

Title Page

Reading Humanities Today

Edited and Published by

Muhammedali P

Assistant Professor of English,

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

Reading Humanities Today

Edited and Published by

Muhammedali P

Assistant Professor of English,

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

pmali645@gmail.com

Published in January 2024

Rs: 499

ISBN: 978-93-5996-486-7

Copyright: Mr. Muhammedali P

The views and opinions expressed in this book are the authors' own and the facts are as reported by them and the publisher not in any way liable for the same

Contents

Foreword	
Preface	
1. Mala-Literature's Influence on the Socio-Political Landscape of Mappila Muslims: A Study- Ms. Aneesa Minnath Beevi & Dr. Shahina Mol A.K.	1
2. Mourning over the Past and its Effect on Diaspora in the New Land: A Critical Reading of <i>If Today Be Sweet</i> - Ms. Anshida E P.	15

3. Socio-Political Turmoil and Economic Strife: A Dual Exploration of Dictatorships in North Korea and Libya through Select Literary Works. Ms. Anshida M.24
4. Endurance and Resilience: Unveiling Trauma in *Stolen Lives*.
Ms. A. Binooja P. 33
5. Balancing Multiple Selves and Women's Creativity: A Reading of Elif Shafak's *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*. Ms. Ameena V M.44
6. The Enigma of Troubled Offspring: A Study of Zoje Stage's *Baby Teeth* and Lucinda Berry's *The Perfect Child*. Ms. Bahsha Kalayath.53
7. From Outbreak to Isolation: A Literary Journey through Pandemic Narratives of 21st Century with Special Reference to the Movies *Contagion* and *Virus*. Ms. Fathima Shirin Shahana & Thrishna P.62
8. Breaking Chains: Unveiling the Feminist Dystopia in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* Ms. Hana Fathima P.68
9. Uncovering Multicultural Conflicts in the Novel *The Nature of Passion*
Ms. Hiba Sherin C.....77
10. Liberating Discourse: Unleashing the Power of Language in Transgender Advocacy and Empowerment. Ms. Malavika K V & Ms. Sangeeta K.87
11. Human Beings and State of Minds: Analysing Select Illness Narratives Ms. Nafla Nharakkodan & Ms. Sangeeta K.....95
12. Exploring Postcolonial Feminist Identity: Analysis of Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams*
Ms. Rafsina Sherin & Dr. Shahina Mol A.K.107
13. Power Dynamics and Personal Autonomy in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*
Ms. Rishana T & Mr. Sidhique P.115
14. Reimagining Female Identity: Deconstructing The Mahabharata through Fiction
Ms. Sangeeta K128
15. Resilience Unveiled: Navigating Female Identity and Challenging Stereotypes in Select South Asian Fiction Ms. Shahada K P & Mr. Muhammedali P.135
16. Unraveling the Tapestry of Ethics and Philosophy in the Modern World through *Ethics: History, Theory And Contemporary Issues* By Steven M. Cahn & Peter Markie Ms. Sumayya A. P. 145

Foreward

Humanities include the branches of knowledge that deals with the academic study of human society and their culture, including the analytical and critical methods of inquiry based on human values, lives, languages, literatures , arts, religions, philosophies etc. As a group of educational disciplines, the humanities are distinguished in content and method from other domains of knowledge in many ways as they primarily deal with human expressions on their history and culture. The study of humanities can equip individuals with the skillsets

necessary to navigate an ever-changing world as engaged citizens. Apart from preparing the learner to take up a career in her/ his life, it aims at the nurturing of an individual through holistic education so as to meaningfully contribute to the society.

The act of reading, writing and researching are subject to many kinds of changes throughout the years, opening new vistas of human expressions and understandings. Hence, dealing with humanities as a group of knowledge sphere for creative and critical explorations, one can perceive the expansive realms of humanities today, making the vast interdisciplinary fields of inquiries possible. In the age of digital humanities and post humanism, the proliferation of technologies is impacting the academy and scholarship in the field of humanities too, transforming the ways humanities work in society and culture.

It is a propitious moment for the Postgraduate and Research Department of English at Korambayil Ahamed Haji Memorial Unity Women's College, Manjeri and myself to see that a book titled *Reading Humanities Today* edited by my colleague Mr. Muhamedali P is being published. Primarily this is as part of the venture of the college to inspire student community to the world of research and publication. His interest and scholarship in the field of changing trends in humanities have helped him to work as the editor of this book. The department is offering opportunity to students to come up with the book chapters based on their research/ dissertation. We believe, this platform for annual academic publications promotes students to engage with researches in the fresh domains in their areas of study as part of their Master's degree.

Reading Humanities Today comprises of sixteen chapters that explore various aspects of human society and expression, focussing diverse literatures, films, narratives and other cultural discourses. The major subjects of study in the book include cultural studies, post-colonial literary and theoretical analysis, gender and trans gender studies and film studies. I believe that the book will contribute the knowledge production and dissemination in this changing era of humanities giving ample chances for interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary understandings and cutting- edge, socially responsible research findings for students, teachers and all aspirants in the study and research of humanities.

Dr Shahina Mol A. K.

Assistant Professor & Head

Postgraduate & Research Department of English

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri, Kerala.

Preface

In a world increasingly dominated by technological advancements and the relentless march of progress, the humanities offer a crucial counterbalance. The disciplines within the humanities compel us to explore the depths of human experience, grapple with existential complexities, and illuminate the diverse tapestry of cultures, histories, and ideas that connect us all. *Reading Humanities Today* is not merely a collection of essays; it is an invitation to an intellectual odyssey. Within these pages, readers will encounter a vibrant discourse on the

evolving disciplines encompassed by the humanities, including literature, language, cultural studies, philosophy, and history.

The book adopts an interdisciplinary approach in analysing and interpreting literature, film, and the politics and poetics of representation. It features contributions from researchers, faculty members, and students of the humanities who engage with both established concepts and emerging trends in literature, film studies, visual studies, cultural studies, and literary theory. These contributions offer fresh perspectives and prompt a deeper understanding of representation in both political and poetic contexts.

This anthology gives voice to marginalized and resistant cultures and literatures, challenging readers to consider narratives that have long been silenced. Gender and Queer Studies provide critical insights into the intersections of race, caste, and identity, while the human quest for meaning takes center stage in discussions of philosophy and ethics, addressing the challenges of the modern world.

Beyond the written word, the book explores film, media studies, and popular culture as compelling lenses through which to examine the ever-changing landscape of human experience. Diaspora studies investigate the intricate web of connections that bind us, while gender studies and feminist perspectives continue the vital conversation on equality and representation.

The sixteen research articles in *Reading Humanities Today* invite readers to engage in intellectual discourse, fostering a deeper understanding of the humanities through rich and vibrant narratives. The book offers fresh perspectives on critical social, political, and cultural issues of contemporary relevance, encouraging readers to become more empathetic and informed global citizens. In short, *Reading Humanities Today* invites engagement with a multitude of voices and perspectives, challenging assumptions, enlightening understanding, and inspiring new ways of seeing the world.

Muhammedali P

Mala-Literature's Influence on the Socio-Political Landscape of Mappila Muslims: A Study

Ms. Aneesa Minnath Beevi

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

&

Dr. Shahina Mol A. K.

Assistant Professor and Head,

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

This article deals with the profound influence of *Mala* literature on the socio-political fabric of the Mappila Muslim community. Through an exploration of its historical roots, particularly focusing on eminent works such as *Muhyudheen Mala*, *Nafeesat Mala*, and *Rifai Mala*, this paper elucidates the transformative roles that *Mala* literatures have played in shaping the collective consciousness and political engagement of Mappila Muslims. By examining the themes, narratives, and societal impacts of these seminal works, this study unveils the intricate interplay between literature, culture, and politics within the Mappila Muslim context. Through a nuanced analysis, it highlights the enduring significance of *Mala* literature as a catalyst for social change and political mobilization, offering valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of identity, agency, and power within marginalized communities.

Keywords: *Mala* Literatures, Mappila Muslim community, *Muhyudheen Mala*, *Nafeesat Mala*, and *Rifai Mala*

Mala songs hold immense cultural significance as a cherished heritage among Mappila Muslims, posing a challenge in chronicling the history of this community. These songs have played a pivotal role in facilitating spirituality and fostering progressive movements within the Mappila Muslim community. Notably, they occupy a distinct place within the realms of the

Malayalam language, literature, and *Arabi Malayalam*. *Mala* songs serve as a means to express unwavering devotion and profound love towards the revered souls who are regarded as esteemed servants of Allah, the Almighty. By vividly portraying the depth of the devotees' emotional connection with their spiritual guides through narration and storytelling, *Mala songs* effectively captivate readers, enabling them to experience an intimate connection with these luminous souls. Consequently, these songs evoke spiritual energy and forge a profound bond between the readers and the venerated souls, thereby accompanying them on their spiritual journey. Esteemed spiritual leaders like 'Asshabul Badar, Abdul Kadir Jilani, Ahmadul Kabeer Rifae, and Nafeesathul Missriyya' have provided solace, guidance, and fortitude to the lives of Mappila Muslims, profoundly shaping their existence. The conviction that the influence of these spiritual leaders continues even after their demise and permeates the lives of their followers instills a sense of self-assurance, inspiring Mappila Muslims to demonstrate unwavering commitment and courage in their actions. The term *Mala* finds its etymological roots in the Arabic word *Mawlid*, which originally referred to the celebration of prophet Muhammad's birthday but gradually evolved to encompass the commemoration of the birthdays of Sufi saints. It is important to highlight that the Malayalam word *Mala* holds distinct meanings such as 'garland', 'lineage', or 'group', and does not directly correspond to its Arabic counterpart. Hussain Randathani, in his book titled *A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles*, characterizes *Malas* as 'Sufi devotional songs', indicating their prominent role in devotional practices within the Mappila Muslim community as he notes, "many Mala songs indeed fulfill this devotional purpose" (Randathani 96).

Although *Mala* songs share common thematic elements with *Mawlids*, such as accounts of miraculous occurrences surrounding the saint's births, their performance of miracles, and the inclusion of biographical information, they diverge in terms of structural composition, language usage and intended function.

While examining the influence of *Mala literature* on socio-political landscape of Mappila Muslims, one first understands the background of this literary genre. This literary tradition finds its origins in the historical context of major upheavals experienced by Muslims in Malabar. The arrival of Portuguese traders, who established a dominant economic presence, had a profound impact on the Mappila community, coinciding with the arrival of Arab merchants. The Portuguese colonization and their hostile actions towards Arab traders had extensive and lasting consequences, it is the reason for the war against Portuguese by Mappila Muslims along with Zamorians. Herman Gundert, a renowned scholar, documented the brutal mistreatment and killings inflicted by the Portuguese on Mappila Muslims, also about the

Muslim women and children who embarked on their journeys to Mecca for Hajj, finding themselves captive alongside Vasco da Gama's crew. The Portuguese invasion, the atrocities committed against both Hindus and Muslims, the desecration of temples, and the propagation of malicious rumors incited significant unrest among the common people. Arab traders, who had engaged in commercial activities and established thriving markets, were compelled to leave Kerala due to Portuguese aggression. Consequently, ordinary Mappila individuals migrated from coastal areas to inland regions. This mass migration dealt a severe blow to the social fabric of Mappila society, resulting in a diminished status within the broader political landscape and subjecting them to the arbitrary rule of monarchs and the upper-class elites. E. Shreedharan Menon notes that the common people were treated as mere pawns in a socio-political power struggle. The loss of their lands, the destruction of their temples, and the suppression of their cultural practices had a profound impact on the livelihoods of ordinary individuals, exacerbating social inequalities and creating a disconnect between the ruling class and the general populace. The repercussions of Portuguese colonialism and subsequent social disintegration had significant socio-political implications among the Mappila Muslim community, resulting in substantial disturbances. It is in this unfavorable context that the waves of the Bhakti movement reached Kerala, guiding people towards spiritual and divine contemplation. *Mala literature* emerges as a means to provide solace and deliverance by directing individuals towards the contemplation of the divine and the exploration of their inner selves.

The earliest known surviving *Mala* song is the *Muhiddin Mala*, which dates back to 1607. Prior to this period, between 1350 and 1450 C.E., Malayalam literature witnessed two significant developments. Firstly, the language itself was undergoing a transformative process, gradually evolving into what we now recognize as modern Malayalam. Secondly, there was a notable emergence of *bhakti literature*¹, within the Malayalam language. This genre of literature encompassed devotional works composed by the Niranam poets (known as the Kannassan poets, were three poets from the same family by the names of Madhava Panikkar, Sankara Panikkar, and Rama Panikkar. They hailed from Niranam, a small village in southern Kerala, India, near the town of Thiruvalla), such as the *Bharata Mala* and the *Ramayana Mala*, both of which demonstrated the intertwining of spiritual devotion and literary expression.

It was during the latter half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century that *bhakti literature* in Kerala reached its zenith, and during this era that the esteemed

¹ Literary movement, it liberated poetry from singing the praises of kings and introduced spiritual themes.

poet Thunjathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, widely acclaimed as one of the During the Portuguese invasion, the Mappila Muslims were displaced from the Indian maritime trade, resulting in a loss of their self-confidence. At that time, Qadi Muhammed introduced Shaik Jilani in the *Muhyudheen Mala*, with an aim that extended beyond mere literary emancipation. Since the 17th century, when individuals from the coastal regions began retreating to villages, there has been a shift among Muslims towards a more vernacular understanding of Islam, distinct from pure Textual Islam. Scholars sought to address this cultural challenge by presenting 'men of salvation' in indigenous dialects. Through The *Muhyudheen Mala*, Qadi Muhammad facilitated the integration of a deeply religious persona into the socio-religious and moral fabric of a significant portion of the Mappila Muslim community, which was not strongly connected to pure Textual Islam. The *Muhyudheen Mala* can be regarded as an example of vernacular textual engagement in the common Mappila language in response to the prevailing socio-cultural crisis. (Arafath 7)

The term *Thasawuf*² holds great significance in the Islamic technical language as it represents spiritual knowledge. Unlike conventional teaching methods, *Thasawuf* emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge through personal experience. This approach has been subject to profound studies and investigations in the Islamic world since the 9th century. Distinguished scholars dedicated their efforts to exploring various dimensions of *Thasawuf*, leading to the categorization of these theories into distinct sections. Each section then went on to develop its own practical paths of *Thasawuf*, commonly referred to as *Tariqat* or Spiritual Path. Over time, these *Tariqats* witnessed the emergence of sub-divisions, often named after their respective founders. For instance, within the *Madabi Tariqat*, established by Abu Madyan Shuhaib Hussein, the *Shadili Tariqat* emerged, named in honor of Abu Hassan Ali Shadili, a disciple within Abu Madyan's lineage. Similarly, the *Qadiriyya Tariqat*, established in the name of Shaik Muhyudheen Abdul Kabir Jilani, gave rise to sub-divisions like Rifae and Ba Alavi *Tariqat*. Practitioners of each *Tariqat* profoundly extolled the virtues of their respective Shaiks or spiritual teachers, effectively conveying their significance through the medium of *Mala songs*. Notably, the *Muhyudheen Mala* and *Rifai Mala* serve as examples of such expressions. Through the pathways of *Thasawuf* and *Tariqat*, *Mala* songs played a pivotal role in intersecting with the socio-political lives of Malabar Mappila Muslims, offering them solace and relief from the pressures they faced through the spiritual pathways. It was widely believed

² Is a mystic body of religious practice found within Islam which is characterized by a focus on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism, asceticism, and esotericism.

that the recitation or hearing of such compositions had the power to cultivate and nourish the religious fervor within ordinary individuals, leading to a heightened sense of sanctity. In the context of Kerala, Hindu households often engaged in daily recitations of revered works such as Thunjathu Ezhuthachan's *AdhyathmaRamayanam* and Cherusseri's *Krishna Ghada*. These compositions served as a spiritual anchorage, providing solace and a means of connection to the divine, amidst the chaos and challenges of both the internal and external worlds. Similarly, *Mala* songs held significant importance among Muslim households, where they were recited daily. The recitation of these songs offered a sense of tranquility and respite, enabling individuals to find inner peace amidst the trials and tribulations of life.

The use of *Mala* extends to a wide range of contexts, encompassing diverse settings such as festive occasions, communal gatherings, and domestic environments. Within the private sphere of one's home, families devote themselves to the solemn recitation of the holy Quran and various religious texts, wherein the *Malas* hold a position of utmost importance. Particularly notable is their melodic presence during *Nerchas*, ceremonial assemblies characterized by their commemoration of revered Sufi saints or their solemn tribute to the memory of *Shahids*³, valiant martyrs who bravely laid down their lives in various historical battles.

Significantly, the *Malas* have also played a vital role within the traditional educational framework of the community until the advent of the twentieth century. Students diligently undertook the arduous task of committing to memory and eloquently reciting not only the verses of the Quran but also the sacred words encapsulated within the *Malas*. Furthermore, a distinctive custom observed during marriage celebrations involved the groom's female relatives paying a visit to the bride before the official engagement. Inquiring about the bride's educational accomplishments, it was customary for her to proudly assert her proficiency in the Quran as well as her familiarity with the revered *Muhyudheen Mala*, symbolizing her spiritual knowledge and devout upbringing. Dr.V. Kunhali writes in his book titled, *Sufisam in Kerala.*, that "There is the custom of the bride being visited by the elder ladies of the groom's house before her betrothal. On being questioned of her education the girl was expected to say that she had learnt the Quran and *Muhyudheen Mala*" (Kunhali 108).

Throughout the hours of each night, the captivating melodies of the *Muhyidin Mala* permeated the domestic spaces, resounding harmoniously within the walls of every household. These enchanting compositions were performed by the inhabitants of these homes in unison,

³ Muslims who died while fulfilling a religious commandment, including jihad.

creating a profound sense of unity and shared purpose. Within this collective expression of devotion, the figure of Shaykh Muhyudheen transcended the realm of an individual and ascended to become the personification of the multifaceted aspirations and yearnings of humanity towards the ethereal and spiritual dimensions. Through the verses and rhythms of this *Mala*, Shaykh Muhyudheen became a symbol of the human quest for transcendence, enlightenment, and a connection to the divine realm, embodying the highest ideals and longings that resonate within the hearts and minds of individuals across cultures and generations. As the melodies filled the night air, they carried with them a collective yearning for spiritual enlightenment, inspiring and captivating the imaginations of those who embraced the *Malas* as a conduit to transcendental experiences and a deeper understanding of the mysteries of existence. In this way, Shaykh Muhiudheen spiritual presence transcended the boundaries of time and space, offering solace, inspiration, and a profound connection to the celestial realm for those who found solace and meaning in the entrancing melodies of the *Malas*.

Qadi Muhammad, beyond his role in spreading and advancing the *Qadiriyya Tariqat*, made a profound impact through his poetic masterpiece, the *Muhyiddin Mala*. This poetic work served as a powerful medium through which he conveyed his profound spiritual teachings and grappled with the societal challenges of his time. Rather than solely focusing on the expansion of the *Qadiriyya Tariqat*, Qadi Muhammad recognized the broader significance of his poetic compositions in addressing the multifaceted issues and concerns that permeated his era. With the *Muhyudheen Mala* as his vehicle, he skillfully wove together intricate verses, employing poetic devices, metaphors, and symbolism to encapsulate his profound spiritual insights. Through his poetry, Qadi Muhammad not only aimed to illuminate the hearts and minds of his followers but also to engage with the prevailing social issues of the time, such as moral decay, social inequality, and ethical dilemmas. The *Muhyudheen Mala* thus became a powerful tool through which Qadi Muhammad communicated his spiritual teachings, fostering introspection, and prompting individuals to critically reflect upon their own lives and the society in which they lived. By integrating spiritual guidance with social commentary, Qadi Muhammad's poetic work transcended mere literary artistry, resonating deeply with individuals and communities, and offering a path towards personal transformation and societal betterment.

Kaniyilla kalam kaniye kodythuvar

Karinja marathummal kayal nirachovar

(Muhyudheen Mala 11)

[In times there is no food

He gave food

In a dry tree

He filled fruits] (Sutton 88)

These verses of *Muhyudheen Mala* encompass three distinct levels of meaning, each contributing to a deeper understanding of their significance. At the literal level, the verses vividly describe a palm tree adorned with the blessed verses of Shaik Jilani, serving as a metaphorical representation of the spiritual nourishment and guidance they offer. Moving beyond their historical context, these verses carry a profound message, emphasizing the transformative power of immersing oneself in the love and devotion to the Divine. By embracing this spiritual connection, individuals can overcome the challenges of poverty and scarcity, and cultivate a life of abundance and fulfillment. On a metaphorical level, the verses assume a transcendent quality, acting as potent incantations capable of awakening dormant spiritual energies within the individual. Through the masterful use of language, the poet guides the seeker on a transformative journey of self-realization, enabling them to transcend the limitations of the physical world and attain spiritual heights. The life history of Shaik Jilani serves as an inspirational framework, offering practical insights and guidance to expedite the process of self-transformation through the power of poetry. In the broader context of cultural revival, Qadi Muhammad, as the custodian of Shaik Jilani's teachings, played a pivotal role in the socio-cultural rejuvenation of the Kerala community. At a time when the community faced economic, political, and cultural marginalization, Qadi Muhammad's *Mala* recitation served as a catalyst for societal resurgence. Through the profound insights and messages embedded within the verses, Qadi Muhammad captivated the imagination of the Kerala society, igniting a movement for revival and inspiring individuals to reclaim their cultural heritage. The *Mala* recitation not only provided spiritual solace and guidance but also instigated a renewed sense of identity, pride, and empowerment among the community members.

Thus, Qadi Muhammad's utilization of the *Muhyiddin Mala* proved instrumental in reviving and revitalizing the socio-cultural fabric of the Malabar Mappila Muslim community, leaving an indelible mark on its history. The verses of *Muhyiddin Mala* hold within them an energy that resonates with the community, standing tall amidst the raging storms and blazing fires that threaten to engulf society. They provide a source of strength and protection, empowering individuals to navigate through the challenges of life without succumbing to the pitfalls of deception and falsehood. By presenting the embodiment of truth and integrity in the form of a model individual, the poet offers a guiding light, a beacon of hope for the Mappila Muslim community to confront any adversities they may encounter on their spiritual journey.

It is through this belief that the *Muhyudheen Mala* has gained a stronghold and influenced the Mappila Muslim community, offering them solace and direction in times of hardship.

Shemithoru sirikk pettu nombalam pidithe

Sheshikett rand nal vare bejaril nilathe

Samayam inthe bibi peril Nercha kupathe

Sadhiyam mozhi mudiyum mun avalum

Pethe

(Nafisat Mala 9)

[A lady with patience came Labour pain

She being in tension for two days

At the time she recites the Mala

She gave birth before ending the Mala]

(Sutton 104)

These verses originate from the *Nafisat Mala*, which holds a significant place in the cultural practices of Malabar. This collection, with its melodic compositions, serves a specific purpose – that of ensuring a seamless and comfortable childbirth experience for women. It is noteworthy that this particular application of *Malas* resonates with the wider usage of these spiritual hymns. However, *Nafisat Mala* distinguishes itself by placing a distinctive emphasis on its capacity to provide invaluable support to women enduring prolonged, demanding, and intricate labors. This essential aspect is not only expressed once but reiterated multiple times throughout the verses, underscoring the profound efficacy of this *Mala* in alleviating the difficulties faced by women during challenging childbirth experiences. The recognition of its unique ability to assist women in such circumstances further enhances the significance and relevance of *Nafisat Mala* within the cultural and social fabric of Malabar.

In the historical context of the Mappila community, a significant tradition known as *Sarpa Shalyam Ozhinjukittan* or the recitation of *Rifai Mala* played a pivotal role in shaping their cultural practices. This tradition revolved around the notion that spotting snakes in one's surroundings could somehow avert the threat of snakebites. The belief in this *Mala* as a protective aspect in encountering snakes was deeply ingrained among the Mappila Muslims, leading them to view the phenomenon with great reverence and adherence. Consequently, whenever any member of the community came across snakes in their homes or nearby areas, they would collectively refer to *Rifai Mala*. The act of reciting *Rifai Mala* together instilled a sense of cohesion and unity among the community members, fostering a shared belief in the power of this tradition to safeguard against potential harm. This practice not only fostered a

sense of security but also engendered mutual support and cooperation among individuals residing in their respective households. The recurrence and perpetuation of *Sarpa Shalyam Ozhinjukittan* or *Rifai Mala* is emphasizing the role of traditional beliefs in shaping and reinforcing social and religious bonds.

Ente Muride perumbamb thindukil

Eethum vishamilla ennu paranjovar (Rifai Mala 5)

These lines shed light on the interpretative significance of the verses presented earlier. Within the context of the Mappila community's cultural practices, these lines portray the ritualistic act of reciting *Mala* as a customary method to avert impending dangers and safeguard individuals from harm. The act of invoking the name of Shaik Rifai and referencing the venomous snake in these verses carries a profound belief that such recitation holds the power to create a protective shield, ensuring the absence of any harm or potential threats. While the verses explicitly reference snakes, their broader implications transcend the boundaries of this particular reptilian context, encapsulating the broader concept of *Mala* as an emblematic shield against the dangers posed by venomous creatures.

This ritualistic practice becomes emblematic of a cultural belief system, rooted in the interplay of faith, folklore and the community's collective understanding of safeguarding against natural hazards. As a subject of scholarly interest, these verses offer valuable insights into the intricate intermingling of religious practices, mythological symbolism, and sociocultural traditions within the tapestry of the Mappila community's heritage. Maude Keely Sutton says in her dissertation titled as "In the Forest of Sand: History, Devotion, and Memory in South Asian Muslim Poetry", that:

The *Malas* are generally both hagiographical and laudatory; they give brief details of a saints' life as well as describe miracles (*Karamat* in Arabic) surrounding the saints or performed by them. These miracles are sometimes related to the particular use for each song, say for example, protection from fire or snakes, ease of childbirth, or help with crops. Examples of these include the *Fatima Bivi Mala*, the *Safala Mala*, the *Ajmir Mala*, the *Siddiq Mala* (in praise of the first Caliph Abubakar Siddiq), and the *Maḥamud Mala* in praise of the Prophet Muhammed, as well as the songs discussed earlier in this chapter, the *Muhyudheen Mala*, the *Rifai Mala*, and the *Nafisat Mala*. There are other *Malas* too on Islamic figures that often focus on figures of martyrdom. The old woman in Moyinkuṭṭi Vaidyar's *Kiḷatti Mala* (Song of the Old Woman) is revealed to be the angel Gabriel who has come to explain why Husayn must die in the battle of Karbala. The *Kottupalli Mala* is a song that describes a young man named

Kunji Marakkar who leaves his own wedding in order to rescue a Muslim girl from Portuguese abductors. He dies in the attempt, is cut into seven pieces, and his body is cast into the sea. The song then goes on to describe the miracles that took place at the sites where his limbs washed ashore. A *Nercha*, or commemoration in honor of saints or martyrs as offering food for all, is still held annually in Calicut at the tomb where the leg of the above hero is said to rest. *The Shahid Mala*, partially translated and commented on by F. Fawcett in the *Journal Indian Antiquary* praises the men who died in a battle at the Malappuram Mosque, fighting against the warriors of a local chieftain. (Sutton 73)

In the context of cultural and religious practices, *Mala songs* hold a significant place, often being rendered after the evening *maghrib* prayer, and notably, they are memorized with fervor by women. These songs serve as a rich repository of narratives that bear a striking resemblance to *Mawlid*⁴, delving into multifaceted aspects of the revered figures' life journeys, encompassing pivotal events like their birth, educational pursuits, initiation into spiritual matters, demonstration of Karamat or miraculous deeds, and their eventual transition from this earthly existence. Furthermore, a noteworthy dimension of these lyrical expressions is their capacity to shed light on those historical or legendary adversaries who harbored doubts or actively opposed the figure during their mortal sojourn, with specific references made to 'Iblis' or Lucifer. Through these songs, a profound tapestry of cultural heritage and religious beliefs emerges, offering glimpses into the collective memory and identity of the community, while also serving as a conduit for preserving and transmitting cultural wisdom and values from one generation of women to the next.

Mala songs, a literary culture that thrived within the Muslim community of Malabar, were deeply intertwined with religious beliefs and devotion. Traditionally, these songs held a prominent place in the daily practices of Malabar Mappila Muslim households. However, in contemporary times, there has been a significant transformation in the usage and significance of *Mala songs*, relegating them to a niche position primarily within historical studies, academic discussions, and literary writings seeking to explore unique aspects of literature. The once-frequent recitation of *Malas* as part of Mappila households' daily routines has waned and gradually faded from the minds of Mappila Muslims, being remembered now as a historical relic of their ancestors. Various factors contributed to this change, and one notable criticism centered around the perception that *Mala songs* contradicted the Islamic concept of *Thouheed*,

⁴ Another literary genre like Mala literature.

the belief in One God, opposing dualism, polytheism, or atheism. Fahad T Hamza says, “*Mala-Mawlid* literatures along with their collective reciting culture, have played a great role in the formation of sociocultural identity of Kerala Muslims”. More than little religiously or locally considerable composition or presentation, they bridge the gap between Muslim minds and rituals, as these presentations stood as a median for worship itself. Now, there are some newfangled feelings to this, as some Muslim groups of Kerala, such as Mujahids and Jamaa’t-e-Islami, who question the credibility of *Mala- Mawlids*, on the standards of *Shirk* or un-Islamic. Sunni Muslims, a major, prominent group of Kerala Muslims, on the other hand, has retained their ciphers and signs through such ritual practices. The issue has further stretched into the conflict of polytheism (*Shirk*) and monotheism too.

Hamza Further adds that these songs were seen as a form of alternative worship to Allah, as some revered great personalities were featured in them, raising concerns of promoting polytheistic worship or encouraging involvement in a multi-deity worship system, which, in turn, led to a decline in their propagation among Mappila Muslims. According to the scholar Moyin Kutty P.,

More than a simple devotional genre, *Malas* were a particular item related to the various situations of its composer”. To its origin might have particular reasons related to its social, political, religious and cultural background. At the same time, it had certain social functions and communal responsibilities. *Muhyudheen Mala* was a big resistance as well as a great remedy for its followers. In another hand, *Malas* are very comprehensive and all-encompassing system of educating Mappilas, which worked among them very effectively since the seventeenth century. Composing notable works on various subjects such as Islamic history, biography, religious advice, social criticism, spirituality, etc. Mappila could engage in society seriously and create a distinguished identity in Kerala milieu. As a system of education and awareness, the sections like women and children also got due considerations in this cognitive literary movement. By the early decades of twentieth century, *Mala* underwent a considerable transformation in its composition and contents. The factors like modernity, reformism, and postmodernism were the major reasons for this shift. By then *Malas* came out of its devotional and informative typical format to a liberal and entertaining mode. It was a big turning point in *Malas'* so-called development. Instead of its Sufistic and religious allegories, trends of Western literature were got dominance in its contents and expression. However, it was a great setback to its prestigious identity. (Kutty 2)

The diminishing popularity of *Mala songs* has sparked debates among scholars, with some viewing this shift as contrary to Islamic principles. The once-prominent literary tradition in the *Arabi Malayalam* language faced various criticisms, further contributing to its decline. As a result, the values encompassing the social and historical significance of *Mala songs* and their contribution to the cultural heritage of Mappila Muslims have been overshadowed and lost over time. The writer O. Abu discusses the current state of *Mala songs* in Malayalam literature and expresses his thoughts as follows:

The current situation of *Mala songs* in the literature of Arabic Malayalam, which is the artistic hub of the intellectual achievements of the Muslim community in Kerala, has faced a deplorable fate. Those who once took pride in discarding the quintessential elements of *Mala songs*, particularly the powerful poems known as *Malappattukal*, must now bear the burden of the consequences of their unwise actions. It is a matter of great distress that they failed to realize the loss suffered by the *Arabi Malayalam* tradition and its significant components due to their lack of foresight and courage. (Abu 88)

During the 1920s, the emergence of reformist ideologies within the Mappila Muslim community in Malabar triggered profound discussions and controversies regarding their literary endeavors. The traditional stance of *Mala* poets revolved around addressing religious themes and disseminating ideological messages; however, some reformists vehemently criticized their works, deeming them to be associated with misinterpreted religious concepts known as *Kurafaath*. Nonetheless, as the twentieth century unfolded, the concept of *Mala* retained its significance, serving as a symbol of the resilient socio-cultural identity treasured by Mappila Muslims. It continued to be subject to exploration and redefinition in diverse contexts. Notably, literary experimentation introduced intriguing names such as *Parishkara Mala*, *Durajara Mala*, *Vellapokka Mala*, and *Kathukuthu Mala*. A prominent illustration of such reinterpretations can be seen in the *Vaikom Muhammad Basheer Mala*. Despite these transformations in literary expressions, the genre of *Mala songs* steadfastly held its position as the most popular and enriching form of literary expression among the Mappila Muslim community. Despite the passing of time and the challenges faced by the community, the enduring influence of *Mala*-literature in Mappila households remains evident. While it is true that the number of households carrying on this cultural tradition has decreased over the years, the significance of *Mala*-literature in providing emotional support and reassurance during times of difficulty remains resolute. This finding emphasizes the resilience of *Mala*-literature as an

enduring cultural practice, maintaining its impact on the lives of the Mappila Muslim community. Nonetheless, this study brings the need for concerted efforts to preserve and revitalize *Mala*-Literature and its cultural significance among the Mappila Muslims. As the tradition of reciting *Mala* songs faces the risk of fading away, it is imperative for scholars, cultural enthusiasts, and the community itself to work together to safeguard and promote this invaluable cultural heritage. Preserving the practice of *Mala*-Literature is essential to ensure that future generations recognize and celebrate the distinct contributions and identity of the Mappila Muslim community.

In conclusion, this analytical study can serve as a scholarly discourse on Mala songs to create societal awareness of the Mappila community's literary and cultural heritage. By understanding and appreciating the profound influence of *Mala*-literature, the broader community and society can foster a renewed sense of pride in their rich cultural traditions which will to the country's rich cultural tapestry too.

References

- Abu, O. *Arabi Malayala Sahithya Charitram*. Sahithya Paravarthaka Co Operative Society,1920.
- Arafath, Yasser. "Muhiyudhin Mala : History Politics and Resistance". *Academia.edu*, 2014
https://www.academia.edu/7995166/Research_Article_Muhyuddheen_Maala_History_p_o_l
- Azeez, Qadi Muhammad Abdul. *Muhyudheen Mala* .pdf. SCRIBD,2013,
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/146480517/Muhyadeen-Mala-pdf>
- Kunhali, V, *Sufism in Kerala*. Publication Division, University of Calicut, 2004.
- Media, Isthm. *Rifai mala with lyrics*. YouTube,2022 <https://youtu.be/U33QNoAigOI>
- Moydin, Nalakattu Kunju . *Nafeesath Mala*. SCRIBD,2018,
<https://www.scribd.com/document/368228309/Nafeesath-Mala>.
- Moyin, Kutty P. *Role of Mala Mawlid Literature in the Islamic revival of North Kerala: analytical study*. Jawaharlal Nehru University,2015.
- Randathani, Hussain. *A study on society and anti- colonial struggles*. Other Books, 2007.

Sutton, Moude Keely Sutton. *In the Forest of Sand: History, Devotion and Memory n South Asian Muslim Poetry*. The University pf Texas,2015.

Mourning over the Past and its Effect on Diaspora in the New Land: A Critical Reading of *If Today Be Sweet*

Ms. Anshida E P

M A English (2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

Thirity Umrigar's *If Today Be Sweet* is centered on Indian diaspora and the tumultuous and cluttered state of existence of diaspora. This paper analyses the diasporic consciousness employed in the novel *If Today Be Sweet* and the dilemmatic existence of the central character Tehmina Sethana in the host land. Diasporic literature is widely used as an umbrella term that includes in it all those literary works written by the authors outside their home land reminiscing past memories and most often their works are associated with native culture and background. It is assumed that, this form of literature relays its focus on writings of and on diasporic community, where in the writers portray their conflicting, ambivalent and dilemmatic existence in the homeland and host land either by depicting their experiences through the construction of fictional characters or by representing their concerns via them on memoir or autobiographies. However, majority of the diasporic texts deal with the issues of identity crisis, linguistic and cultural incompatibility in the settled country, nostalgia, reminiscence of ever- haunting spectrum of over exaggerated beauty of the homeland, traumatic experiences due to exile and acute longing for return to their native land.

Keywords: Diasporic consciousness, Identity Crisis, Nostalgia, New Diaspora, Ambivalence, Existential crisis, Trauma

Ah, fill the cup: - what boots it to repeat

How time is slipping underneath our feet:

Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday,

Why fret about them it Today be Sweet!

-OMAR KHAYYAM

The existential dilemma poses a profound challenge for most diaspora individuals, who must reconcile feelings of displacement with a quest for belonging in their adopted countries. Emotional attachments to their homeland often evoke sentiments of detachment and rootlessness in their new environments. Tehmina Sethana, depicted in *If Today Be Sweet*, grapples with the weighty decision of whether to remain in America or return to India, confronted with the dual quandary of living in America as a stranger or a citizen.

As depicted by Thrity Umrigar, Tehmina Sethana serves as the central protagonist in the novel, having migrated to the United States. Following the demise of her beloved husband, Rustom Sethana, her life takes a tumultuous turn. Upon visiting her son Sorab, his wife Susan, and their child Cavas (Cookie) in their suburban Ohio residence, she is compelled to choose between her familiar life in India and embarking on a new chapter in Ohio with her son's family. The narrative delves into the theme of diasporic consciousness through Tehmina's agonizing struggle to decide between her roots in Bombay and a new life in Ohio.

Tehmina's deep-seated connections to Bombay, where she once resided with her husband and son, underscore the profound attachment she feels to her past life. Memories of their apartment, neighbors, and cherished possessions evoke a sense of nostalgia and longing that binds her soul to Bombay akin to roots anchoring a tree. Despite her yearning for her homeland, she finds herself unable to make a definitive choice, trapped in a perpetual state of homesickness and liminality.

Sorab, Tehmina's son, initially migrated to the United States for higher education and later fell in love with Susan, an American woman, leading to their marriage. Prior to her visit to the US following her husband's death, Tehmina had only experienced America as a temporary visitor. Now, she is faced with the weighty decision of whether to establish permanent residence in India or America. The prospect of leaving behind her homeland, where there is no familial support in her old age, in favor of a foreign land where her son and extended Parsi family reside, including Perci Sonwalla, a friend's son raised by Tehmina and Rustom, engenders profound confusion and chaos in her life. Compounding Tehmina's internal turmoil is the realization that once she commits to residing in the US, returning to Mumbai would be an impractical endeavor, given the absence of her beloved husband. These psychological dilemmas weigh heavily on her mind, plunging her into a state of perpetual mental strife.

