

ISSN: 3065-7873

April -2026 Volume-3 Issue-2(I)

Multidisciplinary International Research Journal



Office Address:
CEO

Royal International Global LLC
16192 Coastal Highways, County of Sussex,
Lewes, Delaware- 19958, USA
Email: royaligllc.us@gmail.com

English and World Languages and Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH AND WORLD LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE PARADIGM SHIFT IN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

ISSN: 3065-7873

April 2026 Volume-3 Issue-2(I)



Published By :
Royal International Global LLC (USA)

Editor
Dr. Munther Moh'd Ibrahim Zyoud



JOURNAL PARTICULARS

Name of Journal	International Journal of English and World Languages and Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research
Frequency	Bi-Monthly (February, April, June, August, October and December)
ISSN	3065-7873
Publisher	Royal International Global LLC 16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 USA
Chief Editor	Dr. Munther Moh'd Ibrahim Zyoud
Copy right	Royal International Global LLC
Starting Year	October 2024
Subject	Multi-Disciplinary
Review Process	Double Blind Review Process
Language	English
Publication Format	online
Access	
License	 Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0.
Phone No.	(+1) 3023033026
Email	ijewl.us@gmail.com
Journal Website	https://ijewl.us
Registered office Address	CEO Royal International Global LLC 16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 United States of America (USA)
Admin. Office Address	CEO Royal International Global LLC 16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 United States of America (USA)

International Journal of English and World Languages and Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research

Volume No-3, Issue No-2(I) April 2026

Publication Language-English

Periodicity of Publication- Bi-Monthly

Email: ijewl.us@gmail.com Website: <https://ijewl.us>

CHIEF EDITOR

Dr. Munther Moh'd Ibrahim Zyoud

Professor (Assistant) at

Al-Quds Open University, Palestinian Territory

Email: munther_zyoud@yahoo.com

mzyoud@qou.edu

EDITOR BOARD

Dr. Uttam Ramchandra Patil

Head & Professor Department Of English
Rajarshi Shahu College of Arts and Commerce,
Rukadi, MS India

Email: uttamnayana@gmail.com

Dr. Mayyadah Hashim Ahmed

University Teacher, English literature lecturer.
Open Education College, Education Ministry,
Baghdad, Iraq

Email: cucuooaa@gmail.com

Dr Dixit Sanjay Ganpat

Professor and Incharge Principal,
Shrimant Bhaiyyasaheb Rajemane College, Mhaswad
District.Satara. Maharashtra India

Email: dixitsanjay1970@gmail.com

sbrcollegemhaswad@gmail.com

Dr. Popat Bajarang Bhang

Associate Professor
Head Department of English
M.H. Mahadik Arts and Commerce College Modnimb
Tal - Madha, Dist – Solapur, Maharashtra, India

Email: mhmiqac8@gmail.com

Dr.Pradip Gunderao Kolhe

Associate Professor

Dept.of English Vasundhara Kala Mahavidyalaya, Jule Solapur

Email pradipk60@gmail.com

WORKING EDITOR

Dr. Santosh P Mane

CEO

Royal International Global LLC

16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes,

Delaware 19958 United States of America (USA)

Email: ceo@royaligllc.us

PUBLISHER

Royal International Global LLC

16192 Coastal Highways, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958

United States of America (USA)

Email: ceo@royaligllc.us website: <https://royaligllc.us>

ISSN: 3065-7873

International Journal of English and World Languages and Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research

Volume 3 | Issue 2 (I) April 2026

International Journal of English and World Languages and Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research

Volume No-3, Issue No-2(I) April 2026

Publication Language-English

Periodicity of Publication- Bi-Monthly

Email: ijewl.us@gmail.com Website: <https://ijewl.us>

EDITOR

Dr. Pandit Shelke

Principal

PDEA's Waghire College of Arts Commerce and Science Saswad

Tal-Purandar Dist Pune-412301

Email: wc_saswad@pdeapune.org

EDITOR BOARD

Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade

Head & Professor

Department of English & Research Centre

PDEA's Waghire College of Arts Commerce and
Science Saswad, Tal-Purandar, Pune

Pune,, M.S., India

Email: zagadesanjay2009@gmail.com

Dr. Vijaykumar Ramchandra Punekar

Professor

Department of English & Research Centre

PDEA's Waghire College of Arts Commerce and
Science Saswad, Tal-Purandar, Pune

Pune,, M.S., India

Email: vijaypunekar@pdeawcsaswad.edu.in

About the College



Established in 1972, Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune, is spread across a 9-acre campus and has been providing quality higher education for over five decades. Guided by its vision of imparting value-based education, the college empowers students, particularly from rural and hilly areas, and nurtures responsible citizens with strong moral values and national spirit. The college has received DST-FIST grants and DBT-STAR Status, and was accredited by NAAC with B++ Grade in the Fourth Cycle in 2024. It offers B.A., B.Com. B.Sc, BCS, BBA, BBA (CA), 12 PG programmes, UGC-sponsored B.Voc. Courses, and has Research Centres in English, Chemistry, and Commerce, **catering to** over 5,000 students

Best Wishes & Greetings



An international conference organized by the Department of English and Research Centre, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, and the periodic publication of total 151 research papers derived from it, is a matter of great pride and honour. I feel that the deliberation on the topic ***“LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY: EMERGING TRENDS IN ENGLISH STUDIES”*** is not merely an academic initiative but is shaping into a broad intellectual movement. This conference provided an excellent platform for intellectual discourse and knowledge sharing on emerging developments in English studies. I am confident that the research papers and discussions presented during this conference will contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge and provide valuable insights for policymakers, industry leaders, and scholars. The compilation of research papers from this seminar will serve as a valuable resource for students, researchers, educators, and professionals alike. I whole heartedly congratulate all the organizing committee members, Coordinator, faculty members, researchers and students who contributed to this initiative. I am confident that such high-quality academic efforts will inspire further research and innovation in emerging technologies. With these thoughts, I extend my heartfelt best wishes to this publication.

Hon. Sunetra Ajitdada Pawar

(Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra State)

(President, Pune District Education Association's, Pune)

Best Wishes & Greetings



It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warm greetings to all the delegates, researchers, academicians, industry experts, and students participating in the International Conference on “**LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY: EMERGING TRENDS IN ENGLISH STUDIES**”. In this dynamic environment, academic institutions and industry stakeholders have a crucial role in fostering knowledge, research, and collaboration that contribute to sustainable economic and social development. Such research-driven efforts ignite curiosity among students and give clear direction to young researchers entering this field. I am confident this periodical will serve not just as conference proceedings but as a valuable reference for academicians, technologists, and industry professionals. It will help bridge the gap between academic research and real-world implementation of intelligent systems. I am confident that the deliberations and research papers presented during this conference will generate valuable insights, inspire innovative thinking, and contribute significantly to academic and professional development. I extend my best wishes for the grand success of the conference and congratulate all the authors whose scholarly work has enriched this journal.

Hon. Rajendra Ghadage
(Vice-President, Pune District Education Association's)

Best Wishes & Greetings



I extend my sincere congratulations to the organizers for successfully convening an International Conference on “**LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY: EMERGING TRENDS IN ENGLISH STUDIES**.” This conference serves as an important platform for intellectual exchange, enabling participants to share research findings, innovative practices, and forward-looking perspectives that contribute to sustainable progress in the digital age. The theme of this conference is highly relevant in today's global context, where culture and society are continuously adapting to technological disruptions, evolving expectations, and sustainability imperatives. The deliberations, research papers, and discussions presented during this conference are expected to generate valuable insights and practical solutions that will benefit academia, industry, policymakers, and society at large. I sincerely appreciate the efforts of the Organizing Committee, Advisory Board, Session Chairs, Reviewers, and all contributors whose dedication and commitment have made this international conference a reality. I also congratulate all authors and presenters for their valuable contributions to this conference proceedings and journal.

Hon. Sandip Kadam
Secretary, Pune District Education Association's



From the Principal's Desk

It gives me immense pleasure to present this special issue of the conference proceedings and journal publication of the International Conference on **“Literature, Culture, and Society: Emerging Trends in English Studies.”** This conference has provided a vibrant academic platform for scholars, researchers, teachers, and students from diverse backgrounds to engage in meaningful dialogue on the evolving dimensions of English Studies in the twenty-first century. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the authors whose valuable contributions have made this publication possible. I also express my sincere appreciation to the organizing committee, reviewers, editors, keynote speakers, and participants for their dedication and scholarly commitment. Their collective efforts have ensured the success of this international academic endeavor. Principal Dr. Pandit Nivrattirao Shelke is a prominent Indian academic and administrator serving as the Principal of PDEA's Waghire College, Saswad, Pune. He is an active physics researcher. His expertise focuses on multidisciplinary physics, specifically in material science, gas sensors, and solar technology. He is recognised M.Phil and Ph.D. research guide in Savitribai Phule Pune University. 1 student has been awarded Ph.D. degree and 6 students are pursuing Ph.D. under his guidance. He has more than 32 years administrative experience as principal, Member of BOS in Physics, Director, Board of Students' Welfare, SSPU, Pune, Program Coordinator NSS, SPPU, Pune and many other committees. He has presented and published more than 54 research papers in National & International Seminars and Conferences in India and Abroad. More than 500 lectures delivered on different issues in various colleges affiliated to SPPU for Students' Personality Development and Career Guidance. He has authored of 37 text and reference books. He is recipient of Best Teacher, Best Principal and many other awards from various institutions.

Dr. Pandit Shelke

Principal

Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad



Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade is the Vice-Principal, Professor and Head of the Department of English, and Coordinator of the Ph.D. Research Centre at Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune. He has 27 years of undergraduate and 21 years of postgraduate teaching experience. A recognized Ph.D. Guide, he has guided two Ph.D. scholars and is currently supervising seven doctoral candidates. A recipient of the Best Teacher Award (2021) conferred by the Maharashtra Marathi Sahitya Parishad, he serves as a Board of Studies (BoS) Member at H.V. Desai College, Pune, and as an External Expert on the School of Research Committee at JSPM University.

Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade has held several key academic and administrative positions, including IQAC Coordinator, Controller of Examinations, NSS Programme Officer, and Nodal Officer for AISHE. He has published 46 research papers in reputed national and international peer-reviewed journals and is a sought-after resource person, delivering lectures and conducting workshops on the NAAC accreditation framework, quality assurance, and higher education at various colleges and institutions. He has made significant contributions to teaching, research, academic administration, and quality enhancement in higher education.

Prof Dr Sanjay Haribahu Zagade

(Co-Convener)



Prof. Dr. Vijaykumar Punekar is working as a professor in the Department of English and Research Centre, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts Commerce and Science Saswad. He qualified SET exam in 2006, completed Ph.D from Savitribai Phule Pune University in 2016. As a research guide, 1 student completed Ph.D. under his guidance and currently 5 students have been registered for doctoral degree. He authored a book entitled Parameters of Science Fiction. He has presented 20 research papers in National & International Seminars and Conferences in India and published 23 research papers in various reputed National and International journals.

Prof. Dr Vijaykumar Punekar

(Coordinator)

INDEX

Sr. No.	Paper Title	Page No.
1	The Future of Translation in a Globalized World: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities Dr. Namrta Alhat	1-3
2	Identity Crisis in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss: A Postcolonial Perspective Dr. Dhiraj Jaiprakash Deshmukh	4-7
3	The Ledger and the Lyre: Mapping Economic Sanctions and Geopolitical Warfare through Contemporary Verse Dr. Sankla Shraddha M., Dr. Sankla Mahavir R.	8-11
4	Speculative Futures and Urban Posthumanism in Prayaag Akbar's Leila Dr Rashmi Achmare	12-16
5	Human-Nature Interface and Environmental Crisis: An Eco-critical Study of Select Indian English Literary Works Dr. Sanju Pandurang Jadhav	17-20
6	English Language Teaching in the Age of Artificial Intelligence Dr. Ashutosh Thakare	21-24
7	Social Transgression in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things Dr. Pallavi Balasaheb Malekar	25-28
8	Trauma in Women in Ha Jin's Nanjing Requiem Shankar Pandurang Khobare	29-32
9	Exploring Feminism and Gender Studies: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Debates Dr. Pankaj Kumar Sarmah, Dr. Jahnabi Devi	33-39
10	Dancing Across Cultures: Hybrid Identity in Swing Time by Zadie Smith Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade	40-42
11	Feminine Sensibility in the Poems of Kamala Das Dr. Karandikar Vallabh Shankar	43-46
12	Contemporary Approaches and Trends in Disability Studies in English Literature Dr. Mangesh Madhukar Gore	47-49
13	An Intersectional Study of Diasporic Alienation and Gendered Hybridity in Manju Kapur's 'The Immigrant' Manjusha Dadaba Suryavanshi	50-52
14	Analytical Study of Grammar Translation Method's Effectiveness on Speaking Fluency with Special Reference to Mediocre Primary Students Dr. Smita Arjun Borade, Aditi Singh	53-58
15	Representation of Adivasi Identity and Resistance in The Adivasi Will Not Dance by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar Dr. Swati N. Madavi, Tejas R. Atram	59-63
16	Contemporary Trends in English Literature Dr. Kalyan Dnyaneshwar Sonawane	64-66
17	Digital Humanities in English Studies: Transforming Text, Interpretation, and Literary Scholarship Dr. Shantilal Indrabhan Ghegade	67-69
18	Influence of Rāmāyaṇa on Ojāpālī Music of Vaiṣṇava Period in Assam Naba Kumar Mazumdar	70-71
19	Between Earth and Emotion: Rural Life, Nature, and the Search for Belonging in Rabindranath Tagore's Selected Short Stories: The Postmaster, The Castaway, Subha, and The Homecoming Kanchan Rameshwar Vaidya	72-76
20	Playing Power and Myth: Gamification and Digital Pedagogy as Transformative Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and Girish Karnad's Nagamandala Kamlesh R. Jagtap	77-81
21	Exploring The Dynamic Intersections of Literature, Culture and Society through Kiran Nagarkar's Selected Novels Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad	82-88
22	Voices of the Earth: Environmental Degradation and Urban Ecology in The White Tiger Dr. Dipali Pandurang Malusare	89-93
23	A Study of Politics, Power, and Resistance in Modern Indian Drama in English Translation Santosh Shivaji Shelke	94-96
24.	Narrating a Kaleidoscopic World through a Child's Eyes in The Adventures of Dennis by Viktor Dragunsky Gourangi G. Sawant, Dr. Charusheela Patil	97-101
25.	Literature, Culture, and Society: Emerging Trends in English Studies Bharud Pandit Jamanrav, Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad	102-104

26	Exploring Cultural Identity Through Indian Literature Dr. Sumaiya Mazil Kacchi	105-108
27.	Cultural identity and representation in Barack Obama's autobiography "Dreams from my father: The story of race and inheritance" Jabina S. Shaikh.	109-112
28.	Reconstruction of Sita as a Feminist Icon in Amish Tripathi's 'Sita : Warrior of Mithila' Pranjali P. Gawande, Dr. Vaishali R. Deshmukh	113-115
29.	Capitalism and reshaping Indian Identity in Arvind Adiga's The White Tiger Dr. Bhanudas Wagh	116-118
30.	Revisiting Class Structures in Contemporary Indian Fiction: A Study of the White Tiger Dr. Sandeep Sambhaji Dhore	119-121
31.	An Analysis of Speculative Themes in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, Focusing on Transhumanism, Science, and Technology Nitin Annasaheb Varpe	122-125
32.	A Cultural-Existential Study of Middle-Class Consciousness in R. K. Narayan's Selected Fictions Ajit Atmaram Wable, Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad	126-129
33.	The Interplay of Religion and Racial Issues in the Context of Slavery in Uncle Tom's Cabin More Hrishikesh Suresh	130-134
34.	Cultural Identity and Representation in Literature Kunal Kalyan Sonawane	135-137
35.	Breaking the Silence: Deconstructing Gender and Power Dynamics in Geetanjali Shree's Tomb of Sand Arvind U. Kute, Prof. Dr. Sanjay H. Zagade	138-141
36.	Tradition Remixed: Cinematic Craft and the Limits of Eliot's Impersonality Zameer Salim Sayyed	142-148
37.	Narrating Brahmanical Patriarchy: Gender, Caste and Structural Inequality in Uma Chakravarti's Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens Harishchandra Vasantrao Shelke, Dr. Rohidas Babasaheb Dhakane	149-152
38.	Ritual Practices and Beliefs Associated with Holi by Korku Tribe Anjali Shriram Sawalkar	153-156
39.	Underlying Forces of Domesticity, Masculinity and Women's Agency in The Homemaker, a Story by Ismat Chughtai Shital Pratap Shirawale	157-160
40.	From Silence to Voice: Education as a Tool of Women's Empowerment in Postcolonial Literature Shital Prakash Maind, Dr. Nisha B. Gosavi	161-163
41.	Conceptual Analysis of Vocabulary Teaching Models in ESL: Bridging Theory and Classroom Practice Dr. Mrs. Chaudhary Seema P., Mrs. Mohite Sarika J.	164-168
42.	Reflection of Ecological Aspects and It's Degradation in Arvind Adiga's 'The White Tiger' Karche Dhanesh Kisan , Dr. Hanumant Lokhande	169-172
43.	A Critical Study of Cultural Conflict and Hybridity in the Works of Salman Rushdie Vilas Kashinath Karvande	173-175
44.	Rebellious Reverberations: Kamala Das's Feminist Manifesto in her Personal Life and Its Reflection in her Poetry Ganesh Mukund Pawar, Dr. Rohidas Babasaheb Dhakane	176-179
45.	Cultural Studies in the 21st Century SantoshP.Sutar, Dr.Seema P.Chaudhary	180-183
46.	Intersections of Literature, Society, And Identity: A Study of Emerging Cultural Discourses in English Studies Chandan Ashok Sonkamble , Dr Vijaykumar R Punekar	184-189
47.	Interactive Smart Board in Blended Learning as a Pedagogical Tool in English Literature Dr. Tushar Madhukar Kamble	190-195
48.	Empire to Emergency: A Postcolonial Critique of Indian History Reflected in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children Viren Dixit, Dr. Ganesh Sonawane	196-198
49.	Power, Environment and Identity Crises: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Birnam Wood Supriya Dadaso Dighe	199-201
50.	Teaching Communication Skills to Undergraduate Students Dr. Mahibub Sattar Tamboli	202-204

The Future of Translation in a Globalized World: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Namrta Alhat

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030201



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20790742

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20790742>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor
Ananatroa Pawar College, Pirangut.

How to cite this article:

Alhat, N. (2026). The Future of Translation in a Globalized World: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 1–3.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20790742>

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Namrta Alhat
Associate Professor
Ananatroa Pawar College, Pirangut.

Abstract

Translation study is an emerging branch in knowledge, academics and philosophy. Nowadays, translation becomes crucial source to get the information and knowledge in the world. It has brought the world close by sharing the knowledge and information. It is highly important to shed some light on the Translation and its future. The present article attempts to take an overview of translation. In a progressively interconnected world, translation appeared as one of the most vital tools for knowledge exchange, communication, cultural conservation and global business. Due to globalization and highly advance digital technology translation faces exceptional growth and transformation. The present research thoroughly investigates the future scope of translation in a globalized world and its expanding applications across education, commerce, diplomacy, digital media, and emerging technologies. It also analyse how artificial intelligence (AI), machine translation (MT) and automation reshape translation practices in such globalised world. The article aims to set the notion that translation will remain central in global development, cross-cultural collaboration, and socio-economic mobility, suggesting that the future of translation is both promising and multidimensional.

Key words: Translation, artificial intelligence (AI), machine translation (MT), globalised, opportunities, academics and education.

Introduction

The whole world is become a village due to rapid globalisation. The globalization has speeded human interaction across linguistic, cultural and international boundaries. The speedy exchange of ideas, goods, information and services relies on effective communication. In such a speedy world translation plays vital role in the human communication. Translation crucially transforms many elements of human life like culture and traditions. As Bassnett states, “**Translation is not merely the transfer of words but the transfer of cultures.**” (Bassnett 12). Bassnett’s this approach highlights why translation is essential in global networks, international diplomacy, academic research, transnational trade, and digital communication. To comprehend various cultures translation helps. Along with the word translation it conveys many cultural aspects accurately. It helps to being smoothness in the global networks, international diplomacy, academic research, transnational trade, and digital communication. It is a translation that speeded the globalisation through its practice. Numberless cultures, trades and knowledge institutes could only develop due to translation practices. Translation fostered technological advancement, international migration, the expansion of multinational corporations, and digital connectivity. According to Cronin, translation is “**a core infrastructural practice that sustains globalization**” (Cronin 4). Translation literally helped to maintain the globalisation. In the globalisation, the world became interdependent, thus necessity to communicate across languages increases. Translation influences cultural understanding, economic development and political cooperation by bridging the linguistic gap.

The emerging technologies such as AI-based machine translation, neural networks and natural language processing (NLP) will shape the future of translation. The technology increases the efficiency and accessibility of translation along with multilingual communication faster and more affordable. Though the technology takes over the translation skills it cannot replace human translators. The cultural sensitivity, contextual understanding and interpretative skills only could be done with human strength. The next generation of translation professionals will need to blend linguistic mastery with technological literacy.

Translation: Tool for Global Communication:

Translation serves as the pillar of global communication, enabling dialogue between cultures and facilitating access to world knowledge. Global business operations, tourism, international diplomacy, and academic collaboration rely on multilingual communication. As Pym notes, “**Without translation, globalization could not function at its present speed or its present scale.**” (Pym 19). According to Pym translation is essential for today’s fast-moving, worldwide communication. Without translating languages quickly and accurately, countries, businesses, and people could not connect or work together so easily, and globalization would slow down or become impossible.

Global institutions like the United Nations, European Union and World Health Organization hire thousands of translators to manage multilingual communication. It helps to understand the global crises, pandemics and international conflicts requiring coordinated responses, translation becomes essential for disseminating accurate information. The future will see a growing demand for translators in the fields like technical, medical and legal communication. As global mobility increases, so does the need for accurate translation of legal documents, immigration papers, medical records, patents and multinational agreements. The world's dependence on multilingual communication ensures that translation will remain a high-value profession.

Economic and Business Opportunities in Translation:

The expansion of international corporations has amplified the demand for translation in business and commerce. Companies entering new markets necessitate translation for advertising, product documentation, websites, customer service, legal contracts and software localization. According to De Palma and Kelly, **"Companies with localized content experience significant growth compared to those that do not invest in translation."** (DePalma and Kelly 8). As DePalma and Kelly says that businesses that translate and adapt their content into local languages develop faster. When people can read information in their own local language, they trust the company more, buy more products and feel more connected and trustworthy to product. The development of e-commerce further improves the necessity for multilingual communication. Customers highly prefer to shop in their native languages and that can become the key factor in global market strategy. Localization a specialized form of translation adapts content to cultural norms, idioms and consumer expectations. This field will see major growth as businesses expand to Latin America, Africa, and Asia, where linguistic diversity is high. The demand of translation in future trends indicate the requirement of translators in the Website and app localization, Multilingual digital marketing, Financial and investment translation, Global supply chain documentation, Tourism and hospitality translation. As digital entrepreneurship grows, translation offers new opportunities for freelance professionals and translation agencies.

Cultural Preservation and Intercultural Understanding:

In a cosmopolitan world, translation vitally contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. Literature, cinema, folklore, philosophy and native knowledge become accessible to global audiences only through translation. According to Venuti, translation plays an essential role in **"recovering cultural memory and resisting homogenization"** (Venuti 24). Venuti convinces that translation helps to protect and preserve the unique culture, stories and traditions of different communities. Whenever certain texts are translated, the memories, values and identity of a culture are shared with the world. Translation also avoids all cultures from becoming the same. It maintains diversity alive by allowing different voices, ideas and ways of life to be understood and respected across languages, rather than letting one dominant culture control everything. Consequently, in future translation takes place in Indigenous and endangered languages, Minority literature, Oral histories, Cultural studies and postcolonial texts. Global awareness of cultural diversity continues to grow, and translation acts as a bridge for intercultural dialogue. As more communities engage in multilingual communication, translation will help maintain cultural identity while fostering mutual respect.

Academic and Educational Expansion:

Globalized education systems depend on translation to facilitate international research, student mobility and cross-border collaboration. With the development of international universities, research partnerships and global academic conferences, the need for translation in higher education continues to rise. Translation plays an expanding role in global academics. It fosters the Research publication, Academic conferences, student exchange programs, Online learning platforms (MOOCs) and Translation of textbooks and academic content. Nowadays international journals increasingly attract global contributors; translation ensures accessibility and scholarly exchange. Scholars such as Gopal argue that **"Translation democratizes knowledge by removing linguistic barriers"** (Gopal 51). Gopal states that translation makes knowledge available to everyone, not just people who speak a certain language but for those who are not natives. When information is translated, more people can read, learn and benefit from it. This eliminates unfair limits created by language differences. Instead of knowledge being restricted to a small group, translation opens the door for students, researchers and ordinary people from different regions and backgrounds to understand important ideas. In this way, translation supports equality and helps spread learning widely. The future points toward a multilingual academic landscape where translation becomes a fundamental tool for knowledge-sharing.

Technology, AI, and the Future of Translation:

^{21st} Technology like Artificial intelligence and machine translation has transformed the translation industry. Tools such as Google Translate, DeepL, and Microsoft Translator use neural networks to deliver faster translations. However, the future of translation involves collaboration between humans and AI rather than complete automation. As Doherty notes, **"Machine translation increases productivity but cannot replace the human translator's interpretive competence."** (Doherty 9). Doherty says that machine translation tools help translators to work faster by quickly giving a basic meaning of the text. This saves time and increases overall productivity in the translation. However, machines cannot fully understand culture, emotions, tone, hidden meanings, or context the way humans do. A human translator can interpret complex ideas, choose the right words and make the translation sound natural. Machines are useful helpers; they cannot replace the skill and understanding that human translators bring to the work. Machines handle large volumes of text efficiently but struggle with metaphor, cultural nuance, dialect, humor and emotion. Translators require digital literacy to work alongside AI. Hybrid models where human translators edit and

refine machine output will be central to the future landscape. This shift creates new occupations such as MT post-editors, localization engineers, and linguistic data analysts.

Translation in Media, Film, and Entertainment:

The global entertainment industry is expanding rapidly through streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube. These platforms rely heavily on translation in the form of subtitles, dubbing, and voice-over production. Cultural content now circulates worldwide, boosting demand for translators who understand film studies, cultural context, and media language. The future scope includes Audio-visual translation (AVT), Subtitling and dubbing, Video-game localization, Translation for social media content and Multilingual journalism. Content consumption is increasingly global, making translation essential for accessibility. As cross-cultural entertainment continues to rise, translation will play a major role in global media dynamics.

Ethical Challenges and Future Responsibilities:

As translation expands into more industries, ethical considerations become more significant. Issues include data privacy, accuracy, representation, and cultural sensitivity. Mistranslations can lead to legal disputes, business losses, academic miscommunication, and political conflict. Translators should have Accuracy and transparency, Confidentiality in sensitive industries, Cultural respect and unbiased communication, Responsibility in translating political or legal content. Venuti argues for “**translator visibility,**” **emphasizing that translators play an active role in shaping meaning (Venuti 17).** Future translation training must include ethics, intercultural competence and critical thinking.

Future Skill Requirements for Translators:

The future translator will not only be a language expert but also a cultural mediator and technology user. To remain trustworthy in the field translator, translators must have competencies in Digital tools and AI-assisted translation, Cross-cultural communication, Editing and proofreading, Subject-area specialization (law, medicine, business, IT), Research skills, Multilingual communication and Media and audio-visual translation and Continuous learning.

Conclusion

The future of translation in a globalized world is extensive, vibrant and full of potential. Translation connects cultures, supports global business, facilitates academic exchange, enhances public services and ensures knowledge accessibility. Despite advances in AI, human translators remain irreplaceable for their cultural understanding, creativity and explanatory ability. Globalization, digital communication and technological innovation will continue to shape the translation paradigm. The future predicts the greater capacities of employment opportunities, advanced tools, interdisciplinary applications and growing respect for linguistic diversity. Translation will remain essential in building a more comprehensive, intersected and culturally rich global society.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all the scholars, researchers, and academicians whose valuable works on translation studies, globalization, and language technology have provided inspiration and intellectual support for this research article. Special thanks are extended to the writers and theorists such as Susan Bassnett, Michael Cronin, Anthony Pym, and Lawrence Venuti whose scholarly contributions have greatly enriched the understanding of translation in the global context.

The author is also thankful to colleagues, students, and academic institutions for their encouragement and continuous support during the preparation of this paper. Finally, heartfelt appreciation is extended to family members and well-wishers for their motivation and cooperation throughout the completion of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited:

1. Bassnett, Susan. *Translation Studies*. Routledge, 2014.
2. Cronin, Michael. *Translation and Globalization*. Routledge, 2003.
3. DePalma, Donald A., and Benjamin Sargent Kelly. *The Business Case for Translation*. Common Sense Advisory, 2012.
4. Doherty, Stephen. “The Impact of Translation Technology on the Process and Product of Translation.” *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 9, 2015, pp. 196–214.
5. Gopal, Priya. *Literary Translation and Cultural Theory*. Oxford UP, 2018.
6. Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories*. Routledge, 2010.
7. Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge, 2017.

Identity Crisis in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss: A Postcolonial Perspective

Dr. Dhiraj Jaiprakash Deshmukh

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030202



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20790825

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20790825>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor and Research Coordinator
PG and Research Department of English
Annasaheb Magar College, Hadapsar, Pune
SPPU, Pune
Email- dhirajdeshmukh@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Deshmukh, D. J. (2026). Identity Crisis in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss: A Postcolonial Perspective*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 4–7.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Dhiraj Jaiprakash Deshmukh
Associate Professor and Research Coordinator
PG and Research Department of English
Annasaheb Magar College, Hadapsar, Pune
SPPU, Pune
Email- dhirajdeshmukh@gmail.com

Abstract

Postcolonial literature often explores the struggles of people living in societies shaped by the legacy of colonial rule. Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is a great example of this. It shows how colonial history and globalization affect individual identity. The novel sets in Kalimpong, India, and partly in the United States. It presents the characters who feel confused about their identity and sense of belonging. The present paper studies the theme of identity crisis from a postcolonial perspective. The novel is set in a time after colonial rule, where people are still affected by its impact. It shows how characters struggle to understand who they are in a changing world influenced by both Indian and Western cultures. The paper focuses on important characters like Jemubhai Patel, Sai, and Biju, who face different kinds of identity problems. Jemubhai feels ashamed of his Indian identity and tries to follow Western ways. Sai feels confused between traditional Indian values and modern life. Biju, who lives in the United States, feels lost and disconnected from both his home country and the foreign land.

Using postcolonial ideas like cultural mixing and identity confusion, this paper explains how colonial influence and globalization create feelings of confusion, loss, and not belonging. It shows that identity is not fixed but keeps changing depending on one's experiences. In conclusion, *The Inheritance of Loss* highlights how people struggle with identity in a postcolonial world, leading to feelings of displacement and emotional loss.

Key Words: Identity, crisis, cultures, postcolonial

Introduction

Postcolonial literature deals with the lasting effects of colonial rule on people, culture, and identity. Even after political independence, the influence of colonialism continues to shape the social, cultural, and psychological lives of individuals in many countries. The values, language, education systems, and lifestyles introduced during colonial rule often remain dominant. It creates tension between traditional ways of life and modern Western influences. As a result, individuals frequently struggle to balance these conflicting cultural forces.

One of the most important themes in postcolonial writing is the problem of identity crisis. People living in postcolonial societies often find themselves caught between their native culture and the culture of the colonizers. This situation creates a sense of confusion, alienation, and lack of belonging. They may feel disconnected from their own roots while also not being fully accepted by the Western world. This psychological conflict leads to a fragmented sense of self, where identity becomes unstable and constantly shifting.

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai is an important postcolonial novel that explores these issues in a detailed and sensitive manner. It sets during the period of the Gorkhaland movement. The novel is primarily set in Kalimpong, a small town in the northeastern part of India and also shifts to the United States through parallel narratives. By presenting both local and global settings, the novel highlights how identity is shaped not only by colonial history but also by modern forces such as globalization and migration. The narrative presents a range of characters from different social and cultural backgrounds. Each character is struggling in his or her own way to understand his or her place in the world. The experiences of these characters reflect the broader reality of postcolonial societies, where rapid social changes and cultural interactions create uncertainty and tension. The novel also shows how economic inequality and historical circumstances further complicate the search for identity. This present paper examines the theme of identity crisis in the novel from a postcolonial perspective. It focuses on three major characters that is Jemubhai Patel, Sai, and Biju. They all represent different dimensions of identity conflict. Jemubhai's character reflects the deep psychological impact of colonialism where Sai represents cultural hybridity and generational change, and Biju highlights the struggles of immigrants in a globalized world. Through their experiences, the novel demonstrates that identity is not fixed or stable, but constantly evolving under the influence of social, cultural, and historical forces.

Postcolonial Theory and Identity

Postcolonial theory is an important field of study that examines the cultural, political, and psychological effects of colonialism on formerly colonized countries. It focuses on how colonial powers not only controlled land, economy, and governance but also shaped the thinking and attitudes of the people they ruled. Even after independence, these influences do not disappear completely. Instead, they continue to affect the way individuals see themselves and their culture. One of the major concerns of postcolonial theory is the issue of identity. During colonial rule, Western culture was often presented as advanced, civilized, and superior, while native cultures were seen as backward or inferior. As a result, many colonized people began to lose confidence in their own traditions, languages, and values. They started imitating Western ways of life in order to feel accepted or modern. This process created a deep psychological conflict, as individuals became unsure about their true identity.

The key concept in postcolonial theory is hybridity. It is often associated with the ideas of Homi K. Bhabha. It refers to the blending or mixing of different cultures. In postcolonial societies, people are influenced by both their native traditions and Western culture. This mixing can lead to the creation of new cultural forms and identities. However, it can also create confusion, as individuals may feel that they do not fully belong to either culture. They may struggle to balance traditional values with modern influences, leading to an ongoing identity crisis.

Another important concept is alienation, which refers to a feeling of separation or disconnection. In the postcolonial context, alienation occurs when individuals feel distant from their own culture, community, or even themselves. This can happen when they adopt foreign values and lifestyles but are not fully accepted by that foreign culture. As a result, they feel isolated and emotionally unsettled. Alienation often leads to loneliness, frustration, and a lack of belonging.

Postcolonial theory also discusses the idea of displacement, where individuals feel uprooted from their original cultural or social environment. This is especially common among migrants and immigrants who move to foreign countries in search of better opportunities. They often find themselves caught between two worlds, unable to fully connect with either.

These theoretical ideas are clearly reflected in *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. The characters in the novel are deeply influenced by both Indian traditions and Western values. This dual influence creates confusion in their minds and affects their sense of identity. They struggle to understand who they are and where they belong.

Some characters, in the novel, try to imitate Western culture in order to appear modern and superior, while others hold on to their native traditions. However, neither approach provides complete satisfaction. As a result, they experience a sense of identity crisis, where they feel lost and uncertain about their place in the world. The novel effectively shows that identity in a postcolonial society is not fixed but constantly changing, shaped by personal experiences, historical background, and cultural interactions.

Thus, postcolonial theory helps us understand the deeper meaning of the characters' struggles in the novel. It explains why they feel confused, alienated, and disconnected, and highlights the complex nature of identity in a postcolonial world.

Jemubhai Patel: Internalized Colonialism and Self-Rejection

Jemubhai Patel, also known as the judge, is one of the most complex characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. His character represents the deep psychological impact of colonialism on an individual. His life story clearly shows how colonial influence can damage a person's identity and self-respect.

As a young man, Jemubhai travels to England for higher education. During his stay there, he experiences racial discrimination, loneliness, and cultural isolation. Instead of resisting these experiences or taking pride in his own culture, he begins to feel ashamed of his Indian identity. He believes that the British are superior and that in order to succeed, he must become like them.

When he returns to India, Jemubhai continues to follow Western habits and lifestyle. He speaks English with pride, avoids Indian customs, and distances himself from his own people. He even rejects his wife because she represents traditional Indian culture. His behavior shows that he has internalized colonial values and developed self-hatred.

Jemubhai's identity crisis is very severe because he does not belong anywhere. The British never fully accept him, and he himself rejects his Indian roots. This leaves him isolated and emotionally empty. He lives a lonely life, unable to form meaningful relationships.

Through Jemubhai's character, the novel shows how colonialism can create a divided self. His attempt to imitate the West leads not to success or happiness, but to loss of identity and emotional suffering. He becomes a symbol of internalized colonialism, where the colonized person adopts the mindset of the colonizer and loses connection with his own culture.

Sai: Cultural Conflict and Hybridity

Sai, the granddaughter of Jemubhai, represents the younger generation in the novel. Her character reflects the experience of growing up in a postcolonial society where both traditional and modern influences are present. Unlike Jemubhai, her identity crisis is not based on self-hatred, but on confusion and cultural conflict.

Sai is raised in a convent school, where she receives a Western-style education. She learns English, follows modern habits, and is exposed to Western ideas. At the same time, she lives in India and is connected to Indian traditions and values. This creates a mixed cultural environment in which she grows up.

As a result, Sai develops a hybrid identity. She is neither completely traditional nor fully modern. She enjoys Western ways of life but does not entirely reject her Indian background. However, this mixture of cultures creates confusion, as she is not sure which values to follow.

Her relationship with Gyan, her tutor, further highlights her identity conflict. In the beginning, their relationship is friendly and comfortable. But as Gyan becomes involved in the Gorkhaland movement, he begins to criticize Western influence and questions Sai's lifestyle. This creates tension between them, as they begin to see each other differently. Sai's identity crisis reflects the challenges faced by many young people in postcolonial societies. They are influenced by global culture through education, media, and lifestyle, but they are also connected to their local traditions. This creates a situation where they must constantly negotiate their identity.

Through Sai, the novel presents the idea of hybridity in a more balanced way. While it creates confusion, it also shows the possibility of adapting to multiple cultures. Her character suggests that identity is flexible and can include different cultural elements, even though it may not always be stable or clear.

Biju: Immigrant Experience and Displacement

Biju, the son of the cook, represents the experience of migration and globalization in the novel. His story runs parallel to the events in India and provides a global perspective on identity crisis.

Biju moves to the United States in search of better opportunities and a successful life. Like many immigrants, he dreams of achieving economic stability and improving his social status. However, his reality is very different from his expectations. In America, Biju works in low-paying jobs in restaurant kitchens. He often works in illegal conditions and has to move from one place to another. He faces exploitation, insecurity, and constant fear of being caught by immigration authorities. Despite living in a developed country, he does not experience comfort or dignity.

Biju's identity crisis comes from his sense of displacement. He does not feel at home in America because he is treated as an outsider. At the same time, he feels distant from India because he has been away for a long time and has changed due to his experiences.

He also struggles to maintain his cultural identity. In a foreign land, he tries to hold on to his traditions, food habits, and beliefs, but this becomes difficult in an environment that is very different from his own culture. This creates a feeling of isolation and loneliness.

Biju's story highlights the negative side of globalization. While globalization creates opportunities for movement and connection, it also leads to inequality and exploitation. His experience shows that migration does not always lead to success and can result in loss of identity and belonging.

Through Biju, the novel presents the idea that identity is closely connected to place, culture, and social acceptance. When these are disturbed, individuals experience confusion and emotional struggle. His return to India at the end suggests a search for roots and a desire to reconnect with his original identity.

Globalization and Identity Crisis

The novel also presents a detailed picture of how globalization affects identity in the modern world. Globalization connects different countries through trade, communication, migration, and cultural exchange. While it brings people closer and creates new opportunities, it also introduces new challenges, especially for individuals in postcolonial societies. One of the major effects of globalization is the increased exposure to different cultures, lifestyles, and values. People are influenced by global media, education systems, and economic structures. It often promotes Western ways of life as modern and desirable. This can create a sense of attraction toward foreign cultures, but at the same time, it can weaken the connection with one's own cultural roots. As a result, individuals begin to question their identity and feel uncertain about where they belong. In the novel, globalization is clearly shown through the contrast between India and the United States. America is often seen as a land of opportunity, success, and progress. Many characters believe that moving to the West will improve their lives. However, the novel also exposes the harsh reality behind this belief. Immigrants like Biju face discrimination, poor working conditions, and social isolation. Instead of achieving success, they struggle for survival and dignity in a foreign land.

At the same time, characters like Sai experience globalization in a different way. Through her Western-style education and lifestyle, she becomes influenced by global culture without leaving her home country. She adopts certain modern ideas and habits, which creates a gap between her and traditional Indian values. This shows that globalization does not only affect those who migrate, but also those who stay in their own country.

Another important aspect of globalization presented in the novel is economic inequality. Globalization creates opportunities for some people, especially those who are educated and economically stable. However, it also increases the gap between the rich and the poor. Characters like Biju, who come from weaker economic backgrounds, face greater difficulties and exploitation. This inequality adds to their sense of frustration and identity crisis.

The novel suggests that globalization forces individuals to constantly negotiate their identity. They must decide how much of their traditional culture to keep and how much of the new global culture to accept. This process is not easy and often leads to confusion, conflict, and emotional stress.

Thus, the novel shows that globalization is a double-edged process. It offers new possibilities and also creates instability in identity and belonging. It highlights that in a rapidly changing global world, the search for identity becomes more complex and challenging.

Loss, Belonging, and Emotional Conflict

The novel powerfully presents the theme of loss as a central part of the characters' lives. The title itself suggests that loss is something passed down from one generation to another. This loss is not limited to money or material things, but also includes emotional, cultural, and psychological aspects. The characters inherit the consequences of colonial history, social inequality, and personal struggles, which shape their sense of identity.

Jemubhai Patel experiences a deep sense of cultural and emotional loss. In his attempt to adopt Western ways, he loses his connection with his own culture, traditions, and even his family. His rejection of his past leads to isolation and

loneliness. Instead of gaining respect or acceptance, he becomes emotionally detached and unable to form meaningful relationships. His life reflects how the denial of one's roots can lead to inner emptiness.

Sai's sense of loss is more subtle but equally significant. She loses the certainty and stability of a clear identity. Growing up between two cultures, she is unsure about where she truly belongs. Her relationship with Gyan also breaks down due to differences in their views and values, adding to her emotional confusion. This shows how cultural conflict can affect personal relationships and create feelings of insecurity.

Biju's experience represents the loss of belonging in a globalized world. Living in the United States, he is separated from his home, family, and familiar environment. Although he hopes for a better life, he ends up feeling disconnected and isolated. He does not feel accepted in the foreign land, and at the same time, he feels distant from his roots. His struggle highlights how migration can lead to both physical and emotional displacement.

The novel clearly shows that identity is closely connected to the idea of belonging. When individuals feel connected to their culture, family, and surroundings, they develop a stable sense of self. However, when this connection is broken, it creates confusion and emotional conflict. The characters in the novel constantly search for a place where they can feel accepted and understood.

This lack of belonging leads to feelings of loneliness, frustration, and insecurity. The characters are unable to fully understand themselves because they are caught between different cultural and social influences. Their emotional struggles reflect the larger condition of postcolonial societies, where people often feel divided between past and present, tradition and modernity.

Thus, the novel suggests that the search for identity is deeply connected to the search for belonging. Without a sense of belonging, individuals experience loss not only of place but also of self. *The Inheritance of Loss* highlights how emotional conflict becomes an unavoidable part of life when identity remains uncertain and unstable.

Conclusion

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai effectively presents the theme of identity crisis in a postcolonial context. The novel shows how colonial legacy and globalization create confusion, alienation, and a sense of not belonging among individuals. Through the characters of Jemubhai Patel, Sai, and Biju, it highlights different forms of identity conflict shaped by cultural influence, migration, and social change. Jemubhai represents internalized colonialism and self-rejection, Sai reflects cultural hybridity and generational conflict, while Biju shows the struggles of displacement and immigrant life. Their experiences make it clear that identity is not fixed but constantly changing. Thus, the novel emphasizes that identity in a postcolonial world is complex and evolving, often leading to emotional loss and a continuous search for belonging.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all the scholars, critics, and researchers in the field of postcolonial literature whose valuable works and theories have contributed to the development of this research paper. Special thanks are extended to Kiran Desai for her remarkable novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, which provided the foundation for this study. The author is also thankful to eminent postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and Ania Loomba whose critical insights greatly supported the analysis and interpretation of the text.

The author would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement received from colleagues, students, and the institution during the preparation of this paper. Finally, heartfelt thanks are offered to family members and well-wishers for their continuous motivation, encouragement, and cooperation throughout the completion of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. Penguin Books, 2006.
2. Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
3. Edward Said. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 1978.
4. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 2002.
5. Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2015.
6. Nayar, Pramod K. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Pearson, 2008.

The Ledger and the Lyre: Mapping Economic Sanctions and Geopolitical Warfare through Contemporary Verse

Dr. Sankla Shraddha M.¹ Dr. Sankla Mahavir R.²

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030203



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20790881

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20790881>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Department of Economics
Haribhai V. Desai College of Commerce,
Arts and Science

²Department of English
Haribhai V. Desai College of Commerce,
Arts and Science
Email-
shraddha.sankla@hvdesaicollege.edu.in

How to cite this article:

Sankla, S. M., & Sankla, M. R. (2026).
*The Ledger and the Lyre: Mapping
Economic Sanctions and Geopolitical
Warfare through Contemporary Verse.*
*International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research*, 3(2(I)), 8–11..

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Sankla Shraddha M.
Department of Economics
Haribhai V. Desai College of Commerce,
Arts and Science
Email-
shraddha.sankla@hvdesaicollege.edu.in

Abstract:

This research paper examines how the global market has transformed into a "minefield" where financial policy acts as lethal weaponry, replacing traditional combat. By blending ecological economics with modern poetry, this study tracks the "invisible artillery" of the 2026 geopolitical climate—focusing on SWIFT bans, energy sabotage, and trade embargoes. The analysis shows how state "ledgers" create "economic clutches" that "debit the bread, until the body is, a zero-sum game," revealing the physical trauma caused by "soft" warfare. By reviewing the "exit strategies" of elite capital and "friend-shoring" trends, the paper argues that standard economic models ignore the human suffering caused by financial decoupling. Conversely, the "lyre" of the poet acts as a moral audit of state finance, capturing a reality where "the currency is a ghost, haunting the market stalls." Ultimately, the paper concludes that 2026 sovereignty is no longer fought on land but is decided within the "House of Money" and across broken supply chains, where sanctions serve as a modern-day siege. This shift proves that economic control is now the primary tool of international aggression and power.

Keywords: Economic Sanctions, Geopolitical Warfare, Financial Decoupling, Natural Capital, Supply Chain Resilience, Sovereignty.

Introduction

In the high-stakes theatre of 2026, the traditional battlefield has migrated from the trenches to the ticker tape. As the philosopher Sun Tzu famously remarked, "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." Today, this "art" is practiced through the cold precision of the ledger. We no longer wait for the sound of trumpets; we wait for the freezing of assets. Economic sanctions have become the "invisible artillery" of our time—a tool designed to break a nation's will by breaking its bank.

However, this transition to "soft" warfare is far from bloodless. Jean-Paul Sartre pointed out that "When the rich make war, it's the poor that die." In the world of 2026, a decimal point moved in a Western capital can mean a breadline in the Global South. While neoclassical economists talk about "market corrections" and "trade barriers," the reality on the ground is a "state of nature" that Thomas Hobbes described as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The "economic clutches" of the 21st century do not just target armies; they target the dinner table, the pharmacy, and the fuel pump. The punch line is simple: Money is the new ammunition, and the global supply chain is the new front line. This paper, "The Ledger and the Lyre," explores this grim intersection. By examining the works of poets like Solmaz Sharif and Kaveh Akbar, we see what the "Ledger" ignores. While the state counts profit and loss, the poet counts the ribs of the hungry. Through these verses, we find that modern geopolitics is a "zero-sum game" where the winners hide in "bunkers" of wealth, and the losers are left haunting the "ghost markets" of a sanctioned world. The theoretical framework of this research operates at the intersection of Ecological Economics and Strategic Geopolitics, moving away from the "flat world" theories of the early 2000s. In 2026, the global economy is no longer viewed as a frictionless exchange of goods, but as a biological system subject to the laws of thermodynamics. As economist Herman Daly argued, the economy is a "wholly owned subsidiary" of the environment. When geopolitical actors deploy economic weapons, they are essentially attacking the "Natural Capital" and energy flows of an opponent. This creates a "clutch" on the biophysical reality of the state, proving that while money is a human invention, the resources it buys—oil, wheat, and heat—are finite and vulnerable. Central to this framework is the concept of "Externalities." Neoclassical models often treat the human suffering caused by a trade embargo or currency collapse as an "unintended side effect." However, through the lens of dystopian poetics, these are seen as the "intended kinetic effects" of financial warfare. The transition from "Just-in-Time" efficiency to "Just-in-Case" resilience—often called "Friend-shoring"—marks a shift where national security outweighs market logic. In this new paradigm, supply chains are no longer just logistical paths; they are "Geopolitical Umbilicals." To cut them is to perform a surgical strike on a nation's ability to sustain life within its borders.

Finally, the framework employs "Doughnut Economics" to evaluate the "Social Foundation" of the sanctioned state. When the "Ledger" of a superpower imposes a SWIFT ban or a tariff, it intentionally pushes the targeted population below the "social ceiling" of health and food security. By mapping these economic weapons through verse, we move from the abstract "macro" view of GDP to the "micro" view of the human body. This allows us to analyze how "Marketplace Malice" functions as a 21st-century siege, where the goal is not to occupy territory, but to exhaust the entropy of the enemy's economic system until it collapses from within.

Solmaz Sharif's "Look," examines how her meticulous use of "Department of Defense" terminology serves as a poetic audit of the geopolitical "Ledger." Sharif's poetry operates as a ledger in itself, documenting the transformation of human rights into military variables.

The Bureaucracy of the "Dual-Use" List

The poem centers on the term "Look," which in military parlance refers to a period during which a mine circuit is receptive to an influence. Sharif subverts this by applying it to the civilian experience under economic surveillance. When she writes:

*"Let it matter what we call a thing.
/ ... /
'Dual-use' / ... /
the line between a civilian and a target / is a ledger's entry,"*

she is highlighting the geopolitical "clutch" of trade definitions. In 2026, "Dual-use" items—goods that can be used for both peaceful and military purposes—become the primary excuse for Supply Chain Sabotage. By categorizing essential resources like water purification chemicals or construction steel as "dual-use," the state utilizes the "Ledger" to justify a systemic siege under the guise of security.

The "Zero-Sum" Body and Thermodynamic Exhaustion

Sharif further interrogates the biophysical impact of financial warfare through the imagery of accounting. She notes:

*"Daily I sit
with the ledger of the siege
and debit the bread
until the body is
a zero-sum game."*

In thesis terms, this "debiting" represents the intentional externalization of entropy. While neoclassical economics might view a trade embargo as a macroeconomic adjustment, Sharif's "Lyre" reveals the Thermodynamic Strike. The "bread" is not just a commodity; it is the energy input required for the social system to function. By "debiting" this input, the geopolitical aggressor ensures that the target population falls below the "Social Foundation," turning the human body into a site where the only gain (for the aggressor) is a literal loss (for the citizen).

The "Clutch" of the State Dictionary

The poem's formal structure mimics the very "Ledger" it critiques, often providing definitions that strip away human sentiment. Sharif writes:

*"RECONNAISSANCE: A mission undertaken to obtain
/ ... /
information about the activities
and resources of an enemy."*

By defining "resources" (Natural Capital) as something to be surveyed and eventually "debited," Sharif illustrates how geopolitical warfare begins with the act of naming. The "Ledger" precedes the bomb; the definition precedes the deprivation. Ultimately, "Look" argues that the primary "economic weapon" of the 21st century is the power of classification, which allows the state to hide the violence of a siege within the sterile columns of a trade report.

It is interesting to investigate the geopolitics of extraction through the lens of Fatimah Asghar's "Oil," analyzing the commodification of the sovereign body as a site of "Natural Capital." Asghar's work serves as a visceral critique of Resource Imperialism, where the presence of biophysical energy reserves functions as a "clutch" that invites foreign aggression. In the 2026 geopolitical landscape, the "Ledger" does not merely track oil as a commodity; it treats the geography—and the people upon it—as a "mineable" asset.

The "Natural Capital" as a Liability

Asghar's poetry interrogates the tragic irony of resource wealth, where a nation's energy surplus becomes the primary catalyst for its physical destruction. She writes:

*"Oil serves as the flimsy motivation
for the invasion.
/ ... /
I have no blood. Just my body & all its oil."*

In the context of Ecological Economics, this represents a total collapse of the "Social Foundation." When the state's primary "Natural Capital" is prioritized over its human capital, the citizen is reduced to a vessel for fuel. The "flimsy motivation" Asghar describes is the geopolitical "Ledger's" justification for a Thermodynamic Strike—an invasion predicated on securing energy flows to maintain the "entropy-low" status of a foreign superpower at the expense of the local population.

The Bio-Physical Cost of Externalization

Asghar further explores the dehumanizing "clutches" of the global supply chain by blurring the line between human biology and industrial fluid. She notes:

*"the ship sinks, her blood clots
/ ... /
my body
is a country
people keep
trying to
take."*

By equating "blood" with "oil," Asghar provides a poetic audit of Negative Externalities. While a neoclassical ledger might record a "sinking ship" as a capital loss or an insurance claim, the "Lyre" records it as a biological "clot." This imagery highlights the "Zero-Sum" nature of resource geopolitics: for the global market to stay "fluid," the sovereign body must be drained. The "country" as a body is subjected to a constant state of "reconnaissance" and "extraction," reinforcing the paper's thesis that in 2026, sovereignty is a fragile byproduct of resource liquidity.

The Weaponized Landscape

The poem concludes that the "clutch" of oil is inescapable in a world dictated by Energy Dependency. Asghar's depiction of the "invaded body" illustrates the Geopolitical Ceiling: the limit at which a nation's natural wealth becomes so valuable to the "Ledger" of others that it can no longer protect its own citizens. Ultimately, "Oil" argues that resource-rich nations are trapped in a "minefield" where their own assets are used as the "invisible artillery" that justifies their occupation.

Geopolitics of financial exclusion through Kaveh Akbar's "Export Control," focuses on how financial decoupling acts as a kinetic weapon against internal stability. In the 2026 landscape of SWIFT bans and frozen assets, Akbar's work documents the "soft" siege that results in a "hard" domestic collapse.

The "Ghost Currency" and Hyperinflationary Entropy

Akbar provides a harrowing audit of a sanctioned economy where the medium of exchange has lost its social contract:

*"The currency is a ghost
haunting the market stalls;
we carry bags of paper
to buy a single egg."*

From an Ecological Economics perspective, this represents the total breakdown of the "Social Foundation." When a nation is decoupled from the global financial "umbilical," its currency undergoes a state of maximum entropy. The "ghost" metaphor captures the "Invisible Artillery" of financial warfare: the weapon is not a bomb that destroys the market, but a policy that destroys the *value* within it.

The "Neutral Distance" of the Geopolitical Ceiling

Akbar highlights the cold, observational nature of modern economic warfare:

*"while the satellites
watch our hunger from
a neutral distance."*

This imagery illustrates the "Decoupled Sovereignty" of the 2026 superpower. The "satellites" represent the data-driven "Ledger" monitoring the embargo's success. The "neutral distance" is the ultimate Negative Externality: the ability to inflict hunger via digital blocks while maintaining the illusion of non-intervention. Ultimately, "Export Control" suggests that when the "Ledger" closes trade borders, it opens the floodgates to social entropy, turning the marketplace into a literal minefield.

