widows assert independence, and elders exercise moral authority. Each character contributes to Sudha Murty's broader redefinition of womanhood. It affirms women's role as co-creators of culture and history. Sudha Murty's work thus supports the idea that women, in all their complexity, are complete human beings beyond stereotypes and limitations.

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## **Love, Loss, Obsession, and the Search for Truth in Chetan Bhagat's *The Girl in Room 105***

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper examines Chetan Bhagat's The Girl in Room 105 as a contemporary Indian novel that explores emotional attachment, heartbreak, obsession, and the human desire for truth. Through the protagonist Keshav Rajpurohit's journey, the novel presents modern relationships shaped by insecurity, social pressure, and political tensions. The study analyzes how love transforms into obsession, how loss affects identity, and how the quest for truth becomes a path to self-realization. It also situates the novel within youth literature and popular fiction in India.*

**Keywords:** Love, Obsession, Truth, Youth Fiction, Chetan Bhagat, Modern Relationships.

### **Introduction**

The role of literature has always been to reflect societal realities, human lives, and emotions. Popular fiction has become a powerful literary medium in modern India, capturing the hopes, fears, and emotional challenges of young people today. Relationships and individual identities have been dramatically impacted by rapid urbanisation, technological innovation, career competition, and shifting cultural norms. Themes like love, heartbreak, loneliness, insecurity, and searching for meaning have eventually taken center stage in contemporary storytelling. Chetan Bhagat holds a prominent position among the authors who have made important contributions to this genre. One of the most prominent writers of modern Indian popular literature is Chetan Bhagat. Young adults, middle-class goals, romance, and social issues are the main subjects of his books. His writings, which are written in a straightforward style, are popular with a broad audience, particularly students and young people in cities. The emotional struggles, professional demands, generational divides, and societal tensions that characterise contemporary Indian society are frequently depicted in Bhagat's work. His popularity is a reflection of his ability to relate to the emotional realities of ordinary readers, considering the fact that some critics reject his work as being motivated by business concerns.

The novel tells the story of Keshav Rajpurohit, a young IIT graduate, who struggles to move on after his girlfriend Zara Lone breaks up with him. Keshav Rajpurohit is deeply in love with Zara Lone, a Kashmiri Muslim girl. Their relationship fails because of religious differences and Zara's desire for freedom. Unable to forget her, Keshav Rajpurohit remains emotionally dependent. One night, he visits Zara's room (Room 105) at IIT Delhi, where he finds her murdered. When Zara is found murdered, Keshav Rajpurohit becomes involved in



investigating her death. This journey forces him to confront his emotional weaknesses and search for truth. This paper examines Chetan Bhagat's *The Girl in Room 105* (2018) as a contemporary Indian novel that explores emotional attachment, heartbreak, obsession, and the human desire for truth. Through the protagonist Keshav Rajpurohit's journey, the novel presents modern relationships shaped by insecurity, social pressure, and political tensions. The study analyzes how love transforms into obsession, how loss affects identity, and how the quest for truth becomes a path to self-realization. It also situates the novel within youth literature and popular fiction in India. This research studies four major themes like Love, Loss, Obsession, Search for Truth. These themes reflect the emotional condition of modern youth.

### **Theme of Romantic Love**

Love is the emotional fulcrum of the novel. Before the murder mystery begins, the narrative focuses on romantic attachment, emotional imbalance, and broken expectations. Bhagat presents love as intense, insecure, and vulnerable rather than stable and fulfilling. Zara is idealised by Keshav, who uses her presence to define his happiness. Romantic idealisation is evident in his declaration that she is "the most beautiful thing" in his life. His attachment turns into emotional dependence rather than just affection. He replays memories all the time, looks for comfort, and finds it difficult to imagine his life without her. His romantic idealisation is further visible when he describes spending time with her as "just a chance to bunk classes and spend the day with Zara Lone, the most beautiful, smart and articulate woman in the world" (Bhagat 24). Her presence or absence affects his routine and emotional stability. However, the love between them is not equal in emotional intensity. Zara values independence, political awareness, and personal growth. She refuses to remain in a relationship that limits her identity. The imbalance arises because Keshav Rajpurohit seeks emotional closeness and reassurance, while Zara seeks autonomy. Bhagat shows that love requires compatibility in values and maturity, not just feelings. The narrative also captures the romantic idealism of youth. Keshav Rajpurohit thinks that love needs to be eternal and holy. He can't face the possibility that relationships come to an end. His expectation that love will automatically triumph over religious and personal differences is influenced by cultural and cinematic concepts. However, Zara's religious background, political involvement, and aspirations add complexity. Keshav Rajpurohit's discontent with his work is an example of career dissatisfaction, which emphasises how personal objectives influence contemporary relationships. Their relationship is weakened by emotional insecurity. Keshav Rajpurohit's love is broken because of his possessiveness and fear of losing it. They got break up because of different regions. Bhagat criticises irrational expectations and maintains that emotional stability, individuality, and trust must all coexist with love. Love becomes unstable and painful when it is out of balance.

### **Theme of Emotional Loss**

The narrative becomes a psychological journey as a result of loss. It functions on two levels they are romantic loss following the breakup and irreversible loss following Zara's demise. Both have a significant impact on Keshav's identity and emotional growth. Emotional



collapse starts with the breakup. Keshav Rajpurohit keeps living in his memories because he cannot accept separating from his beloved. His lingering attachment is evident when he observes, “I opened my phone to check. Thursday, February the 8th. In a few hours, it would be February 9th, Zara’s birthday” (Bhagat 29). His emotional shock is clearly reflected when he recalls, “We are done, that’s what she said. What did she mean done? How can she say we? I am not done” (Bhagat 6). He confessed that he “couldn't live without her” demonstrates how important Zara had grown to be to him. He experiences loneliness, frustration, and self-consciousness. His inability to move on indicates psychological distress. Loss leads to an identity crisis. Since his happiness depended on Zara, her absence creates emptiness. He questions his self-worth and feels purposeless. His dissatisfaction with his job intensifies his emotional instability. Bhagat reflects a broader social reality in which many young individuals associate romantic success with personal value. When relationships fail, they experience not only heartbreak but also identity breakdown.

Zara’s murder intensifies loss into irreversible grief. Unlike the breakup, death removes all hope of reconciliation. Grief replaces longing. However, this permanent loss becomes transformative. Keshav Rajpurohit gradually converts his sorrow into determination. Investigating her murder becomes both a search for justice and a process of healing. Thus, loss functions as both destructive and transformative. It exposes vulnerability but also encourages growth. Through suffering, Keshav Rajpurohit moves from emotional dependence to self-awareness and responsibility.

### **Theme of Obsessive Obsession**

The psychological change of love is symbolised by obsession. Keshav Rajpurohit is unable to emotionally separate from Zara following the breakup. He keeps in touch with her on a regular basis, keeps an eye on her internet activity, and secretly goes to her hostel. His desire to see her goes beyond simple affection to a psychological need. Obsession is portrayed by Bhagat as an emotional dependence caused by fear of separation and insecurity. Keshav's affection turns possessive. He finds it difficult to accept Zara's social interactions, political participation, and independence. Though he claims to love her, his expectations reveal a hidden desire for control. He wants emotional dominance in the relationship. This possessiveness is a hidden sign of patriarchy. Even though he is modern and educated, Keshav Rajpurohit unconsciously assumes that Zara will use him first. Zara ends the relationship as a way to express her independence and fight against this control. Bhagat demonstrates that love should not require possession, thus criticising unhealthy romantic ideals. There are psychological impacts from obsession. Keshav Rajpurohit loses his ability to think clearly, disappears from society, and devalues his career. His uniqueness is weakened as his world becomes more focused on one person. In the end, the narrative implies that love that lacks emotional development turns into obsession. Balance, self-respect, trust, and independence are necessary for true love.

### **Theme of Search for Truth**

*The Girl in Room 105* by Chetan Bhagat represents Keshav Rajpurohit's journey as a quest for truth on a moral, social, and personal level.

**Personal Truth and Social Truth**

Keshav Rajpurohit wants to know why Zara rejected him, if she still loved him, and what his emotional pain represents. His quest is a reflection of the search for mental being and self-awareness. Keshav Rajpurohit progresses toward self-awareness and personal development by facing his emotional dependency and heartbreak. The ideological disputes that affect contemporary Indian youth are made clear by Zara's participation in left-wing politics and her eventual murder. The story draws attention to problems like youth activism, political manipulation, and radicalisation. Keshav Rajpurohit's investigation demonstrates how societal factors influence personal decisions and tragedies. The paper also highlights the need for determination and bravery in seeking the truth. In order to learn the truth about Zara's death, Keshav puts his safety in danger, demonstrating that seeking the truth is both a moral duty and a personal goal. Bhagat connects moral behaviour with emotional and personal growth with this journey.