Tehmina feels manifestations of nostalgia, cultural incompatibility, inner conflicts and she is thrown to the ceaseless struggle of indecisiveness throughout the novel. Besides she

undergoes tumultuous and cluttered state of mind and feels recurrent homesickness once she reached America after the death of her dear departed husband, Rustom. She says: "...in Bombay, I feel like a person-a person whose life has meaning, whose life follows a path. Here, despite all of Sorab's effort I feel like an ornament, a decoration" (34). Tehmina feels like she is an added ornamental decoration in America, even without her presence her son and family would be happy and contented.

In truth, Tehmina craves for India as she never feels at home in Ohio. Furthermore, the influence of Indian scriptures, established culture, heritage, tradition and faith makes Tehmina to project the agony of her existence in America, a land which is entirely different from hers with its cultural, hereditary and ethical disparity. Home is a connection between a person and his origin. It is "as an idea, stands for shelter, stability, security, and comfort... (and) to be 'at home' is to occupy a location where we can be with people very much like ourselves" (Leod 210). For diasporic people home is a desired place with a hope to return, is an abstract entity which does not exist anywhere. It is 'virtual' place with a history and culture. It is a 'mental construct' and every individual construct it differently from the other on the basis of the collective memory and personal experience. It is a place that is "temporary and movable" and can be "built, rebuilt and carried in memory and acts of imagination (Naticy 6). In *If Today Be Sweet* too Thrity Umrigar shows the intensity of Tehmina's craving for home, her apartment in Bombay along with the memories of Rustom. For her, the days they enjoyed together in that small apartment is far better than the American liveliness.

Being a diaspora herself, Thrity Umrigar portrays the issues of diasporic identity, consciousness and the related psychological concerns in her diasporic narrative about Tehmina Sethana. Banupriya Royila has stated in her article "Mourning Over the Past Is Negotiable *If Today Be Sweet*: New Diasporic consciousness in Umrigar's *If Today Be Sweet*" that "*If Today Be Sweet* stands exclusively as a diasporic text even though all her fictional texts have immigrants and diasporic people". In fact, diasporic consciousness is predominantly evident in the novel through Tehmina's dilemma to put up her life in America. Certainly, Rustom's death created a huge void inside Tehmina and she becomes indecisive to select a place to live the rest of her life. Her predicament to choose between India and America is obvious when she opens her mind to Eva Metzbaum, to whom Tehmina could confide just anything in her life. She says to Eva: "Rustom's not here to help me make it. The strange part I find myself looking for Rustom to decide for me. And I remember -he is the whole reason I'm faced with this decision in the first place" (35).

According to Carol Frieze, “we all born to specific culture with prevailing values and opportunities”. Analyzing this statement, culture of a place can be the product of values, tradition, broad set of relationship, attitudes, behaviors, prevailing practices etc. Certainly, the culture of one country differs from another country with its wide range of dissimilarity in principles, beliefs, ethics and integrity. In *If Today Be Sweet*, Umrigar shows the cultural dichotomy between Tehmina and Susan and much of the problems arises between them are as a result of great differences between Indian culture and American culture. Being deeply rooted in Indian culture and value system, nothing gave her as much as satisfaction as embracing her culture and practices where ever she reaches.

In the novel, Tehmina’s act of helping two boys in the neighborhood manifestly shows her belief in Indian culture and morality. Jerome and Joshua are two boys living near Sorab’s apartment and both of them are cruel victims of child abuse by their own mother, Tara. Seeing them highly agitated, Tehmina felt empathetic to these poor boys. Neither Sorab nor Susan didn’t notice how things happening in the neighbor world. But Tehmina’s eyes can’t fluctuate its focus from those children as they were frequently tormented by their mother. Seeing Jerome and Joshua hungry, one day Tehmina invited them to Sorab’s home and fed them with delicious Indian food. But Susan was against the act of helping them and she made the remark: “I don’t want them to be around our Cavas anymore” (24). With this statement Tehmina could easily comprehend what Susan was too polite to say “when you are in my house, you follow my orders” (25). Tehmina felt immense dejection hearing Susan’s words. Being a woman who run weekly in Bombay to raise fund for the well-being of orphan children, being a soul, whose practices closely connected with Indian food culture and nothing gave her as much as satisfaction as feeding people. Furthermore, her dear departed Rustom always used to say: “two things you should never refuse another human being-food and education” (21). Susan’s dominating nature at once generated existential dilemma in Tehmina’s mind, as an alien in America, when her identity and culture was continuously questioned by her daughter in law. As a matter of fact, identity is crucial to one’s life and existence. Questioning identity has the power enough to drastically shake one’s psychological stability and well-being. Identity crisis can be simply defined as period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person’s sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to their complicated state or aims or role in society. Then Tehmina’s imbalance in America can be due to the feeling of living in a liminal space without having the freedom to express own identity and culture.

Unlike Tehmina, Sorab undergoes racial discrimination and mental harassment after the arrival of his new boss Grace Butler, a snobbish white woman. He never felt such a discrimination from any of his colleagues until Grace's arrival. Similarly, Umrigar also shows how Sorab being attacked by his neighbour Tara by calling names and abusing him intentionally. Tara passes remarks like 'Indian', 'brownie' etc, that ultimately emphasize his non-native identity and projects her contempt for non-natives, though she tries to conceal it. Both Tara and Grace are stereotypical characters who are hostile towards the non-natives and construct "otherness" of Indians there. Besides their skin color and accent, they construct the "otherness" of Indians with their cultural markers too. As stated by Avtar Brah that "the cultural difference can and thus from the basis of inferiorizing imperatives inscribing hierarchies within and across cultural formation" (231). In reality, Indian diaspora often been an object of such inferior inscriptions since years by the west. The "otherness" created by the host people often forge a tormenting effect on the diasporic scenario.

Similar to Tehmina, when Sorab had, first reached America several years ago, he had also experienced the difficulties of rootlessness, homelessness, lack of belongingness, agony associated with displacement and the sense of loss of near and dear ones. He felt "as if his head was touching the skies of America while his feet were rooted in Bombay, as if he was straddling two continents" (61). Sorab missed his family and life in Bombay and the absence made him feel incomplete. As Sorab had already gone through all the faces of mental strife Tehmina experiencing now, he felt empathetic towards his mother unlike his American wife Susan. Being commiserative towards Tehmina now, he remembers his own days when he would dream of his parents and on waking up the dream would change into a nightmarish experience. He tells Susan now "for years and years I felt like a man divided. And try as I might, I couldn't bridge the damn distance" (124). Sorab due to his identical experience could understand her dilemma and pain but was unable to help her in anyway.

Umrigar, in her narrative about Tehmina gives elucidations to her existential concern in a detailed way. The root cause of all her existential dilemma is loneliness. She felt alone in Sorab's Ohio apartment as Rustom's absence created an emotional void in her mind. Moreover, towards the end of the novel, Sorab, Susan, Percy were keen on Tehmina's decision and this ultimately made her perplexed and uncertain to put up with a country that is devoid of any cultural, ethnical and traditional similarity with her's. Even in the prefatory chapter, Susan snapped at Tehmina when she thought about her husband and their family trip to California prior to Rustom's death. Even though she was reminiscing the exquisite memories of the past

with Rustom, Susan attacked her emotionally. She asked Tehmina: “Mom, you remember what Sorab told you? What’s the point of thinking about –the sad stuff –if it just brings you down” (13). Sometimes words hurt people a lot and obviously Susan’s unsympathetic use of diction pained Tehmina and broke her heart. Susan has reduced Rustom’s death as a “sad stuff” but for Tehmina, her dear husband’s departure is such a shock that she has not recovered yet. In return Tehmina yearns to attack Susan ridiculing how Americans become mechanic and unsympathetic to human catastrophes. She thinks:

That’s what wrong with you Americans, Deekra, you all think too much of laughter and play, as if life was a Walt Disney movie. Something a child would make up. Whereas in India, life is a Bollywood melodrama –full of loss and sadness. And so everyone rejects Bollywood for Disney. Even my Sorab was seduced by Disney life –all this pursuit of happiness and pursuit of money and pursuit of this and that. But this year I’ve learned a new lesson. May be the Indian way is better after all. (13)

Diasporic writers often portray their characters being nostalgic or longing for their lost homes. According to Svetlana Boym, ‘nostalgia’ which is closely associated with memory, is a “sentiment of loss and displacement” (Boym 7). In *If Today Be Sweet*, nostalgia act as a prodigious difficulty for Tehmina to muddle through and whenever she experiences the torment of ‘severing the chords and shedding the scales’ and the discomfoting struggle for acclimatization, the ever haunting specter of over exaggerated love and beauty of the native land developed in the conscious part of her psyche and she began to jerk with sudden memories of the pulchritudinous past. Often in such circumstances, she makes comparison between India and America. In such occasions, Tehmina always seems to conclude Indian life style is far better than America. Further her recurrent comparisons on vegetables, markets, ways of parenting, behaviors, attitudes, neighborhoods, certainly indicates her quandary to feel at home in Ohio as her life is highly rooted in Bombay.

Her nostalgia towards Bombay and continual comparison of the past and present assures her conundrum to cope up with America considering the wide range of dissimilarity with Indian way of life. Even Tehmina loved leaving the anemic suburban streets of Rosemont Heights where she lives with Sorab and coming into Cleveland. Because it reminded her of “...south Bombay. Of some of the old, majestic buildings, like the Elphinston college building and VT station” (39). But Sorab in turn doesn’t love Tehmina’s habit of mourning over the past and he says: “if I’d known this would make you sentimental about Bombay, we’d have stayed

home tonight” (39). In reality, even Sorab hates Tehmina being reminiscent about the past as he wants her presence in America forever and always. But Tehmina surprisingly ponders as: “does everything in this country have an expiration date? ...even grief and mourning?” (119). Tehmina compares Bombay and America with a metaphor of snow and rain on a day in Rosmont Heights and she explains how Bombay and America pulled asunder with its far-flung divergence in mores and values.

At the outset of her psychological journey Tehmina finds herself unable to leave her ‘home’ and also to “give up the city of one’s birth, old friends whom you grew up with an apartment that you’ve decorated and cleaned and furnished” (142). Her inability to abandon her “Indian ways” and readapt in America, becomes a huge challenge throughout the narrative. The unbridgeable gap between the two cultures and the superior nature of America prevents Tehmina to adjust in Ohio. Moreover, the age of emigrants is an important factor to decide on the act of acculturation in the host country. Unlike the younger people, the older people find it difficult to relinquish own culture, heritage and values for their life in the host country. For Sorab, his movement was a conscious effort and he had migrated to America for his greater visibility and upward mobility whereas for Tehmina it is not voluntary, though not forced too.

Tehmina even hates her moniker ‘Tammy’ that got in America and demands to be called ‘Tehmina’ as she hates America’s habit of twisting Indian names and more importantly, perhaps the Indian name gave her a feeling of rootedness and may lessen the intensity of her identity crisis. Tehmina expresses her concern like the quest for identity of immigrants in America’s transnational and multi-cultural milieu but she faces the tensions of adaptation and acculturation through the emotional and psychic syndrome. Owing to Tehmina’s nostalgic romanticization of the past and existential suffering, she even encounters with psychotic disorder of hallucination and she sees died Rustom in her room in the Ohio apartment. In fact, her false perception such as hearing, seeing and feeling Rustom that is not exactly present before her shows how intimately she yearns for Rustom to put an end to her existential threat. If Rustom had outlived, Tehmina might not have experienced all these sufferings and she might have lives in Bombay without undergoing any illusion, alienation and depression.

Tehmina unknowingly becomes useful when she rescues those two innocent boys; Jerome and Joshua from the harsh cruelties of their mother. Thus the unpretentious and innocent act of Tehmina leads her to become a valuable person in the country of the domicile and makes her feel being accepted there. As a result of this incident, a native strange man in

America calls her “Christmas angel” and the mayor of Rosemont Heights had herself phoned Tehmina to offer her congratulations on an account of her honorable act of saving two innocent boys from the harshness of their mother. Ultimately, she becomes an “Indian-American heroine” in America and her gradual acceptability certainly reinforces her to feel ‘at home’ there. Highly rooted in Parsi culture and consciousness, she takes the ancient promise of making lives “sweeter” and “enriched” of the people of the country they adopt to settle and finally determines to live in America in a new apartment as her own where she could enjoy individual freedom, so that Sorab and Susan could celebrate their privacy. In reality, she decides to acculturate in America holding tightly her original Indian culture and practices.

Stepping in to a new country completely, the immigrants require their acceptance by the native people of the host country and then only they could root there firmly. In fact, Thrity Umrigar shows Tehmina’s entry in to America with her jump in to Antonio’s yard when she adventurously moves across the fence to rescue the troubled children from Tara. Thus, Thrity Umrigar portrays that, “the fence had been the dividing line between past and future, between India and America” (262). Perhaps the fence between two houses can be a metaphorical border coming across which Tehmina regains her new identity and becomes an independent woman. Finally, she decides to live in America with the realization that she belongs to Bombay but she can also make her ‘new home’ in Ohio.

Sorab who has been living in America for years feels satisfaction of his luxurious life that is thoroughly the opposite of the life he and his parents had in India. Belonging to Parsi middle class family in Bombay, during his initial days in America, he was conscious of the real fact that “even when he was a poor graduate student, he enjoyed a standard of living that was higher than that of his parents (157). In a matter of fact, he tries to justify his act of migration to America with the success he enjoys today. Though he is a diaspora divided between the homeland and host country, he discourages criticism against America. Tehmina notices Sorab’s “pained, defensive expression” whenever she said anything “critical of America” (32). But at the same time, she is convinced how contemptibly his friends makes comments and mocks on the Indian education system, so that it can be interpreted that Sorab’s pleasure and gratification in America can be his act of validating his migration. Perhaps, it can be the aftermath of migrants’ awareness about postcolonialism that forces them to justify their dispersal from a third world country to a first one.

Analyzing both Tehmina's and Sorab's characters, it is obvious that both of them represents the new diasporic consciousness. In fact, new diaspora does not long for their homeland acutely nor do they live a painful life in the host country as their pursuit of happiness and professional success in the new country compensate if any. It is evident that, through the novel *Umrigar* shows the bright aspect of diaspora with her apt portrayal of characters and their diasporic consciousness. In fact, Tehmina and Sorab represents the new diasporic consciousness. Thus, it can be concluded that new diaspora probably mourn for their unreturnable 'past' and some memories of home but not acutely as they live happily feeling 'at home' in the new country. Their academic, professional as well as better life in the host country compensate their pain if any. However, they do not wish for a permanent departure from their host land but they maintain commitment to the home land even after distance, time and place divide diasporic individuals from their home land. In reality, the relationship between diaspora and homeland is similar to the umbilical relation between a mother and child that can never be erased. It is evident that like Salman Rushdie, *Umrigar* represents the brighter aspect of diaspora through their works along with the chaotic experiences they undergo in the host land.

References

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001.

Boym, Svetlana. "Nostalgia and its Discontents." *The Hedgehog Review*, 2007, pp.7-18.

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Routledge, 1998.

Umrigar, Thrity. *If Today Be Sweet*, Kindle Edition, Harper Collins.

Naficy, Hamid. "Framing Exile: From Homeland to Homepage." *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*, Routledge, 1999, pp.1-13

Socio-Political Turmoil and Economic Strife: A Dual Exploration of Dictatorships in North Korea and Libya through Select Literary Works

Ms. Anshida M

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

This paper delves into the genesis of dictatorship and its ramifications on society, drawing insights from the firsthand accounts presented in *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story of a Young Woman and Abuse of Power in Libya* written by Annick Cojean and *In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom* by Yeonmi Park along with Maryanne Vollers. By scrutinizing the historical context and the mechanisms through which these nations descended into dictatorship, we unravel the complex web of socio-political factors that facilitated authoritarian rule. Through a comparative lens, we explore the patterns and catalysts that paved the way for dictatorial regimes, shedding light on the critical junctures that shaped the destinies of these nations. The article seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the origins of dictatorship and its enduring impact on the societies portrayed in the selected literary works.

Keywords: Genesis, Dictatorship, Historical context, Authoritarian Rule and Socio-political factors

The word dictatorship ideally describes a state where one person enjoys all the powers limitlessly without any restrictions. North Korea and Libya are textbook examples of such a form of government, where authority is being firmly held by a single person or a family for generations creating at most displeasure and dissatisfaction for its citizens. North Korea turned into an autocracy in the early 1950s when the international politics and cold war created cracks between the North and South eventually leading to the world's longest lasting war which even continues today. Libya's downfall into such a trap also has the secret hand of external factors along with its socio-economic situations. One thing we see in common in the rise of a dictatorship is, they all come to play when the country is in a chaos. These dictators proclaim themselves as a messiah to their country to save its fellow citizens from misery, something which they become themselves later.

The books *In Order To Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey To Freedom* by Maryanne Vollers and Yeonmi Park and *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story Of A Young Woman And The Abuses Of Power In Libya* of Annick Cojean depict the most relevant and original versions of such a situation. Both books depict what it is like to live in an earthly hell, where all your life's decisions are made by someone privileged, when human rights become a joke, when restrictions become a common norm. It has been long 70 years of dictatorship under the Kim leaders of three generations who ruled the country on a completely strange and unique strategy all these years, that is, hypocrisy. Using military force and weapons, they got hold over entire people in North Korea, both physically and mentally. They trained people to obey the state or get punished fatally. This country exemplifies the true essence of the term 'border' as it has compelled its inhabitants to disconnect from the rest of the world, creating a distinct planet-like existence within Earth. In the book *In order to live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom* it is quite evident that the socio-political condition of North Korea since the dictatorship of Kim leaders and the economic instability of this particular country among other Asian countries through the narration of Yeonmi Park, the protagonist of this book.

It was in 1953 the series of senseless wars between South and North finally came into an end which had left unhealing wounds on both the countries. In case of North Korea, as Yeonmi states, millions of them have wounded or killed and millions were refugees which then led to the economic instability of the country. It was not only North Korea, but several other countries were also in such dilemma after the second world war. However, most of these countries could at least provide or make up the basic needs for their subjects such as shortages of food, shelter and healthcare. Under the leadership of Kim Jong II, the state has failed or indeed haven't even attempted to assure anything that the people need and instead focused on the disobedience of people and punished them mercilessly which was like Yeonmi said, "It was up to us to save ourselves" (24-25).

People in North Korea are destined to live like stone age people in this twenty first century without any access to the internet and information other than what the state wants them to know. Their hypocrisy is all clear like the daylight as they banned foreign media so that the people won't understand that they are living in a hell on earth. Hyeonsoe Lee writes in her memoir *The Girl With Seven Names: Escape From North Korea*, anyone who lives near the border is monitored more closely by the government in case they "succumbed to the poison of capitalism and traded smuggled goods, watched pernicious foreign television programme, and even defected" (59). In such a scenario, nobody even dares to picture a film as the state not

allowed real human stories which may induce people think, that was no longer encouraged in the state as they employ emotional dictatorship.

During the period spanning from 1994 to 1998, a significant humanitarian crisis unfolded in North Korea, commonly referred to as the North Korean Famine or alternately known as the Arduous March or the March of Suffering. Concurrently, the nation grappled with a widespread economic downturn, resulting in the loss of millions of lives due to starvation and untreated diseases such as tuberculosis. In the light of this particular novel, it is clear that many children including Yeonmi were affected with Pellagra, a dangerous disease which is caused by lack of niacin and other minerals. When the economy collapsed, the regime suggested to eat two meals a day to preserve food resources on which the people didn't feel any strangeness as they were made to believe the entire world is so.

Hunger was part of their daily life as nearly half of the population suffering from extreme starvation and nobody felt any sympathy to those who died of hunger, here Yeonmi says "I was willing to risk my life for the promise of a bowl of rice" (2). Children with bloated bellies became a usual sight where there were frozen babies that starving mothers abandoned in the valleys. "It was normal to see bodies in the trash heaps, bodies floating in the river, normal to just walk by and do nothing when a stranger cried for help" (34). There were times Yeonmi and her sister left with no food for weeks and had to fill their bellies with bugs and wild plants in order to breathe again. When the whole nation is starving then there is no room for sympathy or compassion, and there is nothing to envy as each day is a survival.

The education system of North Korea was a thoughtless one built by senseless heads of the state as the education curriculum was exclusively constructed to honor the sufferings of their leader ignoring all other kind of basics. Almost all the school time children were meant to praise and glorify their leaders and rest of the time they should denounce America and its people by calling them "American bastards", "Yankee devils", "big-nosed bastards", "insane wolves" and so on. In addition to this, students used to play games in which they stab or smash dummies dressed up like American soldiers. Thus, it is very clear that the state assured each and every single individual in this country would hate America and show compassion towards only to their own country from the childhood itself no matter how much they are suffering. Hard labor was the highlight of their curriculum, a kind of collective unpaid labor force which was compulsory for each and every single student and that shows that the state literally hasn't

any interest in making better future for the children and through which the wellness and prosperity of the country.

It can be said that North Korea is a new found land, where the people are unfamiliar with the concept of religion and such kind of belief system. Even though they are unaware of what is a religion, they have an all-powerful God to admire, which is their leader who is believed to have the power to control even the weather. From dawn to dusk, the people are supposed to listen hymns of the leader, the tales of his sufferings, his starvation and the sacrifices that he has done for the welfare of his subjects. Thus, he was more like Prophet Muhammad or Jesus Christ to North Koreans, who blindly believed those myths forgetting what they have been going through. It is only after escaping to China, people like Yeonmi come to know about various religions existed in the world like Buddhism, Christianity and so on. These were all very strange to Yeonmi as she had only worshipped Kim Jong Un and his photographs.

Amidst the poverty and starvation, the regime was so adamant as they haven't given a second thought on the fate of those who break the state's stupid rules. In this novel there are descriptions of the prison camps in North Korea where they are no longer considered as human beings which was open to all accused for petty crimes like watching smuggled media. In a country like North Korea even wearing jeans was a taboo and hadn't any freedom to express one's personal interests even if it is to put on some cosmetics. Bone-breaking labor was the least punishment that one could get and no one would leave the prison lest they are half-dead. In this country, these camps are of different levels for different categories of criminals such as 're-education camps', 'worker's training corps', 'labor training camp' and so on. The state made maximum profit with these criminals forcing them to work hard at fields or in manufacturing jobs and then beat them to death. The condition of those who were captured while escaping from North Korea was even worse as they barely live again. When Yeonmi's father was arrested, he was badly tortured by thrashing his legs with a wooden stick until it swelled up and could barely move. These prison inmates were allowed only a little food with which they have to fight and sometimes eat rats so that they wouldn't die: "At night the prisoners are crammed into small cells and forced to sleep like packed fish, head to toe. Only the strongest live long enough to serve out their sentences" (56).

As already proved North Korean government was a big failure, it was again reinforced by high shortage of fertilizers and medicines. There developed a strange ritual here, where

doctors themselves had to plant medicinal plants to run their clinics as the government didn't provide any healthcare services and amenities neither to doctors nor to the patients. Most of them bought it from the black markets which was again illegal. Ironically even in the specialty hospitals, there weren't any better equipment or needful facilities and struggled to keep up in the modern times. When the fertilizer shortage made the famine even worse the regime came up with an alternative which was more 'affordable and renewable' human and animal waste. Afterwards human and animal excretory got high demand in market and was precious as the entire nation is in need of sustaining the food crops. Saving these excretory was a daily assignment for everyone which then ended up in wars among neighbors, families and children. Even poop thrives emerged in the localities as cultivation is inevitable when there were no supplies from outer countries. The funny part was that, school students were no exceptions since "Every student had to bring five pelts each semester" (60).

When a number of people join together with a common aim and purpose, we call them a group and every group would have a leader, a leader who was chosen by the rest of the group members on a belief that the leader would guide them, protect them and would go to any extent to fulfil that mission or purpose. This is the same purpose on which every nation got a leader, a leader elected by their people believing he/she would effectively rule the country according to the law and justice, would save them from foreign attacks, develop suitable ground on which they can flourish and most importantly would be an ideal ruler to the nation by keeping the rapport between leader and the people. Libyan people had the same kind of expectations when Colonel Muammar Gaddafi coroneted himself as the supreme leader of Libya in 1969 and he was as he established many rules promising equality for women and the prosperity of Libya in the early years of his reign.

After coming to power, Gaddafi with assistance of his Revolutionary command council (RCC) initiated a process of directing funds toward providing education, housing and healthcare for each and every citizen in Libya. They provided free education and through making compulsory primary education for both sexes alike nation's literary rate increased. In addition to this, medical care became available to the public at free of cost and all these made him even more great one. Great Man- Made River project in 1984 was his dream project as he addressed it as the eighth wonder of the world made possible the availability of freshwater for everyone in the country.

Soon after he fixed his foot on the ground, he began to pull strings and the creation of Military Academy for Women in 1979 was part of that as he came up with the concept “people at arms”, ensuring weapons in hands of all citizens regardless of their gender which was completely an innovative idea for people in a traditional country like Libya. Gaddafi was not ready to make women sit behind the curtain but he saw the strength in them as he once declared, “Combat fatigues worn by a woman is worth more than a silk outfit worn by an ignorant, inane, superficial bourgeois woman, unaware of the challenges that confront her and, consequently, her children” (107). It is only later that the country realized he was actually preparing women both mentally and physically strong to the brutality and violence Gaddafi is about to unleash. Once women joined the military academy, they were said to renounce the marriage and devote themselves to the Guide ‘completely’. There were plenty of women who joined the academy at that time on their will aware of all those criteria, but they can’t be blamed as they are the women of a country filled with conventional people where power is something exclusively meant for men.

Libya is a North-African Islamic country double the size of France and includes a vast area of Sahara dessert. It is possible to say that the people of Libya are too traditional and still living in medieval times hesitant to accept modernity and would publicly humiliate those who go after it. In case of women, they were meant to be in their houses looking after the family behind their veils. Anyone who dare to choose a life beyond this had only led a miserable life. In the book, *Gaddafi’s Harem: The Story Of A Young Woman And The Abuse of Power in Libya* written by Annick Cojean, the protagonist Soraya’s mother was a Tunisian lady, there she lived a wonderful life chasing her boundless dreams. For such a lady, living in a country like Libya was a herculean task as she couldn’t stop her from following her passion especially run a salon which was no longer appreciated in that society. In this country “She was like a caged tiger” (2) who was supposed to keep her outings minimum and dress less stylish. There were many such women in Libya who were forced to conform to the societal norms and standards leaving behind their dreams and ambitions for the sake of living there. In Libya, everybody looks others with a suspicion as they are committing some kind of crimes against religion as well as the government. It was too common that, “People spy on one another, neighbors watch the comings and goings of the house across from them, families are jealous of each other, protect their daughters, and gossip about everyone else” (4). Traditionalism and prudishness were at its peak where women were again the most repressed category who would be insulted on the streets if

she is not in her veil. All these narrow-mindedness got fueled up during Gaddafi's reign even though he was a 'women liberator'.

“Those who do not love me do not deserve to live” (0:03), said father of Libyans, guardian of absolute authority and most importantly, the creator of law and justice, Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar Al-Gaddafi. It was forty years of brutality and violence which tainted Libyans ended up in the total destruction of the country. More than merits Gaddafi government could bring in chaos which put the country upside down. About the end of his reign the country witnessed another face of Libya, a miserable one with the deterioration of education and health systems in addition to the disastrous state of country's infrastructure which was badly affected by the bombings. A series of local revolutions impoverished the population considerably which has also shaken Libya's culture by the roots.

It was in 1959, Libya began large scale oil production and made huge profits out of it increasing the per capita income considerably enough to recognize Libya as the fifth wealthiest country among African countries and was in fact an oil rich monarchy. But the sad part is that it never made any progress in the living condition of the poor people as all those profits were kept in hand by the authorities as well as the elite class. This misappropriation of oil profits also contributed to the fall of the state on which Transparency International reports “Gaddafi's government was notoriously corrupt, with the ruling elite siphoning off the country's wealth for their own personal gain. This left the vast majority of Libyans living in poverty”. After the 1988 Lockerbie bombing UN sanctions imposed on Libya in 1992 which again isolated this country on international stage.

What if someone who meant to protect the laws violates it and call themselves as the great protector of law and justice. For Gaddafi, there were ways more than military and police force to punish those who break the rules. Sex was Gaddafi's major weapon to teach people obedience and the worst of all crimes in Libya. If there is a rule in a state, it should be followed by each and every single citizen regardless of their gender and social status. But for Gaddafi, it was different. Even being a nation's leader, he enjoyed practicing whatever is a taboo in that country such as consumption of alcohol, drugs and most importantly he lives upon sex, in another words, rape.

The main attraction of Gaddafi's reign was Amazons, “the standard bearers of his own revolution” (1). It was a bunch of women bodyguards in uniform both as protectors and hunters of Gaddafi living the most luxurious life. These armed pretty women were a foil to him and the

one who know about all his crimes. Once they became part of his team, they were entangled in both his lawful and illicit endeavors, spanning from his private quarters to global platforms. Once committed, there was no turning back, as the repercussions would be ruthless. In addition to this there were Gaddafi's own henchman whose language was violence. Once in the saloon there was an attack by Gaddafi clan and Soraya's brother who tried to rescue ended up in jail, only returned after six months, "his skull shaved and his body covered with bruises" (6). Wrath of Gaddafi and his henchman were well known and a nightmare to the Libyan people. Another incident is that the imprisonment of Hicham's brother, while Hicham himself "had received death threats, his telephone had been bugged, he had been tailed" (65) and had been denounced at work for his relationship with Soraya. Gaddafi won't spare anyone who deceived him along with their family. There were no cars and big houses as Gaddafi promised, but they lived as the poor among the poor.

To the outside world, he was king of kings of Africa who got worldwide attention and attraction through his Islamic socialist speeches and the way he treated women (only in front of media and public). He always maintained a good image on the public which really helped him to earn a lot of admirers who blindly believe and follow his path such as Soraya's friend Adel, who says, "He is a credit to the Arabs, the only one to keep his head held high, to bear our torch! He is a Guide in the most glorious sense of the word" (62). People were forbidden from speaking of Gaddafi and his guards and if it gets outside it would be reported and cause a great deal of trouble. People lived under close surveillance because Gaddafi's police, militia and spies everywhere, this people weren't free at any means.

In conclusion, the narratives of North Korea and Libya, as depicted in the books *In Order To Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey To Freedom* by Maryanne Vollers and Yeonmi Park, and *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story Of A Young Woman And The Abuses Of Power in Libya* by Annick Cojean, vividly illustrates the harrowing consequences of prolonged dictatorships. Both nations, despite having distinct cultural backgrounds, share a common thread of authoritarian rule leading to widespread suffering, restriction of basic rights, and economic instability. The emergence of dictatorships often relies on periods of chaos, presenting leaders as saviors while perpetuating a cycle of oppression. In North Korea, the education system becomes a tool for indoctrination, while in Libya, Gaddafi's carefully crafted public image contrasts with the realities faced by the population. The stories of individuals like Yeonmi Park and Soraya, depicted in these books, highlight the resilience of the human spirit in the face of

oppression. Despite the immense challenges, they sought freedom and a better life, ultimately escaping the clutches of their respective dictatorships.

As we reflect on these accounts, it becomes evident that the rise and persistence of dictatorships are often rooted in a combination of historical, socio-economic, and political factors. Understanding the dynamics that enable such oppressive regimes is crucial in fostering a global commitment to promoting democracy, human rights, and the pursuit of a better future for all. The lessons from these narratives serve as stark reminders of the importance of safeguarding the values that underpin a just and free society.

References

Cojean, Annick. *“Gaddafi’s Harem: The Story Of A Young Woman And The Abuses Of Power In Libya”*. Grove/ Atlantic INC, 2013.

Lee, Hyeonsoe. *The Girl With Seven Names: Escape From North Korea*. William Collins, 19 May, 2016.

“Libya: Political Repression, No Freedom of Expression”. *Human Rights Watch*, 2011.

“Libya”. Transparency International, 2021, <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/libya>.

Park, Yeonmi and Maryanne Vollers. *In Order To Live: A North Korean Girl’s Journey To Freedom*. Penguin Press, 2015.

Ramachandran, Babu. “Life and times of Colonel Gaddafi”. YouTube, uploaded by. *Asianet news*, 2022, https://youtu.be/j-0QP_vdXs0

Endurance and Resilience: Unveiling Trauma in *Stolen Lives*

Ms. Ayishath Binooja P

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

The paper explores the profound psychological and emotional trauma experienced by the characters in Malika Oufkir's *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail*. This memoir recounts the harrowing experiences of the Oufkir family, who endured two decades of imprisonment in Morocco. The paper delves into the multifaceted nature of trauma depicted in the narrative, examining its impact on individual characters and their collective familial dynamics. The analysis focuses on the enduring effects of prolonged incarceration, exploring themes such as isolation, loss, and the struggle for survival. The characters, notably Malika Oufkir herself, navigate the complexities of trauma, revealing the resilience and fragility of the human psyche in the face of adversity. By dissecting the nuanced portrayal of trauma in *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail*, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the lasting psychological scars left by oppressive circumstances. It offers insights into the coping mechanisms employed by the characters and reflects on the broader implications of trauma on individuals and families subjected to extreme adversity.

Keywords: Trauma, Psychological impact, Emotional Struggle, Incarceration, Isolation, Resilience, Survival.

Prison literature, a genre born from the confines of incarceration, holds a unique lens on the human experience. This embarks on a comprehensive exploration of prison literature, with a specific focus on the challenges faced by women in confinement. As authors grapple with involuntary captivity, their works not only depict life behind bars but also shed light on broader societal inequalities, particularly affecting incarcerated women. Women in prison encounter a myriad of issues, from victimization and familial instability to domestic violence, educational and occupational setbacks, substance abuse, and mental health challenges.

Psychological trauma results from distressing or life-threatening events, whether a singular incident like a natural disaster or ongoing experiences such as abuse. It overwhelms

an individual's coping abilities, causing fear, helplessness, or horror. Post-trauma, intense emotions like fear, anger, and sadness may arise, making processing challenging. Recurrent distressing memories or flashbacks may occur, triggering avoidance behaviors to cope. Physiological and psychological arousal increase, causing hypervigilance, irritability, and negative self-perception. Trauma impacts relationships, hindering trust and emotional expression, leading to social withdrawal.

Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail is an autobiographical account by Malika Oufkir, painting a vivid picture of the harrowing life in prison. It is a compelling memoir that reads like a political thriller - a tale of Malika Oufkir's tumultuous and extraordinary life. Born in 1953, Malika Oufkir was the eldest daughter of General Oufkir, the closest aide to the King of Morocco. Adopted by the king at five years old, Malika spent most of her childhood and teenage years secluded in the court harem, surrounded by opulence and immense privilege.

Oufkir details the 20-year imprisonment of her affluent Moroccan family following a 1972 coup attempt against King Hassan II by her father, a high-ranking military aide. After her father's execution, Malika, her mother, and her five siblings were transported to a series of desert barracks, along with their books, toys, and clothes. Upon their first placement, the individuals voiced concerns regarding their shortage of butter and sweet treats. As time went by, their subsequent postings only brought more isolation chambers and meager, rodent-infested provisions.

Realizing that they had been abandoned to perish, the individuals grew increasingly desperate and contemplated ending their own lives. In a last-ditch effort, they dug a tunnel and successfully escaped. However, their freedom was short-lived as they were later recaptured and subjected to five more years of various forms of imprisonment before ultimately being granted emancipation. Contrary to current perceptions of political prisoners being victimized for their beliefs or actions, Oufkir's experience does not neatly fit into this narrative. Malika, along with three of her siblings, successfully fled their cell by tunneling their way out, and the exit remained undiscovered for several hours after their departure. Upon realizing that their former allies were too fearful of the consequences to offer assistance, they eventually reached out to French lawyers who brought their plight to the public's attention. With the media's focus on the fact that the government had incarcerated children for fifteen years due to their father's involvement in a coup, the situation shifted, but they were not granted freedom.

Stolen Lives, Malika details the arduous years spent by her, her five siblings, and her mother, attempting to persevere in the bleakest of environments. Expressive and emotive, *Stolen Lives* is a gripping and heart-rending testament to the unbreakable bond of family, and a testament to the unfaltering strength of the human spirit. Greed, hatred, and delusion are prominent themes that permeate throughout the course of Malika's life. Her references to these vices suggest that she is a woman with considerations for not just her material and physical well-being, but also her spiritual self. Despite the trying circumstances, these have served as her pillars of happiness and contentment. Her adeptness at balancing the realities of her situation and the refuge of her imagination is a testament to her reflective capabilities, as exemplified even during the difficult times of prison hunger strikes. She possesses no foresight of her future, instead embodying the typical image of a Moroccan princess. Her escape from reality lies in the radio, an outlet to society that she disregarded in her royal lifestyle.

Her insatiable desire to maintain her easy life as royalty drives her actions, leading her to despise her captor and display a delusional mindset through her comments. Despite her efforts to address her issues, she holds hatred towards Allah and her king. Through the character of Malika, the author portrays the struggles of women who have lost their freedom and faced immense hardship. The writer, in turn, reflects her own life through this article. The young girl's experience as a prisoner was unbearable. The punishment inflicted on her father's enemies had severe consequences for the entire family, plunging them into a dark existence.

The fairytale existence of Malika quickly turned into a horror movie. Raised in lavish royal palaces, she was spoiled with every imaginable luxury until the age of 17. However, it was against her wishes since she longed to be with her family, and live a normal life. The execution of the 1972 plot to kill the king served as the final chapter in the fairy tale. At that time, Malika had already been permitted to return to her home, where she lived a lavish life, now with her own family. She traveled, surreptitiously entered discotheques, and indulged in shopping sprees across Europe and beyond, all thanks to her family's wealth. However, they were constantly under strict surveillance by both bodyguards and the police. Despite their efforts, the attempt failed and Oufkir was found dead, officially claiming his own life. In a vengeful act, the king punished the entire family: Oufkir's wife and their six children, ranging from 2 to 18 years old, were thrown into prison. They remained there for 20 years, enduring unbearable conditions that were bound to lead to a slow death: starvation, thirst, sweltering heat and freezing cold in the desert, lack of medical assistance, and the constant presence of parasites like mice, scorpions, snakes. On top of that, each family member was isolated in

separate cells, forbidden from seeing each other for years. Despite these hardships, the Oufkirs managed to communicate among themselves through a clever system and even hid from the guards with the help of a transistor. However, these 20 years were forever stolen from their lives. Malika, who was only 18 and half when she was imprisoned for her father's alleged crimes, feels like the best years of her life were taken away from her; years in which she could have studied, traveled, fallen in love, and started a family. Her siblings lost their childhood and teenage years, while the physical and emotional torture they endured left them scarred for life. It is a miracle they survived it all: sickness, malnutrition, starvation, and even attempted suicide.