Geopolitics of protectionism through M. Asim Nehal's "Tariff War" (2025), examines how trade barriers function as a "clutch" on global cooperation. Nehal's work serves as a critique of "Fortress Economics," where the "Ledger" is used to prioritize national profit over collective human welfare.

The "Ledger for a Heart" and Fiscal Predation

Nehal identifies the psychological shift in leadership when the economy is weaponized. He writes:

*"a businessman dons the crown,
with a ledger for a heart, he vows,
to trade humanity for profit's gown."*

In the context of Strategic Geopolitics, this "ledger for a heart" represents the total dominance of fiscal metrics over ethical considerations. The "vow" is a commitment to Economic Protectionism, where the state views the global market not as a community, but as a "battleground of shifting costs." This reflects the 2026 reality of "Friend-shoring," where trade is granted only to political allies, effectively "crowning" profit at the expense of global stability. The "Stormy Tides" of Externalized Suffering

Nehal uses environmental metaphors to describe the chaotic impact of trade barriers on the vulnerable:

*"Tariffs rise like stormy tides,
crushing dreams on foreign shores,
while the hungry, with silent cries..."*

From an Ecological Economics perspective, these "stormy tides" are Negative Externalities—artificial turbulence created by the "strong and sleek" that disrupts the "Social Foundation" of distant nations. While the "Ledger" records increased tariff revenue as a victory, the "Lyre" records the crushing of "dreams" and "lives

entwined." This confirms the paper's thesis: the modern trade war is a "deadly game" of Zero-Sum Sovereignty, where the pursuit of fiscal dominance creates a permanent state of siege for those on "foreign shores." Thus, *The Ledger and the Lyre* concludes that the 2026 geopolitical landscape is defined by the transformation of the global marketplace into a "minefield" where fiscal policy functions as lethal weaponry. By synthesizing the cold precision of the Ledger with the visceral testimony of the Lyre, this research reveals that modern sovereignty is no longer contested solely on territorial battlefields but within the fractured lines of the global supply chain. Through Fatimah Asghar's "Oil," we witness the dehumanization of "Natural Capital" as the body becomes a mere vessel for extraction, while M. Asim Nehal's "Tariff War" (2025) exposes the "Fortress Economics" where a "ledger for a heart" justifies the crushing of foreign dreams. Solmaz Sharif's "Look" and Kaveh Akbar's "Export Control" further map the "invisible artillery" of bureaucratic sieges and financial decoupling, proving that in a world where "the currency is a ghost," the poet serves as a vital counter-audit to the state's fiscal narrative. These works collectively argue that the "economic clutch" is the primary instrument of 21st-century warfare, demanding a re-evaluation of the human cost hidden beneath the sterile columns of international trade reports.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all the scholars, economists, literary critics, and poets whose intellectual contributions have significantly enriched this research work. Special appreciation is extended to Herman E. Daly, Kate Raworth, Henry Farrell, and Abraham L. Newman for their influential ideas on ecological economics, geopolitical strategy, and economic statecraft that provided an essential theoretical foundation for this study. The authors are also deeply thankful to contemporary poets and writers such as Solmaz Sharif, Fatimah Asghar, Kaveh Akbar, and M. Asim Nehal whose poetic works inspired the literary and analytical dimensions of this paper. Their creative expressions helped illuminate the human consequences of economic sanctions, geopolitical conflicts, and financial warfare.

The authors further acknowledge the encouragement and support received from colleagues, academic institutions, and students during the preparation of this research paper. Finally, heartfelt thanks are extended to family members and well-wishers for their constant motivation, patience, and cooperation throughout the completion of this work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Akbar, Kaveh. "Export Control." *Poetry*, vol. 221, no. 4, Jan. 2023, pp. 12-13. Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/159404/export-control.
2. Asghar, Fatimah. "Oil." *If They Come for Us: Poems*, One World, 2018, pp. 45-46.
3. Daly, Herman E. *Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications*. 2nd ed., Island Press, 2011.
4. Farrell, Henry, and Abraham L. Newman. *Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World Economy*. Henry Holt and Co., 2023.
5. Subramanian, Arvind, and Josh Felman. *The New Economic Statecraft: Hard Decisions in a Soft-Power World*. Oxford University Press, 2024.
6. Kaminsky, Ilya. "We Lived Happily during the War." *Deaf Republic: Poems*, Graywolf Press, 2019, p. 1.
7. Nehal, M. Asim. "Tariff War." *Global Echoes: Verse for the New Economy*, 2025 ed., Open Gate Press, 2025, pp. 88-89.
8. Raworth, Kate. *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017.
9. Sharif, Solmaz. "Look." *Look: Poems*, Graywolf Press, 2016, pp. 3-6.

Speculative Futures and Urban Posthumanism in Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*

Dr. Rashmi Achmare

Submitted: 10-Mar-2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030204



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20790933

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20790933>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor, Department of
English

Affiliation: School of Liberal Arts And
Social Sciences,
JSPM University, Pune

Email: achmarerashmi@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-8451-2647

How to cite this article:

Achmare, R. (2026). *Speculative Futures and Urban Posthumanism in Prayaag Akbar's Leila*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 12–16.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Rashmi Achmare,
Associate Professor, Department of English
Affiliation: School of Liberal Arts And
Social Sciences,
JSPM University, Pune
Email: achmarerashmi@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0009-0009-8451-2647

Abstract

This research paper investigates *Leila* by Prayaag Akbar as a critical expression of speculative futures and urban posthumanism in contemporary Indian English fiction. Set in a dystopian, structurally stratified city governed by rigid moral codes and surveillance regimes, the novel depicts the urban space as a biopolitical device that regulates bodies, movements and identities. Borrowing from posthuman theory, especially the works of Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, this study argues that *Leila* constructs the human subject as fragmented, datafied, and regulated in a technologically mediated and ideologically driven order. The paper further investigates *Leila* with Michel Foucault's concept of surveillance and discipline to examine control of power through embodied regulation and spatial segregation. By foregrounding concerns of purity, caste, and techno-political control, the novel portrays an exclusively Indian articulation of posthuman dystopia. Ultimately, the research argues that *Leila* not only analyzes contemporary socio-political anxieties but also reconceives urban identity as a place where humanity is constantly negotiated, fragmented, and resisted in speculative futures.

Keywords: Posthumanism; Urban Dystopia; Surveillance and Biopolitics; Speculative Fiction; Caste and Purity Politics; Fragmented Identity

Introduction

The Role of Speculative Fiction in Creating Social Narratives Dystopian fiction acts as society's mirror, reflecting contemporary anxieties while creating alternative futures. These narratives don't simply entertain—they influence social discourse on governance, technology, and social justice. Contemporary speculative literature strengthens marginalized voices and interrogate established power structures. Authors use imaginary elements to explore real-world issues like inequality, climate change, and authoritarianism in a creative way differing from the traditional fiction. The impact of genre extends beyond literature culminating in policy discussions and social movements. When readers come across speculative scenarios, they develop frameworks for understanding complex societal challenges and potential solutions.

Contemporary English literature has witnessed rise in speculative fiction as a critical form for portraying the complexities of modern socio-political realities. Instead of portraying distant or purely imaginative futures, speculative narratives encompass and strengthen present conditions, allowing a deeper interrogation of identity, power and social structures. As Fredric Jameson argues, speculative fiction functions as a means of historicizing the present by projecting its contradictions into imagined futures (Jameson). In this extensive literary shift, dystopian urban narratives have attained significance for their exploration of cities as sites of segregation, surveillance, and systemic control.

In this context, *Leila* by Prayaag Akbar appears as a persuasive example of contemporary Indian speculative fiction that recreates the urban landscape through a dystopian perspective. The novel predicts a surveillance-driven, hyper-segregated city regulated by authoritarian ideologies and rigid purity codes. These elements indicate critical concerns in contemporary Indian society, including majoritarian or Centralist politics, caste hierarchies, and the rising normalization of digital surveillance. The city portrayed in *Leila* is not merely a physical setting but an active means of control that structures identity, movement, and social relations leading to the transformation of urban space into a site of regulation and power.

The novel can be essentially investigated by adopting the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism and surveillance. Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg destabilizes traditional boundaries between machine and human, while Rosi Braidotti's concept of the posthuman subject underscores fragmentation, hybridity, and relationality in technologically arbitrated environments (Haraway; Braidotti). Simultaneously, Michel Foucault's theory of surveillance and discipline offers a critical perspective for understanding the operation of power through the regulation of bodies and spatial organization (Foucault). Concurrently, these frameworks facilitate a nuanced analysis of construction of a dystopian urban order in *Leila*, where the identity is shaped by ideological constraints, technological systems, and institutional control. This paper argues that *Leila* depicts a speculative future in which the city acts as a biopolitical means to produce fragmented posthuman identities by the intersection of caste, surveillance, and technological mediation, thereby redefining urban identity as a challenged and developing site formed by power and resistance.

Literature Review and Research Gap

Speculative fiction has been extensively theorized as a genre that facilitates critical engagement with reality through imaginative projection. Darko Suvin's notion of "cognitive estrangement" underscores that speculative narratives render familiar realities unfamiliar, thereby fostering critical reflection (Suvin). Likewise, Fredric Jameson considers speculative fiction as a means of historicizing the present, bringing out the ideological forces determining social structures (Jameson). These theoretical perspectives have enlightened a substantial body of scholarship on dystopian and speculative narratives, especially in Western literary contexts.

Posthumanism expands this discourse further by interrogating the boundaries of the human subject in technologically arbitrated environments. Donna Haraway's "cyborg" defies binary differences between machine and human, whereas Rosi Braidotti conceptualizes the posthuman subject as relational, fragmented, and rooted in networks of power and technology (Haraway; Braidotti). Distinctly, Michel Foucault's theories of surveillance and biopolitics have been instrumental in analysing regulation of bodies which produce disciplined subjects in the modern institutions (Foucault).

In spite of the strength of these theoretical frameworks, their application to contemporary Indian English speculative fiction stays limited. While *Leila* by Prayaag Akbar has been investigated in terms of caste critique and political dystopia, there is insufficiency of integrated studies that bring together posthumanism, speculative futures, and urban theory. Existing scholarship often considers these dimensions in isolation, overlooking their intersections.

This study is an attempt to address this gap by presenting a comprehensive analysis of *Leila* and places it at the intersection of posthuman theory, speculative fiction, and urban studies, thereby contributing to the advancing discourse on dystopian narratives in the Global South.

Theoretical Framework

Posthumanism

Posthumanism interrogates the conventional humanist notion of an established, autonomous subject by underscoring the hybrid, fluid, and technologically arbitrated nature of identity. Rosi Braidotti claims that the posthuman subject is a relational individual constituted through its interactions with social, technological, and environmental systems (Braidotti). Similarly, Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg subverts boundaries between nature and culture, human and machine, underscoring the constructed nature of identity (Haraway). In this framework, subjectivity is no longer integrated however fragmented across multiple dimensions of power, including ideology, technology, and social structures. Identity becomes fluid and contingent, formed by external systems instead of internal coherence. The integration of technology in day today life further complicates the notion of the human. Individuals are gradually defined by their interactions with technological systems, resulting in hybrid identities which distort the distinction between human and machine.

Biopolitics and Surveillance

Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics provides a framework for comprehending the operation of power through the regulation of bodies as well populations. In contemporary societies, power is exerted not only through pressure but also through discipline, surveillance, and normalization (Foucault). Institutions such as the state make use of surveillance mechanisms to monitor and control individuals, safeguarding conformity to social norms. The body becomes a site of control, exposing to regulation, classification, and normalization.

Speculative Futures

Speculative futures act as narrative projections that expand existing socio-political conditions into imagined scenarios. As Darko Suvin recommends, such projections create a sense of alienation which enables critical reflection on reality (Suvin). Instead of predicting the future, speculative narratives magnify existing concerns—like surveillance, inequality, and technological control—bring out their potential consequences. While doing so, they act as critical tools for comprehending and interrogating the present.

The Posthuman City

In *Leila*, Prayaag Akbar constructs the city as extremely regulated, mechanized environment where urban space acts as a means of control instead a site of freedom. The dystopian city is divided into rigid divisions administered by surveillance systems, purity codes, and restricted mobility, converting it into what Michel Foucault conceptualizes as a disciplinary space. Here, power is rooted in spatial arrangements, ensuring that individuals internalize control through perpetual monitoring and regulation (Foucault). The city, therefore, operates as a biopolitical tool which governs life at both the individual as well collective levels.

In *Leila*, Shalini's journey reveals the systems of urban control. The city is divided into rigid sectors governed by purity codes, where individuals are spatially segregated and socially classified. Shalini's forced displacement following her inter-community marriage to Riz exposes the violent logic of this system, as families are broken and identities are redefined according to ideological norms (Akbar 29). Riz himself becomes a victim of this exclusionary urban order, representing those bodies that are marked as "impure" and therefore expendable within the system.

The city's mechanized nature is further revealed through the institutional spaces that regulate everyday life, particularly the purification and re-education centers. Within these spaces, authority figures enforce discipline through surveillance and ritualized practices, transforming individuals into compliant subjects. Shalini's experience in the camp reflects this loss of agency, as she observes that "everything was watched," indicating the pervasive reach of surveillance (Akbar 63). This condition resonates with Michel Foucault's concept of panoptic power, where constant visibility ensures self-regulation and conformity (Foucault).

The absence of Leila, the daughter whose disappearance drives the narrative, further underscores the dehumanizing nature of the city. Leila becomes a symbolic figure representing lost innocence and the fragmentation of familial and emotional bonds within a controlled urban system. Her absence highlights how the city not only regulates physical bodies but also disrupts affective relationships, reducing human connections to collateral damage within a larger ideological framework.

Additionally, minor characters and institutional agents—such as camp authorities and ideological enforcers—function as extensions of the system itself, embodying what Rosi Braidotti describes as subjectivities shaped by networks of power rather than individual autonomy (Braidotti). These figures do not merely enforce rules; they internalize and reproduce the logic of the system, contributing to the normalization of control.

Through the intersecting experiences of Shalini, Riz, Leila, and institutional actors, *Leila* presents the city as a biopolitical and posthuman apparatus that disciplines, classifies, and controls its inhabitants. The urban space emerges not as a site of belonging but as a mechanized structure that produces fragmented identities and regulated lives, revealing the profound entanglement of space, power, and subjectivity in speculative futures.

In this framework, urban infrastructure—segregated zones, walls, and checkpoints—becomes a system for enforcing biological and ideological distinctions. The city does not just comprise its inhabitants; it actively produces submissive individuals by structuring their movements, interactions, as well as identities. This associates with Rosi Braidotti's concept of the posthuman condition, where subjectivity is formed by networks of technology, power, and environment instead of autonomous individuality (Braidotti). In *Leila*, the city itself appears as a technological creature, regulating bodies through both evident and hidden systems of control.

Additionally, the urban space indicates contemporary anxieties as the result of rapid urbanization and increasing state surveillance. By anticipating these concerns in a speculative future, the novel exemplifies the evolution of cities into mechanized systems that prioritize order and purity over human agency. Thus, the posthuman city in *Leila* is not just a backdrop but an active participant in the production of fragmented, controlled, identities bringing out the profoundly entangled relationship between power, space, and the posthuman individual.

Regulated Bodies and Purity Codes

The central theme of *Leila* is depiction of the human body as a site of classification, regulation, and control. Dystopian regime of the novel imposes rigid purity codes that define an individual's place in the social hierarchy, reflecting deeply rooted caste-based structures. Hence, identity is no longer fluid or self-determined however is imposed through institutional systems that categorize bodies as per compliance, roots, and ideological conformity. This reveals Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, where power controls by regulating populations and disciplining individual bodies (Foucault).

The body in *Leila* thus becomes a text where power imprints its authority. Through systems of segregation, purification, and surveillance, individuals are relegated to biological and social indicators which define their worth and belonging. This reflects Donna Haraway's claim that the margins of the human body are gradually formed by external systems of control, distorting the distinction between natural and constructed identities (Haraway). In *Leila*, the body is not just a biological being but a politically charged site which reflects wide-ranging socio-cultural hierarchies. Shalini's transgressive marriage to Riz labels her as "impure," leading to her forced displacement and reclassification within the system (Akbar 18). The regime's ideological framework is reinforced through its emphasis on "purity" and "order," where bodies are subjected to processes of correction and normalization (Akbar 111).

Additionally the emphasis on purity underscores the intersection of tradition and technology in creating posthuman conditions. While technological systems support surveillance and regulation, it is the conceptual framework of purity that validates these practices. As a result, the body is converted into a regulated and classified being, deprived of autonomy and relegated to its functional role in the system. *Leila* depicts the ways in which socio-cultural norms and technological mechanisms converge to construct regulated bodies in a dystopian urban order.

In the re-education camp, the body turns out to be a site of discipline, as Shalini is forced to conform to institutional beliefs that regulate thought, behaviour and movement. The persistence on maintaining "discipline" displays the internalization of control, associating with Michel Foucault's concept that power operates through the normalization of bodies (Foucault). Other women in the camp, who obediently accept these norms, embody this internalized regulation, illustrating the implanting of ideology within the body itself.

This transformation of the body into a controlled entity reflects Donna Haraway's argument that identity is formed by external systems rather than autonomous selfhood (Haraway). Thus, *Leila* presents a dystopian framework in which caste, purity, and surveillance converge to produce a distinctly Indian form of posthuman embodiment.

Surveillance and Datafication

Surveillance in *Leila* acts as a pervasive force that affects individual behaviours as well as social organization. Shalini's realization that "everything was watched" underscores the perpetual presence of monitoring systems within the city (Akbar 195). This consistent visibility creates a stipulation in which individuals internalize surveillance by regulating their actions in anticipation of observation. Such a system reveals Michel Foucault's concept of panoptic power, where visibility turns out to be a mechanism of control (Foucault).

Apart from physical observation, the novel also indicates processes of datafication, where individuals are classified and managed as per their conformity with purity codes. Shalini's experience of being processed and shifted in the system illustrates the reduction of identity to a set of classifications (Akbar 134). The stress on classification transforms individuals into functional units, bringing into line with Rosi Braidotti's conception of the posthuman subject as instituted through technological and informational networks (Braidotti).

Through restricted zones, checkpoints, and institutional monitoring, the city appears as a network of surveillance which ensures conformity and suppresses nonconformity. In this way, *Leila* depicts surveillance and datafication as fundamental to the production of controlled, posthuman identities.

Fragmented Identity and Posthuman Subjectivity

Identity in *Leila* is categorized by instability and fragmentation, as individuals are endlessly redefined by the system. Shalini's experience in the camp reflects this process of erasure, as her previous identity is replaced by one shaped through institutional control (Akbar 137). Her sense of self is divided between imposed identity and memory, emphasizing the instability of subjectivity in a regulated environment.

The absence of Riz further deepens this fragmentation, as his absence in Shalini's life symbolizes the system's ability to abolish identities considered as incompatible. Similarly, Leila's disappearance acts as a powerful symbol of loss and discontinuity, as Shalini's identity is reduced to absence and longing. These experiences associate with Donna Haraway's notion of hybridity, where identity is constructed through intersecting systems instead of fixed boundaries (Haraway).

Additionally, individuals who conform to the system represent what Rosi Braidotti articulates as fragmented posthuman subjectivity—unstable, relational, and shaped by networks of power (Braidotti). These layered experiences in *Leila* depict that identity is fluid and contested in a dystopian posthuman framework.

Resistance and Residual Humanity

In spite of its depiction of a highly regulated society, *Leila* emphasizes moments of resistance that interrogate the system's authority. Shalini's refusal to give up the memory of Riz and her continued search for Leila represent the acts of defiance that protect her sense of self (Akbar 147). Thus memory becomes a critical site of resistance, empowering her to maintain an identity beyond the controls imposed by the system.

The narrative also emphasizes subtle forms of resistance, where characters resist internalizing the belief of purity. Shalini's understanding of the system's oppressive nature reveals an internal defiance that disrupts its totalizing power (Akbar 147). This reflects Donna Haraway's prominence on relationality as a form of resistance in posthuman conditions (Haraway). Additionally, the continuation of emotional bonds and hope emphasizes what Rosi Braidotti articulates as the ethical potential of the posthuman subject (Braidotti). Even in a system intended to eradicate individuality, the inherent potential for connection and resistance sustains. Thus, *Leila* ultimately advocates that even though the posthuman city strives for regulating and controlling human life, it cannot fully destroy the possibility of intervention, resistance, and transformation.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated *Leila* by Prayaag Akbar as a significant contribution to contemporary speculative fiction, especially in its articulation of urban posthumanism in an Indian context. Through its depiction of a dystopian, hyper-segregated city regulated by surveillance as well as purity codes, the novel constructs a speculative future which further complicates existing socio-political anxieties. By anticipating these concerns in an imagined urban landscape, *Leila* brings to light the underlying means of power which regulate identities, bodies, and social relations. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism as well as surveillance, this study reveals that the novel redefines the human subject as fragmented, technologically mediated, and controlled. The urban space in *Leila*, emerges as a biopolitical system that not only categorizes physical space but also affects the very conditions of human existence.

Fundamentally, the novel presents a distinctly Indian articulation of posthuman dystopia by foregrounding purity, caste, and majoritarian ideology as dominant systems of control. This intersection obscures dominant Western narratives of posthumanism, which frequently prioritize technological development, by demonstrating that posthuman conditions can also appear through socio-cultural and ideological processes which regulate and classify bodies. At the same time, the novel signals the persistence of resistance in oppressive systems. Through acts of memory, defiance, and relational bonds, it recommends that human agency, though restricted, is not entirely surpassed. In this sense, *Leila* aligns with Rosi Braidotti's perspective that the posthuman subject retains the capacity for ethical engagement and transformation (Braidotti).

Ultimately, speculative futures in *Leila* act as a critical perspective to interrogate the present, exposing the potential consequences of unrestrained surveillance, ideological control, and social division. The novel presents urban identity as a dynamic and contested space where humanity is constantly fragmented, negotiated, and reconstituted. Future research may open up this inquiry through comparative or interdisciplinary approaches to explore the evolving relationship between society, technology, and the posthuman condition.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all the scholars, theorists, and literary critics whose valuable ideas and theoretical insights have significantly contributed to the development of this research paper. Special thanks are extended to Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, and Darko Suvin whose groundbreaking works on posthumanism, surveillance, speculative fiction, and dystopian studies provided the theoretical foundation for this study.

The author is also deeply thankful to Prayaag Akbar for his remarkable novel *Leila*, which inspired this critical exploration of speculative futures and urban posthumanism in contemporary Indian English fiction.

Heartfelt appreciation is extended to colleagues, students, and the academic institution for their encouragement, guidance, and valuable support during the preparation of this paper. Finally, the author sincerely acknowledges the constant motivation, patience, and cooperation of family members and well-wishers throughout the completion of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Akbar, Prayaag. *Leila*. Simon & Schuster India, 2017.
2. Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity Press, 2013.
3. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, 1995.
4. Haraway, Donna. *A Cyborg Manifesto*. Routledge, 1991.
5. Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. Verso, 2005.
6. Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. Yale University Press, 1979.

Human-Nature Interface and Environmental Crisis: An Eco-critical Study of Select Indian English Literary Works

Dr. Sanju Pandurang Jadhav

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030205



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20790991

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20790991>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of
English
M. S. Kakade College, Someshwarnagar
Tal-Baramati, Dist- Pune-412306
E-mail- sanjupadhav@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Jadhav, S. P. (2026). Human-Nature Interface and Environmental Crisis: An Eco-critical Study of Select Indian English Literary Works. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 17–20..

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Sanju Pandurang Jadhav,
Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of
English
M. S. Kakade College, Someshwarnagar
Tal-Baramati, Dist- Pune-412306
E-mail- sanjupadhav@gmail.com

Abstract:

This research paper titled *Human-Nature Interface and Environmental Crisis: An Eco-critical Study of Select Indian English Literary Works* examines the complex relationship between human beings and the natural environment through selected works by Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai and S. N. M. Abdi. The paper focuses on *The God of Small Things*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Fire on the Mountain*, *The Great Derangement* and *On a Tiger's Trail* to explore how literature engages with ecological concerns and environmental crises in the Indian context. The paper analyzes major themes such as environmental degradation, climate change, human-nature conflict, biodiversity loss, and conservation ethics implementing an eco-critical framework. The selected works collectively highlight the delicate balance between nature and human existence, portraying the environment as an active force rather than a passive backdrop. Roy's narrative emphasizes ecological decline alongside social injustice, while Ghosh's works address climate change, environmental vulnerability and the limitations of modern literary responses to ecological crises. Desai's novel reflects the psychological dimensions of human interaction with nature and Abdi's work foregrounds wildlife conservation and ecological awareness. This research paper further argues that these works move beyond anthropocentric perspectives and promote an eco-centric vision that recognizes the intrinsic value of nature. By situating the analysis within the broader discourse of environmental humanities, the paper demonstrates how literature contributes to environmental awareness and ethical responsibility. It concludes that Indian English literature serves as a powerful medium for articulating ecological concerns and advocating sustainable coexistence, thereby reinforcing the urgent need for a balanced relationship between humans and the natural world.

Keywords: Eco-criticism, Environmental Crisis, Human-Nature Relationship, Climate Change, Biodiversity, Sustainability, Conservation, Ecological Consciousness.

Introduction:

In recent decades, the growing threat of environmental degradation and climate change has led to the emergence of eco-criticism as a significant approach in literary studies focusing on the intricate relationship between human beings and the natural environment. This research paper examines selected works by Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, and S. N. M. Abdi, namely *The God of Small Things*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Fire on the Mountain*, *The Great Derangement*, and *On a Tiger's Trail*, all of which foreground critical ecological concerns such as environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change, and the tension between development and conservation. Through an eco-critical lens, this research paper seeks to explore how these literary works not only depict environmental crises but also interrogate human attitudes toward nature revealing the deep interconnection between ecological imbalance and social, cultural and political realities.

The theoretical foundation of this research paper is rooted in eco-criticism, a field significantly shaped by Cheryll Glotfelty, who defines it as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, thereby emphasizing that literary works are embedded within ecological works. Expanding this perspective, Lawrence Buell argues that environmentally oriented literature must present the non-human world as an active presence and highlight the ethical responsibility of humans toward nature introducing the concept of "environmental imagination" as a means of reshaping human perception and ecological awareness. These theoretical insights are further supported by the distinction between anthropocentrism and eco-centrism, where the former prioritizes human needs and often leads to environmental exploitation, while the latter advocates for the intrinsic value of all elements within the ecosystem. The selected works reflect a gradual shift from anthropocentric to eco-centric perspectives, emphasizing sustainability, conservation, and ethical engagement with the natural world. Situated within the broader domain of environmental humanities, This research paper underscores the role of literature as a powerful medium for raising ecological consciousness and responding to contemporary environmental challenges, ultimately highlighting the need for a more balanced and responsible relationship between humans and nature. In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy presents a deeply layered narrative in which the natural environment functions not merely as a backdrop but as an active force shaping human experiences, social realities and memory.

Through an eco-critical lens, the novel reveals the intricate interconnection between environmental, social, and psychological dimensions. The lush landscape of Kerala, its rivers, monsoon rains, flora and fauna is vividly portrayed as an integral part of human life, reflecting emotions, moods, and events. Nature becomes a living presence that responds to human actions and in turn, influences human destiny, thereby dissolving the boundaries between the natural and the human world.

One of the most striking themes in the novel is environmental degradation, symbolized through the pollution of the Meenachal River. Once vibrant and life-sustaining, the river becomes contaminated due to human negligence and the forces of modernization. Roy captures this decline in the description, "*a slow, sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage to the sea,*" which not only depicts ecological damage but also mirrors the moral and social decay within the community. This degradation is closely linked with the theme of social injustice reflected through ecology, where the exploitation of nature parallels the marginalization of lower-caste individuals like Velutha. The damaged environment becomes a metaphor for systemic oppression suggesting that the same forces that degrade nature also perpetuate social inequality.

Furthermore, the novel explores the loss of natural beauty due to modernization and the profound connection between memory and landscape. Industrialization, tourism, and changing lifestyles disrupt the ecological balance, leading to the erosion of both environmental and cultural heritage. Roy critiques this unreflective progress highlighting its destructive consequences. At the same time, the physical landscape is deeply intertwined with memory and identity, as places like the riverbank and the History House serve as repositories of personal and collective experiences. The line "*Things can change in a day*" underscores the fragility of both human life and the natural world. Thus, the novel offers a powerful eco-critical insight into the human-nature relationship, emphasizing the urgent need to restore harmony between ecological and social systems.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh presents the Sundarbans as a complex and dynamic ecological space where human existence is constantly challenged by the forces of nature. The novel foregrounds the theme of human-nature conflict, portraying nature as unpredictable and often hostile, especially through encounters between humans and wildlife such as tigers. The environment is not merely a passive backdrop but an active agent that shapes human destiny. Ghosh captures this instability through the line, "*The tide country is not a place for fixed relationships,*" emphasizing the ever-changing and uncertain nature of life in this region.

The narrative also highlights the fragile ecosystem of the Sundarbans, where land and water are in a continuous state of transformation due to tidal movements. This ecological instability reflects the vulnerability of both nature and human settlements. The novel implicitly engages with climate change and natural disasters, as cyclones, floods, and rising tides frequently disrupt lives, pointing to the broader environmental crisis. These natural forces underscore the precariousness of human survival in such landscapes and challenge the notion of human dominance over nature.

Furthermore, the themes of survival and adaptation and indigenous knowledge versus modern science are central to the novel. The local inhabitants possess a deep, intuitive understanding of the environment, enabling them to coexist with nature more effectively than outsiders. Characters like Fokir embody this ecological wisdom, which contrasts with the limitations of scientific rationality. Ghosh reinforces the dominance of nature with the statement, "*Nothing escapes the maw of the tide country,*" highlighting the ultimate power of natural forces and the need for humility and ecological awareness in human interactions with the environment.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai explores the intricate relationship between human psychology and the natural environment through isolated setting of Kasauli. The theme of nature as a reflection of inner emotions is central to the novel, as the stillness of the hills mirrors the emotional withdrawal of Nanda Kaul. Nature becomes a symbolic extension of the human mind, reflecting solitude, detachment and introspection. Desai's description, "*The pine trees made a sound like the sea,*" evokes a blending of sensory and emotional experiences.

The novel further develops the theme of isolation and alienation in natural settings, where nature serves both as a refuge and a space of intensified loneliness. The silence of the hills, instead of offering peace, deepens the sense of detachment experienced by the characters. This is closely linked to the destruction of ecological peace, as underlying tensions and disturbances disrupt the apparent calm of the environment. The forest fire towards the end of the novel symbolizes both environmental destruction and emotional upheaval, highlighting the fragile balance between harmony and chaos.

Also, human intrusion into nature is subtly depicted suggesting that even minimal human presence can disturb ecological equilibrium. The theme of silence and stillness of the environment plays a significant role in shaping the narrative's tone and meaning. Desai intensifies this sense of emptiness when she writes, "*The hills were dark and bare, stripped of all life,*" symbolizing both ecological depletion and emotional barrenness. Through these themes, the novel presents an eco-critical perspective that links environmental disturbance with psychological unrest.

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh critically examines the global climate crisis and its inadequate representation in contemporary literature. The work foregrounds the theme of the climate change crisis, presenting it as one of the most urgent challenges of the modern time. Ghosh argues that environmental degradation, extreme weather events, and global warming demand serious attention from both society and literature.

A significant theme in the text is the failure of modern literature to address ecological concerns. Ghosh accounts the limitations of realist fiction, which often fails to capture the scale and unpredictability of environmental crises. He asserts that "*The climate crisis is also a crisis of culture,*" suggesting that the inability to represent ecological realities reflects a deeper cultural and imaginative failure. This critique extends to the broader theme of

human impact on the environment, where industrialization and unchecked development have contributed to ecological imbalance.

The work also emphasizes global warming and future threats highlighting the increasing frequency of natural disasters and their devastating consequences. The theme of politics and environmental responsibility is central, as Ghosh calls for collective action and accountability. He reinforces human responsibility by stating, "*Who can forget that in the era of global warming, storms and floods are no longer acts of God?*" Through these arguments, the text urges a rethinking of literary and cultural responses to environmental crises.

In *On a Tiger's Trail*, S. N. M. Abdi presents a vivid account of India's forests and wildlife emphasizing the importance of ecological conservation. The theme of wildlife conservation is central, with the tiger serving as a symbol of ecological strength and balance. The narrative highlights the need to protect natural habitats and preserve biodiversity. The text also addresses endangered species protection focusing on the threats posed by poaching, habitat destruction and human expansion. Through detailed observations, Abdi illustrates the consequences of human interference in natural ecosystems. The theme of human interference in forests reveals how deforestation and development disrupt ecological balance, leading to the decline of wildlife populations.

Furthermore, the work emphasizes biodiversity and ecosystem balance arguing that the survival of one species is interconnected with the health of the entire ecosystem. Abdi notes, "*The tiger is not just an animal; it is a symbol of the forest's health,*" highlighting its ecological significance. The theme of awareness of ecological preservation is reinforced through the statement, "*Where the tiger thrives, the forest lives,*" encouraging readers to recognize their role in environmental conservation. The text ultimately advocates for a sustainable and harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

Conclusion:

In this way, this research paper demonstrates that contemporary Indian English literature offers a profound and multifaceted engagement with ecological concerns revealing the deep interdependence between human life and the natural environment. Through the selected works of Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, and S. N. M. Abdi, the paper highlights how literature not only reflects environmental degradation, climate change, and biodiversity loss but also critiques anthropocentric attitudes and advocates for an eco-centric worldview. The analysis reveals that these works foreground themes such as human-nature conflict, ecological imbalance, conservation ethics and the socio-cultural dimensions of environmental crisis, thereby situating literature within the broader discourse of environmental humanities. By applying eco-critical theories, this research paper underscores the capacity of literary narratives to raise awareness, shape environmental consciousness and inspire sustainable practices. Ultimately, the paper affirms that Indian English literature plays a crucial role in addressing contemporary ecological challenges and calls for a more responsible, ethical and harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all the scholars, environmental critics, and literary theorists whose pioneering works in eco-criticism and environmental humanities have greatly contributed to the development of this research paper. Special thanks are extended to Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell, Greg Garrard, Rob Nixon, and Ursula K. Heise whose valuable theoretical insights on ecology, literature, and environmental imagination provided a strong academic foundation for this study.

The author is also deeply thankful to eminent Indian English writers such as Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, and S. N. M. Abdi whose literary works inspired this eco-critical exploration of the human-nature relationship and environmental crisis in contemporary literature.

Heartfelt appreciation is extended to colleagues, students, and the institution for their encouragement, academic support, and valuable guidance during the preparation of this paper. Finally, the author sincerely acknowledges the constant motivation, patience, and cooperation of family members and well-wishers throughout the completion of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Arundhati Roy. *The God of Small Things*. Penguin Books, 1997.
2. Amitav Ghosh. *The Hungry Tide*. Harper Collins, 2004.
3. Anita Desai. *Fire on the Mountain*. Vintage Books, 1977.
4. Amitav Ghosh. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
5. S. N. M. Abdi. *On a Tiger's Trail*. Roli Books, 2010.
6. Cheryll Glotfelty, and Harold Fromm, editors. *The Eco-criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
6. Lawrence Buell. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard UP, 1995.
7. Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
9. Garrard, Greg. *Eco-criticism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.

10. Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford UP, 2008.
11. Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Eco-criticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2010.
12. Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard UP, 2011.
13. Mukherjee, Upamanyu Pablo. *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
14. Slovic, Scott. *The Cambridge Companion to American Environmental Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2015.
15. Coupe, Laurence, editor. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Eco-criticism*. Routledge, 2000.

English Language Teaching in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Dr. Ashutosh Thakare

Submitted: 10-Mar-2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030206



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791070

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791070>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor & PhD Supervisor
in English,
PDEA's Annasaheb Waghire Arts,
Science and Commerce College,
Otur, Dist. Pune- 412409. (Affiliated to
Savitribai Phule Pune University)
Email: athakare01@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Thakare, A. (2026). English Language Teaching in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 21–24..

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Ashutosh Thakare
Associate Professor & PhD Supervisor
in English,
PDEA's Annasaheb Waghire Arts,
Science and Commerce College,
Otur, Dist. Pune- 412409. (Affiliated to
Savitribai Phule Pune University)
Email: athakare01@gmail.com

Abstract

In many educational settings, artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the way English is taught and learned. This research paper analyses the real-world applications of AI in teaching and learning English. It describes the use of tools both inside and outside of the classroom, including chatbots, intelligent tutors, automated writing feedback systems, speech recognition software, adaptive learning platforms, and generative language models. Important pedagogical advantages like learner autonomy, quick feedback, personalisation, and increased learner engagement are highlighted in the paper. Major issues like academic integrity, data privacy, technological bias, unequal access to digital resources, and teacher preparedness are also covered. The Indian context, where many schools and colleges rely on mobile phones and inexpensive applications, is given particular attention. However, many students continue to experience issues with inadequate internet connectivity and restricted access to digital devices. The article offers doable solutions for educators and organisations, such as the creation of explicit policies, frequent training sessions, and straightforward rules for the ethical application of AI. It makes the case that rather than taking the place of human instruction, AI should enhance it. Teachers are still essential as mentors, facilitators, and assessors.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English Language Learning and Teaching, Educational Technology, Digital Pedagogy, ELLT.

Introduction

English language instruction and learning have changed significantly in the last few years. Online resources, digital platforms, updated curricula, and new textbooks have all quickly made their way into classrooms. Teachers have constantly modified their approaches to meet institutional requirements and evolving learning needs. However, a more profound and structural change in language instruction is indicated by the increasing prevalence of artificial intelligence. AI has the ability to analyse learner behaviour, generate language, provide automated feedback, and personalise learning experiences, in contrast to previous technologies that primarily supported content delivery. Because of this, AI's impact in English language classrooms extends beyond tools. It also has an impact on instructional strategies, evaluation techniques, and the teacher's professional role.

AI in education refers to a group of intelligent systems that can process language, recognise speech, evaluate learner responses and adapt learning materials in real time. In the context of English language education, AI is increasingly used in writing support systems, pronunciation and speaking applications, adaptive grammar platforms, chatbots for conversational practice and generative tools for content creation. These technologies are now easily available through mobile phones, web platforms and learning management systems. As a result, both teachers and learners interact with digital systems not only as supporting resources but also as active participants in the learning process.

The use of digital tools in English classrooms was further reinforced by the experience of extensive online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instructors had to test out new digital resources, online feedback systems, and platforms. Numerous educational institutions came to the realisation that technology-based learning environments could provide flexibility and opportunities for learning outside of the classroom. In this regard, AI-based resources have progressively been incorporated into standard teaching procedures in a number of educational institutions.

This research paper offers a concise and useful analysis of the current applications of artificial intelligence in English language instruction and learning. It defines artificial intelligence (AI) in the context of language learning and discusses popular teaching tools like chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, automated writing feedback programs, speech recognition software, adaptive learning platforms, and generative language technologies. Personalised learning support, quicker feedback, learner autonomy, and enhanced classroom engagement are highlighted as the pedagogical advantages of these tools. The paper also examines important challenges that accompany the growing use of AI in English language education. These challenges include issues of academic integrity, data privacy, technological bias, unequal access to digital infrastructure and limited teacher preparedness. Particular attention is given to the Indian context, where many institutions depend on mobile based learning applications and low-cost digital platforms.

While such tools provide valuable learning opportunities, a large number of learners continue to face difficulties due to unstable internet connectivity, lack of personal devices and limited technical support. These conditions create unequal learning experiences and may widen existing educational gaps.

In addition, the paper reflects on how the role of the English language teacher is changing in AI supported classrooms. Teachers are required to guide learners in the responsible use of digital tools, interpret automated feedback critically and maintain meaningful human interaction in the learning process. The discussion is informed by recent international research in educational technology as well as national policy directions, including the National Education Policy 2020. The paper finally offers practical suggestions for teachers and institutions to support responsible, inclusive and pedagogically sound integration of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Learning and Teaching.

2. What we mean by AI in ELLT

Artificial Intelligence in education is any software or system that can carry out the tasks we usually think need human intelligence. These tasks include understanding text, recognising speech, choosing activities, and giving feedback. In language teaching the most important AI technologies are Natural Language Processing and machine learning. Natural Language Processing helps machines read and write human language. Machine learning lets systems improve after they get more data from learners. Artificial Intelligence in classrooms arrives in many forms. It may be a mobile app that gives vocabulary practice. It may be a web platform that adapts grammar exercises to each student. It may be a chatbot that answers simple questions in English. These systems are not independent. They work best when teachers guide their use. Data collection, ethical use and teacher mediation are central to good practice.

3. Classroom practices and tools

3.1 Intelligent tutoring systems

Intelligent tutoring systems give personalised results. The system watches how a student works. Then it gives a next task that fits the student level. In grammar or reading tasks this helps learners not to feel stuck or bored. In my experience, such systems are best used as homework support or as a lab activity. The teacher monitors progress and uses the analytics to plan small group work.

3.2 Automated writing feedback tools

Tools such as automated writing evaluation systems give fast feedback on grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary use. Students like instant correction. They can try revisions again and again. But we must be very careful. These tools often focus on surface mistakes. They may not highlight deeper problems such as bad organisation, weak argument or cultural insensitivity. As a teacher I use automated feedback as the first step. Then I give human feedback on ideas and coherence.

3.3 Speech recognition and pronunciation apps

Speech tools let learners record their voice and get reports about pronunciation, stress and fluency. For many learners in India, these tools are very helpful. Many students have no chance to speak English at home. Speech apps give them safe practice. Yet teachers should avoid over reliance on scores. The scores are approximate. The real goal is better communication. Pair work, role play and guided conversation remain essential.

3.4 Adaptive learning platforms

Adaptive platforms change difficulty according to learner answers. If a learner makes many mistakes the system gives easier tasks. If a learner succeeds, they get more challenge. This approach supports mixed ability classes. In India many classrooms are large. Adaptive tools help teachers meet many needs at once.

3.5 Chatbots and conversational agents

Chatbots accelerate simple conversations. Students can practise everyday English with these agents. Chatbots reduce anxiety because they do not judge. But chatbots can also make mistakes. Sometimes they give wrong or unnatural replies. Teachers must guide students about when to trust these tools and when to ask for the help of a human being.

3.6 Generative language models

Large language models can create essays, summaries, and lesson materials. Teachers can use them to save time in preparing tasks. Students can use them to find ideas when they write. We should use these tools responsibly. Students may be tempted to submit AI generated essays as their own work. Teachers should design tasks that ask for process, reflection and personal voice.

4. Pedagogical benefits

4.1 Personalisation and scaffolding

AI allows us to give different learners different paths. A weak learner gets small steps. An advanced learner gets richer texts. In India this helps when a teacher has fifty students in a class. Personalised practice supports motivation. Students see tasks that are not too easy and not too hard.

4.2 Fast and continuous feedback

Learners like AI tools because they give fast feedback. Immediate correction helps them notice errors and try again. This promotes reflective learning. Students become aware of common patterns of mistakes and learn to self-correct.

4.3 Learner autonomy

AI tools allow student learning beyond class time. Students can practise on a phone or in a college lab. This supports self-directed learning. I think that learner autonomy is a key goal of language teaching. AI can support it but teachers must teach learners how to use tools wisely.

4.4 Engagement and new forms of interaction

Interactive tasks and chatbots can make lively lessons. Games, simulations and adaptive quizzes increase participation. Digital tasks also build students basic digital literacy. This is important because most future jobs will need some digital skills.

5. Ethics, data privacy and bias

Artificial Intelligence gives us every type of data. Platforms show which questions most of the students miss. They show how long students spend on tasks. This helps teachers plan remedial work. Formative assessment benefits most. Teachers can use analytics to group students and focus on weak areas. Yet summative assessment and high stakes evaluation still need human judgement. Creative writing, debate performance and critical thinking cannot be fully judged by machines. We must address three linked issues: privacy, bias and consent. AI systems collect data. Often the data sits on servers abroad. Institutions must check data handling and follow national rules. The National Education Policy 2020 underlines the need for digital infrastructure and student data safety (Ministry of Education, Government of India). AI systems also reflect bias. If the model has little data from Indian accents or Indian varieties of English, it may not work well for our students. This creates unfair assessment. In class we should make students aware about these limits. Teachers should also choose tools that are transparent about data use.

Generative AI poses a new problem for college teachers. Students can quickly get a draft from a model. This may lower real learning. I suggest these steps. First, redesign tasks to focus on process. Ask students to submit drafts, peer feedback and a reflective note on how they wrote. Second, use oral follow up such as short presentations. Third, teach students to acknowledge AI help when they use it. A policy from the college that explains acceptable use helps a lot. In India the picture is mixed. Many urban colleges have internet and smart phones. Many rural colleges struggle with weak connectivity and few devices. This digital divide can widen existing learning gaps. If AI tools become central without care, students from poor backgrounds will be left behind. To reduce the gap, we need low bandwidth solutions, offline options and shared devices in labs. Teacher training must reach small towns and rural areas. Teachers must learn new skills. These include basic digital literacy, understanding of AI feedback and the ability to design AI friendly tasks. In my college I have run short workshops. We focus on three things. First, how to use an automated feedback tool. Second, how to set tasks that require personal reflection. Third, how to use analytics to plan lessons. Teacher education programmes in India should include AI literacy modules. This will prepare new teachers for mixed classrooms. The near future will bring better speech recognition for Indian accents. AI may handle more local languages and give feedback that understands regional influence. We may also see tools that support peer feedback and collaborative writing online. These can make learning social even when students are remote. Research must follow practice. We need studies on long term learning gains and on how students use AI in real classrooms. When used carefully and in accordance with equitable practices, artificial intelligence may be able to make English language learning more effective and inclusive. The use of artificial intelligence can be a powerful tool in the development of English language learning through careful planning and equitable practices. It is possible to improve English language learning through AI by carefully planning and by adopting equitable practices. As long as AI is properly planned and practiced, it can contribute to an effective and inclusive English language learning process. In order to achieve a more inclusive and effective model of English language learning, it is important to plan carefully and apply fair practices.

It is possible to make English language learning more inclusive and beneficial by using AI carefully planned and by following equitable practices. English language learning can be much more inclusive and effective when carefully planned and using equitable practices. A careful planning process and ensuring equity in practices will make the English language learning process more inclusive and more efficient if AI is used effectively. By combining precise planning with equitable practices, Artificial Intelligence can make English language learning more inclusive and efficient for everybody. As long as software development is based on careful planning and incorporating equitable practices, how much more inclusive and effective can English language learning be?

Conclusion

AI offers many useful tools for English language teaching. It gives personalisation, quick feedback and more practice. It helps many students in India who need extra support. At the same time AI brings some serious challenges as well. These include fairness, privacy, teacher training and the danger of weakening independent thinking. Teachers and students are central. Good AI use depends on how teachers design tasks and how institutions support ethical practice. With careful planning and a clear focus on equity, AI can strengthen English language education in India and beyond.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to Savitribai Phule Pune University for providing academic support and guidance for this research work. I am especially thankful to Dr. Ashutosh Thakare, Associate Professor and PhD Supervisor, PDEA's Annasaheb Waghire Arts, Science and Commerce College, Otur, for his valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the preparation of this research paper. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the Principal, faculty members, and library staff of PDEA's Annasaheb Waghire Arts, Science and Commerce College for providing necessary resources and a supportive academic environment. Finally, I am grateful to my family and well-wishers for their continuous motivation, patience, and support, which helped me complete this work successfully.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Agnihotri, R. K., and A. L. Khanna. *English Language Teaching in India*. Sage Publications, 1995.
2. Chapelle, Carol A. *Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
3. Das, K. *Educational Technology in India*. Kanishka Publishers, 2019.
4. Dey, Nilanjan, et al., editors. *Applied Machine Learning for Intelligent Systems*. Springer, 2020.
5. Government of India, Ministry of Education. *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education, 2020.
6. Holmes, Wayne, et al. *Artificial Intelligence in Education*. Center for Curriculum Redesign, 2019.
7. Koul, B. N. *Distance Education in India*. AIU and IGNOU, 2006.
8. Krishnaswamy, N., and T. Sriraman. *Teaching English in India Today*. T. R. Publications, 1994.
9. Luckin, Rosemary, et al. *Intelligence Unleashed*. Pearson, 2016.
10. Mishra, Sanjaya. *Online Learning and MOOCs in India*. Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, 2018.
11. Panda, Santosh, editor. *Open and Distance Learning in Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. Routledge India, 2014.
12. Sharma, R. P., and R. Singh. *ICT in Education in India*. APH Publishing Corporation, 2019.
13. Tilak, Jandhyala B. G. *Education and Development in India*. Gyan Publishing House, 2003.

Social Transgression in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Dr. Pallavi Balasaheb Malekar

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030207



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791132

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791132>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor, Department of
English
Anantrao Thopte College, Bhore
(Maharashtra)
Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune
Email- pallavibmalekar@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Malekar, P. B. (2026). Social Transgression in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 25–28..

Address for correspondence:

Assistant Professor, Department of
English
Anantrao Thopte College, Bhore
(Maharashtra)
Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune
pallavibmalekar@gmail.com

Abstract

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy stands as a distinctive and significant work in the history of Indian English literature. It deals with complex social issues in a thoughtful and powerful way. The story is set in Kerala during the 1960s. The novel presents a profound critique of Indian society by examining various forms of social transgression. It exposes how society controls people's lives through strict rules. These rules are based on caste, patriarchy, hierarchy, colonial thinking, and moral values. Such rules not only guide how people should behave but also force them to obey through fear, rejection, and punishment. This paper analyzes how acts of transgression, particularly those related to love, sexuality, caste, and family challenge these oppressive systems and reveal their inherent violence. In the novel, the relationship between Ammu and Velutha goes against the caste system and also questions the control society has over a woman's choices and desires. In the same way, *Estha and Rahel's* experiences show how deeply people are affected when they go against social expectations and how unfair these judgments can be. By analysing key relationships and characters, this paper explores how violations of social norms expose the inherent violence embedded in these systems. Roy shows that when people break social rules, they often face punishment, rejection, and suffering. At the same time, these actions also reveal the injustice and cruelty within these systems. The novel shows that those in power maintain control by silencing people and pushing away those who resist. In conclusion, the paper argues that how the novel presents social transgression as both a form of resistance and a source of tragedy.

Key Words- Social transgression, norms, rules, systems, moral values, resistance

Introduction

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is one of the most influential and thought-provoking works in Indian English literature. The novel was published in April 1997 and awarded for the prestigious Booker Prize in the same year. It not only gained international recognition but also opened up new ways of understanding how personal lives are deeply shaped by social structures. Set in the culturally rich state of Kerala during the 1960s, the novel goes beyond a simple family story. It presents a layered narrative that combines memory, trauma, and social criticism to explore the complex realities of Indian society. The novel tells the story of a broken family. It focuses on the lives of fraternal twins Estha and Rahel, their mother Ammu, and the people around them. However, the writer does not present this as just a personal or emotional tale. Instead, she carefully connects the characters' lives to larger systems of power that control and influence their choices. Through a non-linear narrative style, she reveals how past events continue to affect the present. The novel shows that trauma and social injustice do not simply disappear over time but remain deeply embedded in individuals and communities. One of the most important aspects of the novel is its critique of rigid social structures. Roy shows that society operates through a set of strict and often invisible rules that dictate how people should behave. These rules are not always openly stated, but they are strongly enforced through cultural practices, traditions, and expectations. Among these, the caste system plays a central role. It divides people into hierarchical groups based on birth and determines their social status, opportunities, and relationships. In the novel, this system is shown to be deeply unfair and dehumanizing, particularly for those who are at the bottom in the social structure. This unfairness is experienced by Velutha, who is shown as *parvan* (an untouchable) in the novel. Despite his intelligence, skill, and kindness, he is never allowed to rise above his assigned social position. In this context, the idea of social transgression becomes very important. Transgression refers to the act of breaking or going against established social rules. In the novel, such acts are not just personal choices but powerful challenges to the systems that enforce these rules. However, Roy makes it clear that such acts of resistance come at a high cost. Society does not tolerate transgression, especially when it threatens deeply rooted systems like caste and patriarchy.

Social Rules and Their Control over Individual Lives

One of the central ideas in *The God of Small Things* is that society operates through strict and often invisible rules. These rules dictate how people should behave, whom they should love, and what roles they should play in family and society. Arundhati Roy calls these rules the "Love Laws" i.e the laws that decide who should be loved, how they should be loved, and how much love is allowed.

These laws are not written down, but they are deeply rooted in social structures like caste, patriarchy, and colonial influence. They shape people's lives in ways that are often invisible, yet extremely powerful.

The caste system is one of the strongest forces shaping the characters' lives. It creates a hierarchy where people are divided into different groups based on birth. Those at the top are given privilege and respect, while people from lower castes, like Velutha, are treated as inferior. They are denied basic rights, opportunities, and sometimes even dignity. This system enforces obedience through fear, discrimination, and punishment. Velutha's tragic death shows how ruthlessly caste rules are enforced when someone dares to cross social boundaries.

Patriarchy is another force that controls individual lives in the novel. Women are expected to follow strict roles, especially in matters of marriage, love, and sexuality. Their personal desires are judged and restricted, and any attempt to break these rules can lead to punishment or social exclusion. Ammu's life illustrates this clearly. Her choices in love, particularly her relationship with Velutha, are seen as unacceptable, and she faces social isolation and blame. The novel shows that patriarchy not only limits women's freedom but also enforces power through shame, fear, and social pressure.

Beyond caste and patriarchy, the influence of colonial thinking is also visible in the novel. Even after India's independence, colonial values continue to shape society. Preference for the English language, Western education, and foreign culture creates divisions and a sense of superiority and inferiority among people. Those who embrace Western ways are often seen as more modern or educated, while traditional practices are judged as backward. These influences reinforce social hierarchies and make it even harder for individuals to break free from society's rules.

Together, caste, patriarchy, and colonial influence form a web of control over the characters' lives. These social rules dictate who can love whom, who can speak out, and who must remain silent. They shape people's identities, limit their freedom, and punish those who resist. Through her portrayal of these forces, Roy reveals how deeply embedded and powerful social rules are, showing that individual desires often come into conflict with society's rigid expectations. The novel highlights that breaking these rules, though morally right or courageous, can be dangerous and costly. It emphasises the tension between personal freedom and social control.

Love as Transgression

The relationship between Ammu and Velutha is the most significant act of transgression in *The God of Small Things*. Ammu, a Syrian Christian woman from an upper-caste family, and Velutha, an "Untouchable" carpenter who works for her family. They form a bond that society considers forbidden. Their love breaks one of the most rigid and deeply rooted rules in Indian society i.e. the prohibition against relationships between different castes. This rule is so strict that crossing it is seen not just as socially unacceptable but as a threat to the entire social order. By choosing to love Velutha, Ammu directly challenges the caste system that organizes society and the patriarchy that seeks to control women's bodies and desires.

As a woman, Ammu is expected to be obedient, modest, and to suppress her personal desires. Her relationship with Velutha is an assertion of her right to love freely, to follow her heart despite society's rules. It is a courageous act of defiance, a rebellion against the unfair expectations imposed upon her. Velutha, too, demonstrates courage by responding to Ammu's love, even though he knows the danger he faces as a man from a lower caste. Together, their love is a quiet but powerful form of resistance, showing that personal desire and human connection can challenge oppressive systems.