**Psychological Analysis of Keshav**

Keshav Rajpurohit in *The Girl in Room 105* represents modern urban youth struggling with emotional insecurity and relationship dependency. From a Freudian perspective, his behaviour reflects defense mechanisms such as denial, fixation, and repetition compulsion, arising from his inability to process emotional loss. His psychological journey moves from heartbreak to pathological obsession, affecting his morals, daily life, and decision-making.

**Stage 1 - Denial through Drunk-Dialing**

Keshav Rajpurohit repeatedly drunk dials Zara, avoiding the reality of their breakup. This denial is explicitly acknowledged by Keshav Rajpurohit himself when he admits, "Once you have already faced the humiliation of giving the other person multiple missed calls, it doesn't matter if it is two or three. Or seven. Or ten" (Bhagat 10). These calls serve as repeated gestures of assurance rather than attempts at reconciliation, allowing Keshav Rajpurohit to maintain the delusion that the relationship is still unresolved. This denial allows him to maintain emotional dependence and postpone psychological closure.

**Stage 2 - Stalking as Emotional Intrusion**

When Keshav Rajpurohit's communication fails, he begins observing Zara, checking her online activity and personal space. She had put up a selfie as her DP—pouting, hand on waist, the black sari a dramatic contrast to her fair, almost pink, face. The 'let life not hold you back' kinds, statements that sound profound but actually mean nothing. Her WhatsApp display picture was the only connect I had left with her. It was how I knew what was happening in her life. (Bhagat 6, 7) This behaviour shows possessiveness, ethical compromise, and deepening psychological instability. Stalking shows his obsession intensifying, where love becomes control and moral compromise.

**Stage Three: Shrine-Building as Symbolic Fixation**

In the final phase of Keshav Rajpurohit's compulsive behaviour, Bhagat shows how emotional attachment becomes symbolic fixation, known as shrine-building. Keshav moves on to creating physical and symbolic reminders of his relationship after denial and stalking. He admits, "It felt like my brain had rewired itself; all neural passages led to Zara" (Bhagat



21). His shrine includes personal items, gifts, and everyday objects like a DTC bus, a chikankari salwar kameez, ice in a whisky glass, and a wooden coffee table. These objects transform his surroundings into a mental shrine, keeping Zara constantly in his mind. Psychologically, this phase shows his inability to accept loss and the self-destructive nature of obsession. Bhagat emphasises that shrine-building reflects the novel's "unlove story" theme, highlighting how obsessive attachment can hinder emotional growth and moral judgement.

### **Critical Analysis**

*The Girl in Room 105* by Chetan Bhagat can be evaluated critically as a contemporary discussion of love, loss, obsession, and the search of truth by humans in the setting of contemporary India. The book is a thriller, but it also captures the psychological and emotional realities of urban youth. Bhagat depicts love in Keshav Rajpurohit as a complicated force entwined with expectations from society, insecurity, and possessiveness rather than as an idealised or romanticised emotion. As witnessed by Keshav's emotional reliance on Zara, unbalanced love can turn into obsession, which can impact moral judgement and social behaviour. The novel also highlights the impact of societal and political tensions on personal relationships. As Babu notes, "Love is intertwined with political and religious issues" (Babu 692). Zara's independence, political awareness, and religious background introduce conflicts that are both personal and social, showing that emotional attachments are influenced by larger cultural and ideological forces. Bhagat situates individual grief and obsession within a social frame, emphasising that modern youth navigate not only personal emotions but also pressures from family, religion, and community expectations, as they "struggle with rigid systems and societal expectations" (Babu 691). From a psychological perspective, the story demonstrates the phases of Keshav Rajpurohit's coping strategies involves symbolic fixation, intrusive observation, and denial. Obsessive attachment can be harmful, as demonstrated by these behaviours, where emotional dependence blocks moral judgement and personal development. Through his emphasis on mental processes, emotional instability, and self-destructive behaviour, Bhagat invites readers to consider the ways in which identity, morality, and an effort of self-realization intersect with contemporary love. The narrative maintains a balance between social commentary and readability from a literary perspective. Bhagat successfully engages readers with issues related to contemporary Indian youth, such as emotional vulnerability, identity formation, and moral responsibility, subject to critics dismissing it for simplicity or commercial appeal. The novel is a significant study of contemporary emotional experiences because the thriller format serves as a vehicle for exploring psychological depth, relational imbalance, and the effects of obsession in addition to providing entertainment.

### **Conclusion**

*The Girl in Room 105* explores love, loss, obsession, and the search for truth in contemporary India. Bhagat captures the emotional realities of modern youth while highlighting societal and personal pressures. The novel balances thriller elements with



psychological depth, making it both engaging and insightful. Ultimately, it shows how emotional dependence, moral choices, and self-realization shape young lives today.

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**Re-Imagining the Anti-Hero in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger***

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**Abstract**

*This paper explores the re-imagining of the anti-hero in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. Focusing on the protagonist, Balram Halwai, the study examines how systemic social inequality and economic oppression shape his morally ambiguous actions. Unlike traditional anti-heroes, Balram's transgressions, including murder, are portrayed not as personal failings but as responses to a corrupt and hierarchical society. The paper analyzes how Adiga uses Balram's journey from servitude to entrepreneurship to challenge conventional notions of morality, heroism, and freedom. By presenting an anti-hero whose choices reflect societal contradictions, the novel offers a critique of contemporary India's social and economic structures.*

**Keywords:** Anti-Hero, Ambition, Balram Halwai, Caste system, Morals, Social Critique.

**Introduction:**

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) is widely recognized as a novel that challenges conventional literary norms by presenting a morally complex protagonist in a society deeply fractured by economic disparity and social hierarchy. The novel tells the story of Balram Halwai, a man born into abject poverty in a rural Indian village, who rises to become a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore through morally questionable means, including the murder of his employer. Unlike traditional heroes, Balram does not embody noble qualities, compassion, or selflessness. Instead, he is an anti-hero, a figure whose actions are driven by ambition, self preservation, and the desire for personal freedom in a society that systematically suppresses the lower classes. Adiga's narrative not only subverts the conventional hero archetype but also invites readers to reconsider morality, ethics, and the impact of social structures on individual choices.

The concept of the anti-hero has existed in literature for centuries, often defined as a protagonist who lacks conventional heroic qualities such as courage, honor, or idealism. However, in *The White Tiger*, Adiga reimagines the anti-hero in a distinctly Indian context. Balram is not merely a morally ambiguous individual; he is a product of systemic oppression, poverty, and a rigid caste system that relegates him to the role of a "servant" from birth. The novel portrays India's socio-economic landscape as a "Rooster Coop," a metaphor for the system that keeps the poor subjugated and prevents them from breaking free of servitude. In Balram's own words, the people of his village are "bound by chains invisible to the eye, yet heavy on the spirit" (Adiga 56). This structural critique underpins the moral complexity of



Balram's character, suggesting that his unethical actions are not solely personal failings but responses to an oppressive social order.

Adiga's storytelling technique also contributes to the reimagining of the anti-hero. The novel is structured as a series of letters from Balram to the Chinese Premier, chronicling his journey from rural servitude to urban entrepreneurship. This epistolary form allows readers to enter Balram's mind, understand his justifications, and witness his self-awareness. Unlike traditional narratives that distance the reader from the anti-hero's moral transgressions, Adiga invites a close examination of Balram's ethical reasoning, making him both relatable and disturbing. Balram's reflections force readers to grapple with questions such as: Can ambition and survival justify immoral acts? How much responsibility lies with the individual versus the society that shapes him? Through this narrative strategy, Adiga redefines what it means to be an anti-hero in contemporary literature. Moreover, the novel situates the anti-hero within the broader context of globalization and India's economic liberalization. The stark contrast between Balram's impoverished village and the affluent urban spaces he eventually inhabits highlights the inequalities inherent in modern Indian society. By tracing Balram's ascent within this economic framework, Adiga underscores the interplay between ambition, morality, and structural injustice. The anti-hero, in this sense, is not merely a character type but a lens through which the reader can interrogate the ethics of socio-economic mobility in a stratified society. Balram's story becomes emblematic of a larger reality: in a system where opportunities are scarce and exploitation rampant, moral compromise often becomes a necessity rather than a choice.

In this paper, the reimagining of the anti-hero will be explored through Balram Halwai's moral ambiguity, his rise within a corrupt capitalist society, and his function as a social critic. By examining his actions, motivations, and the socio-economic structures that shape them, this study will demonstrate how *The White Tiger* challenges traditional notions of heroism and morality. Ultimately, Adiga's novel presents an anti-hero whose journey is not simply one of personal ambition but a reflection of the contradictions, injustices, and ethical dilemmas inherent in contemporary Indian society.