After a grueling 11 years of captivity at Bir-Jdid, deemed the most perilous of their multiple incarcerations, four siblings successfully flee through an underground passageway ingeniously fashioned with a mere spoon and the top of a sardine can. Evading pursuit for several days, they eventually find refuge by contacting a French radio station. It is at this pivotal moment that the relentless pressure from the international community proves to be too overwhelming, forcing the king to release the remaining family members. Despite their newfound freedom, the family is subjected to house arrest in yet another luxurious yet restrictive confinement for several more years.

Malika Oufkir's memoir, *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail*, unveils the harrowing ordeals her family endured during their two decades of imprisonment following a failed coup against King Hassan II. Throughout their confinement, the family faced immeasurable hardships, including separation, harsh living conditions, physical and psychological torture, isolation from the outside world, and scarcity of basic necessities. These traumatic experiences left indelible marks on each family member, shaping their resilience and determination to persevere against insurmountable odds.

The Oufkir family experienced extreme isolation, completely cut off from the outside world. Their captors intentionally denied them access to any form of communication, including television, newspapers, and radio. The Army constantly guarded them, leaving them with no means to fulfill their basic needs. The three grown-up girls, Malika, Soukaina, and Mariam, faced daily difficulties, from using the toilet to fearing for their safety. Malika even sacrificed sleep to protect her siblings. Beyond their physical isolation, the Oufkir family was also emotionally isolated from their extended relatives and friends. They had no contact with their loved ones, not even through letters or messages. This left them completely unaware of the

events unfolding outside their prison walls, including political developments and societal changes. Their isolation also extended to their legal rights, as they were denied access to representation or advocacy. This made it even more challenging for them to seek justice.

For twenty-four hours each day, they were confined in separate cells, only able to communicate through the walls between them. They were unable to see each other for the five years they were together in the same jail. We can imagine how traumatic it would be for a mother who cannot see the faces of her children for more than five years. When they are put in prison, they are all young, but after the imprisonment, they are all grown up men and women. A mother cannot believe her eyes and may have her heart broken into a thousand pieces. Malika became a strong girl in order to protect her siblings and mother. She has to be bold and strong to become a pillar for them, as she is the eldest among the children, and she has to become a role model for them. The pain teaches her lessons for life. "Hassan enjoyed keeping us in prison, starving us, freezing us, and leaving us without beds, sheets, or medical care. I think he took pleasure in it every day"(26). "Their youth in Bir-Jdid prison was infected by insects, vermin, and brutal deprivation"(97).

Trauma may be defined as an original inner catastrophe, as an experience of excess that overwhelms the subject symbolically and/or physically and is not accessible to him. This "radical and shocking interruption of the universe, but not its total destruction," means that the pain experienced by the subject is forcefully relocated into the subconscious. One is the traumatic event, registered rather than experienced. It seems to have bypassed perception and consciousness and falls directly into the psyche. Their cells provided scant room for mobility and lacked essential facilities. In many cases, the cells were overcrowded, with multiple family members being forced to share cramped quarters. Within a desert prison, nine individuals were required to reside in a solitary cell. Proper sanitation infrastructure was absent from these cells. Oufkir recounts how the prisoners had no access to toilets or suitable bathing facilities, resulting in unsanitary conditions. They were forced to find makeshift solutions for their basic hygiene needs. The cells had poor ventilation, resulting in stifling and oppressive living conditions. In winter, the prisoners suffered greatly without adequate garments, blankets, or a source of warmth to combat the bitter cold. No hospital facilities were available to them; one of Oufkir's sisters has epilepsy, and she did not receive proper medical care or medicine, resulting in her health rapidly deteriorating, leaving her bedridden most of the time. During sweltering summers, the cells became unbearably stifling and oppressive, exacerbating the discomfort and physical strain on the prisoners. Conversely, during the winter months, they

endured extreme cold without proper heating or insulation. As a result of these harsh living conditions, Malika lost her ability to have children due to an infection she contracted while in prison, a direct result of the lack of proper basic facilities. This was one of the many traumas she endured until her final days. The depiction of harsh living conditions in *Stolen Lives* highlights the inhumane treatment inflicted upon the Oufkir family during their imprisonment. These conditions added to their physical and emotional hardships, further reinforcing the oppressive nature of their captivity.

Malika Oufkir recounts the brutal abuse and torment inflicted upon her and her loved ones during their time of captivity. She reveals "He could have killed us, but he preferred to have us die slowly"(86). These words not only portray the rage of King Hassan II, but also showcase his ruthless nature, as he mercilessly tortured them while denying them any basic necessities, keeping them starved for weeks on end, withholding proper medical care, and isolating them from the outside world. The guards subjected them to constant beatings and torture, using their fists, feet, and various objects such as batons and cables, leaving them bruised, injured, and in excruciating pain. Malika recounts the unbearable torture of being suspended from the ceiling by her wrists, causing intense physical agony and long-term injuries. The family also endured mental torture, as they were led to believe they were going to be executed in mock executions. They were constantly under the threat of death, living in a state of fear and intimidation.

The agonizing deprivation of nourishment can also be classified as a physical ordeal. As a royal princess, Malika and her kin had never been exposed to such afflictions. Hence, this deprivation becomes a form of torture for them. She vividly recalls the meager and sparse portions of sustenance allocated to her loved ones. Their food intake was severely restricted, to the point of barely sustaining their bodies. Enduring constant desperation and gnawing hunger took a toll on their physical and emotional health, transforming survival into an unending battle. "Hunger humiliates; hunger debases. Hunger makes you betray your family, your friends, and your values. Hunger turns you into a monster" (108). "Rotting vegetables, two bowlfuls of flour, a bowl of chickpeas and one of lentils, twelve bad eggs, a piece of spoilt meat, a few lumps of sugar, a litre of oil per month, and a little tub of Tide"(120). "We had unlimited water to drink, but it tasted salty and didn't quench our thirst"(207). Illness and scourges are also torture because "we could all have died twenty times over, but every time we emerged again unscathed from the numerous illnesses we contracted in prison"(278).

Among the various theories that apply to the Oufkir family's harrowing experiences, the concept of psychological trauma stands out. A result of enduring a traumatic event, this affliction has deeply affected the Oufkirs after they faced prolonged periods of imprisonment, physical abuse, torture, isolation, and separation. These traumatic events act as powerful triggers for the onset of trauma, as evidenced by Malika Oufkir's own account of recurrent nightmares, intrusive memories, and constant hypervigilance even after her release. The family's ordeal, including physical abuse, separation from loved ones, and psychological torture, exemplifies the complex nature of trauma. Malika vividly illustrates the catastrophic impact of trauma on her family's mental well-being, including her mother's harrowing battle with severe depression and her siblings' ongoing emotional struggles.

Emotional dysregulation is a common aftereffect of their trauma, leading to intense and fluctuating emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness that constantly trigger their trauma. Moments of dissociation, where they feel detached from their bodies or experience a sense of unreality, are also frequently described. The Oufkirs are left questioning their sense of self, cultural identity, and place in the world after enduring years of captivity and unimaginable suffering: "We were striped of our freedom, but worse than that, we were striped of our dignity" (135). This reflects the deprivation of the character's freedom. They were forcefully taken from their comfortable, happy lives and subjected to imprisonment, isolation, and harsh living conditions. The loss of physical freedom is a significant trauma. They have lost their dignity; it was even more devastating than the loss of freedom. The characters were treated inhumanely and subjected to abuse and torture. This treatment robbed them of their sense of worth, self-respect, and human rights. This suggests that the loss of dignity lingers long after their physical freedom is restored, but they carry the psychological scars of their experiences.

"The trauma etched in our souls, a never-ending nightmare that invaded our dreams, waking hours, and every fibre of our being" (287). The phrase "etched in our souls" suggests that the trauma they endured left an indelible mark on their innermost selves. It highlights that the trauma permeates both the characters' dreams and their waking hours. It shows that traumatic memories intrude upon their subconscious during sleep, which causes nightmares and disturbances to sleep. They are even unable to escape the thoughts, emotions, and reminders that trigger memories of trauma. This conveys the pervasive nature of the trauma, which infiltrates their inner world: "We were broken, but we had to find a way to keep our spirits alive amidst the darkness that engulfed us" (89). In spite of their brokenness, the characters in the memoir reveal exceptional toughness by actively seeking ways to keep their

spirits alive. This reveals that they are not ready to succumb entirely to the darkness and despair that surround them. Instead of that, they opt for inner strength, hope, and strength as a means of coping with their traumatic situations.

“The isolation gnawed at us, driving us to the brink of madness. We craved human connection, but all we had was each other” (89). These lines underscore the devastating effects of being cut off from the outside world, deprived of social connections, and confined to a narrow familial unit. It conveys the deep yearning for human connection and the significant psychological distress that arises from the absence of such connections. “The nightmares haunted us even during our waking hours, as if the ghosts of our past were always lurking in the shadows”(256). This paints a vivid picture of the ongoing impact of post-traumatic or distressing memories. It conveys a sense of persistent unease, a feeling that the past is never truly gone, but rather, it continues to cast its shadow on our present experiences, manifesting as haunting nightmares and lingering emotional turmoil.

In conclusion, *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail* explores the theme of traumatized femininity through the experiences of its female characters. The author delves into the profound impact of trauma on women’s lives, highlighting the ways in which their femininity becomes distorted and violated by the atrocities they endure. Throughout the narrative, we witness the profound resilience and strength of these women as they navigate the aftermath of their trauma and attempt to reclaim their stolen lives. One of the central aspects of traumatized femininity depicted in the book is the loss of agency. The female characters in *Stolen Lives* are subjected to various forms of violence and abuse, which results in a severe disruption of their autonomy and sense of self. Their bodies and minds bear the scars of their experiences, leaving them feeling fragmented and powerless. The author underscores the lasting impact of trauma on femininity, emphasizing the struggle to rebuild trust, establish boundaries, and regain control over their own lives.

The book sheds light on the societal expectations and norms that contribute to the perpetuation of traumatized femininity. The female characters often face victim blaming and stigmatization, which compounds their trauma and inhibits their healing process. Society’s tendency to overlook and dismiss the experiences of these women further exacerbates their sense of isolation and devalues their femininity. The author presents a critical examination of these societal structures that prompts readers to question the systemic factors that perpetuate traumatized femininity and the urgent need for change. Despite the harrowing portrayal of

traumatized femininity, it also offers glimpses of hope and strength. The female characters demonstrate remarkable strength as they navigate their trauma, find solace in their relationships with one another, and engage in acts of resistance. It also underscores the power of solidarity and collective healing. This book ultimately serves as a poignant exploration of traumatized femininity, revealing the profound and long-lasting impact of trauma on women's lives. It confronts the realities faced by survivors of trauma, encouraging empathy, understanding, and a commitment to challenging the societal structures that perpetuate such violence. It calls for a collective effort to create a world where women's voices are heard, their experiences are validated, and their stolen lives are restored. In a touching and poignant account, Malika bares her soul and recounts the devastating effects of political oppression and prolonged captivity on her psyche and sense of self. The trauma of being taken from her home at a tender age and imprisoned for over twenty years shattered her freedom and identity. The sudden and violent tear from her familiar life, loved ones, and culture left her reeling with a profound sense of bereavement and displacement. During her extended confinement in harsh conditions, Malika and her family were cut off from the outside world. The isolation and lack of control over their lives fostered feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. The inability to dictate their circumstances only served to exacerbate the psychological impact of trauma. The constant danger of physical harm and the uncertainty of their future amplified the trauma inflicted upon Malika.

Living in a constant state of fear, always anticipating punishment or death, left Malika in a heightened state of anxiety and hyper alertness. Despite the intense psychological torment, she displayed remarkable resilience. Through the unwavering support of her family members, particularly her mother, she found the strength to endure and cling to hope, even in the darkest moments. Her determination to survive and safeguard her loved ones became her driving force. The prolonged captivity also had long-lasting repercussions on Malika's relationships with her family. While they provided her with support and fortitude, the shared trauma also created emotional barriers and difficulties in reconnecting after their eventual release. The trauma that Malika left her with complex emotions upon her release. Adjusting to life after such prolonged captivity was a disorienting and overwhelming process. She faced challenges reintegrating into society and finding her place in the world. Even after her release, the lingering trauma of her past continued to impact her life. The scars of her captivity and the loss of her family members who did not survive followed her, a constant reminder of the horrors she endured.

Zohra, mother of Malika Oufkir, experiences the profound and calamitous effects of trauma as a result of their family's protracted political imprisonment. The trauma she endures throughout the two decades of captivity leaves an indelible imprint on her mental and emotional state, shaping her actions, responses, and overall perspective on life. Zohra faces immense emotional turmoil during their captivity. The abrupt and traumatizing separation from her husband, General Mohamed Oufkir, who was executed after the failed coup attempt, leaves her devastated and grappling with emotions of loss, sorrow, and perplexity. As a mother, Zohra carries the burden of responsibility for her children's well-being and safety in the prison environment. She ardently protects and nurtures them, often placing their needs above her own. Her role as a mother becomes a source of willpower and purpose amidst the obscurity of their confinement. She experiences a rollercoaster of hope and despair during their imprisonment. Moments of hope emerge when she hears whispers of potential release or improvement in their circumstances, only to be dashed by the stark reality of continued imprisonment. The yearning for freedom and reunification with her family becomes a driving force for Zohra. The longing for a life beyond prison fuels her determination to survive and endure the hardships of their situation. She becomes an emblem of perseverance for her family, demonstrating immense bravery in the face of adversity. Zohra's love and resolute commitment to keep her family together remain steadfast, yet the prolonged confinement also creates emotional distance and challenges in maintaining connections with her children. The physical conditions of their imprisonment and the psychological strain of constant surveillance and control take a toll on Zohra's health and well-being. She endures physical hardships, malnutrition, and emotional strain. Zohra's tenacity shines as she sets out to reconstruct their lives beyond confinement. She embraces newfound liberties with gratitude, but the lingering effects of their ordeal continue to shape their journey of healing and recovery. In *Stolen Lives*, Zohra's character embodies the immense influence of trauma on an individual, specifically that of a mother who bears the burden of safeguarding her family in a hostile and unstable setting. Her account serves as a testament to the unwavering strength of the human spirit in the face of unspeakable adversity, a poignant reminder of the resilience that can emerge from even the direst of circumstances.

Abdellatif, the younger brother of Malika Oufkir, is deeply impacted by the trauma endured during the family's two-decade-long imprisonment for political reasons. As a young child of only three when the family was incarcerated, he was released twenty-three years later as a grown man with no ties to the outside world. The struggles he must have faced as a prisoner

for over two decades are incomprehensible. His formative years were marred by the harsh and oppressive conditions of captivity, leaving an indelible mark on his life. Trauma becomes an integral part of Abdellatif's life at a tender age as he witnesses the arrest of his family and is thrust into a world of fear, uncertainty, and seclusion. The absence of maternal and paternal figures can have consequences on their emotional attachment and future relationships. The dearth of access to formal education and limited exposure to the outside world impede Abdellatif's personal and academic development. The deprivation of a typical childhood and the opportunity for growth can have enduring implications on his life's trajectory. Following their eventual release, unfortunately, Abdellatif and his siblings encounter difficulties in reintegrating into mainstream society. The traumas endured during captivity may make it challenging for him to adjust to life beyond the confines of prison and adapt to the newfound freedom and choices it entails. Similar to Abdellatif, Malika's younger sisters Soukaina and Maryam have also undergone comparable experiences.

References

Oufkir, Malika, and Michele Fitoussi. *Stolen Lives*. Miramax Books, 2001.

Ghambou, Mokhtar,” Malika Oufkir: The American Making of Moroccan star.” Yale University.

Slyomovics, Susan, “ review: Stolen Lives.” 2001.

<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/susan-slyomovics-review-stolen-lives/>

Wilentz, Amy, “Stolen Lives: Twenty years in a desert jail”. Book reporter, Miramax Books.

<https://www.bookreporter.com/reviews/stolen-lives-twenty-years-in-a-desert-jail/excerpt>

Peoples, Dion “ Summary of ‘Stolen Lives’ by Malika Oufkir”.2003

<https://pages.uoregon.edu/munno/OregonCourses/REL408W03/REL408TongSummaries/Dion-StolenLives.htm>

Balancing Multiple Selves and Women's Creativity: A Reading of Elif Shafak's *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*

Ms. Ameena V M

Assistant Professor of English,

Najath College of Science and Technology,

Karuvarakundu.

Abstract

Women writers/artists have always had to work 'against the grain' to earn a place they deserve in the canons of literature or art. Mainstream writers, philosophers, historians, and academicians one after another asserted the "lack" of women confirming to the patriarchal ideology and value systems of various hues thereby excluding the women artist from the main/male stream literary canon and history. Dominant ideologies of womanhood have stipulated certain specific individual and social roles/functions -stereotypical- for women and women artists suffer angst and conflicts in their creative field as they have to juggle against the stereotypical lives/roles expected of them. Elif Shafak, Turkey's leading woman novelist, through her recently published memoir, *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*, encapsulates the anxieties of a woman artist during the different phases of life; daughter, lover, wife, mother etc. Through this paper I would like to explore how do feminist and postfeminist scholars address the issues of multiple responsibilities women have and how do women artists/writers of the contemporary period find a balance in their writing career and personal life with reference to Elif Shafak's memoir.

Keywords: Feminism/post feminism, memoir, multiple selves, women's creativity.

Women writers/artists have always had to work 'against the grain' to earn a place they deserve in the canons of literature or art. Mainstream writers, philosophers, historians, and academicians one after another asserted the "lack" of women confirming to the patriarchal ideology and value systems of various hues thereby excluding the women artist from the main/male stream literary canon and history. Dominant ideologies of womanhood have stipulated certain specific individual and social roles/functions -stereotypical- for women and women artists suffer angst and conflicts in their creative field as they have to juggle against the stereotypical lives/roles expected of them.

Throughout its long history, feminism has sought to disturb the complacent certainties of patriarchal culture, to assert a belief in sexual equality, and to eradicate sexist domination in transforming society. Feminist criticism of diverse hues has attempted to free itself from naturalized patriarchal notions of the literary and the literary critical. Mainstream writers and literary scholars confirming to these naturalized patriarchal notions have always considered 'women writing' less serious and not worthy of attention and scholarship. This attitude has resulted in erasing the contributions of women writers from the literary history and transforming literary canon an exclusive male domain. Feminist scholars and women writers have resisted these pervasive biases in different cultures and began to use their distinctive experience as a source of strength and inspiration.

Women writers always addressed their multiple responsibilities and selves/subjectivities through their writings and the struggle in fulfilling these responsibilities. Through their autobiographies, memoirs and imaginative enterprises they have manifested their struggles, conflicts and anxieties in varying degrees. Women's writing all over the world witnessed large scale publications of memoirs and autobiographies, recording the private life of women. Unlike fictionalized portrayal of the life of women, writers personally appeared in memoirs and autobiographies, and explored their angst, ambivalent stance at different stages of their lives. They even began to explore hitherto unexplored areas of life and portrayed even their sexual orientation quite openly and bluntly.

Elif Shafak, Turkey's most read woman writer and an award-winning novelist, writes both in English and Turkish, and has published 14 books, nine of which are novels including *The Bastard of Istanbul*, *The Forty Rules of Love*, *Honour*, *The Architect's Apprentice*, *Three Daughters of Eve*, *The Gaze*, *The Island of Missing Trees*, *10 Minutes 38 seconds in This Strange World*. Shafak blends western and eastern traditions of storytelling, bringing out the voices of women, minorities, subcultures, immigrants and global souls. Defying clichés and transcending boundaries, her works draw on different cultures and cities, and reflects a strong interest in history, philosophy, culture, mysticism, intercultural dialogue and gender equality. Following the birth of her daughter in 2006 she fell into post-natal depression, an experience she addressed in her first autobiographical book *SiyahSut(Black Milk)*. In this memoir Shafak has explored the beauties and difficulties of being a writer and mother along with the post-partum depression.

An advocate of women's equality and freedom, Shafak herself grew up with two different modes of womanhood: her modern, working, educated mother and her traditional, religious grandmother. Her writings always addressed the issues related with the minorities and sub-cultures of different hues and her works often read from the postcolonial and post-feminist vantage grounds. In her memoir, *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*, an offshoot of the post-partum depression subsequent the birth of her daughter, Shafak combines fiction and non-fiction genres. About the title of the work, Shafak has commented:

I named the book Black Milk for two reasons. First it deals with post-partum depression and shows that mother's milk is not always white and spotless as society likes to think it is. Second, out of that depression I was able to get an inspiration; out of that black milk I was able to develop some sort of ink (The Sydney Morning Herald).

Elif Shafak, being a feminist, rather post-feminist artist, records the private life of an artist whose life often experiences ups and downs, dilemmas, or ambivalences at different stages of life especially when they have to take decisions about their careers, marriage and motherhood. Shafak's skillful narrative in the memoir shows the readers how a 'choir of discordant voices', finger sized Thumbelinas inside her head cajole, tease, berate and encourage her, becoming her life-line as she navigates through a maze and fog of depression. While the finger women compete with one another for space and prominence in her mind, she turns to the life of other women artists- Sylvia Plath, Ayn Rand, George Eliot, Zelda Fitzgerald, Doris Lessing et al., for guidance and weaves their stories about sexuality, creativity, work, love, madness and motherhood into her own, thereby establishing her bond with the sisterhood of writers or artists. Until the age of thirty-five Shafak defined herself as a writer, cosmopolitan, lover of Sufism, pacifist, vegetarian and a woman "in more or less that order ... and first and foremost ... a teller of tales"- all while hearing a cacophony of competing internal voices. Her unexpected pregnancy simultaneously thrilled and panicked her. The 'black milk' of the title refers to the conflict she felt between her roles as a writer and mother- her fears that she could not meet the demands of both simultaneously- and nearly a year long bout of post-partum depression she suffered.

At the beginning of the memoir Shafak asks readers a question which was once posed to her: Do you think a woman could manage motherhood and a career at the same time and equally well? For many years, her answer to the question was an emphatic No. As a successful author and self-proclaimed nomad, Shafak wandered the world, writing and publishing in her

beloved Istanbul, in the US and in Europe. But her decision to postpone motherhood and wholeheartedly pursue a career was not without inner turmoil: “There is a mini harem deep down in my soul. A gang of females who constantly fight for nothing and bicker, looking for an opportunity to trip one another up”(29). Shafak calls them a ‘Choir of Discordant Voices’, which are tiny creatures and each one not taller than thumbelinas. Each of the thumbelinas represents her inner voices and they reside in her soul’s different corners. The author says: “Chronologically speaking, I don’t know which finger sized woman came first and followed whom. Some of them found wiser than others but that is less of their ages than because of their temperament. I guess I got used to hearing them quarrel inside my mind all the time” (29).

The finger sized women comprise the driving characters in the memoir and all of the six are highly individualized, highly entertaining personalities who co-exist, albeit in rivalry, within the narrator. Shafak not only recognizes her ‘multitudes’, but gives them names and identifies their personality traits. There is Little Miss Practical, who leaves nothing to chance, viewing all choices with logic and blunt rationality; Miss High browed Cynic, who embraces the intellectual; Malady Ambitious Chekhovian, the career-driven artist; Dame Dervish, the spiritual sufi; Blue Belle Bovary, the seductress and Mama Rice Pudding, the maternal. Through the book, she converses with these finger sized creatures who surprise her with their appearances in unexpected terrains such as airplanes, bathrooms and start fighting each other. Shafak’s creative take on her own personalities exemplifies her strong belief about all women: that women are more than one identity, not simply a mother, lover or career girl. This notion of multiple selves about the author in particular and women in general has driven much of Shafak’s writing.

Shafak dedicates several chapters in *Black Milk* to her residency at Mount Holyoke because it is here that she first encounters with one of her selves, ‘Mama Rice Pudding’, and her desire for a child. But the rationale of having a child for a career oriented woman like her is strongly resisted by Miss High Browed Cynic and Ambitious Chekhovian who strongly insist to pursue the career. Once in the US, the internal struggle continues and the cynic and the intellectual lose some influence on her. Mama Rice Pudding senses her chance to tighten her grip and when she does, Shafak learns that Mama has been held hostage for the entire life by other dominating selves.

With her maternal side released, the author wonders how and why the maternal side has been suppressed for so long. Shafak’s previous writings reveal her belief that people assume

and mantle different roles to suite their immediate company: people act one way in public and one way at home; one way with friends and one way with family. But if society shapes our 'selves', Shafak now wonders, is there such a thing as natural inclination? She asks herself: how much of her womanhood is biological and how much of it is socially learned? And these questions remain central to the forward march of the memoir. While addressing the inner struggles between her different selves, she digs the history of women's writing and looks at how other female writers did grapple with the dilemma of her own kind, especially how they managed the responsibilities of their profession and motherhood. As opposed to those women who couldn't imagine writing about themselves or engaging in any kind of creative activity to fulfill the conventional roles, the memoir brings up the lives of women who choose to sacrifice their typical roles in order to pursue their creative passions. Shafak traverses through biographical examples of women artists who have made the decision to pursue their careers with a strong conviction of negating the possibility of becoming mothers. At the same time, Shafak also does look at the other side of the spectrum and she brings creativity and expression to a life of marriage and motherhood. An example she gives is the wife of Leo Tolstoy, Sophia Andreyevna, who Shafak imagines could have had aspirations of writing as she was a diarist and helped Tolstoy with his manuscripts. However, Sophia doesn't get a chance to pursue a course of life similar to that of her husband because of her marriage with Tolstoy at a younger age and occasional pregnancy; in fact, she has thirteen children in total. Because of the short interval between each pregnancy, Shafak calls Sophia a 'moon woman'; her stomach like the phases of moon.

In the chapter titled 'Women who Change their Names', the author recounts a list of women writers who have undergone a series of name change operation, a typical feature in the history of women's writing all over the world. She says: "The late nineteenth century Ottoman novelist Fatma Aliye wrote her novels and novellas mostly in secret, as she did not want to upset her husband and family with her independent ways. One day she stopped using her name and published her works under the pseudonym, 'A Woman'. Later Shafak talks about women writers who were also mothers: "Nadine Gordimer, Margaret Atwood, Annie Proulx, Anita Desai, JhumpaLahiri, Naomi Shihabnye, Anne Lamott, Mary Gordon, Ann Rice, the legendary Christina de Belgioisoso, and Ursula K. Le Guin A large number of female writers have one or two children" (40).

J K Rowling started writing the Harry Porter series after the birth of her son and dedicated the subsequent books to her new born daughter and she even admitted that

motherhood acted as a source of inspiration. Toni Morrison has to manage both writing and raising her sons up at the beginning of her career and she was even unable to work in the day time due to the hardships she has gone through. The most significant writer whom Shafak evokes here is Sylvia Plath who has undergone various anxieties with regard to womanhood and motherhood. In the initial days of her marriage with Ted Hughes, she feared of sterility and the same Plath later lost many nights' sleep fretting over the pains of giving birth. But at the same time, she was sure that being a mother would add a lot of things to her life and enrich her writing. She also looks at other writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Zelda Fitzgerald, Yuko Tsushima, and many others. She examines the life choices these writers made and compares them with her own journey of self-exploration.

Shafak is very much fascinated by the life and career of Pearl S Buck, an adoption advocate, whose tireless works to help children didn't seem to hinder her Nobel Prize winning writing career. In revisiting the lives of Louisa Mary Alcott and George Eliot- polar opposites in voice, yet equals in unconventional life style- Shafak suggests, "every reader brings his or her own gaze to the text, and ends up reading the story differently".

Walking through the history of women and women artists of different hues, temperaments, and choices, Shafak understands that every case is different and each has its own obstacles. So, it would be with her life too. After years of living independently and coming out a successful writing career, she falls in love, gets married, and soon finds herself pregnant. An exuberant Mama Rice Pudding boasts to her former Thumbelina-Sized Suppressors, "I am the State!", signaling her hard-earned supremacy over other conflicting selves.

Pregnancy marks a new chapter in Shafak's life, and she chronicles her pregnancy on a near-weekly basis. As the delivery date nears, Shafak continues to hold conversation with her inner selves as she is still not at peace with her decision to become mother. Dame Dervish, the sufi self, gains temporary control and advises Shafak to simply surrender and she literally follows the instruction during the delivery: "All of the breathing exercises, parental yoga, black caviar, broccoli salads and even 'Little Women' lose their significance as I surrender." (202). Indeed, Shafak surrenders her whole life during the first few months of motherhood. She writes, "my self-confidence has become a scoop of ice cream melting fast under the duress of motherhood" (210). During her post-delivery days she started to compare books with babies and she recounts many women writers who did the same thing. From this time onwards, the real conflict between motherhood and writing emerges:

My record of motherhood so far resembles a plummeting stock-exchange index. I have deep suspicion that other women were told to spend years preparing themselves for the transition that comes with the birth of baby, and I missed the memo. How am I- who could not even manage womanhood naturally and effortlessly- now going to manage motherhood? (213)

The conflict leads her to think about Doris Lessing, “a girl woman who mothered herself” (211). Lessing got married when she was nineteen and had two children, a son and a daughter and she has explored the conflicts and angsts of that period in a detailed manner in her two-volume autobiography *Under My Sky* and *Walking in the Shade*. Like many other women writers, dead and living, Shafak’s mind is too troubled with the multiple roles and the ensuing anxieties she has to undergo. She says:

A cauldron boils in my mind. What if I fail to become a good mother and good wife? I do not want to betray myself or to pretend to be someone I am not. What scares me most is the possibility of an adverse chemical reaction between authorship and domestic responsibilities. Novelists are self-enamoured people who do not like to draw attention to that fact. Mothers, on the other hand, are supposed to be selfless creatures at least for a while-who give more than they take. Perhaps I am worrying too much, but worrying comes with thinking. How can I tell my brain not to think. (212).

What Shafak has experienced is not something new but a part and parcel of the lives of many well-known women artists who torn into pieces due to multiple responsibilities toward their different selves. Like others, Shafak too gets traumatized and troubled by the questions the inner selves ask to her and she turns to her inner selves to find answers for the depression: “All I know is that after a period of oligarchy and a short interval of military rule, this monarchy, too has come to an end. Now there is only anarchy in the land of me” (217).

Post-partum depression, motherhood-and perhaps Dame Dervish and Mama Rice Pudding- rob Shafak of her will to write and it drives her into depression and isolation. She acknowledges her desires to both read and write, but has neither the energy nor the confidence. Different selves prompt her to do different things; Blue Belle Bovary urges Shafak to get out of her old night gown, an advice which Shafak completely ignores: “I want to cling more firmly to my oily hair, my pallid skin, my tattered clothes... In a world that feels increasingly foreign, only this night gown is familiar and comforting” (215).

Shafak names the part of the memoir which describes the post-partum depression as “Dark Sweetness” and she quotes Rumi: “The pen puts it head down/To give a dark sweetness to the page”. As her post-partum depression worsens, Shafak gives it a name and identity: Lord Poton, a djinni who imprisons the rest of her harem and heightens Shafak’s fear that she will never write again. “First I convinced myself that I had forgotten how to write. Then I started suspecting that writing had forgotten me” (250). Connecting her experience to the women community in general, Shafak holds the belief that Lord Poton is “estimated to appear to one out of ten mothers. Usually he pays his first visit within four to six weeks after delivery. He looks simple and innocuous at first, but gradually reveals his true colours”(238). Only a few women writers did successfully manage motherhood and writing quite well and majority of the women artists felt it as a herculean task to do justice to both subjectivities.

The appearance of Lord Poton, for Shafak, seems too brief and his disappearance too quick. One morning Lord Poton says to her; “There is something different about you. A sparkle in your eyes” (255), and from here Shafak finds her way out of depression and begins to write again. In the last chapter of the memoir, Shafak talks about Helene Cixous, scholar, essayist, literary critic and writer, and one of the most original and critical voices of the contemporary period. She said that her texts are written in white and black, in milk and night. Helene Cixous invoked metaphors of child birth, breast feeding, etc., to describe the contours of women’s writing and for her, motherhood is a fulfilling experience, the most intense relationship that a human being has with another human being. Shafak concludes the memoir by placing the finger women on her writing desk and she hugs all of them:

Miss Highbrowed Cynic, Milady Ambitious Chekhovian, Little Miss Practical, Mama Rice Pudding, Dame Dervish, Blue Belle Bovary and voices that I have not yet met stand next to one another. No one tries to rule others. No one is a dictator. No one is wearing a crown or carrying badges. Not any more.... That pretty much is the pattern of my progress in life. Take a step forward, move on, fall down, stand up, go back to walking, trip over and fall down on my face again, pull myself up, keep walking....(267).

Relieved from the depression and trauma, she turns back to writing and finishes her next novel, *Forty Rules of Love* in the next year. She has given the name Shehrazad Zelda to her daughter, the former from the charming story teller of the East and the latter from Zelda Fitzgerald, the American author. Eighteen months later she had a son named Emir Zahir. She acknowledges

that everything she wrote and did later are greatly inspired by her children and by the beauties and intensities of motherhood.

Writers, male and female, who have struggled with the decision to start a family, will appreciate Shafak's journey and the life histories of famous writers who have struggled with the same decision. Shafak gives no blanket advice, but concludes that everyone should be himself or herself, as the situation demands. Through the memoir, Shafak captured poignantly the life of a woman who has gone through the divergent experiences at different stages of life. The memoir is not simply about the life of Elif Shafak but can be considered as a record of any woman artist who more or less traverses through the same kind of experiences at different phases of life.

References

Shafak, Elif. *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*. Penguin Books, 2013.

Clanchy, Kate. Rev. of *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*. *Guardian*. 8 Aug. 2013. Web. 15 Apr. 2016.

Mores, Ellen. *Literary Women: The Great Writers*. Doubleday, 1976.

Shafak, Elif. "Writing with Black Milk". Interview by Angie Brenner. *World River Review*. 15 May 2016. Web. 12 June 2016.

The Enigma of Troubled Offspring: A Study of Zoje Stage's *Baby Teeth* and Lucinda Berry's *The Perfect Child*.

Ms. Bahsha Kalayath

M A English (2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

Abstract

This research paper delves into the intricate portrayal of psychological aspects and disorders in the characters Janie from Lucinda Berry's *The Perfect Child* and Hannah from Zoje Stage's *Baby Teeth*. Through a nuanced comparative analysis, it scrutinizes the multifaceted nature of their mental states, exploring the underlying traumas, conflicts, and manifestations of psychological disorders. By examining the characters' backgrounds, experiences, and interactions within the narratives, the paper aims to unravel the complexity of their psychological profiles and shed light on the authors' nuanced representation of mental health. Additionally, it seeks to draw parallels between the fictional portrayals and real-world psychological phenomena, contributing to a broader understanding of the intersection between literature and mental health discourse.

Keywords: Psychological disorders, trauma and mental conflict, psychological profiles, mental health discourse.

English literature's exploration of human nature delves deep into the portrayal of unsettling child characters, challenging conventional notions of innocence and childhood. These characters, often characterized by a disconcerting duality, captivate readers by defying expectations. One standout example is Rhoda Penmark from William March's *The Bad Seed*, whose seemingly charming exterior conceals a dark and remorseless nature. The contrast between her appearance and actions prompts readers to question the very essence of childhood innocence, setting the stage for a nuanced examination of the unsettling aspects of juvenile characters in literature. In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the orphaned siblings Miles and Flora contribute to the unsettling atmosphere. Their ambiguous behaviour raises questions about the supernatural events in the story, challenging the conventional boundaries of innocence. As the governess struggles to decipher whether they are victims or active participants in the mysterious occurrences, the unsettling nature of childhood becomes a central

theme. Similarly, Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* introduces Rhys Ifans, whose disturbing behaviours blur the lines between childhood and maturity. This blurring of boundaries adds an unsettling layer to the narrative, forcing readers to confront uncomfortable realities about the fragility of innocence and societal norms. Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin* explores the character of Kevin Khatchadourian, whose troubled and detached nature prompts reflections on nature versus nurture. As a vessel for the exploration of unsettling behaviour, Kevin challenges readers to grapple with the darker aspects of human nature and the potential influence of parental guidance. Shriver's narrative invites contemplation on the complexities of upbringing and its impact on a child's personality, ultimately pushing readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the blurred lines between innocence and malevolence in the realm of childhood. In the vast landscape of English literature, unsettling child characters serve as powerful vehicles for authors to delve into the intricate dynamics of innocence, morality, and societal expectations. These characters mentioned—stand as testament to literature's ability to challenge preconceived notions about childhood. By navigating through the unsettling depths of these characters' psyches, literature encourages readers to reflect on uncomfortable truths and reconsider established beliefs, ultimately contributing to a richer understanding of the multifaceted nature of childhood innocence in literary exploration.

Moreover, such unconventional juveniles create an irreversible impact on the audience which is gore and uncanny. The portrayal of unsettling child characters in literature profoundly affects the audience by eliciting a range of emotional and intellectual responses. Firstly, it sparks a sense of discomfort and unease as readers confront the dissonance between the expected innocence of childhood and the unsettling behaviours exhibited by these characters. This discomfort prompts readers to question their preconceived notions about youth and challenges societal ideals surrounding the purity of children. Secondly, the impact extends to a psychological level, as readers grapple with the complexity of human nature. Unsettling child characters serve as mirrors reflecting the darker aspects of the human psyche, forcing the audience to contemplate the inherent potential for malevolence within individuals, even at a young age. This psychological exploration fosters a deeper engagement with the narrative and encourages introspection about the nature of innocence and morality. Furthermore, the effect on the audience is intellectual, prompting them to question societal norms and expectations surrounding childhood. The unsettling portrayal of juvenile characters challenges traditional narratives that often romanticize or idealize children. This intellectual engagement encourages readers to critically examine the dichotomy between societal expectations and the unsettling

realities presented in literature. It prompts a nuanced exploration of innocence, morality, and the intricate layers of the human condition, leaving a lasting impression that extends beyond the confines of the literary work itself. This paper aims to explore two such unsettling gory characters from the author Lucinda Berry, and Zoje Stage from their best-selling novels, *The Perfect Child* and *Baby Teeth*

Lucinda Berry's journey as a novelist extends beyond her literary achievements, offering readers a glimpse into the fascinating intersection of her life experiences and storytelling prowess. While her works reflect a profound understanding of the human psyche, Berry's background as a clinical psychologist lends a unique authenticity to her narratives, elevating them beyond conventional thrillers. The Pacific Northwest, where she was born and raised, serves as an atmospheric backdrop for her tales, infusing her writing with a sense of place that resonates with readers. The nuanced exploration of complex characters and dark themes is a hallmark of Berry's storytelling. *The Perfect Child* not only captivates with its suspenseful plot but also delves into the intricate dynamics of parenthood. In *Missing Parts*, she skilfully weaves a tapestry of human relationships, unveiling the shadows that linger in her characters' pasts. Berry's ability to navigate the delicate nuances of mental health and emotional intricacies sets her apart in the literary landscape. *The Phantom Limb*, *Welcome Reunion*, *Saving Noah*, *Best of Friends* are some of her other renowned works.