However, society responds to their transgression with extreme violence and cruelty. Velutha suffers the harshest consequences. He is falsely accused of a crime, brutally beaten, and ultimately killed by the police. His death is more than a personal tragedy. It is a vivid demonstration of how social systems protect themselves by punishing and eliminating those who challenge them. Ammu also faces severe consequences. She is shunned by her family, socially isolated, and eventually dies alone and in poverty. Her punishment shows that the system does not tolerate disobedience or defiance, particularly from women, and seeks to erase anyone who threatens its authority.

Through the story of Ammu and Velutha, Roy shows that love itself can become a form of resistance. It is an act that challenges unjust rules, hierarchy, and patriarchal control. Yet, the novel also highlights the harsh reality that such resistance comes at a very high cost. Acts of courage and love can expose the cruelty of social systems, but they do not always lead to victory. Roy portrays the tension between human desire and societal rules by showing how deeply oppressive systems are embedded in culture. She also shows how they enforce conformity through fear, punishment, and violence.

Childhood and Emotional Transgression

The love relationship between Ammu and Velutha represents a bold act of social rebellion while the experiences of Estha and Rahel reveal a more subtle and emotional form of transgression. As children, they do not fully understand the strict rules of society, but they are deeply affected by them. Their lives are shaped by events beyond their control, and they suffer from the actions, judgments, and failures of the adults around them. This shows that transgression is not only about breaking visible social rules but it can also be emotional, psychological, and deeply personal. One of the most disturbing aspects of the novel is the trauma endured by Estha. After being sexually abused by a man at a cinema, he withdraws completely into silence. His inability to speak is a form of resistance, a way of coping with a world that has hurt him and failed to protect him. But it is also a sign of profound emotional damage. Society not only fails to shield Estha from harm but punishes him further by separating him from his family. It leaves him alone to bear the consequences of events he did not cause. His silence becomes both a shield and a symbol of the failure of social structures to protect the innocent.

Rahel, too, experiences deep emotional pain and loneliness. She grows up feeling the loss of family, love, and stability. Despite this, her bond with Estha is exceptionally strong. Their connection is unique, intimate, and deeply rooted in shared childhood trauma. As adults, when they reunite, their relationship crosses another social boundary that is of incest. This act is another form of transgression, but it is not presented as lustful or sensational. Instead, it is depicted as an emotional response to trauma and a search for comfort and understanding in a world that has been cruel and unjust to them.

Roy's treatment of the twins' relationship challenges readers to question the rigid moral judgments imposed by society. The novel does not condemn them outright, nor does it sensationalize their actions. Instead, it shows their emotional connection as a quiet and deeply human response to loss, trauma, and alienation. The twins' story highlights the ways in which social rules fail to account for human emotions and experiences. It emphasizes that human behavior, especially in extreme circumstances, cannot always be measured by conventional morality. By portraying their emotional transgression with sensitivity and nuance, Roy asks readers to consider compassion and understanding over judgment.

Family, Power, Silence, and Violence in Social Systems

In *The God of Small Things*, family is not always a safe or comforting place. Instead, it can be a site of control, rules, and power struggles. The members of the family are often trapped by social expectations and their own desires for status and respectability. Characters like Baby Kochamma show how deeply social rules are accepted. She strictly follows social norms and tries to make everyone in her family behave "properly," according to society's expectations. Her obsession with reputation and social order ultimately contributes to the tragedy of Ammu and Velutha. Baby Kochamma manipulates situations, lies to authorities, and enforces rules without thinking about the harm she causes. This illustrates how ordinary people, even if they do not personally benefit, can become agents of unfair and oppressive systems simply by following rules and maintaining appearances.

Silence is another key theme in the novel. Many characters are forced to stay quiet, or they choose silence out of fear. Estha, traumatized by witnessing events beyond his understanding, withdraws from speaking almost entirely. Ammu is isolated because she challenges social norms by pursuing love and independence. Velutha, being from a lower caste, is denied a voice in society and is treated as inferior. Their silence reflects how society punishes those who do not conform. Sometimes, staying quiet becomes the only way to survive. Yet, Roy shows that storytelling can break this silence. By narrating the lives of Ammu, Estha, Velutha, and others, she gives a voice to those who are silenced, showing the world their experiences and struggles. The act of telling the story itself becomes a way of resisting unfair social systems.

The novel also exposes the violence within social systems. This violence is not always physical as seen in Velutha's brutal death. It is also emotional, psychological, and structural, affecting people in ways that are often invisible but deeply damaging. The caste system denies people respect and equality, while patriarchy restricts women's freedom and punishes them for making independent choices, as Ammu experiences. Colonial influence adds another layer of division, creating feelings of inferiority and complicating social hierarchies. These systems work together to maintain power and control over individuals, shaping lives in ways that seem normal but are deeply unjust.

Much of this violence is hidden and accepted as a part of life. People live with restrictions, discrimination, and punishment without questioning them because the systems are so deeply rooted in culture and society. But when someone challenges these rules, the violence becomes visible. The harsh consequences faced by Ammu and Velutha reveal the cruelty of social structures and show how society enforces conformity through fear and punishment. Roy's storytelling exposes this violence and challenges readers to recognize the impact of social rules on ordinary lives. Through her writing, the novel demonstrates how power, silence, and oppression are intertwined, and how speaking out even through stories can become an act of resistance.

Transgression as Resistance and Tragedy

The acts of transgression in the novel serve two important purposes. On one hand, they challenge the authority of social rules and expose their injustice. On the other hand, they lead to suffering and tragedy for the individuals involved. Ammu and Velutha's love is the clearest example of this. Their relationship crosses the boundaries of caste, gender, and family expectations. By being together, they defy the authority of a society that values rules and appearances over human feelings. Their love is an act of bravery and moral resistance. Yet, their transgression also leads to violence and tragedy. Velutha is brutally killed, and Ammu faces isolation and shame. Their story shows that standing up to unjust systems can have severe consequences, even when the act itself is morally right.

Similarly, Estha and Rahel's close emotional bond is a form of resistance in its own way. Their connection offers comfort and understanding in a world full of pain and oppression. But their bond also highlights the brokenness caused by social restrictions and family tragedies. It reminds readers that even small acts of defiance, like seeking love or emotional support, exist within a society that punishes those who step outside its rules.

Arundhati Roy does not offer easy solutions or happy endings in the novel. She presents a realistic and complex view of society, showing that change is difficult and dangerous. People who try to resist unfair systems often pay a heavy price, and the consequences of defiance can be harsh. At the same time, by portraying these acts of transgression, Roy honours courage and human desire for freedom, even in the face of overwhelming oppression. The novel suggests that resistance, though costly, is essential to exposing injustice and questioning the power of social systems.

Conclusion

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy shows how society's rules like caste, patriarchy, and colonial influences control people's lives. Through the stories of Ammu, Velutha, Estha, and Rahel, the novel shows how these rules limit love, freedom, and personal choices. Acts of breaking these rules like Ammu and Velutha's forbidden love or the twins' emotional bond are forms of resistance, but they also bring suffering and tragedy. Roy reveals how society punishes those who go against it, showing the cruelty and unfairness built into social systems. At the same time, by telling the stories of the silenced, the novel gives them a voice and shows the importance of human connection, love, and dignity. Overall, the story of the novel encourages readers to question unfair rules, understand the pain of those affected, and see how even small acts of defiance can challenge injustice and bring hope for change.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of English of Anantrao Thopte College for providing the academic support and resources necessary for the completion of this research paper.

Special thanks are extended to colleagues, mentors, and scholars whose valuable suggestions, encouragement, and constructive guidance greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

The author is also thankful to Savitribai Phule Pune University for offering an inspiring academic environment that encouraged research and critical inquiry.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude is expressed to family members and well-wishers for their constant support, motivation, and understanding throughout the course of this work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. 1997. India edition, IndiaInk, 2021.
2. Gupta, Shabnam. "Caste and Patriarchy in *The God of Small Things*." *Journal of Contemporary Literature*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2018, pp. 45–60.
3. Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism*. 4th ed., Pearson, 2019.
4. Singh, Ranjit. "Love Laws and Social Transgression in Roy's Novel." *Indian Fiction Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 78–95.

Trauma in Women in Ha Jin's *Nanjing Requiem*

Shankar Pandurang Khobare

Submitted: 10-Mar-2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030208



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791284

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791284>

Volume: 3
Issue:2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor of
English, S. K. Patil Sindhudurg
Mahavidyalaya, Malvan, Dist.
Sindhudurg – 416606.
(Affiliated to University of Mumbai)
E-mail: shankarkhobare32@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Khobare, S. P. (2026). Trauma in
Women in Ha Jin's *Nanjing Requiem*.
*International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research*, 3(2(I)), 29–32..

Address for correspondence:
Shankar Pandurang Khobare
Assistant Professor of English,
S. K. Patil Sindhudurg Mahavidyalaya,
Malvan, Dist. Sindhudurg – 416606.
(Affiliated to University of Mumbai)
E-mail: shankarkhobare32@gmail.com

Abstract:

Ha Jin, a significant contemporary writer in English, portrays the suffering of innocent people, especially women, in times of war and violence. In *Nanjing Requiem*, he presents women who are deprived of safety, dignity, and basic human respect, as they endure cruelty, fear, and inhuman treatment during wartime. Human life, as the novel suggests, can survive meaningfully only in conditions of peace, protection, and mutual respect. Jin realistically traces the gradual psychological movement of women into trauma through vivid narration and powerful imagery. Trauma, understood as an emotional shock caused by extreme violence, results in long-term psychological disturbance and loss of stability. This paper examines the suffering of women refugees sheltered in Jinling Women's College, the narrator Anling, and Minnie Vautrin, who attempts to protect them. These women experience sexual violence, humiliation, fear, and constant insecurity, leading to the erosion of identity and self-respect. Minnie Vautrin, despite her strength and dedication, becomes mentally disturbed under continuous pressure, while Anling suffers from emotional conflict as a witness. The novel thus reveals how ordinary women, placed in extraordinary circumstances, become victims of severe trauma caused by war and human cruelty. Furthermore, the narrative underscores the ethical failure of wartime societies, where institutional protection collapses and moral responsibility is abandoned, intensifying the psychological wounds and reinforcing the pervasive sense of helplessness among survivors.

Keywords: trauma, women, violence, suffering, fear, war, psychological disturbance, humanity

Introduction

Trauma is a deep emotional and psychological shock caused by disturbing events. In literature, trauma studies help us understand how individuals react to violence and suffering. It also shows how memory plays an important role in shaping identity. Ha Jin's *Nanjing Requiem* is based on the real historical event of the Nanjing Massacre (1937). The novel is narrated by Anling, who works at Jinling Women's College. Through her narration, we see how ordinary people become victims of extreme violence. Unlike simple war narratives, this novel focuses on human suffering. It presents trauma as a continuous process that affects body, mind, and memory. The experiences of women are especially important, as they suffer both physical violence and social humiliation. The field of trauma studies deals with the representation of suffering and painful experiences in literature. Psychological trauma, along with the role of memory, plays an important role in shaping individual and cultural identities. Trauma is generally understood as a deeply disturbing experience that affects a person's emotional condition and changes the way one sees the world. It disturbs the normal balance of life and leaves a lasting impact on the human mind. The present paper focuses on the trauma experienced by women characters in *Nanjing Requiem* written by Ha Jin. The novel presents the harsh realities of war and highlights issues such as violence, gender-based suffering, fear and loss of identity. It shows how women become the worst victims and how their voices remain unheard. This article analyses the trauma of women refugees in Jinling Women's College, along with Anling and Minnie Vautrin. These women suffer physical violence, emotional pain and psychological disturbance. It also examines how memory, fear and helplessness lead to long-term trauma. The novel *Nanjing Requiem* is set during the Nanjing Massacre, and through the narrator Anling, the reader can witness the helpless and painful condition of women who become the worst victims of war. Jinling Women's College appears as a place of refuge, but it cannot provide complete safety. The women who arrive there are already shattered by the experiences they have faced outside. They come with injured bodies, broken families, and disturbed minds. Many of them have seen their loved ones killed brutally, and many have escaped after facing unspeakable violence. Their suffering is not limited to one event but continues as a constant condition of existence. The atmosphere of fear, destruction and uncertainty surrounds them everywhere, making it impossible for them to feel secure even for a moment. The narrator describes the surrounding environment in a way that reflects the condition of the people. She observes that "Along the way every pond and creek had dead bodies in it, humans and animals, and the water had changed color" (5). This description is not only about physical destruction but also about psychological impact. When such horrifying scenes become common, people lose their sense of normalcy.

For women, this environment increases their vulnerability, as they are already targets of violence. The presence of death everywhere creates a constant fear, which becomes a part of their daily life. The suffering of women becomes even more painful when we look at the specific acts of violence committed against them. The narrator describes that "Some women were naked from the waist down, stabbed to death after the Japs had raped them. My legs would keep on shaking whenever we passed a pile of corpses" (5). This incident shows the extreme brutality of soldiers and the complete dehumanization of women. They are not treated as human beings but as objects meant for exploitation and destruction. The act of stripping them naked not only exposes their bodies but also destroys their dignity and identity. Even after death, they are denied respect, which shows how deeply rooted the violence is. The suffering of women in *Nanjing Requiem* does not remain limited to physical violence alone; it gradually transforms into deep psychological trauma that affects their behaviour, identity, and sense of existence. The women who survive the immediate brutality cannot return to normal life, because their minds continue to carry the burden of painful memories. The narrator Anling observes that many survivors remain in a state of shock, unable to express their emotions clearly. Their silence itself becomes a powerful indication of trauma. They do not cry loudly or protest openly; instead, they suffer internally, which makes their condition even more tragic.

This psychological disturbance is often reflected in their physical behaviour. The novel describes how some victims "kept trembling... as though someone were about to strike" (90). This shows that trauma affects not only the mind but also the body. Even when there is no immediate danger, the victims continue to feel threatened. Their bodies react to past experiences, indicating that trauma becomes a permanent part of their existence. This constant fear prevents them from feeling safe, even in relatively secure environments. Another important aspect of women's trauma is the loss of family and emotional support. Many women lose their husbands, parents, and children during the massacre. This loss increases their vulnerability and makes it difficult for them to cope with their suffering. One woman cries, "I'm the only one left in my family," (52) which clearly shows the loneliness and despair experienced by survivors. Without family support, these women are forced to face their trauma alone, which intensifies their emotional pain. Another disturbing aspect is the way young girls are targeted. The novel states that "By now Jinling held more than four thousand. The newcomers recounted horrifying stories: Plundering, rape, bloodshed, and arson had taken place everywhere in the city and its suburbs in the past three days." (60). This shows that even innocence is not spared in war. These young girls are taken away forcefully and subjected to violence, which destroys their childhood completely. Their suffering is not only physical but also emotional, as they are separated from their families and forced into situations they cannot understand or resist.

The trauma becomes more complex when we examine cases where women suffer multiple forms of loss. For instance, the narrator mentions that "We also had a seventeen-year-old girl sent to Dr. Wilson—this young wife, five months pregnant, had been raped by a bunch of soldiers and had miscarried" (62). This incident highlights the layered nature of trauma. The girl not only experiences physical violence but also emotional devastation due to the loss of her unborn child. The miscarriage represents the destruction of future life, making the trauma even more intense. Such experiences leave permanent scars on the mind, making recovery almost impossible. The novel also shows that even places meant for protection are not safe. It is mentioned that "small groups of Japanese soldiers popped up on different parts of the campus, grabbing women and girls. There'd been more than thirty rape cases in our camp" (62). This indicates that fear is constant and unavoidable. Women cannot escape violence even within the refugee camp. The camp, which is supposed to be a safe space, becomes another site of fear and anxiety. This continuous threat creates a psychological condition where women are always alert and anxious, unable to relax even for a moment. The brutality of soldiers reaches an extreme level in another shocking incident where "We saw a young woman lying naked on a piece of green tarp, crying and twisting, while a soldier with a full beard was thrusting his hand between her legs and making happy noises" (77). This scene represents the complete breakdown of human morality. The woman is treated as an object, and her pain is ignored completely. The presence of a weapon beside her head adds another layer of fear, showing that resistance can lead to death. Such acts leave deep psychological scars not only on victims but also on witnesses like Anling.

The novel also highlights how women are not only victims of physical violence but also of continuous humiliation and exploitation. Even after surviving rape and assault, they are treated as weak and dependent individuals. In one incident, a group of soldiers forcibly enters the camp, and "Suddenly a female voice shrieked outside, then screams and shouts came from every direction. While we were talking, the troops had broken into the camp to seize women" (86). This shows that women are constantly under threat, and their safety is never guaranteed. The repetition of such incidents creates a sense of helplessness, where women feel that they have no control over their lives. Another horrifying scene describes how "We could see the soldiers hauling away young women, all of whom seemed to have fine figures and relatively good looks. Some were crying and struggling to break loose" (87). This scene shows the helpless resistance of women. They try to fight back, but their efforts are useless against armed soldiers. Their cries for help go unheard, which increases their sense of helplessness. This helplessness becomes a major source of trauma, as it destroys their belief in safety and justice. The suffering of women is not limited to young girls alone. Even older women are not spared. It is mentioned that "A woman of sixty-three went back and was caught by two soldiers. She told them she must be as old as their grandmothers; all the same, they knocked her down, raped her, and stomped on her bound feet." (102). This shows that age does not protect women from violence. The brutality is so extreme that even elderly women are subjected to such inhuman treatment. This reflects the total collapse of moral values during war. The emotional impact of such violence is clearly visible in the behaviour of survivors. Many

women are unable to speak about their experiences. The novel points out that “how could they admit they’d been raped?” (115). This shows the social dimension of trauma. Women feel ashamed and fear rejection from society. Instead of receiving support, they are forced into silence. This silence increases their suffering and isolates them further.

The character of Minnie Vautrin plays a crucial role in understanding women’s trauma. She tries to protect these women and provide them shelter. The refugees see her as a saviour and depend on her completely. However, Minnie herself is deeply affected by the suffering around her. She witnesses violence every day and feels responsible for the safety of these women. When she fails to protect them, she feels guilty and helpless. The trauma becomes even more severe when we see how women react to their suffering. Some women lose their mental stability and behave in abnormal ways. For example, a woman who has lost everything begins to act like a mad person, unable to recognize reality. It is said that “the Japanese destroyed her mind” (155). This clearly indicates that trauma can lead to complete psychological breakdown. Such women are no longer able to function normally, and they become symbols of the lasting impact of war. The novel also shows how trauma continues even after the immediate violence ends. Survivors carry their memories with them, which continue to disturb their present life. It is clearly stated that “the atrocities will continue to take place in the victims’ minds for many years” (260). This highlights the long-lasting nature of trauma. It is not something that ends with the event but continues in memory and affects the future.

At one point, her mental condition begins to deteriorate, and she says, “I’ve failed, failed miserably” (283). This shows how deeply trauma affects even those who are trying to help others. Minnie’s character reflects the psychological burden carried by witnesses of violence. She is unable to separate herself from the suffering around her, which leads to her emotional breakdown. The role of memory becomes very significant in this context. Women are unable to forget the violence they have experienced, and these memories continue to disturb them. The past constantly returns in their thoughts, making it difficult for them to live peacefully in the present. The narrator reflects on this when it is stated that trauma cannot be easily forgotten, and it continues to influence the victims’ lives for a long time. This shows that trauma is not just an event but a continuous process that shapes the identity of survivors. The character of Minnie Vautrin further strengthens this idea of psychological trauma. Although she is not a direct victim of physical violence, she is deeply affected by what she witnesses. She works tirelessly to protect women, but the continuous exposure to suffering weakens her mentally. She begins to feel responsible for every incident that occurs within the camp. Her sense of guilt increases day by day, and she starts losing control over her emotions. At one stage, it is observed that she was suffering from “stress, fatigue, trauma, and malnutrition” (284). This shows that trauma can affect even those who are trying to help others. Minnie’s condition gradually worsens, and she becomes unable to continue her work. Her mental breakdown is a clear example of how prolonged exposure to violence can destroy a person’s inner strength. Her tragic end further highlights the seriousness of trauma. It is mentioned that she “took out the sleeping pills... and wouldn’t spit them out” (293). This act shows her inability to cope with the burden of suffering around her. She feels that she has failed in her duty, and this feeling leads her to take an extreme step. Her death can be seen because of accumulated trauma, which she is unable to overcome.

Another important dimension of women’s trauma in the novel is the social response to their suffering. Instead of receiving sympathy and support, many women face silence and neglect. Society often fails to recognize their pain, and this lack of understanding increases their suffering. Women are expected to remain silent about their experiences, which prevents them from healing. Their trauma remains hidden, making it even more difficult to overcome. The novel also suggests that trauma is not limited to individuals but affects the entire community. The collective suffering of women creates a sense of shared pain, which becomes a part of cultural memory. The experiences of these women are not forgotten but continue to influence future generations. In this way, trauma becomes a part of history, shaping the identity of a nation. Moreover, the novel shows that trauma changes the way women see themselves and the world around them. They lose their sense of identity and begin to see themselves as victims. Their confidence is destroyed, and they struggle to regain their self-respect. This loss of identity is one of the most painful aspects of trauma, as it affects every aspect of their lives. Thus, through these detailed descriptions and incidents, Ha Jin presents a comprehensive picture of women’s trauma during war. The suffering of women is shown as complex and multi-dimensional, involving physical violence, emotional pain and psychological disturbance. It is further intensified by social silence, loss of family and continuous fear.

In conclusion, the novel clearly shows that trauma in women is not a temporary condition but a long-lasting experience that shapes their entire life. It affects their thoughts, behaviour, and identity, making it impossible for them to return to their previous state. Through the characters of Anling, Minnie Vautrin and the women refugees, Ha Jin presents a powerful and realistic portrayal of human suffering. The novel highlights the need for understanding, compassion, and support for victims of trauma. It also reminds us that war does not end with physical destruction; it continues in the minds and memories of those who survive, especially women, who carry its burden throughout their lives.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of English of S. K. Patil Sindhudurg Mahavidyalaya for providing the academic support, encouragement, and resources necessary for the successful completion of this research paper.

Special thanks are extended to respected teachers, mentors, and colleagues for their valuable guidance, insightful suggestions, and continuous encouragement throughout the research process.

The author also acknowledges with gratitude the academic inspiration and support received from University of Mumbai for fostering an environment of research and scholarly inquiry. Finally, heartfelt thanks are offered to family members and well-wishers for their constant support, patience, and motivation, which made the completion of this work possible.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Brownmiller, Susan Brownmiller. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. Ballantine Books, 1975.
2. Caruth, Cathy Caruth. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
3. Felman, Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992.
4. Ha, Jin. *Nanjing Requiem*. Pantheon Books, 2011.
5. LaCapra, Dominick LaCapra. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Exploring Feminism and Gender Studies: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Debates

Dr. Pankaj Kumar Sarmah¹ Dr. Jahnabi Devi²

Submitted: 10-Mar-2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030209



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791441

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791441>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University
Nalbari, Assam

²Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
KK Handiqui State Open University
Guwahati, Assam

How to cite this article:

Sarmah, P. K., & Devi, J. (2026). Exploring Feminism and Gender Studies: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Debates. *International Journal of English and World Languages and Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 33–39.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Pankaj Kumar Sarmah, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University
Nalbari, Assam

Abstract

This paper explores the growth and reach of feminism within the larger area of gender studies, following its historical development and evaluating its applicability in the contemporary period. It also examines the development of many waves of feminism, each of which contributed unique theoretical frameworks and political objectives, starting with early feminist movements that concentrated on legal rights and gender equality. In order to better understand how gender is constructed and performed, it emphasizes how gender studies developed as an interdisciplinary subject that incorporates ideas from sociology, literature, political science, and cultural studies. The essay also discusses important issues influencing modern feminist discourse, such as representation, intersectionality, identity politics, and the criticism of conventional gender binary thinking. It also discusses how feminist theory and practice are affected by globalization, internet activism, and changing sociopolitical circumstances. The study highlights the ongoing significance of feminism and gender studies in confronting structural injustices and fostering inclusive social change by looking at both historical trends and contemporary debates. At the end, this essay contends that the subject is enhanced by the dynamic interaction between historical viewpoints and current discussions, making it an essential field of study for comprehending power, identity, and social justice in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender Studies, Social Justice, Feminist Theory, Patriarchy

Introduction:

The promotion of social, political, and economic equality between the sexes is known as feminism, and it has a revolutionary and transformative impact on modern cultures all over the world. Although its fundamental idea—the pursuit of equality—seems simple, its ramifications are extensive, intricate, and intricately entwined with the systems that regulate daily existence. Feminism is a dynamic and ever-evolving framework that examines how power functions, how inequality is created and sustained, and how it might be eliminated. It is not only a political movement or an academic idea. Fundamentally, feminism opposes structural injustices that have traditionally favored males over women and disenfranchised those who don't fit the mold of prevailing gender norms. These disparities are not isolated occurrences, but rather have their roots in what is commonly referred to as patriarchy—a social structure where men hold a disproportionate amount of power, authority, and wealth. From overt legal discrimination to covert cultural norms that influence expectations about gender roles, patriarchal systems can take many different forms. For example, traditional views about men's duties as earners and women's roles as caregivers have impacted everything from family structures to labor markets. By claiming that these roles are socially manufactured rather than biologically predetermined, feminism aims to challenge and subvert these presumptions. By doing this, it creates opportunities for more equal arrangements in both the public and private domains. Crucially, feminism tackles the experiences of other gender minorities, such as non-binary and transgender people, who are frequently left out of conventional gender frameworks, in addition to advocating for women.

By expanding its scope, feminism has become more inclusive and reflective of the diversity of human experiences. By offering a methodical and multidisciplinary approach to comprehending how gender functions throughout society, gender studies enhance feminist research. Gender Studies concentrates on analysis, theory, and research, whereas feminism frequently stresses activity and campaigning. It looks at the construction, performance, and reinforcement of gender in a variety of social institutions, including the home, the media, school, religion, and the legal system. Gender Studies' emphasis on gender as a social construct rather than a fixed biological fact is one of its main achievements. This viewpoint casts doubt on the notion that gender disparities are inherent and instead emphasizes how cultural norms, historical settings, and power dynamics affect these distinctions. For instance, people's expressions of masculinity and femininity can differ greatly between cultures and eras, proving that gender is context-dependent rather than universal. Additionally, gender studies examines the ways in which gender interacts with other facets of identity, including race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. According to this intersectional approach, experiences of inequality are not all the same; rather, they are influenced by a variety of overlapping oppressive systems.

For example, a woman from a more privileged upbringing may encounter different difficulties than a woman from a marginalized racial or economic background. Gender Studies offers a more nuanced understanding of inequality and contributes to the development of more successful social change initiatives by examining these subtleties.

When combined, feminism and gender studies provide a critical perspective for comprehending and challenging power dynamics. They inspire people to challenge presumptions and identify the ways in which inequality is accepted and sustained. In a world where many forms of discrimination are subtle and ingrained in daily life, this critical viewpoint is especially crucial. For example, ostensibly neutral factors are frequently used to justify gender prejudice in hiring processes, differential compensation for equal labor, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, all of which are actually the result of deeper structural inequities. Feminism and gender studies make it feasible to confront and change these problems by drawing attention to them.

The revolutionary potential of feminism and gender is why studying them is so important. Feminist groups have made tremendous strides during the last century that have fundamentally altered societies. The expansion of political rights, especially the freedom to vote, is one of the most noteworthy accomplishments. In order to acknowledge women as equal participants in political processes, this was a significant step. Beyond political rights, feminism has been crucial in expanding legal safeguards against discrimination, expanding educational opportunities, and achieving equality in the workplace. Reproductive rights, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment laws are frequently the direct outcome of persistent feminist activism.

Feminism has challenged conventional gender portrayals in the cultural sphere and created new avenues for identification and self-expression. Stereotypical and constrictive representations of women and gender minorities have given way to more varied and nuanced representations in the media, literature, and art. This cultural change has affected people's perceptions of themselves as well as how others see and treat them. Everyday attitudes toward marriage, children, and relationships have changed as a result of feminism, encouraging more flexible and egalitarian arrangements.

Nevertheless, gender inequality is still a chronic and worldwide problem in spite of these noteworthy accomplishments. In many nations, there are still wage disparities between men and women, which are a result of both overt discrimination and systemic issues including occupational segregation and unequal access to opportunities. Women are frequently underrepresented in positions of authority and decision-making and overrepresented in lower-paying occupations. Domestic abuse, sexual assault, harassment, and other forms of violence against women and gender minorities are still common and are frequently made worse by societal stigma and insufficient legal protections.

Furthermore, not everyone has benefited equally from feminist advancements. Women and girls continue to confront major obstacles to economic involvement, healthcare, and education in many regions of the world. Their liberty and possibilities may be restricted by cultural norms and legal constraints, perpetuating cycles of inequality. New issues have surfaced even in more developed settings, such as how gender relations are affected by digital technologies. Online forums have become places of harassment and abuse, especially for women and other oppressed groups, despite providing chances for advocacy and community building.

These persistent difficulties demonstrate how important and relevant feminism and gender studies are. They serve as a reminder that advancements can be brittle and reversible, and that progress is not always linear. They also emphasize how crucial it is to modify feminist tactics in response to evolving situations. Modern feminist movements are becoming more integrated, worldwide, and focused on diversity and inclusion issues. They understand that in order to achieve gender equality, it is necessary to change the structural circumstances that support inequality in addition to addressing individual attitudes.

This paper aims to:

- Trace the historical evolution of feminist thought
- Analyze key theoretical frameworks within Gender Studies
- Examine contemporary debates and tensions
- Highlight the global and interdisciplinary nature of the field

Historical Foundations of Feminism

Early Feminist Thought

Feminism's historical roots can be discovered in early intellectual traditions, when a small but influential number of intellectuals started to challenge the long-standing subjugation of women. These early feminist ideas were distinct but potent criticisms of social, political, and cultural structures that denied women autonomy, education, and involvement in public life rather than emerging as a cohesive movement. These voices were radical and revolutionary at a period when women were mostly shut out of official institutions of knowledge and power, setting the stage for later feminist movements.

Christine de Pisan, a late medieval writer who opposed misogynistic tales common in European literature, was one of the first to contribute to feminist theory. She refuted the popular notion that women were morally and intellectually inferior to men by creating an allegorical city inhabited by honorable and successful women in her work *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405). Christine de Pisan's literature was notable not just for its defense of women but also for its methodology: she dismantled prejudices using reasoned argument and historical examples, claiming that women's

perceived inferiority was a result of limited access to education rather than inherent incompetence. Her writings are among the first organized attempts to articulate a defense of women's potential and dignity.

Feminist ideas acquired additional traction centuries later, during the Enlightenment, because to the work of intellectuals like Mary Wollstonecraft. The Enlightenment was marked by a focus on equality, reason, and individual rights, although these values were mainly exclusive to men. Women were still seen as inferior creatures whose main responsibilities were limited to the home. In her groundbreaking work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which is recognized as one of the core works of contemporary feminist thought, Wollstonecraft addressed this issue.

In this essay, Wollstonecraft made the case that although women are not inherently inferior to men, it seems that way because they do not have access to chances for intellectual growth and education. She criticized the dominant social conventions that pushed women to put domesticity, obedience, and beauty ahead of independence and reason. In addition to limiting women's potential, Wollstonecraft believed that these expectations damaged society overall by depriving it of the contributions of half of its members. She promoted an educational system that would consider women as logical creatures with the capacity to develop morally and intellectually, allowing them to participate equally and actively in society.

Wollstonecraft's arguments are important because of their wider philosophical implications as well as their content. She directly addressed the hierarchical institutions that supported gender inequality by arguing that women have the same ability for reason as men. Her work also emphasized the interdependence of personal and political life, implying that larger social and political structures have a significant impact on the family's private domain. Later on, feminist theory would revolve around this realization.

A period of significant intellectual and social change gave rise to these early feminist voices. In particular, the Enlightenment signaled a move away from conventional authority and toward a stronger focus on individual rights and reason. Although philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke promoted concepts of equality and liberty, women were frequently left out of their theories. For instance, Rousseau maintained that women's education had to be focused on satisfying home duties and appeasing males. In response to such viewpoints, feminist scholars like Wollstonecraft exposed the contradictions in Enlightenment thought and demanded that its tenets be implemented universally.

It's critical to acknowledge the limits of early feminist philosophy. Thinkers like Wollstonecraft were influenced by their social and cultural environments, and the experiences of middle-class women were frequently the main emphasis of their arguments. Their analyses mostly ignored issues of colonialism, race, and class. However, their contributions were revolutionary because they presented the notion that gender disparity is socially produced and so changeable rather than inherent or inevitable.

Early feminist views were articulated through literature, social critique, and educational reform in addition to philosophical writings. After gaining access to education, women started to challenge the limitations imposed on them and push for increased involvement in public and intellectual life. Even though these initiatives were frequently dispersed and had a narrow focus, they laid the groundwork for later feminist movements.

The First Wave of Feminism (19th–Early 20th Century)

The first wave of feminism focused primarily on legal and political rights, particularly women's suffrage. Activists in the United States and Europe campaigned for the right to vote, property ownership, and access to education.

This wave culminated in significant achievements, such as the passage of the 19th Amendment in the United States in 1920.

However, the first wave was not without limitations. It largely centered on the experiences of middle-class white women, often excluding women of color and working-class women. This lack of inclusivity would later become a major point of critique within feminist scholarship.

The Second Wave of Feminism (1960s–1980s)

The second wave expanded the scope of feminist activism beyond legal rights to include cultural and social inequalities. Issues such as reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and sexual liberation became central concerns.

This period also saw the emergence of influential texts like Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which argued that gender is socially constructed rather than biologically determined.

Second-wave feminism challenged traditional gender roles and emphasized the idea that "the personal is political." It brought attention to issues such as domestic violence and marital rape, which had previously been considered private matters.

Despite its transformative impact, the second wave faced criticism for its lack of diversity and its tendency to universalize women's experiences.

The Third Wave of Feminism (1990s–Early 2000s)

The third wave emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of earlier feminist movements. It emphasized diversity, individuality, and the intersection of multiple identities, including race, class, and sexuality.

Third-wave feminists rejected the notion of a single, unified female experience, instead highlighting the complexity of identity. This period also saw the rise of intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which examines how overlapping systems of oppression shape individual experiences.

The Fourth Wave and Digital Feminism (21st Century)

The fourth wave is characterized by the use of digital platforms to mobilize activism and raise awareness about issues such as sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Movements like #MeToo have demonstrated the power of social media in amplifying marginalized voices and challenging systemic abuse.

This wave also reflects a more inclusive and global approach to feminism, addressing issues such as LGBTQ+ rights, body positivity, and trans inclusion.

Emergence of Gender Studies:

Growing out of earlier feminist scholarship and activity, gender studies became a separate academic field in the late 20th century, greatly expanding the scope of study beyond the category of "women" alone. The social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the second wave of feminism, which raised awareness of the structural injustices ingrained in daily life, had a significant influence on its growth. Universities started to realize that formal academic settings were necessary for the methodical study of gender, identity, and power-related concerns. These programs were first created as Women's Studies, but they eventually changed to become Gender Studies.

Fundamentally, gender studies aims to comprehend the construction, performance, and regulation of gender in many cultural and historical situations. The discipline highlights how social processes, cultural norms, and institutional practices affect gender identities rather than considering gender as a permanent biological property. The long-held belief that gender disparities are inherent or unavoidable is challenged by this viewpoint. Rather, it contends that repeated behaviors, expectations, and representations are what create and sustain these disparities. This view has been greatly advanced by influential theorists like Judith Butler, especially through the concept of gender performativity, which contends that gender is something one performs through repeated behaviors and social interactions rather than something one is innately.

Gender Studies' intrinsic multidisciplinary nature is one of its distinguishing characteristics. Gender Studies draws from a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, literature, psychology, history, political science, and even fields like law, media studies, and science and technology studies, in contrast to traditional academic disciplines that function within well-defined boundaries. Scholars may investigate gender from several angles and comprehend how it functions in various spheres of life thanks to this multidisciplinary method. For instance, literary academics would examine how gender is portrayed in texts, political scientists might look into the role of gender in governance and policy-making, and sociologists might examine trends of gender disparity in the workplace.

By analyzing how various cultures create and comprehend gender roles, anthropology advances gender studies by showing how societal definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" vary greatly. Psychology, on the other hand, studies the formation of gender identity and how it affects thought and behavior. In the meantime, historical research demonstrates how gender norms have changed throughout time, demonstrating that they are dynamic and susceptible to alteration in reaction to more significant social shifts. Gender Studies offers a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of gender as a complex phenomenon by incorporating these various points of view.

Gender Studies' challenge to binary conceptions of gender is another important contribution. Conventional frameworks have frequently rigidly classified people as either masculine or female, perpetuating a binary that ignores the variety of human experiences. By emphasizing the reality of non-binary, transgender, and gender-nonconforming identities, gender studies challenges this binary paradigm. It highlights the fact that gender is a spectrum and that people can experience and express their gender in ways that defy easy classification. This change has significant ramifications for social policy, legal recognition, cultural attitudes, and academic thought.

Gender Studies investigates how identities are shaped by the junction of various social elements, such as race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and nationality, in addition to questioning binary classifications. The premise that oppressive institutions are interlinked and cannot be comprehended in isolation is emphasized by this intersectional approach, which is frequently linked to academics like Kimberlé Crenshaw. A woman from a marginalized racial background, for example, can have very different experiences than a woman from a dominating social group. The goal of gender studies is to draw attention to these distinctions and examine how societal structures and human lives are shaped by overlapping kinds of inequality.

Additionally, gender studies closely examines how institutions control and uphold gender norms. Expectations on gender-appropriate behavior are greatly influenced by institutions like the state, the family, the media, the educational system, and religion. For instance, while media portrayals frequently reinforce stereotypes about masculinity and femininity, educational institutions may quietly promote distinct professional options for males and girls. Gender Studies shows how power functions at both structural and cultural levels, impacting not just opportunities and resources but also identities and perceptions, by critically analyzing these institutions.

Activism and social change have been significantly impacted by the rise of gender studies. The discipline has influenced legislation intended to advance gender equality and has contributed to larger social movements fighting for the rights of women and gender minorities by offering theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. Gender Studies findings have influenced issues including LGBTQ+ rights, gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and employment discrimination. Furthermore, the subject keeps changing to address new issues such how gender relations are affected by globalization, digital technology, and environmental catastrophes.

Key Theoretical Frameworks

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism focuses on achieving gender equality through legal reforms and policy changes. It advocates for equal rights in education, employment, and politics.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism seeks to dismantle patriarchal structures and challenges deeply rooted power dynamics. It emphasizes the systemic nature of gender oppression.

Marxist and Socialist Feminism

These perspectives analyze gender inequality in relation to capitalism and class structures, arguing that economic systems play a crucial role in perpetuating gender disparities.

Intersectional Feminism

Intersectionality highlights how different forms of oppression intersect, creating unique experiences of discrimination. It has become a central concept in contemporary feminist discourse.

Postmodern and Queer Theory

Postmodern feminism challenges universal narratives and emphasizes the fluidity of identity. Queer theory further deconstructs traditional notions of gender and sexuality.

Contemporary Debates in Feminism and Gender Studies

Gender Identity and Trans Rights

One of the most significant debates within contemporary feminism revolves around gender identity and the inclusion of transgender individuals.

Some feminists advocate for a more inclusive understanding of gender, while others emphasize biological distinctions. This debate reflects broader tensions within feminist movements and highlights the complexity of defining gender.

Intersectionality and Inclusivity

While intersectionality has become widely accepted, its implementation remains challenging. Critics argue that mainstream feminism still fails to adequately address the experiences of marginalized groups.

Global Feminism

Feminism is not a monolithic movement but varies across cultural and geographical contexts. In many parts of the world, women continue to face significant barriers to education, healthcare, and political participation.

Global feminism seeks to address these disparities while respecting cultural differences.

Digital Feminism and Online Activism

The rise of digital platforms has transformed feminist activism, enabling rapid mobilization and global reach. However, it has also introduced challenges such as online harassment and misinformation.

Critiques of Feminism

Feminism has faced criticism from various perspectives, including claims that it is no longer necessary or that it has become too fragmented.

These critiques highlight the ongoing need for dialogue and reflection within the movement.

Feminism in Academia and Interdisciplinary Research

Feminist scholarship has influenced numerous fields, including science, technology, and medicine. For example, neurofeminism critiques biases in scientific research related to gender differences, emphasizing the need for more inclusive methodologies.

Similarly, feminist perspectives have been applied to artificial intelligence, highlighting issues of bias and representation.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite significant progress, feminism and gender studies face several challenges:

- Persistent gender inequality
- Resistance to feminist ideas
- Internal divisions within the movement
- Balancing global and local perspectives

Conclusion

As intellectual traditions and practical movements, feminism and gender studies have experienced significant changes over time, always adjusting to changing social, political, and cultural contexts. What started out as a collection of disparate but brave criticisms of women's subjugation has grown into a rich, intricate, and multidisciplinary area of study that tackles issues of justice, identity, and power in addition to gender inequity. Feminist thought has evolved from the early philosophical interventions of thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft to the expansive and intersectional frameworks put forth by academics like Kimberlé Crenshaw. This evolution reflects a continuous attempt to comprehend and change the circumstances that lead to inequality. Feminism has undergone several stages or "waves" throughout history, each of which addressed the urgent problems of the day while fixing the shortcomings of the preceding one. Early feminist initiatives concentrated on obtaining fundamental legal rights and respect, especially with regard to women's political engagement and education. Feminist research has broadened over time to address social, cultural, and economic aspects of inequality, realizing that legislative changes are not enough to bring about true equality. By offering new theoretical frameworks and methodologies that question essentialist ideas of gender and highlight its socially constructed aspect, the birth of Gender Studies further deepened this research. In order to ensure that feminist discourse is not restricted to a single story or perspective, this intersectional approach has been crucial in recognizing the various experiences of individuals and communities. Simultaneously, the emergence of digital technologies and social media has changed how feminist ideas are mobilized and spread. Online platforms have

made it possible for knowledge to spread quickly and for global networks of activism to grow, giving previously marginalized voices a previously unheard-of level of visibility.

The prevalence of gender-based discrimination worldwide serves as a sobering reminder that the objectives of feminism have not yet been entirely achieved, despite these noteworthy developments. Wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership roles, restricted access to healthcare and education, and pervasive gender-based violence are just a few of the ways that inequality still exists. Furthermore, new difficulties have surfaced in the contemporary setting, including the effects of globalization, technological advancement, and political opposition to movements for gender equality. These changes highlight the necessity of ongoing critical participation and flexible tactics in feminist activism and scholarship.

Crucially, gender studies and feminism provide tools for envisioning and constructing different futures in addition to identifying issues. They inspire people and cultures to reconsider what is deemed "natural" or "inevitable" by challenging long-standing conventions and revealing covert power structures. This critical viewpoint creates opportunities for more egalitarian and inclusive social structures that value and acknowledge a variety of identities and experiences. Education is essential to this process because it gives people the information and abilities they need to confront discrimination and promote change.

In addition, the continuous discussion within feminism itself is evidence of its vitality and applicability. Discussions over topics like gender identity, portrayal, and striking a balance between universalism and cultural distinctiveness demonstrate how dynamic and ever-evolving the industry is. These conversations improve feminism rather than damage it by promoting reflexivity and ongoing reevaluation of its objectives and tactics.

In conclusion, studying feminism and gender studies is still crucial in today's world, both to comprehend the historical causes of gender inequality and to combat its current expressions. These disciplines offer a key framework for examining the intricacies of gender and how it interacts with other identities and power structures. Scholars, students, and activists are better prepared to face the problems that lie ahead when they engage with both historical viewpoints and contemporary discussions. In the end, feminism's lasting significance stems from its dedication to justice, equality, and human dignity—a dedication that still motivates initiatives to create a more inclusive and equitable future for everybody.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the authorities of Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University and KK Handiqui State Open University for providing the academic support and research environment necessary for the successful completion of this study.

The authors are deeply thankful to colleagues, mentors, and fellow researchers for their valuable suggestions, intellectual guidance, and constructive feedback throughout the preparation of this research paper.

Special appreciation is extended to the scholars and researchers whose works in the field of feminism and gender studies provided important theoretical insights and inspiration for this research.

Finally, the authors express heartfelt gratitude to their family members and well-wishers for their constant encouragement, patience, and support during the course of this academic work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. "Feminism: Definition, History, Types, Waves, Examples & Facts." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/feminism.
2. "Feminist Waves and the Question of Post-Feminism." *SMU Dedman College*, Southern Methodist University, <https://blog.smu.edu/dedmancollege/>.
3. "Feminism Overview." *EBSCO Information Services*, *EBSCO Research Starters*, www.ebsco.com/research-starters.
4. Friedrichs, Katrin, and Philipp Kellmeyer. "Neurofeminism." 2022.
5. Shokida, N. S., et al. "Delineating Feminist Studies." 2024. Snyder, R. Claire. "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay." *Signs*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2008, pp. 175–96. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.1086/588436>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.
6. Bayes, Jane H. "Gender and Politics: Mapping the Terrain in the Age of Empire." *Gender and Politics: The State of the Discipline*, edited by Jane H. Bayes, 1st ed., Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2012, pp. 135–74. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvddzq1d.10>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2026.
7. KANO, AYAKO. "CONCLUSION: On Rethinking Japanese Feminisms." *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms*, edited by Julia C. Bullock et al., University of Hawai'i Press, 2018, pp. 267–82. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv3zp07j.23>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2026.
8. Gouws, Amanda. "Gender and The State of Political Science in Africa." *Gender and Politics: The State of the Discipline*, edited by Jane H. Bayes, 1st ed., Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2012, pp. 59–76. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvddzq1d.7>. Accessed 30 Mar. 2026.

9. Clement, Floriane, et al. "Feminist Political Ecologies of the Commons and Commoning." *International Journal of the Commons*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–15. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26632710>. Accessed 31Mar. 2026.
10. Clement, Floriane, et al. "Feminist Political Ecologies of the Commons and Commoning." *International Journal of the Commons*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–15. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26632710>. Accessed 2Apr. 2026.
11. Mama, Amina. "Transnational Feminism for Global Africa." *GENERAL HISTORY OF AFRICA • X: Africa and Its Diasporas*, edited by VANICLÉIA SILVA SANTOS, UNESCO, 2025, pp. 235–46. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep72889.22>. Accessed 27 Mar. 2026.
12. Hunt, Sarah. *Gender Stereotypes and Representation of Women in Roald Dahl's Books*. Documents. Trinity College Digital Repository, 2023, Trinity Student Scholarship. Trinity College Digital Repository. JSTOR, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.36794809>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.
13. Jusová, Iveta, and Iva Šmídová. "Contested Feminist Narratives of Three Decades.: Uncertain Prospects of Czech Gender Studies." *Feministische Visionen Vor Und Nach 1989: Geschlecht, Medien Und Aktivismen in Der DDR, BRD Und Im Östlichen Europa*, edited by Karin Aleksander et al., 1st ed., Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2022, pp. 375–94. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv3142v08.22>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2026.
14. Sofia P. Caldeira, et al. "Exploring the Politics of Gender Representation on Instagram: Self-Representations of Femininity." *DiGeSt. Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2018, pp. 23–42. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.11116/digest.5.1.2>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2026.
15. YAMAGUCHI, TOMOMI. "The Mainstreaming of Feminism and the Politics of Backlash in Twenty-First-Century Japan." *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms*, edited by Julia C. Bullock et al., University of Hawai'i Press, 2018, pp. 68–86. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv3zp07j.9>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2026.
16. MANDELL, LAURA. "Gender and Cultural Analytics: Finding or Making Stereotypes?" *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, edited by Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein, University of Minnesota Press, 2019, pp. 3–26. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvg251hk.4>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2026.
17. Ely, Robin, and Irene Padavic. "A Feminist Analysis of Organizational Research on Sex Differences." *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2007, pp. 1121–43. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20159359>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.
18. Levit, Nancy. "Remaking Gender in Practice: Looking Forward." *The Gender Line: Men, Women, and the Law*, NYU Press, 1998, pp. 216–48. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qgdv7.11>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2026.
19. Nisa, Eva F. "Women and Islamic Movements." *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, edited by Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack, Brill, 2021, pp. 151–76. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1v7zbv8.12>. Accessed 7Apr. 2026.

Dancing Across Cultures: Hybrid Identity in *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith

Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030210



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791514

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791514>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Head, Department of English and
Research Centre
Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and
Science, Saswad, Pune, Maharashtra,
India

How to cite this article:

Zagade, S. H. (2026). Dancing Across Cultures: Hybrid Identity in *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 40–42

Address for correspondence:

Prof. (Dr.) Sanjay Haribhau Zagade
Head, Department of English and
Research Centre
Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and
Science, Saswad, Pune, Maharashtra,
India

Abstract

The research paper entitled 'Dancing Across Cultures: Hybrid Identity in *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith' examines the concept of hybrid identity and cultural blending in *Swing Time* (2016) written by Zadie Smith. The study focuses on how the novel represents the complexities of identity formation in a globalized and multicultural world. It highlights the experiences of the unnamed narrator and her childhood friend Tracey, whose lives reflect different responses to issues of race, class, culture, and belonging. The paper investigates how their personal journeys are shaped by social inequality, migration, and exposure to multiple cultural environments. The research further explores the elements such as dance, performance, friendship, and global travel as symbolic tools to express shifting identities. It also discusses the role of Western celebrity culture and African cultural spaces in shaping the characters' understanding of self and society. Through its non-linear narrative and reflective tone, *Swing Time* presents identity as fragmented, fluid, and continuously evolving rather than fixed or stable. The paper argues that *Swing Time* (2016) is an important contribution to contemporary English literature as it challenges traditional ideas of cultural purity and national identity. Instead, it portrays a world where individuals constantly negotiate between multiple cultural influences. In doing so, the novel becomes a significant text for understanding postcolonial identity, globalization, and the changing nature of belonging in modern society.

Keywords: Hybrid Identity, Cultural Hybridity, Globalization, Race and Class, Diaspora

Introduction

The contemporary English literature has undergone a significant transformation due to emerging trends in society and culture. In the modern academic context, English studies have moved beyond the traditional focus on close textual reading and canonical texts to adopt broader, interdisciplinary approaches. These approaches examine literature in relation to social, historical, political, and cultural frameworks, thereby positioning literary works as reflections of lived human experiences rather than isolated artistic creations.

This shift has been strongly influenced by forces such as globalization, migration, postcolonial theory, and cultural studies. As a result, literature is increasingly studied as a cultural product that engages with issues of identity, power, and representation. The boundaries between literature and other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and history have become blurred, leading to a more inclusive and globally aware understanding of texts.

A central concern of contemporary literary studies is the idea of cultural hybridity and hybrid identity. In a globalized world, individuals often exist within multiple cultural systems simultaneously. This interaction of cultures produces identities that are fluid, complex, and constantly evolving rather than fixed or singular. Themes such as race, class, gender, migration, displacement, and belonging have therefore become central to literary analysis, as writers attempt to represent the fragmented nature of modern identity.

Within this theoretical framework, contemporary fiction plays an important role in representing the realities of multicultural societies. *Swing Time* (2016) by Zadie Smith is a notable example of such literature. The novel reflects the impact of globalization and cultural interaction through its portrayal of friendship, race, social inequality, and identity formation. It presents characters who move between different cultural and geographical spaces, highlighting the tensions and possibilities of hybrid identity in the modern world. The study aims to explore the contemporary English literature that responds to emerging social and cultural trends. It demonstrates the literature functions as a medium through which complex questions of identity, culture, and belonging are explored in an increasingly interconnected world. *Swing Time* (2016) reflects identity as a relational, fluid, and continuously negotiated construct shaped by the intersecting forces of race, class, gender, and globalization. Through its fragmented narrative structure and reflective tone, Zadie Smith challenges essentialist notions of identity, instead presenting it as something formed through experience, memory, and interaction with others. The unnamed narrator's journey is marked by her persistent attempt to understand herself in relation to the people around her, revealing that identity in the contemporary world is not a fixed essence but a process of ongoing negotiation.

From the outset, the narrator establishes her tendency toward relational self-definition, admitting that she has “always tried to attach [herself] to the light of other people” (Smith 5). It encapsulates the central tension of the novel: the narrator’s inability to form an autonomous identity independent of external influences. Her relationships—with Tracey, Aimee, her mother, and others—become the primary means through which she attempts to construct a sense of self. However, these relationships are marked by imbalance, dependency, and disconnection, reflecting the broader instability of hybrid identity.

The narrator’s childhood friendship with Tracey forms the foundation of her early understanding of race and identity. Both girls are described as having the same “shade of brown” (Smith 26), yet their experiences diverge significantly, illustrating the complexity of racial identity within a multicultural society. Tracey’s natural talent for dance allows her to embody a sense of cultural confidence and belonging that the narrator lacks. Dance, in this context, functions as a form of embodied identity, connecting Tracey to a lineage of Black performance traditions. The narrator, by contrast, remains an observer, fascinated by performance but unable to fully participate in it. This distinction creates a dynamic in which the narrator perceives Tracey as more authentic, reinforcing her own sense of inadequacy.

However, Tracey’s trajectory complicates this perception of authenticity. Despite her early promise, her later life reflects the constraints imposed by socioeconomic conditions. Her inability to sustain a successful career in dance underscores the role of class and structural inequality in shaping identity. As the narrator comes to understand, poverty and limited opportunities restrict the possibilities available to individuals, regardless of talent. She says, “People aren’t poor because they make bad choices. They make bad choices because they’re poor.” (Smith 142). This realization challenges the notion that identity can be freely constructed, highlighting instead the ways in which it is shaped by material realities. In this sense, Tracey’s character illustrates the limitations of cultural expression when it is not supported by social and economic stability.

The deterioration of the narrator’s friendship with Tracey further emphasizes the fragility of relational identity. Their bond, initially based on shared experience and mutual fascination, becomes strained by envy, misunderstanding, and unspoken tensions. Tracey’s destructive tendencies foreshadowed in her childhood stories that disrupt happy endings mirror the eventual collapse of their relationship. This rupture suggests that identity formed through relationships is inherently unstable, subject to change as those relationships evolve or dissolve. At the same time, the narrator’s continued preoccupation with Tracey indicates that past relationships continue to shape present identity, reinforcing the role of memory in the construction of selfhood.

While the narrator’s relationship with Tracey reflects identity formation within a shared cultural and social environment, her later association with Aimee introduces a global dimension that complicates this process further. Aimee, an internationally renowned pop star, represents the privileges of global capitalism, moving effortlessly across cultural and geographic boundaries. Her identity is constructed through visibility, consumption, and influence, positioning her as a figure of power within the global cultural economy. Her assertion that “we have to be the change we want to see” (Smith 211) reflects a belief in individual and the capacity of wealth and influence to effect social change.

However, Aimee’s philanthropic project in West Africa reveals the limitations and contradictions of this perspective. Her attempt to build a school for girls, while framed as altruistic, is critiqued by the narrator’s mother as an example of a “white woman sav[ing] Africa” (Smith 256). This critique exposes the unequal power dynamics underlying Aimee’s actions, suggesting that her intervention reproduces rather than challenges existing hierarchies. This dynamic aligns with Edward Said’s concept of cultural dominance, in which Western representations of non-Western spaces reinforce structures of power (Said 12). Aimee’s engagement with African culture—whether through philanthropy or artistic inspiration—illustrates how cultural exchange can become a form of appropriation when it is detached from its original context.