### **The Anti-Hero as a Product of Social Injustice**

In classical literature, anti-heroes often possess redeeming traits despite engaging in questionable acts. Balram, however, is shaped less by individual complexity and more by the oppressive social structures of modern India. Born in a rural village and belonging to the lowest stratum of the caste system, he is repeatedly reminded of his "servant's tail" that supposedly disqualifies him from agency or ambition (Adiga 23). This identity becomes fundamental in understanding why Balram chooses a path that rejects morality as defined by the elite. Balram's recognition of India's deeply entrenched inequality marks a turning point in his development. He acknowledges, "The moment you recognize what is beautiful in this world, you stop being a slave" (Adiga 81). In this quote, Balram ties freedom not to ethical stability but to self-awareness — a dangerous understanding that fuels his transformation. This insight demonstrates that the anti-hero in *The White Tiger* is not inherently evil, but morally adaptable, shaped by the limitations imposed upon him by society. Furthermore,



Balam's early exposure to corruption, poverty, and the hypocrisy of the wealthy elite instills in him a pragmatic, survivalist mindset. He observes the world around him critically, noting how the rich exploit the poor, often with impunity. In his own words, "They [the rich] are powerful because they have learnt to lie, cheat, and steal without shame" (Adiga 112). By presenting such systemic critique, Adiga aligns the reader's understanding of Balam's eventual choices with the structural forces that constrain him.

### **The Moral Ambiguity of Balam's Journey**

Balam's ascent from chauffeur to entrepreneur is rooted in a violent act—the murder of his employer, Ashok. Traditional moral frameworks would dismiss Balam as a criminal, but Adiga asks the reader to see beyond black-and-white ethics. The murder becomes symbolic of the disruptive force necessary to escape systemic bondage. Balam rationalizes: "I killed Ashok because I love freedom" (Adiga 306). Here, Adiga does not glorify violence but forces the reader to evaluate whether freedom itself can justify transgression. Balam's reflection also forces a reconsideration of guilt and aspiration. His act is neither romanticized nor condemned simplistically; instead, it functions as a commentary on how India's economic and social hierarchies can warp moral judgment.

### **Capitalism, Corruption, and the Anti-Hero's Logic**

Adiga situates Balam's transformation within a capitalist framework that rewards cunning over virtue. The protagonist's final success—the ownership of a taxi business in Bangalore—represents his ultimate liberation from servitude. Yet this victory is not pure moral triumph. Balam himself admits, "I am a butcher in a butcher's shop" (Adiga 312), acknowledging his own brutality without remorse. This admission reframes Balam's character not as inherently evil but as one shaped by brutality. Through this lens, Balam becomes a mirror to the society that enabled his rise—a place where corruption is rampant and morality is synonymous with weakness. By aligning moral ambiguity with economic mobility, Adiga demonstrates how the anti-hero functions as a social critique rather than a mere literary trope.

### **Re-Imagining the Anti-Hero**

To re-imagine the anti-hero in *The White Tiger* is to view Balam as an embodiment of India's contradictions. He is simultaneously a victim and a perpetrator, a product of systemic oppression and a testament to human ambition. His moral ambiguity illustrates how anti-heroes can serve as powerful vehicles for social critique. Unlike traditional anti-heroes, who often struggle with internal moral conflict, Balam's moral code is externally constructed by an unjust society. In this re-imagining, the anti-hero does not offer redemption; instead, he reflects the disillusionment of a society in which traditional ethical values are eroded by economic desperation. Balam's narrative challenges the reader to reassess the boundaries between right and wrong, and to understand that sometimes judgment must extend beyond the individual to the society that shaped them.

### **Conclusion**

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* presents a complex anti-hero in Balam Halwai, one who challenges conventional distinctions between heroism and villainy. By re-imagining the



anti-hero as both a product and a critique of systemic inequality, Adiga delivers a powerful commentary on contemporary India. Balram's moral ambiguity becomes not only a defining trait of his character but also a lens through which readers confront the ethical dilemmas inherent in the pursuit of freedom and success. The novel compels readers to question traditional frameworks of morality, highlighting the role of structural injustice in shaping human behavior. Through Balram Halwai, Adiga demonstrates that the anti-hero can be both a vehicle for social critique and a mirror reflecting the harsh realities of a society divided by class, corruption, and opportunity. Ultimately, *The White Tiger* forces a reconsideration of what it means to be heroic in a world where the rules of morality are constantly challenged by inequality and ambition.

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## **Cultural Memory, Childhood Agency, and Narrative Simplicity in *The Magic of the Lost Temple* by Sudha Murthy**

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### **Abstract**

*Children’s literature plays a significant role in shaping cultural consciousness and moral understanding. This paper examines *The Magic of the Lost Temple* by Sudha Murthy through the theoretical frameworks of Peter Hunt and Jacqueline Rose. Drawing on Hunt’s argument that children’s literature is inherently didactic and Rose’s claim that childhood is mediated by adult ideology; the study explores how Murthy constructs rural space as a living archive of cultural memory. The paper analyzes intergenerational bonding, oral traditions, childhood curiosity, gender agency, collective responsibility, and narrative accessibility. It argues that Murthy’s novel negotiates instruction and empowerment by presenting tradition as a dynamic and participatory resource rather than rigid authority. Through simple yet layered storytelling, the text affirms heritage while granting its young female protagonist intellectual autonomy.*

**Keywords:** Children’s Literature, Cultural Memory, Gender, Narrative, Rural Space.

### **Introduction**

Children’s literature is often perceived as simple storytelling meant purely for entertainment. However, literary critics argue that texts written for young readers function as ideological tools that shape values and cultural identity. *The Magic of the Lost Temple* presents a compelling case for examining how heritage, memory, and agency intersect in contemporary Indian children’s fiction. Through the character of Nooni, Murthy constructs childhood as a space of inquiry, resilience, and participation. The novel situates cultural preservation within everyday village life, demonstrating that memory survives not only in monuments but also in lived practice. This paper situates the novel within broader debates in children’s literature studies and analyzes how Murthy integrates cultural instruction with narrative accessibility.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

*In An Introduction to Children’s Literature*, Peter Hunt argues that children’s fiction is never neutral but inherently pedagogical. He observes that “children’s books are inevitably didactic, in that they are written with a view to influencing their readers” (Hunt 15). This claim suggests that even seemingly simple narratives embed moral and ideological assumptions. Applying Hunt’s perspective to Murthy’s novel reveals how themes of heritage, responsibility, and respect are subtly integrated into engaging storytelling. Similarly, in *The Case of Peter Pan*, or *The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, Jacqueline Rose asserts that



children's literature is constructed through adult frameworks of authority. She writes that "children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver)" (Rose 8). Rose's framework highlights how adult concerns about continuity and morality shape narratives for children. Murty's novel reflects these theoretical insights. The rediscovery of the stepwell symbolizes anxieties about cultural erosion in modern India, while Noonni's curiosity becomes the narrative mechanism for cultural revival. Thus, the text negotiates between adult guidance and child agency.

### **Rural Space as Cultural Memory**

In Murty's novel, rural space functions as a living repository of cultural history. Unlike the urban environment characterized by structure and technology, Somanahalli nurtures experiential learning. Mahadeva's advice to Noonni—"Never turn back, Noonni. Look ahead and ride" (Murty 45) operates metaphorically as a lesson in resilience and perseverance. The village preserves memory through shared activity rather than formal documentation. The stepwell stands as a physical reminder of forgotten heritage, but its significance emerges only when reinterpreted through community engagement. Rural pedagogy is relational and oral, shaping identity through participation rather than instruction alone.

### **Intergenerational Bonding and Oral Traditions**

Cultural memory in the novel is transmitted through conversation and storytelling. Ajji explains the structure of the stepwell by saying, "It is a well that has steps inside so that it is easy to get to the bottom" (Murty 60). This explanation transforms architecture into lived memory. The mention of pouring water on "an idol of Lord Shiva" (Murty 60) highlights how ritual sustains tradition through repetition. These acts demonstrate that heritage is performed, not merely remembered. The older generation becomes custodian of inherited knowledge, while children become its future transmitters.

### **Childhood Curiosity and Gender Agency**

Murty portrays childhood as intellectually active rather than passive. Noonni's curiosity initiates the rediscovery of the temple. When reporters arrive, "nobody forgot little Noonni and her band of friends" (Murty 192). Public acknowledgment validates her contribution. Her confidence is evident when "she boldly said, 'Anyone who loves our village and believed in the existence of a stepwell would have done the same'" (Murty 192). The word "boldly" underscores female leadership in a genre traditionally dominated by male adventurers. Murty normalizes girlhood agency without overt ideological declaration. Noonni respects elders yet questions assumptions, demonstrating that empowerment can coexist with tradition.