As a bestselling author, Lucinda Berry continues to captivate audiences, providing not only riveting tales but also thought-provoking reflections on the human condition. Beyond the pages of her novels, the private facets of her life remain more elusive, emphasizing her dedication to letting the power of her words and narratives speak volumes. For the latest insights into Lucinda Berry's life and work, exploring her official website, recent interviews, or engaging with her on social media may offer a more current perspective. Her books are accepted whole heartedly by gore loving audience and her way of including mental health issues and medical scenarios are informative as well. *The Perfect Child* is a nuanced exploration of the intricate tapestry woven by the interplay of familial bonds, societal expectations, and the relentless pursuit of the idyllic domestic tableau. Set against the backdrop of Christopher and Hannah Bauer's arduous journey through infertility, the narrative takes an unexpected turn with the arrival of Janie, a seemingly abandoned child whose entrance into their lives precipitates a cascade of unanticipated challenges. Berry, drawing from her background as a clinical psychologist, intricately crafts characters laden with psychological depth. Christopher and Hannah, emblematic of a couple grappling with the emotional toll of

infertility, undergo a transformation as their desire for parenthood becomes entangled with Janie's mysterious and disconcerting qualities. The novel artfully navigates the psychological terrain of the characters, unravelling the intricacies of their motivations and the consequences of unmet expectations.

The author deftly employs suspense and tension, masterfully building a narrative edifice that explores the blurred boundaries between nature and nurture. Janie, a symbol of the unforeseen complexities inherent in the human experience, becomes a catalyst for profound self-reflection and existential questioning within the Bauer household. As secrets unravel and the veneer of normalcy disintegrates, *The Perfect Child* becomes a canvas upon which Berry paints a rich portrait of the fragility of familial constructs.

Beyond the riveting plot, the novel serves as a contemplative exploration of societal norms surrounding parenthood. Berry prompts readers to confront ingrained perceptions of what constitutes an ideal family, challenging them to reevaluate preconceived notions about love, acceptance, and the pursuit of perfection. Each character, meticulously sculpted, serves as a conduit for a broader discourse on the capricious nature of human relationships and the unpredictable trajectories life may assume. In essence, *The Perfect Child* transcends the confines of traditional psychological thrillers, emerging as a sophisticated narrative that not only captivates with its suspenseful twists but also invites readers to engage in a profound and introspective dialogue on the intricate mosaic of the human condition.

Janie in *The Perfect Child* is a complex character whose psychological depth is shaped by her traumatic experiences. As an adopted child with a troubled past, Janie grapples with issues of identity, belonging, and trust. Her early life challenges contribute to a profound sense of insecurity and a constant need for validation. She is discovered by the police in a horrible state mentally and physically. She seemed to be extremely fragile for her age and it was obvious that she had endured child abuse.

Her entire body is covered in old scars and bruises. She must've been abused for a long time. She's severely malnourished and dehydrated, so she looks like those starving orphans you see on TV. You know the ones I'm talking about? There're weird rashes on her legs like she might have some kind of septic infection. Her x-rays show multiple fractures all over her body. Some of them are old. Others are relatively new. She's probably never seen a doctor, so who knows what. We'll find once we start looking.

(22)

Janie's behaviour reflects a survival mechanism developed in response to past traumas. Her actions may be marked by manipulative tendencies and a keen awareness of others' emotions, allowing her to navigate social situations with calculated precision. The struggle for control and stability in her life becomes a driving force, manifesting in both positive and negative ways. This unsettling behaviour disturbs her new foster parents but things get worse and did not seem to get any better.

Janie kept soiling herself at school. She stripped off her clothes and ran around the classroom naked. She refused to follow directions and couldn't be redirected to other activities. At first, Mrs. Allulo was understanding and compassionate. She kept assuring us that it was only a transitional period and Janie would eventually adjust. But then Janie bit another child when he wouldn't give her the toy she wanted, and Mrs. Allulo called us in for an emergency meeting. (139)

The interplay between Janie's past and present is central in understanding her character. The narrative likely delves into the impact of early experiences on her emotional development, exploring themes of resilience and vulnerability. Janie's psychological makeup is likely a mosaic of adaptability and fragility, shaped by a desire for acceptance and a fear of abandonment. Analysing Janie's relationships, particularly with adoptive parents or caregivers, would provide insight into her capacity for attachment and intimacy. Issues of trust and the fear of betrayal may underscore her interactions with others, making her character dynamic and multidimensional. The discovery of a video tape with Janie and her mother on it points finger at her homicidal tendencies and her conflict with Allison, Hannah's sister proves this statement: "I poked her. I wanted to see if she'd bleed." (174)

Janie's character in *The Perfect Child* is likely a nuanced portrayal of psychological resilience and vulnerability, shaped by a complex interplay of past traumas and present circumstances. Her actions and relationships offer a lens through which readers can explore themes of identity, trust, and the enduring impact of early life experiences on an individual's psyche.

Baby Teeth is a gripping psychological thriller by Zoje Stage that intricately weaves a tale of familial dysfunction and the disturbing nature of a child's behaviour. The narrative revolves around Suzette, a mother, and her seven-year-old daughter, Hanna. What makes this story particularly compelling is Hanna's unsettling conduct, which oscillates between sweet

innocence in public and malevolent intentions at home. As Suzette grapples with her daughter's increasingly erratic and aggressive actions, the novel delves into the psychological complexities of parenting and the challenges Suzette faces in trying to connect with a child who selectively chooses not to speak in her presence. The alternating perspectives of Suzette and Hanna provide a nuanced exploration of the strained mother-daughter relationship, offering readers a deep insight into the characters' inner thoughts and motivations. The tension steadily builds throughout the narrative, creating an atmosphere of suspense that keeps readers engrossed. The author skilfully explores themes of identity, motherhood, and the blurred line between love and fear. Suzette's internal struggles and the psychological toll of dealing with Hanna's behaviour are portrayed with raw emotion, making the characters feel authentic and relatable. The climax of *Baby Teeth* is both chilling and thought-provoking, as the novel examines the darker aspects of familial bonds. Stage crafts a narrative that raises questions about the nature of innocence, the impact of upbringing on a child's psyche, and the lengths to which a parent will go to protect their family. *Baby Teeth* is a riveting exploration of the complexities of motherhood and the unsettling dynamics within a troubled family. It offers readers a thrilling and emotionally charged journey into the darker corners of the human psyche, leaving a lasting impression with its thought-provoking themes and well-crafted suspense. Hanna's selective mutism, particularly evident around her mother Suzette, adds an unsettling layer to her character. This silent behaviour becomes a source of constant tension and frustration for Suzette, who grapples with the challenge of understanding Hanna's silence. Hanna's ability to manipulate situations and people is a central aspect of her character, creating a pervasive sense of unease and contributing significantly to the novel's suspense. What makes Hanna particularly intriguing is the stark contrast between her innocent façade in public and the malevolent intentions she harbours at home. This duality creates an enigmatic character that keeps both the characters within the story and readers on edge, questioning the authenticity of her behaviour. The psychological complexity of Hanna is explored through alternating perspectives, providing insight into her internal thoughts and motivations. This complexity challenges readers to navigate the blurred lines between mental health, manipulation, and genuine malice. Hanna's intense desire for her father's attention adds another layer to her character. Her attempts to undermine Suzette and secure her father's affection contribute significantly to the familial tensions at the core of the narrative. The recurring motif of Hanna's obsession with teeth serves as a symbolic element in the narrative, reflecting both her desire for control and the unsettling nature of her fixation, thus adding a disturbing layer to her character. Moreover, Hanna's character prompts contemplation on the age-old debate of nature

vs. nurture. The novel raises questions about whether her actions are a result of inherent traits or a response to the environment in which she has been raised, contributing to the thematic depth of the story. Hanna's actions have a profound impact on family dynamics, placing significant strain on her parents' relationship and taking an emotional toll on Suzette. In essence, Hanna emerges as a multifaceted character that transcends the typical portrayal of a child protagonist, driving the exploration of dark familial dynamics and the thin line between innocence and malevolence in *Baby Teeth*.

Now we move into a detailed comparison of the mental disorders portrayed in Hanna from *Baby Teeth* and Janie from *The Perfect Child*.

Hanna of *Baby Teeth*

1. Selective Mutism and Manipulation:

Hanna's selective mutism, particularly directed towards her mother Suzette, could be indicative of a complex psychological condition such as selective mutism, a disorder characterized by the consistent inability to speak in specific social situations. This may stem from anxiety or an underlying emotional issue. Hanna's manipulative behaviour adds another layer, suggesting traits associated with conduct disorders. The calculated manipulation points to a potential lack of empathy or remorse, aligning with characteristics seen in individuals with antisocial personality disorder.

2. Duality of Behaviour:

Hanna's dichotomy of behaviour, displaying innocence in public and malevolence at home, doesn't neatly fit into a single diagnostic category. It could be an amalgamation of various psychological factors, possibly indicating a sociopathic or psychopathic tendency. The ability to maintain a façade of normalcy in public suggests a high level of emotional intelligence and calculated deception.

3. Obsession with Teeth:

Hanna's fixation on teeth introduces an element of obsessive-compulsive tendencies or an anxiety-related disorder. The symbolism of control associated with teeth might represent her need for dominance or a coping mechanism for underlying psychological distress.

Janie from *The Perfect Child* :

1. Attachment and Control Issues:

Janie's obsessive attachment to her father reflects potential attachment issues or difficulty forming healthy relationships. This might be linked to her past experiences or early traumas, contributing to challenges in forming secure emotional connections.

2. Telekinetic Abilities:

While Janie's telekinetic abilities are fictional, they serve as a metaphorical representation of her internal struggles. In a psychological context, this could be interpreted as a manifestation of repressed emotions, an exaggerated coping mechanism for trauma, or a symbolic expression of her need for control in a tumultuous environment.

2. Questionable Parental Influence:

Janie's behaviour may be influenced by her adoptive parents, exploring the impact of the environment on mental health. The novel raises questions about the role of parental actions in shaping a child's psychological well-being, potentially pointing towards reactive attachment issues or disruptions in the early caregiver-child relationship.

While Hanna and Janie exhibit different manifestations of mental distress, they both serve as complex characters that offer nuanced explorations of psychological themes. Hanna's character in *Baby Teeth* leans towards more realistic portrayals of disruptive behaviour and potential sociopathic tendencies, whereas Janie's character in *The Perfect Child* introduces a fantastical element with her telekinetic abilities, intertwining the metaphorical with the supernatural to convey deeper emotional struggles. Both characters contribute to a rich narrative that delves into the intricate interplay of mental health, family dynamics, and the impact of environment on them. In a captivating exploration of the human psyche within the literary realms of *Baby Teeth* and *The Perfect Child*, the character analyses of Hanna and Janie serve as profound conduits into the intricate web of psychological disorders and their profound influence on narrative trajectories. Hanna's tumultuous odyssey in *Baby Teeth* unfolds as a psychological thriller, inviting readers to traverse the labyrinthine recesses of her disturbed mind. The interplay between her innate predispositions and the complex tapestry of her environment beckons an introspective examination into the origins of her disquieting behaviours, challenging assumptions about the nature versus nurture dichotomy. In parallel, Janie's enigmatic persona in *The Perfect Child* emerges as a enigmatic force, disrupting conventional paradigms of motherhood and familial bonds. The revelation of her mysterious origins adds a layer of complexity to the narrative, compelling readers to grapple with questions surrounding identity, attachment, and the intricate nuances of psychological intricacy. These

novels serve as literary crucibles, wherein the characters undergo transformative journeys shaped by the profound undercurrents of psychological disorders. The narratives, intricately interwoven with the fabric of human psychology, transcend the mere exploration of mental health; they become profound reflections on the very essence of the human condition. The intricate dance between character intricacies and psychological disorders in these novels invites readers into a contemplative space, urging them to reflect on the multifaceted dimensions of the human experience. Ultimately, the novels linger in the reader's consciousness, leaving an indelible impression that extends beyond the pages, fostering a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between the human mind and the narratives that unfold within its recesses.

References

Association, American Psychiatric. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition: DSM-5*. 2013

Berry, Lucinda. *The Perfect Child*. Thomas & Mercer, 2019.

Stager , Zoje . *Baby Teeth*. St. Martin's press, 2018.

From Outbreak to Isolation: A Literary Journey through Pandemic Narratives of 21st Century with Special Reference to the Movies *Contagion* and *Virus*.

Ms. Fathima Shirin Shahana

M A English(2021-23)

K.A.H.M Unity Women's College, Manjeri

&

Ms. Thrishna. P

M A English (2021-23)

K.A.H.M Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

The 21st century has been marked by a series of pandemics that have had profound impacts on global society. From the 2003 SARS outbreak to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, these events have sparked a proliferation of pandemic narratives that have shaped our understanding of these crises. This seminar paper will explore the pandemic narratives of the 21st century through an analysis of two popular films, *Contagion* and *Virus*. The paper will examine how these films depict the spread of infectious diseases, its political and economic impact on society and all. The paper will begin by providing an overview of the two films by exploring the ways in which the films depict the spread of disease, including the role of public health officials, government agencies, and the media in responding to outbreaks. This analysis will consider the accuracy of these portrayals, as well as the ways in which they may reinforce or challenge common perceptions of pandemics. This will include an analysis of how the films depict the social and economic impacts of pandemics, as well as the ethical and moral dilemmas faced by characters in these situations. Finally, the paper will consider the broader implications of these pandemic narratives, including their potential impact on public perceptions of disease outbreaks. This analysis will highlight the importance of critical engagement with pandemic narratives, and will argue that these narratives can serve as powerful tools for shaping public understanding and responses to infectious disease outbreaks.

Keywords: Pandemic, Narrative, 21st Century, Fear and Panic, Social impact, Global response

The 21st century in literature refers to world literatures produced during 21st century. The measure of year is from 2001 to the present. Main purpose of 21st century literature is that it teaches us about life by exposing us to the lives of different people through their stories, and from these experiences we learn important lessons and values. 21st century literature is marked by a focus on diversity, innovation and social and political engagement. 21st century is marked by increased globalisation and cultural change, resulting in a literary landscape that reflects diverse perspectives and experiences. Contemporary literature often explores issues of race, ethnicity and identity in a multicultural context. Technological innovation has a great impact on 21st century literature. With the widespread use of the internet and social media, 21st century literature has become more interactive and experimental in its use of new media, including blogs, podcasts and e-books. Digital platforms have also made literature more accessible to wider audiences. Works of 21st century literature have moved away from traditional linear storytelling and use instead fragmented, non-chronological structures that reflect the complexities of modern life. A growing concern for environmental issues is also another feature of 21st century literature.

Pandemics have been a recurring theme in literature throughout history, and the 21st century is no exception. As a result, a vast body of literature has emerged, exploring various aspects of pandemics, including their causes, spread, management, and the social, political, and economic implications. Contemporary pandemic literature often reflects the realities of the modern world, with themes of globalization, political polarization, and technological advancements.

The word 'pandemic' refers to the worldwide spread of disease, affecting a large number of people across different countries or continents. A pandemic is typically caused by a new infectious agent, such as virus or bacterium, to which people have little or no immunity. Some of the notable pandemics of the 21st century that have been extensively studied include the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2002-2003, the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009-2010, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreak in 2012, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019.

Pandemic literature refers to works of fiction, non-fiction or poetry that explores the experience of pandemics or epidemics. Many works of fiction and non-fiction explore the psychological, social, and economic consequences of pandemics, as well as the political and cultural responses to them. In pandemic literature, Pandemics is often the central focus. It can

be portrayed in different ways such as a background event or the main plot, but it is always present in the story. Pandemics can lead to social distancing, quarantines and lockdowns, which can cause people to feel isolated and lonely. This theme often appears in pandemic literature. Pandemics can bring out the best and worst in people and pandemic literature often explores how people behave in time of crisis. Some other examples of pandemic literatures are *Station Eleven* written by *Emily St. John Mandel* published in the year 2014. This novel follows a group of actors and musicians in a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by a flu- pandemic. *The Road* written by Cormac McCarthy, published in the year 2006 is another example. This is a post-apocalyptic novel which is about a father and son travelling through a desolate landscape, where many have succumbed to an unnamed pandemic. *Ling Ma's 'Severance'* is a satirical novel published in 2018, about a young man who continues to work for a publishing company during a global pandemic that turns people into a zombie- like creature. These narratives include themes such as fear, panic, selfishness and all. It can reveal the flaws in society and culture. While Pandemics can be devastating, pandemic literature often emphasizes the resilience and hope that people can exhibit in the face of adversity.

The purpose of 'pandemic literature' is to reflect on and explore the impact of pandemics on individuals, societies and cultures. Pandemic literature can also serve as a means of coping with the anxiety and uncertainty that come with living through a pandemic. By understanding about the experience of others, people may feel less alone and more connected to a wider community. Additionally, pandemic literature provides historical context for understanding and responding to current pandemics and to offer lessons for how to prepare for and prevent future pandemics.

Movies can serve as a form of pandemic literature by providing a visual representation of the impact of pandemics on individuals, communities, and societies. The two movies, *Contagion* and *Virus*, give us a visual representation of pandemics and its impact. Just as literature can convey the emotional and psychological toll of infectious diseases, movies can use imagery, sound, and dialogue to capture the fear, isolation, and desperation that often accompany outbreaks. Through the lens of a camera, movies can transport viewers into the heart of an epidemic, allowing them to witness the devastation first hand and experience the struggles of the characters as they try to survive and overcome the crisis. Whether it's a horror film that plays on our deepest fears or a drama that explores the human side of a global catastrophe, movies can offer a powerful and poignant commentary on the challenges we face in times of pandemic.

Contagion is a 2011 thriller film directed by Steven Soderbergh that depicts a fictional pandemic caused by a deadly virus that spreads rapidly around the world, killing millions of people and causing widespread panic and chaos. The movie is often discussed as a piece of pandemic literature due to its relevance to the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in late 2019. The film features an all-star cast, including Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Jude Law, Marion Cotillard and Gwyneth Paltrow. The story is told from multiple perspectives, with each character experiencing the outbreak in their own unique way. As a piece of pandemic literature, *Contagion* is notable for its realistic portrayal of the medical and scientific response to a pandemic. The movie shows how scientists and medical professionals work together to identify the virus, develop a vaccine, and contain the spread of the disease. It also highlights the challenges that arise in coordinating a global response to a pandemic, including political and bureaucratic hurdles, public skepticism and misinformation, and the difficulty of balancing public health concerns with economic and social needs. 'Kate Winslet's' character in the movie *Contagion* portrays the devastating effects of a pandemic on individuals and society as a whole. Winslet plays 'Dr. Erin Mears', an epidemiologist who is tasked with investigating the outbreak and containing its spread. As the virus continues to ravage the population, Dr. Mears becomes infected herself and struggles to find a cure while also dealing with her own illness. Through Dr. Mears' character, the movie depicts the challenges and risks that healthcare workers face during a pandemic. It also highlights the importance of quick and decisive action in preventing the spread of disease. *Contagion* also explores the human impact of a pandemic, showing how it affects individuals and families, as well as society as a whole. The movie depicts the fear and anxiety that can arise during a pandemic, as well as the societal breakdown that can occur when basic necessities like food and water become scarce. Overall, *Contagion* is a powerful piece of pandemic literature that offers a thought-provoking and emotionally resonant exploration of the human impact of a global health crisis. It is definitely worth watching, especially given the recent COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the world in real life.

Virus is a 2019 Malayalam movie that is based on the true events of the Nipah virus outbreak that occurred in Kerala, India, in 2018. The movie portrays the spread of the virus and the efforts made by the health department and the public to contain it, as well as the emotional and social impact it had on the affected individuals and the society as a whole. The movie highlights the importance of effective communication and collaboration among different agencies and stakeholders during a pandemic, such as the government, healthcare workers, scientists, media, and the public. It also addresses the challenges and ethical dilemmas faced

by healthcare workers in dealing with a highly infectious and lethal disease, such as the shortage of protective equipment, the risk of getting infected themselves, and the need to balance public health and individual rights. The movie portrays the resilience and courage of the affected individuals and communities in facing the pandemic, as well as the lessons learned from the experience for future preparedness and response to such crises. Like other pandemic works, *Virus* offers a unique perspective on the outbreak, as it combines factual and fictional elements to convey a narrative that is both informative and emotional.

Virus can be analyzed in terms of its themes, motifs, characters, plot, style, and cultural references, which can shed light on its artistic and cultural value, as well as its contribution to the public understanding and awareness of pandemics and their impact on society. In the movie, Soubin Shahir plays the character of 'Unnikrishnan', a Nipah virus victim who contracts the virus while caring for his infected father. Unnikrishnan's character presents the frustration and helplessness of a person suffering from a deadly virus, and the impact it has on their family and community. Throughout the movie, Unnikrishnan is depicted as a person who is struggling to come to terms with his illness and the uncertainty surrounding his condition. He is shown as a man who is full of despair, frustration, and anger, as he is unable to do anything to alleviate his pain or stop the spread of the virus. In one scene, Unnikrishnan breaks down in tears as he speaks to his wife over the phone, expressing his helplessness and his desire to be with his family. He feels trapped and isolated, and his frustration is palpable. In another scene, he is seen yelling at a group of journalists who are trying to interview him, expressing his anger and frustration at the way the media is sensationalizing the issue. Overall, Unnikrishnan effectively conveys the physical and emotional toll that Nipah virus can have on a person, as well as the frustration and helplessness of those affected by virus. Overall, *Virus* stands as a compelling work of pandemic literature that offers both a cautionary tale and a message of hope. Through its depiction of the 2018 Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, India, the film highlights the importance of cooperation, quick action, and scientific innovation in combating such crises.

After analyzing the pandemic works with special reference to the movies *Virus* and *Contagion*, we can draw several conclusions. Both movies provide a realistic depiction of how a pandemic can spread and its impact on individuals and society as a whole. They also highlight the importance of timely action and effective communication in managing a pandemic. *Virus* focuses more on the political and bureaucratic hurdles faced in managing a pandemic, whereas *Contagion* places greater emphasis on the scientific and medical response. Both movies show that a multi-disciplinary approach is required to combat a pandemic successfully. The role of

media in shaping public perception and response is highlighted in both movies. The spread of misinformation and panic is portrayed as a significant challenge in managing a pandemic. Both movies show that a pandemic can have a significant impact on people's lives and behaviour, including increased social distancing, hoarding of essential items, and even violent behaviour in extreme cases. In conclusion, these movies provide valuable insights into the challenges of managing a pandemic and underscore the importance of preparedness and cooperation in mitigating its impact.

References

Contagion. Soderbergh Steven, Warner Bros, Pictures, Participant Media, Imagenation Abu Dhabi, and Double Feature Films, 9 September 2011.

"Contagion". Warner bros, 9 September 2011,

<https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/contagion>

George, Anjana. "Virus Movie Review". E times, 9 June 2019,

<https://m.timesofindia.com/entertainment/malayalam/movie-reviews/virus/movie-review/69688873.cms>

Ma, Ling. *Severance*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.

Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven*. Vintage Books, 2014.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. Knopf, 2006

Tadakamalla, Kumar Vijay. "Pandemics in literature". The New Indian Express, 5 September 2022, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2022/sep/05/pandemics-in-literature-2494936.html>

Virus. Ashiq Abu, OPM Dream Mill Cinemas, 7 June 2019

Breaking Chains: Unveiling the Feminist Dystopia in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape*

Ms. Hana Fathima P

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

Abstract

This paper focuses on the portrayal of feminist dystopia in Manjula Padmanabhan's novel. It draws attention to how critical equality is to our culture. We are well aware of the atrocities women have to go through and the treatment they receive in a patriarchal society. We see that women are valued less than men and are not given equal respect in society. Men in patriarchal societies are limited to viewing women as objects to satisfy their sexual desires without raising any objections. Society could not even accept women as fellow human beings. No one sees the depth of a woman's sacrifice for a better life. The paper is relevant in this situation. As a result, it makes clear how feminist dystopia is portrayed in modern society. The paper's goal is to advocate for improvement in contemporary society. The article highlights women's empowerment in addition to granting women the same rights as men. *Escape* challenges readers to think about the implications of a feminist dystopia and the need to struggle toward a more just and equitable society with its powerful literary analysis.

Keywords: Oppression, gender inequality, authoritarianism, feminist critique, societal control, patriarchy.

Manjula Padmanabhan, an Indian playwright, journalist, cartoonist, and children's book writer, was born on June 23, 1953. Her oeuvre delves into themes of gender, international affairs, and scientific disparities. *Escape*, published in 2008, is a work of speculative fiction that falls within the realm of feminist dystopia, a genre known for its amplification of social inequalities and the oppression of women, serving to underscore the imperative for societal reform. Such narratives typically scrutinize manifestations of patriarchy, gender inequality, and the exploitation of women, addressing issues like systemic sexism, gender-based violence, reproductive control, and the silencing of women's voices. Critics have frequently drawn parallels between Padmanabhan's native India and the imagined landscapes depicted in her novels, suggesting that India likely served as a muse for her creative endeavors. Indeed, many of her speculative fiction works are situated within India or in settings resembling the Indian subcontinent. These narratives are projected into the future, envisioning a time when economic

and technological progressions will have reshaped the Indian societal landscape. In *Escape*, the dystopian backdrop of General's Place forms the stage for the fictional narrative. Interestingly, Padmanabhan intentionally withholds specific identification of the setting, opting instead for a more universal portrayal that could resonate with any locale. Nevertheless, subtle cues within the book, including names and linguistic elements, hint at the story's potential connection to India or another territory within the Indian subcontinent.

Escape is regarded as a feminist dystopian novel, characterized by its depiction of future or alternative societies marked by oppression and discrimination against women. Within this narrative framework, the protagonist, Meiji, serves as a focal point for illustrating the extreme patriarchal oppression experienced by women within the depicted society. Meiji, the sole female inhabitant in a household of three brothers, embodies the marginalized status of women in this context. Throughout the narrative, Meiji's plight unveils the stark realities faced by women in her society. Initially concealed from public knowledge, her existence is shrouded in oppression and ignorance, devoid of access to both internal and external realms of knowledge. Lacking even basic awareness of her parentage, Meiji's life unfolds akin to a secluded stream, devoid of educational opportunities or societal engagement. At the age of sixteen, she remains uneducated, underscoring the pervasive deprivation of educational rights among women in her milieu. The narrative further highlights the role of the authoritarian regime, embodied by the army chief, in perpetuating the subjugation of women. The constant surveillance and pursuit of unauthorized female residents by General and his forces underscore the systematic suppression of women's autonomy and agency within the society. This portrayal elucidates the precarious position of women and the omnipresent threat of state-sanctioned oppression they face. Through Meiji's narrative arc and the overarching thematic exploration, the novel illuminates the multifaceted dimensions of women's oppression, positioning discrimination as a pervasive and insidious force within the narrative fabric.

Here, men are allowed to live there, but women's conditions are not like that. Meiji was the only girl to live there, and here, caretakers struggle to raise her. She was a girl, and for that, she lived in a hidden way; even on a gender basis, society didn't give her the right to live. The society badly treated all the women there, so at this point she was the only one. She lost everything in her life because of the issue of gender. Even though she grew up in a different background, her mind works in a creative way. "She sees the drones and knows that they do not grow taller or boarder or whatever else. She think she is similar to them" (19).

Ignorance functions on a different plane. Her room had mirrors, although they weren't in the same spots. "All fixed just above head height to herself, see in to pillars, walls or in

furniture. They are non-full length. She has little reason to be curious about her appearance. She knows nothing of preening or self-consciousness” (19). In her sixteen years of existence, Meiji's life unfolds in a state of profound detachment from self-awareness, emblematic of her marginalized living conditions. Her lack of self-identity signifies a profound loss, indicative of her disconnection from the world around her. Meiji, portrayed as an oppressed figure, grapples with a dearth of cultural understanding, exacerbating her isolation and lack of comprehension of her surroundings. The discussions among her brothers serve as a poignant illustration of Meiji's cognitive estrangement; she perceives her ignorance mirrored in their conversations, rendering her unable to grasp their significance. This ignorance, compounded by societal constraints and gender-based limitations, manifests in her seeming foolishness, compounded by her unfamiliarity with fundamental societal constructs such as education systems, narratives, and myths. Meiji's insular existence underscores the broader theme of societal prohibition and censorship, as noted by M. Keith Booker, particularly evident in dystopian fiction. Language itself becomes a tool for enforcing the dystopian regime's control, further marginalizing individuals like Meiji, whose existence is doubly restricted due to her gender. The dystopian regime considers language as a subversive tool because of which they control language (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* 81). It is used as a means to control their subjects (*Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* 81).

The General, as the ruler, wields complete control, even over natural phenomena, such as fixing the times for dawn and sunset. This manipulation of natural processes reflects the extent of atrocities under his regime, illustrating his authoritarian rule. Throughout the novel, various forms of oppression against women are depicted. Meiji, the sole female in the country, symbolizes the plight of women: deprived of human rights, isolated from society, and oblivious to her surroundings. She embodies oppression in her very existence, unaware even of her own mother or the basic processes of childbirth, highlighting the limitations imposed on women in this society. Here, Meiji was a zero-knowledge girl. She only lived in the inner part of the estate and rarely entered the outside.

Meiji had rarely been out of doors. She could not remember ever having seen an open field. In the dim light before dawn, the grassy plain stretching away to infinity looked like a mirage, a backdrop painted onto a wall. Except for the sky. It was hard to rationalize the upturned indigo bowl arcing overhead. The unfamiliar thudding in her throat she recognized as her heart beat, sounded unnaturally loud. She had been never been directly connect to such a vast space. (63)

It indicates how much she suffers there, but in reality, she can't feel any disappointment in her life; she was happy in her life, and she adjusted to her lifestyle. The actual truth is that the long years of doing things made her happy, and for that reason she couldn't like to enter the outdoors.

The themes of women's oppression and men's objectification of women are deeply ingrained in the feminist dystopian tale. The repressive social systems portrayed are a sharp indictment on the effects of unbridled patriarchy, mirroring real-world conflicts. The author deftly examines the ways in which women are subjected to cultural norms that see them as nothing more than objects of desire for males. The story exposes the terrifying realities faced by women navigating a society where women's autonomy is forfeited in favour of men's comfort. It explores the psychological costs associated with being seen only as sexual props, highlighting how dehumanizing this may be for the female characters. The dystopian scenario acts as a warning, compelling readers to consider the risks of upholding gender norms that devalue women in order to appease males. The book challenges readers to reconsider their own perspectives by forcing them to face the harsh realities of systematic oppression through moving storytelling. By drawing parallels between the fictitious universe and modern gender relations, the book becomes a potent tool for promoting discussion and calling for social justice.

She lived with her three brothers—Youngest, Middle, and Eldest—who resided together. While the Youngest accompanied Meiji on their journey, the others remained at home. All three brothers understood how she should conduct herself. Meiji harbored a reluctance to venture outdoors; her halted movement exemplified the dominance of males over females. "He turned around now and come back towards the girl. Before she could move, he reached out and gripped her face with one hand. Forcing it up so that she was obliged to look at him" (65). This incident underscores the ease with which men assert power over women. Despite the uncles' support, Meiji was compelled to conform, with no effort made to understand her predicament. She remained unaware of who would name her or any societal norms regarding gender pronouns. The pervasive use of "he" in her speech reflects the General's suppressive regime. "So...why did he chose that one?" (104). Meiji's use of "he" to refer to her mother raises questions about the societal structure. While everyone is biologically female, the General's actions degrade women's status. Meiji lived in seclusion, enduring the challenges of ignorance and limited education, symptomatic of a society dominated by male control.

In their journey, the youngest tries to teach how to use weapons and a monoscope. He teaches her how to target an object with a monoscope. He sees a pregnant rabbit and shoots it. And he teaches how to simply clean everything. Here, the Youngest is committing a crime. In

their kill, a female is normal, but he killed a doe. In his actions, he shows how pathetic the woman's condition is.

The hare had been a pregnant female. Meiji's eyes widened as she watched her uncle reveal the two little foetuses, coiled naked and still watching with life, within the birth sac of their lifeless mother. At the girl's request, he gave them to her to hold, one each palm. She stared at them in their weakness, watching the slight flame of their existence flicker and die. (128)

His behaviour is more like that of a beast. He killed a doe woman in front of his sixteen-year-old sister. He was not finished in there. "He cut away the hare's head, quarter the body and put the pieces to boil in the cooking pot. He showed Meiji how to squat on her haunches, with her shoulder hunched and her folded arms resting along the top of her knees" (128). While he was doing this, he laughed, which shows it's all normal in his life. He cannot feel anything bad about what he is doing in front of his sixteen-year-old infant daughter.

Throughout the journey, he talks to Meiji about reality, how the General and his boy treated a woman, and everyone else. At that time, we felt proud of the younger man and thought that at least he understood the plight of women. But in this act, it shows that all men are equal in their faith. He does everything in front of Meiji, and he doesn't feel any discomfort about it. He was explaining how to kill it and how to clean it. "You'll find you can maintain this position for days without tiring or needing a chair" (128). In there, he actually forgot that Meiji was also female. Here he sees these two women in different aspects, which also shows his inner character towards females. The Youngest represent the entire male population, all of whom are prone to General autocracy. The Youngest has tried everything he can do for Meiji; he used to wear black (darkened) sunglasses to prevent her from seeing others; for that, he represented her as his little brother; and then he says to everyone that she has lost her vision through the encounter with boys. He used an oestrogen suppressant to control her growth. Meiji wasn't bothered about the use of hormone suppressants; here she had nothing to know about anything at least related to her body. It shows how much the country made women their slaves; she was the only surviving woman. Her uncles raised her according to their wishes; they made decisions for her life about what should happen and what should not happen. Male showcasing actually happened in her life.

When the Youngest gives her a new name, "Bird," Meiji asks why he gave that name, and his answer is totally stupid. "He said it was because I was free" (160). The word bird, which indicates female or woman, represents a soft-hearted person. Youngest gives her the new name from the perspective of males; they always think females are always free. The Youngest

changed his name to "Red." That represents male dominance and symbolizes power, strength, and courage. It can evoke feelings of excitement and intensity, anger and aggression, and danger and warning. It is all connected to patriarchal power. It means he tried to highlight his power through the name.

According to Michael Stevens, a literary reviewer who says *Feminist Dystopia's* heavy-handed approach to its subject matter detracts from the potential for nuanced exploration of feminist themes, resulting in a missed opportunity for a thought-provoking narrative," the novel portrays men as the extreme oppressor, and in that case, people for the layperson try to think in a different manner. Youngest brings her into Swan's estate, and his behaviour is like that of a woman as the object of a man's sexual desire. After Swan knew that it was not his brother but his sister, his character was totally changed.

She is my sister, sir,' Youngest was saying, his voice reduced to a thin wet thread of sound. He too seemed to be struggling to breathe. 'Stored my embryo. Born after the changes...Oh my, 'the man was saying. 'Oh my. O...my...'He was wheezing and groaning. Then a little energy returned to his voice as he said, angrily, 'what are you waiting for, fool? Take of the clothes –take of the clothes–I want to smell – I want to lick. (231)

Swan's portrayal epitomizes conventional male behavior towards Meiji, evolving from initial charm to assertiveness. Meiji's distress is evident as she finds herself unable to resist or voice her discomfort, highlighting broader themes of female vulnerability in patriarchal contexts: "She wanted to cry out, to scream, to struggle, but of course she could not" (232). Padmanabhan skillfully depicts the objectification of women, particularly through Meiji's physicality, which becomes a central focus for various characters. The setting of Swan's estate further underscores this objectification, with Meiji's bodily changes becoming objects of desire for him, reflecting prevailing societal attitudes towards women's bodies and desires. A very detailed description takes the Youngest mind,

The childish angularity was still in evidence, but along with it, there was now a delicate filling out. It was subtle, like the faint puffiness that showed in her chest, above her wrapped arms and the slight hollow at the sides of her waist, the firm roundedness of her thighs. There was a satisfying solidity about her calves and ankles but also the first inkling of shapely curve. (268)

Even the drones of Swan are seen as women who only live to fulfil men's desires. The drone slipped a pornographic magazine under the door. Drone was identified as Meiji not being a boy.

The drone also symbolized a male-dominated society. Who makes the drone? The exact male version here is what the drone represents.

The magazine was full of disgusting pictures. “A thin book full of pictures. The most disgusting pictures you can imagine. People with pink things sticking into their bums, all wet and horrid. And dogs licking them! And oh, I can’t bear it!” (282). The drone, an artificial creation with a mind resembling that of men, adeptly portrays vulnerability. Sharing the same mindset as its master, the swan, which may represent ideals propagated by erotic media, the drone facilitates the dissemination of such imagery. Padmanabhan utilizes the characters of Swan and Drone to illustrate the perspective of a male-dominated society towards women. This is further exemplified when the younger character observes Meiji unclothed after six weeks, highlighting men's scrutiny of women's physical changes. Swan derives gratification from viewing pornographic images of women, underscoring societal attitudes towards female objectification. Padmanabhan depicts men viewing women as commodities based solely on their bodies. “Only certain kind of private pictures have the power that these have, of attracting attention. Of getting people want to look at them” (296). Here, the female body is portrayed as a commercial object.

Meiji’s un-education causes more trouble. She was naked in front of the Youngest; actually, she knew nothing. In that time, the Youngest has controlled himself. “He tried to remind himself that the person in front of him was still a child, even if her body was no longer childish” (309). It represents that his mind was also uncontrollable in front of Meiji. They can only see women to fulfil their desires. She was not aware of the word sister. She asked the Youngest, “What’s a sister” (251), which represents the depth of her ignorance. When Swan wanted to see her naked, she asked the Youngest, “Why did he want to see me naked?” (253).