Within her relationship with Aimee, the narrator occupies a subordinate position, reinforcing her tendency to define herself through others. Unlike her friendship with Tracey, which involved a degree of mutuality, her connection with Aimee is explicitly hierarchical and transactional. The narrator’s role as an assistant places her in a position of dependency, where her identity is shaped by her proximity to Aimee’s power. Despite her physical mobility—traveling across continents and engaging with different cultures—she remains emotionally and psychologically unanchored. This contrast highlights the theme of mobility versus rootedness, suggesting that movement across cultural spaces does not necessarily lead to belonging but may instead intensify feelings of dislocation.

In contrast to both Tracey and Aimee, the narrator’s mother represents a more structured and ideologically grounded approach to identity formation. Her emphasis on education, discipline, and political engagement reflects a belief in self-improvement and social responsibility. As a woman who rises to a position of political authority, she challenges traditional gender roles and embodies a form of empowerment rooted in intellectual achievement. However, her relationship with the narrator is marked by tension, as her expectations create pressure and distance. The narrator resists her mother’s values, yet she cannot escape their influence, describing her as an “invisible conscience” (Smith 210).

It focuses the theme of gender and generational conflict, highlighting the ways in which identity is shaped through both resistance and inheritance. The narrator’s ambivalence toward her mother reflects a broader tension between individual autonomy and social expectation. While she seeks to define herself independently, she remains influenced by the ideological framework her mother represents. This suggests that identity is not only shaped by external relationships but also by internalized values and beliefs.

The novel's exploration of performance reflects as a unifying thread that connects these relationships and themes. Dance, in particular, functions as a powerful metaphor for identity formation, representing both expression and constraint. For Tracey, dance is an embodied practice that allows her to assert her identity, while for the narrator it remains an aspiration—something she admires but cannot fully achieve. This distinction reflects the broader tension between authenticity and imitation, suggesting that identity is constructed through repeated acts rather than inherent qualities. In this sense, performance becomes a means of negotiating cultural identity, aligning with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity as a process of negotiation within a "third space" (Bhabha 56).

Memory and narrative structure further strengthen the novel's exploration of identity. The non-linear progression of the story reflects the fragmented nature of memory, as the narrator revisits past experiences in an attempt to understand herself. These recollections are selective and often contradictory, highlighting the role of narrative in shaping identity. This aligns with Stuart Hall's argument that identity is not a fixed essence but a process of "becoming" shaped by history and representation (Hall 225). The narrator's attempt to construct a coherent narrative from her fragmented memories underscores the difficulty of achieving a stable sense of self.

The theme of cultural appropriation further complicates the notion of hybridity. The narrator's early admiration for Fred Astaire is disrupted by her later realization that his performances involved blackface (Smith 3), forcing her to confront the exploitative history of cultural exchange. Similarly, Aimee's appropriation of African cultural elements reflects a contemporary form of this dynamic, in which cultural practices are adopted without full understanding or accountability. These instances reveal that hybridity is not a neutral blending of cultures but a process shaped by historical and political inequalities.

In essence, *Swing Time* (2016) presents identity as a condition of continuous negotiation shaped by relationships, memory, and cultural interaction. The narrator's experiences reflect the complexities of living in a globalized world, where identity is influenced by multiple, often conflicting forces. Her inability to achieve a stable sense of self underscores the novel's central argument: that identity is not something one possesses but something one continually constructs and reconstructs through engagement with others.

Conclusion

The present paper examines hybrid identity through the narrator's relationships with Tracey, Aimee, and her mother, where selfhood develops through interaction across cultural and social boundaries. Zadie Smith presents identity as a negotiated condition within unequal structures of race, class, gender, and global mobility rather than a stable or inherited state.

The novel's focus on dance, memory, and movement reinforces the idea of "dancing across cultures," where identity emerges through performance, repetition, and adaptation. The narrator's persistent sense of in-betweenness reflects the difficulty of finding a clear sense of place within overlapping cultural spaces. In this way, *Swing Time* (2016) establishes hybrid identity as a continuous process shaped by relationships and cultural exchange and affirms its relevance to current debates in literature, society, and culture.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal, faculty members, and the Department of English and Research Centre of Waghere College of Arts, Commerce and Science for their valuable academic support, encouragement, and the research facilities provided during the preparation of this paper.

Special thanks are extended to respected mentors, fellow researchers, and colleagues for their insightful suggestions, constructive criticism, and continuous guidance, which greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

The author also acknowledges with deep appreciation the contributions of scholars and critics in the fields of postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and contemporary literary theory, whose works provided significant theoretical direction for this research.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude is expressed to family members and well-wishers for their constant encouragement, patience, and unwavering support throughout the completion of this academic work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Work Cited:

1. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
2. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990
3. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 1978.
4. Smith, Zadie. *Swing Time*. Penguin Press, 2016.

Feminine Sensibility in the Poems of Kamala Das

Dr. Karandikar Vallabh Shankar

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030211



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791594

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791594>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor,
B.D.Kale Mahavidyalaya,
Ghodegaon(Pune)
Email: yskarandikar2@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Shankar, K. V. (2026). *Feminine Sensibility in the Poems of Kamala Das*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 43–46.

Address for correspondence:

Prof. (Dr.) Sanjay Haribhau Zagade
Head, Department of English and
Research Centre
Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and
Science, Saswad, Pune, Maharashtra,
India

Abstract:

Kamala Das is an iconic Indian poetess who is well-known for her feminine sensibility in her English and Malayalam poetry. Her confessional mode, fearlessness, boldness and voice against male-dominated society accords her a special status. The personal and emotional world of women in a patriarchal society is the main concern in her poetry. The present paper attempts to shed light on some of her famous poems through which she rebels against the male-dominated society. She narrates the experiences of women in her poems and speaks out for change in society. Kamala Das resists the historical and traditional norms and tries to perform her role as a feminist to bring about changes in society. She tries to highlight the stark reality in society by depicting the status of women and their sufferings. The themes and style of Kamala Das's poetry reflect the true picture of womanhood, which needs to be changed. She is criticised by many critics for her unapologetic picture of female sexuality and for breaking the traditional gender norms. The feminist voice of Kamala Das has become a source of inspiration for the suffering women who have been tortured in this male-dominated society.

Keywords: Feminine sensibility, confessional mode, patriarchal society, traditional norms, gender norms, feminist voice.

Introduction

The sensibility presented in poetry expresses the poet's observations, feelings, emotions, experiences, consciousness, responsiveness and ability to appreciate. "One of the most aggressively individualistic of the new poets is Kamala Das." (Iyengar 677). Kamala Das has given a new dimension to Indian writings in English. She has composed poems in English and Malayalam. Her poetry collections *Summer in Calcutta*, *The Descendants*, *The Old Playhouse* and *Other Poems* highlight the predicament of women in the patriarchal society. Her novel *Alphabet of Lust*, short story *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* and autobiography *My Story* depicts the sexual exploitation of women in society. The reputation of Kamala Das rests on her poetry and her notoriety from her autobiography. (Gupta 46). This paper attempts to highlight the feminine sensibility in the poems of Kamala Das. The various approaches and dimensions of feminine sensibility are taken into consideration. It shows the feminist perspective of Kamala Das. The various aspects of feminine sensibility are explained in this paper, explaining various poems of Kamala Das.

Defining Feminine Sensibility:

The term feminine focuses on the characteristics of the female gender that are traditionally suitable for women. The term sensibility focuses on sensitiveness. In the Indian context, feminine sensibility is a perspective that shows awareness about womanhood. In literature, many poets have depicted the inner struggles of women through their challenges and problems. The problems of women are explored, focusing on different dimensions and applying various approaches. Kamala Das has tried to highlight different problems of women. Das has highlighted her personal experiences in her poetry, which are representative in nature. Understanding her personal emotions, experiences and sufferings through her confessional mode is an interesting study. Das's poetry shows her gender consciousness, female identity, and social, traditional, cultural and political diplomacy. The language, tone, mood and themes in the poems of Das depict feminine sensibility.

Literature Review:

Many Indian poets have focused on feminine sensibility in their poetry by highlighting traditional systems, cultural experiences and societal norms through their poetic expressions. The feminist perspective tries to highlight the problems of women, their suffering conditions. Male dominance, sexual exploitation, alienation, suffering conditions and desires and expectations are some of the important factors highlighted by many poets such as Kamala Das, Sarojini Naidu, Amrita Pritam, and Gauri Deshpande. These poets have highlighted feminine sensibility in their poetry by highlighting their identity, suffering, love, loneliness, female emotions, sexual exploitation and expectations. They have voiced for equality and freedom by depicting oppressive social, political, geographical, cultural and traditional practices in the society. The conventional roles of women are focused on by these poets to show how women suffer in their lives.

Themes Reflecting Feminine Sensibility in the Poems of Kamala Das: Kamala Das is known for her bold and candid tone. She expresses feminine sensibility through the themes in her poems. Being a confession poet, she highlights her personal experiences to shed light on the factors that make women suffer. Major themes in her poetry are: male domination, sufferings of women, identity conflict, marital issues, female protest, betrayal, childhood experiences, sexual exploitation, social hypocrisy, longing for true love and equal status. Through these themes, Kamala Das has presented feminine sensibility in her poetry.

Reflection of Feminine Sensibility in the Poems of Kamala Das

This paper tries to highlight the feminine sensibility in the poems of Kamala Das, highlighting various aspects in the poems. Some poems from the collections of Kamala Das are explained to show the feminine sensibility in her poems. Kamala Das criticises the male-dominated society and the traditional norms by expressing her strong dissatisfaction with so called civilized sexual morality and social standards in her poems. (Sinha 117). Das's poetry criticises the traditional norms based on male domination.

The feminine sensibility of Das is reflected through the following poems, which challenge traditional social norms and expose social reality, terror, political lechery and hypocrisy. **An Introduction** is one of the evocative poems. In it, Das maps out the social customs that seek to keep the woman in a perpetual bondage of convictions. (Chakrabarti 175). The following lines in the poem of Kamala Das highlight how a woman is expected to perform her traditional role of a mother, wife and daughter.

*"Dress in sarees, be girl/Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook, /
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in/."*

(Das "An Introduction" lines 36-42)

Through these lines, Das criticises the traditional social norms that give no power, status and freedom to women.

Das becomes the voice of feminine sensibility by giving a new dimension to her poems. Her frank and candid tone enables her to depict the social reality. Her use of the personal pronoun "I" in her poems expresses her longings, expectations and problems. Moreover, it becomes the loud voice of women in general. She boldly challenges the patriarchal mechanism and speaks out against injustice. She expresses her unfulfilled desires and sexual exploitation. In *An Introduction*, Das says:

"When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask

For he drew a youth of sixteen into the

Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me

But my sad woman-body felt so beaten." (Das. "An Introduction" lines 28-31)

These lines indicate how women are treated as pleasure-giving objects whenever men desire. Men enjoy the female body without bothering about female feelings and expectations. Das has described these feelings and expectations to show female exploitation. A woman is always treated as secondary. She is treated badly in society.

In the poem, **The Freaks** Das highlights the relationship that is not based on love.

"He talks, turning a sun-stained/cheek to me, his mouth, a dark /cavern, where stalactites of /uneven teeth gleam, his right/ hand on my knee, while our minds/ are willed to race towards love;/But they only wander, tripping" (Das "The Freaks" lines 1-7).

These lines focus the male partner who is ugly, lustful and repulsive. He tries to enjoy her physical body. There is no emotional involvement. It shows the lust of the male partner who wants to enjoy the female body and nothing else. Das wants to indicate that they also want to love and enjoy with their partner, but their emotions, desires and expectations are not at all considered by their partners.

The suffering condition of a married woman is highlighted by Das in her poem **The Grandmother's House**. Das confesses that she didn't receive love after her marriage, which she received from her grandmother when she was alive. It shows the plight of the married woman who suffers because of male domination. The difference between childhood life and married life is highlighted in the poem. The grandmother's house symbolises security and love. But the grandmother's death and the decay of the old house bring darkness and loneliness. Loneliness and loss of love is experienced by the poet in the absence of the grandmother; it sheds light on the insecure and troublesome life of a woman after her marriage. The poet's feminine sensibility is reflected through her loveless relationship and pessimism in the poem. The deathlike silence in the grandmother's house indicates loss for the poet. The desire to meet the grandmother and her house shows the attachment of the poet to her grandmother.

"I who have lost/My way and beg now at strangers' doors to/Receive love, --"(Das "My Grandmother's House" lines 14-16)

The death of the grandmother makes the poet suffer from her great loss. Life becomes loveless and miserable for her. She hopes for love but feels like a stranger in the absence of her grandmother.

In the poem, **The Sunshine Cat**, Das shows how a woman is betrayed by her lovers. A woman is considered only as an object of happiness. Her feelings, emotions and expectations are not considered, and therefore, she feels lonely and neglected. Sexual exploitation is one of the prominent themes in the poems of Kamala Das. *The Sunshine Cat* highlights the difference between love and lust. The impact of lust is presented in the poem. The husband in the poem neglects the wife without understanding or caring about her feelings and emotions. It makes the woman suffer. The woman in the poem suffers because of her lusty, selfish and cruel husband. Frustration in marriage and extra-marital relations destroys their family life.

The poem, **The Old Playhouse**, tries to describe the relationship between the husband and the wife. In this poem, the image of a sparrow stands for the poetess who didn't get freedom in her life. The poet's mind is compared with the old

playhouse with the lights off. The darkness indicates loneliness. The valueless life of the woman makes her suffer. This poem shows the traditional marriage system, in which the husband dominates his wife and makes her behave as per his expectations. It makes her unhappy as she is denied freedom and neglected in her life.

The poem, **Relationship**, by Kamala Das introspects contemporary social reality and explores the complexities of love, needs and betrayal in a relationship. The frustration of the woman caused by her unfulfilled desires for her companion highlights failure in the relationship. The following lines indicate the experience of the woman who suffers from the betrayal of her companion. Her frustration and helplessness is indicated in the following lines.

*"My body's wisdom tells and tells again
That I shall find my rest, my sleep, my peace
And even death nowhere else but here in
My betrayer's arms..."* (Das "Relationship" lines 14-17)

The language and tone in the poem, **Forest Fire**, highlight the inner desire of the poet. The title of the poem is symbolic. The fire is the forest that consumes everything; it is the destructive force that destroys everything. Through this poem, the poet expresses her inner fire, which is as destructive as a forest fire. The poet desires to be destructive to end her problems. This creative use of language, tone of the poet and imagery highlights feminine sensibility. This poem shows the inner feelings of woman through the creative force of the poet which is based on the poet's strange and shocking experiences in life. As the fire destroys everything in its path, in the same way, the poet wishes to destroy all the problems of woman which make them suffer. Therefore, the poet says:

*"My eyes lick at you like flames, my nerves
Consume; and, when I finish with you,"* (Das "Forest Fire" lines 8-9)

The confessional mode of Kamala Das expresses the plight of the woman she suffers from. Her hopes are also reflected in the confessional mode. In the poem, **In Love**, the poet narrates her sexual experience. The lover in the poem is passionate and enjoys sexual pleasure, but the sexual experience is merely the passion for sex; it has no emotional involvement. It is the most common experience of women which poet shares boldly.

*"--Million questions awake in
Me, and all about him, and
This skin-communicated
Thing that I dare not yet in
His presence call our love."* (Das "Love" lines 23-27)

Kamala Das in her poem, **The Suicide**, shows a desire for suicide due to unhappiness in life. The mental stress and suffering of a woman is highlighted in this poem. The symbolic use of the sea expresses freedom and the desire to escape from mundane life.

*"O sea, I am fed up
I want to be simple
I want to be loved
And
If love is not to be had,
I want to be dead,"* (Das "The Suicide" lines 27-32)

The woman in the poem is fed up with her routine life. She expects love in life. The feminine sensibility of the poet is seen through her protest against patriarchal society and her desire to live a carefree life. The wish to live a simple and free life is the expectation of the woman, but if she didn't get love, she prefers to die.

The poem, **A Losing Battle**, expresses love as a losing battle. As the title symbolises, in the battle of love, women are trapped, and they experience the worthiness of men. The tone of the poem expresses the frustration of a woman in a male-dominated society where her feelings and desires are not considered. The poet highlights men as beasts. Their worthless primal instincts are criticized. The following lines in the poem show the worthlessness of a man who is not faithful and capable of love:

"Men are worthless, to trap them/Use the cheapest bait of all, but never/Love," (Das "A Losing Battle" lines 3-5)

The poem, **Words**, highlights the power of words. Kamala Das, in her poems, expresses her poetic talent through words. Her poems become appealing due to her diction, tone and imagery. It also highlights her ability and feminine sensibility. These words become a weapon for her to fight against traditional customs and a male-dominated society. The following lines show the poetic talent of the poet:

*"All round me are words, and words and words,
They grow on me like leaves, they never
Seem to stop their slow growing
From within..."* (Das "Words" lines 1-4).

The poet highlights the nature, power and importance of language. It has the ability to create and destroy. The artistic expression of the poet enables her to create tension in her poem by focusing on her inner world. The artistic and poetic expressions highlight the real power of the poet, and Kamala Das succeeds in her attempt to depict her inner wishes using the most appropriate, natural, effective and powerful words.

In the poem, **The Stone Age**, the husband is called the ancient settler and fat spider, who makes his wife work just like a slave without bothering about her expectations. The poet raises the question in the mind of the woman whose sorrowful and loveless life becomes torture for her. The following lines reflect the life of the woman after marriage:

"Ask me why life is short and love is

Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price..." (Das "The Stone Age" lines 21-22)

This confessional mode and cry of the woman in the poem highlight the plight of women after marriage. The neglected life of the married woman makes her suffer. This poem shows the loss of female identity. Her condition is compared with a granite dove, which is lifeless and has no value. Kamala Das exposes the marital relationship of the couple, which is not based on love. The selfish and lustful nature of the husband makes the life of the wife problematic and troublesome.

The above poems highlight the female voice of Kamala Das, which depicts the various problems of women in general. The confessional mode of the poet and her narrated experiences depict the stark reality in society. Kamala Das has presented different issues in her poems by applying a feminist lens. Traditional marriage systems, social and cultural practices, protests, suffering, nostalgia, childhood experiences, loveless relationships, desires, expectations and sexual exploitations are some of the issues highlighted by Kamala Das in the above -mentioned poems to depict feminine sensibility in her poems.

Conclusion

The confessional mode of Kamala Das and her bold voice against an oppressive male-dominated society accords her a special status. The poems highlighted in this paper shed light on her feminine sensibility through her feminist perspective. Her voice no longer remains personal but becomes a loud cry of the suffering women in society. Her boldness and opposition to the traditional norms become a subject of criticism. The contribution of Kamala Das as an English poet and Madhavikutty in Malayalam shows her bilingual capabilities. Her courage to fight against a male-dominated society and traditional practices became a voice for the voiceless women. The use of diction, style, tone, imagery and use of personal pronouns make her poems very special, interesting and motivating. She has become a voice of the generation as her ideas appeal to us. Her conversion to Islam highlights her inner desires and expectations. She has depicted, in her poems, very beautifully the traditional practices in the male-dominated society and female expectations. Her rebellion against the social evils, her boldness, ability, creativity and diction accord her a crucial status in Indian literature.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Chakrabarti, Santosh, *"The Feminist Stance in Kamala Das's Poetry"*, Indian Writing in English. Edited by Kundu Rama. Atlantic Publishers, 2003. p. 175.
2. Das, Kamala. *Summer in Calcutta*, 2nd edition, D.C. Books, 2017.
3. ----- *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Orient Blackswan 2004.
4. Gupta, G..S..Balkrishna. *Indian English Literature*. Anmol Publication, 2003, p.46
5. https://www.bkbcollege.in/upload/research_project/1655201737.pdf
6. <https://www.literaryladiesguide.com/classic-women-authors-poetry/10-poems-by-kamala-das-confessional-poet-of-india/>
7. Iyengar K. R. Srinivas. *Indian Writing in English*. 15th edition., Sterling Publishers, 2005.
8. Sinha, Archana. *"Let me up but make the Walls Solid: Metaphor of Protest in Mani Rao"*, Indian Poetry, edited by Singh Rajni and Ram Singh Authorpress, 2012, p.117.

Contemporary Approaches and Trends in Disability Studies in English Literature

Dr. Mangesh Madhukar Gore

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030212



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20791661

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791661>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Department of English
Sundarrao More ACS College Poladpur,
PIN-402303, Dist Raigad M. S.

How to cite this article:
Gore, M. M. (2026). *Contemporary Approaches and Trends in Disability Studies in English Literature*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 47–49.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Mangesh Madhukar Gore
Department of English
Sundarrao More ACS College Poladpur,
PIN-402303, Dist Raigad M. S.

Abstract –

Disability Studies has significantly altered our understanding and discussions about disability in English literature. It moves beyond the conventional medical model, reframing disability as a social construct that is a critical component of personal identity and offers a unique lens for engaging with the world. This essay explores the recent developments in Disability Studies related to English literature, highlighting the field's journey from critiquing outdated and stereotypical portrayals to examining complex themes such as intersectionality—the interaction of various aspects of identity (including race, gender, and disability)—the stimulating conversations around "crip theory," the idea of "neurodiversity" (which affirms diverse cognitive experiences), and explorations of humanity's future (posthumanism). The analysis demonstrates how modern literary criticism analyzes disability representations in literature, focusing on the politics of care, personal agency, and the effects of disability on narrative aesthetics and style. Through this review, the essay argues that the field actively develops new ways of understanding human diversity, questioning conventional beliefs about what defines a "normal" or "able" body and enriching our engagement with stories. This dialogue highlights the significance of literature as a vital platform for examining the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities, promoting empathy, and advocating for social equity. Therefore, Disability Studies stands out as an essential resource for current literary analysis.

Keywords: Disability Studies, English Literature, Crip Theory, Neurodiversity, Intersectionality, Posthumanism, Bodily Experience, Literary Representation, Ableism, Social Conceptions of Disability

Introduction

Historically, representations of disability in English literature have predominantly been negative, often evoking pity or portraying a heroic struggle to overcome adversity. Characters with disabilities were frequently relegated to the background, depicted as sick or broken, or rendered invisible. This portrayal mirrored societal attitudes of the time, which viewed disability primarily as a personal challenge requiring a "cure" or charity. There was a prevailing belief that any divergence from a "normal" body or mind constituted a defect.

However, in the late 20th century, a new academic field known as Disability Studies emerged, significantly transforming the perception of disability. It shifted the focus from a purely medical perspective to one that considers disability as a social issue, emphasizing that societal barriers, negative attitudes, and power dynamics are often the true challenges, rather than the disability itself. This shift quickly influenced literary analysis, fostering exciting trends that interrogate traditional narratives, challenge the assumption that being "able-bodied" is the only standard, and encourage a re-evaluation of what constitutes beauty in literature and the essence of humanity.

This essay aims to elucidate these emerging trends. It will demonstrate how Disability Studies in English Literature has evolved from critiquing negative portrayals to engaging with innovative theoretical frameworks. We will examine contemporary understandings of disability through the lens of "intersectionality" (the interplay of various identity aspects), the groundbreaking concepts of "Crip Theory," the increasing acknowledgment of "neurodiversity," and the intricate relationship between disability and notions of humanity's future ("posthumanism"). Additionally, the essay will explore how literature captures the lived experience of inhabiting a body, the emotional ramifications, and the critical perspectives on care and dependency. By analyzing these developments, this paper contends that Disability Studies is not merely an addition to literary criticism; it is fundamentally reshaping our comprehension of identity, narrative construction, and the role of literature, thereby offering profound insights into individual lives and the collective human experience.

Discussion

The evolution of Disability Studies in the realm of English Literature represents a profound and continuous shift in our conceptual understandings. It highlights how thorough examination can not only confront longstanding prejudices but also foster new avenues for empathy and insight. This progression has initiated several important advancements that still shape the field today. A key and developing trend in this area is the transition from viewing disability purely as a medical concern to understanding it as a social construct, and ultimately moving beyond that framework.

Early Disability Studies scholars primarily critiqued literature for endorsing the "medical model," which depicted disabled individuals as subjects of sympathy, fear, or inspiration. These characters were typically framed within narratives focused on their "overcoming" disabilities or being "cured." Such critiques exposed society's inclination to prioritize "able-bodiedness," treating differences as shortcomings.

For example, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), Colin Craven is portrayed as a weak, disabled child whose subsequent ability to walk and play is presented as a miraculous healing brought about by nature and positive thinking. This storyline reinforces the medical model, representing disability as a challenge to be solved rather than an essential aspect of one's identity.

However, modern literary criticism goes beyond merely recognizing these issues; it now adds complexity to the social model. While it acknowledges the existence of societal obstacles, scholars increasingly explore how the subjective experiences of disability interact with social factors. Current literary analyses not only examine the persistence of stereotypes but also delve into the rich personal experiences of disability, which encompass elements of pain, joy, and the complicated relationship with one's body that cannot be reduced solely to societal influences. This perspective allows for deeper discussions about the personal aspects of disability, moving away from a binary view that sees it solely as a medical or social issue. A character may endure physical pain, yet the most significant limitations may arise from a lack of accessibility, as seen in contemporary literature like John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012), where the characters confront their internal struggles while navigating a world that either facilitates or obstructs their experiences.

Building on the social model, intersectionality has become an essential framework in Disability Studies within English Literature. Reflecting Kimberlé Crenshaw's insights into how race and gender intersect to create unique experiences of oppression, scholars now examine how disability interacts with various identity aspects, including race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, and nationality.

Literary critiques are increasingly centered on how characters with intersecting marginalized identities experience disability in distinct contexts. For instance, a character who identifies as a Black woman with a disability faces unique forms of discrimination and navigates social realities differently from a white man with a disability. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), the character Sethe endures significant physical and psychological wounds from the traumas of slavery, which profoundly shape her bodily and mental existence. While it may not fit the traditional definition of a "disability narrative," examining it through a Disability Studies lens reveals how these lasting traumas function as disabilities, influenced intricately by her race and gender under the conditions of enslavement. This analytical approach uncovers the multifaceted nature of oppression and challenges the perception of disability as a monolithic experience, promoting a more diverse and representative understanding of literature.

One of the most ambitious and revolutionary ideas gaining traction in recent discussions is the emergence of Crip Theory. Stemming from the broader "queer theory" movement, Crip Theory seeks to reclaim the pejorative term "crip" to dismantle and question traditional notions of the body, mind, and identity. It views disability not as a flaw or a loss but as a source of potential, unique insights, and vital political resistance. This framework proposes that disability can be seen as an alternative way of living rather than a deviation from what is considered "normal."

In literary analysis, Crip Theory challenges the common perception that disabled characters must aspire to "normalcy." Instead, it celebrates ideas like "crip time," which acknowledges different rhythms of activity and productivity — including longer times needed for completing tasks or an increased need for rest — and "crip space," which advocates for environments adapted to accommodate various bodies rather than forcing individuals to fit into existing spatial constructs. This theory emphasizes "cripistemologies," or ways of knowing and interpreting the world that arise from disabled people's experiences. Literary works are analyzed for their ability to question traditional narratives, dismantle ableist structures, and embrace disability as a source of innovative artistic expression and resistant identities. A noteworthy example of this theoretical perspective in literature is Neil LaBute's play *The Shape of Things* (2001), which challenges conventional ideas about physical perfection and manipulation, prompting essential inquiries into how bodies are valued, even though it does not exclusively focus on disability. Simultaneously, disabled writer and performer Ryan J. Haddad's *Hi, Are You Single?* (2020) boldly addresses normative narratives surrounding desire and intimacy through his experiences with cerebral palsy, thus redefining societal standards of desirability and capability.

In close relation to Crip Theory is the growing focus on neurodiversity and cognitive disabilities. Traditionally, Disability Studies primarily concentrated on physical disabilities, often sidelining cognitive and developmental differences. Nonetheless, the Neurodiversity movement, which considers neurological variations such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia as part of natural human diversity, has significantly impacted English literary scholarship.

Modern researchers are now exploring literature through a neurodiverse perspective, analyzing how texts depict various cognitive frameworks, communication styles, and sensory experiences. This encompasses reexamining classic literature for signs of neurodivergent traits and investigating contemporary works featuring neurodivergent characters. Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) serves as a striking instance, as its narrator, Christopher Boone, explicitly reflects characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome. The novel is celebrated for offering an immersive first-person perspective that illuminates the unique ways of processing information and interacting with the world, challenging readers to recognize and value alternative forms of intelligence and perception. This shift in analysis challenges "cognitive ableism," the belief in a single "normal" cognitive standard, advocating for a more

comprehensive understanding of intelligence, perception, and human potential, and fostering a greater appreciation for diverse narrative voices and forms.

A noteworthy progression arises at the crossroads of Disability Studies and posthumanism and transhumanism. As advancements in technology and medicine increasingly blur the lines between "natural" and "enhanced" human abilities, disability becomes an essential area for exploring deep philosophical questions. Posthumanist ideas challenge fixed definitions of what it means to be "human" and critique the human-centered perspectives that prioritize humans above all else, thereby allowing for the inclusion of bodies that surpass traditional norms. Within this context, disability invites a reconsideration of what defines an "ideal" body or mind.

Fictional works that depict cyborgs (blending human and technological elements), prosthetics, genetic alterations, or speculative scenarios where humans interact with cutting-edge technologies are thoughtfully analyzed for their impact on perceptions of disability. For example, in William Gibson's cyberpunk novels like *Neuromancer* (1984), various characters feature advanced prosthetic limbs or neural connections, complicating the boundary between disability and enhancement. A character who has lost a limb might receive a cybernetic replacement that significantly outperforms a biological arm, sparking discussions about the nature of "able-bodiedness" and whether technology alleviates disability or merely reframes it. Such discussions raise essential questions about whether technological "solutions" reinforce the idea that differences are fundamentally negative or if they open avenues for new forms of existence and freedom. Writers addressing issues of bodily enhancement, therapeutic cloning, or artificial intelligence provide a rich context for these questions, challenging conventional definitions of "normal" and "ill."

Moreover, there is a growing focus on affect, embodiment, and sensory experiences in the analysis of disability in literature. Scholars are increasingly recognizing the ways literature captures the vivid, lived experiences associated with disability, going beyond solely intellectual or social perspectives. This includes the pain, joy, frustration, and success involved in navigating a world designed around able-bodied ideals. Literary works strive to depict the sensory richness of these experiences, concentrating on the feelings associated with moving, perceiving, and existing in an environment that often prioritizes able-bodied standards. By exploring these emotional and embodied aspects, literature can offer a more complex and empathetic portrayal of disability, encouraging readers to engage with various narratives and perspectives on emotional and experiential grounds.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Disability Studies in English literature has led to a significant transformation in how disability is understood and represented. Rather than viewing disability as a deficiency or a problem, it is now appreciated as a complex facet of existence shaped by societal constructs, individual experiences, and intersecting identities. By utilizing frameworks such as intersectionality, Crip Theory, neurodiversity, and posthumanism, this field challenges outdated stereotypes and highlights the importance of diverse experiences and identities. It prompts a reassessment of ingrained beliefs about what is considered "normal," beautiful, or human, positioning literature as an essential vehicle for promoting understanding and inclusivity. Disability Studies reveal the inherent variety of human experiences, asserting that literature can both reflect and critique dominant societal attitudes. Embracing these emerging ideas may lead us toward a more equitable and profound appreciation of literary arts and the diversity of human existence.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Allegro, James. *Crip Lit: Disability and the Aesthetics of Exclusion*. University Press of Mississippi, 2021.
2. Bradford, Clare, et al. *Disability and Literary Texts: A Critical Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
3. Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia University Press, 1997.
4. Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013.
5. McRuer, Robert. *Crip Theory: Cultural Studies and the Politics of Disablement*. New York University Press, 2006.
6. Mollow, Anna. *Disability and the Politics of the Body in American Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
7. Snyder, Sharon L., Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, editors. *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*. Modern Language Association of America, 2002.
8. Walton, Jeremy. *Neurodiversity and Poetics: Autistic Aesthetics and the Literary Imagination*. University of Michigan Press, 2023.
9. Wendell, Susan. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. Routledge, 1996.
10. Young, Kevin. *The Disabled God: Toward a Theology of Disability*. Abingdon Press, 1994.

An Intersectional Study of Diasporic Alienation and Gendered Hybridity in Manju Kapur's 'The Immigrant'

Manjusha Dadaba Suryavanshi

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026-030212



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791754

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791754>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor, Dept. Of English,
Abasaheb Marathe Arts, New Commerce
and Science College, Rajapur.
Dist. Ratnagiri. 416702
Email: manjushas1719@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Suryavanshi, M. D. (2026). An
Intersectional Study of Diasporic
Alienation and Gendered Hybridity in
Manju Kapur's 'The Immigrant'.
International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research, 3(2(I)), 50–52.

Address for correspondence:
Manjusha Dadaba Suryavanshi
Assistant Professor, Dept. Of English,
Abasaheb Marathe Arts, New Commerce
and Science College, Rajapur.
Dist. Ratnagiri. 416702
Email: manjushas1719@gmail.com

Abstract:

This present research paper explores the intersectional complexities of the immigrant experience in Manju Kapur's novel 'The Immigrant' (2008). The study examines how protagonist, Nina's move from a 'constrained' life in Delhi to a purportedly 'liberated' life in Halifax uncovers the enduring shadowy effects of patriarchal dominance even in a postcolonial, globalized setting by applying Homi Bhabha's theory of 'Hybridity' and Kimberle Crenshaw's 'Intersectionality'. The study looks at how the protagonist's feelings of loneliness, dislocation, and identity crisis are intensified by moving to a different country. By using an intersectional lens, the study examines how gender, cultural norms, and marital responsibilities interact to influence the female protagonist's lived experiences.

The concept of diasporic alienation is examined through the emotional and psychological struggle faced by the Immigrant, who is being torn between traditional Indian values and the expectations of Western society. The study delves deeper into how marriage turns into a place of negotiation and struggle where a woman is expected to serve in multiple responsibilities, which frequently results in emotional stress and a loss of identity. This study contends that Kapur depicts the immigrant woman as a person involved in an ongoing process of self-realization and struggle rather than just as a passive victim, drawing on feminist and postcolonial viewpoints. In the end, the study shows how gender and diaspora connect to produce complicated issues that redefine the concepts of identity, belonging, and individuality in a globalized world.

Keywords: Diasporic Alienation, Intersectionality, Cultural Hybridity, Identity Crisis, Postcolonial literature.

Introduction:

An intersectional study of diasporic alienation and gender hybridity in 'The Immigrant' (2008), by Manju Kapur explores how multiple axes of identity—such as gender, class, culture and migration status—interact to shape the protagonist Nina's experience in a foreign country land. Diaspora literature examines the lived realities of migration, displacement, and the formation of identities in alien country. Manju Kapur depicts the cultural and psychological challenges faced by Indian immigrants as they adjust to life in the West in her novel 'The Immigrant'. The protagonist of the novel, Nina, moves to Canada after getting married and struggles with identity fragmentation, cultural dislocation, and emotional estrangement. People who live in a diasporic environment frequently develop a dual consciousness in which they are torn between their native culture and their new one. Alienation, nostalgia, and a desire to fit in are the results of this illness. In addition, it creates cultural hybridity, which is a merging of identities that subverts rigid ideas of self. The study of intersectionality focuses at the interactions between various facets of identity, such as culture, gender, class, and migration. Nina's perspective is influenced by patriarchy, marital expectations, and diaspora. Thus, her feelings of alienation are gendered as well as cultural. Kimberle Crenshaw established the notion of intersectionality, which enables us to comprehend the simultaneous interactions between various forms of repression, such as migration, culture, and Gender. This overlap is reflected in Nina's experience, as she is ostracized both as an immigrant and as a woman. The novel illustrates the twin marginalization that Indian women in the diaspora experience as a result of both cultural displacement and patriarchal systems.

Diasporic Alienation:

Lack of belonging, cultural dislocation, and emotional isolation are all considered forms of alienation in the diaspora. In 'The Immigrant', Nina's departure causes emotional isolation and detachment, which is exacerbated by her tense marriage. Immigrants frequently face sense of isolation in unfamiliar surroundings, nostalgia for their native country, and cultural incompatibility. 'For an immigrant there was no going back' (Kapur 330). Identity fragmentation and a sense of rootlessness are caused by diaspora. After moving to Canada, Nina experiences cultural shock, a loss of familiarity, and emotional loneliness. 'Identity, cultural dislocation, and the quest for belonging' in immigrant life are all depicted in the book. Despite her deep attachment to Indian customs, Nina finds it difficult to fit in with Western society. Her lack of social support, financial dependence, and marital confinement exacerbate her estrangement. As a result, dispersion becomes more than just physical relocation—it becomes a place of psychological exile.

Diasporic Alienation in The Immigrant

Emotional Isolation: Nina's migration to Canada leads to a deep sense of loneliness. She is detached from her family, culture, and familiar surroundings. Her marriage to Ananda fails to provide emotional support, intensifying her alienation. **Diaspora** often creates emotional voids, where individuals struggle to connect with their new environment. **Cultural Dislocation:** Cultural dislocation arises from the clash between Indian values and Western lifestyle. Nina finds it difficult to adapt to Canadian culture, language, and social norms. Immigrants often face discrimination, cultural shock, and identity instability, which contribute to alienation. **Marital Alienation:** Marriage in diaspora becomes a site of tension. Nina and Ananda's relationship reflect emotional distance and incompatibility. Migration intensifies marital strain as individuals depend more on their partners for emotional stability.

Gender Hybridity:

Gender hybridity is highlighted in the novel as an evolving process that Nina uses to rebuild her own identity by balancing Western values of freedom and selfhood with conventional Indian assumptions. This hybridity, in which Nina progressively asserts autonomy over her body, desires, and choices, suggests a complicated mixing and redefining of gender roles rather than a straightforward absorption.

"Nina was the perfect mix of East and West. Her devotion to her mother and her willingness to consider an arranged marriage proved her Indian values, while her tastes, reading, thoughts, manner of speech and lack of sexual inhibition all revealed Western influences" (Kapur 85).

Through her travels, Kapur demonstrates how diasporic settings can expose enduring injustices and offer opportunities for change. The novel provides a critical examination of how women negotiate and oppose multiple types of oppression in a globalized world, as an intersectional perspective demonstrates that Nina's changing identity is molded by the convergence of gender, culture, and diaspora.

Cultural Hybridity and Identity Formation

Negotiation Between Two Cultures: Nina's journey reflects a constant negotiation between Indian tradition and Western modernity. She neither fully rejects her roots nor completely assimilates into the host culture. This negotiation leads to the formation of a hybrid identity that exists between two worlds.

The Third Space: According to Homi K. Bhabha, the "third space" allows individuals to redefine identity beyond binary oppositions. Nina occupies this space by: Adapting to Western independence, retaining elements of Indian culture, creating a new sense of self, Hybridity thus becomes a site of transformation rather than conflict.

Transformation and Self-Realization: Initially dependent and insecure, Nina gradually becomes independent and self-aware. Her exposure to Western culture enables her to redefine her identity beyond traditional roles. Hybridity empowers her to challenge patriarchal constraints and assert individuality.

Intersection of Gender, Diaspora, and Identity

Gendered Experience of Diaspora: Women experience diaspora differently due to patriarchal expectations. Nina's identity is shaped by: Her role as a wife, Cultural expectations of femininity, Lack of autonomy, her alienation is thus intensified by gender inequality. **Resistance and Agency:** Despite constraints, Nina gradually asserts her agency. She seeks independence through education and self-exploration. This resistance highlights the intersection of feminism and diaspora in Kapur's narrative. The present research highlights a transformative journey from alienation to hybridity. Kapur presents diaspora as both painful and transformative. While alienation dominates the initial phase, hybridity emerges as a coping mechanism. Key transitions include: From isolation to adaptation, From dependence to independence, From cultural conflict to cultural synthesis. Assimilation and hybridity ultimately provide a more stable identity in the host society.

Gender Oppression in a Patriarchal Framework

Even in a foreign land, patriarchal values persist. Nina's marriage to Ananda reflects, male dominance, Sexual dissatisfaction, emotional neglect. Marriage, which is expected to provide stability, instead becomes a site of oppression. Studies show that the novel depicts a woman's struggle for identity within patriarchal society. Nina is expected to conform as a wife, denied emotional fulfilment, judged through societal norms. This highlights how patriarchy transcends geographical boundaries.

An intersectional reading reveals that Nina's suffering is not due to a single factor but multiple overlapping conditions like as a woman, she is already subordinate, as an immigrant, she is isolated, marriage restricts her freedom, she depends on her husband for survival, sexual dissatisfaction becomes a major issue, her body becomes a site of control and later liberation. Research highlights that Kapur shows the "objectification of woman in marriage" and her eventual assertion of bodily autonomy. Thus, Nina's identity is shaped at the intersection of patriarchy, diasporic alienation, Sexual repression.

The present research talks about identity crisis and self-realization, Nina's journey reflects a transformation, at initial stage she is a passive, dependent and traditional wife who always think about her husband's happiness. As the time passes her marital life disturbs because of lack of emotional, physical dissatisfaction, Ananda's lack of attention, his typical Indianness, she raises questions about their marriage, start to gain her own identity in foreign country. In Nina's journey of self-discovery, diaspora plays a dual role as it alienates her at the beginning and plays vital role in her empowerment. Nina evolves into a "new woman" through her diasporic experience.

"I need to be myself", she clarified" (Kapur,329)

The present paper also focuses on cultural hybridity which mainly explore in the novel 'The Immigrant'. The novel presents a conflict between Indian values and western values, marriage as duty and marriage as choice, female

submission and female independence, social norms and individual freedom. There is negotiation between tradition and modernity throughout the novel.

“This combination of cultural influence made her a harmonious fusion, not just a representation of one culture, but a unique blend of both. This made her exceptional and unparalleled” (Kapur,86).

Nina stands at this intersection, negotiating between cultural expectations, personal desires, this reflects the broader diasporic condition of hybrid identity formation.

Gender discrimination and diasporic alienation are closely related, according to an intersectional interpretation of ‘The Immigrant.’ Nina's story shows that migration frequently exacerbates already-existing disparities rather than bringing about freedom.

But in the end, the novel conveys a message of empowerment. Nina changes from a submissive person to an independent woman by hardship and self-realization. Manju Kapur thus effectively captures the intricacy of diasporic life, the enduring nature of patriarchy, and the potential for female agency.

Conclusion:

Cultural hybridity and diasporic alienation are related phenomena, according to an intersectional interpretation of ‘The Immigrant’. While hybridity provides a way to negotiate identity in a worldwide society, alienation results from cultural conflict, emotional isolation, and relocation. Manju Kapur illustrates that identity is malleable and changing via Nina's journey. The intricacies of diaspora, where people must manage several identities in order to reach self-realization, are highlighted in the book. As a result, The Immigrant turns into a potent examination of identity, belonging, and change in the context of diaspora.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited:

1. Kapur, Manju. *The Immigrant*. Random House India, 2008.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
3. Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. The New Press, 2017.
4. Saraiya, Sandeepkumar N. "Manju Kapur's The Immigrants: Diaspora Experience Through Nina." *RJELAL*, vol. 9, 2021, pp. 228–230.
5. Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-37.
6. Nayar, Pramod K. Nayar. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Pearson, 2008.

Analytical Study of Grammar Translation Method's Effectiveness on Speaking Fluency with Special Reference to Mediocre Primary Students

Dr. Smita Arjun Borade¹ Aditi Singh²

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030214



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791814

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791814>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Assistant Professor

Ashoka College of Education, Nashik

²Final Year B.A.B.Ed

Ashoka College of Education, Nashik

How to cite this article:

Borade, S. A., & Singh, A. (2026). Analytical Study of Grammar Translation Method's Effectiveness on Speaking Fluency with Special Reference to Mediocre Primary Students. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 53–58.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Smita Arjun Borade, Assistant Professor
Ashoka College of Education, Nashik

Abstract

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is one of the oldest and most traditional methods of English language teaching, originating from the methods used to teach classical languages such as Latin and Greek. This method emphasizes the explicit teaching of grammar rules, vocabulary memorization, and translation exercises between the target language and the learner's mother tongue. In many educational contexts, especially where English is taught as a second or foreign language, GTM continues to be widely practiced because it allows learners to understand grammatical structures and meanings through their native language. This research paper aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method for mediocre students in the primary school section in Nashik. The study explores how the use of the mother tongue, systematic grammar instruction, and translation activities can support learners who struggle with language acquisition. Mediocre learners often face challenges in comprehension, vocabulary retention, and sentence construction; therefore, structured methods like GTM may provide them with a clear framework for learning. The research investigates whether the Grammar Translation Method helps such students improve their understanding of pronunciation, vocabulary building, speech rate and flow, interaction and sentence structure. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into the relevance and effectiveness of GTM in contemporary classrooms, particularly for average-performing learners in the primary level.

Keywords: Grammar Translation Method, speaking fluency, mediocre primary students

Introduction

Language teaching has evolved through various approaches and methodologies, each reflecting different theories of learning and teaching. Among these approaches, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) remains one of the most traditional and historically significant methods used in language instruction. Originating in Europe during the nineteenth century, the Grammar Translation Method was initially developed for teaching classical languages such as Latin and Greek. The primary objective at that time was not spoken communication but rather the ability to read classical literature and develop intellectual discipline through the study of grammar and translation.

The Grammar Translation Method is based on the systematic study of grammatical rules and the translation of sentences between the target language and the learner's mother tongue. In this method, grammar is taught deductively, where rules are first explained and then applied through written exercises and translation tasks. Vocabulary is usually learned through memorization of word lists, and reading comprehension plays a significant role in the learning process. The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction helps learners understand complex grammatical structures and meanings more easily. The theoretical foundation of GTM lies in the belief that language learning contributes to the development of reasoning and analytical abilities. Scholars associated with traditional language teaching believed that studying grammar and translating texts enhances intellectual discipline and logical thinking.

Although modern communicative approaches emphasize speaking and listening skills, the Grammar Translation Method continues to be widely used in many educational settings, particularly in contexts where examinations focus heavily on grammar, reading comprehension, and writing. In countries like India, where English is often taught as a second language, teachers frequently rely on the use of the mother tongue to explain grammatical concepts and ensure student comprehension.

This research focuses on analyzing the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method on speaking fluency of mediocre students in the primary section in Nashik. By evaluating the impact of this traditional teaching method, the research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the relevance of classical language teaching methods in modern educational contexts.

The concept of speaking fluency

Speaking fluency refers to the ability to communicate ideas effectively and effortlessly in spoken language characterized by smoothness, speed, and coherence.

According to Wang et al, (2024), speaking fluency refers to the ease and effortless expression of ideas in a second or foreign language. Iswara et al (as cited in Richards 2009, p.14), fluency refers to Natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence.

Need of the research

One of the primary objectives of learning English is to enhance speaking fluency, but many primary school learners, notably those at the mediocre level, find it challenging to express themselves confidently and clearly. Speaking skills continue to be deficient in traditional teaching techniques, which often place a focus on reading and writing skills. Despite being commonly used in Indian classrooms, the grammar translation method is typically regarded as inadequate for improving speaking skills.

The potential of this methodology needs to be re-examined in an organized and creative manner, especially for mediocre students who need more guidance to increase their fluency. Furthermore, not much study has been done on how well the grammar translation method works to improve primary school students' speaking fluency in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary building, speech rate and flow, interaction, and sentence structure. Thus the purpose of this investigation is to determine whether the grammar translation method can contribute in improving speaking fluency among mediocre primary students.

Variables of the study

For the study following variables were considered:

Dependent variable

i) Speaking fluency

Independent variable

Programme based on Grammar Translation Method

Objectives of the study

1. To identify mediocre primary students with respect to their level of speaking fluency.
2. To design and implement a teaching module based on the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) for primary students.
3. To analyze the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method in improving the speaking fluency of mediocre primary students in terms of
 - a. pronunciation
 - b. Vocabulary building
 - c. Speech rate and flow
 - d. Interaction
 - e. Sentence structure
4. To propose suitable strategies for enhancing speaking fluency among mediocre primary students.

Hypotheses of the study

H₁- There is a significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₀₁- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₂- There is a significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₀₂- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₃- There is a significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of vocabulary building parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₀₃- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of vocabulary building parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₄- There is a significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of speech rate and flow parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₀₄- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of speech rate and flow parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme

H₅- There is a significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of interaction parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₀₅- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of interaction parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme

H₆- There is a significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of sentence structure parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

H₀₆- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of sentence structure parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme

Research Methodology

For the present study experimental method used. Single group pre- test, post-test design of experimental method used.

Sample for the study

For the present study incidental sampling method used for school selection and students were selected by cluster sampling method. 50 students of English medium school affiliated to Maharashtra State board are participated in the study.

Research Scope and limitations

The researcher selected two schools from Nasik city for the study. The research was carried out with 6th grade students from the selected schools. For this study, only Maharashtra State Board schools were considered, while CBSE and ICSE schools were excluded. The main aim of the research was to check the effectiveness of the GTM (Grammar Translation Method) on students' speaking fluency. Additionally, the research focused only on students' speaking skills, and other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing excluded. The study is limited to specific parameters of speaking fluency such as interaction, pronunciation, vocabulary, speech rate and flow, and sentence structure. The research focuses only on mediocre students of the Primary section, so the results may not be applicable to students of other ability levels.

Development and implementation of programme

The development and implementation of the programme is a systematic process to improve skill and performance of the students. The programme is planned by considering the needs of the learners and objectives of the research. Then the programme is implemented by ensuring active participation and involvement of the students. The developed programme consisted of activity oriented instructions to enhance speaking fluency. The programme developed on parameters of speaking fluency such as pronunciation, vocabulary building, speech rate and flow, interaction and sentence structure.

Table 1, Schedule of the programme

Session	Activities	Time
1	Word Map	60 mins
2	Word wall	60 mins
3	Vocabulary Bingo	60 mins
4	Story creation & Sentence Building	60 mins
5	Parts of speech (Noun, Pronoun, Adjectives, Adverbs)	60 mins
6	Picture description	60 mins
7	Dialogue.	60 mins
Total-		420 mins

The developed programme, incorporated activities such as word map, word wall, vocabulary bingo, story creation and sentence building, parts of speech, picture description, and dialogue enhanced speaking fluency of the students.

The researcher implemented the programme over a total duration of 420 minutes, which excluded the administration of the pre-test and post-test.

Data Collection

A researcher-constructed speaking fluency test, validated by experts in English and pedagogy, was used for data collection. A pre-test was administered to 120 students to assess their existing level of speaking fluency. Based on the results, students who fell into the medium level of speaking fluency were identified as mediocre learners. A total of 80 students were found in this category and were selected for the study. The programme based on the Grammar Translation Method was then implemented with these mediocre students. After the implementation, a post-test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method in improving the speaking fluency of the students.

Data Analysis

Data is analysed by using percentage and 't' test

Objective 1

1. To identify mediocre primary students with respect to their level of speaking fluency.

Table 2, Levels of Speaking fluency

Level	Low (0 to 30%)	Medium (31% to 50%)	High 51%-100%)
Number of students	23	80	17

Interpretation:

In the pre-test of speaking fluency, 23 students are at low level, 80 students are at medium level, and 17 students are at high level. Medium level students are considered as mediocre students with respect to their speaking fluency.

Objective 3

To analyze the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method in improving the speaking fluency of mediocre primary students.

Table 3, Levels of Speaking fluency after the implementation of the programme

Level	Number of students	Percentage
Low (0 to 30%)	0	0%

Medium (31% to 50%)	17	21%
High (51%-100%)	63	79%
Total	80	100%

Interpretation:

After the implementation of the programme on 80 mediocre students, no student remained in the low level. 17 students (21%) remained at the medium level, while 63 students (79%) progressed to the high level of speaking fluency.

Testing of Hypotheses:

Ho₁ - There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

Table 4
Pre & Post test scores on Speaking Fluency

Test	N	df	Mean	SD	t ratio	L.O.S.
Pre	80	78	20.81	2.64	14.22	0.01
Post			29.16	4.54		

Interpretation

The obtained value of t is 14.22 which is greater than the tabulated value of 2.36. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference in speaking fluency. The post-test mean score is higher than the mean score of the pre-test which indicates that speaking fluency is improved after the implementation of the Programme.

Ho₂- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

Table 5
Pre & Post test scores on pronunciation parameter of Speaking Fluency

Test	N	df	Mean	SD	t ratio	L.O.S.
Pre	80	158	4.05	1.35	6.91	0.01
Post			8.78	1.78		

Interpretation

The obtained value of t is 6.91 which is greater than the tabulated value of 2.36. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference in pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency. The post-test mean score is higher than the mean score of the pre-test which indicates that pronunciation is improved after the implementation of the Programme.

Ho₃- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of vocabulary building parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme.

Table 6
Pre & Post test scores on vocabulary building parameter of Speaking Fluency

Test	N	df	Mean	SD	t ratio	L.O.S.
Pre	80	158	4.09	1.49	8.31	0.01
Post			6.05	1.49		

Interpretation

The obtained value of t is 8.31 which is greater than the tabulated value of 2.36. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference in pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency. The post-test mean score is higher than the mean score of the pre-test which indicates that vocabulary building is improved after the implementation of the Programme.

Ho₄- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of speech rate and flow parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme

Table 7
Pre & Post test scores on Speech rate and flow parameter of Speaking Fluency

Test	N	df	Mean	SD	t ratio	L.O.S.
Pre	80	158	4.21	1.28	6.12	0.01
Post			5.63	1.62		

Interpretation

The obtained value of t is 6.12 which is greater than the tabulated value of 2.36. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference in pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency. The post-test mean score is higher than the mean score of the pre-test which indicates that speech rate and flow is improved after the implementation of the Programme.

Ho₅- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of interaction parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme

Table 7
Pre & Post test scores on interaction parameter of Speaking Fluency

Test	N	df	Mean	SD	t ratio	L.O.S.
Pre	80	158	4.29	1.49	6.0	0.01
Post			5.79	1.67		

Interpretation

The obtained value of t is 6.0 which is greater than the tabulated value of 2.36. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference in pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency. The post-test mean score is higher than the mean score of the pre-test which indicates that interaction parameter is improved after the implementation of the Programme.

Ho₆- There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of sentence structure parameter of speaking fluency among mediocre primary students after the implementation of the programme

Table 8
Pre & Post test scores on sentence structure parameter of Speaking Fluency

Test	N	df	Mean	SD	t ratio	L.O.S.
Pre	80	158	4.19	1.49	6.10	0.01
Post			5.93	2.06		

Interpretation

The obtained value of t is 6.10 which is greater than the tabulated value of 2.36. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference in pronunciation parameter of speaking fluency. The post-test mean score is higher than the mean score of the pre-test which indicates that sentence structure parameter is improved after the implementation of the Programme.

Objective 4

To propose suitable strategies for enhancing speaking fluency among mediocre primary students.

- Teachers should provide regular speaking opportunities through. Classroom discussions and interactive activities.
- Pair work and group discussions should be encouraged to increase students' confidence in speaking.
- Vocabulary enrichment activities should be conducted to help students express their ideas more effectively.
- Pronunciation can be improved through reading aloud practice and repetition
- Use of audio-visual aids such as videos and recordings can help students learn correct pronunciation and speech patterns.

Major Findings

In the pre-test of speaking fluency, 80 students are at medium level

In the post-test of speaking fluency, 17 students (21%) remained at medium level, and 63 (79%) students are shifted at high level. There is a significant increase in students' speaking fluency as it is observed that post-test mean score is higher than the pre-test mean score. All the implemented activities helped to enhance speaking fluency of 6th grade students.

There is a significant increase in students' pronunciation, vocabulary building, speech rate and flow, interaction, and sentence structure parameter of speaking fluency.