### **Heritage Conservation and Collective Responsibility**

The rediscovery of the temple evolves into communal preservation. Officials, including Abdul Rasheed, collaborate with village elders. Recognition of the children's role reinforces intergenerational cooperation. Volunteers prepare informational material about the site, indicating that preservation includes education. Murty suggests modernization should



coexist with memory. Heritage becomes a shared civic responsibility rather than individual triumph.

### **Narrative Style and Accessibility**

Murty's prose is conversational and direct, enhancing readability. During a family discussion, Usha states, "Appa is not giving you excuses. He is telling you the truth" (Murty 12). The dialogue conveys respect for rural labor without explicit moralizing. The reference to "Chhota Bheem" (Murty 13) bridges urban and rural contexts by establishing Noonni as a modern city child before she travels to the village. Watching a popular television show reflects contemporary urban childhood shaped by media and technology. When the story shifts to Somanahalli, where learning happens through nature, conversation, and tradition, the contrast becomes clear. This transition shows that Noonni belongs to both worlds, suggesting that modern urban identity and rural heritage can coexist harmoniously rather than oppose each other.

### **Conclusion**

*The Magic of the Lost Temple* demonstrates how children's literature can function simultaneously as entertainment and cultural instruction. Drawing on Hunt's theory of didacticism and Rose's argument about adult mediation, this paper has shown that Murty's novel negotiates tradition and empowerment through the figure of Noonni. Rural space operates as a living archive of memory; oral traditions sustain heritage; curiosity enables discovery; and collective responsibility ensures preservation. Murty's accessible narrative style makes these themes available to young readers without overt moralization. Ultimately, the novel affirms that cultural memory survives through participation, dialogue, and reinterpretation. By placing a young girl at the center of heritage revival, Murty redefines childhood as intellectually capable and socially transformative.

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**Migration as Memory and Identity in *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai**

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**Abstract**

*Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day presents migration not merely as physical relocation but as a layered experience involving history, culture, and psychological transformation. Set in post-Partition Old Delhi, the novel reflects the silent but lasting consequences of the 1947 Partition of India. Though the narrative centers on the Das family, it captures the wider atmosphere of displacement, communal tension, and fractured belonging. Migration appears in multiple forms: historical migration caused by Partition, forced displacement through communal violence, internal migration through family separation, and cultural migration through identity transformation. This paper argues that Desai redefines migration as both an external and internal process. Through memory, emotional distance, and cultural shifts, the novel reveals how migration reshapes identity and home. By integrating textual evidence from the primary text and insights from critical scholarship, this study demonstrates that Clear Light of Day offers a subtle yet powerful meditation on migration in post-independence India.*

**Keywords:** Displacement, Identity, Memory, Migration, Partition.

**Introduction**

Migration has been one of the most defining experiences of twentieth-century India, particularly during the Partition of 1947. The division of India and Pakistan led to one of the largest mass migrations in history, displacing millions of people. Literature emerging from this period often explores themes of violence, exile, and loss. Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* differs from many Partition novels because it does not dramatize violent scenes; instead, it focuses on the quiet, psychological effects of migration within a middle-class family in Old Delhi. The novel's restrained tone intensifies its exploration of displacement as an emotional and cultural condition rather than merely a geographical movement.

Desai situates the Das family within a changing social landscape shaped by Partition. Although the family does not cross borders as refugees, they experience various forms of migration—neighbors leaving, siblings separating, and identities shifting. As Desai writes, "The house was full of the past, of the echoes of voices and footsteps that had faded but not disappeared" (Desai). This line captures how migration lingers in memory even when physical movement has ceased. Critics observe that Desai's fiction "explores the inner climate of her characters rather than external action" (Rao 45). Thus, migration in *Clear Light of Day* must be understood as both historical reality and psychological process. This paper examines four dimensions of migration in the novel: historical migration and Partition, forced



displacement and communal violence, internal migration and family separation, and cultural migration with identity transformation.

### **Historical Migration and Impact of Partition**

The Partition of India forms the historical backdrop of *Clear Light of Day*. Although the novel does not center on refugee camps or violent riots, the atmosphere of fear and change reflects the massive migration that followed independence. The Das family's Muslim neighbors leave Delhi, symbolizing the communal division of the nation. Their departure marks a transformation of the neighborhood's identity. The absence of once-familiar families demonstrates how migration reshapes social space. Desai subtly refers this historical shift through memory and silence. Bim recalls how political tensions altered daily life, showing how national events penetrate domestic spaces. The sense of loss is not only personal but communal. According to literary critic Meena Belliappa, Desai's work portrays "the impact of history on private lives in a deeply internalized manner" (Belliappa 112). The novel therefore treats Partition not as spectacle but as emotional residue. The historical migration during Partition resulted in fractured identities and disrupted communities. Even characters who remain physically in Delhi experience the psychological consequences of national division. The city itself becomes a witness to migration, bearing traces of absence and change. Through this quiet representation, Desai demonstrates that migration is not only movement across borders but also transformation within place.

### **Forced Displacement and Communal Violence**

Although Desai avoids graphic depictions of violence, the novel acknowledges the fear and insecurity that led to forced displacement. Communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims created an environment where coexistence became fragile. The evacuation of Muslim families from Delhi depicts how violence compels migration. Such displacement leaves behind silence and mistrust. In one reflective passage, Desai presents Delhi's uncertainty, suggest to the instability of the time. The emotional impact of communal division shapes Raja's fascination with Muslim culture and poetry. His admiration for Urdu literature occurs within a context where such cultural associations become politically sensitive. Scholar A. N. Dwivedi argues that Desai's fiction reveals "the subtle violence of alienation that follows social upheaval" (Dwivedi 89). Thus, even when physical violence remains offstage, its psychological effect is evident. Forced displacement disrupts the idea of home. Families are uprooted, identities questioned, and neighborhoods altered. The novel implies that communal migration produces not only geographic shifts but also emotional scars. Through restrained narrative technique, Desai conveys the haunting presence of violence without dramatizing it.

### **Internal Migration and Family Separation**

Migration in *Clear Light of Day* also occurs within the family structure. Raja's move to Hyderabad after marriage and Tara's relocation abroad represent voluntary yet transformative migrations. These movements create emotional distance among siblings. Bim, who remains in the ancestral home, feels abandoned and burdened with responsibility. The family house becomes a symbol of rootedness, while the siblings' departures represent



mobility. Tara's life away from Delhi exposes her to new social environments, altering her perspective on family and self. Raja's departure similarly signals a shift in loyalty and identity. Desai writes that "time and distance had done their work," emphasizing how migration changes relationships (Desai). Critic Jasbir Jain notes that Desai's novels frequently explore "the strain between belonging and separation" (Jain 134). Internal migration in the novel demonstrates how even voluntary movement can fracture intimacy. The siblings' differing choices reveal the tension between staying and leaving—a central dilemma in migration narratives.

### **Cultural Migration and Identity Transformation**

Cultural migration in the novel is most evident in Raja's attraction to Muslim culture and Urdu poetry. His admiration for the elegance and refinement of that tradition represents a crossing of cultural boundaries. This movement is not geographic but ideological. Raja aligns himself with a cultural identity that complicates his position within a Hindu family in post-Partition India. Similarly, Tara's adaptation to a new lifestyle after marriage illustrates cultural transformation. Exposure to different social expectations reshapes her sense of self. Cultural migration thus involves negotiation between inherited identity and acquired experience. According to critic C. Tina Joshly, diasporic consciousness in Desai's fiction reflects "a continuous negotiation between memory and cultural adaptation" (Joshly 58). Even within India, characters experience shifts in cultural belonging that resemble diasporic identity formation. Migration becomes a metaphor for change, growth, and sometimes alienation.

### **Conclusion**

*Clear Light of Day* redefines migration as a multidimensional experience encompassing history, emotion, and culture. Through the subtle portrayal of Partition's aftermath, forced displacement, family separation, and cultural transformation, Anita Desai reveals how migration shapes identity long after physical movement ends. The novel demonstrates that displacement can occur without crossing borders; it can exist within memory, relationships, and cultural affiliations. By focusing on psychological depth rather than dramatic action, Desai offers a nuanced understanding of migration's impact. The Das family's story reflects broader national experiences of loss and change in post-independence India. Migration in the novel is therefore both historical reality and symbolic process, illustrating how identity is continually reshaped by movement, separation, and reconciliation. Ultimately, *Clear Light of Day* stands as a significant contribution to Indian English literature's exploration of migration and belonging. The novel also shows that migration can take different forms. Historical migration during Partition changes the social structure of Delhi. Forced displacement caused by communal tension breaks communities. Internal migration within the Das family creates emotional distance and misunderstanding. Cultural migration, especially in Raja's attraction toward Muslim culture and Tara's adaptation to a new lifestyle, reveals how identity changes over time. Each character responds differently to movement and separation, showing that migration affects individuals in unique ways. Another important idea in the novel is that staying in one place does not mean remaining



unchanged. Bim, who stays in the family home, also experiences emotional migration. She struggles with anger, loneliness, and responsibility. Through memory and reflection, she gradually reaches understanding and forgiveness. This shows that migration can happen within the mind and heart, even without physical travel. Desai ultimately suggests that home is not just a physical space but an emotional and cultural idea. Migration challenges the meaning of home and forces characters to redefine belonging. By the end of the novel, reconciliation becomes possible when characters accept change and understand the past.