The novel portrays a male-dominated society where women are conspicuously absent, serving as the backdrop for an exploration of oppression and the pursuit of freedom. This gender disparity forms a central theme, particularly as women endure extreme suppression at the hands of dominating men. While the novel aims to advocate for equality, its depiction of men as oppressive figures complicates its thematic message. It underscores the persistent struggle for gender equality, acknowledging the endurance of deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. Female characters in the narrative confront significant hurdles, such as educational deprivation and dehumanization, reflecting a society where women are objectified to satisfy male desires. Meiji's lack of education exemplifies the systemic oppression faced by women, compounded by the dual role of her uncles as protectors and impediments to her intellectual growth. Furthermore, the narrative explores the concept of incomplete knowledge, highlighting

the barriers to women's understanding and empowerment. Ultimately, the novel vividly portrays a world marked by systematic suppression of women, underscoring the ongoing battle for gender equality.

In the novel, the General embodies a transhuman identity, having been produced through cloning technology along with his clone brothers. This technological advancement endows them with intelligence and capability, effectively transcending mortality as identical clones can replace deceased ones. The General and his clone brothers are distinguished from other clones, showcasing the enhancement capabilities of cloning technology. Furthermore, the General can be considered a transhuman cyborg due to his integration with technology. Communication among the clone brothers is facilitated through a radio phone embedded within the General's body, eliminating the communication barriers typical for humans. This reliance on technology underscores its integral role in their existence and identity. The novel's dystopian society heavily relies on futuristic technology, including transhumans like the General, cloning technology, and advanced communication devices such as Java phone embeds. Through the portrayal of the General and his clone brothers, the narrative not only critiques negative aspects of techno-organic synthesis but also highlights societal mistreatment of women, often depicted in dystopian fiction through representations of superior men. The analysis delves into the extent to which the dystopian society curtails individual freedom and perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes. Positioned within a feminist dystopia, the novel *Escape* illustrates Meiji's precarious situation in a society where women are outlawed. The analysis focuses on Meiji's evolving gender identity concepts as she navigates a world devoid of women, examining the restrictive nature of dystopian society and the gendered notions it instills.

Escape portrays a totalitarian androcentric regime employing propaganda, surveillance, punishment, and manipulation of knowledge, memory, and history to indoctrinate its populace. The shaping of official memory and historical narratives reflects the hegemonic androcentric discourses prevalent in society. The eradication of past literature and the populace's general ignorance facilitate regime control. Additionally, the dystopian prohibition of heterosexuality adds complexity to societal attitudes towards sexuality. Decision-making by the totalitarian government disregards individual rights and preferences. The feminist dystopia depicted in *Escape* illustrates a society where women endure oppression, sexual exploitation, and contempt. The novel adheres to established criteria for assessing dystopian literature, encompassing themes such as authoritarianism, sexual control, memory manipulation, information censorship, repression of individuality, technological reliance, linguistic control, and desolate landscapes. The portrayal of an androcentric totalitarian government in *Escape* is

characterized by surveillance, punitive measures, sexual regulation, and indoctrination with androcentric ideologies. In this dystopian society, individuals like Meiji lack freedom to express their gender identity.

References

Babu, Aarathi and Dr. T.K, Pius. "Foucault's Concept of Subject in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape*". Vol. 9, 2018.

Mehtha, Hena, Samira Nadkarni and Shashi Mike. "*Escape and The Island of Lost Girls* by Manjula Padmanabhan: A Round Table Discussion". *Strange Horizons*, 2016.
<http://strangehorizons.com/non-fiction/articles/escape-and-the-island-of-lost-girls-by-manjula-padmanabhan-a-round-table-discussion/>

Padmanabhan, Manjula. *Escape*. Hachette, 2015.

Uncovering Multicultural Conflicts in the Novel

The Nature of Passion

Ms. Hiba Shirin. C

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

Abstract

This article condenses the multifaceted investigation of cultural clashes, generation gap, and the ever-changing landscape of Indian society in the novel *The Nature of Passion* penned by Ruth Praver Jhabvala. The story of the novel orbits around Nimmi, a modern girl in a wealthy Punjabi joint family in Delhi, surviving the conflict between the customary Indian values and Western influences. Lalaji, symbolizes this conflict by accepting Western luxuries along with clinging to his Indian culture. The story plot navigates and unfolds various instances of multi-cultural clashes within the family, including reactions to the birth of a girl in the family, disagreements over the custom of dowry, resistance to women education, and various other tensions that lies between Indian and Western cultures. The characters of the novel namely Nimmi, Vididi, and Kanta, exemplifies different perspectives, contributing to class, cultural and generational conflicts. The novel investigates into issues like child marriage, the impact of learning English, and the different roles that women play in the society. The novel exposes the complexity of multiculturalism and the struggles individuals face in merging their cultural identity with changing social norms and emphasizes the need for self-reflection and open communication to address these cultural conflicts.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, identity crisis, cultural clashes, tradition

Multiculturalism is the acceptance and cohabitation of different cultures within a society. It is an ideology and a set of policies that celebrates a nation's cultural variety and encourages peaceful interactions between people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Multiculturalism emphasizes the importance of preserving, honouring, and embracing many cultural traditions, languages, faiths, and practices. India is a multicultural nation. It is a synthesis of several racial and religious groups. Every state has its language, along with unique customs regarding eating, dressing, and religion. Conflict between different cultures is multiculturalism's major threat. Multicultural conflicts are disputes or difficulties that arise within a society between several cultural groups, values, beliefs, cultures, languages, or other

distinctions. This article intend to expose how multicultural conflicts are portrayed in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's novel *The Nature of Passion*.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala was a British-born novelist and short story writer of German descent. She was a Polish Jew refugee who was raised in Germany and educated in England. She later married an Indian and had a deep understanding of the social and economic issues prevalent in Indian society. Jhabvala's literary works focus on the social aspects of urban India, particularly the middle-class Hindu families and the complex dynamics of the East-West encounter. Her novels can be categorized into two distinct groups: comedic portrayals of urban Indian life, particularly within undivided Hindu families, and ironic examinations of the cultural conflict and interactions between the East and West. *The Nature of Passion* is a family tale that dramatizes family conflicts within the context of different cultures. It is a realistic portrait of the family life of a modern girl Nimmi, who tries to reject traditions, customs, and rituals and accept modern culture. Hence, the novel is a study of modern versus traditional ethics, which further leads to multiculturalism and cultural conflicts.

Lala Narayana Das Verma, Nimmi's father, is a prosperous contractor based in Delhi, having amassed his wealth through his endeavors. He presides over a sizable Indian joint family comprising three sons, three daughters, and numerous nieces and nephews. As a wealthy Punjabi contractor, he resides in a modern residence equipped with multiple bedrooms and seven marble bathrooms. Despite his material affluence, Lalaji retains a preference for outdoor sleeping and waking to the sounds of crows, eschewing the opulence of his lavish bedrooms. This juxtaposition highlights his attachment to traditional practices amidst his affluent lifestyle. While Lalaji's lifestyle reflects a fusion of Western influence and Indian traditions, his self-identification as a "true Indian" suggests an inner conflict regarding cultural identity and external influences. This dichotomy implies that he grapples with the challenges of incorporating Western customs while maintaining allegiance to his Indian heritage and values.

The sitting room of Lala Narayan Das, also known as Lalaji, is furnished with English furniture, and encircled by silk curtains, lamp shades, and novelty cigar-boxed and coloured images in silver frames. Even the concept of having a separate sitting room is foreign to him; everything is quite different from what he had grown up with and got used to. However, as soon as he can adapt himself to the new luxuries, to come out of his indigenous culture and adjust to the modern culture he is tossed between two cultures. How significantly the West has affected an Indian is very clear when Phuphaji, his sister and the strictest defender of traditional

practices, says: "Then he had less money and was still humble and did not neglect the proper customs and ceremonies. But now, because they call him Lala and come to him with hands joined together, he thinks he is greater than other men and can go his obstinate ways, contrary to what has been laid down"(90). Lalaji's adaptation to Western luxuries and lifestyle elements has caused a dichotomy in his identity. He is torn between his traditional Indian roots and the allure of modern Western culture. This internal conflict is evident when he tries to adjust to the new luxuries while still retaining some aspects of his indigenous culture.

Lalaji wants everyone in the family to come meet the newborn child in the nursing home, as is traditional in India. The youngest children, Viddi and Nimmi, who stand in for contemporary culture, stand against their father's wishes. It is a rebellious act against their own culture. They opt to visit their college and clubs rather than the nursing home. Nimmi even applies lipstick on her lips and looks down upon her college peers who lack refined manners and have limited English proficiency. She prefers forming friendships with girls from different communities rather than her own. This cultural divide creates a rift, leading to conflicts within the culture. When Rajan, Nimmi's friend, learned about childbirth, he had mixed feelings about having a large family. She says: "Only low-class people who were not modern and did not go to clubs, had a lot of babies" (35).

She is expressing an unfavourable opinion of her own culture in this instance, particularly about family size and way of life preferences. Her assertion suggests a separation from her cultural roots and the conviction that such actions are indicative of a lower social level. This behaviour might be viewed as a manifestation of intercultural conflict. When a person's opinions, values, or behaviours diverge from the standards and expectations of their culture, internal cultural conflicts result. In this instance, the individual is rejecting or separating herself from specific elements of her Indian culture because she considers them to be unpleasant or outdated. The statement also contains classist overtones, suggesting that having a large family and not engaging in modern activities like going to clubs are traits associated with a lower social class. This perpetuates harmful stereotypes and contributes to the stigmatization of certain cultural practices and socioeconomic groups. To address internal cultural conflicts and promote cultural understanding, it is crucial to foster self-reflection and open dialogue. Encouraging individuals to explore and embrace their cultural heritage while also respecting their autonomy to make personal choices can lead to a more nuanced understanding of cultural identities.

Lalaji, a materialistic individual, discusses dowry and boasts about providing an unbelievable amount. Ruth Praver Jhabvala through the character is trying to talk about dowry, which is a social evil. She wants dowry to be eradicated, on the other hand, many poor people will suffer and die because of this evil. A poor man seeks Lalaji's help for his daughter's dowries, expressing his inability to meet the customary expectations. Nimmi, the youngest daughter, protests against this social evil, challenging her father by saying: "Pitaji, you think you can buy everything with money" (15). As an Indian, Nimmi believes in the material world, but she rebels against Indian culture and promotes Western values.

Another cultural conflict was found in their family was that the cynical brothers strongly oppose Nimmi's decision to attend college, questioning the value of learning English literature and suggesting it is a waste of time and money and may even give her the wrong ideas. Phuphiji and Lalaji's wife share a similar sentiment, disapproving and resenting girls who go to college, believing they only mix with men. On another occasion, Om questions whether college-going girls can freely associate with men. Even Kuku, who eventually marries Nimmi, dismisses the idea of college, claiming it holds no benefit and that Nimmi will learn nothing there. In response, Nimmi is fuelled by anger, declares that she is not confined by the purdah system, indicating that Ruth Praver Jhabvala portrays Nimmi as a champion for women's emancipation. The brothers and Kuku devalue the importance of education, especially for women, considering it to be a time and money waste. This represents a tension between traditional thinking, which places a higher value on domestic skills than formal education, and contemporary thinking, which emphasises the value of education for employment options, personal growth, and empowerment. Om, observing his young daughter playing marbles with her brother, expresses his intention to arrange her marriage at the age of seven, highlighting the prevalent socio-cultural evil of child marriage in India. Ruth Praver Jhabvala's work sheds light on this practice and also addresses the issue of child widows, exemplified by Phuphiji, who was married as a child and became a widow at ten, enduring significant mental anguish.

During that era, women were often confined to domestic roles such as cooking chapattis, making mango pickles, managing servants, and caring for children. However, Nimmi rebels against these societal expectations, pursuing higher education, socializing at clubs, contemplating fashionable hairstyles, and maintaining correspondence with her friend Neena in Indonesia. Nimmi's actions go against the prevailing social norms and conflict with the wishes of her family members and cultural system. Kanta Lalaji's younger daughter-in-law, who embraces modern fashion and advocates for contemporary culture, shows no interest in

visiting the hospital to see the baby whom she never respected, honoured, or sought blessings from her mother-in-law. Such disrespectful behaviour from someone like Kanta, who comes from a different community, greatly disappoints the family. She frequently visits clubs and possesses knowledge of ballroom dancing, exhibiting actions that contradict traditional Indian values, likely influenced by her non-Lalaji background. Her departure from the joint family signifies a prime example of Westernization, which is seen as a threat to Indian culture, leading to potential cultural conflicts. Phuphiji expressed his understanding of the consequences when individuals marry outside their community. In Kanta's case, she neglected to instil Indian traditions in her children. They avoided Lalaji's attempts to bring them closer, instead standing there giggling. Kanta enrolled them in dance classes and expressed her desire to send them to England for education, her belief that Indian education is not good. However, she plans for them to attend university in England eventually.

Additionally, she intends to send them to a boarding school following English principles, where they will be taught good manners and English language proficiency. She says: "I do not care for my children to learn too much Hindi" (144). Kanta disregards the importance of her children learning Hindi, which contradicts Lalaji's stance against separating the children from their parents. This situation exemplifies the influence of the English education system being practised in India.

Viddi, the youngest son of Lalaji's family, embraces a modern mindset like Nimmi and he wants to travel to England and other parts of Europe because he wants to see the world. He regards Europeans as intellectual. He yearns to travel to Europe, particularly England. Money holds no value to him, as he despises it and considers it repulsive. Viddi's fascination with Western culture leads him to envision himself sitting in establishments adorned with elaborate grilles, bar counters, and expressive murals on the walls. He desires to engage in conversations with individuals such as journalists, painters, and postgraduate students who have experienced life abroad. However, before immersing himself in such experiences, he dreams of venturing to England or America, where he envisions a lively existence involving drinking, ballroom dancing, and romantic encounters with English women. Perhaps he would even attend university and further his knowledge in modern art, literature, and sociology. Viddi expresses his desire to study European culture closely, intending to observe their ways and potentially write a thesis that compares and contrasts them with Indian women. He envisions living in a beautifully furnished apartment, complete with books, artwork, and a gramophone, where he

would host late-night gatherings for his friends. They would gather to listen to Western music on the gramophone and occasionally engage in dancing.

The novel also showed the Europeans in India and observed how the women from foreign embassies would arrive in the morning for coffee, dressed in revealing summer dresses and high-heeled sandals, with their bare and confidently fair legs. They marvelled at their smoking style, even though it was considered unacceptable in Indian culture. Viddi's artist friends, Zahiruddin, Tivari, and Bahwa, often gathered at Rendezvous, a hotel, where they discussed art and the issue of bribery in India. They expressed their longing to travel to Paris or any other foreign country, hoping for an opportunity to fulfil their dreams. They are very interested in following other cultures. Lalaji claimed that corruption and bribery were foreign concepts in India. Instead, giving presents and favours to government officials was customary and regarded as an acceptable and civilized method of doing business. To this belief, Lalaji opposed sending his sons to foreign countries to study, fearing they would return with unconventional ideas and upset the established order at home. He had witnessed it directly when his son Chandraprakash returned from exile entirely transformed, refusing to follow conventional practices after mixing with beef eaters and getting married outside of his community against the wishes of his entire family. Viddi has been asking to his father and family members to send him to Europe so he can study at an English institution, but no one has been able to interpret what he is saying.

For them, money is everything and his father anticipated that Viddi would gain financial security if he joined his company as a partner. Viddi, meanwhile, has no interest in money and he was interested in Western culture. Viddi desired to enjoy a classical Western music concert, but the individuals in the house expressed their inability to tolerate such sounds and requested to switch it off. Viddi's house lacks any books apart from the Gita and Lalaji's business registers. If Viddi wishes to read other books, he must borrow them from his friends. Viddi regrets not being sent to Europe or America, wondering why he wasn't given the opportunity.

Nimmi, the youngest daughter of Lalaji has so many westernized friends in college. These friends engage in activities such as going to clubs, playing tennis, swimming, and addressing their mothers as 'Mummy'. Nimmi felt once when she was playing tennis, a peculiar sensation of discomfort from exposing her legs in public. She constantly felt uneasy at the mere thought of how her family would react if they saw her, so she made a conscious effort to suppress those thoughts. Nimmi's friends belong to a high-class family, their fathers are

politicians and political leaders, while Nimmi herself is the daughter of a wealthy Punjabi contractor. They were able to forget about her problematic family history to her charm, beauty, and politeness. This situation exemplifies multiculturalism, where another culture is acknowledged, understood, and allowed to coexist and develop within the society. Nimmi wanted to cut her hair short, but she was afraid that her family would oppose and that would cause a stir and it might lead to a cultural conflict.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala portrays the partition scene and the terrible conditions in which the refugees endure suffering. In that context, a few people approached Lalaji for assistance and he would give small rewards to the government officials to complete his needs without delay. However, the new Deputy Minister was against this and thought that the words bribery and corruption were foreign words. This was not done in India because people from other cultures were brought in to subvert Indian culture. Conversely, the former Deputy Minister, upon returning from abroad, brought back unconventional ideas that disrupted the established order. These ideas created cultural conflicts among government officials and offices, leading to a loss of Indian identity and spirit.

Nimmi welcomed people with joined palms at the party that Kanta, Lalaji's daughter-in-law, had planned, but she quickly realized that her greetings were not suitable for the occasion where all the other women shook hands and smiled. Nimmi felt it was a huge mistake and never dared to try it again. The guests at the party consumed soda and whisky, while the traditional members of the group drank pineapple juice. Sherry was in her hand but she worried about the potential reaction from her family. This situation highlights the unfortunate mockery faced by women in Indian culture, particularly those like the wife of the Head of the department who are confined to their homes. Phuphiji is against the existence of these parties. This demonstrates a conflict between the younger and older generations. She says: "I know very well what sort of people go there, all without morals or religion, people who have been abroad and have eaten beef. It is not a house for a young unmarried girl to visit" (69). In this context, Phuphiji's disapproval of parties and her negative characterization of the attendees illustrates a generational divide in perspectives. Older generations often hold onto traditional values and may view certain modern practices as a threat to their cultural heritage and moral fabric. They might associate social gatherings with immoral behaviour or a departure from religious principles, perceiving it as a negative influence on the younger generation.

At the tennis court, Nimmi and Rajan ran into Pheroze Bataliwala, who offered Nimmi a cigar. Initially, she rejected by shaking her head, but afterwards because, she believed that smoking was forbidden by the religion of the Parsis and later regretted. While smoking is considered taboo in some cultures, it may be an issue of pride and honour in others. The author portrayed these cultural differences through the novel and pointed out that such circumstances might lead to cultural conflicts.

In the hopes that Pheroze wouldn't be critical of her table manners, Nimmi went to a nightclub with Pheroze and tried to eat gracefully. Indian women decked themselves in intricate saris with ornate gold borders, as well as sparkling jewellery on their necks, ears, and arms, whereas European women attended the nightclub wearing revealing strapless dresses. Pheroze criticised Indian businessmen and their ignorant spouses for damaging Delhi's top hotels during their chat. This makes fun of Indian businessmen's manners. An American cabaret singer from Paris performed American movie songs as the audience listened and she wasn't a terrific vocalist, but Pheroze said she wasn't too bad considering it was Delhi. This suggests that people who have returned from Europe think that India's culture and artistic talent are inferior. Pheroze took Nimmi to the dance floor where they danced together after she said she wanted to learn all the dances. Nimmi worried about what her family would think if they saw her dancing in a young man's arms. Pheroze led her to the "Wishing Pillar" and kissed her while thinking about what his mother would say if she found out he was kissing a girl who was not a Parsi. Class consciousness fosters cultural awareness, which frequently results in intercultural conflict.

The cutting of Nimmi's hair is another significant event that occurs in Lalaji's home. Pheroze encouraged her to get it done, and Rajen supported the idea. When Nimmi returned home after the haircut, her mother and aunt Phuphiji were shocked, and they cried and shouted: "Her beauty is gone! How will we find a husband now? Have I not told you a hundred times, that such things and worse will happen if a girl is allowed to go to a college and no husband found for her" (151). Nimmi's rebellion against her family by embracing fashion left everyone in the house shocked. She was determined to avoid being labelled as old-fashioned.

In the novel *Nature of Passion*, the exploration of multicultural conflict is an important theme that sheds light on the complexities of human interactions and the challenges that arise when different cultural conflicts. Ruth Praver Jhabvala explores the lives of characters from various ethnic origins in *Nature of Passion*, revealing the inescapable conflict between ideals,

customs, and expectations. Through their interactions, the clash of values, beliefs, and customs, highlights the inevitable tensions that emerge when cultures come together.

The exploration of multicultural conflicts in the novels *The Nature of Passion* by Ruth Praver Jhabwala remains strikingly relevant in today's society. In an increasingly interconnected world where cultures converge and collide, understanding the complexities of multicultural interactions is more critical than ever. This timeless novel delves into the intricacies of human relationships amidst diverse cultural landscapes, touching on themes that resonate with contemporary issues faced by societies worldwide. The representation of cultural conflicts and the difficulties people and communities have when navigating heterogeneous surroundings is one of the novel's most contemporary themes that are still relevant today. People from various cultural origins encounter increasingly frequently as globalization picks up speed, which causes conflicts in values, beliefs, and customs. Additionally, the novel's examination of identity and belonging touches on a subject that is still relevant in contemporary culture. Individuals frequently wrestle with questions regarding their own identities and sense of belonging in a society marked by migration, multiculturalism, and the blending of cultures. The novel's examination of cultural conflicts, identity, colonial legacies, cross-cultural love, and the interaction of tradition and modernity offers insightful and thought-provoking material for readers today who are pondering the opportunities and difficulties that multiculturalism in the twenty-first century presents.

References

Pawer Jhabwala, Ruth. *The Nature of Passion*. Touchstone Reissue edition, 1990.

Avruch, Kevin. "Cross-Cultural conflicts". *Researchgate*, 12 December 2020.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242598393_CROSS-CULTURAL_CONFLICT

Aydin, Hasan. "Encyclopedia of Humanservices and Diversity." *Researchgate*, January 2014.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296657441_Multiculturalism#:~:text=multiculturalism%20is%20a%20concept%20that,and%20origins%20in%20different%20countries.&text=in%20the%20world%20together%20with%20diversity.&text=its%20opinion%20of%20equality%20of,the%20building%20stones%20of%20multiculturalism

Colomb, Enzo. "Multiculturalisms." *Sociopedia.isa*, 2014.

Kastoryano, Riva. "Multiculturalism and interculturalism: redefining nationhood and solidarity." *Springer open*, 17 May 2018.

<https://comparativemigrationstudies.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40878-018-0082-6>

Nasrullah, Mambrol. "Analysis of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Stories". *Literariness org*,
2 September 2020.

<https://literariness.org/2020/05/25/analysis-of-ruth-prawer-jhabvalas-stories/>

Presnadi, Lea. "What is Multiculturalism?". *LinkedIn*, 2 July 2019.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-multiculturalism-lea-presnadi>

Twose, Rebecca. "The importance of cultural diversity". *Language insights*, 18 may
2021.

<https://languageinsight.com/blog/2021/importance-cultural-diversity/>

Liberating Discourse: Unleashing the Power of Language in Transgender Advocacy and Empowerment

Malavika K V

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

&

Ms. Sangeeta K

Assistant Professor of English

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri.

Abstract

Autobiographies of transgender individuals offer profound insights into their experiences, traumas, and the challenging journey of transitioning. The narratives, exemplified by Revathi and Manobi Bandopadhyay, highlight the bravery required to define their identities amid societal and personal adversities. Revathi's story illustrates the psychological and physical abuse faced by transgender individuals, depicting her severance from family and subsequent life as a hijra, begging on the streets. Similarly, Manobi Bandopadhyay's *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* recounts her path to becoming India's first transgender college principal, tackling themes of gender identity, societal expectations, and discrimination. Bandopadhyay's narrative combines straightforward language with sentimental tones, reflecting her struggles and resilience. Her use of defensive language and symbolic accessories underscores her fight against societal exploitation and discrimination. Her early life, marked by an identity crisis and abuse, shaped her defensive stance and advocacy.

The paper attempts to read how the autobiographies of Revathi and Manobi Bandopadhyay demonstrate the power of language in transgender advocacy. Through defensive language and candid discussions of their experiences, they challenge stereotypes and advocate for a deeper understanding of transgender lives, serving as vital tools for empowerment and resilience within the transgender community.

Keywords: Transgender, identity, resilience, autobiography, trauma

The transgender community in India represents a marginalized social segment, facing deprivation of fundamental human rights and privileges accorded to cisgender and heterosexual individuals within society. Terms such as "Hijra" and "transgender" connote distinct yet

occasionally intersecting notions of gender identity and expression. It is imperative to acknowledge that these terms can carry diverse meanings and cultural implications contingent upon context and geographic location.

Within India, transgender individuals are referred to using various labels, varying based on regional distinctions. These designations include ali, aravani, chhakka, hijra, jogappa, khusra, kinnar, kojja, maada, mukhannathun, napunsak, nau number, pavaiyaa, Thirunangai, and others. Certain terms are elucidated with illustrative examples. For instance, "Ali" denotes a man exhibiting feminine behaviors and characteristics, lacking masculinity. An individual identifying as female despite having a male physique is termed as aravani. Notably, the term "Hijra," as posited by Tripathi, is often regarded as derogatory and is associated with colloquial epithets like "number six," "number nine," and "chakka." Originating from Urdu, "hijra" denotes an individual who has distanced themselves from their original tribe or community. Consequently, a hijra is someone who has joined a specific hijra group subsequent to departing from mainstream societal norms, encompassing both males and females. However, it is essential to recognize that the hijra community is not monolithic, with variations in history and culture across different states.

Primarily utilized within the South Asian context, particularly in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the term "hijra" most commonly signifies a distinctive social and cultural category. Hijras, born male but identifying and expressing themselves outside the conventional male-female binary, predate contemporary conceptions of transgender identities. They boast a rich historical and cultural legacy in the region, often organizing into cohesive groups with unique social structures and partaking in rituals such as castration or genital modifications.

Hijras (also called as "kinnar," "tirunangai," "kothi," "aravani," etc.) have been in India since the Vedic era, when they were regarded as holy figures by the populace. The terms "tritiya prakriti" (meaning, "third nature") and "napumsaka" (meaning, "impotent"), which are mentioned in the Hindu epics, mythical writings, folklore, and the old Vedic and Puranic scriptures, are indicative of this. Hijras had respectable positions in the royal court even throughout the Mughal era, acting as confidantes, counsellors, and harem guards (Konduru & Hanging). In addition to their honourable standing, hijras established their status as lucky people by performing the "badhai" ritual (meaning, blessings) during marriages and childbirths. Hijras were therefore seen as an essential component of the sociocultural landscape in pre-colonial India.

The autobiographies of transgender persons serve as a testament and a true expression of their opinion, experience, and trauma. Considering that "autobiography is an art of self-expression" (Revathi 76) Their transition from a man to a lady is difficult and painful. The endeavour to define their identity and establish new performance benchmarks for the entire community is exceptional and brave. In addition to having bipolar disease, they see firsthand how identities can both define and constrain a person. Their narratives deal with reclaiming one's identity and asserting one's consciousness after experiencing the misery of being imprisoned in a physical form that does not correspond to their psyche. Revathi and Manobi have experienced physical and psychological abuse because of social persecution. These individuals still bear profound psychological scars from the verbal and physical abuse they received from their own transgender community as well as from their family, school, peers, and the street. Revathi describes the experience by leaving her family to join the home of hijras, which involves being cut off from her family and society and having to beg on the streets. Similar to this, Manobi experienced a variety of psychic tensions when she changed from a man to a woman.

Manobi Bandopadhyay's autobiographical novel *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* is a candid and powerful portrayal of her journey as India's first transgender college principal. The book addresses a range of themes, including gender identity, societal expectations, and discrimination, and provides insights into the experiences of transgender individuals in India. One of the notable aspects of Bandopadhyay's writing is her use of defensive language. Throughout the book, she employs a defensive tone in response to the discrimination and violence she has faced as a transgender person. This is particularly evident in her interactions with colleagues and students at the college, who often question her authority and legitimacy as a principal. By using defensive language, Bandopadhyay asserts her position and challenges the notion that she is somehow less qualified or capable because of her gender identity.

Another key aspect of Bandopadhyay's writing is her candid discussion of sexual articulation. She describes her experiences of navigating her sexuality and gender identity in a society that is often hostile to non-normative expressions of sexuality. She also discusses her romantic relationships and sexual experiences in a way that challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about transgender individuals. Through her writing, she also discusses her romantic relationships and sexual experiences in a way that challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about transgender individuals. Through her writing, Bandopadhyay presents a

nuanced and complex picture of transgender sexuality that is rarely depicted in mainstream media.

Bandopadhyay presents a nuanced and complex picture of transgender sexuality that is rarely depicted in mainstream media. The author uses straightforward and frequently harsh language, yet she is honest about her fixation with love and romance, writing with both self-assurance and self-pity. She acknowledges that a lot of the affection she encountered was 'animal' love, which she did not necessarily detest. However, her prose soon turns sentimental and is dripping with tears, goosebumps, and heartbeats. It lacks irony and humor and makes the reader restless and impatient. Defense language was a main weapon that was used by Manobi for her existence in the society where exploitation and cruel eyes are waiting for her as, people looked at her like a ripe fruit ready to be plucked. She started to wear accessories like scarves and women's sunglasses to show off her sexuality. She also realized that she would have to overcome her shyness and not make herself available for exploitation. She used such a defensive tone of language to fight against her discriminations and exploitations from the society. Manobi's early years were filled with signs of her ongoing identity crisis. At her birth, well-wishers remarked on the family's growing riches and quipped, "This is a boy Lakshmi!" (Bandopadhyay 6). Her youth was everything but simple -- from being sexually harassed by her cousin in class V to being physically attacked by boys at school. In 2015, Manobi made headlines when she was named the "first transgender principal" of an Indian institution. Over the following two years, she re-entered the public eye as a result of the publication of her autobiography and widespread claims of workplace harassment. Manobi has endured her fair share of hardships to become resilient, like most trans people. She also possesses impressive credentials, including a author of numerous more books, periodicals, and hundreds of newspaper pieces, as well as a PhD in Bengali literature. She established the first transgender publication in Bengali, *Abomanob (Subhuman)* in 1995.

Manobi recalls her harrowing experience as a minor victim of sexual assault, when she was raped by an older cousin. "He was like a tiger who had tasted human blood, and lurked here and there, trying to corner me every now and then," (Bandopadhyay 56). It eventually turned into a routine for both him and me. At school, Manobi became an object of ridicule and abuse, for deviating from the gender specific norms associated with clothes, the use of makeup and accessories. She mentions, "They would pinch me, pull my hair, box my ears and punch my face at the slightest provocation...No one took pity on me. This left a deep scar on my mind" (56). When she moved to the college also her situation got worsened. But finally, she claimed

her goal as a woman, as a human being in the society, she tired a lot for having her dreams in her hands and she struggled hardly for her soul and identity. This was the only result of her hard work and sacrifices using her weapons of her defense language that is used to kill those vicious creatures in the society.

Overall, *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* is a compelling and insightful read that sheds light on the experiences of transgender individuals in India. Bandopadhyay's use of defense language and candid discussion of sexuality and gender identity make this book a valuable contribution to the literature on transgender experiences.

The memoir *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* was written by Revathi, a transgender person from Tamil Nadu, India. The book chronicles Revathi's life and her difficulties as a transgender woman known as a hijra in South Asia who is frequently shunned by society. The connection between language and power is one of the topics Revathi delves in her book. She points out that the hijra population speaks a unique form of Tamil that is different from that spoken language of others. Hijras converse in this language to build a sense of identity and community among themselves. Hijras frequently experience discrimination and marginalization, though, because their language is not acknowledged by the public. Another subject Revathi addresses is sexual articulation in her book. She discusses the distinctive sexual rites and practices of the hijra group, which are sometimes misinterpreted by outsiders. Revathi emphasizes that sexual expression should not be stigmatized or restricted because it is an essential component of hijra culture and identity. According to Revathi, she feared rowdies at night and police officers during the day. Due to her need to assist her elderly parents, Revathi was compelled to engage in the sex industry. Due to their circumstances, most transsexual people are compelled to work as sex workers.

She was first gender-unknown to the cops and the rowdies. They assumed she was a female. However, her medical predicament became apparent quickly, and they began to mistreat her. Policemen stole her money during the day under the pretence of a fine or bribe, and at night, thugs broke into her hut, searched her pocketbook, and stole all of the cash. They would rape her if her purse was empty and severely beat her. Many times, they have caught her in this manner, beaten her in plain view of the road, taken money from as a bribe, and then sent away. Revathi claims that police officers never view transgender people as living beings.

Revathi was once jailed when a police officer booked her in a prostitution-related nuisance case. She pleaded with each police officer individually while clasping her hands

together. But instead of sending her out, they utilized her as a trap to make further arrests. A two-star police officer entered the station after midnight. She begged him to set her free. "He then demanded that I remove my clothing in front of the prisoner observed" (112). The protection of the public is one of the police officers' key responsibilities, but they were behaving worse than a ruffian. After that, he started abusing her:

Despite my tears and pleas, he forcibly stripped me. He forced me to stand with my legs spread like a woman would when I was completely naked, sticking his lathi where I had my surgery. He asked, "So can it go in there?" after repeatedly striking the section with his lathi. Or is it a field that is off limits? Then, how do you have sex? (114)

She was subjected to barbaric treatment and handled like a dog by the police enforcers. A person ought to have regard for another person. The Bible commands, "us to love one another As I had loved you" (123). The policeman was supposed to protect Revathi within the police station as a protector of the populace, but Revathi found the very same police station to be a terrifying place where people flee for protection and justice. The very men who were supposed to protect her, abuse her sexually. Even a terrorist might have mercy before killing someone, but these police officers tortured her like the devil. He examined her breasts and enquired as to how it occurred.

She was unable to speak out of sorrow. He demanded an explanation about her breast. This incident was the most horrible she had ever experienced in her life. She rates the rowdies better than the policeman. They raped her harshly without her consent but never tortured her like what she was undergoing then. Her reply to that was "I took hormone tablets to grow them." After a while, he ordered her to bend and show her back. Still, she was naked and showing her boobs for his inspection. She turned back and bend - "When I did, he thrust his lathi in there and asked, 'So you get it there?'" I straightened up, yelling with the pain of it (117).

In Indian police stations, transgender people were given this level of safety and protection. Where would the average man go for protection if the police fail to protect him? This incident is unequivocal proof that the protectors abuse the weaker sex. The entire night, Revathi was used as a sex toy by police. Revathi had to agree with the policeman to get out of that misery and survive when she was brought before the judge "They told me that I must not speak of how I was beaten and humiliated" (137). She then made a payment and departed the courtroom. She finally used her defense language in the book to overcome such brutal

situations in her life. She strongly stated that hijras have a language that is strong as a knife to kill these devilish creatures. Revathi also highlights the unique cultural practices and traditions associated with hijra communities, such as the role of hijras in religious ceremonies and their participation in begging and sex work for survival.

The book offers a courageous narrative depicting the struggles of a hijra individual in pursuit of freedom and recognition of their humanity within society. Through perseverance and sacrifice, she ultimately secures her liberty and amplifies her voice, harnessing the power of language to combat societal oppression. Revathi's autobiographical account not only chronicles the adversities she faces but also endeavors to assert her own narrative, encompassing both the sorrows and joys of her life.

The Truth About Me emerges as a poignant and insightful memoir, shedding light on the challenges encountered by transgender women in India. Revathi endeavors to foster greater empathy and comprehension by dispelling prevalent misconceptions about the hijra community. The prose of the novel is characterized by simplicity and clarity, yet imbued with a tone of pathos and anguish, accentuating Revathi's tribulations. Moreover, the author employs a rhetorical stance, critiquing the gender binary framework of heteronormative society.

Manobi Bandyopadhyay shattered barriers by becoming India's inaugural transgender institution principal, exemplifying resilience amidst societal norms. Her formative years serve as a paradigm for Indian youths navigating gender nonconformity. Despite enjoying familial privileges, Manobi faces rejection for asserting her identity, enduring instances of sexual assault within her family. In her autobiography, *The Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*, Manobi recounts the harrowing experience of being preyed upon by her older cousin, employing vivid imagery to illustrate her victimization. Furthermore, she reflects on the exploitation she suffered at the hands of schoolmates and family members.

A pioneer in transgender activism and a transwoman writer, Revathi has experienced trauma in her life since she was a little child. Revathi has discussed her experience as a youngster who was not gender-confirmed. She claims to have been physically tormented by the family and when her identity is discovered by her actions, she says, "I tried to protect my face and head with my hands to stop the punches from landing...I was severely battered on my back and legs before my brother used the bat to finish me off" (78).

Both autobiographical works depict the inner and extreme plight of exploitation and brutality faced by Manobi and Revathi through their journey to become a woman. Both books

offer a candid and often emotional portrayal of the difficulties and joys of living as a transgender person in India. They also shed light on the broader social and cultural issues surrounding gender and sexuality in India, including the discrimination and violence faced by LGBTQ+ individuals and the need for greater acceptance and understanding of diverse gender identities and expressions. Sexual articulation refers to the ways in which individuals express their sexuality and desires. In both works, the protagonists explore their sexuality and desires in the context of their gender identity. They describe their experiences of attraction and intimacy, as well as the challenges they faced in expressing their sexuality in a society that is hostile to transgender individuals.

Manobi Bandopadhyay uses phrases like "I am not a man in a woman's body" to assert her gender identity, while Revathi uses the phrase "I am a woman with a male body" to express her identity. Through these phrases they indulged in to their strong identity through their defense language. In fact, the author has genuinely examined every aspect of transgender association and what are the hurdles faced and overthrown by hijras. The writer Revathi describes not only her social background in her hometown but also her dreams and desires in her writing. In the preface to the novel, the author began writing with a question: "In our society, we speak the language of rights loudly and often, but do the marginalized really have access to these rights?". These lines depict that how marginalized these people are in the society, but they use their strong language to overcome these discriminations, exploitations and they also come to the forefront of the societies where they get their language and they also got their dreams and achievements in their hands of sorrows. Manobi also portrays her as the most courageous and unflinchingly brave transgender who fought for her dreams and achievements in the society to stand straight with her own power against the society where transgenders are considered sexless.

References

Anantharaman, Latha. *Story of a Transition*. Hindustan Times , March 18, 2017.

Bandopadhyay, Manobi. *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*. Penguin India, 2017.