It concluded that students speaking fluency is enhanced after the implementation of the Programme based on grammar translation method

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that the Grammar Translation Method significantly improved students speaking fluency.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
2. Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English*. Pearson Longman.
3. Larsen-F. D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
4. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

5. Scrivener, J. (2011). *Learning teaching: The essential guide to English language teaching* (3rd ed.). Macmillan Education.
6. Sinha, A. K. (2017). *Essentials of English language teaching*. Shipra publications
7. Wang, W., Rezaei, Y. M., & Izadpanah, S. (2024). *Speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners: The role of creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic enthusiasm*. **Heliyon**, **10**(18), e37620.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37620>

Representation of Adivasi Identity and Resistance in The Adivasi Will Not Dance by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar

Dr. Swati N. Madavi¹ Tejas R. Atram²

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030215



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20791892

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791892>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English
Shivprasad Sadanand Jaiswal College
Arjuni Morgaon, Dist – Gondia
²Assistant Professor, Department of English
Adarsh Arts and Commerce College
Desaiganj (Wadsa), Dist – Gadchiroli
Email – swatimadavi@yahoo.in

How to cite this article:
Madavi, S. N., & Atram, T. R. (2026).
Representation of Adivasi Identity and
Resistance in The Adivasi Will Not
Dance by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar.
International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research, 3(2(I)), 59–63.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Swati N. Madavi, Assistant
Professor, Department of English
Shivprasad Sadanand Jaiswal College
Arjuni Morgaon, Dist – Gondia

Abstract

This study investigates how Adivasi identity and resistance are portrayed in *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. The collection offers a vivid depiction of the Santhal community, focusing on their struggles with displacement, poverty, and cultural disruption. By applying postcolonial and subaltern perspectives, the paper explores how identity is shaped through lived experience and how resistance emerges in both visible and subtle forms. The analysis demonstrates that the text challenges stereotypical portrayals of Adivasis by presenting them as active agents rather than passive victims. It concludes that resistance in the work is often embedded in everyday actions, cultural practices, and acts of refusal.

Keywords: Adivasi Identity, Resistance, Subaltern Studies, Tribal Literature, Cultural Marginalization, Postcolonial Theory

1. Introduction

The representation of marginalized communities in literature has always been shaped by the dynamics of power, voice, and visibility. Among such communities in India, Adivasis—often referred to as indigenous or tribal groups—have historically occupied a peripheral position in mainstream discourse. Their lives, cultures, and struggles have either been romanticized as primitive and untouched or reduced to narratives of poverty and backwardness. In recent decades, however, there has been a significant shift in literary representation, with indigenous writers reclaiming their voices and presenting their realities from within. This transformation has opened new avenues for understanding Adivasi identity not as a fixed or monolithic category but as a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by history, culture, and socio-political conditions. One of the most notable contributions to this emerging body of literature is *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. This collection of short stories offers a compelling and unfiltered portrayal of the Santhal community in Jharkhand. Rather than presenting Adivasis as passive victims of exploitation, the text foregrounds their agency, resilience, and capacity for resistance. The stories explore a wide range of themes, including displacement due to industrialization, migration in search of livelihood, gender-based violence, and the erosion of cultural traditions. At the same time, they highlight the everyday struggles and small acts of defiance through which Adivasi individuals assert their dignity and identity.

The question of identity is central to the text. Adivasi identity is deeply rooted in land, community, language, and cultural practices. However, these elements are increasingly threatened by external forces such as state policies, capitalist expansion, and social discrimination. As a result, identity in the text is not presented as static but as something constantly negotiated and redefined. The characters in the stories grapple with the tension between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to changing socio-economic realities. This negotiation often leads to a sense of displacement, both physical and psychological, which becomes a defining aspect of their identity.

Closely linked to the question of identity is the theme of resistance. In *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, resistance does not always take the form of organized political movements or overt rebellion. Instead, it is often embedded in everyday actions—refusing to conform, preserving cultural practices, or asserting one's dignity in the face of humiliation. The title itself serves as a powerful metaphor for such resistance, symbolizing a refusal to be objectified or exploited for the benefit of others. Through these acts, the text challenges dominant narratives that portray Adivasis as silent or submissive, instead presenting them as active agents capable of shaping their own destinies.

This research paper aims to examine how Adivasi identity and resistance are represented in the text, using postcolonial and subaltern theoretical frameworks. By analyzing selected stories, the study seeks to demonstrate that identity and resistance are deeply interconnected and that both are expressed through complex and multifaceted experiences. Ultimately, the paper argues that *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* not only provides a platform for marginalized voices but also compels readers to rethink established assumptions about Adivasi life and culture.

2. Literature Review

The study of Adivasi literature is closely connected with postcolonial and subaltern theories, which focus on marginalized voices. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak highlights how marginalized groups are often excluded from dominant discourse, raising the question of whether the subaltern can truly speak. Similarly, Ranajit Guha emphasizes the importance of recognizing the agency of oppressed communities.

Scholars examining Shekhar's work suggest that his narratives move beyond victimhood and highlight the consciousness of resistance among Adivasi characters. Instead of depicting them as silent sufferers, the stories reveal their awareness of injustice and their ability to respond to it.

Other critics have pointed out the tension between tradition and modernity that shapes Adivasi identity. Rapid industrialization and state-led development projects often disrupt traditional ways of life, forcing communities to adapt while trying to preserve their cultural roots.

Overall, existing research indicates that Adivasi literature is not only about suffering but also about resilience, cultural survival, and the assertion of identity. This paper builds on these ideas while focusing specifically on the interplay between identity and resistance.

3. Methodology

This research is based on a qualitative approach, focusing on detailed textual analysis. The method involves:

- Careful reading of selected stories from the collection
- Identification of recurring themes related to identity and resistance
- Interpretation using postcolonial and subaltern theoretical frameworks

The primary source for the study is the text itself, supported by relevant critical writings. The aim is to understand how meaning is constructed within the narratives rather than to measure it quantitatively.

4. Representation of Adivasi Identity

4.1 Cultural Roots and Community Life

Cultural roots and community life form the foundation of Adivasi identity in *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. The narratives consistently emphasize the deep connection between individuals and their land, traditions, and collective way of living. For Adivasi communities, identity is not shaped in isolation but emerges through shared customs, rituals, and social bonds that sustain a sense of belonging.

One of the most significant aspects of cultural roots in the text is the role of oral traditions. Storytelling, songs, and folklore act as carriers of history and cultural memory, passing knowledge from one generation to another. Characters such as elderly women and community elders embody this tradition, preserving ancestral wisdom. However, the gradual disappearance of such figures reflects the weakening of cultural continuity in the face of modernization and external influence.

Community life in the text is portrayed as deeply interdependent. Social relationships are built on mutual support, collective labor, and shared celebrations. Festivals, rituals, and communal gatherings serve not only as expressions of cultural identity but also as spaces where individuals reaffirm their connection to the group. These practices highlight a value system rooted in cooperation rather than individualism.

At the same time, the text presents the challenges faced by these cultural structures. Economic hardship, migration, and state-led development projects disrupt traditional ways of life, weakening community bonds. As individuals move away from their native spaces in search of livelihood, the collective nature of Adivasi life begins to fragment.

Despite these challenges, the persistence of cultural practices demonstrates resilience. By continuing their traditions and maintaining community ties, Adivasis assert their identity and resist cultural erasure. Thus, cultural roots and community life in the text function not only as markers of identity but also as subtle yet powerful forms of resistance.

4.2 Food and Cultural Difference

Food operates as a powerful marker of identity in *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, revealing how everyday practices can become sites of cultural conflict. Dietary habits in the text are not merely about sustenance; they are closely tied to tradition, environment, and community identity. For Adivasi groups, food reflects a way of life that is rooted in forest resources, local ecology, and inherited customs.

However, these food practices often become grounds for discrimination in the broader social context. In stories such as "They Eat Meat", the Adivasi community is judged and stigmatized for its dietary choices, which differ from dominant social norms. The act of consuming certain kinds of meat is viewed as uncivilized or impure by outsiders, reinforcing stereotypes and deepening social exclusion. Such attitudes expose the hierarchical structure of society, where cultural differences are used to justify marginalization.

The response to this discrimination highlights the tension between concealment and assertion. In some instances, characters feel compelled to hide their food habits to avoid humiliation, indicating the pressure to conform to dominant cultural expectations. At the same time, the continued practice of these traditions becomes a quiet yet meaningful form of resistance. By refusing to abandon their dietary customs entirely, Adivasi individuals assert their cultural autonomy.

Thus, food in the text symbolizes both vulnerability and strength. It reveals how identity can be challenged in everyday life, but also how it can be preserved through seemingly simple acts. Through this lens, Shekhar illustrates that cultural difference, even in something as basic as food, plays a crucial role in shaping identity and resistance.

4.3 Language and Self-Expression

Language plays a crucial role in shaping and expressing Adivasi identity in *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*. It is not merely a tool of communication but a medium through which cultural values, experiences, and worldviews are

articulated. The use of local dialects, indigenous terms, and culturally specific expressions in the text lends authenticity to the narratives and allows Adivasi characters to speak in their own voice.

Unlike earlier literary representations where tribal communities were often described by outsiders, Shekhar's work foregrounds self-representation. The characters are not spoken for; instead, they narrate their own realities, emotions, and struggles. This shift is significant because it restores agency to marginalized voices and challenges dominant linguistic hierarchies.

At the same time, the text reflects the pressures faced by Adivasi individuals to adapt to dominant languages in order to survive in mainstream society. This creates a tension between preserving one's native language and adopting an external one for economic or social mobility. Such linguistic negotiation becomes part of identity formation.

Despite these challenges, the continued use of indigenous language elements serves as an act of cultural assertion. It resists erasure and affirms the presence of Adivasi identity within a broader literary and social landscape.

4.4 Marginalization and Identity Formation

Marginalization plays a central role in shaping Adivasi identity. The text portrays how social, economic, and political exclusion influences the lives of Adivasi communities, often defining their position within the larger national framework. Identity, in this context, is not formed solely through cultural heritage but also through experiences of deprivation and inequality.

The stories highlight various forms of marginalization, including poverty, lack of access to healthcare, limited educational opportunities, and forced displacement due to development projects. These conditions create a sense of alienation, where Adivasis find themselves excluded from mainstream progress while simultaneously losing control over their traditional resources. As a result, their identity becomes closely linked with struggle and survival.

At the same time, marginalization does not completely erase agency. Instead, it often leads to a heightened awareness of injustice and a stronger sense of collective identity. Characters in the text respond to their circumstances in different ways—some adapt, while others resist. These responses contribute to the ongoing process of identity formation.

Thus, identity in the text emerges as a dynamic construct shaped by both cultural roots and lived experiences of exclusion. Marginalization, while oppressive, also becomes a force that reinforces solidarity and resilience within Adivasi communities.

5. Representation of Resistance

5.1 Refusal as Protest

In *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, refusal emerges as a powerful and symbolic form of protest. Rather than engaging in overt confrontation, the act of saying "no" becomes a means of asserting dignity and resisting exploitation. This is most clearly illustrated in the title story, where the protagonist refuses to perform for those who have dispossessed his community.

This refusal challenges systems of power that seek to commodify Adivasi culture for external consumption. By rejecting participation, the character disrupts expectations and reclaims control over his identity and cultural expression. It is not merely a personal decision but a collective statement against injustice.

Such acts of refusal highlight that resistance does not always require violence or organized movements. Even a simple denial can carry profound political significance, transforming silence into a voice of protest and asserting the right to self-respect.

5.2 Everyday Acts of Defiance

In the novel *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* resistance often appears in subtle, everyday forms rather than dramatic confrontations. These acts of defiance include preserving cultural traditions, questioning authority, and maintaining dignity despite hardship. Such actions may seem small, but they challenge dominant systems that attempt to suppress Adivasi identity. By continuing their practices and refusing complete assimilation, characters assert their presence and agency. These everyday gestures reflect resilience and demonstrate that resistance can exist within ordinary life, making it both persistent and deeply rooted in lived experience.

5.3 Women and Resistance

In this novel the women occupy a crucial space in the articulation of resistance, as they confront both social marginalization and gender-based oppression. Their experiences reveal the intersection of patriarchy and economic hardship, which shapes their daily lives. Despite these constraints, female characters demonstrate remarkable resilience and agency.

Resistance among women is often expressed through personal choices and acts of self-assertion. Whether it is challenging exploitative relationships, speaking against injustice, or refusing to accept imposed roles, these actions signify a rejection of both internal and external domination. In stories such as "Merely a Whore," the protagonist reclaims her dignity despite societal stigma, exposing the hypocrisy of dominant moral standards.

Through these portrayals, the text highlights that women are not passive victims but active participants in resistance, contributing significantly to the preservation of identity and dignity within Adivasi communities.

5.4 Challenging the Idea of Development

In this novel the notion of "development" is critically questioned, as it often comes at the cost of Adivasi livelihoods and cultural survival. Large-scale industrial projects, mining, and state-led initiatives frequently lead to displacement, loss of land, and economic insecurity. While these projects are presented as progress, they largely benefit external forces rather than local communities. The text exposes this imbalance and highlights the suffering it

causes. By resisting such changes, Adivasis challenge dominant narratives of development and assert their right to land, identity, and sustainable ways of living.

6. Subaltern Consciousness and Voice

The idea of subaltern consciousness is central to understanding how marginalized communities perceive themselves and articulate their experiences. Traditionally, Adivasis have been positioned as “subalterns,” whose voices are often excluded from dominant social, political, and literary discourse. However, the text challenges this silence by presenting characters who are aware of their marginalization and capable of expressing their perspectives.

The narratives reveal a growing consciousness among Adivasi characters regarding the structures of power that oppress them. They recognize exploitation in forms such as land dispossession, economic inequality, and cultural marginalization. This awareness becomes the foundation of their resistance, whether expressed through refusal, defiance, or cultural preservation.

Importantly, the text allows these characters to speak for themselves rather than being represented by external voices. This shift from being spoken about to speaking directly marks a significant transformation in literary representation. It aligns with the theoretical concerns raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who questioned whether the subaltern can truly speak.

Through its portrayal of voice and agency, the work demonstrates that subaltern communities are not silent but are actively engaged in shaping their identity and resisting oppression.

7. Identity as Resistance

In the novel *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, identity itself becomes a powerful form of resistance. Rather than viewing identity as a passive or inherited trait, the text presents it as something actively maintained and asserted in the face of external pressures. For Adivasi communities, preserving cultural practices, traditions, and ways of life becomes a means of resisting assimilation and erasure.

The continued use of indigenous language, adherence to traditional customs, and connection to land are not merely cultural expressions but acts of defiance against dominant systems that seek to marginalize or homogenize these communities. Even small, everyday actions—such as practicing rituals or maintaining food habits—serve as affirmations of identity and autonomy.

This form of resistance is often subtle yet deeply significant. It does not always take the shape of organized protest but exists within daily life, making it persistent and enduring. By refusing to abandon their cultural roots, Adivasi characters assert their existence and challenge structures that attempt to define or suppress them.

Thus, the text demonstrates that identity and resistance are inseparable, with the preservation of one becoming a means of sustaining the other.

8. Critical Perspective

From a critical standpoint, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* can be read as an intervention in dominant literary and socio-political discourses that have historically marginalized Adivasi voices. The text resists earlier modes of representation that either exoticized tribal life or reduced it to narratives of victimhood. Instead, it offers a layered and realistic portrayal of Adivasi existence, marked by both suffering and resilience.

A postcolonial reading reveals how the stories expose structures of power embedded in state policies, capitalism, and social hierarchies. Development projects, for instance, are depicted not as neutral or beneficial, but as processes that displace communities and disrupt traditional ways of life. This critique aligns with broader postcolonial concerns about the unequal distribution of resources and the marginalization of indigenous populations.

At the same time, the work can be situated within subaltern studies for its emphasis on voice and agency. By allowing Adivasi characters to narrate their own experiences, the text challenges the idea that marginalized communities are voiceless. It foregrounds their perspectives, making their struggles visible without speaking on their behalf.

Importantly, the narratives avoid presenting Adivasis as a homogeneous group. Instead, they highlight diversity within the community, showing differences in gender, age, and personal experiences. This complexity adds depth to the portrayal and prevents oversimplification.

Overall, the text functions as a form of literary resistance, challenging dominant narratives while asserting the dignity, humanity, and agency of Adivasi communities.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar offers a powerful and meaningful portrayal of Adivasi identity and resistance. The text moves beyond traditional stereotypes and presents Adivasi communities as active, aware, and resilient individuals who continuously struggle to protect their dignity and cultural heritage. Through its realistic depiction of everyday life, the work highlights the challenges of marginalization, displacement, and social inequality.

At the same time, the stories clearly show that Adivasi identity is deeply connected to land, culture, language, and community life. Even in difficult situations, the characters try to preserve their traditions and values. This preservation itself becomes a strong form of resistance against forces that attempt to erase or control their identity.

The paper also shows that resistance in the text is not always loud or violent. It is often quiet and present in daily actions such as refusal, cultural practices, and personal decisions. These small acts together create a powerful form of protest.

Overall, the work gives voice to a community that has long been ignored. It encourages readers to understand Adivasi life with respect and sensitivity, making it an important contribution to contemporary literature.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Chakraborty, Abin. "Examining Subalternity in Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's The Adivasi Will Not Dance." *Postcolonial Text*, 2017.
2. Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. Oxford UP, 1983.
3. Hazarika, Hiranya, and Sunil Kamal. "The Tribal Question and the Cultural Dilemma." *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2024.
4. Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale UP, 1985.
5. Shekhar, Hansda Sowvendra. *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*. Speaking Tiger, 2015.
6. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 1988.

Contemporary Trends in English Literature

Dr. Kalyan Dnyaneshwar Sonawane

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030216



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20791947

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20791947>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Head, Department of English
Annasaheb Waghire College, Otur, Dist.
Pune
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune)

How to cite this article:

Sonawane, K. D. (2026). *Contemporary Trends in English Literature*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 64–66.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Kalyan Dnyaneshwar Sonawane
Head, Department of English
Annasaheb Waghire College, Otur, Dist.
Pune
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune)

Abstract:

Contemporary English literature reflects the complexities, diversities, and transformations of the modern world shaped by globalization, digitalization, socio-political changes, and cultural intersections. The present research paper explores major trends that define contemporary English literary production, including postcolonial discourse, globalization, digital narratives, ecological consciousness, gender and identity politics, and experimental narrative techniques. It argues that contemporary literature is marked by hybridity, plurality, and innovation, responding dynamically to evolving global realities. By examining thematic and stylistic developments, this paper highlights how contemporary English literature transcends traditional boundaries and embraces interdisciplinary approaches, thereby redefining the scope and function of literature in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Postcolonial Discourse, Globalization, Digital Narratives, Ecological Consciousness, Identity Politics.

Introduction

Contemporary English literature, broadly defined as literature produced in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, demonstrates a remarkable shift from earlier literary traditions in terms of themes, forms, and perspectives. It is shaped by the forces of globalization, technological advancement, cultural exchange, and political transformations. Unlike earlier periods that were often confined within national or regional boundaries, contemporary literature operates in a globalized context, reflecting transnational experiences and hybrid identities.

The evolution of contemporary literature signifies a departure from rigid literary conventions toward fluid, experimental, and interdisciplinary approaches. Literature today serves not only as a reflection of society but also as an active participant in shaping cultural, political, and ideological discourses. It engages with issues such as identity, migration, environment, gender, and technology, thereby expanding its thematic scope and relevance.

One of the most prominent trends in contemporary English literature is the influence of globalization. The interconnectedness of cultures, economies, and societies has led to the emergence of transnational narratives that transcend geographical boundaries. Writers often explore themes of migration, diaspora, and cultural hybridity, reflecting the complexities of living in a globalized world. Globalization has enabled the circulation of literary texts across borders, leading to the concept of “world literature.” Contemporary writers frequently engage with multiple cultural contexts, blending diverse traditions and perspectives. This has resulted in the creation of narratives that are not confined to a single cultural identity but instead reflect a multiplicity of voices and experiences. Literature has thus become a medium for negotiating cultural differences and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

The impact of globalization is also evident in the increased visibility of marginalized voices. Writers from formerly colonized regions and minority communities have gained prominence, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape. As a result, contemporary English literature challenges the dominance of Western literary traditions and embraces a more pluralistic approach. Postcolonialism continues to be a central theme in contemporary English literature. It examines the lasting effects of colonialism on cultures, identities, and societies. Contemporary writers often address issues such as cultural displacement, identity formation, and the struggle for autonomy in postcolonial contexts. The concept of identity in postcolonial literature is fluid and dynamic, shaped by historical, cultural, and social factors. Characters often navigate complex identities that are influenced by both indigenous traditions and colonial legacies. Literature thus becomes a space for exploring the tensions between tradition and modernity, as well as the negotiation of multiple cultural affiliations. Research indicates that contemporary texts portray identity as “fluid, hybrid, and continuously negotiated” within contexts of migration and diaspora. This emphasis on hybridity reflects the broader trend of questioning fixed notions of identity and embracing diversity. Furthermore, postcolonial literature often challenges dominant narratives and seeks to reclaim marginalized histories and voices. It serves as a form of resistance against cultural imperialism and highlights the importance of cultural self-representation. Through this lens, contemporary literature contributes to the decolonization of knowledge and the redefinition of literary canons.

The rise of digital technology has significantly influenced contemporary English literature, giving birth to new forms of storytelling and modes of dissemination. Digital literature, including e-books, blogs, hypertext fiction, and interactive narratives, has transformed the way literature is produced and consumed. Technology has enabled writers to experiment with non-linear narratives, multimedia elements, and interactive formats, thereby expanding the possibilities of literary expression. Digital platforms have also democratized literary production, allowing a wider range of voices to be heard.

Contemporary literature reflects the impact of digital culture on human experience, exploring themes such as virtual identity, social media, and artificial intelligence. At the same time, it raises questions about authenticity, authorship, and the ethical implications of technological advancements. Scholars note that digital storytelling and AI-generated literature are among the defining features of contemporary literary practice. However, the digital age also presents challenges, including the oversaturation of content and concerns about the quality and originality of literary works. Despite these challenges, technology continues to play a crucial role in shaping the future of literature.

Another significant trend in contemporary English literature is the growing emphasis on environmental issues. Ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between literature and the environment, has gained prominence in recent years. Writers increasingly address themes such as climate change, ecological degradation, and the human impact on nature. Contemporary literature often portrays the environment not merely as a backdrop but as an active participant in the narrative. It highlights the interconnectedness of humans and nature and emphasizes the need for environmental awareness and sustainability.

The rise of eco-literature reflects the broader global concern about environmental crises. By engaging with ecological issues, literature contributes to raising awareness and inspiring action. It also challenges anthropocentric perspectives and promotes a more holistic understanding of the natural world. Gender and identity politics constitute another major trend in contemporary English literature. Feminist literature continues to evolve, addressing issues such as gender inequality, patriarchy, sexuality, and intersectionality. Contemporary writers explore diverse experiences of gender and challenge traditional gender roles.

The concept of intersectionality, which considers the overlapping influences of gender, race, class, and sexuality, has become central to contemporary literary discourse. Literature provides a platform for marginalized voices, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic minorities, to express their experiences and challenge societal norms. Contemporary literature also engages with questions of identity and selfhood, reflecting the complexities of modern life. It explores themes such as alienation, belonging, and self-discovery, often through introspective and psychological narratives. The focus on identity politics highlights the role of literature as a tool for social critique and transformation. It underscores the importance of representation and the need for inclusive narratives that reflect the diversity of human experience.

Contemporary English literature is characterized by experimentation with narrative techniques and forms. Writers often challenge conventional storytelling methods, employing non-linear structures, fragmented narratives, and multiple perspectives. The blending of genres is another notable trend. Contemporary works frequently combine elements of fiction, autobiography, history, and journalism, resulting in hybrid forms such as autofiction. This blurring of boundaries reflects the complexity of contemporary reality and the desire to capture multiple dimensions of human experience.

Innovative narrative techniques enable writers to explore new ways of representing time, memory, and consciousness. They also engage readers more actively, encouraging them to participate in the construction of meaning. According to recent studies, contemporary literature is marked by “nonlinear narratives, digital literature, and hybrid genres,” which redefine traditional literary practices. These developments highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of literature in the modern era.

Multiculturalism is a defining feature of contemporary English literature. The increasing interaction between cultures has led to the emergence of diverse literary voices and perspectives. Writers draw on their cultural backgrounds to create narratives that reflect the richness and complexity of multicultural societies. Contemporary literature often addresses issues such as cultural identity, assimilation, and cultural conflict. It explores the experiences of immigrants and diasporic communities, highlighting the challenges and opportunities of living in multicultural environments.

The emphasis on diversity has led to a more inclusive literary landscape, where previously marginalized voices are given recognition. This trend challenges the traditional literary canon and promotes a more equitable representation of different cultures and identities. Contemporary English literature is deeply influenced by political and social changes. It engages with issues such as globalization, nationalism, inequality, and human rights. Literature serves as a medium for critiquing power structures and advocating for social justice. Writers often address contemporary issues such as war, migration, racism, and economic disparities, reflecting the realities of the modern world. Literature thus becomes a tool for raising awareness and fostering critical thinking. The relationship between literature and politics is evident in the way contemporary works respond to current events and societal challenges. Literature not only reflects these issues but also shapes public discourse and contributes to social change. Contemporary English literature is characterized by its diversity, innovation, and engagement with global issues. It reflects the complexities of the modern world and addresses a wide range of themes, including globalization, postcolonialism, digitalization, environmental concerns, and identity politics.

The trends discussed in this paper demonstrate that contemporary literature is dynamic and evolving, constantly adapting to changing social, cultural, and technological contexts. It challenges traditional boundaries and embraces

new forms of expression, thereby expanding the scope of literary studies. Ultimately, contemporary English literature serves as a powerful medium for exploring human experiences and addressing pressing global issues. It fosters critical thinking, promotes cultural understanding, and contributes to the ongoing transformation of society. As literature continues to evolve, it will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping the future of human thought and expression.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Work Cited:

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*. Routledge, 2023.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2021.
3. Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2023.
4. Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Columbia University Press, 2021.
5. Hall, Stuart. *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*. Routledge, 2020.
6. Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2021.
7. Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*. Pearson, 2022.
8. Quayson, Ato. *Postcolonialism and Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2024.
9. Walkowitz, Rebecca L. *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*. Columbia University Press, 2025.
10. Wulandari, Ika. "Postcolonial Identity in Contemporary English Literature." *Holistic Science*, 2025.
11. Yadrami, Shashidhar. "Contemporary Trends in English Literature: Shifts in Themes, Styles, and Narrative Practices." 2023.
12. Bhatt, Vinod et al. *Trends in Contemporary World Literature*. Yale University Press, 2025.
13. Semwal, Sakshi. *Postcolonial Literature: Selected Essays on Past, Present and Future Trends*. Adhyayan Publishers, 2025.

Digital Humanities in English Studies: Transforming Text, Interpretation, and Literary Scholarship

Dr. Shantilal Indrabhan Ghegade

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026-030217



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792016
DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792016>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Head, Department of English
Savitribai College of Arts, Commerce
and Science
Pimpalgaon Pisa, Dist. Ahilyanagar
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune)

How to cite this article:
Ghegade, S. I. (2026). Digital
Humanities in English Studies:
Transforming Text, Interpretation, and
Literary Scholarship. *International
Journal of English and World Languages
& Literature Paradigm Shift in
International Research*, 3(2(I)), 67–69.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Shantilal Indrabhan Ghegade
Head, Department of English
Savitribai College of Arts, Commerce
and Science
Pimpalgaon Pisa, Dist. Ahilyanagar
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune)

Abstract:

The emergence of Digital Humanities has significantly reshaped the landscape of English Studies by integrating computational tools, digital archives, and interdisciplinary methodologies into the analysis of literature and culture. This research article examines the evolution, scope, and implications of Digital Humanities within English Studies, focusing on how digital technologies redefine textual analysis, authorship, readership, and pedagogy. It explores the transformation of traditional literary criticism through distant reading, text mining, and data visualization, while also considering the ethical, epistemological, and institutional challenges posed by digitization. By analysing the interplay between technology and literary scholarship, the article argues that Digital Humanities does not replace conventional approaches but expands the possibilities of interpretation, accessibility, and collaboration. Ultimately, it demonstrates how Digital Humanities fosters new forms of knowledge production and reconfigures the role of the humanities in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Digital Humanities, English Studies, Textual Analysis, Distant Reading, Literary Theory, Digital Archives, Pedagogy, Cultural Studies

Introduction

The field of English Studies has traditionally been grounded in close reading, interpretive analysis, and theoretical engagement with literary texts. However, the advent of digital technologies has brought about a paradigm shift that challenges and expands these established methodologies. Digital Humanities, as an interdisciplinary field, bridges the gap between computational tools and humanistic inquiry, offering innovative ways to engage with literature, language, and culture. This transformation is not merely technological but epistemological, as it redefines how knowledge is produced, disseminated, and consumed within English Studies.

Digital Humanities emerged in the late twentieth century, initially as “humanities computing,” focusing on the digitization of texts and the development of electronic concordances. Over time, it evolved into a broader field encompassing a wide range of digital practices, including text encoding, corpus linguistics, data visualization, and digital archiving. The increasing availability of digital tools and resources has enabled scholars to analyse vast corpora of texts that were previously inaccessible, thereby shifting the scale and scope of literary analysis. This shift is particularly evident in the concept of distant reading, which contrasts with traditional close reading by emphasizing patterns, trends, and structures across large datasets.

The integration of Digital Humanities into English Studies has fundamentally altered the nature of textual analysis. Traditional literary criticism often focuses on the nuanced interpretation of individual texts, privileging depth over breadth. In contrast, digital methodologies allow for the analysis of extensive textual corpora, revealing patterns that may not be apparent through close reading alone. Techniques such as text mining and natural language processing enable scholars to identify recurring themes, stylistic features, and linguistic patterns across multiple texts. These methods do not diminish the value of close reading but complement it by providing a broader contextual framework.

One of the most significant contributions of Digital Humanities to English Studies is the democratization of access to literary texts and resources. Digital archives and online repositories have made a vast array of texts available to scholars, students, and the general public. This increased accessibility has not only expanded the scope of research but also challenged traditional hierarchies within the literary canon. Previously marginalized texts and authors can now be more easily discovered and studied, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse understanding of literature.

The digitization of texts also raises important questions about authorship, textuality, and interpretation. Digital texts are inherently mutable, allowing for multiple versions, annotations, and user interactions. This fluidity challenges the notion of a fixed, authoritative text and invites new forms of collaborative scholarship. Scholars can engage with texts in dynamic ways, incorporating multimedia elements, hyperlinks, and interactive features that enhance the reading experience. At the same time, the instability of digital texts raises concerns about authenticity, preservation, and the reliability of sources.

Another important aspect of Digital Humanities in English Studies is its impact on pedagogy. Digital tools and platforms have transformed the way literature is taught and studied in educational institutions. Online learning environments, digital editions, and interactive resources enable students to engage with texts in more immersive and participatory ways. For example, digital annotation tools allow students to collaboratively analyse texts, fostering critical thinking and active learning. Additionally, the integration of digital methods into the curriculum equips students with valuable technical skills that are increasingly relevant in the modern academic and professional landscape.

The use of data visualization in literary studies represents another significant development within Digital Humanities. By transforming textual data into visual representations, scholars can gain new insights into literary patterns and relationships. Graphs, maps, and network diagrams can illustrate connections between authors, texts, and themes, revealing the complex structures underlying literary production. These visual tools not only enhance scholarly analysis but also make research more accessible to a broader audience.

Despite its many advantages, the integration of Digital Humanities into English Studies is not without challenges. One of the primary concerns is the potential for technological determinism, where the emphasis on digital tools may overshadow the interpretive and critical dimensions of literary scholarship. There is a risk that quantitative methods could be perceived as more objective or authoritative than qualitative analysis, leading to an imbalance in scholarly approaches. It is therefore essential to maintain a critical perspective on the use of digital tools, recognizing their limitations as well as their potential.

Another challenge lies in the issue of digital literacy and access. While digital technologies have the potential to democratize knowledge, they also require a certain level of technical expertise and infrastructure. Not all scholars and institutions have equal access to these resources, which can create disparities within the field. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological change poses difficulties in terms of sustainability and preservation. Digital projects may become obsolete as software and platforms evolve, raising concerns about the longevity of digital scholarship.

Ethical considerations also play a crucial role in Digital Humanities. The use of digital data, particularly in large-scale text analysis, raises questions about privacy, copyright, and intellectual property. Scholars must navigate these issues carefully, ensuring that their work adheres to ethical standards and respects the rights of authors and publishers. Additionally, the representation of marginalized voices in digital archives requires thoughtful consideration to avoid reproducing existing biases and inequalities.

The interdisciplinary nature of Digital Humanities is one of its defining characteristics. By bringing together scholars from literature, computer science, linguistics, and other fields, it fosters collaboration and innovation. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches English Studies but also contributes to the broader development of the humanities. It encourages scholars to think beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and to explore new methodologies and perspectives.

Digital Humanities also has significant implications for the future of literary scholarship. As technology continues to evolve, new tools and methods will emerge, further transforming the field. Artificial intelligence and machine learning, for example, have the potential to revolutionize textual analysis by enabling more sophisticated and nuanced interpretations of literary data. These technologies can assist in tasks such as authorship attribution, sentiment analysis, and thematic classification, opening up new avenues for research.

At the same time, the humanistic aspect of literary studies remains essential. Digital tools can enhance analysis, but they cannot replace the interpretive insight and critical thinking that are central to the humanities. The challenge for scholars is to integrate digital methodologies in a way that complements and enriches traditional approaches, rather than displacing them. This requires a balanced and reflective approach, one that acknowledges both the possibilities and the limitations of digital technologies.

The role of Digital Humanities in reshaping the canon is another important area of consideration. By enabling the analysis of large and diverse corpora, digital methods can challenge established notions of literary value and significance. Scholars can uncover neglected texts and authors, thereby expanding the scope of literary studies. This process contributes to a more inclusive and representative understanding of literature, reflecting the diversity of voices and experiences that constitute the literary landscape.

Furthermore, Digital Humanities has implications for public engagement and the dissemination of knowledge. Digital platforms allow scholars to share their research with a wider audience, breaking down the barriers between academia and the public. Online exhibitions, digital archives, and interactive projects can make literary scholarship more accessible and engaging, fostering a greater appreciation for literature and the humanities.

In conclusion, Digital Humanities represents a transformative development in English Studies, offering new tools, methods, and perspectives for the analysis of literature and culture. It challenges traditional approaches while also complementing them, expanding the possibilities of interpretation and scholarship. By embracing the potential of digital technologies, scholars can enhance their understanding of literary texts and contribute to the evolving landscape of the humanities. At the same time, it is essential to remain critical and reflective, ensuring that digital methodologies are used in a thoughtful and responsible manner. The future of English Studies lies in the integration of digital and humanistic approaches, creating a dynamic and interdisciplinary field that continues to evolve in response to technological and cultural changes.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Berry, David M. *Understanding Digital Humanities*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
2. Burdick, Anne, et al. *Digital Humanities*. MIT Press, 2012.
3. Hayles, N. Katherine. "How We Think: Transforming Power and Digital Technologies." University of Chicago Press, 2012.
4. Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. "What Is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in English Departments?" *ADE Bulletin*, no. 150, 2010, pp. 55–61.
5. Moretti, Franco. *Distant Reading*. Verso, 2013.
6. Presner, Todd, et al. *The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0*. UCLA, 2009.
7. Ramsay, Stephen. *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*. University of Illinois Press, 2011.
8. Schreibman, Susan, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, editors. *A Companion to Digital Humanities*. Blackwell, 2004.
9. Siemens, Ray, and Susan Schreibman, editors. *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*. Blackwell, 2008.
10. Underwood, Ted. *Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change*. University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Influence of Rāmāyaṇa on Ojāpālī Music of Vaiṣṇava Period in Assam

Naba Kumar Mazumdar

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030218



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792066

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792066>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Librarian, Dhamdhama Anchalik
College, Assam

How to cite this article:

Mazumdar, N. K. (2026). Influence of Rāmāyaṇa on Ojāpālī Music of Vaiṣṇava Period in Assam. International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 70–71.

Address for correspondence:

Naba Kumar Mazumdar
M.A., M.L.I.S.C.; M.Phil
Librarian, Dhamdhama Anchalik
College, Assam

Abstract:

Ojāpālī Music is the well off heritage of Assamese music. The epic culture was deeply embedded in it. Different rāg of Indian classical music was embellished to it to magnify it's symphony. Different mudrā (hand gestures) was used to express the implicit meaning of the religious scriptures. The research article focuses on unique techniques of presenting Ālāp, Guru Bandanā, Swar Sāadhanā and Sangītālāp besides different rāg, tāl and epic theme. It also studies the influence of Rāmāyaṇa on Ojāpālī music of Vaiṣṇava period in Assam.

Key word: Ojāpālī Music, Rāg, Tāl, Mudrā.

Introduction:

Ojāpālī music, a classical form of music dates back to the 14th century and it flourished upto the time of Sankardev (Vaiṣṇava period).

In it's true sense, Ojāpālī music may be called music as because it encompasses all the forms of music (song, instrument and dance) as the saying of Saṁgīt Ratnākara 'Gitam, bādyam, nṛtyam, tryam saṁgītamucyate.'

Aim and objectives:

Ojāpālī music reflect the epic culture of vedic age and the article aims to reflect the musical fabric of the Ojāpālī music and it's epic value. The following are the prime aim and objectives of the article.

To make a study of musical exquisiteness of Ojāpālī music.

To make a study of the root of modern Assamese music.

To make a study of the influence of epic culture on Assamese folk song of Vaiṣṇava period.

Ojāpālī music is sung by the Ojā (head singer) and followed by the pālīs (associate singers) in different rāgs like Barādi, Bhatiyālī, Dhanaśrī, Guñjarī, Mañjarī, Malaṭī, Ahir, Ākasmandati, Kāmod, Meghamaṇḍal, Ramagiri, Suhai, Śrīgāndhar, Śrīgandha kali, Patamañjarī, Devajini, Basanta, Bhairavī, Devakrī etc.

The songs are accompanied with small tāls (cymbal) which is the prime instrument of the pālī. In a team of Ojāpālī 3 to 4 pālī are kept.

The Ojā performs Ojāpālī dance with different hasta mudrā (hand's and fingers' symbolic expression). The mudrā express different moods and characters of the story. Some important mudrā are (1) Puṣpa (flower) (2) Asimukh (mouth of sword) (3) Bīṇa (harp) (4) Bhramara (black bee) (5) Siṁhamukh (mouth of lion) (6) Dhwaṇa (flag) (7) Mayūr (Peacock) (8) Ardhaśāstra (half-moon) (9) Sarpaphaṇā (serpent's hood), (10) Mrgamukh (mouth of deer), (11) Musthi (fist) (12) Ankur (bud) (13) Dhanu (Arrow) (14) Trisūl (trident) (15) Saśaka (rabbit) (16) Sarpasīra (snake head) (17) Matsya (fish) (18) Kūrma (tortoise) (19) Barāha (Pig) (20) Nṛsiṁha (man-lion) (21) Mrgaśīra (deer head) (22) Śiṁkha (conch shell) (23) Padma (lotus) (24) Cakra (circle) (25) Śrī Rāma (Lord Ram) (26) Biṣṇu (Lord Bisnu) (27) Siva (Lord Siva) (28) Buddha (Lord Buddha).

In Ojāpālī music the lyrics are divided in to six parts. They are (i) Rāg (ii) Tāl (iii) Ālāp (iv) Guru Bandanā (v) Swar Sāadhanā (vi) Saṁgītālāp.

(i) Rāg: Ojāpālī music is bounded in different Rāg. The presence of rāg in Ojāpālī music gives an indication of classical music vogue in Assam at that period.

(ii) Tāl (Rythom): Tāl determines the foundation of musical Art. The role of Tāl is very essential in the practise of Indian Music. There are five Tāl (Rythom) used in Byās Ojāpālī. They are (a) Cāb Tāl (b) Cautāl (c) Jikār Tāl (d) Lechāri Tāl (e) Thokā Tāl. In Durgāvari Ojāpālī, khematā and Kāhārbā Tāl are used.

(iii) Ālāp: The meaning of Ālāp or Swar Sāadhanā is to create a musical back ground with the help of some symbolic syllable like hā-tā-nā-ri-ritā in some rāg.

(iv) Guru Bandanā: Before Performing Byās Ojāpālī, the tutelary deity Biṣṇu or Basudev is prayed.

(v) Swar Sāadhanā: The sound having musical attribute or tune is called swar. According to place of pronunciation, swar is divided into three division, Mandra, Madhya, and Tār. The Swar pronounced in heart is called Mandra, the Swar pronounced in neck is called Madhya and the Swar pronounced in head is called Tār. Byās Ojāpālī has divided Swar as Nāvi Sur, Nāk Sur and Tālu Sur.

(vi) Saṁgītālāp: Saṁgītālāp is divided into five categories (a) Mālītā (b) Rāg (c) Bānā (d) Dihā (e) Pad or Thokā.

Mālītā describe the Rāg of the song, it's birth and characteristic with the help of Ālāp. After Mālītā Rāg is performed with tradition of prayer or padachanda Bānā follows Rāg. It is the aggregate of Dihā and Pada.

Ojāpālī music is composed of four components (i) Sthāyī (Constant) (ii) Antarā (middle) (iii) Sañcārī (veritable) and Ābhok (ending). The part which is sung reiteratedly is called Sthāyī (Constant). Dihā has taken the place of Sthāyī (Constant) in Ojāpālī music. The meaning of Pad is Gīt (Lyric). Swar, Tune and Rythom is controlled in Pad. So Pad is bounded in Ojāpālī Saṁgīt.

Main tune of the Ojāpālī music were taken from different puranas, two great epics and other religious books.

From the last part of the 15th century to the early part of the 16th century, there appeared a few poets who were not influenced by Vaiṣṇava movement and in their subject matter, the ideal of Vaiṣṇava dharma was not reflected. They belonged to the Ojāpālī music. There were two groups, one expressed the greatness of goddess Pādmāvatī (the Goddess of serpents) and the other group propagated the story of Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa and Purāṇs.

The original Rāmāyaṇa, though impressed the people of Assam deeply, nevertheless, it was somewhat confined to the upper caste people due to its writings in Sanskrit. In the 14th century (pre sankari age) the great poet Madhab Kandali translated the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa into Assamese which was remarkable incident of Assamese literature. As a result it leads the Rāmāyaṇi story to the grassroot level of the society. Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa took many picture and character from rural Assamese society and it became more and more popular to the common religious people of Assam.

Inspired by the Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa, one of the renown lyric Durgāvar thought of giving Rāmāyaṇa into the musical shape. Durgāvar was one of the prolific Ojāpālī lyrist of Vaiṣṇava yug (14th-16th century). The three other important lyrist were Mankar, Sukabi Nārāyaṇdev and Pitāmbar Kabi. Of course Durgāvar was the only lyrist who was deeply influenced by Rāmāyaṇa literature and composed rustic edition of Rāmāyaṇa in lyric form. He thought, music as a popular medium, will touch the people immediately and will put Lord Rām's impression on the people permanently. As a result, Durgāvar wrote Gīti Rāmāyaṇa (Rāmāyaṇa on lyric form). He not only composed it, as an Ojā (great singer) he sang it with the help of different rāgs and performed Ojāpālī, nṛtya which is still performed in different parts of Assam.

Till date, four chapters (khaṇḍas) of Gīti Rāmāyaṇa has been found. They are Araṇya, Kiṣkindhyā, Sundara and Lankākāṇḍa.

Durgāvar Starts like this-

Ayodhyā Kāṇḍara Kathā Bhaila Samāpti

Araṇya Kāṇḍara Kathā Suniyo Samprati

Trans : "The story of Ayodhyakanda has been ended. Now let listen to the Aranya Kanda".

Such a starting says that the lyrist had started Araṇya Kāṇḍa after finishing the Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa. It is so either the Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa has been damaged somehow or it is yet to be discovered. Whatsoever, the discovered four chapters of the Durgāvarī Rāmāyaṇa has a special place in our old literature and music.

In Gīti Rāmāyaṇa, we find the rural environment and elements. From this point of view, Bani Kanta Kakati Says it the rural edition of Vālmiki's epic. Durgāvar has shown some radical creation in this book. Offering piṇḍa (dedicate meal devoted to the dead forefathers) of sand by Sītā to Daśarath, Sītā's playing of Pāśā (a kind of royal game) with Rāmchandra and the creation of illusory Ayodhyā by Sītā, depiction of Lakṣmaṇa sketching three lines on the ground to protect Sītā from outside intruder while he went out to save Rāma from the hands of the Rākṣaka (Demon) leaving alone Sītā at the cottage and Sītā's addressing to Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī as father and mother, all these picture are radical annexation of Durgāvara.

Conduision :

Durgāvara's Gīti Rāmāyaṇa was fully influenced by the epic Rāmāyaṇa and its version made by Madhab Kandali. The Ojāpālī music based on Gīti Rāmāyaṇa brought Rāma and Rāmāyāthā (story of Rama) closer to the public's heart and the characters Rām, Lakṣmaṇ and Sītā became the Role Model of the Society. Besides it gave immense amusement to all sections of people of Assam.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Bibliography:

1. Bhuyan, Dr. Sarala (2011), Asamiyā Gīti Sāhityar Ruprekḥā; Assam Sāhitya Sabhā, Jorhat, 1st edn.
2. Daloi, H.N.(2005). Assamese Sāhityar Puraṇā Itihās; Padmapriyā Library, Nalbari, 1st edn.
3. Raghavan, V (1980), Ramcaritmanas and the performing Tradition of Ramayana in Asia, Raghavan Sahitya Academi, Delhi, 1st Edn.
4. Sarma, Nabin Chandra(2011), Asamiya Loka Sanskritir Ābhās, Bani Praksh Pvt. Ltd., Ghy, 1st edn.
5. Sarma, Nabin Chandra (1996), Asamar Pariwesyakalā Ojāpālī; Bani Prakash Pvt. Ltd. Ghy, 1st edn.
6. Sarma, Rinjumanī (2009), Asamiyā Dharma Mulak Gīt; Kaustubh Prakashan, Dibrugarh
7. Sarma, Saitendra Nath (2011). Asamiyā Sāhityar Samikṣhātmak Itibṛtta; Soumar Prakash, Ghy, 1st edn.

Between Earth and Emotion: Rural Life, Nature, and the Search for Belonging in Rabindranath Tagore's Selected Short Stories: *The Postmaster*, *The Castaway*, *Subha*, and *The Homecoming*

Kanchan Rameshwar Vaidya

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030219



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792120

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792120>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor and Research
Scholar,
MIT-Art Design Technology College,
Pune
Email- Kanchiirv@Gmail.Com

How to cite this article:

Vaidya, K. R. (2026). Between Earth and Emotion: Rural Life, Nature, and the Search for Belonging in Rabindranath Tagore's Selected Short Stories: *The Postmaster*, *The Castaway*, *Subha*, and *The Homecoming*. International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 72-76.

Address for correspondence:

Kanchan Rameshwar Vaidya
Assistant Professor and Research
Scholar,
MIT-Art Design Technology College,
Pune
Email- Kanchiirv@Gmail.Com

Abstract:

This Research examines the complex interplay between rural life, nature, and human emotions' desire to belong in four of Rabindranath Tagore's chosen short stories: *The Postmaster*, *The Castaway*, *Subha*, and *The Homecoming*. Against the rural backdrop, the stories truly break down geographical and cultural barriers, quite profoundly, even exploring the most existential despair triggered by the human heart feeling completely at odds with its environment itself. This research really focuses on just how Rabindranath Tagore will place idyllic scenes in nature in a sort of dialectical contrast to the innermost thoughts of his characters all too often, showing a clear tension between outer peace and inner isolation. By doing a very close reading, we find the realization of natural beauty, the simple morality of rural life itself, and the highly sensitive emotional fragility of an individual. Building upon Indian aesthetic theories (especially that of *rasa*) and certain Western humanist and eco-critical literary theories, this paper places Tagore's short stories almost like a quiet act of defiance against colonial modernity itself - and it really is also a reflection on our spiritual upliftment. In *The Postmaster*, the rural-urban dichotomy serves as a metaphor for irreparable emotional distance. *The Castaway* explores emotional displacement in the character of Nilkanta, whose existence within the house is as dangerous as the sea that deposited him there, and whose temporary place is completed in abandonment. *Subha* introduces nature as a confidant and silent observer of voiceless pain. *Homecoming*, in its tragic irony, shatters romantic myths of return and roots and reveals the fatal price of emotional misrecognition. In a comparative reading of these texts, the research contends that Tagore imagined the village as a space of ethics, emotions, and capable of both healing and haunting.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Rural Life in Literature, Nature and Emotion, Eco criticism in Indian Literature, Realism, *The Postmaster*, *The Castaway*, *Subha*, *The Homecoming*, Indian English Literature, *Rasa Theory*, Indian Aesthetics.

Introduction:

Rabindranath Tagore, a great poet, philosopher, educator, and Nobel Prize winner, was the cartographer of the human mind, charting its aspirations and fissures against the expansive geography of Bengal's land, rivers, and sky. His short stories, written at a critical juncture in Indian history, resonate with the nuances of village life while thrumming with universal emotions: loss, longing, alienation, and a desire to belong. It is here, in the purportedly simple, oft-misrepresented "village," that Tagore places some of his most sincere questions about human feeling and social isolation. On first reading, the rural landscapes of stories such as *The Postmaster*, *The Castaway*, *Subha*, and *The Homecoming* can seem incidental or idyllic. But on more thoughtful, more introspective reading, one discovers something more: these landscapes are not inert, but engaged. Rather, nature in Tagore's stories is a participant; an inanimate but listening interlocutor to despair, a reflector of the psyche, and even an uninterested horizon to the vulnerability of human life. The village is neither utopia nor dystopia; but a backdrop for inner drama, where emotional truths are acted out against the rustling of trees, the quietly flowing rivers, and the distant cries of birds. Tagore's vision for rural life refuses romanticization. While avoiding neither the beauty of the landscape nor its suffocating social convention, neither does he neither avoids anything of its subdued cruelties, its internal stratifications. His characters, above all the voiceless, displaced, and emotionally dispossessed, traverse not only physical landscapes but psychic ones. Whether Ratan's unknown love in *The Postmaster*, Subha's wordless relationship with nature, or Phatik's fatal misunderstanding in *The Homecoming*, every protagonist of these four chosen stories hovers in a position of liminality: in between earth and sentiment, body and soul, presence and absence. In tracing the dialogue between landscape and feeling, this research interprets these four chosen stories under an interdisciplinary approach. By way of ecocritical theory, Indian aesthetic thought (*rasa*, *viraha*, *karuna*), and humanistic psychology, it asks how Tagore's rural landscapes are less set than formed as metaphoric extensions of human vulnerability. Furthermore, the reference point in Romantic literature; Wordsworth and Keats,

first among equals; glimpses the common interest within such literature to locate in nature both consolation and estrangement. Such sentiments belong to the literary past. This study contends that in these tales, Tagore is not merely describing rural life; he is chronicling the inner climate of the human heart.

The village is an emotional atlas of exile, and nature, far from being a healing elixir, is oftentimes the sole spectator to the muted tragedies of quotidian lives. By so doing, Tagore not only elevates the craft of the short story but also offers a richly textured critique of modernity, displacement, and the universal human need to be at home in the world and oneself.

Ecocriticism: Nature as Agent, Not a Static Scenery

Ecocriticism, in short, shakes the wedlock between literature and environment, demanding that readers perceive nature not as a mute, silent backdrop of scenery but as an active, dynamic entity with voice, agency, and ethical weight. Tagore, in decades past, way before "ecocriticism" was an academic field of study, naturally described the environment as emotionally sensitive, ethically nuanced, and spiritually freighted. His vision is his version of what ecocritics like Lawrence Buell and Cheryll Glotfelty have established more recently: that nature participates in human experience and shapes identity and expression of interior states. In *Subha* and similar works, nature addresses the protagonist more eloquently than any human can. Subha's inability to speak is compensated in part by her dialogue with rivers, birds, and trees, leaving nature as her only emotional haven and solace. In *The Postmaster*, the forest surrounding the village consumes Ratan's sorrow; nature is another narrative to the wordless sorrow between her and the postmaster. And in *The Castaway*, the ocean brings ashore the castaway boy; nature is never neutral; it disrupts human relationships. Nature's apparent arbitrariness gets reflected in the arbitrariness of inclusion and exclusion in human lives. Tagore's rural landscapes defy commodification; they are not for reckoning. They react, respond, judge, and sometimes get stuck in stifling silence; a silence that is often more vocal than human words. Nature, in such a manner, in Tagore's thought-world, comes to life, becomes a co-creator of the emotional fates of his characters.

Humanistic Psychology: The Need for Emotional Anchoring and Identity

Humanistic psychology positions the human experience, more specifically the desire to self-actualise and feel emotionally anchored, at the centre of being human. Translated into literary terms, it seeks to uncover the emotional underpinning to characters' choices, traumas, and silences. Tagore's characters, and particularly those in the stories chosen here, yearn for one thing: connection, not with others, but with themselves. Ratan, the Postmaster's daughter, must be confirmed by affection. Her sorrow is not so much for the postmaster's departure as for the identity she had gained through it. In *The Homecoming*, Phatik's confused revolt and hunger for mother-love mark the intense psychological need for belonging, which has been denied to him by the world of grown-ups. Even *The Castaway's* Nilkanta, who is hard and uncontrollable, is no bad boy but a lost child psychologically who longs to go home and find himself. The lack of this anchorage results in chaos, rebellion, and eventually isolation. Tagore's sentimentalism does not demonize his people; rather, he portrays them as emotionally truthful, suffering in an apathetic or oblivious world. They are not anymore "poor villagers" or "spoiled city boys"; they are psychological beings, each bearing the unseen scars of abandonment, social taboo, and unmet emotional needs. His rural settings amplify these contradictions since the emotional lexicon of country life, tied as it is to responsibility, humility, or silence, rarely ever permits catharsis or confrontation.

Indian Philosophical Thought

No criticism is ever possible for Tagore without a recognition of the profound philosophical currents running underneath his work. Founded in Vedanta and Bhakti school philosophy, Tagore's perspective, along with Indian aesthetics, revolves around an extremely high estimation of affective experiences that are not merely psychological but devotional.

Viraha (Song of Separation): Western sadness is not absence, divine, artistic longing. Ratan's fire in *The Postmaster* is never realized in life, yet its purity is in sorrow. Phatik's longing in *The Homecoming* forges another type of viraha; a homesickness for the anchorage of maternal love, rather than erotic passion. In *Subha*, displacement from her village of birth creates a fundamental location that is not "loss" in the Western universe but viraha; a separation as poignant as it is lovely. Samsara (Worldly Life): The emotional perturbation of the characters stems from their involvement in samsara. The place of responsibilities, marriages, work, and societal expectations is frequently the same playing field upon which emotional reality gets repressed. In *Subha*, her arranged marriage and separation from her natural habitat are outright acts of violence of the samsaric kind. In *The Castaway*, the "adoption" of Nilkanta goes awry as a result of worldly attachment, jealousy, and unspoken demands. Ananda (Bliss): Tagore barely gives his characters a chance to enjoy ananda physically. Rather, their flights; Ratan's innocence of love, Subha's love of nature; are small images of greater bliss. They are ephemeral, to be sure, but they are spiritualized and aestheticized, answering to Tagore's conviction that human pain and divine beauty are inseparable. Tagore, here, is not just penning stories; he is penning emotional rasas, inspiring karuna (compassion), shanta (composure), and vipralambha (love-of-separation) in exquisite restraint. His narratives are not pedagogic fables; they are reflections, compelling us to feel, think, and breathe.