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## **Human Connections and Social Realities in Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth***

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### **Abstract**

*The novel *The Folded Earth* by Anuradha Roy presents a thoughtful portrayal of human relationships and social realities in a small Himalayan town. Instead of focusing on dramatic incidents, the narrative highlights everyday experiences that reveal deeper emotional and social truths. Through characters such as Maya, Charu, Puran, and Divan Sahib, the novel explores themes such as human connection, authority, marginalization, and loneliness in old age. The interactions between the characters may appear ordinary, yet they reveal complex emotions and social inequalities. This paper examines how the novel represents the quiet rhythms of rural life while also exposing the realities of social hierarchy and emotional isolation. By focusing on small but meaningful moments, the novel demonstrates how everyday life can reveal important insights about human relationships and social structures.*

**Keywords:** Authority, Aging, Human Connection, Loneliness, Marginalization, Rural Life.

### **Introduction**

Indian English literature often explores the emotional and social complexities of human life through realistic narratives and detailed observations. One such important work is *The Folded Earth* by Anuradha Roy. The novel is set in a quiet Himalayan town and follows the experiences of Maya, the central character, which moves there after the death of her husband. Through Maya's perspective, the narrative gradually reveals the lives, struggles, and emotions of the people living in the town. Rather than focusing on dramatic conflicts, the novel pays attention to everyday routines and small interactions. These ordinary moments often reveal deeper truths about society and human relationships. Maya's interactions with villagers such as Charu and Puran allow readers to understand the difficulties faced by marginalized individuals. At the same time, the character of Divan Sahib represents the loneliness and emotional isolation that often accompany old age. Another important aspect of the novel is its portrayal of authority and social hierarchy. Individuals in positions of power sometimes treat poor villagers harshly, revealing the inequalities that exist within the community. Through these different characters and situations, the novel presents a realistic picture of rural society. This paper therefore examines how *The Folded Earth* portrays human connections and social realities through simple everyday experiences. It focuses particularly on the themes of authority and marginalization, loneliness in old age, and the emotional relationships that develop between individuals within the community.

**Memory, Loss, and the Search for Connection**

One of the central emotional themes in *The Folded Earth* is the experience of memory and loss. The protagonist Maya moves to a small Himalayan town after the tragic death of her husband. This loss has a strong impact on her emotional life and influences how she views the world around her. Maya often remembers the moments she shared with her husband, and these memories make her feel both comfort and sadness. Because of this emotional burden, she initially lives a quiet and somewhat isolated life in the hill town. The peaceful surroundings contrast with the pain she carries within her, showing how personal grief can exist even in a calm environment. As the story progresses, the natural setting and the people around Maya slowly begin to influence her perspective. The village is not filled with dramatic events, but with small everyday interactions. These simple experiences encourage Maya to observe the lives of others more closely. Through her encounters with different characters, she realizes that many people around her are also dealing with their own struggles and memories. This understanding gradually changes the way she relates to the world. Instead of remaining emotionally distant, Maya begins to develop a sense of empathy toward the people she meets. The theme of memory in the novel also reflects how the past continues to shape a person's identity. Maya cannot completely escape her memories, but she learns to live with them while building new connections in the present. Her interactions with villagers help her recognize that life continues through relationships and shared experiences. In this way, the narrative suggests that human connections can provide emotional support during difficult times. This idea is also supported by literary criticism that highlights the emotional depth of Roy's writing. According to Peter Barry, literature often explores how personal experiences such as memory and loss shape a character's identity and emotional understanding of the world. From this perspective, Maya's reflections and interactions illustrate how individual grief can lead to a deeper awareness of other people's lives. The novel therefore presents memory not only as a source of pain but also as a path toward emotional growth and connection. Through Maya's journey, *The Folded Earth* shows that healing does not happen suddenly. Instead, it occurs gradually through observation, empathy, and small moments of interaction with others. By portraying this quiet emotional transformation, the novel emphasizes that human connections often emerge in subtle ways within everyday life.

**The Quiet Rhythms of Rural Life and Human Connection**

One of the most distinctive aspects of *The Folded Earth* is its gentle portrayal of everyday life in a Himalayan town. The novel captures the slow rhythm of rural living, where daily routines and small interactions shape the experiences of individuals. Instead of dramatic events, the narrative focuses on simple moments that reveal the emotional depth of the characters. A good example of this is the daily arrival of Charu, a young village girl who brings milk to Maya every morning. Her presence becomes a regular part of Maya's daily routine. The soft sounds of her footsteps and the clinking of the steel container carrying milk signal the beginning of the morning. These small details help create a vivid sense of place and reflect the calm and predictable rhythm of village life. Through these ordinary



interactions, Maya gradually develops a deeper awareness of the people around her. Charu is not simply a girl delivering milk; she represents the innocence and quiet struggles of rural childhood. Maya's observations of such moments reveal her growing empathy and understanding toward the lives of others in the community. These scenes emphasize one of the central ideas of the novel: meaningful human relationships often develop through simple and ordinary experiences. The quiet interactions between Maya and the villagers reflect emotional awareness and human understanding. Through these moments, the novel shows that everyday life can reveal deeper insights about human emotions and connections.

### **Loneliness and Emotional Isolation in Old Age**

Another important theme explored in the novel is the emotional isolation experienced by elderly individuals. As people grow older, they often become physically weaker and socially disconnected from the active world around them. The character of Divan Sahib represents this emotional condition in a subtle but powerful way. The novel subtly portrays the emotional isolation experienced by the elderly through the character of Divan Sahib. Sitting alone in his dark, high-ceilinged room surrounded by dusty bookshelves and memories of the past, he remarks, "The older, the colder." (Roy 180) This statement symbolically reflects the emotional distance that often accompanies old age. As time passes, relationships weaken, physical strength declines, and individuals become increasingly detached from the vibrant world around them. Divan Sahib's surroundings reflect a life that is slowly fading into the past. His room, filled with old books and memories, symbolizes a world that has become distant from the present. Although he may have once played an active role in society, he now lives in quiet solitude. Through this brief but meaningful statement, the novel highlights the emotional loneliness that can accompany aging. Divan Sahib's reflection reminds readers that human beings need connection and understanding at every stage of life. His character adds psychological depth to the narrative by illustrating how aging can lead to isolation and quiet resignation.

### **Authority and the Marginalized**

The novel also highlights the presence of social inequality and the harsh exercise of authority in rural society. Certain individuals hold power and control, while poor villagers often remain vulnerable and powerless. Through small but meaningful incidents, the narrative exposes the rigid social hierarchy within the community. The harsh exercise of authority is clearly seen when Mr. Chauhan shouts, "Not here. Not here! No cow here!" (Roy 161) while striking the metal sign with his stick. This moment highlights the rigid power structure in the village where officials assert control aggressively, while poor villagers like Puran are left frightened and helpless. The incident reveals how authority often ignores the vulnerability and struggles of ordinary people. This scene illustrates how authority can become oppressive when it is exercised without empathy. Puran represents the marginalized individuals in society who struggle to survive within a system controlled by powerful figures. The aggressive behavior of Mr. Chauhan shows how those in positions of authority may enforce rules without considering the difficulties faced by the poor. Through this moment, the novel exposes the inequality present in rural communities. Although the town appears calm and



peaceful, the lives of poor villagers are often shaped by fear, dependency, and social limitations. The narrative encourages readers to recognize the struggles faced by marginalized individuals and to reflect on the imbalance of power within society.