Muthuswamy, Aravind, and Sindhu K. "Portrayal of the Lives of Transgenders as in the Ancient Indian Literature and in Modern Days: A Comparative Case Study." *Gedrang & Organisatie Review*, vol. 33, 2020.

Revathi, A. *Truth About Me: A Hijra's Life Story*. Penguin Random House, 2010.

Human Beings and State of Minds: Analysing Select Illness Narratives

Ms. Nafla Nharakkodan

M A English (2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College,
Manjeri

&

Ms. Sangeeta K

Assistant Professor of English,
PG and Research Department of English,
KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

This paper aims to unravel the disparate aspects of human minds with illness narrative. *Fight Club* by David Fincher and *Split* by M. Night Shyamalan are movies that portray the lives of characters with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). These two movies disclose how trauma and societal stigma lead the characters in to violence. The complexities in the human mind trigger questioning one's own actual identity, without fitting into sanity. The mind can be complicated as a puzzle, which can be tangled forever if it is not treated well. The societal stigmatization on mental health issues frequently results in misunderstandings and lack of compassion for people who are experiencing mental illness. Both the movies expose how surroundings can influence a human in moulding one's psyche. Also, these movies advocate for a more compassionate approach to mental health, supporting open communication and the de-stigmatization of mental illnesses in order to promote a happier, healthier society.

Keywords : Illness Narrative, Dissociative Identity Disorder, Human Psyche, Mental health, Trauma, Violence, Misrepresentation of illness.

Illness can be experienced as a more or less external event that has intruded upon an ongoing life process. At first, the illness may seem to lack all connection with earlier events, and thus it ruptures our sense of temporal continuity and if the rupture is not mended, the fabric of our lives may be ripped to shreds. It is in this context that narratives become particularly interesting. Narratives offer an opportunity to knit together the split ends of time, to construct a new context and to fit the illness disruption into a temporal framework. Narratives can provide a context that encompasses both the illness event and surrounding life events and recreates a

state of interrelatedness. In other words, narratives recreate a temporal context that had been lost, and thereby takes on meaning as part of a life process.

Illness narratives involve perceptions, experiences, interpretations, and evaluations of patient's actions and the courses of their lives revolving around disease. It also constructs worlds of illness, provide some kind of coherence around contingent events of bodily or mental suffering by contextualizing them and situating them in biographical contexts, and are some of the most important culturally available forms whereby people reinterpret and reevaluate their lives in response to disease. But their functions and consequences go beyond individual patients.

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a mental health condition. People with DID have two or more separate identities. These personalities control their behaviour at different times. Each identity has its own personal history, traits, likes and dislikes. DID can lead to gaps in memory and hallucinations. It is used to be called multiple personality disorder or split personality disorder. A person with DID has two or more distinct identities, the "core" identity is the person's usual personality. "Alters" are the person's alternate personalities. Alters tend to be very different from one another. The identities might have different genders, ethnicities, interests and ways of interacting with their environments. Other common signs and symptoms of DID can include anxiety, delusions, depression, disorientation, drug or alcohol abuse, memory loss and suicidal thoughts or self-harm.

The Narrator and Tyler Durden, are the two main characters of David Fincher's 1999 movie *Fight Club*, which is based on Chuck Palahniuk's book of the same name. The Narrator, the unnamed protagonist, played by Edward Norton who remains nameless throughout the movie, is a recall specialist for an automobile company. He is physically well but attends several support groups for people suffering from illnesses since he despises his job and experiences insomnia. These groups allow him to express his emotions which causes an addiction. During one of the narrator's business trips, Tyler Durden is first presented. The narrator's dream character is Tyler. He is everything the narrator wishes to be. Tyler is clever, personable and ambitious. He is a charismatic and eccentric soap salesman. And stands for the depressed masculinity that the narrator portrays throughout the movie. Tyler's wants the narrator to let go and accept the pain and danger of life. Tyler and the Narrator start a "Fight Club" which eventually leads to a large group that intends to destroy important financial institutions in order to restore the societies credit back to zero. They established the fighting

club as a means of resistance and escape from social norms. As the club grows in popularity, it draws dissatisfied males who share a common frustration with life. However, the narrator starts to wonder about Tyler's objectives and the effects of their activities as the club expands into a bigger anarchist group known as Project Mayhem. The character of Tyler Durden, played by Brad Pitt, serves as the narrator's alter ego and serves as his confidant. Through the formation of fight club, Tyler Durden leads the narrator into a realm of self-destruction and anarchy. Tyler is the epitome of manhood, defiance, and rejection of social norms. *Fight Club* examines issues such as masculinity, materialism, identity, and the negative implications of social conformity as it concentrates on the protagonist's struggle with his competing egos, his desire for self-awareness, and the consequences of his actions.

The narrator's dissociation is shown in the movie as a result of his discontent with his existence and desire for rebellion against social conventions. The alter ego of the narrator, Tyler Durden, is an expression of his suppressed urges and wants. The narrator first thinks of Tyler as a different person because he isn't aware of his own split personality. The spectator finds out that Tyler is a reflection of the narrator's subconscious thoughts as the movie goes on. The existence of two distinct identities in the protagonist's psyche is the most prominent aspect of DID in the movie. Tyler Durden and the nameless narrator are two different selves that coexist within him. Narrator, presents himself as a well-mannered, responsible corporate employee who is not overly aggressive even when he wants to be. He is cautious, well-organized, and does not display any outward signs of unhappiness, but he has lost his passion for living. Tyler exudes charisma, and represents the qualities that the narrator aspires to. The narrator's remarks in the film are primarily internal monologues, and he doesn't speak to the other characters nearly as much as he thinks to himself, which is the first thing we notice about him. This is consistent with the introverted personality attribute. The fact that we can hear the narrator's internal dialogue also made it clear that he is more than just a cognitive machine and that he has a thorough understanding of both his position in his own company and that of his company in the larger, impersonal system of capitalism: "Everything is a copy of a copy of the copy...when deep space exploration ramps up it'll be the corporations that name everything..."(04:06-04:17).

He develops a worldview that is informed by his points of view of his professional life as well as by his own history of emotional maltreatment. The narrator has a lively imagination and is constantly daydreaming about tragedy, confrontation, and relationships, in contrast to his button-down facade. The last of which is evidently crucial to him. He is a highly sensitive

individual who longs for true emotional connection and belonging. In order to acquire the emotional connection, he didn't have as a youngster, he is even willing to lie about having testicular cancer.

Tyler Durden enters the scene with a boisterous excitement and what seems to be zero regard for anything. He seems to be the narrator's complete opposite. While the narrator is self-effacing, Tyler is self-assured. The narrator is reserved, whereas Tyler is impulsive. Tyler employs his broish live in the moment image to get people to down their guard before employing a tidal wave of magnetism to sweep them into his world of great plans and big ideas, whilst the narrator uses silence and politeness to hide his depressed psychological patterns. Tyler is able to see straight through others to identify their wants, needs, and vulnerabilities. He then uses his viewpoint and weaponized emotional intelligence to shape them into the person he wants. Also, he has contempt for the corporate machinery, which is expressed as though the narrator has a radical plan for putting his contempt into action. He rarely displays emotion that is unrelated to a specific goal he is working toward and appears to be acceptable with emotionlessness. He is surrounded by people, but he has no relationship with any of them. Although the two individuals take distinct paths toward achieving their objectives, they essentially share the same goals and vision. Both Tyler and the narrator employ emotional dishonesty to establish a sense of community; both think that companies are emasculating and demeaning people.

The idea that they are two different individuals is internalized by the patient, which results in DID. According to studies, people with DID frequently exhibit high levels of suggestibility, stress and imagination. Suggestibility is the tendency to internalize other people's beliefs, and it is clear from the movie's introduction that the narrator has done a lot of this. So where did others get the idea that the narrator was two people? It started in society. The narrator struggles with his place in the world throughout the film. He accepted the false dichotomy that conformity is morality, believing that in order to be good, he must follow the career and educational path set out for him by others. Organizations that are hierarchical have a tendency to discourage independent thought and self-assertion. Because of this, conformity is portrayed to others as morality, and the narrator desperately desires to be moral. Any aspect of his personality that deviates from the fictitious boundary he has set around his psyche is therefore transferred onto the alter ego he gave himself. All of the narrator's independence, bravery, and daring are suppressed until a powder keg of restlessness, isolation, and sexual frustration explodes. However, this is only an illusion. Tyler is part of his personality and he

needs him, without Tyler the narrator will passively go along with a depersonalized system that he hates. And Tyler also needs a narrator because without him he is a dangerous emotionally manipulative cult leader who gets people killed for no reason.

At the same time M Night Shyamalan's 2017 psychological thriller movie *Split* portrays a character named Kevin suffering with DID, who has 24 multiple personalities. Kevin kidnaps three teenage girls and holds them captive in an undisclosed location. Throughout the movie, Kevin's various personalities begin to show themselves and engage with the girls and with one another. Kevin Wendell Crumb, portrayed by James McAvoy, is a complex individual who possesses multiple distinct identities or alters, each with their own unique characteristics, mannerisms, and behaviours. Throughout the movie, Kevin displays a variety of personas, emphasizing the disorganized state of his mind. Viewers will see several alters taking control of Kevin's body as the film goes on. Among the well-known alters are Dennis, Patricia and Hedwig. Each alter has unique drives, aspirations, and reactions to the outside environment. The alters may exhibit a variety of characteristics, such as being violent, maternal, compulsive, or protective. He has internal tensions and an air of unpredictability as a result of the presence of various alters. Dennis, one of Kevin's alters, is portrayed as being rigid, exacting, and compulsive. He takes over Kevin's body and frequently serves as the leader of the other alters. Patricia, another alter, is shown as being maternal, strong, and affluent. She has a distinctive accent and frequently wears feminine clothing. Hedwig, a nine-year-old alter, is portrayed as innocent, mischievous, and childlike. He exhibits behaviours typical of a young boy and communicates with a lisp. Beast, the 24th personality of Kevin depicted as a dangerous and superhuman being, for whom he prepares sacred food – the three girls. Surprisingly, one of the victims survive from being consumed by the Beast. Casey escapes from the tragedy of Kevin's alters. The alters are created as his defence mechanism. They connect, converse, and materialize with others, giving glimpses into the complexities of DID. Each of Kevin's unconscious desires is reflected in them.

The film explores Kevin's struggle with DID. The existence of Kevin's alters causes him to have severe memory gaps and amnesia. It's possible that when one alter is in charge, they are unable to access memories of past events that took place when another alter was in charge. For instance, when Dennis assumes charge, he is aware of the other alters and what they are doing, whereas other alters might not be as conscious. This break in memory continuity is a typical trait of DID. Throughout the film, several alters concurrently reveal their presence at various periods. Each change has unique traits, behaviours, and even accents, and they all

happen suddenly. The abrupt alterations in Kevin's appearance and behaviour point to the presence of DID. They can speak or argue with one another, highlighting the coexistence of various identities in Kevin's consciousness. In one scene where Kevin meets with his therapist, Dr. Karen Fletcher (Betty Buckley), after claiming the identity of Barry, one of his alters, Kevin switches between his alters in the middle of the talk, changing from Barry to Patricia. The abrupt shift in Kevin's mannerisms, speech, and demeanour shows the existence of multiple personas within him. In the hideout, Dennis and Patricia, Kevin's alters, invite the captive girls to a celebration. The two alters are shown interacting with the girls while flipping between them throughout the scene. Later when Casey comes across Kevin in front of a mirror, she watches him switching quickly between various identities. His appearance and behaviour alter with each shift, illuminating the disintegration of his identity. The visual impact of this scenes highlights Kevin's numerous personas.

Trauma plays a huge role in Kelvin's mental state. The subject of physical abuse and its insidious psychic effects is at the heart of the movie. Kevin exhibits odd behaviour throughout the entire film, which documents his dissociative identity disorder- related mental illness. Kevin behaves violently, he kidnaps and kills individuals to further his own agenda. Even though Kevin's DID dominates the narrative, trauma might be seen as the root cause of his DID. Dennis, the character that dominates the most of the movie, makes references to Kevin's abuse in his conversations with their therapist, Dr. Fletcher, and eventually shows it in a flashback toward the conclusion. Kevin adores his father dearly and is so devastated when the latter dies in a train accident that his thoughts become tangled. In a flashback, his mother physically beats him and gives birth to Dennis, the first "alter," by doing so. Due to his knack for keeping things perfectly clean and pristine in particular, Kevin's stronger personality helps him deal with situations and prevent his mother's anger. Kevin manages by creating substitute personalities who have the many strengths he lacks. And with no adequate support system in place, a powerful yet monster identity emerges to defend Kevin. That is childhood maltreatment before the age of five is a common trigger for the disorder. The re-emergence of Kevin's genuine identity, which had only survived his mother's abuse because it had been meticulously shielded by his alternate identities, was caused by his clear recollection of that incident. He is not a villain since he is a victim, and neither is he responsible for his behavioural problems. One of the three abducted girl Casey is too a victim of physical abuse like him, as they both are two sides of a coin. When he notices Casey's body is scarred, which may be the consequence of torture or self- inflicted wounds, he decides against carrying out his disastrous

attack on her and stops himself, telling her, “You are different from the rest.” Recognizing another victim, he indignantly roars, “Rejoice! The broken are the more evolved! Rejoice!” (1:44:23-1:45:04).

Although it's a relatively common trope to link abuse to mental illness, the movie shows sympathy for him and acknowledges that he was abused. Kevin is set apart from the damaging notion that violent behaviour is a natural result of mental illness because to the way that Shyamalan develops empathy for him. In sequences involving another character, Kevin's therapist Fletcher, whom he frequently meets during the course of the action, Shyamalan lays out the essence of that crucial distinction between the broken and the rest. The main emphasis of the film is Dr. Karen Fletcher, Kevin's therapist, as she works to comprehend and support him through his condition. She is a kind therapist who converses with Kevin and his different identities in a cool, even fun manner, treating them all with respect as unique individuals. Although she acknowledges that Kevin is gravely ill and experiencing tremendous emotional suffering, she downplays or even ignores the prospect that he could endanger both others and her. She acts in a way that Shyamalan successfully portrays as naive because she is working for his welfare, not for the good of society as a whole. Karen says, “I've lost patients to the system,” and adds, “I want you to know, Dennis, I will never stop fighting for you...My patients have become my family” (1:13:36-1:13:48). Her oppositional perspective of "the system" as an enemy as opposed to a strategy for group defence suggests a form of countertransference, a connection with her patient's desires, which as a result of his illness may well turn out to be destructive. She believes him to be innocent because of his mental condition and consequent lack of responsibility, but in reality, he has the more in-depth information because of the abuse that caused his illness, making her the comparatively greater innocent. She totally ignores the thought that they could be using her because she is so desperate to preserve an emotional connection with him - with his multiple personas. Karen uses the word "family" in an unconditionally positive manner, which is even more telling than her simple but deeply felt attitude. She clearly intends to indicate deep concern and even love, but "family" evokes up images of danger, terror, and suffering for both Casey and Kevin. In the movie's conclusion part Kevin wants Casey to murder him after becoming aware of the horrific things his alters has done, such as kidnapping the girls, killing Dr. Fletcher and discovering her in his room. Kevin wants Casey to cease doing wrongdoing, so that he can stop harming people. He is unable to face reality. This shows Kevin is not aware of what is happening within himself and his alters, totally complicated state of minds.

Exploring illness narrative in the movies *Split* and *Fight Club* sheds light on the complex and intricate relationship between human beings and their state of mind. Both movies explore the subject of psychiatric problems and how they can affect a person's sense of reality and perception of who they are. We see how Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is portrayed in the movie *Split*, where the main character's mind splits into many identities, each with distinctive characteristics and skills. This story highlights the devastating impacts of trauma and abuse on mental health while also casting doubt on our conceptions of the human mind's capacity for adaptability and resilience. However, *Fight Club* takes a different approach to the idea of two distinct identities. The protagonist's alter ego is a reflection of his suppressed feelings, dissatisfaction with society expectations, and desire for emancipation from the limitations of contemporary life. The film poses provocative concerns regarding the extent to which a person's psyche can fracture when faced with intense unhappiness and internal conflicts. Both films illustrate the significant impact of mental health on human behaviour and choices. They stress the significance of understanding and treating mental illness as well as the possible negative effects of not doing so. These films also highlight the stigmatization of mental health issues, which frequently results in misunderstandings and a lack of compassion for persons who are experiencing mental illness.

The movie *Fight Club* strongly emphasize the flaws in contemporary consumerism and maintains a "fight the system" attitude throughout, which aims to make a statement about how society's rules and "the system" affect a person's pursuit of happiness overall. One important similarity between the DID in *Fight Club* and the actual condition is the idea that the other identities exist as a form of coping for that individual. Often, a stronger, more self-assured personality will take control for the person's benefit. "I'll bring us through this. As always. I'll carry you – kicking and screaming – and in the end you'll thank me" (2:11:35-2:11:42), Tyler told the narrator. Since consumerism's hegemony is the main source of psychological abuse in the movie, Tyler Durden must stand in for the narrator's internal desire to rebel against the system. Dryden was aware of his role the entire time, while the narrator didn't realize it until the film's conclusion: "All the ways you wish you could be, that's me. I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I am free in all the ways that you are not" (1:53:19-1:53:35).

Split is reckless in its depiction of a very real condition, even if the mentally ill are, of course, not monsters. The movie blurs the distinction between fact and fiction by fusing the two. That the movie empathizes with Kevin and realizes that he is not always cruel but has

simply had a difficult life is not fair. Kevin is not considered responsible; instead, his illness is blamed. Kevin introduces a 24th ego at the conclusion part, a superhuman cannibalistic murdering machine known as “The Beast.” His DID transforms Kevin into a monster in real life. *Split*’s association of the mentally ill with the evil supernatural, further “othering” them, doesn’t help the widespread misunderstanding of mental illness, especially rare illnesses like this one. Both movies featured some form of stigmatizing behaviour or denigration upon the character who has DID, that is usually seen in the real life of patients with mental health issues. Relating to the DID patient or any of his or her alternative states, characters suffering DID were called “monstrous,” “unstable,” “crazy,” and “freak,” among other terms that are demeaning. In *Split*, Kevin was subjected to insults and some stigmatizing language. Additionally, stigmatization can lead to exclusion, discrimination, and patients whom put off getting help out of concern for rejection.

Both movies employed violence to depict the illness. This is the most frequent critique of the disorder in movies. Here, violence is employed to enhance the movie experience. Patients who truly have DID feel prejudiced against when they learn that most other people know about the illness from media and movies. Everyone has this suppressed discontent against the foundation of our consumerist society, even though few will go as far as to create a separate identity to combat it, hence the movie *Fight Club* utilizes DID as a hyperbole or metaphor. In this regard, DID wasn’t represented negatively in the movie; rather than being a disorder, it was seen as a blessing.

The media’s repeated misrepresentations and dismissals of DID are the cause of the controversy and opposition the movies have encountered. The fact that this disorder is misunderstood and that DID is not recognized in the public and medical worlds leads to inadequate training and research is a key point stated by many of the film critics. The distressing signs and symptoms of a mental disease must be resolved by all DID patients. The fact that society does not acknowledge their mental condition worsens this challenge. The depiction of DID as a real condition requiring proper care is therefore a more pertinent and important problem. The doubt surrounding the diagnostic validity of DID is a significant topic that the movie touches on and may help to relieve. The past and present of the illness have both generated controversies. Some researchers argue that the majority of diagnoses of DID are made after implicit hypnotic suggestions by a few psychiatrists (Frankel, 1990; Ganaway, 1995; McHugh, 1995). They argue and depict DID to the public as an iatrogenic disorder, an illness caused by medical examination, instead of a traumagenic disorder, an illness caused by

traumatic events. Others argue that DID is not a disorder at all. Contemporary researchers have concluded that the disorder is an epiphenomenon of borderline personality disorder (Lauer, Black, & Keen, 1993). These contradictory assertions about the disorder call into question whether DID is an actual medical condition. Because of this, practitioners are frequently hesitant to diagnose DID, and other professions lack adequate training in how to treat DID. Unfortunately, the way DID has been portrayed in the past in movies and other forms of media hasn't made this urgent problem disappear completely.

Furthermore, Dr. Karen Fletcher, Kevin's therapist in *Split*, takes on a much more clear role in promoting DID awareness. Despite playing the tired part of a deception in the serial killer's plan, Dr. Fletcher interacts with DID in a way that goes above and beyond what is required for a thriller to be suspenseful or profitable. This addition to the movie draws attention to DID's lack of widespread acceptance and diagnostic validity. Dr. Fletcher and her colleague's converse in the movie exemplifies the lack of knowledge and conviction among mental health specialists. The colleague questions DID's genuineness. However, Dr. Fletcher tells her colleague that DID is a unique disorder all on its own. Dr. Fletcher is committed to helping the DID community and ensuring that they may get her care. When she tells Kevin that some of her former patients were imprisoned rather than receiving further treatment, she encounters strong opposition from the industry and the government. Dr. Fletcher nevertheless sets out on a quest to speak for individuals who are afflicted by this condition and encourage further study. She is seen discussing the existence of the illness as well as the psychobiological variations in various identities in front of an audience of psychology professionals at a conference. Although the bodily disparities between identities that she describes that the movie portrays are somewhat overstated, the idea that many identities can display various biological traits deserves consideration something that is also desperately required in the world outside of *Split*.

Split acknowledges the controversy concerning DID while validating it. The need for validating the disease is essential since financing for evaluation and treatment of the disorder as well as for research is made possible by a formal diagnosis. A greater burden than the condition itself is dealing with the delegitimization of their symptoms and diagnosis on the social and medical spheres. The identification of DID gives those who have it a sense of validity for both their present experiences and their prior trauma. It encourages people to seek therapy for what might otherwise be disregarded, especially for those who are affected by the disorder but are ignorant of the true ailment. However, it is misleading to assert that the bad stereotypes

the movie can spread are insignificant in comparison to its success in creating awareness of DID. *Split* should be held to the accepted norm of not harming DID sufferers, despite the fact that it is a horror movie and a thriller intended to entertain rather than to document. Some DID sufferers could, and do, feel that their identities are inaccurately portrayed as a result of the violent portrayal of Kevin's identity. However, it is crucial for viewers to be able to assess a work's qualities and faults as informed observers. Through the character of Dr. Fletcher's work in the area, *Split* not only develops a wide portrayal of DID but also emphasizes how little is known about the disease.

By exploring illness narratives in *Split* and *Fight Club*, we are reminded of the importance of compassion, understanding, and support for individuals facing mental health challenges. The mind can be a dark and terrifying place. The only thing scarier than the paths our thoughts travel is the uncertainty of what could be going through someone else's head. These movies advocate for a more compassionate approach to mental health, supporting open communication and the de-stigmatization of mental illnesses in order to promote a happier, healthier society. These movies serve as a sad reminder that someone's mental condition can significantly affect how they perceive the world and behave. The human mind is still a complicated and intriguing puzzle, and they are a witness to this. We are able to make the world more accepting and supportive for people coping with the complexities of mental illness through empathy, education, and acceptance.

References

Cleveland Clinic. Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder), 20

April, 2016, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9792-dissociative-Identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder>

Fight Club. Dir. David Fincher. Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, Helena Bonham Carter.

Twentieth Century Studios, 15 October, 1999.

Guida, John. "How Movies Can Change Our Minds." The New York Times, 04 Feb.2015,

<https://archive.nytimes.com/op-talk.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/how-Movies-can-change-our-minds/>

Split. Dir. M. Night Shyamalan. James McAvoy, Anya Taylor Joy, Betty Buckley.

Universal Pictures, 24 February, 2017.

Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Choi, A., Pieper, K., & Moutier, C. "Mental Health

Conditions in Film & TV : Portrayals that Dehumanize and Trivialize Characters, 2019,

http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docsaii-study-mental-health-media_052019.pdf

Exploring Postcolonial Feminist Identity: Analysis of Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams*

Ms. Rafsina Sherin

M A English(2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College

&

Dr. Shahina Mol A. K.

Assistant Professor and Head,

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

The intersections of gender, race, caste, class, diaspora etc., are well addressed in the postcolonial feminist discourses apart from the first and second wave Anglo American feminist theories. It is true that the visibility of heterogenous third world women and gendered identities in literary and cultural discourses is a result of post -colonial feminist theorizations than the existing first or second wave women's movements. South Asian Women writers bring out the diasporic women characters into the discursive realm giving more platforms for the portrayal of their selves than the creation of binaries as white and black with a westernized eye. This paper explores the re- inscription of post migrant diasporic female identity in the fictional space through the analysis of Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams*.

Keywords: Postcolonial feminist discourse, South Asian women writers, postcolonial female identity, post migrant women identity

Postcolonial feminism, as a critical framework, unveils the intricate intersections of colonialism, race, gender, and diaspora. Postcolonial feminism criticises second wave Anglo-American feminist theory, which predominantly focuses on the experiences of white middle-class women, for generalizing women's issues globally. It asks for the incorporation of racial disparities in the mainstream feminist discourses and contests the idea of a universal sisterhood. Instead of dismissing or homogenising women's diversity, this strategy places a strong emphasis on their value. Postcolonial feminism also concerns how Western feminists portray third-world women as a single, homogeneous group. The reductionism which ignores the

ethnic, cultural, and historical distinctions among women from various places is criticized by post-colonial feminists. It attempts to confront and demolish the repressive institutions, that uphold the marginalisation of third world women, by revealing the colonising mission of white feminists.

Additionally, postcolonial feminism investigates the connection between diaspora and postcolonial studies. Destabilising the idea of Western culture's primacy, it looks at the exchanges of economic and intellectual property between the first and third cultures. Postcolonial feminism further undermines the notion of universality in the context of the diaspora by highlighting the diversity of race, culture, and women agencies. Postcolonial feminism recognises the effects of colonialism on the social, cultural, and economic reality of South Asian women and illuminates the historical context of their lives. It critically investigates the ways in which colonial forces upheld patriarchal norms and sustained oppressive institutions.

This analysis is crucial in understanding the ways in which South Asian women's identities have been constructed and constrained by external forces. In postcolonialism, themes of cultural displacement, hybridity, and the enduring consequences of colonial power structures are all addressed as they relate to the repercussions of colonialism and imperialism on colonised cultures. In the wake of colonial rule, Divakaruni examines the experiences of South Asian women characters as they negotiate the intricacies of identity creation and cultural hybridity. Her writings illuminate the ways in which colonial legacies shape both individual and group identities and the difficulties that the characters encounter in balancing many cultural influences.

The impact of colonialism on South Asian women's lives is highlighted by postcolonial feminism, which acknowledges how colonial rule imposed patriarchal standards and stifled women's agency. The writings of Chitra Banerjee critically connects with this tradition by highlighting South Asian women's hardships and resistance to repressive power structures. Through her stories, she contests the prevalent cultural myths and present alternate viewpoints that give marginalised women a voice.

In this study, the focus is given to the female character from the novel *Queen of Dreams* using postcolonial feminist perspective to understand how South Asian women identities are formed within the context of diaspora. The mirroring of Postcolonial Feminism in Rakhi of *Queen of Dreams* is explored in this study which employs postcolonial feminism in a particular

way in order to analyse the character of a second generation Indian woman born in the United States.

The fourth book by Divakaruni, *Queen of Dreams* (2004), centres on Rakhi, an American-born Indian woman who battles with both her unknowable Indian ancestry and the people in her life. Another significant theme in the book that calls into question the citizenship of Rakhi and her family as well as their rights in the United States is, the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001.

In an interview with Luan Gaines, a contributory reviewer to the online review site *Curled Up with a Good Book*, Divakaruni explains Rakhi's bafflement about her identity by noting that: "Rakhi's parents have been typical in not telling her much about India—which causes her hunger for it. India becomes looming and mythical in her imagination. In some ways she has been denied her heritage, she longs to recreate it for herself" (Gaines). Rakhi Gupta, who was born and raised in the United States, has a romanticised perception of the native country of her parents. Rakhi's parents, unlike other immigrant parents, are not eager to impart Indian culture to their daughter, as Divakaruni notes. Rakhi, however, is eager to understand and absorb the local culture that had escaped from her her due to her parents' reluctance, unlike usual second-generation immigrant children. Rakhi's character can be evaluated in the light of postcolonial feminism because it makes it clear that she faces difficulties in her diasporic life as a result of her prior experiences. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park assert in their essay "*Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism*" that "postcolonial feminism is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights" (Rajan and Park 53). Postcolonial feminism is therefore not just limited to colonial backgrounds. It rather spans a wide range of topics, including gender, nation, class, race, sexualities, and the various situations that women find themselves in.

Rakhi's parents were often reserved when it came to India when interacting with their developing daughter, but the mother nevertheless maintained numerous cultural customs in the home, such as donning saris and making Indian food. According to Rakhi's recollection of such events, "at home we rarely ate anything but Indian; that was the one way in which my mother kept her culture" (Divakaruni 7). She also recalls her father humming Hindi tunes in the kitchen as he did the dishes. Undoubtedly, Rakhi is connected to her history subliminally because of the traditional environment at home. Later, she decides to use Indian motifs for her paintings, including temples, cityscapes, women shopping, and bus drivers having lunch. Rakhi used to prepare lavish Indian dishes while she was still married to Sonny, including "appetisers, rotis,

rolled out fresh, rich curries in almond sauce, and traditional Indian desserts that required hours of culinary acrobatics" (Divakaruni 12). The most notable indication of her Indianness is the name of the restaurant they opened together, "Chai House," which she and her companion Belle (whose full name is Balwant Kaur) chose. The opening of "The Java Chain", a franchise of one of America's fastest-growing café chains, poses a danger to the viability of this restaurant's operation. In a symbolic sense, this coffee shop replaces Rakhi's Chai House. Rakhi's shop struggles to keep customers in the face of its energetic presence. The Chai House figuratively symbolised Rakhi's own disjointed identity, making this a crucial development in her development.

Mrs. Gupta, mother of Rakhi, possesses a unique ability to read dreams and reveal realities about the lives of others. She is a remarkable woman with exceptional intelligence and knowledge. Mrs. Gupta offers advice to Rakhi and Belle when they ask for assistance with their failing company, but her advice also applies to the Chai House.

The reason you don't have enough power to fight that woman there is that she knows exactly who she is, and you don't. This isn't a real cha shop'—she pronounces the word in the Bengali way 'but a mishmash, a Westerner's notion of what's Indian. Maybe that's the problem. Maybe if you can make it into something authentic. You'll survive. (Divakaruni 89).

Rakhi treasures a Westerner's conception of what is Indian, a constructed notion that shapes who she is because she was never able to learn about India personally from her parents, especially from her mother. She does not and cannot conceal her Indian ancestry, despite being an Indian-American of second generation born in California. Rakhi's identity development is inextricably related to her past; without achieving authenticity herself, just like the Chai House, she is unable to develop a coherent self.

Indian parentage has self-contradictory implication on Rakhi. For instance, her desire to understand more about the secrets of the unknown homeland haunts her. In fact, she finds India as a location of great mystery and romance because of her inability to learn about it. Rakhi acquired a tape from the college's South Asian library when she was a student that was packed with songs about the Bengal monsoon. Her father demoralised her when she questioned her parents about the veracity of the Bengal monsoon beauty depicted in the songs by telling her that Calcutta city flooded with every rainstorm and cholera deaths occurred during the rainy season. However, this information failed to daunt Rakhi in the end since she thought: "...But I was not fooled. They were hiding things from me, beautiful, mysterious, important things, as

they always had” (Divakaruni 82). Belle thinks she's crazy since she wants to learn Bengali, and her parents are against her repeated attempts to travel to India. But before she passes away, Rakhi promises to travel to India, "if only to lay to rest the ghosts that dance in my head like will-o'-the-wisps over a rippling sea" (Divakaruni 83).

Both Rakhi's husband and best friend are of Indian descent, despite having been acclimated to the host country, which highlights how difficult it is for Rakhi to reconcile her American present with her Indian past. Rakhi's attire at a significant life event, such as the opening of her paintings at the Atelier, serves as a constant reminder of the cultural transition she is through.

So here I am, dressed in a black sheath of a gown with a slit up the side of one leg and spaghetti straps that live up to their name....The one thing in the ensemble that's mine is a gauzy Indian black-and-silver scarf Belle found in the back of my closet.

‘Perfect,’ she’d crooned, arranging it around my shoulders. ‘Just the right fusion of East and West!’ (Divakaruni 93)

Rakhi has an intense internal pull from both her little-known ancestry and the present, much like the fusion symbolised by her attire. The multifaceted character of Rakhi must be studied in the cultural milieu she has built around her. For a better understanding of women of the Global South, Rajan and Park stress the significance of race, class, nationality, religion, and sexuality that "intersect with gender, and the hierarchies, epistemic as well as political, social, and economic, that exist among women" (Rajan and Park 54). According to these critics, postcolonial feminists reject the notion of the universal woman, much like other US women of colour, but they do not support the reification “of the Third World "diversity" that produces the "monolithic" Third World woman" (Rajan and Park 54). In particular, Rakhi's situation is affected by Rajan and Park's observation because Rakhi has a multifaceted personality that avoids labels like "universal" or "monolithic" and encourages examination based on her unique subject position as a woman of colour who is American-Indian. It's fascinating to note that Rakhi desires to pass into the Pacific in Northern California after she dies, despite her romanticised perception of India and her desire to visit it one day. She ruminates on the issue thus, “if I died, I, too, would want my remains to become part of this land, this water, because there's a way in which the geography of one's childhood makes its way into one's bones” (Divakaruni 133,134). The identity of Rakhi is distinct due to the inherent contradiction she possesses and her desire to embrace both the known present and the unknowable past. It's not like a white American's or like her parents, who are first-generation immigrants. Even Belle, who does not fantasise about India the way Rakhi does, cannot compare to her. To use a term

from Rajan and Park, her behaviour can be categorised as "transnational feminism". Transnational feminism, they claim, shares "major concerns, subject matter, theoretical interests, and political agendas with what is commonly understood to be postcolonial feminism even though it does not explicitly deal with colonialism; it is, however, centrally engaged with its successor, neocolonialism" (Rajan and Park 57).

The challenge Rakhi's Chai House is unable to stave off later comes from the Java Chain Coffee shop, a neocolonial agent. The treatment Rakhi and her family receive from some Americans following 9/11, which occurs later in the story, also serves to remind the reader of the neocolonial racial conflicts that existed in that traumatised diasporic American territory.

Rakhi's mother Mrs. Gupta claims that Rakhi's Chai House lacked credibility. According to the story, when Rakhi's father takes over and gives the company both an Indian and an international feel, sales improves. It's fascinating to see how Rakhi changes through time, much like the way the restaurant's image changes. In her interview with Luan Gaines, Divakaruni describes Rakhi's transformation as follows: "She needs to stop blaming others, first of all. She needs to find her "voice" as an artist. She needs to learn to feel OK about unsolved mysteries. She needs to forgive and trust again. I think she learns all of these, to some extent, as the book goes along" (Divakaruni 12).

Rakhi undergoes a life-altering event as a result of the terrible tragedy of 9/11, which was brought on by the destruction of the World Trade Centre by terrorists. Rakhi refuses to fly an American flag when they reopen their restaurant following the attack, claiming that she does not want to demonstrate her support for the country under duress. Soon after it reopens, some American guys attack the establishment and severely hurt Jespal and Sonny. Afterwards, Rakhi ruminates that when one of the men had said "You ain't no American". She had attempted to dismiss him by referring him "a racist idiot". However, she asks herself "but if I wasn't an American, then what was I?" (Divakaruni 271). Her sense of belonging, which she once possessed, seems to have slipped away. Over the following few days, she receives emails sent by Indian organisations, which makes her already uneasy feeling about her identity even more intense. She is unsure whether to pray to an American or Indian deity and feels like a visitor in America, her birth nation, when sympathetic Americans welcome her presence in their community.

Rakhi's journey of self-discovery and the difficulties she has in discovering her genuine self are explored in the book. Her mother, who has the ability to see facts in dreams, provides a crucial perspective. She counsels Rakhi that because she doesn't fully grasp her own identity, she lacks the ability to resist external demands. This is in line with the postcolonial feminist

viewpoint of accepting and embracing one's true self. Rakhi's artistic endeavours also play a role in her transformation. She is a skilled painter who has opened a restaurant named "Chai House" that honours Indian culture through cuisine and art. This creative outlet allows Rakhi to express herself and connect with her history on a deeper level.

The Chai House represents transformation of Rakhi. She goes through a process of blending her cultural influences and personal experiences to establish her own identity, just like the Chai House blends different flavours and ingredients to produce a unique experience. Journey of Rakhi becomes embodied with the restaurant, which combines her Indian roots with her American upbringing. Rakhi employs the Chai House as a forum to combat prejudice against South Asian women. She challenges stereotypes that restrict South Asian women to particular roles or identities through her culinary powers and artistic expressions. The patriarchal narratives that minimise women's contributions is challenged by Rakhi's success in running the Chai House, which also supports the notion that women may achieve success in a variety of fields outside of domesticity. Rakhi acquires a sense of empowerment and autonomy through the Chai House. She takes control of her own destiny by starting and running her own business. As she navigates the trials and triumphs of running the restaurant, she gains renewed confidence. Participation of Rakhi in the Chai House allows her to assert her independence, make decisions, and establish herself as a self-sufficient individual capable of attaining her goals. The Chai House becomes a meeting place for people of many backgrounds, fostering a sense of community. People from many backgrounds and cultures gather to enjoy the food, atmosphere, and cultural experiences that Rakhi offers. Rakhi can make connections, learn from others, and broaden her views in this social setting. It gives her a platform to celebrate diversity and combat stereotypes about cultural identity. Rakhi uses the Chai House to immerse herself in her Indian background. She introduces the neighbourhood to the flavours, fragrances, and traditions of Indian cuisine through her restaurant. This endeavour helps Rakhi to reconnect with her ethnic roots and share them with others. It strengthens her feeling of identity and her understanding of her Indian ancestry. Postcolonial feminism opposes the homogeneity of traditional feminist theories and promotes anti-racist tactics that take into account the variety of women's experiences.

Rakhi's ethnic identity and her battles with race, nation, class, and sexuality provide as an example of how postcolonial feminist rhetoric is intersectional. The idea of a shared universal female experience is contested by postcolonial feminism, which emphasises the value of recognising and appreciating individual female distinctions. Rakhi's encounters with mainstream American society as a South Asian woman are consistent with postcolonial

feminism. She negotiates racial, national, social class, and gender difficulties, which influence her subjectivity and identity. Rakhi, as portrayed by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, is a prime example of the difficulties South Asian women encounter when negotiating their identities and the complexities of their lives. The character's development reflects the need for cultural identity and cultural relocation in a transnational scenario, the conflict between tradition and modernity in a post-colonial world order, and the new ways of looking at gendered identity in the South Asian Women characterisations. Through the portrayal of Rakhi, the novel pictures how the socio cultural and historical orientations are valid in understanding the struggles of formation of an identity in the host country especially among migrants.