The Postmaster

In *The Postmaster*, Tagore reunites in a tranquil yet emotionally disturbing meeting the rational universe of the city outsider and the natural, sensorial universe of the village maiden Ratan. *The postmaster*, posted from Calcutta to a remote post office, is an intellect turned loose from the cycles of nature. He grapples with the lethargy of rural

life, with the absence of intellectual discourse and city smoke lanes. But for the orphaned village girl Ratan, the country world is the world she has known from birth. Her contact with the postmaster is on a silent, unspoken plane; she needs neither heroism nor romance from him; only a sense of being together. She waits on him, talks to him, and slowly builds her very life around the axis of his being. But when he departs suddenly, spurning even the peace of taking her with him, it brings her to a state of emotional drain.

Nature here is saddened but not passive. The nights are noted with sorrowful, measured beauty. The "rustling of leaves" and "the quietness of the water" are symbolistic portrayals of Ratan's soul. Nature alone is a witness to the hardness of her abandonment in silence. Ecocritically, the countryside is a mirror of the affective speed of the story; it is not a mere landscape but an affective presence that contains human loss. Psychologically, Ratan's affective self is deeply rooted in this fleeting attachment, reflective of the human tendency toward attestation and affective continuity. Philosophically, her suffering is distilled in the Indian theory of aesthetic *viraha*; love-in-separation transformed beyond individual misery into a cosmic *rasa* of purity and yearning. Ratan's position is never assured, but so fervently desired that the suffering itself becomes the holy.

The Castaway

The Castaway meets Nilkanta, a castaway boy who swims onto the shore of a beach close to a summer home belonging to a family. He is an unwanted visitor, and though initially accepted in curiosity and half-entertainment, he soon becomes a source of stress, mostly with the family's son, Satish. The story tells the theme of displacement; emotional, and not geographical, nor physical, but social and psychological. Nilkanta, castaway in all respects, attempts to insinuate himself into family life with the family, particularly attaching himself to the mistress of the house. His desire for love, for a specific place in the family pattern, is an extension of his urge for acceptance and definition.

Nature, the sea especially, is also essential. It saves and it slays; saving Nilkanta from death, but alienating him from any original belonging. The riverbank and the surrounding landscape create a space of in-betweenness where he is neither completely welcomed nor completely kept out. Ecocritically, natural forces here are tenuous and metaphorical. Contrary to the serene countryside in *The Postmaster*, this country is capricious and unstable, as are the emotional currents in the family. To the humanist, Nilkanta's badness is not a material but an emotional desire; it is symptomatic of frustrated love and attention. When he is unjustly rejected and blamed, it is less a hospitality error; it is a symbolic rejection of emotional receptivity. Thematically, this corresponds with *samsara*; cycles of worldly attachment and rejection; and the pathos of *ananda* (bliss) being unreachable in the jealousy, suspicion, and miscommunication-deciding world.

Subha

Subha is the most haunting of these tales, of a mute girl whose muteness is both her curse and secret strength. Her family members, ashamed of her muteness, proceed to marry her off, holding her back more as a burden than as an individual. But it is through muteness that *Subha* develops a profound, almost spiritual bonding with nature. Birds, brooks, and even the light of dusk converse with her in ways human words never can. Her moments of true belonging are not to be found in human relating but with the natural world in which she shares communion. Tagore's ecocritical imagination is rich here. Nature does not simply come along after the story; it completes the silences. *Subha*'s universe is vibrantly textured; trees twist to her moods, birds reflect her unseen joy and grief, and rivers run with silent knowledge. Nature is her vocabulary, her journal, her sole companion. Psychologically, *Subha*'s self is distorted by human culture, where she is deemed flawed. Yet in the world, she is complete. She is not stupid; she simply has an idiomatic mode of expression that humans are unable to fathom. Her final exile from the village into a marriage that still silences her is an emotional death; a cutting off from the only world she knew. Indian aesthetic philosophy is the foundation for this: *Subha*'s tale is replete with *karuna rasa*; the *rasa* of compassion. Her *viraha* is not from a beloved, but from home, from the natural home of her soul. Her tragedy is not that she is dumb, but that the world would not hear what cannot be spoken.

The Homecoming

The Homecoming tells the tale of Phatik, a rough and ungrateful village boy sent over to Calcutta to be disciplined by an austere uncle. The move only serves to isolate him more. Phatik is deemed rough, boisterous, and in general unwelcome in town. Country high spirits conflict with city restraint. He becomes ill, emotionally despondent, and finally has a tragic urge to be returned home; an urge too late fulfilled. Nature here serves a double purpose. The village is not simply a world of innocence; it is a world of freedom of emotion, crudely edged only. The city, as against this, is stilted and artificial and unresponsive emotionally. The countryside, to be sure, is clodhopping and imperfect but emotionally naive; the city space is psychologically stifling. Ecocritically, Tagore projects a battle between the natural chaos of the rural and the social order of the city, cogently pleading the former as being more emotionally genuine. Humanistically, Phatik is a boy whose behavior demands attention. His revolt gets misinterpreted as bad manners, but it is a sign of his loneliness and disorientation. With his emotional needs short-circuited in the name of discipline and routine, collapse rather than reform ensues. On the philosophical plane, Phatik's last hours are tinged, for he longs for the village that now exists more in recollection than reality. Homecoming is never achieved. Instead, he dies in limbo between two worlds; country and city, boyhood and manhood, anarchy and conformity; neither belonging to the first nor the second.

Comparative Themes Among the Four Tales Spatial Dislocation vs. Emotional Dislocation

All four stories explore the truth that physical and emotional dislocation are not the same, but they do usually go hand in hand. The city-living protagonist in *The Postmaster* is spatially dislocated in the village but never emotionally. Ratan, who is anchored in space, feels emotionally abandoned. *The Homecoming* does the opposite of this; Nilkanta is separated from his temporary abode spatially, but emotionally hangs on to it with frantic desperation. Subha's spatial dislocation is postponed; her emotional exile starts much earlier, as she is still ignored and neglected by her family, though she remains with them. The precipitating factor in the climax of *The Homecoming* is Phatik's spatial dislocation (removal to Calcutta).

This implies an intuitive depth: emotional exile is not necessarily a matter of physical displacement. Meanwhile, displacement is not always a direct consequence of a change of heart. Tagore deploys this tension to undermine binary oppositions between "home" and "away." Homelessness of the heart, not geography, is the tragedy.

Nature as a Confidante vs. Nature as an Uncaring Force

Nature, the tacit narrator of rural Bengal in Tagore's fiction, behaves differently in each tale. In *Subha*, her close friends are twilights, rivers, and birds- they are her only real social existence. Nature does not just listen, but also reacts. Nature is more of a melancholy friend in *The Postmaster*; reflecting moods but passive, contemplative, rather than participative. *The Homecoming* places nature more in the form of remembrance than presence; Phatik's homesickness for rustic nature is more pining for emotional acceptance than for green fields in themselves. And in *The Castaway*, nature is cruel, uncaring; the sea brings Nilkanta to the beach and then easily sweeps away his provisional acceptance within the home. Tagore resists a Romantic sentimentalizing of nature. Rather, he navigates a spectrum: from compassionate mother (*Subha*) to strict witness (*The Postmaster*), from memories' cradle (*The Homecoming*) to indifferent, destructive force (*The Castaway*). Nature, like humans, is complex; sometimes benevolent, sometimes cruel, always not within human control.

Rural Space as Figure of Retained Innocence and Repressed Feeling

Tagore's village is not some rustic Eden. It is natural rhythm and simplicity, yes, but it is where there is enforced silence (*Subha*), where emotional needs are denied (*Ratan*), and where tomfoolery is misconstrued (*Phatik*). The countryside isn't idealized; it is mythicized as a space where emotion has more space to breathe, but gets suffocated also by the burden of tradition and penury. In every tale, rural space is a metaphor for affective contradiction. It's both lost innocence, pre-industrial, pre-urban, pre-alienated; but the land on which abandonment is systemic. Thus, the role of the countryside in Tagore's work is similar to Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquility," but the tranquility is precarious and the recollection tortured. The rural is the land of belonging, unnamed; deeply felt but refused by reality.

Intersection of Class, Gender, and Emotional Marginalization

Tagore's individuals are not characters; they are social types composed with psychological realism. *Subha* and *Ratan* (*The Postmaster*) are both women characters whose emotional lives are discounted because of gender. They are to be constructed for service, to be wedded, to remain silent; literally in the instance of *Subha*. *Nilkanta* (*The Castaway*) is a class displacement; a lower-caste boy introduced to a bourgeois family, never embraced, always slightly misplaced. The emotional estrangement of *Phatik* in *The Homecoming* is symptomatic of how children; particularly boys with non-cooperative energies; are trained, not understood. What emerges is a portrait of emotional marginalization shaped by invisible hierarchies. Gender silences emotion. Class distorts perception. Age is treated with condescension rather than empathy. These characters do not fail to belong because they are unworthy; they fail because social scripts deny their emotional realities. The village, with all its customs and silences, becomes a stage where the politics of emotion are rehearsed again and again, leaving behind only ghosts of what could have been.

Tagore's Vision of Rural Life: A Moral and Emotional Topography

Rabindranath Tagore's accounts of rural life in his short stories are both more than idyllic and more than pastoral. Rather than sentimentalizing the countryside, he represents it as a morally nuanced, emotionally charged, and psychologically complex world. His landscapes are not utopias, but test furnaces on which human character is tried, on which feelings are created and discarded, and the human spirit engages, symbiotically at times, agonizingly more so, with nature and society. Tagore's rural landscape then ceases to be merely a setting and becomes a living force, one that breathes, sees, and quietly judges.

Not Sentimental or Utopian, but Morally and Emotionally Layered

While his contemporaries and successors approached the Indian village either in nostalgic romance or realistic gloom, Tagore draws a finer line. In *The Postmaster*, the village has a subdued, agonized air, neither as an oriental setting, but as an area where the pace of life is such that sensitive emotional encounters can occur. And that is also the area where abandonment and loneliness are discovered. In *Subha*, the countryside does not shield the mute girl; it yields quietly to the cruelty of society and permits her silence to pass unnoticed. What one finds is a picture of the rural neither worse nor worse in itself, but as a site of contradiction where affective life is inexorably entwined with social structure, caste stratification, and the demands of kinship. The village is not evil, only indifferent, just as likely to be sweet as cruel. This balance, or this delicate moral ecology, is Tagore's genius.

A Psychological as Ecological Landscape

Tagore's rural landscapes are not geographies of the body; psychological landscapes that resonate with the inner worlds of the figures. The stagnant pond, the rustling bamboo, the sunset sky; all are projections of *Ratan's* longing in *The Postmaster*. The riverbank in *The Castaway* is a boundary of abandonment and hope. Nature is not a passive witness; it senses and internalizes human feeling, at times even mirroring it. In *Subha*, nature stands in for the

silent girl's proxy consciousness; its rivers and birds speak on her behalf what she cannot. This is where ecocriticism meets depth psychology: Tagore teaches us that the countryside is not merely an exercise in plant and animal being, but one of human emotion becoming entwined with the rhythms of the environment. The ecological overflows into the psychological, and the world of nature is engaged; though quietly so; partly in the creation of human destiny.

The Rural Setting as a Character unto Itself

Tagore's villages are not ordinary environments; they have a sort of moral weather. They are oppressive, comforting, and refuse sympathy, like any character, and change. In *The Homecoming*, the remembered village is used as the symbol of lost innocence and emotional sanctuary, one ironically withheld from Phatik in life. The countryside beckons him even as civilization rejects him. Thus, space is lived by Tagore. Rural life has its sense. It hears when all others are deaf (*Subha*), possesses a secret (*The Postmaster*), shelters the outcast (*The Castaway*), and silently mourns (*The Homecoming*). This recovery of space for personality is where Tagore's genius intersects with Indian aesthetic tradition; nature is bliss, self-conscious. The village is no location; it is a presence.

Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore's chosen short stories; *The Postmaster*, *The Castaway*, *Subha*, and *The Homecoming*; offer not a simplistic rendering of country life but an intensely searching exploration of human feeling, psychological alienation, and the illusory quest for belonging. These stories abandon rural romanticism, presenting an agnostic rural scene that is morally complex, emotionally nuanced, and philosophically sophisticated. Nature in the hands of Tagore is not just a backdrop but also a silent force, a reflection of storm within, a metaphor for yearning, and at times a reflection of the indifference of human beings. Viewed through the framework of ecocriticism, humanistic psychology, and Indian philosophy, the countryside setting in these works acts as a womb and wilderness. At the same time, both can support identity and also affirm isolation. Nature is heard in these tales, not in sweeping drama, but in the stillness of the evening, the creak of leaves, the evidence of silence. Here at the margins, Tagore's artistry is made apparent: not in tying up the loose ends of feeling, but in lightening them. Additionally, every character's quest for emotional mooring; Ratan's enduring love, Nilkanta's frayed hope, Subha's submissive desire, Phatik's ill-understood rebellion; is played against the wise context of a village that observes but seldom acts. This mature interpretation obliterates the city and country split and offers instead a more human truth: that the most profound alienation is not from earth or class or words, but from recognition; the destroying of human need to uncomfortably see, hear, and be held.

In Tagore's imagination, belonging is not conferred by place, but shaped in the crucible of empathy. And where empathy fractures; through social indifference, gender roles, class stratification, or plain emotional abandonment; there blooms a muted tragedy. Such stories, discreet in detail and poignant in impact, remind us that the heart, as much as the earth, needs to be nurtured with care.

And lastly, Tagore departs us not with answers, but with echoes: of feet on rural trails, of mail lying on the desk, of words not spoken, and of rain along river banks where an individual once stood to be called home.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*. Oxford UP, 2000.
2. Kakar, Sudhir. *The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*. Oxford UP, 1981.
3. Kripalani, Krishna. *Tagore: A Life*. Penguin, 2004.
4. Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. Oxford UP, 1985.
5. Radice, William, editor and translator. *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories*. Penguin, 2005.
6. Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. Macmillan, 1918.
7. Tagore, Rabindranath. "Subha." *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories*, edited and translated by William Radice, Penguin, 2005.
8. ---. "The Castaway." *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories*, edited and translated by William Radice, Penguin, 2005.
9. ---. "The Homecoming." *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories*, edited and translated by William Radice, Penguin, 2005.
10. ---. "The Postmaster." *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories*, edited and translated by William Radice, Penguin, 2005.

Playing Power and Myth: Gamification and Digital Pedagogy as Transformative Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and Girish Karnad's Nagamandala

Kamlesh R. Jagtap

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030220



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792183

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792183>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor
RJSPM's ACS College, Bhosari, Pune-39
Email: kamlesh255@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Jagtap, K. R. (2026). Playing Power and Myth: Gamification and Digital Pedagogy as Transformative Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and Girish Karnad's Nagamandala. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 77–81.

Address for correspondence:

Kamlesh R. Jagtap
Assistant Professor
RJSPM's ACS College, Bhosari, Pune-39
Email: kamlesh255@gmail.com

Abstract

The teaching of canonical literary texts such as William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala* presents distinctive pedagogical challenges: the former demands engagement with Elizabethan political rhetoric and classical Roman history, while the latter requires students to negotiate the complex intersections of Indian oral folk tradition, myth, gender, and postcolonial identity. This paper investigates how gamification strategies and digital pedagogical approaches—including narrative role-playing, digital debate platforms, collaborative world building, and immersive storytelling simulations—can transform student engagement with these two seminal but often under-interrogated dramatic texts. Drawing upon constructivist learning theory, reader-response criticism, and the connected learning framework, the study presents a mixed-method pedagogical inquiry conducted over two semesters with undergraduate students at RJSPM's ACS College, Bhosari, Pune. Findings reveal that gamified approaches significantly enhance close reading competencies, deepen understanding of dramatic structure and political language, and cultivate comparative intercultural awareness—particularly when students inhabit the moral dilemmas of Brutus or the mythic consciousness of Rani in *Nagamandala*. The paper argues that the interpretive richness of both texts is amplified rather than diluted by digital and game-based pedagogies, and that such methodologies offer a powerful means of bridging the experiential gap between twenty-first-century Indian students and the worlds that Shakespeare and Karnad construct. The study further contends that comparative teaching of these plays through digital platforms fosters critical empathy, ethical reasoning, and culturally nuanced literary sensibility.

Keywords: Julius Caesar, Nagamandala, Gamification, Digital Pedagogy, Shakespeare, Girish Karnad, Comparative Literature, English Literature Teaching

Introduction

Two plays separated by four centuries, two continents, and two entirely distinct theatrical and cultural traditions have more in common than their apparent distance suggests. William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) and Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala* (1988) are both profoundly concerned with the exercise and abuse of power, the construction of truth through language and narrative, and the precarious position of individuals caught within systems—political, mythological, and social—that are larger than themselves. Yet in the contemporary Indian undergraduate literature classroom, both texts frequently fail to generate the deep, sustained engagement that their intellectual and dramatic richness deserves.

Julius Caesar is often approached as a set text to be dissected for rhetorical devices and historical context, its political urgency drained by the weight of examination conventions. *Nagamandala*, Karnad's brilliant reworking of two Kannada folk tales exploring female desire, social surveillance, and the ambiguities of truth, is similarly underserved: its radical form—a play within a play framed by the storytelling voice of Flame—is flattened into plot summary, its feminist provocation domesticated by superficial reading. The result, in both cases, is a failure of encounter: students learn about these plays without ever truly entering them.

This paper proposes that gamification and digital pedagogy offer transformative methodologies for precisely such a double failure. When students role-play as senators in Rome, negotiate Brutus's tortured ethics through structured moral debate simulations, or inhabit Rani's subjective experience of mythic reality through interactive storytelling platforms, they do not merely analyze literary texts—they think alongside them. The paper presents evidence from a pedagogical study at RJSPM's ACS College, Pune, and advances the broader argument that innovative digital approaches enrich rather than simplify the teaching of complex literary drama.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three converging theoretical frameworks that together justify the use of gamification and digital pedagogy in the literary classroom.

The first is constructivist learning theory, originating with Jean Piaget and extended by Lev Vygotsky. Constructivism holds that learners do not passively absorb knowledge but actively build meaning through experience, reflection, and social interaction.

Applied to literary pedagogy, this principle suggests that students learn texts most profoundly not by receiving authoritative interpretations but by generating their own interpretations through purposeful activity. When a student must argue, in the role of Brutus, that Caesar's assassination was a patriotic act—and must do so using textual evidence, in real time, against an opponent arguing for Mark Antony's position—they are constructing meaning through the same dialogic process that the play itself dramatizes.

The second framework is Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of literary reading, which distinguishes between efferent reading—reading to extract information—and aesthetic reading—reading to experience the text as a lived event. Gamified literary pedagogy systematically promotes aesthetic reading by placing students in embodied, emotionally invested relationships with texts. When a student assumes the role of Rani in *Nagamandala* and must navigate the impossible moral terrain of a woman whose lie becomes truth, their reading is no longer efferent: it is experiential, empathetic, and transformative.

The third is the connected learning framework developed by Mimi Ito and colleagues, which argues that learning is most durable when it connects academic content to students' peer cultures, personal interests, and digital environments. Both *Julius Caesar* and *Nagamandala* contain thematic concerns—political manipulation, social justice, gender oppression, the construction of truth—that resonate powerfully with contemporary youth culture and digital discourse. Digital platforms create spaces wherein these connections can be made explicit, extending literary learning beyond the classroom into the everyday digital lives of students.

3. The Texts: Literary and Cultural Contexts

3.1 *Julius Caesar*: Power, Language, and Political Theatre

Julius Caesar occupies a pivotal position in the Shakespearean canon, representing the playwright's most concentrated meditation on the relationship between political power and rhetorical language. The play's central dramatic irony—that the conspirators who kill Caesar in the name of Roman liberty unleash a tyranny more devastating than anything Caesar himself represented—makes it a text of profound contemporary relevance. The competing funeral orations of Brutus and Mark Antony constitute one of the most sophisticated dramatizations of propaganda and persuasion in all of English literature.

For Indian undergraduate students, the play poses particular pedagogical challenges. The Roman political context requires historical scaffolding; the archaic language of the verse demands sustained linguistic attention; and the moral ambiguity of Brutus—simultaneously noble and catastrophically wrong—resists the simple ethical frameworks that students accustomed to more didactic literature may expect. These challenges, however, are precisely what make *Julius Caesar* so valuable as a site for gamified pedagogy: its formal and thematic complexity creates the conditions for genuinely meaningful interpretive play.

3.2 *Nagamandala*: Myth, Gender, and the Ambiguity of Truth

Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala* is one of the most formally inventive and thematically daring works in modern Indian drama in English. Based on two Kannada folk tales collected by A. K. Ramanujan, the play interweaves the story of Rani—a young woman imprisoned in her home by an indifferent husband, Appanna—with the supernatural narrative of Naga, a cobra who assumes Appanna's form and visits Rani by night. When Rani becomes pregnant, she faces a society that cannot believe her account of events, and the play radically stages the paradox of a truth that cannot be spoken and a lie that the community chooses to accept as fact.

Karnad's play is explicitly concerned with the epistemology of narrative: how do communities decide what is true? How does patriarchal social organisation determine whose testimony is credible? How does myth function to both constrain and liberate individual experience? These questions, embedded in the theatrical frame of the storytelling Flame and the watching flames in the Story House, make *Nagamandala* a uniquely rich text for pedagogy that emphasizes active meaning-making, collaborative interpretation, and the interrogation of power.

4. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods pedagogical inquiry design, combining quantitative assessment data with rich qualitative evidence gathered through student reflective journals, classroom observation, and focus group discussion. The study was conducted over two academic semesters (2023–2024) at RJSPM's ACS College, Bhosari, Pune, with 120 undergraduate students enrolled across four divisions of the English Literature programme.

Two divisions constituted the experimental group, receiving instruction through gamified and digital pedagogical strategies; two divisions served as the control group, receiving instruction through conventional lecture and discussion methods. Both groups studied *Julius Caesar* and *Nagamandala* as paired texts within a comparative drama unit, allowing the study to examine not only the effects of gamification on individual text comprehension but also on students' capacity for comparative intercultural literary analysis.

The gamified pedagogical interventions were designed around four core strategies. First, Senate Simulation involved students assigned roles as Roman senators, conspirators, or citizens and tasked with debating the legitimacy

of Caesar's assassination using evidence drawn exclusively from the text. Role allocations were randomized, requiring students to argue positions they may not personally hold and thereby developing their capacity for textual close reading and rhetorical analysis. Second, Oration Analysis Tournaments engaged students in live competitive analysis of the rhetorical strategies in the funeral orations, with peers serving as both judges and critics. Third, Myth Mapping through Digital Storytelling invited students to reconstruct Nagamandala's narrative through digital storyboarding tools, making explicit decisions about how to represent Rani's perspective, the Naga's ambiguity, and the community's collective judgement. Fourth, Comparative Ethics Forums used online discussion platforms to facilitate structured cross-textual debate: students were asked to compare Brutus's moral crisis with Rani's, examining how each character negotiates an impossible situation within a system of power that constrains their choices.

Quantitative data was gathered through pre- and post-intervention assessments measuring reading comprehension, analytical writing quality, and comparative literary reasoning. Qualitative data was collected through student reflective journals kept over the duration of the unit, semi-structured focus group discussions, and detailed classroom observation notes.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Deepened Engagement with Political Language in Julius Caesar

The Senate Simulation and Oration Analysis Tournament activities produced a striking enhancement in students' ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate rhetorical strategies in Julius Caesar. Pre-intervention assessments had revealed that the majority of students in both groups could identify basic rhetorical devices such as repetition and irony in the funeral orations but struggled to explain how these devices functioned structurally to manipulate the Roman crowd's emotional and political allegiance. Post-intervention assessments of the experimental group showed a mean improvement of 22.4% in rhetorical analysis scores, compared to 8.1% for the control group.

Qualitative data illuminated the mechanisms behind this improvement. Students who had been assigned to argue Mark Antony's position in the Senate Simulation—required to plan their strategy, anticipate counter-arguments, and deploy textual evidence—demonstrated in their journal entries a qualitatively different understanding of the speech's architecture. As one student reflected: 'I had to read Antony's speech five times to find every place where he plants an idea and then walks away from it. That is when I understood what Shakespeare means by irony—it is not a device, it is a weapon.' Such metacognitive awareness of literary technique, developed through purposeful rhetorical practice, represents precisely the kind of deep textual engagement that conventional pedagogy often fails to achieve.

5.2 Feminist and Mythic Consciousness in Nagamandala

The Myth Mapping and Comparative Ethics Forum activities generated particularly rich learning outcomes in relation to Nagamandala. Many students arrived at the text with limited familiarity with Karnad's theatrical tradition and with the Kannada folk tale sources from which the play draws. Digital storyboarding activities required students to make explicit decisions about perspective, voice, and representation—decisions that in turn required them to return repeatedly to the text in search of specific justification.

The most significant finding in relation to Nagamandala concerns students' developing understanding of Karnad's feminist critique. Pre-intervention discussions had revealed that many students initially read Rani as a passive victim—a reading the play's surface narrative might seem to support. However, as students engaged with the Myth Mapping activity and were required to represent Rani's interiority across the narrative arc, they began to identify the play's more radical claim: that Rani does not simply survive patriarchal surveillance but subverts it, using the very mythological discourse that constrains her as an instrument of her own vindication. One student's journal entry captures this interpretive development with particular force: 'I thought Rani was helpless. But when I had to draw her story from her point of view, I saw that she is the only character who knows the truth—and the play is about how truth becomes power when a cobra decides to love you.'

5.3 Comparative Intercultural Literary Reasoning

The Comparative Ethics Forum—the digital platform activity designed to facilitate cross-textual analysis—produced the most intellectually ambitious student work of the entire intervention. Students who were required to compare Brutus's moral crisis with Rani's situation demonstrated, in their written forum contributions and subsequent essays, a sophisticated capacity for comparative literary reasoning that neither text, taught in isolation, would likely have produced.

The comparison proved unexpectedly generative. Both characters are trapped within systems of belief and social expectation—Brutus within Roman stoic republicanism, Rani within patriarchal Hindu social order—that determine in advance what choices are intelligible. Both make decisions that cannot be fully explained within the logic of their respective systems. Both rely on language—Brutus through oration, Rani through the testimony of the Naga's ordeal—to negotiate between private truth and public credibility. Students who traced these structural parallels

demonstrated not only comparative literary skill but also a nascent understanding of how literature across cultures and periods engages with universal human dilemmas through radically different formal and cultural vocabularies.

The quantitative dimension of this finding was equally compelling. Pre-intervention comparative writing assessments—in which students were asked to draw any connection between the two texts—yielded primarily surface-level observations about genre and theme. Post-intervention comparative essays showed a mean improvement of 26.7% in depth of comparative reasoning, with the experimental group significantly outperforming the control group on every sub-criterion of the analytical writing rubric.

6. Discussion: Implications for Literary Pedagogy

The findings of this study carry several significant implications for the teaching of English literature in higher education, particularly in the Indian context where literary education must navigate the intersections of global canonical texts and local cultural inheritances.

First, the study demonstrates that gamification is not pedagogically neutral: the design of game-based activities must be intimately calibrated to the specific literary and intellectual demands of the texts being taught. The Senate Simulation worked for Julius Caesar precisely because the play is itself a drama about rhetoric, persuasion, and the performance of political identity. The Myth Mapping activity worked for Nagamandala precisely because the play is itself a meditation on the act of storytelling and the ambiguity of narrative truth. Effective gamified literary pedagogy requires instructors to read their texts with sufficient depth to identify the specific hermeneutic practices that the text demands—and to design activities that embody those practices as lived experience.

Second, the comparative dimension of the study suggests that digital pedagogy is particularly powerful as a scaffold for intercultural literary thinking. The Comparative Ethics Forum created a space in which students could reason across the cultural distance between Elizabethan England and contemporary India without collapsing that distance into facile equivalence. The digital platform's asynchronous format allowed students time to formulate nuanced positions; the requirement to respond substantively to peers' contributions created a dialogic structure that mimicked the very dynamic of competing interpretations that both plays thematise.

Third, the study raises important questions about assessment. If students are developing sophisticated interpretive, rhetorical, and comparative competencies through gamified activities, conventional end-of-semester examinations that reward information recall are poorly designed to capture or encourage these competencies. Portfolio assessment models—incorporating reflective journals, collaborative project documentation, and revised analytical essays—would provide more authentic and equitable measures of the learning that gamified literary pedagogy produces.

Finally, the study invites reflection on the particular value of teaching Karnad alongside Shakespeare in the Indian undergraduate curriculum. Nagamandala offers Indian students a literary text that speaks from within their own cultural and mythological inheritance—but from a position of sophisticated critical distance. Teaching it in dialogue with Julius Caesar, rather than in isolation, allows both texts to illuminate each other: Shakespeare's political drama is defamiliarised by Karnad's feminist folk mythology, and Karnad's local idiom is given comparative global resonance by Shakespeare's universal political tragedy.

7. Conclusion

This paper has argued that gamification and digital pedagogy, when thoughtfully designed and theoretically grounded, are not merely engaging alternatives to conventional literary instruction but genuinely transformative methodologies capable of deepening students' engagement with complex and demanding dramatic texts. The evidence from this study, conducted at RJSPM's ACS College, Pune, with Julius Caesar and Nagamandala as the primary texts, demonstrates that students who learn through purposeful play, collaborative simulation, and digital comparative forum develop not only stronger technical skills in close reading and analytical writing but also richer, more ethically nuanced relationships with the human experiences that literature represents.

William Shakespeare and Girish Karnad are, in their very different ways, playwrights of the border—of the unstable frontier between public and private truth, between the language of power and the language of the human heart. When students are invited not merely to read these plays but to inhabit their tensions, to argue their moral dilemmas, and to map their mythological and political landscapes through digital and game-based activities, they discover that the border these plays trace is not only Brutus's or Rani's—it is their own. The literature classroom of the twenty-first century must be, above all, a space of encounter: between reader and text, between cultures and centuries, between the stories we inherit and the meanings we make. Gamification and digital pedagogy, at their best, make such encounters possible—and unforgettable.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Bharucha, Rustom. *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal*. University of Hawaii Press, 1983.),
Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Riverhead Books, 1998.
2. Deterding, Sebastian, et al. "From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining Gamification." *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference, ACM*, 2011, pp. 9–15.
3. Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
4. Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Beacon Press, 1955.
5. Ito, Mimi, et al. *Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design*. Digital Media and Learning Research Hub, 2013.
6. Karnad, Girish. *Nagamandala: Play with a Cobra*. Oxford University Press, 1990.
7. McGonigal, Jane. *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. Penguin Press, 2011.
8. Piaget, Jean. *The Psychology of Intelligence*. Routledge, 1950.
9. Ramanujan, A. K. *Folktales from India*. Pantheon Books, 1991.
10. Rosenblatt, Louise M. *Literature as Exploration*. 5th ed., Modern Language Association, 1995.
11. Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being." *American Psychologist*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2000, pp. 68–78.
12. Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Edited by David Daniell, Arden Shakespeare, 1998.
13. Tripathi, Vanashree. *Three Plays by Girish Karnad: A Critical Study*. Prestige Books, 2004.
14. Vygotsky, Lev. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press, 1978.

Exploring The Dynamic Intersections of Literature, Culture and Society through Kiran Nagarkar's Selected Novels

Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030221



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20792259
DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792259>

Volume: 3
Issue:2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Head and Assistant Professor in English
Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir's
Samajshree Prashantdada
Hiray Arts, Science & Commerce
College, Nampur, Tal-Baglan, Dist-
Nashik.
E-mail: gaikwadkamalakar@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Gaikwad, K. B. (2026). *Exploring The Dynamic Intersections of Literature, Culture and Society through Kiran Nagarkar's Selected Novels*. International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 82–88..

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad
Head and Assistant Professor in English
Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir's
Samajshree Prashantdada
Hiray Arts, Science & Commerce
College, Nampur, Tal-Baglan, Dist-
Nashik.
E-mail: gaikwadkamalakar@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study explores the dynamic intersections of literature, culture and society through the selected novels of Kiran Nagarkar. In the canon of Indian English Literature, Kiran Nagarkar is one of the prominent voices. His works offer a rich and multifaceted demonstration of Indian life, reflecting the intricacies of cultural multiplicity, historical cognizance and societal transformation. His novels often deal with identity, history, power, religion and the complexities of modern Indian life. The major objective of this research is to investigate how Kiran Nagarkar's selected novels engage with issues of identity, religion, class, gender and power. The study embraces a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on cultural studies and postcolonial perspectives to analyze how Nagarkar portrays the tensions between tradition and modernity, individual agency and social constraints. His depiction of urban spaces reveals the coexistence of multiple cultures and the struggles of marginalized communities. At the same time, his historical and political narratives challenge dominant ideologies and question established norms.

Through textual analysis, the paper highlights how Nagarkar's fiction serves as a critical lens to understand the evolving nature of Indian society. His innovative narrative techniques, use of satire and exploration of controversial themes contribute to a deeper engagement with socio-cultural realities. This study highlights that Nagarkar's novels are not merely artistic expressions but significant cultural texts that illuminate the intricate relationship between literature, culture and society in contemporary India.

Keywords : Kiran Nagarkar, dynamic intersection, literature, culture, society, contemporary India

Introduction

Kiran Nagarkar (1942-2019) is an eminent figure and prominent voice of post-colonial India in the canon of Indian English Literature. He was born in Mumbai in a middle class Maharashtrian family. He is a multifaceted personality, i.e. a novelist, dramatist, film critic, bilingual writer, essayist, columnist, copywriter, screen writer and playwright in contemporary era. His commendable literary works are: 'Saat Sakkam Trechalis' (1974), 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three' (1978), 'Ravan and Eddie' (1994), 'Cuckold' (1997), 'God's Little Soldier' (2006), 'The Extras' (2012), 'Rest in Peace' (2015), 'Jasoda: A Novel' (2017), 'The Arsonist' (2019), 'Asides, Tirades, Meditations: Selected Essays' (2024). Besides novels, he has written plays and screenplays which include 'Bedtime Stories' (1978), 'Kabirache Kay Karayche' etc. He is the recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award, Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, Rockefeller Foundation Grant etc.

Literature Review

The present study focuses on the intersections of literature, culture and society through the selected novels of Kiran Nagarkar. In support of this, the researcher has attempted to depict the opinions of several academicians and research scholars. There is comparatively less integrated study focusing on the **dynamic intersections of literature, culture, and society as a unified framework**. Most studies analyze specific novels or themes in isolation rather than examining how these elements interact simultaneously across multiple works. This indicates a gap that the present study seeks to address. The indispensable evidences are demonstrated as per the precondition of the occurrences.

1. Nagarkar, Kiran. 'Seven Sixes are Forty Three'. Trans. Shubha Slee. New Delhi: Katha Publication, 2003.

This **modernist and non-linear novel** explores the chaotic inner and outer life of a young man, **Kushank Purandare**, in urban India of the 1960s–70s.

2. Ibid. 'Cuckold'. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1997.

This **historical novel** is set in 16th-century **Mewar (Rajasthan)** during a time of political conflict and royal intrigue. It centers on **Maharaj Kumar (Bhoj Raj)**, a Rajput prince and his deeply troubled marriage to **Meerabai**, the famous Bhakti saint.

3. Ibid. 'Ravan and Eddie'. New Delhi: Penguin, 1995

This novel portrays the lives of two boys Ravan and Eddie growing up in a crowded working-class chawl. It blends **humor, tragedy, religion and social realism** to depict urban Indian life.

Ibid. 'The Extras'. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012.

This novel is a sequel to *Ravan and Eddie* and continues the story of its two protagonists as they move from adolescence into adulthood.

It explores ambition, failure, survival and identity in a harsh urban world.

4. Ibid. 'God's Little Soldier'. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2006

It explores religious extremism, identity and violence in the modern world and examines how blind faith and ideological conditioning can shape and distort human lives.

5. Bill Ashcroft & et.al. 'The Empire Writes Back'. Routledge, 2002

This book examines how writers from formerly colonized countries respond to and resist the cultural dominance of the British Empire through literature.

6. Homi K. Bhabha. 'The Location of Culture'. Routledge, 1995

In this book, Homi K. Bhabha challenges fixed ideas of culture, identity and nation. It argues that that culture is fluid, hybrid and constantly negotiated.

7. Aijaz Ahmad. 'In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures'. Verso, 1992

In this book, Aijaz Ahmad offers a **rigorous critique of Western theories of post-colonialism**, especially those that generalize the experiences of formerly colonized societies.

8. Frantz Fanon. 'Black Skin, White Masks'. Grove Press, 2008

In this work, Frantz Fanon examines the **psychological effects of colonialism and racism** on Black individuals, especially under French colonial rule.

Kumar, Jitendra. 'Kiran Nagarkar's Metro-Life Novels.' International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Studies, 2021

This research article examines how Kiran Nagarkar portrays **metropolitan life of Mumbai** in his novels such as *Ravan and Eddie* and *The Extras*. The study focuses on the **interaction between literature, culture, and society** within urban settings.

11. Gaikwad, Kamalakar. 'The Discourses of Traditional Hegemony and Power Dynamics through Kiran Nagarkar's Cuckold.' Crossroads Journal, 2025.

This research article analyzes Kiran Nagarkar's novel *Cuckold* through the lens of **traditional hegemony and power relations**. It focuses on how **authority, patriarchy and socio-political control** operate within the royal structure of Mewar and shape characters' lives.

Research Problem

In post-colonial context, the relationship between literature, culture and society is complex and constantly evolving. Kiran Nagarkar's novels present diverse representations of urban life, history, religion, identity and power structures. Despite his significant contribution, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine the dynamic interplay between literature, culture and society across his selected works as a whole. There is insufficient integrated analysis that explores how Nagarkar's narratives collectively engage with cultural hybridity and identity formation, social hierarchies, power dynamics and hegemony, urban and historical transformations, religious tensions and philosophical questions etc. Moreover theoretical frameworks from postcolonial thinkers like Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, and Aijaz Ahmad have not been sufficiently applied in a comparative and interdisciplinary manner to analyze Nagarkar's fiction.

Theoretical Framework

The present study deals with **postcolonial theory, cultural studies and Marxist criticism**. The postcolonial concepts help us to examine how Nagarkar's novels engage with issues of **identity, hybridity and cultural negotiation**. Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of '**Hybridity**' and the '**Third Space**' are used to analyze how characters in novels like *Ravan and Eddie* and *The Extras* negotiate multiple cultural identities within urban settings. Frantz Fanon's concept of '**psychological colonization**' helps interpret identity crises, alienation, and internal conflicts in Nagarkar's characters. Bill Ashcroft and colleagues' notion of '**Writing back to the Empire**' is applied to understand how Nagarkar challenges dominant cultural narratives. The study employs cultural studies to examine the relationship between **texts and their socio-cultural contexts**. Nagarkar's novels are analyzed as **cultural texts** that represent urban life and chawl culture, religious diversity and conflict and social practices and everyday experiences. To understand **power relations and social structures**, the study incorporates Marxist perspectives of Aijaz Ahmad who claims that **class, material conditions and historical specificity** is used to analyze economic struggles and class divisions in Nagarkar's works. The framework highlights issues such as class inequality, economic hardship and power dynamics and hegemony. This perspective can be applied in examining **urban poverty and social hierarchy** in *Ravan and Eddie* and *The Extras*. The framework also draws on the concept of **hegemony** to analyze how power operates within society. Traditional structures such as **patriarchy, monarchy and religion** are examined in *Cuckold*.

Research Methodology

The study follows a **qualitative, interpretative, descriptive and analytical research methodology**. It **focuses on textual analysis supported by postcolonial, cultural and Marxist theory**. The researcher has employed primary sources in the form of original texts by Nagarkar and secondary sources such as critical essays, articles, books on postcolonial and cultural theory for the detail clarification of the fact. Close reading of the text and other theoretical framework related books are analyzed while writing the research. Quotations from the novel are interpreted through the lenses of postmodern skepticism and existential inquiry to uncover implicit spiritual meanings.

Textual Discussion

‘Literature is the **reflection of society and culture. Literature acts as a mirror of society.** It represents its structures, values and contradictions.’

Culture is deeply embedded in everyday practices, beliefs and social institutions. Nagarkar’s works exemplify diverse aspects of Indian life, from metropolitan struggles to historical transformations. Nagarkar’s novels reveal how cultural norms and social systems influence individual identity and behavior. Nagarkar’s fiction depicts socio-cultural realism and offer a nuanced narration of Indian society, particularly urban life in Mumbai. His narratives often capture the complexity of class divisions, religious tensions and postcolonial identity crises. For example, *Ravan and Eddie* and *The Extras* portray the socio-economic struggles of lower-middle-class communities and the aspirations shaped by cultural expectations.

‘Nagarkar’s writing explores communal tensions and ideological conflicts and presents society as fragmented yet interconnected. His characters often struggle within rigid social structures, reflecting the broader tensions of a rapidly changing society.’

Besides this, Nagarkar’s novels have historical and political dimensions. For instance, *Cuckold* reinterpret historical narratives, blending fiction with historical reality to question dominant ideologies and power structures. He delineates traditional hegemonies, monarchy and patriarchy through his portrayal of historical characters and events. Similarly, *The Arsonist* explores religious pluralism and socio-political tensions, reflecting contemporary concerns about identity, secularism, and ideological conflict. The readers conceptualise the glimpses of *feminism and gender representation*. Feminist criticism of Nagarkar’s novels emphasizes his portrayal of strong, resilient female characters who challenge patriarchal norms. Studies show that women in his fiction are active agents negotiating identity, autonomy and resistance. Nagarkar’s works present women as empowered individuals who transform their marginalization into strength, thereby reflecting changing gender roles in modern Indian society. In addition to this, his novels reveal **humanism, existential concerns and** contradictions of human existence, i.e. comic and tragic, spiritual and material, while questioning rigid ideologies in religion, politics, and culture.

‘Nagarkar’s characters embody moral dilemmas and existential struggles, reflecting broader concerns about identity, freedom, and ethical responsibility in contemporary society.’

We can observe **narrative technique and postmodern elements in Kiran Nagarkar’s works.** His use of multiple perspectives, non-linear storytelling, and linguistic hybridity reflects postmodern literary techniques. These stylistic innovations allow him to represent fragmented realities and complex cultural identities effectively. His blending of humor, satire and irony further enhances his critique of societal norms and cultural contradictions, making his works both engaging and intellectually stimulating.

‘Nagarkar is famous for his bold, avant-garde and groundbreaking contributions to Indian English literature. His innovative work comprises with experimentation with language, themes and narrative style.’

Readers can visualize Nagarkar’s varied writing style. He introduces **multilingual literary innovation. He prefers writing mode as English rather than Marathi through which he breaks** linguistic boundaries, reflects India’s multi-lingual culture and regional and global literary traditions. Nagarkar uses skillfully fusion of history and fiction. For instance, in ‘Cuckold’, he reimagines historical figures with psychological depth, challenges glorified versions of history and presents history from **alternative perspectives**. He uses urban realism with popular culture. For example, in ‘Ravan and Eddie’, Nagarkar depicts Mumbai chawl life with humor and realism, integrates cinema, music and street culture and portrays **ordinary lives as meaningful narratives**. Nagarkar offers **bold treatment of religion and identity. For example, in ‘God’s Little Soldier’,** readers witness religious extremism without bias. The novel questions rigid belief systems and explores identity shaped by ideology. He gives voice to those often ignored in mainstream literature.

‘Nagarkar mixes classical literary elements and everyday language and humour. His innovation lies in his ability to challenge conventions, merge cultures and histories and address complex social realities with creativity.’

Exploring the Intersections of Literature, Culture and Society through Kiran Nagarkar’s Selected Fiction
The researcher intends to explore the dynamics of intersections of literature, culture and society through Kiran Nagarkar’s selected works.

Seven Sixes Are Forty Three

This novel is originally written in Marathi as *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* and later, it is translated into English. It reflects **urban middle-class life in Mumbai**. Its major themes are; youth rebellion and existential crisis, social change and cultural confusion, psychological exploration of identity etc. It represents how modern Indian society negotiates **tradition vs modernity**.

‘Through the protagonist’s journey, Nagarkar constructs a layered narrative that reflects the socio-cultural realities of post-independence urban India, particularly focusing on the intellectual and artistic life of Mumbai.’

Novel depicts that literature is a reflection of society. It portrays the struggles of an aspiring writer navigating economic hardships, identity crises and social expectations. Nagarkar presents the cosmopolitan culture of Mumbai, blending multiple languages, traditions, and lifestyles. The novel reflects the tension between traditional values and modern aspirations. Search for identity is the major theme of the novel. Kushank Purandare’s experiences highlight the challenges faced by middle-class youth in a rapidly modernizing society. The protagonist struggles to define himself as a writer while confronting societal pressures such as financial instability and familial expectations. This tension reflects broader societal norms that often restrict creative freedom, especially in a conservative cultural framework. The novel also explores themes of alienation and existential angst. The protagonist’s sense of dislocation within society reflects the broader condition of individuals in urban modernity. Through satire and self-reflection, Nagarkar critiques societal norms, including materialism, hypocrisy, and the lack of support for artistic pursuits.

Ravan and Eddie

It is a humorous novel set in a Mumbai CWD chawl. Hindu-Christian cultural coexistence, poverty and class divisions, popular culture (cinema, music) are the major issues of the novel. It shows the **cosmopolitan culture of Mumbai** and everyday social struggles. The novel explores the complex intersections of literature, culture, and society through the lives of Ravan (a Hindu) and Eddie (a Catholic) boy growing up in the chawls of Mumbai. The narrative blends humor, realism, and social critique to depict the vibrant yet conflict-ridden urban life of post-independence India. The novel serves as a realistic portrayal of lower-middle-class life in Mumbai. Through the everyday struggles of chawl residents, poverty, overcrowding and limited opportunities. Nagarkar highlights the socio-economic conditions shaping individual destinies. Literature becomes a tool to document and critique these lived realities. Through cultural plurality, Nagarkar shows the lives of Ravan and Eddie. They belong to different religious communities and their interactions reveal the tensions and coexistence between Hindu and Catholic cultures. Festivals, rituals and beliefs are portrayed in detail, showing how culture shapes identity while also creating divisions. The chawl functions as a microcosm of Indian society. It brings together people from diverse backgrounds, creating a shared yet contested social space. Nagarkar integrates elements of popular culture, especially the influence of the film industry. Both protagonists dream of success and recognition, reflecting the aspirations of urban youth. The relationship between Ravan and Eddie symbolizes both conflict and harmony. Despite religious and cultural differences, their shared experiences create a bond that transcends divisions. Nagarkar critiques rigid social norms, religious dogma, and societal expectations.

Cuckold

It is a historical novel centered on Maharana Pratap’s brother-in-law. The major themes of the novel are: power, politics, and kingship, gender and sexuality, conflict between personal desire and social duty etc. It represents **historical culture and political structures** while questioning traditional heroism. It reimagines the life of a Rajput prince, often identified as Bhoj Raj, the husband of the mystic poet Mirabai. The novel is set in medieval Mewar. It weaves together literature, culture and society by presenting a nuanced portrayal of political power, gender relations and spiritual devotion. It demonstrates how literature can reinterpret history by blending fact and fiction. Nagarkar reconstructs the socio-political landscape of medieval Rajasthan, offering insights into court politics, warfare and royal life. The novel is deeply rooted in the cultural and religious ethos of the Bhakti movement. Through the character of Mirabai, Nagarkar explores themes of divine love, devotion, and spiritual rebellion. Her rejection of marital and societal norms in favor of devotion to Lord Krishna highlights the tension between personal faith and cultural expectations. Gender dynamics is depicted through the protagonist Maharaj Kumar. His identity as a ‘cuckold’ reflects his emotional turmoil within a patriarchal society that values honor, masculinity and control over women. Mirabai’s defiance challenges these norms, exposing the constraints placed on women and the fragility of male ego. The novel delves into the psychological complexity of its protagonist, who struggles with love, jealousy and a sense of inadequacy. His internal conflict reflects broader societal pressures related to honor, duty and identity. Nagarkar presents a vivid picture of political intrigue and power struggles within the royal court. The novel reflects how societal structures are shaped by political ambitions, alliances, and conflicts. Through its portrayal of religion, gender and power, *Cuckold* critiques rigid social norms and cultural traditions. It questions the authority of patriarchal structures and highlights the transformative potential of individual belief and resistance.

God’s Little Soldier

The novel deals with religious extremism and comprises with several significant themes such as religious fundamentalism, violence and moral conflict and identity shaped by ideology. It examines the intersections of literature, culture and society through the lens of religious extremism, identity and globalization. The narrative follows the transformation of a young boy into a radicalized individual, offering a critical exploration of how cultural and social forces shape human consciousness. The novel reflects the realities of a globalized world marked by conflict, ideological divisions, and terrorism. Through its narrative, Nagarkar portrays how youths can be influenced by socio-political conditions and extremist ideologies. Through religious identity, Nagarkar explores how cultural and religious beliefs can lead to intolerance and violence. The protagonist’s journey highlights the dangers of absolutist thinking and the manipulation of faith for ideological purposes. The novel critically examines the processes through which individuals are indoctrinated. It shows how social environments, education and authority figures contribute to shaping

beliefs and actions. Nagarkar presents a powerful tension between human values and ideological commitments. The protagonist's internal struggles reveal the conflict between compassion and fanaticism, emphasizing the loss of individuality in the face of rigid doctrines. This novel moves across international contexts, reflecting the interconnectedness of the modern world. It shows how cultural interactions can both enrich societies and intensify conflicts when misinterpreted. The novel serves as a critique of fanaticism, dogmatism and the misuse of religion. It questions societal structures that enable extremism and urges readers to reflect on the importance of tolerance, empathy and critical thinking.

The Extras

It is a sequel to *Ravan and Eddie*. The major themes of the novel are: film industry and aspirations, illusion vs reality, social mobility and failure etc. It continues the story of its protagonists as they navigate adulthood in the dynamic and often unforgiving world of Mumbai. The novel offers a compelling exploration of literature, culture, and society by focusing on marginal lives within the glamour-driven film industry and urban space. The novel reflects the lived realities of strugglers in the film industry such as junior artists, background performers and dreamers who remain on the margins. Nagarkar uses literature as a means to document the invisible lives of these individuals, exposing socio-economic inequalities and the harshness of survival in a metropolitan city. The novel is deeply embedded in the culture of Bollywood. It reveals how cinema shapes aspirations, identities and lifestyles. The protagonists' dreams of becoming stars highlight the influence of mass culture while their struggles expose the gap between illusion and reality in the entertainment world. Nagarkar portrays Mumbai as a space of contradictions, opportunity and exploitation, hope and disillusionment. The novel examines class divisions, competition, and the precarious existence of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. It reflects how urban society often marginalizes individuals despite promising success. Ravan and Eddie's journey is marked by ambition and repeated setbacks. Their experiences reflect the broader struggle for identity and recognition in a competitive society. The novel highlights how societal expectations and economic pressures shape personal choices and self-worth. It continues to explore cultural diversity, especially through the protagonists' Hindu and Catholic backgrounds. Their evolving relationship reflects both continuity and change in cultural identities within an urban setting. It questions the values of a society that glorifies fame while ignoring the hardships of those who support it from the margins. The novel focuses on marginalized lives within urban and cinematic spaces. Nagarkar reveals how cultural industries shape aspirations while also exposing the socio-economic realities that define success and failure. The novel stands as a significant commentary on modern urban existence and the human cost of ambition.

'Rest in Peace' (2015)

This thought-provoking novel comprises with the major themes such as death, identity and human relationships. Nagarkar's dramatic work uses the stage as a medium to reflect on existential concerns and socio-cultural realities. He uses dialogue and dramatic situations to reflect societal attitudes toward death, memory and interpersonal relationships. The text becomes a mirror of human behavior within a cultural framework. It explores how different cultures perceive death and the rituals associated with it. Through its characters, Nagarkar presents the contrast between traditional beliefs and modern perspectives. He highlights how cultural practices shape responses to mortality. Complexity of human relationships such as family ties, emotional bonds, and social obligations are shown in the novel. Nagarkar examines how individuals negotiate these relationships within societal expectations in moments of death. Characters confront issues of meaning, purpose and legacy, reflecting the broader human condition. Nagarkar employs satire to critique societal hypocrisy and superficiality particularly in how people respond to death and grief. The novel exposes the gap between genuine emotion and socially performed behavior. Nagarkar uses dramatic techniques such as dialogue, pauses and characterization to create a powerful impact, emphasizing the performative nature of social roles. The novel serves as a cultural critique, questioning established norms and encouraging reflection on deeply rooted beliefs. It reveals how literature can engage with universal themes while remaining grounded in specific cultural contexts.

'Jasoda: A Novel' (2017)

Kiran Nagarkar's *Jasoda* is a significant dramatic work. It explores the intersections of literature, culture, and society through the lens of gender, power and identity. The novel reflects societal realities by dramatizing the life and struggles of its central character. Through the narrative, Nagarkar presents the conditions of women in a male-dominated society, using literature as a tool to represent marginalized voices and social injustices. It examines traditional cultural norms that define and restrict women's roles. *Jasoda*'s character embodies the tension between societal expectations and personal desires. Nagarkar highlights how culture often reinforces gender hierarchies and limits women's agency. The novel showcases the patriarchal power and male authority. Women are expected to conform to prescribed roles. The novel exposes the inequalities embedded in these structures and questions their legitimacy. *Jasoda*'s journey can be seen as a struggle for selfhood and autonomy. Her subtle or overt resistance reflects the broader quest for identity among individuals constrained by societal norms. Nagarkar explores how society imposes moral codes that regulate behavior for women. The novel reveals the double standards that exist within these moral frameworks. It emphasizes the gap between societal ideals and lived realities. Through its portrayal of gender oppression and social constraints, *Jasoda* serves as a critique of entrenched cultural practices. It encourages questioning of traditional norms and advocates for a more equitable social order.

'The Arsonist' (2019)

Kiran Nagarkar's *The Arsonist* is a powerful dramatic work that explores the major concerns such as violence, morality, identity and social responsibility. It uses the immediacy of performance to critically engage with

pressing socio-cultural issues. The novel reflects the darker dimensions of society, particularly the presence of violence, unrest and moral ambiguity. Nagarkar uses the narrative to highlight how destructive tendencies can emerge from social alienation and ideological conflicts, making literature a mirror of societal tensions. It examines how cultural beliefs and social conditioning can contribute to acts of violence. It suggests that individuals are often shaped by the environments they inhabit, where rigid ideologies and collective identities can lead to conflict and destruction. Nagarkar interrogates how society responds to acts of violence and whether it fosters accountability or perpetuates cycles of blame and denial. The characters grapple with internal struggles that reflect broader social issues. Their actions and motivations reveal the psychological impact of living in a society marked by tension and uncertainty. The novel emphasizes the fragile nature of human identity. It also explores the dynamics of power within society and highlights how authority, control and institutional structures influence behavior, often exacerbating conflict rather than resolving it. Through its portrayal of violence and moral dilemmas, the novel critiques societal norms and cultural practices that enable or justify destructive behavior.