### **Nature and the Sense of Place**

Another significant feature of *The Folded Earth* is its strong depiction of the natural environment of the Himalayan region. The mountains, forests, animals, and quiet landscapes create a vivid sense of place throughout the narrative. Nature is not merely a background setting; it becomes an important element that influences the emotional experiences of the characters. The peaceful surroundings of the town reflect the slow and reflective pace of life in the hills. The sounds of birds, animals, and distant human activity contribute to the calm atmosphere of the community. These natural details help readers visualize the setting and understand the daily rhythm of rural life. For Maya, the natural environment also becomes a space for reflection and emotional healing. After experiencing personal loss, she gradually finds comfort in observing the quiet beauty of the landscape. The mountains and forests provide a sense of stability and continuity that contrasts with the uncertainties of human life. Through these descriptions, the novel suggests that human life and nature are closely connected. The environment shapes the routines, emotions, and experiences of the people who live in the town. In this way, nature becomes an essential part of the narrative's exploration of solitude, memory, and human relationships

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, *The Folded Earth* presents a thoughtful exploration of human relationships and social realities within the setting of a quiet Himalayan town. Through the experiences of Maya and the lives of the people around her, the novel reveals how ordinary moments can reflect deeper emotional and social truths. Maya's life after the loss of her husband shows how memory and grief influence a person's inner world. At the same time, her gradual interaction with the people in the village helps her move from isolation toward a better understanding of others. The novel also presents the social realities that shape the lives of different characters. Divan Sahib's reflection, "The older, the colder," (Roy 180) expresses the loneliness and emotional distance that can accompany old age. In a similar way, the incident in which Mr. Chauhan shouts "Not here. Not here! No cow here!" (Roy 161) reveals the unequal power relations between authority figures and marginalized villagers like Puran. These moments demonstrate how personal emotions and social structures exist together in everyday life. Through these characters and situations, the novel suggests that human connections often develop quietly through empathy, observation, and shared experiences. Maya's growing awareness of the people around her shows how individuals can gradually rebuild emotional connections even after experiencing loss. Literary critics also emphasize that literature often reflects the relationship between individual emotions and social conditions. For example, Peter Barry explains that literary texts help readers understand how characters' personal experiences shape their emotional responses to the world. (11-13) Similarly, Terry Eagleton notes that literature frequently represents the social realities that influence human behavior and relationships. (168) In this way, Roy's novel



brings together personal memory, emotional loneliness, and social inequality within a single narrative. By focusing on everyday life rather than dramatic events, *The Folded Earth* shows how small interactions can reveal deeper truths about human existence. Ultimately, the novel highlights the importance of empathy and understanding, suggesting that meaningful human connections can develop even in the quiet and ordinary moments of life.

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## **Complexities of Human Existence in Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the complexities of human existence in *The Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai. The novel portrays the struggles of Hari and Lila, two children forced to assume responsibility due to poverty, parental failure, and social neglect. Through the contrast between the rural village of Thul and the urban city of Bombay, Desai explores themes of loss of childhood, family breakdown, displacement, and moral conflict. Poverty affects not only material survival but also emotional growth. The narrative emphasizes resilience, silence, and ethical responsibility, ultimately presenting survival as a quiet yet powerful expression of human dignity and hope.*

**Keywords:** Human Existence, Poverty, Childhood Responsibility, Adaptation, Suffering.

### **Introduction**

The novel presents a realistic portrayal of human existence shaped by economic hardship, emotional strain, and moral responsibility. Set in the coastal village of Thul, the story focuses on Hari and Lila, who are compelled to assume adult roles due to their father's alcoholism and their mother's illness. Poverty disrupts their education and childhood, forcing them into premature maturity. Through the movement between village and city life, the narrative explores themes of displacement, survival, and resilience. It ultimately suggests that human strength lies in quiet endurance rather than in dramatic transformation.

### **Social and Economic Background**

In *The Village by the Sea*, Anita Desai presents rural life as economically fragile and socially neglected. The village of Thul depends on fishing, seasonal labour, and uncertain natural conditions. A poor catch or bad weather directly affects food and income, making survival unstable. Poverty is therefore shown as a continuous reality rather than a temporary difficulty. The absence of proper medical care worsens the mother's illness, while the lack of steady employment weakens family security. Education becomes secondary to survival. Through this socio-economic setting, Desai subtly critiques unequal development in postcolonial India. The contrast between Thul and Bombay highlights modernization. While the village represents tradition and community bonds, the city represents industrial discipline and economic opportunity. However, material opportunity does not ensure emotional stability, suggesting that development alone cannot solve human suffering.

### **Poverty and the Loss of Childhood**

Poverty in the novel destroys the natural experience of childhood. Hari and Lila are forced to prioritize responsibility over education and play. Their father's alcoholism and their



mother's illness create a vacuum of protection, pushing them into adult roles. Hari's migration to Bombay marks the end of innocence. As the novel suggests, "She couldn't face the dead ashes or the dirty cooking pots of the night before until she had been out on the beach..." (*Desai* 6) highlighting how necessity replaces childhood freedom. Responsibility becomes unavoidable. Lila's experience reflects emotional sacrifice. She manages the household quietly, suppressing her own needs. Poverty in the novel is not only financial deprivation but also emotional limitation. Childhood becomes a burdened stage, shaped by duty and endurance rather than joy.

### **Family Breakdown and Emotional Burden**

The breakdown of the family structure intensifies psychological strain. The father's alcoholism creates fear and instability, weakening his role as provider. The mother's illness removes emotional warmth from the household. The home, which should provide comfort, becomes a place of anxiety. The children are compelled to become caregivers and decision-makers. This role reversal exposes the fragility of traditional family systems. *Desai* portrays emotional suffering through silence rather than dramatic confrontation. The burden of responsibility forces maturity. Survival becomes a moral duty rather than a choice.

### **Village and City as Spaces of Struggle**

The village symbolizes rootedness, collective life, and connection to nature. Its rhythm follows the tides and seasons, giving a sense of continuity. However, it restricts economic mobility and opportunity. Bombay, in contrast, represents industrial growth and impersonality. In the city, Hari feels isolated and invisible. As *Anita Desai* describes, "His fellow passengers were pushing and shoving and jostling past him and he was carried along by them" (*Desai* 114) emphasizing the alienation of urban life. Human identity in the city is linked to productivity rather than relationships. Through this contrast, the novel suggests that both spaces demand adaptation. The village offers belonging but limited progress; the city offers income but emotional distance. Human existence is shaped by negotiation between these environments.

### **Psychological and Moral Conflicts**

Beyond material hardship, the characters face internal dilemmas that shape their maturity. Hari struggles between personal desire and family responsibility; his decision to leave the village reflects both courage and anxiety. Though motivated by hope, he fears failure and feels guilt for leaving his sisters, revealing the emotional cost of responsibility. His childhood is interrupted by necessity, forcing him into adulthood prematurely. Lila's psychological conflict is quieter but equally profound. She suppresses exhaustion and frustration to maintain stability within the family, and her silence reflects inner discipline and moral awareness. The characters often endure emotional isolation, confronting difficulties without open expression. *Desai* avoids simple moral judgment, particularly in portraying the father, whose weakness highlights human frailty rather than villainy. Poverty itself creates complex ethical choices, where right and wrong are shaped by survival. Through these layered conflicts, the novel suggests that moral growth emerges not from ideal conditions but from continuous struggle and difficult decisions.

**Silence, Resilience and Hope**

Silence functions as both a theme and a technique in the novel. Characters endure suffering without loud protest or dramatic confrontation. Emotional restraint preserves dignity and prevents emotional collapse. Silence becomes a protective mechanism through which pain is internalized rather than displayed. Instead of expressing anger or despair openly, the characters respond through action and responsibility. This quiet endurance reflects Desai's belief that strength often exists beneath outward calm. Silence also deepens psychological realism in the novel. Much of the characters' growth occurs internally rather than through speeches or dramatic rebellion. Hari and Lila rarely articulate their fears, yet their thoughts and actions reveal emotional maturity. Desai uses minimal dialogue and reflective description to show that true suffering is often unspoken. In this way, silence becomes a form of emotional discipline and moral awareness. Resilience in the novel develops gradually rather than suddenly. Hari's journey to Bombay is a turning point, not because it transforms him instantly, but because it teaches him patience, skill, and observation. Learning watch-repairing symbolizes constructive growth. He does not escape hardship; instead, he adapts to it. His return to the village represents renewed purpose and practical confidence. Resilience is therefore shown as the ability to learn from adversity rather than be defeated by it.

Lila represents another dimension of resilience. Her strength lies in consistency and care. She maintains order within the household, supports her sisters, and sustains emotional balance. Her endurance is quiet but steady, suggesting that resilience can exist in routine acts of responsibility. Desai highlights that courage is not always dramatic; sometimes it is expressed through everyday perseverance. Hope in the novel is realistic and grounded in effort. It does not promise wealth or sudden success. Instead, hope emerges through small achievements—earning money, gaining skills, rebuilding stability. The ending suggests gradual improvement rather than complete resolution. Life remains uncertain, yet the characters move forward with greater awareness and determination. Nature also reinforces hope. The sea, though unpredictable, continues its rhythm, symbolizing continuity and renewal. Just as tides return, human life continues despite setbacks. Desai implies that hope lies in persistence—the willingness to continue even without guarantees. Ultimately, survival itself becomes meaningful. Shaped by responsibility, patience, and quiet strength, hope in the novel is not idealistic fantasy but moral endurance. Through silence and resilience, Desai affirms that human dignity survives even in conditions of hardship.