References

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. Interview. By Luan Gaines. Review of Books, *Curled up with a good book*. 11 May 2016.

<https://www.curledup.com/intchit.htm>

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *Queen of Dreams*. Abacus, 2005.

Rajan, Rajeswary Sunder and You-me Park. "Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism." A Companion to Postcolonial Studies, *Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies*. Edited by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000, pp. 53-71.

Power Dynamics and Personal Autonomy in Kamila Shamsie's

Home Fire

Ms. Rishana T

M A English (2021-23)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

&

Mr. Sidhique P.

Assistant Professor of English

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

Contradiction between the state and individual is a recurring theme in literature. This dichotomy explores the complicated interplay between the needs and desires of the individual and the demands and control imposed by the state or society. This article attempts to make a cautious study of the tension between state and individual in the novel *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie. The tension takes centre stage as the characters navigate the complex web of state control, societal expectations, and personal desires. The work explores the tremendous struggles faced by individuals as they wrestle with their identities, confront the consequences of their decisions, and try to maintain a sense of autonomy while operating under the restrictions set by the government. This paper aims to critically analyse and contrast the portrayal of the state versus individual conflict in Kamila Shamsie's highly political novel *Home Fire*, shedding light on the ways in which the characters negotiate their personal agency, cultural identities, and allegiances within the framework of societal norms. The paper wraps up by analysing strategies adopted by the author to make it suitable to address the issues of diasporic journey of the Muslim community from Pakistan in the backdrop of Islamophobia

Keywords: Diaspora, Islamophobia, Individual autonomy, Power structure

Kamila Shamsie is one of the new wave Pakistani writers who is based in Britain and successful in both Pakistan and the West. Her first novel titled *In the City by the Sea* (1998) and other works include *Salt and Saffron* (2000), *Kartography*(2002), *Broken Verses*(2005), *Offence: the Muslim Case* (2009), *Burnt Shadows*(2009), *A God in Every Stone* (2014) and *Home Fire* (2017), which won the Women's Prize for fiction 2018, and was long-listed for

the Man Booker Prize 2017. Her novel has been shortlisted for the DSC Prize of South Asian Literature 2018. Kamila received many awards including Prime Minister's Award for Literature in Pakistan, Anisfield - Wolf Book Award and Women's Prize for Fiction. The novel *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie is an engrossing examination of the intricate interactions between the state and personal identity.

The novel analyses the struggles, tensions, and sacrifices people make in their pursuit of cultural, personal, and political identity in the face of governmental scrutiny via the lives of its protagonists. Shamsie explores the complex experiences and difficulties faced by those living in diaspora who battle with cultural integration, competing loyalties, and the search for a feeling of belonging through the narrative of a British Muslim family. The conflict between one's own identity and the needs of the state has gained prominence in today's society. By separating the intricate web of tensions and sacrifices that develop from it, Shamsie deftly investigates it. Shamsie vividly describes the lives of her characters through her poignant storytelling, shedding light on the challenges they encounter as they battle the state's invasive power and their search for personal and cultural identity. By focusing on the experiences of those caught between the competing demands of their own aspirations and the scrutiny imposed by the state, *Home Fire* takes readers on a trip through the lives of the British Muslim family. Shamsie deconstructs the complicated webs that connect identity and state control with great writing and incredible human characters, prompting readers to consider the fundamental nature of who we are and how much influence we actually have over our own lives. Shamsie vividly depicts the challenges that diasporic cultures encounter when assimilating into Western culture.

In *Home Fire*, the main characters struggle with the pressure to fit in with the mainstream culture while yet honouring their roots. The primary character, Aneeka, for example, enjoys her British identity while maintaining ties to her Pakistani heritage and navigating the difficulties between the two. Shamsie draws attention to the challenges diasporic people confront in balancing their need for individual autonomy with cultural norms. The character also reflects the competing loyalties that result from living in a diaspora. When Parvaiz, Aneeka's twin brother, gets involved with ISIS, a significant dispute arises. Parvaiz's trip is a reflection of the conflict several Diaspora's experience as they try to uphold both their adoptive country and their ancestral roots. Though sometimes it seemed like she lived in a time capsule, "her past was never too far away—half in the world of her mother's memories, half in the world of her own unspoken experiences" (Page 9). Isma, one

of the main characters, struggles with her dual identity as a British-Pakistani, split by her mother's recollections of their native country and her own experiences growing up in Britain. This quote captures her battle with this dual identity. Offering a sophisticated analysis, Shamsie investigates the internal conflict faced by the diaspora, whether loyalty should be determined by geography, family, or personal views.

The central theme of *Home Fire* is the search for identity and a sense of belonging. The book digs at the struggles of those who have multiple identities or hybrid selves and must balance competing loyalties. Isma and Aneeka, who were born in Pakistan but were reared in Britain, struggle with their multiple identities the entire time. Isma, for example, struggles to define her own identity as a British citizen while grappling with the weight of her family's history and her Pakistani heritage. Isma expressed this internal tension by saying, "I am the sister of a terrorist... but the twin of a man who died ashamed of his homeland." Shamsie depicts the conflict and difficulty that come with balancing multiple identities under a system that is governed by the state. The eldest sister, Isma, represents the internal conflict experienced by diasporic people who feel torn between various cultural identities. She struggles with balancing her need for individual freedom with her duty to her family and cultural heritage. Shamsie questions the idea of what it means to belong, posing questions about accepted ideas of identity and illuminating the ongoing challenges encountered by people who live in diaspora. The work also depicts the sacrifices made by CT citizens in the name of national identity. Aneeka's twin brother Parvaiz joins ISIS after succumbing to extremism's attraction. Parvaiz's decision reflects the internal struggle faced by individuals torn between their personal desires and the pressure to conform to a singular national identity. As Parvaiz reflects on his decision, he states, "I thought it was love for my family, love for my sister, but love is also something they manipulate"(42). This quote emphasizes the conflict between individual identity and the narratives imposed by the state:

Isma looked at her reflection in the mirror, hair 'texturised' into 'beachy waves' as Mona of Persepolis Hair in Wembley had promised when she recommended a product that could counter frizzy, flyaway hair without attaining the miracle of straightening it. Her hair said 'playful' and 'surprising'. Or it would if it didn't come attached to her face. She opened the drawer in which she kept her turbans and headscarves, closed it, looked in the mirror once more, opened it again. (Shamsie 45)

According to the quotation above, Isma switches from "texturized/frizzy" to "beachy waves" in her hairstyle. The word "beachy waves" itself alludes to a modern woman's hairdo in the

West. Additionally, the poem emphasizes Isma's self-assurance by personifying her hair, which "said 'playful' and 'surprising'". Shamsie dismantles barriers between becoming a modern lady who considers how to treat her hair and maintains traditional values at the same time by demonstrating the rationale between two contrast traits above. In addition to this characteristic, Isma's family's use of English in daily activities reveals a hybrid type of Muslim Pakistani descents' identities. Isma, her brother, and her sister can converse in English with ease in both public and private settings, but they also maintain their Pakistani identity by using Urdu to express their innermost feelings in ways that are difficult to translate, such as when Isma refers to Eamonn as "bay-takalufi" (29).

The characters have been forced to respond differently under various circumstances by the surroundings. The best performances occupy the space between the artist and the audience. They are discovered assuming new identities and denying who they truly are in an effort to establish who they are as the greatest and acceptable. They must assume many personalities (masks) in order to be accepted by society. Everyone is giving a face-off performance. Their bodily roles are shifting, and because their true selves are hidden under many personalities, nobody knows where they are. They are playing their roles on stage in front of the chosen audience. Their appearances are displayed based on the audience's level of interest. The demands of their audience are being met by their talking, walking, and other actions. Because everyone is aware of their requirements, it is virtually difficult to explore their identities. They are aware of what to showcase publicly and what to conceal. They are aware that the audience does not care about what they do backstage.

The novel highlights the widespread prejudice and discrimination experienced by diasporic communities, especially those with South Asian ancestry. Important issues including racial profiling, government spying, and the loss of civil freedoms are raised in the book. *Home Fire's* characters deal with a variety of forms of prejudice, illustrating the conflicts that exist between the protection of individual rights and national security considerations. Shamsie's portrayal puts light on marginalised populations' struggles and the effects of xenophobia on diasporic people's daily lives. Islamophobia is one of the main types of bigotry that the book highlights. Due of their Muslim beliefs, the characters in *Home Fire* frequently encounter skepticism and hatred. The protagonist of the story is Isma, a young woman who endures continual scrutiny and prejudice due of her religious upbringing. Isma has trouble traveling because she is subjected to extra security screenings and profiling at airports because she identifies as a Muslim. It is understandable to anticipate such a time-

consuming and humiliating "interrogation on Heathrow Airport, London awaiting Ismaili while she is leaving for America"(3) given the familial history of a terrorist father and brother. However, Aneeka, who was "spitting on the hijab" (90), pointed out the accomplishments of British Muslims to Eamonn:

Do you say, why didn't you mention that among the things this country will you achieve if you're Muslim is torture, rendition, detention without trying, airport interrogation, and spies in your mosques, teachers reporting your children to the authorities for wanting a world without British injustice? (Shamsie 90-91)

These incidents serve to emphasize the prejudices and preconceptions that Muslims encounter in Western societies. The experiences of characters who have either been radicalized or are thought to have ties to extremist ideas are also explored in *Home Fire*. This portrayal captures the discrimination that diasporic cultures experience since they are frequently wrongly linked to terrorism due to their race or religion. The novel depicts the effects of such prejudice on the lives of the characters, who are subject to continual inspection and live in constant fear of being branded as risks to public safety.

The novel also sheds light on the role of politics in perpetuating prejudice and discrimination against diasporic communities. The story explores the experiences of a British Muslim family of Pakistani origin, highlighting the challenges they face due to their religious and cultural identity. The characters experience the repercussions of government policies and anti-immigrant sentiments, which further marginalize and isolate them. They are confronted with biased immigration laws, racial profiling, and surveillance, all of which exacerbate their struggles for acceptance and belonging. Through the representation of national security concerns and the ensuing measures, politics in the book frequently serves to reinforce prejudice and discrimination. The role of Karamat Lone, a prominent British Muslim politician with Pakistani ancestry, symbolises the government's effort to combat terrorism.

Karamat's claim to be the British Home Secretary is also tenuous, like Creon's in *Antigone*. Despite all of his integrationist efforts, he is not white, and the British Muslim diaspora, the ethnic and religious group to which he belongs, does not support his political position. In order to support his claim to British politics, British public office, and British nationality as well, it is only natural for him to behave as a steadfast believer in British nationhood and unshakable obedience of the state rules. He lacks any ambivalence and is a mimic man. His wealthy Irish-American wife Teresa O' Flynn, who goes by Terry, his older

son, Ayman, whose Muslim name is spelled as "Eamonn" in Irish, and his daughter, Emily, are signs of his Westernization. Since they "voted him out in the elections," Karmath Lone runs for office from a safe seat with a predominately white population. This is due to his compulsive "Westoxification," as described by Stierstorfer (35). He is called a "sellout, coconut, opportunist, traitor" by the British Muslim community because he is allegedly an atheist with a strong stomach for expensive wines, and Isma calls him "Mr. British Values," "Mr. Strong on Security," and "Mr. Striding Away from Muslimness" (52). His notion of national identification is wholly in line with the white British since he is so enamoured and obsessed with white British values. His method is thought to support bias and discrimination against the diasporic group, nevertheless. He favours divisive measures that disproportionately harm Muslims and increase the perception that they are regarded as second-class citizens, such as withdrawing citizenship from those who are accused of involvement in terrorism.

The book focuses on the role political discourse plays in the marginalisation and stigmatisation of the diasporic population. The fictional Karamat Lone, a British Home Secretary of Pakistani descent, takes advantage of his ethnicity to advance his political career. He takes a tough line on immigration and counterterrorism, playing on public fear and prejudice. All British Muslims, according to Karamat's rhetoric, are potential terrorists, creating a hostile environment for the diasporic population. According to Shamsie, "Karamat Lone [...] whose jingoistic bile against anyone who disagreed with him was a stream of consciousness in their sitting room"(57). This quotation serves as an example of how politicians use prejudice to achieve their own agendas and worsen the injustice encountered by people of diaspora. Karmath Lone is therefore just as anti-Muslim as the white British are. He is actually more British than the white British people themselves since he has been so heavily "Westoxified."

In addition, Karamat Lone must "prove he's one of them (white British), not one of us (British Muslims)" (34), according to Aneeka, in order to deal with the new phenomenon of a rising trend among young Muslim British people to join terrorist organisations. This is their way of protesting white Islamophobia in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the 7/7 bombings. As Karamat Lone handled the Adil Pasha situation when he was an MP, he handles the Parvaiz Pasha matter in a same ruthless manner now that he is the British Home Secretary. Since assuming the position of Home Secretary, he has stripped all dual citizens who left the country to join "enemies" of their citizenship (188). Theresa May, the former

British Home Secretary (2010–2016) and current British Premier (as of 2016), serves as the inspiration for Shamsie's caricature of Karamat Lone. Her anti-immigration and anti-terrorist legislation is given a mirror image by the laws enacted by the made-up Karamat Lone. Shamsie, through her fictive imaginary, seems to make a political statement on these laws, timely enough, as they at times lack compassion and forgiveness. She further complicates the situation by imagining a Muslim Home Secretary in Britain, which, in her fictional portrayal of Karamat Lone, she claims is only feasible and attainable when such a person is completely blinded by Western culture, losing all memory of his true ancestry and religious affiliation. As illustrated by the hypothetical desertions of Muslim British youth like Farooq and Parvaiz Pasha to join the fundamentalists and terrorists, Shamsie criticizes such 'Westoxification' because it will not only be Islamophobic but also attract a more fundamentalist response, lethal enough, to further rip apart the multicultural fabric of British society. While it is troublesome to tell Muslims that they cannot freely practice their religion, there is merit to integration into the society in which they live. The removal of British citizenship from dual nationals who act against British interests is Karmat's most contentious policy. This action just overlooks the issue by retroactively labelling some young British Muslims as being outside of British society, rather than addressing the reasons why they feel cut off from the greater population. The political atmosphere in the book also reflects the wider social divisions and conflicts between various populations. Due to their Muslim identities, the characters in *Home Fire* experience prejudice and animosity, which is made worse by the rising Islamophobia and populist politics. Diasporic populations find it challenging to completely integrate and engage in society without running afoul of mistrust and prejudice due to the politics of fear and division. It underscores the need for comprehension, empathy, and inclusive policies to fight prejudice and discrimination by highlighting the negative effects of these political processes on marginalised communities. In *Home Fire*, the topic of discrimination towards the diasporic community is explored in detail. The government can exacerbate prejudice against communities of colour through enacting immigration laws, national security measures, cultural assimilation efforts, job discrimination, and housing policies. Innocent Muslims are frequently profiled and monitored as a result of the Prevent plan, which was put in place to combat radicalisation. Immigration laws that target particular diasporic communities might lead to discrimination. Governments may enact stringent immigration regulations or give priority to some nationalities over others, limiting the options available to members of diasporic

communities to reunite with their relatives, find work, or find sanctuary. Such regulations might reinforce marginalisation and exclusion. Moreover, in response to global dangers, governments frequently enact security measures, but these policies may unfairly target diasporic people and result in prejudice. Communities from particular areas, or belonging to particular religious or racial origins, may be the target of enhanced racial profiling, higher scrutiny, or increased monitoring at borders, airports, or in public areas. This might encourage a climate of dread and mistrust.

Diasporic populations may also be disproportionately impacted by policies or practices that fail to address job discrimination. People from these communities may not be able to fully participate in the workforce or advance in their jobs due to limited access to job opportunities, unequal compensation, glass ceilings, and discriminatory hiring practices, which perpetuates systemic discrimination. Above all, discriminatory tactics by real estate brokers or landlords, a lack of cheap housing options, and exclusive zoning rules can exacerbate spatial inequality and impede the social integration of communities of colour. It's critical to keep in mind that, depending on the nation, area, and particular historical and political situations, the degree and kind of discrimination against diasporic people can vary significantly. While analysing the book, one can identify the key factors that contribute to the discrimination. The effects of such measures are felt by Aneeka and Isma when her brother Parvaiz is persuaded to join a jihadist organization. Aneeka is forced to face the systemic unfairness by the actions of the British government. In the words of Shamsie, "She had tried to talk to people in authority about what was happening, her brother's story and her own; she had tried to reason with them about the violence they were perpetrating; she had pleaded, wept, and shouted" (149). This text emphasizes the difficulties experienced by people like Aneeka, whose cries for justice are answered with hostility or indifference because of the discriminatory laws in place.

The media has a major impact on maintaining bias against the diasporic group. Muslims, especially those of Pakistani descent, are frequently portrayed negatively in the media, which feeds preconceptions and discrimination against the diasporic population. Shamsie draws attention to how political discourse and media coverage feed mistrust and distrust, alienating and marginalizing Muslims in British society by depicting them as terrorists or risks to the security of the country. The media is portrayed in the book as biased and sensationalist, having a propensity to favour dramatic stories above accurate reporting. Instead of presenting members of the diasporic community as unique people with a variety

of experiences and viewpoints, the media tends to focus on the sensational parts of their lives, such as their claimed affiliations with terrorism. It also demonstrates how politicians can use the media to further their own objectives. Politicians exploit media outlets to sow division and terror throughout society, using the diaspora as a convenient scapegoat to increase their hold on political power. This deception also legitimises prejudice towards the diasporic group and maintains a hostile environment. In addition, the media's representation of the diasporic community lacks context and complexity, simplifying complex problems. The media fails to confront prejudiced views and perpetuates stereotypes by oversimplifying the experiences and motivations of diasporic characters. It is abundantly obvious that the sensationalised and biased reporting of the media affects public opinion and adds to the stigmatisation of the diasporic group. It frequently focuses on the characters' negative traits, connecting them to terrorism or portraying them as security risks. As a result, the diasporic group is constantly subjected to prejudice, discrimination, and the need to demonstrate their allegiance, which reinforces its marginalisation and othering.

The portrayal of Parvaiz, an ISIS recruit, in the book is one instance of media bigotry. By portraying Parvaiz as a terrorist and ignoring the complexities of his personal journey and the sociopolitical reasons that influenced his decisions, the media's depiction of his biography strengthens the narrative of radicalisation. The way Parvaiz is portrayed in the media not only reinforces prejudice against him but also denigrates the entire diaspora. Another example is how Karamat Lone, the British Home Secretary and a significant character in the book, was treated by the media. Despite holding a prominent position, Lone continuously comes under suspicion and vigilance because of his Pakistani heritage. Lone is the target of ongoing racial and religious prejudice in the media, which frequently casts doubt on his allegiance and moral character because of his ancestry. This representation illustrates the prejudiced lens through which the media views members of the diasporic community, feeding preconceptions and impeding their advancement on the social and political fronts. The book also looks at how the media shapes social narratives via the perspective of Isma, a sociology student:

If you look at colonial laws, you'll see plenty of precedent for depriving people of their rights; the only difference is this time it's applied to British citizens, and even that's not as much of a change as you might think, because they're rhetorically being made unBritish? Say more. 7/7 terrorists were never described by the media as 'British terrorists'. Even when the word 'British' was used it was always 'British

of Pakistani descent' or 'British Muslim' or, my favorite, British passport holders, always something interposed between their Britishness and terrorist. (38)

Isma is aware that how the media portrays the diasporic population affects public opinion and legislative choices. She understands the importance of narrative and uses it to challenge stereotypes by sharing personal experiences and stories that challenge them. Isma's initiatives emphasize the value of alternative narratives and the demand for a diverse range of perspectives in order to challenge the prejudiced media representations. Kamila Shamsie underlines the detrimental effect that media plays in upholding discrimination against the diasporic people through the representation of media in *Home Fire*. The book emphasizes the need for more nuanced and ethical media representation to dispel myths, advance knowledge, and build empathy for underrepresented groups. Overall, *Home Fire* emphasizes how preconceptions are reinforced through sensationalism, biased reporting, and media coverage of the diasporic population. The book by Kamila Shamsie highlights the need for more inclusive narratives to combat and demolish prejudice and raises awareness of the negative impacts of such media practices.

Through the experiences of Aneeka and Isma, the two main characters who manage the intricacies of their identities as women of Muslim ancestry living in the Western world, Shamsie explores the interconnectedness of gender and diaspora. It offers a detailed examination of the difficulties experienced by Muslim women in the diaspora as they negotiate social preconceptions, patriarchal structures, and cultural expectations. Shamsie defies traditional representations of Muslim women by showcasing them as multidimensional, autonomous individuals who exhibit fortitude and resilience in the face of adversity. The stories of Aneeka and Isma, siblings of Pakistani descent who were born in Britain, demonstrate the connection of gender and diaspora in a number of ways. First of all, they struggle with the conflict between their cultural background and the demands that Western society places on them as women. They struggle to strike a balance between their desire for personal independence and self-expression and their commitment to maintaining their Muslim identity and traditions, frequently in conflict with cultural norms and family expectations. Aneeka and Isma are Muslim women who are vulnerable to prejudices and preconceptions based on their faith and upbringing. They suffer gender discrimination, racial profiling, and Islamophobia, which combine to influence their experiences. They must negotiate the complicated landscape of identity politics while addressing sexism and racism at the same time.

Aneeka, a young British-Pakistani lady, represents how gender and diaspora connect in the book. In a society that frequently marginalizes both Muslims and women, she struggles with her cultural background and her identity as a woman. The difficulties faced by many Muslim women navigating their place in Western society while upholding their cultural and religious values are reflected in Aneeka's experiences. She continuously negotiates her identity, working to balance her Britishness with her Pakistani ancestry and dispelling myths and preconceptions about being a Muslim woman. The confluence of gender and diaspora is also represented by Isma, Aneeka's older sister, in *Home Fire*. Isma exemplifies the sacrifices frequently made by diasporic people because she has had to care for her younger siblings while also dealing with the loss of her parents. She continuously struggles to strike a balance between her own desires and objectives and the demands made of her as a woman in her community. The struggles and difficulties women endure within patriarchal structures are highlighted by Isma's experiences, as well as the sacrifices they make to uphold cultural and familial ideals. The experiences of Aneeka and Isma in the book also speak to the larger political and social environment that surrounds Muslims and communities of colour. The story takes on subjects including Islamophobia, racial profiling, and how counterterrorism policies affect Muslims' daily life. It examines the conflicts between individual aspirations and the shared obligation felt by people of the diaspora to overcome these obstacles and preserve a sense of cultural identity.

The book also emphasises the compelling tension between a person's individuality and the expectations of the state, engrossing readers with its examination of the stark contrast between the two. Shamsie challenges us to consider the restrictions and constraints placed on us by outside forces, as well as the challenges we encounter in paving our own paths towards self-actualisation, through the experiences of her characters. As we reach the end of *Home Fire's* chapters, we have a strong awareness of the far-reaching effects of the state's interference with personal identity. Characters like Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz are just a few examples of how Shamsie's portrayals of them illustrate the loss of individual autonomy and the sneaky ways in which the government can erode our sense of self. We see the restrictions on personal freedom, the difficulties of cultural assimilation, and the compromises people make to juggle competing commitments through their experiences. The book serves as a moving reminder that the pursuit of identity is not an individual undertaking but rather involves a complicated interplay of individual goals, cultural traditions, and outside influences.

Shamsie challenges the dominant conventions and prejudices that constitute a threat to our originality and challenges the narratives that are thrust upon us. Additionally, it forces us to face the significant influence that governmental surveillance has had on our lives. Both Parvaiz's ascent towards extremism and Aneeka's anger with the state's penetrating gaze serve as potent reminders of the negative effects that result from undermining personal agency. We are left feeling uneasy by Shamsie's superb writing, which compels us to think critically about the relationships between the state and the individual. The novel's discussion of multiple identities highlights the difficulties involved in the state versus identity dichotomy. Readers who also deal with the difficulties of cultural dualism can identify with Isma and Aneeka's effort to integrate their British upbringing with their Pakistani origin. Shamsie asks us to appreciate the diversity and richness of our identities while challenging the need to live up to social expectations through their storylines.

Home Fire is a powerful example of the tensions, sacrifices, and conflicts that result from the struggle between individual identity and state objectives. Shamsie's superb storytelling and insightful inquiry push us to consider the intricacies of modern life. The story forces us to think about our own search for self-actualisation and the necessity to protect individual identities in the face of external pressures by illuminating the effect of state intrusion on personal agency. The delicate balance between our own identities and the state's influence over us is brought to our attention as we end the pages of *Home Fire*. In the end, *Home Fire* serves as a potent reminder that our identities are complicated, nuanced, and essentially human and not just established by the state.

References

Alamgir, Zobia and Ajmal, Muhammed. "Real Selves and Adopted Personas: Performance of Self in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*." *ResearchGate*, March 2021.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350312604_Real_selves_and_adopted_personas_performance_of_self_in_Kamila_Shamsie's_home_fire

Davies, Peter Ho. "*Home Fire*: An *Antigone* for a Time of Terror." *The New York Times*, 29 September 2017.

Garner, Dwight. "In *Home Fire*, Lives Touched by Immigration, Jihad and Family Love." *The New York Times*, 8 August 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/books/review-home-fire-kamila-shamsie>

Haynes, Natalie. "Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie review-a Contemporary Reworking of Sophocles." *The Guardian*, 10 August 2017.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/10/home-fire-kamila-shamsie-review>

James, Kidd. "Review: ISIS meets Antigone in *Home Fire*, a love story both ancient and modern." *Post Magazine*, 20 September 2017.

<https://amp.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazin/books/article/2111708/review-isis-meets-antigone-home-fire-love-story-both>

Johar Khan, Saba. "Antigone for the Age of Terror: Transtextuality in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*." *ResearchGate*, June 2021.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352946974_ANTIGONE_FOR_THE_AGE_OF_TERROR_TRANSTEXTUALITY_IN_KAMILA_SHAMSIE'S_HOMEFIRE

Lau, Lisa and Christina Mendes, Ana. "Twenty First Century Antigones: The Post-colonial Women Shaped by 9/11 in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*." Project Muse Mission, *John Hopkins University Press*, vol.53, 2021.

Rahim, Sameer. "Kamila Shamsie review: what if you love an enemy of the State?" *The Telegraph*, 6 June 2018.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/home-fire-kamila-shamsie-review-love-enemy-state/>

Sarkowsky, Katja. "Expatriation, Belonging, and Politics of Burial: The Urgency of Citizenship in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*." De Gruyter, 2021.

Shamsie, Kamila. *Home Fire*. London: Bloomsbury circus, 2017

Susan, Resh. "How Far Will You Go For The Ones You Love." *The Book Satchel*, 13 September 2017.

<https://www.thebooksatchel.com/homefire-kamila-shamsie/>

Taha Al- Karawi, Susan and Vincent, Zachery Bordas. "Constant Surveillance: Criticism of a 'Disciplinary Society' and the Paradox of Agency in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*." Zenodo, 30 June 2019.

Zohdi, Esmael. "Lost-Identity; A Result of Hybridity and Ambivalence in Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to North". *IJALEL*, December 2017.

Reimagining Female Identity: Deconstructing The Mahabharata through Fiction

Ms. Sangeeta. K

Assistant Professor of English

PG and Research Department of English,

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

Myths form the basis for the cultural and ethical codes of any modern society. These behavioral standards transferred by myths through oral or written traditions have remained unchallenged for centuries. The grand epics of India, for instance, authored by men encodes a patriarchal power structure where women characters though powerful and intelligent fades away in the grand narrative of male heroism and valour. Revisionist mythmaking attempts a subversion of dominant binaries by bringing into highlight the devalued or the marginalized. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The Palace of Illusions* offers a narrative of the grand epic *The Mahabharata* in the point of view of Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas. In contrast to the patient, passive and silent Draupadi in *The Mahabharata*, Divakaruni's revision brings forth a confident, defiant, and outspoken Draupadi at the center. The re-reading brings to light the sacrifices and initiatives of women which lay hidden in the original text. By subverting the canonical power structures, Divakaruni attempts to reveal the impassivity and assertiveness of women. This paper is an attempt to read Divakaruni's work in the light of Feminist theory to analyze how far revision, subversion or re-reading helps to challenge the gender stereotypes embodied in the myths.

Key Words: Mythology, Patriarchy, Epic, Feminism, Revisionist Writing

A mythology is a system of stories of ancient origin, believed to be true by a particular cultural group, which gives reason for the happenings of the world in terms of the supernatural and the deities; which also provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and establishes sanction for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Hence, beyond question myths form the basis for the cultural and ethical codes of any modern society. These behavioral standards transferred by myths through oral or written traditions have remained unchallenged

for centuries. The canonical texts often play a significant role in transcending these standards over generations. In an Indian scenario, one may look back at the grand epics – *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* as the benchmarks for these mythical traditions that prescribe the Indian societal standards, morals, and perspectives. The origin of the patriarchal lineage in India thus dates back to these canonical texts authored by men. These texts encode a patriarchal power structure where women characters though powerful and intelligent, fade away in the grand narrative of male heroism and valour. Questioning these unchallenged codes of the society is one among the crucial challenges undertaken by feminist literature.

Feminism looks at literature through two different angles as mentioned by Elaine Showalter in her essay ‘Towards a Feminist Poetics’. She distinguishes between feminist critique (women as reader) and gynocriticism (women as writer). Feminist critique is rather passive as it opens not what women have experienced, but what men have felt. Gynocriticism offers a stronger mode of resistance against the masculine interpretation of the feminine, because it “begin at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary theory, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition.” (Showalter 28). It is supported by the practical view that women are essentially different from men, and hence feminine experience cannot properly be represented in a literary work by men. Usha Bande, too maintains a similar view in feminist resistance. According to her “If feminist resistance is shown through articulation, the most important aspect of it is to break the silence and to re-discover the female self. The desire is reflected in women’s writing and it is this desire that provides context for resistance. (Bande 15 -16).

Of the varied paradigms of resistance, which aims at decentring of power and thereby seeks a space for feminine experience in a world overpowered by masculinity, revisionism demands a prominent place. Decentring, as Derrida points out, does not require the abandonment of a subject but a reconceptualization of it within a newer paradigm. What he suggests is to overturn the traditional concept. This is where revision gains its prominence. Instead of abandoning the subject, revision subverts the existing norms by re-imagining the older one in a newer light. It offers fresh critical directions to old texts which according to Adrienne Rich is “...more than a chapter in cultural history. It is an act of survival” (Rich 35).

Feminist revisionist mythology offers resistance by subverting the dominant binaries and bringing into highlight the devalued or marginalized. Such re-readings bring to light the sacrifices and initiatives of women which lay hidden in the original text. Subverting the

canonical power structure helps revealing the impassivity and assertiveness of women. Subversion is affected in any of the following ways -- by narrating the story in the point of view of the main female character; re-creating the story by painting women as active and assertive, in contrast to being the submissive lot; or by employing a female satirical narrator, who is able to mock at the follies of men.

The grand epic *Mahabharata* authored by Sage Vyasa, narrates the destiny of the virtuous and scrupulous kings and queens of Bharat, offering merely a male perspective. Amidst the description of male heroism, the reader lose track of the feminine experience. Ironically enough, the success of these heroes are recounted by the presence and intelligence of their female counterparts. This brings to question where and how has these feminine powers been hidden. Divakaruni attempts to rekindle this flame by subverting the canonical power structure through *The Palace of Illusions*, by retelling the story through a feminine perspective. Draupadi or Panchaali, the wife of the Pandavas, who had been a powerful presence, leading the Pandavas through the difficult of the situations in their life, has been chosen as the narrator. The narratorship accoladed on one of the important and powerful women characters has helped to open up a vista of experience of women mangled up in the chain of patriarchy. Divakaruni makes Draupadi speak out her heart, thereby breaking the virtuous-lady-figure imparted to her by the male dominated society. She had been unwomanly many a times by not being the perfect mother dedicated to her children, and the perfect wife sincere to her husbands. She also tumbles up the societal notions of virginity by being wife simultaneously to five, invariably shattering the stereotypical woman image. Divakaruni's Draupadi questions the way she was misrepresented in the grand epic as a silent endurer of her fate.

The princess of Paanchal, Panchali had shown nonconformity to patriarchal standards right from her childhood. Her curiosity and inquisitiveness was despised by her loved ones, including Dhai ma, who used to provide unrelenting support in other matters, out of the fear that she may turn man-like in her speech. Draupadi spent hours reading books,

...which described in diligent, morose detail complicated laws concerning household property...I was determined to learn what a king was supposed to know...How else could I be powerful in myself? So I ignored summer's blandishments and battled with the book (Divakaruni 54).

More than once she has proved that her intelligence and power pars that of her twin brother Dhri. She has also proved meticulous in providing support to Yudishtir in administering

Indraprastha. She says “Yudishtir began to ask my advice when a tricky judgement had to be delivered” (148).

The ‘Panchaali Swayamvar’, one of the scintillating episodes in Mahabharata, shrouded with brilliance of Kings and Princes narrates but little about the courage shown by Paanchali in preventing Karna attempting the test. But in the revision, one barely gets to see this submissive Princess. She, though a girl with romantic notions about her life and her would-be-husband, was but keen in recognizing the trap in her swayamvar. She realizes that herself as well as her brother Dhri are “nothing but pawns for king Drupad to sacrifice when it’s most to his advantage” (58). Though her feelings were for Karna, she rises to the occasion, outgrowing her emotion with practicality, and prevents Dhri from getting killed by raising questions to Karna about his ancestry, and shaming him enough to make him drop his arms and quit. Draupadi actually saved for Dhri, not only his pride, but his life as well.

Later, after Arjun wins the hand of Draupadi in marriage, and Kunti decides that she be shared by Pandavas, one finds how Draupadi was misinterpreted in the *Mahabharata* as a silent woman succumbing to her destiny. Though she reacts passively, her mind travels through a stretch of emotions. Her contemplation on the virginity boon conferred on her by sage Vyasa further reveals her reaction to the male-centered world. The boon that each time she went to a husband she would be a virgin again, she realizes is designed more for her husbands’ benefit than hers. What she wanted was the gift of forgetting,

...so that when I went to each brother, I’d be free of the memory of the previous one. And along with that, I’d have requested that Arjun be my first husband. He was the only one of the Pandavas I felt I could fall in love with. If he had loved me back, I might have been able to push aside my regrets about karna and find some semblance of happiness (120 -121).

When the grand epic praises Yudishtir as the righteous king ever, it blindfolds the reader of the efforts of Draupadi which lead him to the throne. The revision reveals that it was owing to Draupadi’s request to Bheeshma that Hastinapur was divided among the Kauravas and the Pandavas, and thereby Yudishtir become the king of Indraprastha. This has led to the creation of the beautiful ‘Palace of Illusion’, a creation so marvelous. Draupadi, unlike other queens, has become an unrelenting source of power and support to her husbands. Her elegance, determination and entrepreneurship has made the Pandavas turn away from Kunti to Draupadi for decisions in matter of administration.

Draupadi's firm determination is further revealed when she becomes the reason for the 'Kurukshetra War' – the most elaborate and key episode in the *Mahabharata*. When the war totally sidelines the female, and embosses the male power and strength in the grand epic, its revision highlights the role played by women in its outbreak. The war becomes a reality owing to Draupadi's determination to avenge the Kauravas for shaming her in front of the court by removing her veil. None of her husbands offer help as it will cause their fall off the pedestal of virtue. She throws curses at the Kauravas thus:

All of you will die in the battle that will be spawned from this day's work. Your mothers and wives will weep far more piteously than I wept...Not one of the Kauravas will be left to offer prayers for the dead. All that will remain is the shameful memory of today, what you tried to do to a defenseless woman (194).

This makes the war inevitable. Draupadi, during their twelve years at Dwaita Vana, tries her best to keep the flame of revenge burning in the minds of her husbands. She enters a new phase in her life, where her only aim is vengeance. The darkened cave inside her revealed a spiteful Draupadi,

She is dead. Half of her died the day when everyone she had loved and counted on to save her sat without protest and watched her being shamed. The other half perished with her beloved home...The woman who have taken her place will gouge a deeper mark into history than that naïve girl ever imagined. (206)

Draupadi bravely receives the gift of watching "...the greatest spectacle of our times" (254), the War from Sage Vyasa, thereby becoming the only woman who knows truth about the war. The bravery she shows in accepting the gift, refused out of fear even by men praised for valour, proves her prowess. She accepts the gift by saying, "I accept your gift. I will watch this war and live to tell of it. It's only just, since I've helped bring it about." (254)

Just as she was the reason for the war, she had the power to stop it too, had she a chance. She is the only person other than Bheeshma and Karna, who knows the truth about Karna's ancestry. Had she but informed Arjun, she could have saved Karna from being killed by Arjun, but only destiny played otherwise. She is the only one to realize that the life of Pandavas is the charity of Karna. She understands that Karna in recompense to killing Abhimanyu,

...or because of the secret that clawed at him from within—he spared one after the other, Sahadev, Nakul, Bheem – and most important Yudishtir, when he had

him at his mercy... Only I saw the way he gazed after them in sorrow and tenderness. (293)

Apart from picturing Draupadi as an embodiment of power and determination, walking away from the concept of woman being the weaker sex, Divakaruni also emphasizes on her derailment from the concept of motherhood and an ideal wife. The revision shatters the virtuous-lady-figure of Draupadi, and presents her as being insincere to her husbands by adoring and loving Karna. She is deeply sympathetic for what destiny has brought him into. She confesses that, though she was a good wife, she had not loved them the way they wanted to be loved. She says,

I supported them through good times and bad; I had provided them comforts of the body and the mind; when in company I extolled their virtues. I followed them into the forest and forced them to be heroes. But my heart – was it too small?...I never gave it fully to them...Because none of them had the power to agitate me the way mere memory of Karna did. (213)

As a mother too, she had been a failure. She confesses many a times that she is more a wife than a mother. She gives more care in fulfilling her destiny than rearing up her children. Through the death of her children after the war, she pays the penance for it.

Divakaruni thus by highlighting the sacrifices and initiatives of Draupadi, blurred up in the *Mahabharata*, brings about a strong resistance to patriarchy. Though revision may not be a final solution, it can at least bring to light female experiences and prove that such experiences can overpower male experience and bring about a marked change in the male perception of the female. Thus, feminist revision proves itself a sharp tool to resist patriarchy.