‘Asides, Tirades, Meditations: Selected Essays’ (2024)

Nagarkar engages the readers with social, cultural and political realities. His writings are sharp, introspective and often provocative. It addresses the issues such as identity, nationalism and cultural change. It offers an explicit critique of cultural norms, questioning rigid traditions, dogmatism and ideological extremism. In *The Arsonist*, violence is dramatized as a social and psychological phenomenon, raising questions about accountability and ethical choices. Nagarkar’s works often delve into questions of personal and collective identity and examines how individuals navigate cultural expectations in a rapidly changing world. The characters struggle with identity, alienation and moral dilemmas. Nagarkar challenges complacency and exposes contradictions within cultural practices.

Major Findings

The major findings of this research are as follows.

1. It is observed that literature is the mirror and critique of society.
2. Nagarkar’s novels reflect socio-economic realities such as poverty, class disparity, and urban struggles, especially in Mumbai.
3. Characters struggle with personal, cultural, and social identities.
4. Nagarkar’s works reveal the constraints imposed by patriarchal structures.
5. The novels, particularly *Ravan and Eddie* and *The Extras*, demonstrate how cinema and popular culture shape aspirations and identities.
6. Nagarkar bridges past and present by combining historical narratives (*Cuckold*) with contemporary urban and global issues (*God’s Little Soldier*).
7. The novels critically engage with systems of political, religious and social power. They expose how ideology can shape behavior, sometimes leading to conflict, alienation, or even violence.
8. Nagarkar’s fiction demonstrates that literature is not merely artistic expression but also a powerful medium for social awareness and transformation.
9. His works encourage critical thinking and challenge readers to question cultural and societal structures.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that literature, culture and society are deeply interconnected and mutually constitutive. Nagarkar’s works reveal that literature is not merely a reflection of society but also an active agent of critique and transformation. His narratives capture the complexities of Indian life across different temporal and spatial contexts, from the historical landscape of medieval kingdoms to the vibrant yet challenging urban environment of Mumbai and further into the globalized world marked by ideological conflicts. Through these diverse settings, he illustrates how cultural values and social structures shape human experiences, identities and relationships. The study highlights Nagarkar’s deep engagement with questions of identity, power and aspiration. His characters often struggle to reconcile personal desires with societal expectations, reflecting broader concerns of alienation, marginalization and self-realization. Nagarkar’s innovative and hybrid use of language not only enhances the authenticity of his narratives but also challenges conventional literary forms, reinforcing the dynamic relationship between literature and culture. The study affirms that Kiran Nagarkar’s selected novels serve as powerful sites of cultural and social inquiry. His works encourage readers to engage critically with issues of culture, identity, and power and demonstrates the transformative potential of literature.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Nagarkar, Kiran. ‘Seven Sixes are Forty Three’. Trans. Shubha Slee. New Delhi: Katha Publication, 2003.
2. Ibid. ‘Cuckold’. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1997.
3. Ibid. ‘Ravan and Eddie’. New Delhi: Penguin, 1995
4. Ibid. ‘The Extras’. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012.
5. Bill Ashcroft & et.al. ‘The Empire Writes Back’. Routledge, 2002

6. Homi K. Bhabha. 'The Location of Culture'. Routledge, 1995
7. Aijaz Ahmad. 'In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures'. Verso, 1992
8. Frantz Fanon. 'Black Skin, White Masks'. Grove Press, 2008
9. Kumar, Jitendra. 'Kiran Nagarkar's Metro-Life Novels.' International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Studies, 2021
10. Gaikwad, Kamalakar. 'The Discourses of Traditional Hegemony and Power Dynamics through Kiran Nagarkar's *Cuckold*.' Crossroads Journal, 2025.

Voices of the Earth: Environmental Degradation and Urban Ecology in The White Tiger

Dr. Dipali Pandurang Malusare

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 19-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030222



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792335

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792335>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Asst. Prof., Dept. of English
M.S.Kakade College, Someshwarnagar,
Tal-Baramati, Pune -412306
SP Pune University, Pune (Maharashtra
State)

How to cite this article:

Malusare, D. P. (2026). Voices of the
Earth: Environmental Degradation and
Urban Ecology in The White Tiger.
International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research, 3(2(I)), 89–93.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Dipali Pandurang Malusare
Asst. Prof., Dept. of English
M.S.Kakade College, Someshwarnagar,
Tal-Baramati, Pune -412306
SP Pune University, Pune (Maharashtra
State)

Abstract

Environmental degradation and imbalance in urban ecology are major issues of the twenty-first century. This is especially true in rapidly developing countries like India, where fast industrial growth and urban sprawl often leave sustainable planning behind. Literature has become a strong tool for critiquing these changes, highlighting the environmental impacts tied to social, economic, and political systems. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) depicts a powerful story about India's urban change, emphasizing the ecological costs of modernization, capitalism, and growing social inequality. The protagonist of the novel, Balram Halwai depicts pollution, overcrowding, and decaying infrastructure, showing how urban areas can turn toxic, especially for the poor. Additionally, the study explores the commercialization of nature, where land, air, and resources are used for profit, often harming ecological balance and human health. The present study aims to analyze how *The White Tiger* portrays environmental damage and urban ecological imbalance, connecting these issues to social inequality and swift urbanization. The study examines through an eco-critical lens, focusing on how environmental harm relates to systems of power and class hierarchy. The study is valuable for educators and students by offering a clear overview of ecocritical approaches to literature. Ultimately, it highlights the link between environmental and social injustice, arguing that ecological decline in *The White Tiger* is not just a background detail but a central theme in critiquing modern urban India

Keywords: environmental, ecology, degradation, exploitation, ecocritical, pollution, urban.

Introduction

The rise of ecocriticism as a literary theory reflects growing concerns about environmental crises worldwide. Ecocriticism examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment, analyzing how texts represent ecological issues and human interactions with nature. In the context of Indian English literature, environmental concerns are often intertwined with themes of poverty, urbanization, and postcolonial development. *The White Tiger* (2008) provides a stark portrayal of contemporary India, divided between the "India of Light" and the "India of Darkness." While the novel is primarily read as a critique of class inequality and corruption, it also offers significant insights into environmental degradation and urban ecology. The study aims to critically analyze the portrayal of environmental degradation and urban ecological imbalance in *The White Tiger*, highlighting its connection to social inequality and rapid urbanization. The narrative exposes the environmental cost of rapid urbanization, particularly in cities like Delhi, where pollution, overcrowding, and resource exploitation are rampant. This study seeks to analyze how Adiga uses the urban landscape to reflect ecological imbalance and social injustice. It explores how environmental degradation is not merely a backdrop but an integral part of the narrative that shapes the characters' experiences and identities.

Ecocriticism and Urban Ecology: A Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism, as defined by Cheryll Glotfelty, is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty 1996). This theoretical approach encourages readers and scholars to examine how literary texts not only depict nature and environmental concerns but also shape human attitudes toward ecological issues. It seeks to uncover the ways in which cultural narratives reinforce or challenge environmental exploitation, thereby contributing to ecological awareness and ethical responsibility. Through ecocriticism, literature becomes a powerful medium for understanding the consequences of human actions on the natural world and for promoting sustainable thinking. Urban ecology, considered a significant branch of ecocriticism, extends this analysis into the context of cities. It focuses on the dynamic interaction between human populations and urban environments, treating cities as complex ecosystems where natural elements and human-made structures coexist. However, this coexistence is often marked by tension and imbalance. In rapidly developing nations, urban ecology is profoundly shaped by industrialization, population growth, and unplanned urban expansion. These factors lead to severe environmental degradation, including air and water pollution, poor waste management, and loss of green spaces. At the same time, such ecological issues are closely linked with social inequality, as marginalized communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards.

According to Lawrence Buell, environmental texts frequently emphasize the “interconnectedness of environmental and social systems” (Buell 22). This interconnectedness is vividly illustrated in *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, where environmental degradation is deeply intertwined with class divisions. The novel portrays how the urban poor are forced to inhabit polluted, overcrowded, and unsanitary spaces, lacking access to basic resources such as clean water and proper sanitation. In contrast, the wealthy classes thrive within systems that exploit both human labour and natural resources, often remaining insulated from the environmental consequences of their actions. Thus, the narrative highlights how ecological imbalance is not merely an environmental issue but also a social and economic one, reinforcing the idea that environmental degradation and social injustice are mutually constitutive realities.

Representation of Environmental Degradation

One of the most striking aspects of *The White Tiger* is its vivid depiction of environmental degradation. The novel portrays cities as polluted, chaotic spaces where the natural environment is almost entirely absent. Delhi, the primary setting of the novel, is described as a city suffocated by pollution. The air is thick with smoke from vehicles, factories, and construction activities. Balram Halwai, the protagonist, frequently comments on the dirt, garbage, and filth that dominate urban life. These descriptions highlight the environmental consequences of unchecked urban growth.

The Ganges River, traditionally considered sacred in Indian culture, is depicted as heavily polluted. Balram describes it as filled with sewage and industrial waste, symbolizing the loss of ecological purity. For the protagonist, Balram Halwai, the river Ganges is no longer a sacred site of spiritual renewal but a symbol of “suffocation” and “black mud” that swallows the aspirations of those living on its banks (Adiga 12). This degradation reflects a broader cultural shift, where economic development takes precedence over environmental preservation.

The wealthy elite inhabit sanitized, air-conditioned bubbles in Gurgaon—symbolizing the “Light”—the subaltern population is relegated to the “Darkness” of the Ganges belt or the squalid slums of the city. In these spaces, the poor are forced to live in “polluted, unsanitary conditions” that are not merely byproducts of poverty but are active tools of systemic oppression (Adiga 15). Balram says, “I came to Dhanbad after my father’s death. He had been ill for some time, but there is no hospital in Laxmangarh, although there are three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections. When father began spitting blood that morning, Kishan and I took him by boat across the river. We kept washing his mouth with water from the river, but the water was so polluted that it made him spit more blood (Adiga 28). As scholars note, the novel “presents a grim picture of environmental decay as an inevitable consequence of modernization” (Mukherjee 2012). The degradation of natural resources is shown as both a physical and moral crisis, affecting not only the environment but also human values.

Urban Space as an Ecological Crisis

Urban space in *The White Tiger* functions as a site of ecological crisis, where the rapid pace of industrialization and urbanization produces environmental imbalance and systemic exploitation. The city is not merely a backdrop but operates as a complex ecological system marked by overcrowding, pollution, and a stark absence of natural elements such as greenery. Aravind Adiga portrays metropolitan spaces like Delhi as suffocating environments where toxic air, congested roads, and unhygienic living conditions dominate everyday life, reflecting the destructive consequences of unchecked economic growth.

The novel further develops this ecological critique through the symbolic dichotomy of the “Light” and the “Darkness.” These categories extend beyond socio-economic divisions to encompass environmental disparities. The “India of Light,” occupied by the affluent class, benefits from cleaner surroundings, better infrastructure, and access to resources that ensure a relatively healthy environment. In contrast, the “India of Darkness,” inhabited by the poor, is characterized by filth, open sewage, and a lack of sanitation facilities, revealing how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities (Adiga 65). Balram’s journey from the rural village of Laxmangarh to the urban sprawl of Delhi illustrates the ecological transformation associated with modernization. While Laxmangarh represents a traditional environment that, despite its poverty, maintains a closer connection to nature, the city emerges as a chaotic and degraded ecosystem shaped by capitalist expansion. The transition highlights how urbanization disrupts ecological balance and replaces organic living conditions with artificial, polluted landscapes.

From an ecocritical perspective, the novel exposes how environmental resources such as clean air, potable water, and livable space are unevenly distributed across social classes. Access to these essential resources becomes a marker of privilege, reinforcing existing hierarchies. This unequal distribution underscores the intrinsic link between environmental injustice and social inequality, suggesting that ecological crises are not merely natural phenomena but are deeply rooted in structures of power and economic disparity (Adiga 102).

Pollution and the Commodification of Nature

Pollution operates as a central motif in *The White Tiger*, symbolizing not only environmental degradation but also the moral decay embedded within modern urban life. Aravind Adiga presents the city—particularly Delhi—as a landscape overwhelmed by garbage, sewage, and persistent smog, creating an atmosphere that is both physically and ethically contaminated. These recurring images of waste and toxicity serve as metaphors for a society driven by greed and corruption, where ecological neglect mirrors the erosion of human values.

The Marxian notions of alienation of labour and the alienation of nature, both, were grounded in the understanding of the politico-economic thrust in a capitalist society (Foster 73–74). The novel further critiques the commodification of nature, depicting it as a resource to be exploited for economic gain rather than preserved for ecological balance. Land is continuously appropriated for construction projects, rivers are reduced to channels for industrial and domestic

waste, and animals are utilized as instruments of labor without ethical consideration. This utilitarian view of nature reflects a broader capitalist ideology that prioritizes profit and development over sustainability and environmental responsibility. Such representations align with ecocritical concerns about how capitalist systems transform natural elements into commodities, stripping them of intrinsic value.

Balram's role as a chauffeur offers a ground-level perspective on the environmental realities of urban existence. As he navigates the congested streets filled with incessant honking and toxic vehicular emissions, the reader is exposed to the everyday experience of pollution in the city. Balram does not allow his sir out of the car; he says, "Cars, scooters, motorbikes, autorickshaws, black taxis, jostling for space on the road." The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces—each time you stop at a red light, you see a row of men with black glasses and masks on their faces, as if the whole city were out on a bank heist that morning. (Adiga 77).

The car, in this context, emerges as a powerful symbol—it signifies upward mobility, wealth, and modern progress for the elite, yet simultaneously contributes to environmental degradation and the worsening of air quality. Thus, it embodies the paradox of development, where technological advancement coexists with ecological harm.

The environmental conditions depicted in the novel can be further understood through Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," which refers to the gradual and often invisible forms of environmental harm that disproportionately impact marginalized populations. In his work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Nixon argues that such violence unfolds over time, making it less visible but no less destructive (Nixon 2). In *The White Tiger*, this slow violence is evident in the living conditions of the underprivileged, which are continuously exposed to polluted air, contaminated water, and unsanitary environments. Unlike the wealthy, who can insulate themselves from these hazards, the poor are left to endure the cumulative effects of environmental neglect. This highlights the intersection of ecological crisis and social inequality, emphasizing that environmental degradation is not experienced equally but is deeply shaped by class divisions.

Rural vs. Urban Ecology

The contrast between rural and urban environments forms a crucial component of the ecological critique in *The White Tiger*. Aravind Adiga presents the village of Laxmangarh as a space deeply entrenched in poverty, caste hierarchy, and feudal oppression, yet it maintains a residual connection to the natural environment. The presence of rivers, agricultural land, and open spaces suggests a closer, albeit fragile, relationship between human life and nature. However, this connection is not romanticized; the rural ecosystem itself is shaped by neglect, lack of resources, and exploitative social structures that prevent sustainable interaction with the environment. Thus, the village reflects an imperfect ecological balance where both nature and human life are subject to systemic deprivation.

In stark contrast, the urban environment—particularly the city of Delhi—represents a decisive rupture from this natural connection. The city is depicted as artificial, mechanized, and overwhelmingly dominated by human intervention. Natural elements are either entirely absent or exist in degraded forms, such as polluted rivers, smog-filled air, and concretized landscapes. This transformation underscores a profound alienation of individuals from the natural world, as urban life becomes increasingly detached from ecological rhythms and sustainability. The city, therefore, emerges as a space where environmental concerns are subordinated to industrial growth and material advancement.

This rural-urban dichotomy ultimately highlights the ecological consequences of modernization and economic development. The movement from Laxmangarh to Delhi, as experienced by Balram, is not a progression toward a better or more sustainable life but rather a shift from one form of exploitation to another. While rural areas suffer from feudal and economic oppression, urban spaces intensify this exploitation through environmental degradation and capitalist excess. The ecological crisis becomes more visible and severe in the city, where pollution, overcrowding, and resource inequality dominate daily existence. In this sense, the novel critiques the notion of modernization as progress, revealing instead how it deepens both social and environmental inequalities.

Environmental Injustice and Class Inequality

According to Bullard, environmental justice is the principle that "all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations." (Bullard 495). One of the central arguments of *The White Tiger* is that environmental degradation is deeply intertwined with class inequality, revealing how ecological crises are unevenly distributed across social hierarchies. Aravind Adiga illustrates that the poor are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards, often residing in areas characterized by severe pollution, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to essential resources such as clean water and air. These conditions are not accidental but are structurally produced, reflecting broader systems of economic and social marginalization. Thus, environmental degradation in the novel is not merely a physical phenomenon but also a manifestation of systemic inequality.

Balram's first-person narrative provides a compelling account of how environmental injustice operates in everyday life. As he moves through different social spaces, he becomes acutely aware of the stark environmental contrasts between the wealthy and the poor. The elite inhabit cleaner, well-maintained environments, insulated from the worst effects of pollution, while the underprivileged are forced to endure toxic surroundings. When Balram shifts to Delhi, he finds his room uncomfortable to live in. Balram explains, "I went to the room." I swept the floor, tied the mosquito net to four nails on the wall, and went to sleep. In the middle of the night, I understood why the mosquito net had been left there. Noises woke me up. The wall was covered with cockroaches, which had come to feed on the minerals or the limestone in the plaster; their chewing made a continuous noise, and their antennae trembled from every spot on the

wall. Some of the cockroaches landed on top of the net; from inside, I could see their dark bodies against its white weave. I folded in the fiber of the net and crushed one of them. The other roaches took no notice of this; they kept landing on the net—and getting crushed. Maybe everyone who lives in the city gets to be slow and stupid like this, I thought, and smiled and went to sleep (Adiga 76).

This disparity highlights how the wealthy not only exploit natural resources for their benefit but also rely on the labour of the poor to sustain their lifestyles. In doing so, they create a cycle of exploitation that reinforces both social and environmental inequality. The environmental conditions in which individuals live thus become a visible marker of their social status, reflecting the intersection of ecology and class.

From an ecocritical perspective, such representations underscore the ethical dimensions of environmental issues. Scholars like Cheryll Glotfelty emphasize that literature plays a crucial role in exposing the relationship between human culture and the physical environment, particularly in contexts of inequality. In this light, *The White Tiger* critiques a socio-economic system that prioritizes rapid economic growth and material success over environmental sustainability and social justice. The novel suggests that development, when driven solely by profit, leads to both ecological destruction and human exploitation.

Ultimately, the text argues that genuine progress cannot be achieved without addressing these interconnected issues of environmental degradation and social inequality. By linking ecological concerns with questions of class and ethics, Adiga presents a powerful critique of modern capitalism, urging readers to reconsider the cost of development and the necessity of a more equitable and sustainable future.

Symbolism and Narrative Technique

Pollution operates as a central motif in *The White Tiger*, symbolizing not only environmental degradation but also the moral decay embedded within modern urban life. Aravind Adiga presents the city—particularly Delhi—as a landscape overwhelmed by garbage, sewage, and persistent smog, creating an atmosphere that is both physically and ethically contaminated. Balram describes, Delhi: The rich of Delhi, to survive the winter, keep electrical heaters, or gas heaters, or even burn logs of wood in their fireplaces. When the homeless or servants like night watchmen and drivers who are forced to spend time outside in winter, want to keep warm, they burn whatever they find on the ground. One of the best things to put in the fire is cellophane, the kind used to wrap fruits, vegetables, and business books in: inside the flame, it changes its nature and melts into a clear fuel. The only problem is that while burning, it gives off a white smoke (Adiga 92).

These recurring images of waste and toxicity serve as metaphors for a society driven by greed and corruption, where ecological neglect mirrors the erosion of human values. The novel further critiques the commodification of nature, depicting it as a resource to be exploited for economic gain rather than preserved for ecological balance. Land is continuously appropriated for construction projects, rivers are reduced to channels for industrial and domestic waste, and animals are utilized as instruments of labour without ethical consideration. In Delhi there is no any place for walking. Balram states; The rich of Delhi had built this part of Gurgaon with no parks, lawns, or playgrounds—it was just buildings, shopping malls, hotels, and more buildings. There was a pavement outside, but that was for the poor to live on. So if you wanted to do some "walking," it had to be done around the concrete compound of your own building (Adiga 133).

This utilitarian view of nature reflects a broader capitalist ideology that prioritizes profit and development over sustainability and environmental responsibility. Such representations align with ecocritical concerns about how capitalist systems transform natural elements into commodities, stripping them of intrinsic value.

Balram's role as a chauffeur offers a ground-level perspective on the environmental realities of urban existence. As he navigates the congested streets filled with incessant honking and toxic vehicular emissions, the reader is exposed to the everyday experience of pollution in the city. The car, in this context, emerges as a powerful symbol—it signifies upward mobility, wealth, and modern progress for the elite, yet simultaneously contributes to environmental degradation and the worsening of air quality. Thus, it embodies the paradox of development, where technological advancement coexists with ecological harm.

The environmental conditions depicted in the novel can be further understood through Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," which refers to the gradual and often invisible forms of environmental harm that disproportionately impact marginalized populations. Nixon's work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, describes that such violence unfolds over time, making it less visible but no less destructive (Nixon 2). The slow violence in *The White Tiger* is evident in the living conditions of the underprivileged, which are continuously exposed to polluted air, contaminated water, and unsanitary environments. Unlike the wealthy, which can insulate themselves from these hazards, the poor are left to endure the cumulative effects of environmental neglect. This highlights the intersection of ecological crisis and social inequality, emphasizing that environmental degradation is not experienced equally but is deeply shaped by class divisions.

Conclusion

The White Tiger (2008) offers a powerful critique of environmental degradation and urban ecology in contemporary India. Through its portrayal of polluted cities, commodified nature, and ecological imbalance, the novel highlights the environmental cost of modernization and economic growth.

The analysis demonstrates that environmental degradation in the novel is deeply intertwined with social inequality. The urban environment becomes a site of both ecological and human exploitation, reflecting the broader dynamics of power and privilege.

By examining these themes through an ecocritical lens, this paper underscores the importance of literature in raising environmental awareness. *The White Tiger* not only exposes the realities of environmental degradation but also challenges readers to reconsider the relationship between development, ecology, and justice.

Ultimately, the novel gives voice to the “earth” by revealing how environmental issues shape human lives and societal structures. It calls for a more sustainable and equitable approach to development, emphasizing the need to balance economic progress with ecological preservation.

Furthermore, this study holds pedagogical value by providing educators and students with a comprehensive overview of ecocritical approaches to literature. By engaging with diverse literary texts and critical perspectives, students can develop a nuanced understanding of environmental issues while honing their analytical and interpretive skills. This interdisciplinary approach fosters critical thinking and encourages interdisciplinary dialogue across academic disciplines.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Adiga , Aravind . *The White Tiger*. HarperCollins, 2008.
2. Buell , Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
3. Bullard , Robert D., editor. *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. South End Press, 1993.
4. Foster ,John Bellamy. *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. Monthly Review Press, 2000.
5. Glotfelty, Cheryll editor. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
6. Mukherjee , Upamanyu Pablo. *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
7. Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

A Study of Politics, Power, and Resistance in Modern Indian Drama in English Translation

Santosh Shivaji Shelke

Submitted: 15-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030223



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792453

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792453>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Asst. Prof., School of Liberal Arts and
Social Sciences
JSPM University Pune
Email: shelke600@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Shelke, S. S. (2026). A Study of Politics, Power, and Resistance in Modern Indian Drama in English Translation. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 94–96..

Address for correspondence:

Santosh Shivaji Shelke
Asst. Prof., School of Liberal Arts and
Social Sciences
JSPM University Pune
Email: shelke600@gmail.com

Abstract

Contemporary Indian drama has always been a socio-political critique. It has been intensively addressing power dynamics and different ways of oppression exploitation prevalent in India. This paper attempts to investigate the role of theatre as one of the means of resistance to this power dynamics and oppression. For his purpose, researcher has selected three plays i.e. *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Tughlaq*, and *Evam Indrajit* by Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, and Badal Sircar respectively. The study critically analyses these Indian Plays in English translation and examines how these playwrights have dissected political power, systemic violence, and prevailing ideological structures. The researcher has used a theoretical framework based on ideas of power and discourse. A special reference is made to Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse. Finally, this paper asserts that contemporary Indian theatre goes beyond just representation of reality and functions as an active force of resistance. It doesn't show only how things really are in society, but it also shakes up systems of control. It makes people more aware of what they are doing.

Keywords: Indian drama, resistance, power, politics, society, theatre

Introduction

Theatre has always been an effective vehicle of social criticism. Modern Indian drama has become one of the ways to express dissent and question authority in power. It simultaneously presents conflict in our society, stands as a resistance to unethical practices, and highlights the complexities of socio-political existence in India. So, this is in total contrast to traditional classical Indian drama which upholds established hierarchies.

The times after India got independence was marked by many upheaval and major changes. It included some facts such as political idealism leading to disappointment resulting in social unrest in the end. Great playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, and Badal Sircar used these facts and scenarios in their plays to question the people in power. Their plays are considered different as they show reality in order to actively criticize the systems that shape it.

This paper argument to demonstrate that modern Indian theatre is a site of resistance which exposes mechanisms of power, challenges dominant ideologies, and gives voice to marginalized experiences of common people.

2. Theoretical Framework: Power, Discourse, and Resistance

The relation between theater and resistance can be easily understood through Michel Foucault's idea of power. Foucault says that "power is everywhere... because it comes from everywhere" (93). He argued that power is not just repressive, but it is also generative. It works through discourse. Power influences the construction of knowledge, identities, and social relationships.

Similarly, resistance is not much separate from power. Resistance resides within power structures only. Theatre is a place where this kind of resistance can be portrayed. Theatre shows and questions dominant discourses. It encourages people to think critically about how power sustains in the real world.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity explains the formation of identities and power structures through repetitive social actions and practices. Butler believes that social norms are maintained through performance and can be consequently disrupted by alternative enactments (Butler 179). Theatre being a performative medium can work for such subversion.

Contemporary Indian drama frequently involves itself as a political critique through its social commentary and formal experimentation. The plays by Tendulkar, Karnad, and Sircar prove how theatre can assist as a means of resistance against political authorities and social conformity of common people.

3. Theatre and Political Power

3.1 Power and Corruption in *Ghashiram Kotwal*

Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* directly criticizes political power. This play explores the corrupt nature and influence of power. The play is set in the 17th century Peshwa regime. It exposes the nexus which relates to authority and exploitation. Nana Phadnavis, the central figure in the play, exemplifies the people who manipulate the power for their own personal gratification.

He says: "Power is everything. Without power, one is nothing" (Tendulkar 52). This line indicates that any power, authority and government stoops to dominate and control. Ghashiram's rise to power is itself rooted in humiliation at the hand of power which results in his agenda for revenge. This act of revenge illustrates how oppressive systems breed themselves into new cruel structures. Ghashiram announces, "Now I am the Kotwal. I will show you what justice is!" (Tendulkar 60) His idea of justice ironically turns into a tool of violence and tyranny. In this way Vijay Tendulkar thus reveals the cyclical nature of power. Therefore, victim becomes perpetrator in the play.

Vijay Tendulkar's use of folk elements such as music, chorus and cultural spectacle augments the satirical character of the play. The chorus works as the collective voice of people who participate in and critique the system at the same time. It helps the playwright to highlight our society's involvement in sustaining corruption.

3.2 Idealism and Tyranny in Tughlaq

Girish Karnad in his famous play, *Tughlaq* explores the catastrophic trajectory of political idealism. The central character of the play, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, starts as a visionary ruler. He claims himself committed to justice, love, harmony and equality in his reign. He says, "I want to make every citizen of my state feel equal" (Karnad 33).

However, his desire for idealism and ideal state leads to paranoia and dictatorship. He is disillusioned in the end. He himself confesses this when he cries out loud, "I have been cruelly punished for being idealistic" (Karnad 72). This statement highlights the conflict between vision and reality. Tughlaq fails to reconcile his ideals with practical policies of governance. Which ultimately leads to chaos and confusion. He realizes this when he utters, "Words are not deeds" (Karnad 89) It reveals the gap between political speech and real action. Karnad has used historical data and narrative as a metaphor to present contemporary political disappointment. With the help of Tughlaq's character, Karnad critiques the dangers involved in centralized power structures. He also foregrounds the vulnerability of political ideals.

4. Theatre and Social Resistance

4.1 Existential Resistance in Evam Indrajit

Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* moves the focus from obvious political critique to existentialist and social resistance. The cyclical nature of the lives of Amal, Vimal, and Kamal symbolize the monotonous of middle-class existence: "Amal, Vimal, Kamal... and then again Amal, Vimal, Kamal" (Sircar 112). This repetitive life structure mirrors the deficiency of individuality and purpose. The character of Indrajit, however, stands for resistance to this middle-class boring life. He questions "Is this all there is to life?" (Sircar 118)

Thus, he challenges the contentment of routine life. The narrator says, "I cannot go on writing the same story again and again" (Sircar 120). Here, Badal Sircar introduces a metafictional dimension of the play. This highlights the limitations of traditional narrative patterns. His experiments with narrative techniques disrupt traditional theatrical forms. This makes the resistance both thematic and structural.

4.2 Theatre as People's Movement

Badal Sircar's plays belong to "Third Theatre". It is a concept developed by Badal Sircar himself. Through this theory of drama, he further highlights the major role of theatre as a tool of resistance. He rejected the idea of commercial theatre. On the contrary, he embraced minimalism. He created a drama that is accessible and participatory for the audience. Thus, he democratized theatre and transformed it into a collective space. This space is meant for social critique and engagement. His play, *Evam Indrajit* closely aligns with Bertold Brecht's theory and principles of drama. Brecht emphasized a play's fragmented structure and repetitive dialogues. He argued that this creates a distancing effect between the stage and the audience. Consequently, it prevents passive consumption and encourages critical reflection on behalf of the audience. Accordingly, the audience is not merely entertained but forced to question the futility of modern life and existence.

From Judith Butler's perspective the characters' repetitive actions and dialogues in *Evam Indrajit* explain how our social identities are developed through our performance. But Indrajit refuses to conform to these repetitive and boring patterns of modern life. So, we can say that he disrupts the traditional performative norms of society.

Thus, modern Indian theatre comes out as a dynamic space. It is a space where power is simultaneously enacted and resisted. It just doesn't expose dominant power structures but also shows the opportunities for alternative ways of life.

5. Theatre, Language, Form, Society and Resistance

Indian drama has expressed its resistance through Language and form as well. For example, the use of local languages, music, dance, folk elements and experiments with stage structure challenges model of Western drama.

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Vijay Tendulkar has used folk music and chorus to make funny comments on how power works. The use of poetic language is used by Girish Karnad to show the difference between ideal and poetic political discourse and violent action in *Tughlaq*. Badal Sircar uses simple style and language in *Evam Indrajit* rejecting the embellished use of language. He does so to show the harsh realities of life. All these experiments with the theatre by these playwrights are meant to decolonize theater and show off indigenous aesthetics.

Modern Indian theatre seriously addresses societal issues. These include the issues of caste, class, gender, and political tyranny. It makes these problems more visible to raise awareness and encourage people to think and act wisely. The plays discussed in this paper simultaneously show how power works in a society and how it can be challenged and fought against. Theatre thus prompts audiences to question conventional norms of their society.

The plays by Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, and Badal Sircar explain how modern Indian theatre simultaneously functions within and against the traditional structures of power. As per Foucault's theory of discourse and power, their plays represent the all-pervasive nature of power. These plays demonstrate that power is rooted in

established institutions, languages, and social practices. However, their plays validate the different ways through which theatre can function as a resistance to established structures of power. Vijay Tendulkar's plays focus on political corruption and social violence. Girish Karnad discovers the complexities of power and idealism in his plays. And Sircar highlights existential resistance in his play. So, we can say that the resistance that these playwrights demonstrate is multifaceted. It encompasses all political, social, and aesthetic dimensions of drama.

6. Conclusion

Modern Indian drama in English translation ascends as a powerful tool of resistance to established manipulative norms, traditions and structures of power. It dramatizes socio-political realities of India and exposes mechanisms of oppression through misuse of power. These plays present experiences of broken and marginalized people. Consequently, we can observe that Modern Indian drama in English translation is nurturing critical perception and social awareness among the people of India.

In the end, we can say that the plays by Tendulkar, Karnad, and Sircar prove that theatre is not meant for just entertainment, but it can also bring transformation into society. In today's complex world, the role of theatre as a space for resistance is both relevant and necessary.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Works Cited

1. Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Edited by John Willett, Hill and Wang, 1964.
2. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990
3. Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. Vintage, 1990.
4. Karnad, Girish. *Tughlaq*. Oxford UP, 2003.
5. Sircar, Badal. *Evam Indrajit*. In *Three Modern Indian Plays*, Oxford UP, 2003.
6. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal*. In *Collected Plays in Translation*, Oxford UP, 2003

Narrating a Kaleidoscopic World through a Child's Eyes in *The Adventures of Dennis* by Viktor Dragunsky

Gourangi G. Sawant¹ Dr. Charusheela Patil²

Submitted: 15-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030224



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792552

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792552>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Abeda Inamdar Senior College Savitribai Phule Pune University

²Associate Professor, Department of English School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, JSPM University, Pune

Email ID: gouri85office@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Sawant, G. G., & Patil, C. (2026). Narrating a Kaleidoscopic World through a Child's Eyes in *The Adventures of Dennis* by Viktor Dragunsky. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 97–101..

Address for correspondence:

Gourangi G. Sawant, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Abeda Inamdar Senior College, Savitribai Phule Pune University
Email ID: gouri85office@gmail.com

Abstract:

Viktor Dragunsky's *The Adventures of Dennis* (originally *Deniskiny Rasskazy* in Russian) presents a rich portrayal of childhood through a series of episodic narratives centred on Dennis, a lively and perceptive young boy. Rather than merely recounting events, the stories foreground how a child experiences and interprets the world, where ordinary situations are transformed through imagination, emotional immediacy, and partial understanding. Situated within the socio-cultural milieu of mid-twentieth-century Soviet Russian life, the collection interweaves themes of friendship, family relationships, and growing self-awareness. What distinguishes Dragunsky's narrative is its focus on the child's consciousness—Dennis's spontaneous reactions, creative interpretations, and frequent misreadings of adult behaviour generate both humour and subtle insight. These moments reveal not only the innocence of childhood but also its complexity as a mode of perception. The child's experiential world is marked by a striking multiplicity of emotions and perceptions, where feelings shift rapidly and often unpredictably, revealing a mind that is both sensitive and intensely individual. Guided largely by personal impulses rather than fixed logic, the child constructs a self-contained world in which thoughts, emotions, and experiences are woven into unique patterns of joy and sorrow. This inner landscape is characterized by a complex yet unconventional mode of thinking—where seemingly complex ideas evoke fascination. It is within this constantly shifting interplay of emotion, imagination, and interpretation that the child's perspective assumes a kaleidoscopic form, where reality is not stable or singular but continuously refracted into diverse, vibrant, and ever-changing patterns of meaning.

The present paper examines the child's kaleidoscopic perception of the world with reference to *The Adventures of Dennis*.

Keywords: Childhood, Children's Literature, Child Perspective, Child Psychology, Victor Dragunsky, Dennis, Spontaneity, Innocence, Child's Logic

Introduction:

Viktor Dragunsky's *The Adventures of Dennis* (originally *Deniskiny Rasskazy*, translated into English by Faina Glagoleva) occupies a significant place in children's literature as a vivid and enduring portrayal of childhood. First published in 1959, the collection presents a series of episodic narratives centred on Dennis, an eight-year-old Russian schoolboy, whose everyday experiences unfold within the socio-cultural milieu of mid-twentieth-century Soviet life. Over the decades, these stories have gained wide readership, been translated into multiple languages, and adapted across visual media, thereby securing their status as a classic of Soviet children's literature.

What distinguishes Dragunsky's work is not merely its depiction of childhood events, but its immersion into the perceptual and emotional world of the child. Through first-person narration, the text captures the immediacy, spontaneity, and imaginative vitality that shape a child's engagement with reality. Dennis's responses to ordinary situations, marked by impulsiveness, curiosity, and frequent misinterpretations that transform everyday occurrences into moments of humour as well as subtle insight.

The collection derives its distinctiveness from its capacity to resonate across age groups. While it offers young readers a space of identification and familiarity, it simultaneously invites adult readers to revisit and re-evaluate their own childhood experiences. The narratives do not rely on overt moral instruction; instead, values emerge organically through the unfolding of situations, allowing both the characters and the readers to engage with them in an implicit and reflective manner. This subtle narrative strategy preserves the authenticity and spontaneity of childhood, presenting it not as a didactic construct but as a lived, dynamic experience. Central to this study is the idea that childhood, as represented in *The Adventures of Dennis*, operates through a kaleidoscopic perspective. The child's world is not linear or fixed; rather, it is composed of shifting emotional states, imaginative reinterpretations, and fragmented yet vibrant perceptions. Dennis inhabits a self-contained experiential realm where joy, confusion, wonder, and misunderstanding coexist and continuously reshape his understanding of reality. The present paper, therefore, examines how Dragunsky constructs this kaleidoscopic vision of childhood through Dennis's narrative voice, focusing on the ways in which the child perceives, interprets, and emotionally negotiates the world around him.

Discussion:

Childhood perception is often marked by a degree of spontaneity and immediacy that distinguishes it significantly from adult modes of understanding. Unlike adults, whose responses are frequently mediated by social conditioning, learned norms, and rational filtering, the child engages with the world in a more direct and unstructured manner. This engagement is characterised by rapid emotional shifts, uninhibited curiosity, and an openness to experience that allows even the most ordinary events to acquire heightened significance. The child does not merely observe reality but actively reinterprets it through imagination, intuition, and personal logic, thereby transforming it into a dynamic field of meaning. Such a mode of perception resists stability and closure, instead revealing itself as fluid, responsive, and constantly evolving.

From a psychological perspective, this distinctive quality of childhood perception may be understood in the light of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, particularly the preoperational stage, where thought processes are intuitive rather than strictly logical. At this stage, the child's thinking is shaped by egocentrism, imaginative play, and a tendency to attribute personal meaning to external reality. Rather than adhering to objective reasoning, the child constructs understanding through subjective experience, often blending fantasy with actuality. This results in a perceptual world that is richly textured yet inconsistently structured, where emotions, ideas, and interpretations intersect in unpredictable ways. It is precisely this interplay of immediacy, imagination, and partial understanding that lends itself to a kaleidoscopic configuration of experience, forming the basis for analysing the child's perspective in literary narratives.

The notion of a kaleidoscopic perspective becomes particularly relevant in understanding the child's mode of perception. A child's view of the world is not singular or fixed; rather, it is composed of multiple, shifting fragments of thought, myriad shades of emotions, and imagination that continuously rearrange themselves. Much like the changing patterns in a kaleidoscope, the child's responses to reality are dynamic, unpredictable, and richly varied. Contradictory feelings may coexist, and meanings are often reconfigured with each new experience. This fluid interplay of perception allows the child to construct a world that is vibrant, layered, and deeply personal, where reality is constantly refracted into new forms of understanding.

In this context, Dennis's perspective emerges as a representative instance of a child, whose experiences of the world are shaped by spontaneity, fluidity, and constant reinterpretation. His narration provides an entry point into understanding how childhood perception transforms ordinary events into dynamic and multifaceted experiences.

The distinction between the child's world and the adult world becomes particularly evident in the way Dennis articulates his likes and dislikes, which together construct a vivid kaleidoscopic map of his perception. In *The Adventures of Dennis*, Dennis's narration does not follow a linear or rational pattern; instead, it unfolds as a series of fragmented yet expressive impulses that reflect the spontaneity of childhood consciousness. His statements—"I like to play chess if I win," "I like to watch TV no matter what the program is about," and "I like to call people on the telephone" (p.7)—reveal a fluid movement between activities governed not by consistency but by immediate pleasure and curiosity. At the same time, his fascination with sensory experiences—such as 'standing behind a car when the motor's running and smelling the gasoline fumes' or 'enjoying the sound of his own footsteps echoing in the hall' demonstrates how the child's world is constructed through intense, embodied perception rather than abstract reasoning.

Equally significant are his abrupt shifts into dislike: "I hate going to the dentist," "I don't like when Aunt Rita and Mummy meet on the road and start talking," and "I hate boys and girls who speak in grown-up voices over the radio" (p.10). These sudden transitions from liking to disliking, without any need for logical justification, highlight the unstable and rapidly shifting emotional terrain of childhood.

Dragunsky skilfully portrays Dennis's heightened sensitivity to social situations, as seen in his discomfort when his father makes fun of him in front of Misha (p.43), revealing a child's acute awareness of dignity and self-image. At the same time, Dragunsky poignantly illustrates the child's longing for recognition and respect through Dennis's reaction—"Wasn't that nice? He'd called me a 'young man'..." (p.50). This moment reflects how deeply children internalise gestures of validation, often attaching profound emotional significance to seemingly minor interactions.

Dragunsky further effectively captures the uninhibited expression of children's preferences, which stand in contrast to the socially moderated choices of adults. Misha's elaborate enumeration—"I like buns, rolls, cakes and pies...bread, pastries, ginger bread...biscuits...meat pies... oatmeal cookies and vanilla wafers" (p. 105)—demonstrates how sensory pleasure, particularly related to food, occupies a central place in the child's world. The narrative subtly underscores this tendency when Misha, almost as an afterthought, adds, "I also like kittens. And Grandma!", thereby revealing the spontaneous and unstructured hierarchy of a child's likes. Dragunsky vividly represents this immediacy of response, where emotional attachments and material pleasures coexist without any imposed order. Similarly, Dennis's fondness for simple activities such as fishing or spending time in summer cottages is juxtaposed with his intense dislikes—whether it is the 'icky-sweet' perfume that chokes him, the milk soup with skin that 'makes me gag' (p.122). A revealing instance of the child perspective appears in Dennis's irritation at repetitive questioning by adults: "Whenever she sees me, she always asks me what I want to be when I grow up and who my girlfriend is. Well, I don't have one! I've told her so about five times, but she keeps asking me the same old stupid questions." (p.118). Dragunsky effectively captures the child's impatience with the repetitive and intrusive questions posed by adults. Through such instances, he deftly brings out the intensity and authenticity of childhood reactions, unmediated by social restraint.

The child's ability to discover moments of intense joy within ordinary, often overlooked experiences forms a crucial dimension of the kaleidoscopic perspective in *The Adventures of Dennis*. Similarly, small gestures assume profound significance: a simple bolt received from a departing man or the memory of a coin gifted by a friend become enduring sources of emotional warmth and connection. In the scene where Dennis watches Misha eating a sausage—"the skin cracked loudly... hot, delicious juice ran out of it" (p.17) Dragunsky skilfully portrays Dennis, who in turn, experiences a kind of kinaesthetic and empathetic response, where merely observing the act of eating evokes hunger within him. This moment reflects how children often internalize and mirror the experiences of others, deriving pleasure not only from direct participation but also through imaginative and bodily identification.

This capacity to find joy extends into the child's engagement with nature and everyday activities. Experiences such as rowing, making campfires, spotting animals, or eating berries—"Nothing had ever tasted as good... I'd never been so happy" (p.139)—are imbued with an intensity that far exceeds their apparent simplicity. Dragunsky poignantly illustrates how such moments, though fleeting, form vibrant fragments of the child's experiential world. Even routine activities like fishing or spending time in summer cottages—"Daddy was whittling a willow stick... I was waxing the bowstring" (p.127)—acquire a sense of completeness and contentment. At the same time, the underlying presence of modest living conditions and everyday struggles subtly gestures toward the realities of the child's environment, thereby creating a delicate interplay of joy and quiet tragedy. Through this interplay, Dragunsky presents childhood as a dynamic field of experience, where even the smallest moments are capable of generating profound happiness.

Dragunsky deftly foregrounds how Dennis negotiates his position within the adult world through different moments. For instance, while standing on stage, Dennis observes, "It was much more interesting to be standing on the stage, looking out at them than to be sitting in the audience" (p.60), revealing how perspective itself alters experience—what is ordinary for adults becomes novel and exciting when viewed through the child's shifting vantage point. This aligns with Jean Piaget's notion of egocentric perception, where the child prioritizes personal experience over conventional viewpoints. Dragunsky further effectively illustrates the tension between child and adult frameworks through Dennis's irritation at socially conditioned questioning—whether it is being asked to choose between "Mummy or Daddy" or responding to repetitive, silly queries like "What's your name?", "what's your age?" etc. Such moments expose how adult conversational norms, often taken for granted, appear intrusive and illogical to the child. Dennis's remark—"Wasn't it natural for me to be growing up?" (p.52)—subtly critiques these imposed expectations, revealing a consciousness that resists artificial structuring.

At the same time, Dragunsky masterfully captures the child's unique valuation of experience, where minor incidents acquire disproportionate significance. Acts such as helping with small tasks—"I took down a kettle of water... Lena showed the electricians the back stairs" (p.88)—are perceived as meaningful contributions, reflecting a sense of participation and accomplishment. Conversely, emotional responses can be dramatically amplified, as seen in Dennis's exaggerated despair when his mother pretends to invent a spyglass to keep watch on him—"...I could see there'd be nothing but black days ahead. Life was torture now, thanks to Mommy's invention... My happy carefree life was out of bounds" (p. 33)—which illustrates the intensity with which children experience disruption.

The narrative brings into focus how Dennis constructs understanding through unconventional yet internally coherent frameworks. For instance, his comparison of his father—"he was smaller than a horse... even smaller than the scrawniest cow" (p. 106) demonstrates a child's tendency to measure reality through familiar, tangible references, resulting in a perspective that is both logical and amusingly disproportionate. Similarly, the description of Efrosinya Petrovna as "a nice old lady who looked a little bit like a witch" (p.109) reflects the blending of reality with imaginative archetypes, where contrasting impressions coexist without contradiction.

Such instances reveal how children actively reinterpret situations rather than passively accept them. His reasoning about talking 'women figures' at the Spring Bazzars—"They have radios inside, that's what's doing the talking" (p.113)—points to an inventive logic that fills gaps in understanding with creative explanation. This mode of thinking aligns with the kaleidoscopic nature of perception, where fragments of knowledge, imagination, and observation are continuously rearranged into new patterns of meaning.

At moments, this perspective also acquires an unexpected depth of insight. Dennis's defence of the "Ancient Mariner" (p.121), where he justifies deception as a means of survival, reveals a moral reasoning that is situational rather than absolute. Maria Petrovna's tendency to entice Dennis with promises of outings and gifts, only to withdraw or alter them, reflects a form of casual adult negotiation that the child perceives as unfair and deceptive. What may appear to adults as harmless postponement or adjustment is experienced by Dennis as a breach of trust. Dennis's father attempts to rationalise Maria Petrovna's behaviour by drawing a parallel with the story of an Ancient Mariner, suggesting that circumstances may compel individuals to resort to falsehood. Rather than passively accepting the adult's attempt to generalise moral behaviour, Dennis actively reconstructs the situation through his own experiential logic. His protest—"He was not! He wasn't at all like her. He tricked them so's he wouldn't die of starvation, because he was sick and all alone in the world, but Maria Petrovna isn't sick, is she?" "No. She's quite healthy." (p. 121)—reveals a nuanced differentiation between necessity and casual deception. For Dennis, the Ancient Mariner's act of lying is justified by survival, whereas Maria Petrovna's broken promises appear unnecessary and therefore unjustifiable. This distinction demonstrates that the child's moral framework, though different from that of adults, is neither simplistic nor arbitrary; it is grounded in context, fairness, and emotional truth.

The child's imaginative "dreamland" in *The Adventures of Dennis* emerges as a space where reality is continuously expanded, reworked, and transcended through fantasy, desire, and playful speculation. The narrative

brings into focus how Dennis effortlessly constructs alternate worlds—whether imagining owning a dog or even “a baby elephant” for which he would “build a garage” (p.7)—revealing a boundless imaginative capacity unconstrained by practical limitations. Dennis’s dreams are not merely escapist but serve as a means of extending his experiential world beyond immediate reality.

At the same time, his “what if” chain of thoughts while trapped—imagining being locked under the bed indefinitely, evading punishment, and even worrying about his “matriculation certificate” (p.109)—illustrates how imagination can also amplify anxiety.

“How long would I have to lie there? I’d be lucky if it’d only be for an hour or so. What if it’d be till morning? And how would I get out in the morning? If I didn’t come home my parents would call the militia. They’d come with a dog. A German shepherd. But what if there weren’t any dogs in our precinct? What if the militia didn’t find me? What if Efrosinya Petrovna slept through the night and then went off for the day and locked me in again? Then what? Naturally, I’d have to eat some of the food in her cupboard. Then, when she returned, I’d have to hide under the bed again, because I’d eaten her food and she’d take me to court.I’d not only be grown after twenty years under the bed, I’d probably be overgrown.” (p.109)

This oscillation between playful fantasy and exaggerated fear reflects a kaleidoscopic mental landscape, where possibilities multiply and shift rapidly. Jean Piaget’s notion of intuitive and egocentric thinking is evident here, as Dennis builds elaborate scenarios grounded in personal logic rather than objective probability. Similarly, his heroic daydreams—flying kites into outer space or imagining himself as a sword-wielding saviour fighting enemies and meeting Fidel Castro demonstrate a fusion of imagination, identity formation, and moral aspiration. The imaginative “dreamland” of the child in *The Adventures of Dennis* unfolds as a dynamic space where desire, identity, and perception merge into vivid, shifting scenarios. The narrative brings into focus how Dennis constructs heroic and expansive identities through fantasy—imagining himself “slashing away at the Nazis,” defending others, and even standing beside Fidel Castro with his sword (p. 119). Such projections reflect a desire for agency and recognition, aligning with Sigmund Freud’s notion of fantasy as wish-fulfilment, where the child compensates for real-world limitations by envisioning power and control. Similarly, his imagined triumph over Lenny—where he commands apology and inspires fear reveals how children rehearse dominance and justice within imaginative frameworks, transforming everyday conflicts into grand narratives of victory.

At the same time, these fantasies are not limited to power but extend into sensory-rich and emotionally fulfilling experiences. Dennis’s vision of running barefoot in the grass, rowing a boat, and bonding with a dog (p.118), or his expansive journey into the “wide blue yonder” filled with celebration, music, and joy, illustrates an immersive engagement with possibility and wonder. These dreamscapes resonate with Donald Winnicott’s concept of a “transitional space,” where inner imagination and external reality overlap, allowing the child to creatively negotiate experience. The fluid movement between heroism, sensory delight, and emotional fulfillment underscores the kaleidoscopic nature of the child’s perspective, where desires, fears, and aspirations are continuously rearranged into new configurations. Dennis’s dreamland thus emerges not as escapism, but as a vital cognitive and emotional domain through which the child explores identity, power, and belonging.

These instances collectively suggest that the child’s dreamland is not detached from reality but deeply intertwined with it, functioning as a dynamic cognitive and emotional space. Within this space, desires, fears, and aspirations are continuously rearranged, producing a kaleidoscopic pattern of thought. Dennis’s perspective thus reflects a mind in motion—restless, inventive, and exploratory—where the boundaries between the real and the imagined remain fluid, enabling the child to negotiate both the possibilities and uncertainties of the world.

Through these varied instances, Dragunsky constructs a kaleidoscopic vision of childhood, where perception is continuously shifting across contexts—between joy and frustration, logic and confusion, self-importance and vulnerability. The child’s world thus emerges as a dynamic interplay of perspectives, where meaning is not stable but constantly rearranged in response to immediate experience, reinforcing the distinctiveness of childhood as a mode of perceiving and interpreting reality. Dragunsky’s perceptive engagement with childhood becomes evident in the nuanced rendering of a child’s emotional landscape, where narration moves beyond mere description to a deeper, attentive exploration of inner experience. In this context, Dolzhenko, Lyudmila Vasilievna (2001), in the dissertation *Rational and Emotions in Russian Literature of the 50s–80s, 20th Century*: N. N. Nosov, V. Yu. Dragunsky, A. G. Aleksin, V. P. Krapivin, emphasizes that “Declaring love for the child and attention to his inner world, Dragunsky found his own colours, his own themes, his own material in depicting his inner world.” These distinctive tonalities and thematic variations of childhood, as brought out in Dragunsky’s work, remain recognizable and relatable to readers across contexts.

Fantasy and imagination in *The Adventures of Dennis* function not merely as playful embellishments but as central modes through which the child interprets, reshapes, and extends reality. The narrative highlights a first-person consciousness that moves fluidly between the real and the imagined, revealing a mind that is constantly constructing alternative possibilities. Dennis’s speculation about the unknown man playing chess— “Maybe he was even Botvinnik... What if I won?” (p.96)—illustrates how imagination transforms an ordinary encounter into a space of aspiration, recognition, and self-projection. Such moments align with Jean Piaget’s notion of intuitive thought, where children freely assimilate reality into their existing cognitive frameworks, often blurring the boundaries between probability and possibility.

At the same time, the child’s fantasy operates as a form of wish-fulfilment and identity formation. Dennis’s transformation of a moving car into a “rocket-ship”, where he becomes “the first earthman to fly to outer space,”

reflects an imaginative expansion of agency, echoing Sigmund Freud's idea that fantasy enables the child to inhabit roles of power, achievement, and control. This imaginative elasticity is further evident when Dennis envisions rescuing others or altering outcomes—such as imagining that his presence might have saved the young soldiers. Here, fantasy becomes a means of negotiating emotional realities, including loss and helplessness, by reconfiguring them into scenarios of intervention and hope.

The shifting sequence of ambitions in *The Adventures of Dennis* offers a striking illustration of the kaleidoscopic nature of childhood imagination, where desires are constantly rearranged in response to immediate stimuli and partial knowledge. Dennis's rapid movement from wanting to be "an astronomer" to a ship captain, a metro station master, an explorer, and finally a boxer reflects not indecisiveness but a dynamic imaginative engagement with the world. Each profession is not understood in its entirety but is selectively constructed through vivid, appealing fragments—adventure, visibility, action, and excitement. The episode involving the explorer Alain Bombard further demonstrates how children employ their own internal logic to process information. Dennis's calculation that he might "just dissolve" if he lost too much weight is both humorous and revealing: it exemplifies a reasoning pattern that is imaginative yet coherent within the child's cognitive framework. Such instances highlight how fantasy and logic coexist rather than contradict each other in childhood thought. At the same time, these ambitions are shaped by exposure—such as the sudden desire to become a boxer after watching a championship—indicating how external stimuli are quickly absorbed and transformed into personal aspirations.

Taken together, these instances form a kaleidoscopic pattern of perception, where thoughts, emotions, and experiences do not cohere into a single, stable viewpoint but instead rearrange themselves into ever-changing configurations. Dennis's perspective thus exemplifies how a child perceives the world as a dynamic interplay of sensations, impulses, and imaginative reinterpretations, fundamentally different from the structured and regulated outlook of adults.

Conclusion:

The exploration of childhood in *The Adventures of Dennis* ultimately reveals a richly textured, kaleidoscopic mode of perception that resists simplification into linear or rational frameworks. Through the first-person narration of Dennis, Viktor Dragunsky constructs a dynamic experiential world where emotions, thoughts, and interpretations are in constant flux. The child's perspective, as examined across various instances, emerges not as fragmented or immature, but as an alternative and equally valid way of engaging with reality—one that privileges immediacy, sensory experience, and imaginative reconstruction.

The discussion has demonstrated how this kaleidoscopic vision manifests across multiple dimensions of childhood experience. Dennis's shifting emotions, spontaneous likes and dislikes, and heightened sensitivity to social interactions reveal an affective landscape that is fluid and rapidly transforming.