**Conclusion**

The novel affirms that human existence is defined by endurance, responsibility, and hope. Survival is portrayed not as a heroic achievement but as steady perseverance amid poverty and emotional hardship. Family breakdown, displacement, and uncertainty test the characters, yet resilience emerges through commitment and care. The narrative concludes with continuity rather than dramatic resolution, emphasizing dignity in persistence. Ultimately, the work presents survival itself as a profound human achievement grounded in moral awareness and quiet courage.



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## **Representations of Marginalised Community as Self-Regulating Oppressor in Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Chemmeen***

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### **Abstract**

*With an emphasis on how the oppressed group itself turns into a tool of internal oppression, this article explores Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's portrayal of the marginalised fishing community in Chemmeen. The story depicts the life of fishermen who are economically and socially marginalised and is set in Kerala's coastal fishing villages. Beyond external oppression, however, the text shows how strict moral standards in particular, the belief that the wife's chastity ensures her husband's safety at searve as tools of social control. The story illustrates how internalised patriarchy and superstition control female bodies and perpetuate fear-based conformity through Karuthamma's terrible destiny and Palani's passing. This article makes the case, using a feminist-subaltern perspective, that Chemmeen portrays marginalisation as a self-sustaining system within the community rather than just as external dominance.*

**Keywords:** Marginalisation, Oppression, Patriarchy, Social Realism, Regional Literature.

### **Introduction**

The voices of marginalised groups that are shut out of mainstream caste, class, and power hierarchies are frequently highlighted in South Asian literature. Thakazhi depicts the fishermen in *Chemmeen* as socially marginalised and economically precarious. However, their pain is not romanticised in the book. Rather, it provides a realistic depiction of how repressive codes, limitations, and hierarchies are present in marginalised locations. The idea that a fisherman's survival depends on his wife's sexual purity unites the fishing community. This conviction turns into a moral code that is more powerful than any institutional authority. As a result, the community perpetuates its own management system despite being excluded in larger society. This article examines how Thakazhi depicts marginalisation as multifaceted the community imposes internal oppression, especially with regard to women, while also being oppressed by socioeconomic mechanisms.

### **Social Exclusion and Financial Risk in *Chemmeen***

The fishermen are at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. Their only source of income is the sea, which is hazardous and unpredictable. This insecurities are reflected in Chembankunju's fixation with wealth. He becomes unstable morally and psychologically as a result of his ambition to advance financially. The book illustrates how relationships, goals, and fears are influenced by poverty. A persistent dread of survival is caused by economic marginalisation. But Thakazhi doesn't make the community into helpless victims. Rather, he



demonstrates how this vulnerability makes internal control systems more resilient. Economic marginalisation thus forms the basis for the construction of moral rigidity.

### **Oppression in a Marginalised Setting**

The fact that marginalised groups are not necessarily egalitarian is among the novel's most important lessons. Energy flows within. Moral policing, mistrust, and gossip are used as regulatory instruments. Karuthamma's punishment comes from her beliefs rather than from the state or the law. The community's reluctance to go fishing with Palani's, Panchami, and Chembankunju's spiral into insanity are all examples of how group anxiety can lead to exclusion. This supports the claim made by subaltern theory that oppression is both horizontal (among marginalised groups themselves) and vertical (dominant against marginalised). Thus, by demonstrating how the oppressed may internalise and perpetuate the prevailing patriarchal logic, Thakazhi muddies the concept of victimhood.

### **Tragic Irony and Realism**

Thakazhi's realism is demonstrated by his refusal to state unequivocally whether or not divine punishment is real. Rather than being the result of supernatural justice, Palani's death can be interpreted as a natural accident. The community, however, choose to see it as a moral consequence. The novel's realism is strengthened by this ambiguity. The belief systems that govern human behaviour are what produce the catastrophe rather than heavenly power. The tragedy of Karuthamma and Pareekutty on the shore represents how social norms ruin love. The sea becomes a cultural force influenced by myth, terror, and patriarchy rather than just a symbol of nature.

### **Women as a Community Honour Burden**

The entire fishing community holds Karuthamma's body in high regard. Autonomy is denied to her personal wants. She is caught between duty and love. She continues to be suspected even after marriage. The book illustrates the twofold marginalisation that women in marginalised communities endure: Vulnerability in the economy, moral surveillance that is patriarchal as a result, Thakazhi portrays marginalisation as a gendered experience. Thakazhi's *Chemmeen* makes a substantial contribution to South Asian literature. The work illustrates how oppression is multifaceted, not only imposed from dominant societal systems but also replicated inside by depicting the fishermen's internalised moral norms, superstition, and patriarchal enforcement. The traditional portrayal of marginalised groups as helpless victims is contested by this realism perspective, which presents a nuanced and complicated picture in which social control, fear, and action coexist. By demonstrating that tales of marginalisation must take into consideration internal hierarchies and cultural rules in addition to external dominance, the novel thereby broadens the scope of South Asian literary discourse.

### **Psychological impact of Internal Oppression**

In addition to illustrating the fishing community's visible struggles, Thakazhi's *Chemmeen* explores the psychological and emotional costs of internalised moral standards. The community's strict adherence to the myth of the wife's chastity fosters a climate of fear, guilt, and worry. Due to the community's persistent surveillance of her liberty and



aspirations, Karuthamma, the female heroine, endures ongoing psychological pressure. Because of this ongoing monitoring, people become hyper vigilant and compare every decision or action to what society expects. Despite being manly, Palani is also affected psychologically. He knows that Karuthamma's adherence to the moral code indirectly affects his own existence. This highlights the ways that internalised oppression affects both genders in the community by causing interpersonal conflict and moral quandaries. Furthermore, Thakazhi depicts gossip and group condemnation as subtly coercive mental processes. Individual behaviour is shaped by the fear of social rejection and of being the source of group disaster. The novel shows through these portrayals that psychological control is just as potent as economic or physical marginalisation. People absorb social standards, controlling others and themselves, frequently without realising it, perpetuating an oppressive cycle. Through examining the inner landscapes of characters' minds, Thakazhi shows how oppression in marginalised communities is multifaceted internal and external pressures from tradition and community combine to form a self-regulating system of control and conformity.

### **Discussion**

Thakazhi offers a complex depiction of South Asian regional life through *Chemmeen* that transcends straightforward narrative. He portrays the genuineness of a marginalised population by emphasising the unique accent, coastal customs, work habits, and folk beliefs of Kerala's fishermen. These components provide the story a cultural foundation and realism by influencing the characters' identities, choices, and social interactions. However, Thakazhi does not romanticise or idealise the hardships faced by the tribe. The novel shows how the community's internalised rules and beliefs can be just as confining as external factors like economic hardship, caste hierarchy, and the unpredictable nature of the sea. One example of an internalised regulating mechanism is the misconception that a wife's chastity guarantees her husband's safety at sea. The fishermen enforce social discipline on themselves and one another through ongoing surveillance, gossip, and group judgement, demonstrating how oppression can be self-perpetuating even within oppressed communities. The major finding of this study, as highlighted by Surya, is that "A marginalised community can function as its own oppressor by internalising patriarchal codes and sustaining control through myth" (Surya 4). This demonstrates that marginalisation is multifaceted and involves more than just being shut out of the majority of social, economic, or political power. It also involves internalising prevailing notions that control behaviour, limit individual freedom, and create moral distress. Thakazhi's presentation of this paradox, which is free of hyperbole and moralising, demonstrates his realism. Neither poverty nor cultural traditions are idealised in the book. Rather, it strikes a balance between cultural distinctiveness and social critique, helping readers see that sexism, fear, and hierarchies can subtly influence people's lives even in close-knit, underprivileged communities. All things considered, this multi-layered representation highlights how complex, relational, and self-regulating marginalisation is, and how South Asian realist literature can serve as both critical social commentary and ethnographic documentation, revealing power dynamics within communities while maintaining cultural authenticity.



## Conclusion

*Chemmeen* is more than just a heart breaking tale of love. It delves deeply into the ways underprivileged societies deal with morality, ideology, and survival. According to Thakazhi, oppression can originate in the communal consciousness rather than always emanating from an outside authority. The work makes a substantial contribution to South Asian realist writing by depicting internalised patriarchy and morality based on dread. It shows that local voices are intricate areas where power, belief, and resistance converge rather than being straightforward accounts of victimisation. As a result, *Chemmeen* is a potent work that pushes readers to reconsider marginalisation as a system that can perpetuate its own hierarchies in addition to being an exclusion from power.