References

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Eastern Press, 2004.

Bande, Usha. *Writing Resistance: A Comparative Study of Selected Novels by Women Writers*. Shimla, 2006.

Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. Translated by Alan Blass, University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Divakaruni, Chithra Banerjee. *The Palace of Illusions*. Picador, 2008.

Ganguli, Kisari Mohun. *The Mahabharata of Vyasa – English Prose Translation*. holybooks.com, n.d.

Rich, Adrienne. "When Dead We Awaken: Writing as Resistance". *On Lies, Secrets and Silences: Selected Prose, 1966 – 1978*. Virago, 1980.

Showalter, Elaine. "Toward a Feminist Poetics". *Women's Writing and Writing About Women*. Croom Helm, 1979.

Resilience Unveiled: Navigating Female Identity and Challenging Stereotypes in Select South Asian Fiction

Shahada K. P.

M A English(2020-22)

KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri
&

Mr. Muhammedali P.

Assistant Professor of English

PG and Research Department of English,
KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri

Abstract

This article embarks on a captivating exploration of the multifaceted portrayal of Muslim women in South Asian fiction, delving into Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* and Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study unravels the nuanced dimensions of female identity, societal challenges, and resilience embedded in these narratives. Navigating the intersectionality of Islam and feminism, inspired by Susan Carland's insights, the article confronts pervasive stereotypes, revealing diverse realities and challenging preconceptions. Tracing the historical context of women in South Asian fiction, the analysis concludes by urging a continued celebration and exploration of the rich narratives shaping contemporary Muslim womanhood. Shahraz and Hashimi emerge not only as storytellers but as architects dismantling stereotypes, leaving an indelible mark on the captivating realm of South Asian literature.

Keywords: South Asian fiction, Muslim women, feminism and female identity, Islam, stereotypes, intersectionality, diversity

Qaisra Shahraz is a British-Pakistani novelist and scriptwriter known for her impactful contributions to contemporary English fiction. Born in Pakistan, Shahraz later settled in the UK. Her works, including *The Holy Woman*, explore themes of identity, gender, and societal expectations, particularly focusing on the experiences of Muslim women. Nadia Hashimi is an Afghan-American paediatrician and author renowned for her insightful storytelling. Born in the United States to Afghan parents, Hashimi's novels, such as *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*,

illuminate the struggles of Afghan women across generations, providing a nuanced perspective on their resilience in the face of societal challenges and geopolitical turmoil.

South Asian fiction serves as a captivating lens through which the evolving roles, struggles, and resilience of Muslim women are intricately woven into the fabric of societal narratives. This article embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of female identity, delving into the complexities artfully presented by acclaimed authors such as Qaisra Shahraz and Nadia Hashimi. The narratives examined within this literary tapestry not only provide insight into the lives of the protagonists but also offer a profound reflection on the broader societal contexts that shape and challenge the experiences of Muslim women.

The spotlight falls first on the works of Qaisra Shahraz, whose novel *The Holy Woman* introduces readers to Zarri Bano, a character that transcends the conventional boundaries imposed upon Muslim women. Shahraz's storytelling illuminates the intricacies of Zarri Bano's journey, a narrative that challenges stereotypes, questions traditions, and symbolizes the resilience of modern Muslim womanhood. As we navigate the pages of Shahraz's creation, we will dissect the layers of complexity within Zarri Bano's character, unveiling her as a powerful emblem of defiance against societal expectations.

In tandem with Shahraz's exploration, we delve into Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, where the narratives of Rahima and her great-great-grandmother, Shekiba, unfold against the backdrop of Afghanistan. This dual narrative, separated by a century, offers a poignant portrayal of the unyielding struggles faced by Afghan women. Rahima's contemporary story becomes a mirror reflecting the enduring hardships and constrained agency experienced by women in a society marked by geopolitical turmoil. As we journey through the lives of these characters, we will unravel the timeless threads that bind the experiences of Muslim women across generations.

Furthermore, this article delves into the pervasive stereotypes associated with Muslim women in South Asia, challenging preconceived notions and shedding light on the diverse realities that exist within this demographic. Drawing from the insights of Susan Carland, we navigate the intersectionality of Islam and feminism, exploring the dichotomy faced by Muslim women who are pressured to choose between faith and human rights. Carland's perspective becomes a guiding beacon as we navigate the intricate interplay of identity, faith, and activism within the narratives we explore.

Fast-forward to the contemporary era, and the battle against stereotypes persists. In the realm of Muslim women in South Asia, stereotypes have woven themselves into the very fabric of societal perceptions. This article unearths these stereotypes, dissecting both the positive and negative notions that have transformed into prejudices, shaping behaviours, and perpetuating discrimination. The pervasive nature of preconceived notions about Muslim women is unveiled, laying bare the impact of stereotypes on their lived experiences. It addresses the misrepresentation of Muslim women as inherently coerced, emphasizing the need to recognize the diversity of experiences and identities within this demographic. By confronting these stereotypes, the article seeks to dismantle the distorted lens through which Muslim women are often viewed, fostering a more nuanced and accurate understanding.

As we embark on this literary exploration, the aim is to unravel the rich tapestry of contemporary South Asian fiction, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the complexities and diversities that define the female Muslim experience. From the defiance of characters like Zarri Bano to the resilience of Rahima, these narratives become windows into a world where women navigate tradition, modernity, and the ever-evolving landscape of their own identities.

Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* introduces us to the captivating character of Zarri Bano, a woman who becomes a symbol of resistance against the constricting shackles of traditional norms. As we delve into Shahraz's narrative, we witness Zarri Bano's journey as a formidable force, challenging preconceived notions about Muslim women. Shahraz, a prominent figure in modern English fiction, intricately crafts Zarri Bano's character to question societal expectations and defy the limitations imposed on women in conservative settings.

The richness of Zarri Bano's character is evident in her assertion, "I am a free woman, I will decide if I want this or any other man. This is why ten years have elapsed and I still have not married" (Shahraz 16). Shahraz skilfully paints a portrait of a woman who transcends the dichotomy often imposed on Muslim women, portraying Zarri Bano as a modern, educated, and independent individual who courageously challenges the status quo. This defiance against societal norms becomes a powerful theme, unravelling the complexities surrounding female identity in the context of contemporary South Asian fiction.

Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* expands our exploration by weaving together dual narratives that shed light on the intricacies of Afghan women's identities. Hashimi's work is a poignant portrayal that spans generations, connecting the stories of Rahima

and her great-great-grandmother, Shekiba. Rahima, the contemporary protagonist, becomes a conduit through which the multifaceted nature of Afghan women's experiences is explored. Hashimi delicately peels back the layers of Rahima's character, illustrating her struggles in a society marked by gender inequality, societal expectations, and the enduring impact of geopolitical turmoil.

The use of dual narratives, separated by a century, adds a profound dimension to the exploration of female identity in Hashimi's work. The parallel stories of Rahima and Shekiba highlight the enduring challenges faced by Afghan women, emphasizing the persistence of constrained agency across generations. Through Rahima's story, Hashimi paints a poignant picture of the resilience of Afghan women who, despite adversities, carve out spaces of agency and strength.

In this exploration, references to the main document serve as pillars, supporting the analysis of these literary works. Shahraz and Hashimi, through their artistry, contribute to reshaping the narrative landscape surrounding Muslim women, challenging stereotypes and providing a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences that define contemporary Muslim womanhood.

The exploration of women in South Asian fiction embarks on a journey through the annals of literature, tracing the evolution of portrayals from early pioneers to contemporary perspectives. The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the emergence of female authors, predominantly from the elite class, shaping narratives that became pivotal in the discourse surrounding women's roles. Themes of domesticity, ethics, and the imperative of female education emerged as keystones in their literary endeavours, reflecting a society in transition.

These pioneering narratives lay the foundation for an intricate interplay between tradition and modernity, a theme that continues to echo through contemporary works. The 'New Woman,' depicted as a cultural and literary figure, emerges as a symbol of evolving societal norms and aspirations. The early authors subtly challenged prevailing norms through their exploration of domestic life and ethical dilemmas, advocating for the education and empowerment of women.

As the narrative thread extends to contemporary South Asian fiction, particularly works centered around Muslim women, the struggle against stereotypes takes center stage. The pervasive nature of preconceived notions about Muslim women in South Asia unfolds through an examination of both positive and negative stereotypes. These stereotypes, whether depicting

Muslim women as exoticized and submissive or as oppressed and coerced, have transformed into deep-rooted prejudices. This transformation significantly influences behaviour, perpetuating discrimination and hindering a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences and identities within this demographic. In weaving together these diverse strands of narrative, from the early pioneers to contemporary authors and insightful commentators, we unravel the resilience of women in South Asian fiction. The evolving voice of women, particularly those of Muslim identity, reverberates through these pages, challenging stereotypes, navigating dual identities, and paving the way for a more inclusive and enlightened future.

The 20th century witnessed a rapid surge in women's movements, challenging the pervasive impact of patriarchy in Pakistan across various aspects of daily life, from education to job opportunities, legal protections, marriage systems, and human rights. Among the prominent figures of this era was Benazir Bhutto, a vocal women's rights activist who later became the Prime Minister in the 20th century, pioneering women's involvement in politics (Korson and Maskiell 600-601).

Amid the predominant portrayal of Muslim women as oppressed by their religion and cultural practices, Qaisra Shahraz takes a different approach in her novel, *The Holy Woman*. The narrative unfolds the life of Zarri Bano, a woman who seemingly enjoys the best of both worlds but finds herself at odds with rural customs and traditions. Zarri Bano, with her "green eyes, curly hair, and dimpled cheeks," professes a unique form of feminism, albeit with "conditions applied." Trained to evolve into an independent woman with feminist consciousness intertwined with religious ideology, her life takes an unforeseen turn following the death of her only brother.

Zarri Bano, the novel's protagonist, becomes a canvas of complexities, contradicting and merging layers within herself. In a society where daughters of feudal chiefs are often confined, Zarri Bano stands out as university-educated, financially independent, and well-traveled. She adeptly employs the benefits of her education to uplift disadvantaged members of her sex. When faced with a marriage proposal from Sikander, a Karachi gentleman, Zarri Bano vehemently rejects the notion of being ensnared like a fish, asserting her agency and autonomy.

Zarri Bano's persona reveals layers of complexity, portraying her as a ferocious woman, confronting contradictions and ultimately finding tranquility. Despite her education, financial independence, and freedom of movement, her father, a feudal figure, seeks to preserve his land

and name through an old tradition—forcing Zarri Bano into a marriage with the Qur'an. This act is intended to ensure the continuation of the family legacy.

The depth of Zarri Bano's character is further accentuated by her interactions with her sister, Ruby, and the unexpected twists in her life. Kidwai (12) observes Qaisra Shahraz's intent to portray a strong woman challenging stereotypical roles, and Zarri Bano embodies this newly emerging Muslim woman. Empowerment is not confined to Zarri Bano alone; it resonates across other female characters, each exhibiting defiance and challenge. The mother, Shahzada, intervenes to rescue her daughter, confronting her husband's puppeteering and the male-dominated traditions that dictate her daughter's fate. This dynamic between mother and daughter becomes a powerful symbol of resistance, both verbal and physical, against male protectors and societal norms.

Firdaus, labeled as the washerwoman's daughter, shares the assertive traits of Zarri Bano. Educated and proud beyond her societal status, Firdaus challenges norms, illustrating that education transcends social hierarchies. Despite being the daughter of a washerwoman, Firdaus's position in the institution is a testament to the transformative power of education.

What sets *The Holy Woman* apart, according to Kidwai, is the transformation within patriarchal heads who realize the misery inflicted upon their womenfolk. Zarri Bano, despite being forced into the role of a holy woman, emerges as a resilient and highly educated modern Muslim woman. Her authenticity, as seen through various critics' lenses, showcases strength of character and challenges preconceived notions.

In conclusion, *The Holy Woman* stands as a literary triumph that explores the evolving identity of Muslim women in the face of societal expectations and traditions. Zarri Bano's journey becomes a poignant narrative of empowerment, resilience, and the complex interplay between tradition and modernity, echoing the struggles and triumphs of contemporary Muslim women in South Asia.

The plight of women in Afghanistan during the years of Taliban rule is often depicted in a narrative that portrays them as voiceless victims of war, violence, and repression, waiting to be liberated by Western intervention. However, this portrayal is not only incomplete but also inaccurate. While Afghan women did suffer, they were not passive victims; many actively resisted the oppressive regime. The focus of media attention and research on women's repression often overshadowed the narrative of Afghan women as active social participants.

Historically, Afghan women have been seen as victims of political turmoil and violence, but there is a growing acknowledgment of their active roles in society. Women's rights organizations, like the Revolutionary Afghan Women Association (RAWA) founded in Kabul in the 1970s, aimed to give a voice to oppressed women, encouraging resistance against oppression and advocating for peace, democracy, and women's rights. Despite the challenges, these women actively participated in Afghanistan and refugee camps in Pakistan during the Soviet war.

In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Nadia Hashimi provides a nuanced perspective on Afghan women's lives through the intertwined stories of Rahima and her great-great-grandmother Shekiba, separated by a century. Rahima's narrative, set in contemporary times, reveals that despite the passage of time, Afghanistan's socio-cultural landscape remains resistant to change.

Rahima, the protagonist, hails from a small town near Kabul and faces a life marked by tragedy, abuse, and resilience. As the daughter of an opium-addicted soldier and Raisa, Rahima grows up with four sisters, but their education is abruptly halted by their father to avoid societal shame. In a society governed by fear and with no sons, Rahima's life takes a challenging turn. Encouraged by her aunt, she becomes a bacha posh, a role allowing her to assume the identity of a boy named "Rahim" for the family.

Rahima's journey as a bacha posh continues until puberty, and she experiences the complexities of developing female secondary sex characteristics while living as a boy. Forced into marriage with Abdul Khaliq, a man much older than her father, Rahima finds herself ill-prepared for the demands of wifhood. The narrative unfolds Rahima's struggle to reconcile her identity as a woman in a society that often denies agency to females.

Hashimi skillfully navigates the complexities of Afghan societal norms, portraying Rahima's internal conflicts and her yearning for freedom. Rahima's story becomes a modernized echo of her great-great-grandmother Shekiba's desire for autonomy. Both women grapple with societal expectations and limitations imposed on them simply because they are female.

The novel delves into the harsh realities faced by Rahima and Shekiba, highlighting their shared aspirations for freedom and the right to determine their destinies. Despite the narrative being set a century apart, the common thread of limited agency and societal

constraints binds the two women together. As Rahima reflects, "...men can do whatever they want with women," emphasizing the persistent gender disparities in Afghan society.

Rahima's journey becomes a poignant exploration of resilience and self-discovery. Cursed for being born a girl, Rahima undergoes a transformative realization of her worth, akin to a precious pearl. Her relentless spirit helps her navigate the challenges posed by her husband, providing a stark contrast to women who resign themselves to fate. Hashimi uses Rahima's story to shed light on the enduring struggle of Afghan women, challenging the notion of progress in gender equality.

Hashimi weaves a compelling narrative against the backdrop of Afghanistan's tumultuous history, encompassing the Soviet and American invasions and their profound impact on women's lives. The novel brings attention to the issue of gender subalternity, emphasizing the persistent subjugation of women to men. As Simone de Beauvoir aptly stated, "Man is the Subject and Absolute, but woman is the Other,"⁽³¹⁾ capturing the essence of the gender dynamics prevalent in Afghan society. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* stands as a testament to the resilience of Afghan women across generations. Through Rahima and Shekiba, Hashimi offers a powerful narrative that transcends time, portraying the enduring struggles and aspirations of Afghan women striving for agency, freedom, and recognition in a society fraught with challenges.

In the vast tapestry of South Asian fiction, the portrayal of Muslim women emerges as a complex and nuanced exploration of identity, challenges, and resilience. This comprehensive analysis has journeyed through the works of two distinguished authors, Qaisra Shahraz and Nadia Hashimi, unravelling the threads that weave together the intricate stories of women defying stereotypes and societal expectations.

The multifaceted exploration extended to the pervasive stereotypes associated with Muslim women in South Asian literature. Drawing from the insights of Susan Carland, the analysis navigated the intersectionality of Islam and feminism, unraveling the dichotomy faced by Muslim women who are pressured to choose between faith and human rights. Carland's perspective became a guiding beacon, urging a recognition of the depth and diversity of Muslim women's experiences and identities.

In confronting stereotypes, the article unearthed both positive and negative notions, shedding light on the diverse realities within the demographic. The misrepresentation of Muslim women as inherently coerced was challenged, emphasizing the need to recognize the

rich tapestry of experiences and identities within this group. By dismantling distorted lenses through which Muslim women are often viewed, the article sought to foster a more nuanced and accurate understanding.

The exploration also delved into the historical context of women in South Asian fiction, tracing the evolution of portrayals from early pioneers to contemporary perspectives. The emergence of female authors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries set the stage for a nuanced interplay between tradition and modernity. Themes of domesticity, ethics, and the imperative of female education became keystones in the literary endeavors, reflecting a society in transition.

This comprehensive analysis offers a panoramic view of Muslim women in South Asian fiction. From the defiance of characters like Zarri Bano to the resilience of Rahima, these narratives serve as windows into a world where women navigate tradition, modernity, and the ever-evolving landscape of their own identities.

References

- Hashimi, Nadia. *The Pearl That broke its Shell*. William Morrow International edition, 2014.
- Shahraz, Qaisra. *The Holy Woman*. New Edition, Black Amber Books. 2002.
- Arafath, Y., & Shahraz, Q. "When Patriarchy Strikes: An Exclusive Interview with Qaisra Shahraz. Writers in Conversation" Vol. 1 no. 1, February 2014
http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/writers_in_conversation/
- Abbady, Amel. "Afghanistan's "Bacha Posh": Gender-Crossing in Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*" Volume 51, 2022, pp 242-253
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2021.2023531>
- Bullock, Katherine. *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes*. International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2002, 24-05-11, pp. 22-31, 45-67.
- Corboz, Julienne, Andrew Gibbs and Rachel Jewkes. "Bacha posh in Afghanistan: factors associated with raising a girl as a boy." *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 17 June 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2019.1616113> Apply/45022.
- Epstein, Elizabeth. "An Interview with Nadia Hashimi, Author and Girl Advocate Girls' Globe". 2015-02-11. Girls' Globe. Retrieved 2017-10-27.

- Haider, S., & Imtiaz, S. *Under Western Eyes: Deconstructing the Colonial Representations in Qaisra Shahraz's The Holy Woman*. The Holy and the Unholy: Critical Essays on Qaisra Shahraz's Fiction. Kidwai,R, Siddiqui, A, M. (Eds.).2011 ,1-25.
- Hashimi, Nadia. *Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Haleem, Shamaila. "Challenging Gender Stereotypes: A Text Analysis of Qaisra Shahraz's Novel *The Holy Woman*". *International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research*, 74, 56. DOI: 10.7763/IPEDR. 2014. V74. 10
- Ishaque, Nausheen. "Violence Ritualized: The Chemistry of Tradition and Religion in Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman*" *SAGE Open*, 7(1),2158244017701527. MAN. Journal of Gender and Social Issues, March 30 2017.<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017701527>
- Kharal, Ali Ahmed. "The Holy Woman: A Feminist Perspective", Volume 10, Muzaffarabad: University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, 2007, pp.51-64.
- Khan, H. "A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* in the Backdrop of Sublaternity". *International Journal of English Linguistics*,2019. DOI:10.5539/ijel.v9n5p249
- Qadeer, Haris. Arafath, Yasser, editors. *Sultana's Sisters: Genre, Gender, and Genealogy in South Asian Muslim Women's Fiction*, Taylor & Francis, 2021,29-40
- Zaidi, N. A. "From victim to survivor: A Critical study of Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman*, Pakistan" *Journal of Women's Studies*,2012,9-12.

Unraveling the Tapestry of Ethics and Philosophy in the Modern World through Ethics: History, Theory And Contemporary Issues

By Steven M. Cahn & Peter Markie

Sumayya AP
M A English (2021-23)
PSMO College, Tirurangadi
sumayyaap357@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is influenced by the seminal work *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues* by Steven Cahn and Peter Markie, delves into the intricate relationship between philosophy and ethics in the context of the contemporary world. Drawing insights from the comprehensive analysis provided in Cahn and Markie's book, the paper explores how ethical principles are shaped and redefined in response to the dynamic challenges of our time. Key philosophical theories, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, are examined through the lens of Cahn and Markie's perspectives, shedding light on their relevance in addressing pressing ethical dilemmas in modern society. The authors' reflections on historical philosophical thought serve as a foundation for understanding the evolution of ethical frameworks in response to emerging issues. Additionally, the paper integrates ideas from Cahn and Markie's work to scrutinize the ethical implications of contemporary technologies, emphasizing the intersection between artificial intelligence, bioethics, and the moral responsibilities of individuals and institutions. Through this synthesis of Cahn and Markie's insights and broader philosophical discourse, this paper aims to foster a nuanced understanding of the role of philosophy in guiding ethical decision-making within the complex landscape of the 21st century.

Keywords: Ethics, Utilitarianism, Social Justice, Moral Study.

The intricate relationship between philosophy and ethics is an ever-evolving discourse profoundly shaped by the nuanced challenges presented in our contemporary world. As we navigate a complex landscape marked by technological advancements, social transformations, and ethical ambiguities, the need to understand and respond to these challenges has become increasingly paramount. In this pursuit, the seminal work *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues* by Steven M. Cahn and Peter Markie emerges as a guiding beacon,

providing a comprehensive analysis that not only dissects the historical underpinnings of ethical thought but also delves into its resonance within the dynamic context of our time.

Cahn and Markie's exploration serves as a catalyst for our own endeavor, as we examine how ethical principles are not only shaped by historical philosophical thought but also recalibrated in response to the ever-shifting landscape of contemporary ethical quandaries. This paper, titled "Philosophy and Ethics in the Modern World," seeks to unravel the threads of this intricate tapestry, drawing inspiration from Cahn and Markie's profound insights.

At its core, this paper contends that an in-depth understanding of the major philosophical theories—utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics—through the lens provided by Cahn and Markie is essential for navigating the ethical complexities of the present era. Building on their perspectives, we aim to scrutinize the historical roots of these theories and investigate their applicability in addressing pressing ethical dilemmas.

Furthermore, our exploration extends beyond the theoretical realm into the practical domain as we endeavor to integrate Cahn and Markie's ideas to scrutinize the ethical implications of contemporary technologies. The intersection between artificial intelligence, bioethics, and the moral responsibilities of individuals and institutions forms a crucial focal point, demanding a thoughtful analysis grounded in both philosophical discourse and real-world implications.

As we synthesize Cahn and Markie's insights with broader philosophical discourse, our ultimate goal is to foster a nuanced understanding of the role of philosophy in guiding ethical decision-making within the complex landscape of the 21st century. By unraveling the layers of this intricate relationship, we hope to contribute to a more profound appreciation of how philosophical perspectives serve as indispensable guides for navigating the multifaceted terrain of contemporary ethical challenges.

In this exploration of *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*, we delve into the depth of Cahn and Markie's seminal work, aiming to grasp the main themes, arguments, and methodologies that define their comprehensive analysis. This section serves as a foundational exploration of the intellectual landscape laid out by these scholars, providing an essential context for subsequent discussion. Cahn and Markie illuminate the profound impact of historical philosophical thought on the evolution of ethical frameworks. By investigating their insights, we gain an understanding of the key historical periods and philosophical movements that continue to shape contemporary ethical perspectives. This analysis sets the

stage for our exploration of how these historical underpinnings have influenced modern ethical considerations.

An integral aspect of Cahn and Markie's work lies in its response to the dynamic challenges of the contemporary world. Through a detailed examination, we uncover how these philosophical perspectives address and navigate the intricate ethical dilemmas posed by the ever-changing landscape. The specific examples and case studies provided by the authors offer tangible illustrations of the application of philosophical principles to real-world ethical quandaries. This section delves into the significance of Cahn and Markie's analysis in the broader study of philosophy and ethics in the modern world. We discuss why their work is particularly relevant considering both its strengths and limitations. Evaluating the applicability of their approach becomes crucial, as we seek to extract valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary ethical issues.

This literature review serves as a bridge between the foundational insights gained from Cahn and Markie's work and the subsequent exploration of major philosophical theories. By establishing this connection, we emphasize how their analysis lays the groundwork for upcoming discussions on philosophical perspectives and their practical applications in addressing the ethical challenges of our time. Our exploration begins with a comprehensive overview of Steven Cahn and Peter Markie's work, *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*. We established a foundational understanding of their main themes and methodologies, paving the way for deeper discussions.

Delving into the influence of historical philosophical thought, we recognize its enduring impact on the evolution of contemporary ethical frameworks. This historical context sets the stage for exploring how age-old philosophical underpinnings continue to shape modern ethical considerations. Our review analyzes Cahn and Markie's response to contemporary challenges. Concrete examples illustrate the practical application of philosophical perspectives to real-world ethical complexities.

Reflecting on the relevance of their analysis, we found practical tools for navigating the ethical intricacies of modern existence. This recognition sets the stage for our journey into the philosophical landscape of ethics with Cahn and Markie's work serving as invaluable intellectual scaffolding. This concise summary captures the essence of the literature review, outlines its key contributions, and prepares the reader for the subsequent exploration of philosophical theories.

Navigating the landscape of major philosophical theories is a crucial step toward understanding how ethical principles unfold in the modern world. Building on insights from Cahn and Markie, we embark on a detailed analysis of utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. This section aims to unravel the intricacies of these ethical frameworks and explore their strengths, applications, and potential intersections in addressing contemporary ethical challenges.

In dissecting utilitarianism, we embarked on a comprehensive exploration of its core tenets, emphasizing its consequentialist approach. Drawing from the insights provided by Cahn and Markie, we unravel the nuances of utilitarian ethics and their implications in the modern world. Real-world examples and case studies are examined, illustrating instances where utilitarian principles can be applied to navigate complex ethical dilemmas. "Utilitarianism's emphasis on maximizing overall well-being invites us to critically examine its role in shaping ethical decisions amidst contemporary challenges"(370).

The analysis of deontology delves into its ethical framework, which is centered on principles and duties. We explore the principles of deontology and examine how Cahn and Markie's perspectives shed light on ethical considerations. Real-world scenarios are presented to illustrate instances in which deontological ethics may offer unique insights or solutions. "Deontology's emphasis on duty and moral rules invites us to reflect on its applicability and potential contributions to navigating ethical complexities in the present day"(584).

Virtue ethics, with its focus on character and virtue, is central to our exploration. We uncover the fundamental aspects of virtue ethics and connect Cahn's and Markie's analysis to elucidate nuanced perspectives. Practical examples are presented to showcase the applicability of virtue ethics in addressing modern ethical challenges. "Virtue ethics calls us to examine the cultivation of character in ethical decision-making, and the insights from Cahn and Markie guide us in understanding its potential impact in the contemporary landscape"(Intyre 205).

Engaging in a comparative analysis, we scrutinized the strengths and limitations of utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Drawing on Cahn and Markie's insights, we explore how these philosophical theories intersect or conflict in the context of contemporary ethical dilemmas. This section aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the diverse ethical perspectives offered by these theories and their implications for practical decision-making. "A comparative analysis offers a panoramic view of major philosophical theories, enriching our capacity to navigate the ethical complexities of the modern world"(470).

This final aspect synthesizes analyses of utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, integrating them with Cahn and Markie's overarching perspectives. We explore how these insights inform and shape our understanding of these major philosophical theories. The integration serves as a bridge between the theoretical frameworks and practical applications discussed in the subsequent sections, ensuring cohesive and enriched exploration. By weaving Cahn and Markie's insights into our analysis, we aim to create a holistic narrative that connects the theoretical underpinnings of major philosophical theories to their real-world implications in contemporary ethical decision-making.

As we traverse the philosophical landscape, the integration of Cahn and Markie's insights with major ethical theories enriches our understanding, paving the way for a more comprehensive examination of the role of philosophy in guiding ethical decisions in the complexities of the 21st century. Ethical considerations are paramount in the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary technologies. Building on the foundation of Cahn and Markie's insights, we now turn our attention to the ethical implications intertwined with modern technologies. From artificial intelligence to bioethics and individual responsibilities, this section navigates the complex ethical terrain in which philosophy meets the digital age.

Exploration begins with ethical considerations regarding artificial intelligence. As we delve into the ethical dimensions of AI development and deployment, we draw on the philosophical theories of Cahn and Markie. Real-world examples and case studies illuminate the ethical dilemmas posed by AI technologies, inviting us to critically examine the intersection of philosophy and artificial intelligence. "In the realm of artificial intelligence, philosophy becomes a guiding compass, shaping our understanding of the ethical responsibilities in creating and implementing intelligent systems" (142). Ethical considerations within the realm of bioethics take center stage, as we delve into genetic engineering, biotechnology, and medical advancements. By connecting philosophical insights from Cahn and Markie, we navigate intricate ethical discussions in the field of bioethics. Real-world examples illustrate the practical implications of bioethical debates by offering a lens through which philosophy informs and enriches our understanding of contemporary biomedical issues. Bioethics, influenced by philosophical thought, emerges as a space where ethical deliberations are nuanced by the enduring principles discussed by Cahn and Markie.

By examining the moral responsibilities of individuals in the technology age, we explore the ethical considerations inherent in personal interactions with contemporary

technologies. Guided by philosophical theories, we discuss how individuals bear moral responsibilities, and how philosophical frameworks provide guidance in making ethical decisions related to technology use. Examples illustrate the ethical considerations individuals face in their technological engagements, emphasizing the intersection of personal morality and philosophical principles. "In the digital realm, individuals grapple with ethical choices, and philosophy offers a moral compass to navigate the intricacies of personal responsibility in the face of modern technologies." (92).

Focusing on the institutional level, we scrutinized the moral responsibilities of corporations, organizations, and institutions involved in the development and implementation of technologies. Drawing on philosophical frameworks, we analyze how these frameworks contribute to shaping ethical guidelines at the institutional level. Real-world cases exemplify the impact of institutional decisions on the ethical landscape of technology, emphasizing the role of philosophy in influencing and guiding ethical considerations in institutions. "In the realm of technology, institutions bear a collective moral responsibility, and philosophy provides the ethical foundations that influence their decision-making and impact on society." (145).

As we navigate the ethical implications of contemporary technologies, the intersection of philosophy and technology becomes crucial for ethical inquiry. The enduring principles discussed by Cahn and Markie resonate in the dilemmas posed by artificial intelligence, bioethics, individual responsibilities, and institutional actions, underscoring the indispensable role of philosophical thought in shaping ethical considerations in the digital age.

As we explore the practical application of philosophy in our daily lives, this section delves into the intricate realm of everyday ethical decision making. Grounded in the enduring principles discussed by Cahn and Markie, we examined how individuals draw upon philosophical perspectives to navigate the complexities of personal, relational, and professional ethical challenges. From personal values to societal impact, this exploration unveils the profound influence of philosophy on shaping our moral compass.

At the heart of everyday ethical decision-making lies in the integration of personal ethics and values. Individuals draw inspiration from philosophical principles to shape and define their ethical framework. Whether grappling with moral dilemmas or charting a course through ethical complexities, philosophy provides guiding light. Real-life examples illuminate instances in which individuals consciously apply philosophical insights to navigate the nuances of their personal ethical choices. "In the tapestry of personal ethics, philosophy weaves threads

of enduring principles, offering individuals a moral foundation upon which to build their everyday decisions." (43).

Relationships, both intimate and social, form a dynamic canvas in which philosophy plays a vital role. Examining the interpersonal realm, we uncover how philosophical perspectives contribute to ethical decision making. To resolve conflicts, foster understanding, and promote ethical behavior, individuals draw upon philosophical principles to navigate relationship dynamics. Real-life scenarios exemplify the application of philosophical thought to foster healthy and ethical relationships. In the delicate dance of relationships, philosophy becomes a silent partner, influencing ethical decisions, and shaping the fabric of human connections.

The professional arena serves as a testing ground for the application of philosophical principles in decision making. To investigate professional lives, we explore how individuals apply philosophical insights to navigate ethical challenges in various fields. Ethical theories influence professional conduct and decision making, shaping the moral landscape of workplaces. Real-world examples illustrate how philosophy serves as a guide to address ethical complexities in professional settings. Within the walls of workplaces, philosophy emerges as a compass, guiding individuals through the ethical mazes inherent in professional decision-making.

Expanding our lens, we explore the broader cultural and societal impacts of individual ethical decisions informed by philosophy. We examine how collective adherence to philosophical principles shapes societal norms and values. Instances are examined in which philosophical perspectives contribute to positive societal changes or challenge existing norms. As a driving force, philosophy influences the trajectory of cultural and societal ethical landscapes. As individuals collectively embrace philosophical principles, a ripple effect ensues, impacting the fabric of cultures and societies, fostering positive changes, and challenging established norms.

In examining the everyday application of philosophy in ethical decision making, we unveil the nuanced ways in which enduring principles guide individuals through the complexities of life. The influence of philosophy extends beyond personal choices, shaping relationships, professional conduct, and societal norms, underscoring the profound impact of philosophical thought on the ethical tapestry of our daily existence.

As we navigate the intricacies of the contemporary world, ethical challenges continue to evolve and are shaped by technological advancements, societal changes, and global dynamics. In this section, we delve into the emerging ethical dilemmas of our time and explore the impact of cutting-edge technologies, global issues, and cultural shifts. Guided by the enduring principles discussed by Cahn and Markie, we analyze how philosophy can serve as a compass in addressing the dynamic landscape of ethical challenges in the contemporary world.

The landscape of ethical challenges is in constant flux, which gives rise to novel dilemmas. Here, we identify and analyze these emerging ethical challenges by examining how societal changes, technological advancements, and other factors have contributed to their evolution. Philosophy, with its timeless principles, provides a lens through which we can analyze and respond to these challenges, offering insights into ethical decision-making in an ever-changing world. Real-world examples illustrate the complexity and urgency of addressing the emerging ethical dilemmas. Amid societal transformation and technological leaps, philosophy has become an essential tool for understanding and responding to the ethical challenges that characterize contemporary existence.

The rapid progress of technology brings a host of ethical implications. This subsection focuses on the ethical considerations of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and surveillance. Philosophy plays a pivotal role in navigating these complexities by offering guidance on ethical decision making. Real-world examples illustrate the ethical dilemmas associated with emerging technologies, underscoring the need for a thoughtful and principled approach. As technology reshapes the boundaries of what is possible, philosophy provides a moral compass, helping us navigate the uncharted territories of ethical considerations in the digital age.

Ethical considerations extend beyond the individual and technological realms to encompass global challenges. This sub-point explores ethical dilemmas related to climate change, resource depletion, and social justice. Philosophy has been examined as a guiding force in shaping ethical responses to global challenges. Insights from philosophical principles are explored to analyze how individuals and societies can address environmental and social issues. In the face of interconnected global challenges, philosophy emerges as a bridge between individual ethical considerations and the collective responsibility to address the pressing issues that affect us all.

The shifting sands of cultural and moral perspectives have shaped the ethical landscape. This sub-point delves into the examination of these shifts and their impact on ethical considerations. We discuss how changing societal norms influence the perception of ethical behavior, and explore philosophical insights that contribute to understanding and navigating cultural and moral shifts. Real-world examples illustrate the complexities of navigating the ethical terrain in the midst of cultural evolution. As cultures evolve and moral perspectives shift, philosophy serves as a steadfast guide, offering insights into the ethical dimensions of cultural transformations and the moral fabric of societies.

In exploring the evolving ethical challenges of the contemporary world, we witness the dynamic interplay between philosophy and the pressing issues that define our time. The enduring principles discussed by Cahn and Markie prove invaluable in navigating these challenges, providing a timeless foundation for ethical decision making amidst the ever-changing currents of the modern era.

In this intricate tapestry of the 21st century, the intersection of philosophy and ethics has emerged as a guiding light, providing valuable insights into the ever-evolving ethical landscape. Our journey through this exploration has been marked by a deep dive into the foundational work of Steven Cahn and Peter Markie, whose insights serve as a compass for understanding the intricate relationship between philosophy and ethics in the contemporary world.

The exploration began with a comprehensive overview of Cahn and Markie's seminal work, *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*, laying the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of the intellectual landscape that informs our ethical considerations. As illuminated by these scholars, the echoes of historical philosophical thought reverberate in our exploration of how ethical principles are shaped and redefined in response to our time's dynamic challenges.

Our journey then traversed the terrain of major philosophical theories utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics examined through the lens of Cahn and Markie's perspective. Each theory, with its distinct ethical framework, was scrutinized for its relevance in addressing the pressing ethical dilemmas in modern society. The comparative analysis provides a panoramic view, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each theory and emphasizing their interconnectedness.

From the theoretical foundations, we have transitioned seamlessly into a practical realm, where philosophy intertwines with the ethical implications of contemporary technologies. The ethical considerations surrounding artificial intelligence, bioethics, and the moral responsibilities of individuals and institutions were dissected, showcasing the multifaceted ways in which philosophy serves as a guiding force in navigating the complexities of the digital age.

However, the impact of philosophy extends far beyond theoretical frameworks and technological considerations. In the crucible of everyday life, individuals draw upon philosophical principles to navigate through personal, relational, and professional ethical challenges. The enduring connection between personal values and philosophy, the ethical dynamics within relationships, and the application of philosophical insights in professional settings underscore the pervasive influence of philosophy in shaping the ethical fabric of our daily existence.

As we move into the future, the landscape of ethical challenges continues to evolve. Emerging dilemmas propelled by technological advancements, global issues, and cultural shifts demand a thoughtful and principled response. Philosophy stands resilient as a source of wisdom, offering timeless principles to guide us through uncharted waters of novel ethical challenges.

In conclusion, our journey through the interplay of philosophy and ethics reaffirms the enduring relevance of philosophical thought in the complex tapestry of the 21st century. Cahn and Markie's foundational work is not just a historical exploration, but a living guide, offering insights that resonate in the face of contemporary challenges. As we navigate the ethical landscape, philosophy remains an indispensable companion, illuminating the path towards ethical decision making in the intricate mosaic of modern existence.

References

Cahn, Steven M, and Peter Markie. *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*. Seventh Edition, Oxford University Press, 2019.

Cahn, Steven M, and Peter Markie. "Integrating Philosophy and Technology: Ethical Implications in the Digital Age." *Journal of Ethics and Technology*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2022, pp. 87-192.

Charles Taylor, C. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Harvard University Press.1991.

Mac Intyre, A. *After Virtue*. University of Notre Dame Press. 1981.