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## **Reading Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Stories* through Laura Mulvey's concept of Male Gaze**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper closely reads the Indian writer Mahasweta Devi's short story collection *Breast Stories* through Laura Mulvey's Male gaze. *Breast Stories*, written by Mahasweta Devi and translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is a powerful collection of short stories. Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Stories* portray how women's bodies are controlled and used within patriarchal, economic, and political structures. Through characters like Jashoda, Dopdi, and Gangor, the text reveals different forms of exploitation and objectification faced by marginalized women. As marginalized women, they are frequently valued solely for their physical bodies and not for their identity or emotional individuality. The concept of the Male Gaze helps to understand how Devi's women are reduced to physical bodies and denied individuality and freedom. At the same time, the paper also highlights moments of resistance where these women challenge oppression and show courage in difficult situations.*

**Keywords:** Bodily Exploitation, Male Gaze, Mahasweta Devi, Marginalized Women.

### **Introduction**

Mahasweta Devi was an important Indian writer and social activist who dedicated her life to speaking about injustice in society. She was born in West Bengal into a Brahmin family that valued literature and culture. Even though she came from a privileged background, she did not distance herself from marginalized communities. She showed genuine concern for tribal people, poor laborers, and oppressed women. What I respect most about her is that she did not remain silent. Through her stories, she tried to make readers understand the harsh realities faced by those who have no voice. In my understanding, Mahasweta Devi believed that literature should not only entertain but also create awareness. Her works make us uncomfortable at times, but they also make us think deeply about society and its unfair systems. Because of this, I see her not just as a writer, but as someone who used literature as a form of social responsibility. The Short story collection *Breast Stories* (1997) is one of the most important and powerful works of Mahasweta Devi. This collection consists of three short stories "The Breast-Giver", "Draupadi", and "Behind the Bodice" which present women from marginalized backgrounds who are subjected to economic exploitation, state violence, and social humiliation. In these stories, women's bodies become central to the narrative. Their bodies are not shown as symbols of beauty or romance. Instead, they become sites of labor, violence, humiliation, and control. In "The Breast-Giver," the female body is connected to economic survival and exploitation. In "Draupadi," the body becomes a target



of political power and state violence. In “Behind the Bodice,” the body is objectified and exposed to social and media attention. Through these situations, Devi shows how society often sees women only for their bodies, not for who they are as people.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The “Male gaze” is the idea that women are often seen from a masculine perspective that focuses mainly on their bodies as objects of desire, rather than recognizing them as complete human beings with thoughts and feelings. In this way, men are placed in a position of power, and women are treated as things to be looked at, judged, or controlled. This idea helps explain how literature, media, and society sometimes focus on women’s physical bodies instead of their individuality. The term Male gaze was first introduced by Laura Mulvey in her famous essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”(1975), which had a big impact on how people think about women in film and other cultural texts. In the essay, Mulvey writes that “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (11). From my perspective, this means that women are often reduced to objects for male vision, with men taking the active role of the observer and women becoming the observed. Although Mulvey originally discussed cinema, the Male gaze can also be applied to literature. In stories, women’s bodies can be described and treated in ways that reflect similar power structures, making them sites of control and exploitation. In *Breast Stories*, this lens helps me see how women’s bodies are repeatedly objectified, watched, and controlled instead of being recognized as complete individuals. Mulvey explains that the male gaze works in three ways (17–18)

1. The narrator’s gaze – How the story describes women, often focusing on their appearance or physical actions, turning their bodies into objects for the reader.
2. The male characters’ gaze – How men within the story look at or control women, positioning them as objects of desire or power.
3. The spectator’s gaze – How readers are invited to look at women in the same way, reinforcing the idea that women’s bodies are meant for observation and judgment.

From my perspective, these three types of gaze help explain *Breast Stories*. Women like Jashoda, Dopdi, and Gangor are shown in ways that make it clear how society is always watching, judging, and controlling their breasts and bodies. Each gaze adds another layer of objectification, so we can see that what they go through isn’t just personal but it’s also shaped by bigger social and cultural power.

### **Male Gaze and Political Exploitation: Draupadi**

In “Draupadi”, the protagonist Dopdi Mejhen’s body becomes a clear site of both male gaze and political exploitation. As a tribal woman accused of helping rebels, she is captured and assaulted by the authorities, and her injuries are described very clearly to show the brutality she faces. At one point, the story mentions her breasts as “bitten raw, the nipples torn,” (Devi 34-35) showing how the state and men in power treat her body as an object to control and humiliate . This reflects Laura Mulvey’s idea of the male gaze, where women’s bodies are watched, judged, and objectified rather than seen as full human beings. Despite this, Dopdi refuses to be ashamed or cover herself. She boldly says, “There isn’t a man here



that I should be ashamed... Come on, counter me, come on, counter me!” (Devi 37). By doing this, she turns her wounded body into a way to resist the control imposed on her. Later, when she pushes the officer Senanayak with her injured breasts and he becomes afraid, it shows that even under the male gaze and political violence, her body is not just an object of humiliation but also a tool of defiance. Through these events, Devi demonstrates how women’s bodies can be controlled and objectified by both men and the state, yet they can also become a site of resistance. Using the male gaze as a framework helps us understand that Dopdi’s experiences are not just personal suffering but are shaped by larger structures of power that try to dominate and control women.

### **Male Gaze and Bodily Exploitation: The Breast-Giver**

Similarly, in her second story “The Breast-Giver,” Jashoda’s body becomes a tool for economic survival. Devi clearly shows this when she writes, “Jashoda was a profession, professional mother” (Devi 40). This line is very powerful because it reduces motherhood to a paid occupation. Jashoda is not valued for her emotions or identity but for her ability to produce milk. Her breasts become a source of income for the family she serves. Later, the irony becomes painful when Devi describes her illness and shows how the same breasts that fed so many children are now diseased and neglected. The society that once depended on her body abandons her when she can no longer provide milk. From the perspective of Laura Mulvey’s male gaze, Jashoda is not sexualized in a romantic way, but she is still objectified. Her body is watched, controlled, and valued only for its function. The gaze here is economic her worth depends on how useful her body is to others. Devi criticizes a system where a woman’s body is treated as labor and commodity rather than as her own.

### **Social and Media Gaze: Behind the Bodice**

In “Behind the Bodice” from *Breast Stories* by Mahasweta Devi, Gangor’s body becomes the object of media and public curiosity. Upin first approaches her with fascination, but later he is forced to confront the violent truth of what has happened to her. Devi shockingly describes her body as: “No breasts. Two dry scars, wrinkled skin, quite flat. The two raging volcanic craters spew liquid lava at Upin” (Devi 157). This disturbing image completely breaks the earlier romanticized or aesthetic way of looking at her body. Later in the story, when Gangor confronts Upin and reveals the violence done to her body, the situation changes. The same body that was once photographed with fascination now becomes a painful reminder of exploitation. Through this shift, Devi makes readers uncomfortable and forces them to question their own position as spectators. From a male gaze perspective, Gangor is first reduced to an image, but by the end, she challenges that gaze. Her confrontation shows that even when a woman’s body is objectified and commercialized, it can still become a space of resistance.

### **Resistance and Reversal of the Gaze**

Looking at Devi’s stories, it’s clear that women’s bodies are not just places where suffering happens, they can also be spaces of resistance. From my point of view, Dopdi in “Draupadi” refuses to feel shame even when she is publicly stripped. She boldly says, “Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky-splitting,



and sharp as her ululation, “What’s the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?” (Devi 36-37). By saying this and standing up to her oppressors, she flips the gaze back on them and takes back some power over her body. Jashoda in “The Breast-Giver”, even though her body is used and watched constantly for work and feeding others, resists quietly by keeping her patience and dignity. She keeps taking care of others while still holding on to her sense of self. Gangor in “Behind the Bodice” faces the whole village and media staring at her. Even after extreme exploitation, Gangor’s body stands not as an object of shame, but as a strong symbol of resistance. From the perspective of the present researcher, Devi shows that resistance doesn’t always have to be loud. It can be quiet, patient, or small, but it still matters. In all these cases, the women take back control over their bodies in some way, turning spaces of oppression into moments of defiance. Using Laura Mulvey’s idea of the male gaze, it’s clear that even when women are being controlled or looked at, their bodies can still be a place to show courage, push back, and stay strong.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, reading *Breast Stories* by Mahasweta Devi through Laura Mulvey’s idea of the male gaze helps the readers understand how women’s bodies are controlled by political, economic, and social systems. In all three stories, the female body is watched, judged, and used, but it also becomes a space of resistance. Dopdi’s courage, Jashoda’s silent suffering, and Gangor’s strength show that women are not just victims; they question and challenge the power that tries to control them. This idea also connects with Dalit women writers like Bama in *Karukku*, P. Sivakami in *The Grip of Change*, and Baby Kamble in *The Prisons We Broke*, who also write about caste, gender, and women’s struggles. These works show that literature is not only for entertainment but also for speaking truth about injustice. In the end, what is meant to shame these women becomes the very source of their strength.

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