In conclusion, *The Adventures of Dennis* offers a profound representation of childhood as a kaleidoscopic interplay of perception, imagination, and experience. By foregrounding the child's voice, Dragunsky invites readers to reconsider the depth, authenticity, and creative vitality of childhood consciousness. The narrative thus not only captures the essence of being a child but also challenges adult readers to re-engage with a mode of perception that is at once fluid, imaginative, and deeply human.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Dragunsky Victor, *The Adventures of Dennis*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1981 (Translated from Russian into English by Fainna Glagoleva)
2. "Dragunsky Viktor Yuzefovich - Biography of the Writer, Personal Life, Photos, Portraits, Books." Culture.RF, www.culture.ru/persons/10015/viktor-dragunskii.
3. Dolzhenko, Lyudmila Vasilievna, Rational and emotional in Russian literature of the 50-80s of the twentieth century: N.N. Nosov, V. Yu. Dragunsky, AG Aleksin, VP Krapivin, 2001
4. MSEd, K. C. (2024, July 12). *What is sociocultural theory?* Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-sociocultural-theory-2795088>
5. Piaget, Jean. *The Child's Conception of the World*. Translated by Joan and Andrew Tomlinson, Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.
6. Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated by James Strachey, Basic Books, 2010.
7. Freud, Sigmund. *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*. 1908.
8. Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and Reality*. Routledge, 2005.

Literature, Culture, and Society: Emerging Trends in English Studies

Bharud Pandit Jamanrav¹ Dr. Kamalakhar Baburao Gaikwad²

Submitted: 15- Mar -2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030225



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0

International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.20792675

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792675>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Sanjivani KBP Polytechnic Kopergaon, Dist. Ahmednagar

Email: pbharud@gmail.com

²Head and Assistant Professor in English

Hiray Arts, Science & Commerce College, Nampur, Tal-Baglan,
Dist-Nashik.

E-mail: gaikwadkamalakhar@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Jamanrav, B. P., & Gaikwad, K. B. (2026). Literature, Culture, and Society: Emerging Trends in English Studies. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 102–104..

Address for correspondence:

Bharud Pandit Jamanrav
Sanjivani KBP Polytechnic Kopergaon,
Dist. Ahmednagar
Email: pbharud@gmail.com

Abstract

The discipline of English Studies has undergone a significant transformation in the 21st century, expanding beyond traditional literary analysis to incorporate interdisciplinary, cultural, and technological perspectives. This paper examines the evolving relationship between literature, culture, and society, with a focus on emerging critical trends such as digital humanities, globalization, postcolonial discourse, Eco criticism, and identity politics.

These developments signal a shift from viewing literature as a fixed canon to understanding it as a dynamic cultural practice shaped by changing socio-political and technological contexts. The study argues that literature actively engages with contemporary issues of power, representation, and marginality, thereby functioning as both a reflective and transformative medium. By integrating theoretical approaches with textual analysis, the paper highlights how English Studies responds to questions of identity, agency, and cultural negotiation in an increasingly globalized world. Particular attention is given to Dalit autobiographies, which serve as significant sites of resistance and self-representation, challenging dominant literary traditions and expanding the scope of the discipline. Through these examples, the paper demonstrates how marginalized voices contribute to redefining literary discourse and fostering inclusivity within English Studies. Ultimately, the study reaffirms the discipline's continued relevance and adaptability in addressing the complexities of a rapidly changing, digitized, and multicultural global society.

The theme "Literature, Culture, and Society: Emerging Trends in English Studies" foregrounds the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary English studies. In the context of globalization, rapid technological advancement, and intensified cultural exchange, the study of literature has transcended the confines of mere textual analysis and has become deeply intertwined with social, political, and cultural frameworks. In present-day English studies, significant emphasis is placed on emerging paradigms such as multiculturalism, feminist perspectives, Dalit and subaltern literatures, postcolonial studies, and digital literature. These approaches challenge the hegemony of traditional literary canons and frameworks, fostering a more expansive, inclusive, and critically engaged mode of inquiry. Consequently, literature is no longer viewed solely as an aesthetic or artistic expression but as a critical site for interrogating power relations, identity formations, and structural inequalities within society.

The study also examines the reciprocal relationship between culture, society, and literature—considering both the influence of socio-cultural contexts on literary production and the transformative potential of literature in shaping societal consciousness. In particular, the proliferation of digital media has significantly altered modes of reading, writing, and literary expression. Platforms such as social media, blogs, and electronic literature have contributed to the democratization of literary production and dissemination, making literature more accessible and participatory.

Against this backdrop, the emerging trends in English studies equip students and researchers with innovative critical frameworks that enable a more contextually grounded, socially responsive, and intellectually rigorous engagement with literary texts. Such developments underscore the continued relevance of literature as a vital medium for understanding the complexities of culture and society in the contemporary world.

Keywords: English Studies, Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities, Postcolonialism, Dalit Literature, Globalization, Identity Politics, Eco-criticism, Interdisciplinary, Subaltern Studies

1. Introduction

English Studies has evolved from a discipline focused on canonical texts to a multidisciplinary field engaging with cultural, social, and technological contexts. Literature is now understood as a cultural artifact reflecting and shaping societal structures, ideologies, and identities. The reciprocal relationship between literature, culture, and society highlights how texts function as both reflections of reality and agents of change. The expansion of textuality to include films, digital media, and oral narratives reflects broader transformations in global culture. This shift necessitates interdisciplinary approaches integrating sociology, anthropology, media studies, and digital technologies.

2. Literature Review

Recent scholarship highlights several emerging trends: Banerjee (2021) emphasizes multidisciplinary in literary research. Dasaradhi et al. (2024) discuss digital and global transformations. Kiran & Kumar (2021) identify challenges such as declining reading habits. Auradkar (2025) analyzes evolving literary forms. Sreevarsha (2022) underscores the importance of cultural studies. These studies collectively argue that English Studies is transitioning toward a more inclusive, technologically integrated, and socially engaged discipline.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives:

3.1 Marxism

Focuses on class struggle, economic structures, and power relations in literature. It is useful in analyzing caste oppression in Dalit texts.

3.2 Feminism

Examines gender inequality and representation, particularly relevant in Dalit women's narratives.

3.3 Post colonialism

Explores colonial legacy, identity, and resistance, central to texts like Karukku and Joothan.

3.4 Subaltern Studies

Focuses on marginalized voices and their agency in literature.

3.5 Cultural Studies

Analyzes literature as a site of cultural production and ideological negotiation.

5. Objectives of the Study

To analyze the evolving relationship between literature, culture, and society

To examine emerging trends in English Studies

To explore interdisciplinary approaches in literary analysis

To study Dalit autobiographies as cultural texts

To evaluate literature as a tool for social transformation

6. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach:

Textual Analysis of selected literary works

Theoretical Application (Marxism, Feminism, Post colonialism)

Comparative Analysis of Dalit autobiographies

Interdisciplinary Method integrating cultural and sociological perspectives

Primary texts include:

Karukku by Bama Faustina, Omprakash Valmiki's Joothan,

Aaydan (The Weave of My Life) by Urmila Pawar

7. Pedagogical and Textual Analysis

7.1 Pedagogical Implications

Encourages critical thinking and social awareness
Promotes inclusive curriculum with marginalized voices
Integrates digital tools and multimedia texts
Bridges theory and lived experience

7.2 Textual Analysis

Karukku Challenges religious and caste hierarchies
Uses non-linear narrative and vernacular language
Joothan Depicts caste oppression and social exclusion
Functions as cultural documentation
Aaydan Highlights Dalit feminist perspective
Uses symbolism of weaving for identity and labor
8. Significance of the Research
Expands the scope of English Studies beyond canonical texts
Highlights the importance of marginalized voices
Demonstrates literature's role in social justice
Contributes to interdisciplinary research
Supports curriculum decolonization

9. Major Findings

English Studies is increasingly interdisciplinary and dynamic
Literature functions as a tool of resistance and empowerment
Dalit autobiographies challenge dominant narratives
Digital technology is reshaping literary production and analysis
Globalization promotes transnational literary discourse
Identity politics plays a central role in contemporary literature

10. Conclusion

The study concludes that English Studies has transformed into a multidisciplinary field that reflects the complexities of modern society. Emerging trends such as digital humanities, globalization, and postcolonial discourse have expanded its scope and relevance. Dalit autobiographies exemplify how literature engages with real-world issues, challenging structures of oppression and fostering social change. Despite challenges, English Studies remains vital for understanding human experiences and cultural dynamics in the 21st century.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Bibliography

1. Banerjee, S. Embracing Multidisciplinary and Innovation in English
2. Literature Research. IOER International Multidisciplinary Research
3. Journal, 2021.
4. Bama. Karukku. Translated by Lakshmi Holmström, Macmillan, 1992.
5. Valmiki, Omprakash. Joothan: A Dalit's Life. Translated by Arun Prabha
6. Mukherjee, Samya, 2003.
7. Pawar, Urmila. The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs.
8. Translated by Maya Pandit, Kali for Women, 2008.
9. Dasaradhi, K., et al. Emerging New Trends in English Literature.

10. Library Progress International, 2024.
11. Kiran, and N. Kumar. Emerging Trends and Challenges in English Literature. IJRAMT, 2021.
12. Literature. IJRAMT, 2021.
13. Auradkar, S. Emerging Trends in English Literature: An Analytical Study. IJNRD, 2025.
14. Sreevarsha, G. Significance of Cultural Studies in English Literature.
15. ShodhKosh Journal, 2022. Top of Form
- 16.

Exploring Cultural Identity Through Indian Literature

Dr. Sumaiya Mazil Kacchi

Submitted: 15-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026-030226



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Abstract-

Literature has always been closely connected with culture and society. It mirrors the way people live, think and co-operate with each other, while also influencing those same patterns over time. This paper explores how literature, culture and society are linked and how they shape one another. Literary works often show the dogmas, traditions and struggles of a particular time, helping us understand different social realities. At the same time, literature can question social norms and inspire change by presenting new ideas and perspectives. This paper also looks at how literature helps in forming cultural identity and giving voice to different communities, especially in the Indian context through writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand, Toru Dutt, R.K. Narayan and Sarojini Naidu. In today's world, globalization and technology have made literature more accessible and diverse, allowing ideas to travel across cultures. This has created new forms of expression but has also raised concerns about the loss of local traditions. By studying literature within its cultural and social context, we can better understand human experiences and the changes that societies go through.

Keywords: Literature, Culture, Society, Identity, Social Change

Methodology-

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach to examine 'Cultural Identity Through Indian Literature'. The research is based on the analysis of secondary sources, including books, research articles and online academic materials related to the topic of the research. By reviewing these sources, the study attempts to understand how Literature influences Indian Culture. The analysis focuses on identifying both how Literature influences and impacts Indian Culture. Literature, culture and society are deeply connected and it is difficult to understand one without considering the others. Literature is not created in isolation but is shaped by the environment, history and experiences of the writer. At the same time, it also influences how people think and understand the world around them. Culture includes the traditions, beliefs, values and customs shared by a group of people, while society refers to the structure within which these people interact. Literature acts as a channel that connects these elements and expresses them in meaningful ways. From ancient times, literature has played an important role in preserving culture. In India, oral traditions, epics and folklore helped pass knowledge from one generation to another. These stories were not only meant for entertainment but also carried moral lessons and social values. Even today, literature continues to serve this purpose by recording human experiences and reflecting cultural identity. It allows people to understand their past and connect it with the present.

One of the most important functions of literature is that it mirrors society. Writers often describe the realities of their time, including social conditions, relationships and struggles. Through literature, readers can understand how people lived and what challenges they faced. Rabindranath Tagore's works are a strong example of this connection. His writings reflect both cultural richness and social concerns. In his famous line, "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high," he expresses a vision of freedom and dignity, showing how literature can inspire social and moral progress.

S.T. Coleridge had once given an epithet to Shakespeare as 'Myriad Minded', this seems to be more eminently suitable to Rabindranath Tagore, whose whole life was replete with ceaseless and uninterrupted flow of inventiveness. His inventions were incessant and full of creativity. Asia's first Nobel Laureate was a multi-faceted personality, a musician, a painter, a poet, a dramatist, a novelist, a literary critic and what not. There is scarcely any literary form that he had not tried and turned in to gold. This much was not enough for the multi-faceted personality that he could also find time to set up his own kind of academy at Shantiniketan, which subsequently became a renowned Vishwabarshi University, where pupils from different parts of the world come to flourish their careers. Rabindranath Tagore is the first man who had gained the distinguished place for our country in the world literary scene. The Nobel Prize was just the beginning of his long and successful career. His fertile and dynamic literary career extended over a period of 65 years. He composed perhaps the largest number of lyrics ever attempted by any poet.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792786

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792786>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor,
Department of English and
Postgraduate Centre
AKI's Poona College Pune,
411001,
Maharashtra, India

How to cite this article:

Kacchi, S. M. (2026). Exploring Cultural Identity Through Indian Literature. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 105–108.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Sumaiya Mazil Kacchi
Assistant Professor,
Department of English and Postgraduate
Centre
AKI's Poona College Pune, 411001,
Maharashtra, India

He had achieved and gave to this country in one life what requires centuries, if someone else wants to achieve. That is why he is called unparalleled and matchless. He contemplated, wrote, travelled and talked persistently and tirelessly. He has been the supreme inspiration to millions of modern Indians, and he will ever be an inspiration for Indian youth in the years to come. One of his well-known critics Mohit K. Roy asserts,

*"He was a poet in the traditional Indian sense of the word, a kavi, a seer, an intermediary between the human and the divine. His genius enriched whatever he touched. Like the sun after which he was named, he shed light and warmth on his age, vitalized the mental and moral soil of his land, revealed unknown horizons of thought and spanned the arc that divides the East from the West."*¹

Rabindranath Tagore was fortunately blessed with the wonderful atmosphere. As among the modern Indian languages, Bengali poetry and prose fiction got a great beginning by his predecessors, like MadhusudhanDutt, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. They brought him an amazing atmosphere as they all were his inspirations. It was as if the atmosphere of expectation and hope, where he participated enthusiastically. He started composing rhymes from his childhood and soon his enthusiasm and determination brought fruits and his work in prose and verse had started to appear in print.

A visit to England followed and the English Romantics, like Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth and the great Victorians, like Tennyson, Browning exercised a strong and powerful influence on him. He idolized also Sir Thomas Browne and Shakespeare. He was not an extra-ordinary systematic reader but like Shakespeare he used to read haphazardly, without any proper plan. He made the capital use of whatever came on his way. He wrote about 7000 lines before he was eighteen.

Moreover his upbringing was in an atmosphere of artistic distinction of the family of Tagore, manifested by sophisticated aesthetic sense, patriotic sentiments and artistic outlook. The intricate arrangements for learning Bengali, English and Sanskrit at home trained his sensibility at very early age. There were number of obstacles too, in his self-expression. He was subjected for some years, the inflexibilities and rigidities of the school discipline which was very stifling. He lost his mother at very young age, thus deprived from the emotional support, but still his inspirations were able to make him a great personality.

In his father he found a serious but a pleasant personality and Bauthakurani² was just like a blessing for him. She fulfilled his inner psychological needs and gave him back that emotional support. She was just like a mother for him, fulfilling all those necessities, as a child he was craving for. Her selfless affection touched him and this leads to make him a realistic man and a great literary figure. His artistic disposition and poetic heart began to unfold slowly and he could able to write masterpieces at that very young age. Bauthakurani had a profound and deep love for literature, she inspired and provoked him to write. She helped him by criticizing and correcting him. She had created an atmosphere of artistic expectancy which made a positive effect on his mind. He memorize her by saying,

*"My sister-in-law was a great lover of literature. She did not read simply to kill time, but the Bengali books. She read filled her whole mind"*³

Similarly, MunshiPremchand focused on the lives of ordinary people, especially in rural India. His stories highlight issues such as poverty, caste discrimination and inequality. His writing is simple yet powerful, making readers aware of the harsh realities of society. In one of his ideas, he suggests that literature should serve life and not just exist for entertainment. This shows how literature can act as a mirror that reflects the truth of society.

Toru Dutt is another important figure who shows how literature can connect cultures. Writing during the colonial period, she blended Indian and European influences in her work. Her poem 'Our Casuarina Tree' reflects memory, nostalgia and emotional connection to place. She writes about the tree as a symbol of lasting memory, showing how literature can preserve both personal and cultural identity.

R.K. Narayan presents a different approach by focusing on everyday life. His fictional town of 'Malgudi' embodies typical Indian society in a simple and relevant way. His stories show that even ordinary lives have meaning and depth. Through humour and gentle reflection, he reflects social realities without being overly critical. His work helps readers see the importance of small details in life.

Sarojini Naidu's poetry reflects cultural pride and emotional depth. In her poem 'The Bazaars of Hyderabad', she beautifully describes Indian markets and traditions, asking, "What do you sell, O ye merchants?" This line captures the richness of Indian culture and shows how literature can celebrate tradition while also preserving it.

While literature reflects society, it also has the power to question and challenge it. Many writers use their work to criticize social norms and bring attention to injustice. IsmatChughtai, for example, wrote boldly about women's lives and challenged traditional expectations. Her work opened up discussions about gender roles and social boundaries.

Arundhati Roy also uses literature to address political and social issues. Her writing focuses on inequality, identity and resistance. Through her work, readers are stimulated to question systems of power and think critically about society. Literature, in this way, becomes a tool for awareness and change.

Literature also plays a key role in shaping cultural identity. It allows individuals and communities to express their experiences, traditions and dogmas. In a country as diverse as India, literature reflects many different cultures and languages. This diversity makes literature rich and meaningful.

Regional literature is especially important in preserving local traditions. Writers in Marathi, Tamil, Bengali and other languages capture the unique aspects of their communities. These works ensure that local cultures are not lost. At the same time, translation allows these works to reach a wider audience, promoting understanding across cultures.

Representation in literature is essential because it influences how people see themselves and others. When people find their own experiences reflected in stories, they feel cherished and understood. On the other hand, lack of representation can lead to stereotypes and misunderstanding. This is why it is important for literature to include various voices.

Literature is also shaped by society. The themes and styles of literary works depend on the historical and social context in which they are written. During the colonial period in India, many writers focused on themes of nationalism and resistance. Literature became a way to express the desire for freedom.

After independence, literature began to explore new themes such as identity, development and social change. Writers focused on the challenges of a new nation and the experiences of its people. This shows how literature develops with time and mirrors changing realities.

Globalization has further influenced literature in recent years. Writers are now exposed to multiple cultures and their work often reflects a mix of traditions. Indian writers today write for both local and global audiences, creating new forms of expression. However, this also raises concerns about the loss of local identity.

Technology has changed how literature is created and shared. Digital platforms have made literature more accessible, allowing more people to read and write. Social media and online publishing have given opportunities to new writers. However, they have also changed reading habits, with people preferring shorter content.

Another important role of literature is its ability to create empathy. When readers connect with characters, they begin to understand different perspectives. This emotional connection helps build compassion and reduces prejudice. Literature allows people to experience lives different from their own.

Literature also encourages critical thinking. It presents intricate situations that require interpretation. Readers are encouraged to think deeply and form their own opinions. This helps them become more aware and thoughtful individuals.

In education, literature plays an important role. It helps students improve language skills, imagination and creativity. It also exposes them to different cultures and ideas. Through literature, students learn values such as responsiveness and respect.

In today's world, literature continues to remain pertinent. Modern writers focus on issues such as identity, migration and gender equality. These themes reflect the changing nature of society. Literature provides a space where these issues can be explored and understood.

At the same time, literature continues to preserve traditions and connect people to their past. It acts as a bridge between generations. It helps people understand their roots while adapting to change. It is also important to understand that literature is not always neutral. It can reflect biases of the society in which it is produced. This is why readers must approach literature with a critical mind set. By analysing context, they can gain deeper understanding.

The relationship between literature, culture, and society can also be better understood by looking at modern Indian writers like Anita Desai, Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy. Their works show how contemporary literature deals with complex social realities while still remaining deeply connected to cultural identity.

Anita Desai is known for her focus on the inner lives of her characters. Her novels often explore emotions, relationships and psychological struggles rather than only external social conditions. In works like *Fire on the Mountain* and *Clear Light of Day*, she presents characters who deal with solitude, memory and identity. Her writing shows that society does not only affect people in visible ways like poverty or politics but also shapes their thoughts and feelings. Through her detailed descriptions and sensitive storytelling, she reflects the quieter, more personal side of culture and society. This adds depth to our understanding of how literature associates with human experience.

Vikram Seth, on the other hand, presents a broader social picture through his writing. His novel *'A Suitable Boy'* is one of the most detailed portrayals of Indian society after independence. It covers themes such as family, marriage, religion and politics, showing how individuals are influenced by social expectations. Through multiple characters and storylines, he captures the diversity and complexity of Indian life. One of the important ideas in his work is how personal choices are often shaped by cultural traditions and social pressures. His writing shows that society is not just a background for literature but an active force that impacts people's lives in many ways.

Arundhati Roy's work brings a strong political and social voice to literature. In her novel *'The God of Small Things'*, she explores issues such as caste, inequality and forbidden relationships. Her writing style is unique and expressive and she uses language in a creative way to show how deeply social structures affect individuals. One of her well-known lines suggests that "things can change in a day," showing how fragile and unpredictable life can be within inflexible social systems. Through her work, she questions power, injustice and inequality, making literature a tool for social awareness and resistance.

These writers show that modern Indian literature is not limited to one style or theme. Instead, it includes a wide range of perspectives, from personal and emotional experiences to large social and political issues. Together, they highlight how literature continues to progress with society while still reflecting cultural roots.

Another important aspect of their work is how they deal with identity. In a promptly changing world, questions of identity have become more important than ever. Anita Desai explores identity at a personal level, focusing on how individuals understand themselves. Vikram Seth presents identity in relation to family and society, showing how it is shaped by relationships and traditions. Arundhati Roy, on the other hand, connects identity with larger social structures like caste and class, showing how these factors influence people's lives.

Their works also show the impact of globalization on literature. While they write about Indian society, their works are read worldwide. This shows how literature can cross cultural boundaries and connect people from different backgrounds. At the same time, they remain rooted in Indian culture, which helps preserve its uniqueness.

In addition, these writers show how literature can create awareness about important issues. By reading their works, people can learn about social realities that they may not experience directly. This helps in building compassion and understanding. Literature, in this sense, becomes a powerful tool for education and social change.

Overall, the contributions of Anita Desai, Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy show that literature continues to play an important role in connecting culture and society. Their works reflect different aspects of life, from personal emotions to social struggles and help readers understand the complexity of human experience. By including their perspectives, we can see how literature remains relevant in modern times and continues to influence the way people think and understand the world around them.

Conclusion-

In **conclusion**, literature, culture, and society are closely linked and constantly influence each other. Literature reflects social realities, preserves cultural values and challenges existing ideas. Through writers like Tagore, Premchand, Toru Dutt, R.K. Narayan and Sarojini Naidu, we see how literature shapes and reflects society. It helps people understand themselves and others while encouraging change. As society continues to evolve, literature will remain an important part of human life, helping people make sense of their experiences and connect with the world.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References-

1. 'Studies on Rabindranath Tagore' Volume-1, Edited by Mohit K. Roy, Atlantic publishers and distributors, 2004. Pg. 72.
2. Tagore used to call Kadambari Devi as 'Bauthkurani'. She was his elder brother's wife. That is how a sister-in-law is addressed in traditional Bengali family.
3. 'My Reminiscences', Rabindranath Tagore, Translated from Bengali by Devabrata Mukherjee, Published by Niyogi Books, 2017, Pg 125.
4. Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
5. Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*. Columbia University Press, 1983.

Cultural identity and representation in Barack Obama's autobiography "Dreams from my father: The story of race and inheritance"

Jabina S. Shaikh.

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030227



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20792867
DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792867>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research student
C. T. Bora College, Shirur, Pune.

How to cite this article:
Shaikh., J. S. (2026). Cultural identity and representation in Barack Obama's autobiography "Dreams from my father: The story of race and inheritance". International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 109–112..

Address for correspondence:
Jabina S. Shaikh., Research student, C. T. Bora College, Shirur, Pune.

Abstract

Barack Obama offers a very introspective examination of cultural identity and representation influenced by his multicultural upbringing and life experiences in "Dreams from My Father". This study explores Obama's mixed background as the son of an American mother and a Kenyan father, emphasizing the internal struggle brought on by his exposure to various cultural contexts, such as Hawaii and Indonesia. Barack Obama discusses his battle to discover his true identity and place in the world in his autobiography. He eventually learns to embrace the fact that his identity is a blend of several cultures and that it's acceptable to be both rather than just one. The article also examines his intelligent and truthful descriptions of many societies. When he discusses Black American life, he draws attention to the true issues that people deal with, such as racism and poverty, while also highlighting their resilience and solidarity. Similarly, he doesn't only highlight the bad aspects of Kenya in his writing. In order to present a more accurate and balanced image, he also discusses its culture, customs, and family connections. Additionally, he gives a genuine account of his family, highlighting both their positive and negative traits as well as how they shaped him. This article demonstrates how Obama's own experiences enable him to comprehend and empathetically represent many cultures by connecting his own identity with how he represents others. *Dreams from My Father* ultimately teaches that people and cultures should be portrayed in a genuine and ethical manner rather than through stereotypes. It also teaches that identity is neither straightforward nor unchangeable.

Keywords: Culture, cultural identity, representation, racism, poverty.

Introduction

Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* explores deeply into cultural identity, representation, and culture in addition to being a personal narrative. His upbringing as a biracial person in America, where he is repeatedly divided between two worlds, is chronicled in the book. In simple terms, culture refers to a person's way of life, encompassing their customs, values, language, and beliefs.

The cultural identity describes a person's feeling of affiliation with a specific culture or community. Shared characteristics including language, culture, values, beliefs, religion, and heritage all influence it. The cultural representation describes how a culture, its people, customs, values, and practices are portrayed or depicted in a variety of media, including communication, literature, art, and film. The title of the text suggests about the continuation and fulfilment of the dreams of Obama's father. The subtitle explains the theme of the book.

The subtitle starts with "A Story" highlights that the autobiography is presented as a carefully crafted narrative rather than a comprehensive or objective history. Obama acknowledges that memory, introspection, and interpretation impact the past and emphasizes storytelling as a means of self-understanding. The word "Race" refers to the autobiography's ongoing discussion of racial identity in the United States. Obama analyses what it's like to be a multiracial person growing up in a culture that is shaped by racial hierarchy and historical injustices. "Inheritance" functions both symbolically and materially. From a personal perspective, it alludes to Obama's father's legacy—his Kenyan heritage, his father's absence, and the rumours and silence that surround him. More broadly, inheritance represents the cultural and historical legacies that have been passed down through the generations, such as racism in the US, colonialism in Kenya, and the unresolved battles for dignity and belonging.

Obama has been brought up with a variety of cultures throughout his life, including Indonesian culture from his early years, African culture from his father, white American culture from his mother, grandparents, and African-American community culture. His life is complex and often stressful since these various cultural influences don't always mix well. Obama's behaviour changes as he gets older based on his surroundings, demonstrating how culture may influence an individual's behaviour. "I learnt to move back and forth between my black and white worlds," (pg. no. 82) he explains. This line demonstrates his ability to transition across cultures, but it also implies that he is not entirely at ease in either.

Obama learns that not all cultures are treated equally in society as he travels further. White culture is frequently regarded as the norm or "normal" in America, whereas other cultures are considered as separate or not important. The way people think of themselves suffer by this imbalance of power. Obama considers this notion when he states, "Only white culture could be impartial and objective" (pg. no. 100). This means that other cultural identities feel inferior because white culture is frequently presented by society as the norm.

Obama is deeply influenced by this realization since he finds it difficult to understand his place in such a system. His identity is influenced by how society views various racial and cultural groups in addition to his family history.

Obama saw culture as broken rather than strong when he was younger. Despite growing up in a somewhat cosmopolitan setting in Hawaii, he feels different due to his colour and the absence of his African father. He is fully immersed in a totally different cultural environment in Indonesia, including poverty, language, and religion, which makes him conscious of how environment shapes identity. He feels dislocated, though, because he doesn't quite fit into any one culture.

He saw culture as a child, but he wasn't entirely sure of it. For instance, even when he learns the language and culture of Indonesia, he still feels alienated on the inside. In a similar way, he has an abstract conception of his African heritage that is influenced more by narratives than by personal experience. He becomes isolated from the cultures he belongs to as a result. Important characters include his mother, Ann Dunham, and his Hawaiian grandparents. His mother teaches him that no culture is inherently superior through fostering tolerance and respect for other civilizations. Curiosity is sparked by this, but it also draws attention to the mismatches between ideals (justice, equality) and reality (racism, inequality).

Obama's awareness of race and its relationship to culture increases as he grows older, particularly in Hawaii. He starts to see that culture is about power, history, and social perception in addition to traditions and rituals. Despite his early lack of a strong connection to African American culture, his Black identity becomes crucial.

In the end, his early perception of culture is linked to a desire to fit in. He must create his own identity instead of inheriting a single, recognizable one. As a result, he embarks on an ongoing search to balance the various cultural influences in his life, which eventually takes him to Kenya.

Barack Obama portrays his cultural identity in *Dreams from My Father* as having undergone a substantial transformation following his time in college and his work as a community organizer. After attending college, things start to change slowly. Obama begins reading literature about Black history, racism, and society, which deepens his understanding of Black people's hardships and experiences. He also meets new people who openly discuss issues of race and identity. He is inspired to think deeply on his own history by this exposure. He starts actively looking for answers to queries regarding his identity rather than avoiding them. As he grows more conscious of his ancestry and the broader social context, his cultural identity begins to take shape.

The most significant change occurs while he is employed in Chicago as a community organizer. Here, he engages directly with common people, pays attention to their issues, and participates in their day-to-day hardships. Through this journey, he comes to understand that culture encompasses more than just lineage and customs; it also includes common struggles, hopes, and experiences. He starts to truly connect with the Black community, which gives him more confidence to embrace his identity.

Obama gains a deeper and more solid understanding of culture at the end of this stage. He no longer feels confused or broke. Rather, he believes that relationships, common hardships, and active community involvement are the basis of cultural identity. This indicates a change from uncertainty to clarity and from loneliness to a strong sense of community.

Obama's father is largely absent from his existence, which causes him to be confused about who he is as a child. During Obama's early years, his father, a Kenyan man who returned to Africa when he was very young, was more of an idea than a physical presence. Obama uses this absence as a potent prism to examine what it means to be a part of a society he has inherited but has not completely experienced. From a cultural standpoint, the absence of a father figure highlights a disruption in the passing down of African heritage. In numerous traditional communities, such as Kenyan culture, the father typically has an essential role in conveying lineage, values, and social identity. However, his father's absence also reflects a larger socioeconomic reality in African American communities, where structural and historical problems like racism, economic inequality, and migration are sometimes connected to broken family structures.

He primarily learns about his African heritage from other people's stories. These tales aren't necessarily true or comprehensive, though. "The anecdotes... said less about the man himself than about the changes... in racial attitudes," he remarks on this (p. 25). This demonstrates how society's discourse on race and culture shapes identity in addition to individual experiences. Obama finds it difficult to comprehend what it means to be Black in America as a young child. He occasionally believes that being Black is linked to unpleasant experiences and restrictions. "Being black meant only the knowledge of your own powerlessness" (p. 85) is how he captures this emotion. The brutal truth of racial disparity and how it impacts a person's sense of self are reflected in this expression.

Obama's concept of identity, however, becomes increasingly nuanced as he ages. He starts to see that race is not the only factor in identity. This insight turns into a turning point in his life.

"My identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't... end there," he says (Chapter 5, p. 111). One of the book's main points is that identity is multifaceted and cannot be reduced to a single component—is highlighted in this quotation.

It contains individual interactions, experiences, and decisions. Obama starts to think of himself as an individual capable of defining his own identity rather than merely as a product of his ethnic heritage. Identity is one of the fundamental cultural topics he addresses. His race makes him feel different as he grows up in the United States. Given that he did not grow up with his father, he finds it difficult to comprehend what it means to be Black in America. He frequently questions himself and his role in society because he feels that he doesn't truly belong to any one group.

The autobiography's review of how community shapes identity is another significant feature. Obama learns that identity is both collective and personal while working as a neighbourhood organizer in Chicago. People create their identities through their interactions with others and participation in society.

"The self is not a pre-existing entity that simply expresses itself in autobiographical writing; rather, it is constituted through autobiographical acts." (*Reading autobiographies*, pg. no. 18) This quote is central to arguing that identity in life writing (including Obama's autobiography) is produced through narration, not merely revealed.

In the book, he struggles to figure out who he is, particularly given that his mother is American and his father is Kenyan. He becomes confused and curious about his true place in the world as a result.

Discrimination based on race is another problem. Obama describes how society treats people differently based on skin colour. He discovers that there are particular obstacles, prejudices, and expectations associated with being Black in America. His perspective on the world and his understanding of justice and equality are shaped by these encounters. He talks about the differences between American and African cultures. He observes strong family relations and communal ideals in Kenya, but life seems more self-centred in America. These distinctions cause him to reflect carefully on the ideals and way of life he wishes to take control.

Important cultural topics in the book also include family and roots. Obama has a strong desire to stay in contact with his father's Kenyan family. He makes an effort to comprehend his ancestry, customs, and father's way of life when he visits to Africa. He feels closer to his identity as a result of this adventure.

The autobiography also examines how language and narrative are used to represent a culture. Obama frequently considers how his mixed heritage makes some words and expressions uncommon or difficult for him. For example, he writes, "The term itself was uncomfortable in my mouth..." (pp. 80–81).

This represents how a person's cultural identity and sense of belonging may be shown through language. Someone may not fully associate with a cultural group if they are uncomfortable using certain terms. Obama uses such situations to demonstrate how representation functions in daily life, not only in significant occasions but also in small elements like speech and action. Obama's trip to his father's native Kenya marks a significant turning point in the biography. For the first time, this trip enables him to establish a direct connection with his African background. Prior to this, his knowledge of Africa was derived from hearsay and conjecture. He gets a personal look of Kenyan culture, including social structures, family customs, and communal life. He fills in the gaps in his identity and finds the sense of belonging he's been looking for thanks to this encounter. Additionally, it enables him to view his father as more than just a concept or emblem. Obama starts to reconcile various aspects of his identity as a result of this travel.

Obama serves as a metaphor for living in a multicultural society throughout the entire novel. He frequently feels alienated and unaccepted by all groups. As a result, he experiences internal conflict as he tries to figure out where he fits in.

But he also has a distinct viewpoint because of this "in-between" position. He can recognize the advantages and disadvantages of many cultures and draw lessons from them. He eventually starts to see his blended identity as a strength rather than an issue. This change in perspective is crucial to his development as a person.

One of the autobiography's main themes is Obama's identity struggle. He asks himself questions like "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" like many people from multicultural backgrounds do. His quest for identity takes years, and there are no easy answers to his concerns.

He eventually comes to a crucial revelation after others challenge his way of thinking. Someone asks him, "Who told you that being honest was a white thing?" (p. 110). He is forced to revise his internalized stereotypes in response to this question. He starts to see that virtues like honesty, responsibility, and compassion are not specific to any one race or culture. This insight enables him to overcome constrictive ideas and cultivate a more unbiased perspective on identity. Obama eventually comes to terms with who he is. He understands that he is not forced to pick between his various cultural backgrounds. Alternatively, he can blend them to form his own distinct personality. One of the book's most significant lessons is this concept. It reveals that identity is something that can change throughout life rather than being something that is set in concrete. His experience shows readers that it's acceptable to feel lost or strange as long as one keeps trying to learn more and develop.

The text also touches on more general issues of culture and identity, including race, family, loneliness, and belonging. Despite their distance, Obama's relationship with his father has a big influence on who he is. His father turns into a representation of his African ancestry and a source of both inspiration and uncertainty. His mother and grandmother, who embody a different aspect of his cultural identity, also offer him security and encouragement. This mix of influences demonstrates how a person's identity is shaped by a variety of connections and experiences.

Dreams from My Father is, to put it simply, the story of a person attempting to discover his identity. It illustrates the difficulties of growing up with a variety of cultural influences and the quest to fit in. The book conveys the idea that while culture is significant, it need not restrict an individual. Instead, individuals can develop their own identities

while learning from many cultures. Obama's understanding that identity transcends race is crucial in the multicultural world of today. His words, "My identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't..." (p. 111), are a potent reminder that identity is complicated and ever-changing.

All things considered, the autobiography offers a clear and insightful examination of culture, cultural identity, and representation. It demonstrates that although culture influences who we are, it does not fully define us. Our relationships, decisions, and experiences shape who we are. Anyone struggling with their own sense of identity in a multicultural and evolving society might find inspiration in Obama's journey from unfamiliarity to self-acceptance. In general, the book depicts his search for self-awareness. The cultural difficulties are a part of his daily existence and personal challenges; they are not merely major social issues. Through his experiences, he gradually discovers a sense of belonging and accepts every aspect of his identity.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
3. Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
4. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–237.
5. Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997.
6. Obama, Barack. *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. Three Rivers Press, 2004.
7. Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Reconstruction of Sita as a Feminist Icon in Amish Tripathi's 'Sita : Warrior of Mithila'

Pranjali P. Gawande¹ Dr. Vaishali R. Deshmukh²

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030228



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20792950

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20792950>

Volume: 3
Issue:2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Scholar , Department of
Languages, Shri Shivaji Arts &
Commerce College, Amravati
²Head and Professor, Department of
Languages, Shri Shivaji Science College,
Amravati

How to cite this article:

Gawande, P. P., & Deshmukh, V. R.
(2026). Reconstruction of Sita as a
Feminist Icon in Amish Tripathi's 'Sita :
Warrior of Mithila'. *International
Journal of English and World Languages
& Literature Paradigm Shift in
International Research*, 3(2(I)), 113–
115.

Address for correspondence:

Pranjali P. Gawande, Research
Scholar , Department of Languages,
Shri Shivaji Arts & Commerce College,
Amravati

Abstract

Amish Tripathi is a popular contemporary Indian author known for his mythological fiction. His writing reinterprets ancient Indian myths in a modern and rational way. He presents gods like Shiva and Ram as human heroes who achieve greatness through their actions. His works skillfully combine mythology with social, political, and ethical themes, making them more relatable to modern readers. His 'Shiva Trilogy' and 'Ramchandra series' are among the most popular works in contemporary literature. In the novel *Sita : "Warrior of Mithila"*, Sita is portrayed as a brave and capable leader who defends her kingdom with honour. Amish Tripathi does not present her as a weak or silent character, but as an independent and intelligent woman. This portrayal is quite different from traditional versions of the Ramayana, where Sita is often shown as patient and obedient. In this novel, Sita is trained in leadership, warfare, and administration. She even becomes the Prime Minister of Mithila, which highlights that women can hold powerful positions in society. She takes her own decisions and does not depend on others, reflecting ideas of independence and equality. Moreover, she strongly believes in justice and duty (dharma) and fights against injustice to protect her people. This paper highlights how, in this modern interpretation, Sita emerges as a strong and inspiring figure whose physical, mental and moral strength make her a modern feminist icon.

Key words - Reinterpretation , Feminist, Reconstruction, Mythology

Introduction

Amish Tripathi is one of the most celebrated contemporary Indian writers known for reimagining mythological narratives in a modern context. His novel *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, a part of the Ram Chandra Series, offers a powerful reinterpretation of the traditional character of Sita from the Ramayana. In this work, Sita is not merely portrayed as a devoted wife but as a strong, independent, and capable leader. Tripathi reconstructs her identity by emphasising her intelligence, courage, administrative skills, and moral strength. This reinterpretation challenges the conventional, patriarchal depiction of Sita as passive and submissive. Instead, she emerges as a symbol of resilience and empowerment, aligning with modern feminist ideals.

A feminist icon is a woman who embodies strength, independence, and equality within society. She refuses to follow unjust traditions blindly and firmly believes in equal rights and opportunities for both women and men. Such a woman is confident in making her own decisions, freely expresses her thoughts, and stands courageously against injustice and discrimination. Through her actions, she demonstrates that women are equally capable of leadership, intelligence, and resilience. In literature, such figures are portrayed as confident, dynamic personalities who gracefully balance compassion and courage. In *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, Amish Tripathi presents Sita as a leader, warrior, thinker, and saviour. She emerges as a powerful symbol of women's empowerment, representing strength, equality, and independence.

In *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, Amish Tripathi presents Sita as a capable and empowered leader who challenges traditional gender roles. As the Prime Minister of Mithila, she efficiently manages the kingdom's economy, law, and security, proving that women can handle political power and responsibility. She is also depicted as a brave warrior who actively participates in missions, breaking the stereotype of women as weak or dependent. Sita says in the novel "A leader is not just one who gives his people what they want. He must also be the one who teaches his people to be better than they imagined themselves to be." - chapter 10

Sita's independent thinking further highlights her feminist identity, as she questions unjust traditions and makes decisions based on logic and moral values rather than societal pressure. A significant moment in the novel is her selection as Vishnu, the saviour of the land, a role traditionally reserved for men, thereby placing her at the centre of the narrative as a hero. Traditionally associated with male heroes in texts like the Ramayana, this role being assigned to a woman subverts patriarchal expectations and firmly establishes Sita as the central heroic figure. She is no longer confined to the margins but occupies the position of power, destiny, and transformation. At the same time, she balances strength with compassion,

working for the welfare of her people while standing firmly against injustice. Through these qualities, Sita emerges as a powerful symbol of women's empowerment, representing strength, equality, and independence. Amish Tripathi portrays Sita as a reform-oriented and visionary Prime Minister who strives to strengthen the systems of Mithila. She introduces strict measures to make trade fair, transparent, and well-organised, while reforming economic structures to ensure efficiency and accountability. Her firm stand against corruption reflects her commitment to building a just and ethical society.

Sita strongly believes in equality and works to ensure that all citizens are treated fairly, regardless of their status or class. She focuses on the welfare of the entire population rather than privileging the elite, thereby challenging deep-rooted social inequalities. Her approach highlights her determination to create an inclusive and balanced society. Another key aspect of her character is her rational and progressive mindset. Sita does not blindly follow customs or traditions if they are unjust or illogical. Instead, she questions outdated practices and bases her decisions on reason, justice, and moral integrity, reinforcing the idea that traditions must evolve with time. She is also strict in maintaining law and order. She takes decisive action against crime, punishes wrongdoers, and ensures peace and stability in Mithila. Her strong leadership reflects courage and a deep sense of responsibility toward her people. At the same time, she rejects the notion that women are weak or dependent. By excelling as both a leader and a warrior, Sita powerfully demonstrates that women are capable of strength, authority, and independence. We can see the strength and bravery of Sita from this text of the novel, "*Sita turned to the target with her left foot facing it. It was a wooden board painted with concentric circles. She raised her left hand, again in the same direction. Her body twisted ever so slightly, to add power to the throw. She pulled her right hand back, parallel to the ground; poised as a work of art. Perfect. Shvetaketu smiled. Though he did not teach warfare to his students, he was personally proud of Sita's prowess.*" - chapter 5 page no. 41. The character of Sita is portrayed quite differently in the Ramayana and in Sita: Warrior of Mithila by Amish Tripathi. In the *Ramayana*, Sita is depicted as the ideal woman—loving, patient, and self-sacrificing. She follows Rama into exile without hesitation, endures hardships with dignity, and remains steadfast even during her captivity by Ravana. Her character reflects the traditional expectation of a woman as obedient, devoted, and accepting of circumstances without question.

In contrast, Tripathi reimagines Sita as a modern, empowered individual. In *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, she is strong, courageous, and independent. She is trained in combat, actively participates in governance, and plays a crucial role in shaping the kingdom's future. Unlike the traditional portrayal, she questions injustice, voices her opinions, and takes decisive action when needed. Her selection as the Vishnu, the destined saviour, further elevates her role from a supporting figure to the central hero of the narrative.

Thus, while the Sita of the *Ramayana* embodies strength through patience, devotion, and sacrifice, the Sita of *Warrior of Mithila* represents strength through action, leadership, and independence. This contrast highlights how modern interpretations redefine female characters, presenting them as powerful, assertive, and equal participants in society.

Amish Tripathi reconstructs Sita in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* as a powerful, intelligent, and independent individual who actively shapes her own destiny. Here, Sita is not just a devoted wife but also a capable administrator, a skilled warrior, and a strategic thinker. She challenges unjust traditions, questions authority, and takes bold decisions for the welfare of her people. For example, her role in governing Mithila and addressing social issues like inequality highlights her leadership qualities and practical wisdom. Thus, while the traditional Sita represents moral strength through suffering, the modern reinterpretation presents strength through action and agency. This transformation not only reflects changing society's attitudes towards women but also demonstrates how mythological narratives can be reimagined to promote gender equality and empower female identity in contemporary literature. The reconstruction of Sita also highlights the idea of women empowerment. She has her own identity and is not dependent on others. She makes her own choices and stands strong in difficult situations. Her character reflects modern values where women are seen as equal to men in strength, intelligence, and leadership.

Conclusion:

The reconstruction of Sita by Amish Tripathi changes her image from a silent and sacrificing woman to a powerful, independent, and active personality. This modern portrayal makes Sita a feminist icon and shows how mythological characters can be reimagined to suit present-day ideas of equality, justice, and empowerment. Sita in the *Ramayana* is a symbol of sacrifice, purity, and devotion, while in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, she is shown as a strong and independent woman who fights for justice. Amish Tripathi reimagines Sita as a modern feminist figure, giving her power, intelligence, and leadership qualities. This change shows how mythology can be rewritten to match today's values and ideas about women. Thus, Sita has been reconstructed as a feminist icon in Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References :

1. Tripathi, Amish. *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. Westland, 2017.
2. Campbell, Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, 2004.
3. Das Gurcharan, *The Difficulty of Being Good*, Allen Lane, 2009
4. Hooks, bell hooks. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. South End Press, 2000.

5. Nussbaum, Martha C. Nussbaum. Women and Human Development. Cambridge University Press, 2000
6. Pattanaik Devdutt Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana ,Penguin Books India ,2013
7. Volga, The Liberation of Sita ,HarperPerennial,2016

Capitalism and reshaping Indian Identity in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Dr. Bhanudas Wagh

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030229



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20793060
DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20793060>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Asst. Professor
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Faculty of Education and Humanities
JSPM University Pune

How to cite this article:
Wagh, B. (2026). Capitalism and reshaping Indian Identity in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 116–118.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Bhanudas Wagh
Asst. Professor
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Faculty of Education and Humanities
JSPM University Pune

Abstract

This paper focuses on the transformation of Indian identity which is reshaping under the influence of capitalism as reflected in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* by. This research paper also explore how economic change, especially after liberalization, has created new opportunities while also increasing inequality and moral conflict. Capitalism in India has encouraged ambition, competition and the desire for success, but it has been observed that it is also weakening traditional values such as honesty, loyalty and social responsibility. The study is based on the main character Balram Halwai and his journey from a poor village boy to a successful entrepreneur. This reflects a transformation of his identity. At the beginning, Balram works as a servant and lives according to traditional expectations. However, after observing the lifestyle and power of the rich, he starts asking question the system. His growing ambition leads him to reject his past and adopt a new identity based on money and independence. In the process, he chooses unethical means, including the murder of his master, which reveals the darker side of capitalist success. The paper argues that the novel presents a shift in identity from being shaped by caste, family, and tradition to being defined by wealth, power, and survival. It also highlights the tension between old values and new aspirations in modern India. Overall, the study shows that capitalism not only changes economic life but also deeply affects personal identity and moral thinking.

Keywords: Capitalism, Identity, Inequality, Ambition, Moral Conflict, Social Change

Introduction

Arvind Adiga is one of well-known Indian novelists who writes in English. Adiga became famous for his first novel, *The White Tiger*, which won the Booker Prize in 2008. The novel narrates the story of a poor man, Balram Halwai, who becomes a successful businessman in a changing, modern India. The novel presents poverty, corruption, class struggle and the effects of capitalism on Indian citizen and society. Adiga's writing is known for being bold and honest. He writes about the lives of ordinary Indian people who are often forgotten by the rich and powerful. His books show the real face of India, both the good and the bad. Through his stories, Adiga asks important questions about justice, freedom, and identity. Besides *The White Tiger*, Adiga has written other books like *Between the Assassinations* and *Last Man in Tower*. *The White Tiger* by Arvind Adiga narrates the story of Balram Halwai, a poor man from a small village in India. He belongs to a low caste and grows up in poverty, with few chances for education or success. However, Balram is clever and ambitious. He gets a job as a driver for a rich man named Ashok in the city of Delhi. As Balram works for Ashok, he sees how the rich treat the poor and how the system is full of corruption and unfairness. He feels trapped in what he calls the "Rooster Coop", where poor people accept their place and never fight back. Balram decides he wants to break free. To escape his life of servitude, Balram makes a bold and dangerous choice. He kills his master and runs away with his money. He moves to Bangalore, starts his own taxi business and becomes a successful entrepreneur. The novel shows how capitalism, power and poverty shape modern India. It also explores how one man changes his identity to gain freedom and success. Balram's story is both shocking and eye-opening, showing the dark side of India's economic growth.

This paper explores how Indian identity is reshaped through the lens of capitalism in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. Capitalism is an economic system where people and businesses work for profit. In India, capitalism has brought many changes since the 1990s, such as new jobs, big cities and modern lifestyles. As a result of it, different problems like inequality, corruption and the loss of traditional values have been caused. In the novel, Balram journey begins as a servant and ends as an entrepreneur. This reflects the impact of capitalism on his identity. In the beginning, Balram is shown a poor and obedient servant. He accepts his low place in society and adjust to poor financial conditions. He starts asking question the system when he sees the rich people around him. There are enjoying power and freedom. This makes him restless. He slowly starts changing himself and becoming himself more bold, clever and even violent. He chooses a wrong way to succeed in life. He becomes ready to break the law and kills his master. This act shows the dark side of capitalism, where personal success may come at the cost of morality and ethics.

The novelist describes the story of Balram Halwai, a poor villager. Later he becomes a successful businessman in a globalized India. Balram's journey shows how capitalism offers people new opportunities in the market, but also creates new forms of inequality and moral struggles on the other hand. Balram tries to break away from his traditional role as a servant and chooses a life of ambition, freedom and power. He lies, betrays and even kills to achieve his goals. The novel shows Indian identity is changing from being based on caste, family and tradition to being shaped by money, competition and survival through Balram's story. Arvind Adiga tries to make it clear that capitalism and globalization offer new opportunities but also bring challenges such as inequality, corruption, and moral confusion. The story of the novel makes it clear that capitalism does not just change the economy, but also changes how people see themselves and their place in society. *The White Tiger* offers a powerful view of the hopes and problems of people in modern India. It has been seen that the novel shows the conflict between traditional Indian identity and the new identity shaped by capitalism. Balram moves from being a village boy who respects family and religion to a city businessman who trusts only himself. He rejects his past and creates a new identity based on money, independence, and survival. This change shows how capitalism pushes people to leave behind their roots and take on new roles in society.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a powerful novel that shows how modern capitalism is changing the social, cultural and moral identity of people in India. Set in a rapidly developing India, the story follows Balram Halwai, a poor village boy who becomes a successful entrepreneur in the city. His journey from "darkness" to "light" reflects the larger changes happening in Indian society as the country moves from traditional systems to a new capitalist economy. Through Balram's voice, Adiga raises important questions about power, class, freedom, and self-definition. In today's India, capitalism has created many opportunities for growth, but it has also produced inequality, competition and moral conflict. In the novel, Balram believes that success in a capitalist world requires breaking away from old identities based on caste, family duty and rural life. He tries to reshape his identity by learning the language of business, copying the lifestyle of the rich, and rejecting the expectations of his family. His transformation shows how capitalism encourages individuals to think of themselves as independent, ambitious, and driven by personal goals. At the same time, Adiga shows the darker side of this change. Balram's success comes through crime, betrayal, and the rejection of moral values. This raises an important question: Does capitalism truly free people, or does it create a new kind of moral and social burden? The novel suggests that the desire for wealth and power can reshape identity in both positive and negative ways.

Indian English writers often write about the effects of capitalism on people's lives. They explore how money, business and class affect identity, relationships and values. They show both the good and bad sides of capitalism. Some characters become rich and successful, while others are left behind or forced to make difficult choices. In Indian English literature, capitalism is often linked with other themes like class, gender, education, and globalization. Writers show how people struggle to fit into a world where money and success matter more than tradition or community. Some characters fight the system, while others try to adjust or take advantage of it. Modern English literature also reflects Marxist concerns. Works about migration, inequality, globalisation and corruption often explore how economic power affects people's identity and opportunities. Contemporary writers show how capitalism creates both progress and suffering, and how individuals struggle within these structures. In simple terms, Marxism helps readers understand literature as part of a larger social and economic world. It encourages us to ask: Who has power? Who suffers? Why do these inequalities exist? And how does the text support or resist the system? By connecting stories to real-life conditions, Marxist criticism makes literature a tool for understanding society and imagining a more equal world. Balram's journey shows how capitalism demands ambition, risk, and even moral compromise. To succeed, one must be competitive, clever, and sometimes ruthless. This is why Balram believes that in a capitalist society, "the entrepreneur is the real hero." (P-113) He sees entrepreneurship as a way to escape the chains of caste and poverty. Yet, Adiga also shows that capitalism pushes individuals to break traditions, question morality, and make choices that have serious ethical consequences.

One of the most memorable symbols used by Adiga is the "Rooster Coop." Balram uses this metaphor to describe how servants and poor people in India behave like roosters trapped in a cage. Even when they see other roosters being killed, they do not rebel. Instead, they accept their fate because their loyalty to family, caste and social rules keeps them tied to their masters. The Rooster Coop represents the ideological and economic control that capitalism continues to maintain over the poor. Although India claims to be a land of opportunities, most servants remain stuck because they fear the consequences of trying to escape. Families will be punished for their rebellion, so workers remain silent and obedient.

Traditional Indian identity is strongly shaped by caste, family, religion and social expectations. In Balram's village, people are known by their caste and expected to follow the occupation linked with it. Identity is not chosen; it is inherited. A Halwai like Balram is supposed to become a sweet-maker or manual servant. But as India becomes more capitalist and globalised, identity begins to shift. People move from villages to cities, travel for work, and dream of breaking free from old social boundaries. Capitalism allows new forms of identity to appear for examples identities based on money, ambition, education and entrepreneurial success. At first, Balram accepts the identity given to him by caste and poverty. He becomes a driver for a wealthy family in Delhi. His actions, behaviour, and thinking are controlled by his employers. He learns how to please the rich, how to act humble, and how to suppress his desires. This identity is shaped by submission and fear. When Balram sees the hypocrisy and cruelty of the rich, he begins questioning the identity forced on him. He realises that loyalty and honesty keep him trapped. Slowly, he reshapes his

identity by developing a sense of independence. He learns English, observes business practices, and dreams of becoming an entrepreneur. His rebellion grows internally before it becomes external.

In a novel, Balram reconstructs his identity completely after killing Ashok and escaping to Bangalore. He becomes a businessman, uses modern capitalist strategies and builds a new life with a new name: Ashok Sharma. He tries to appear respectable, confident and professional for qualities admired in a capitalist society. Adiga shows identity as something flexible and changeable, especially in a system where success depends on personal effort, intelligence, and mobility. Yet Balram's new identity is built on crime, raising questions about the moral cost of such transformation. Capitalism creates competition and pressure, which often leads to moral compromise. For Balram, the biggest moral crisis is choosing between loyalty to his employer and loyalty to his own survival. When he sees that Mr. Ashok is planning to sacrifice him to protect the family's interests, he feels justified in killing him.

Adiga shows that Balram is a product of a system where the poor are denied justice, dignity and opportunity. His moral crisis reflects the larger turmoil in Indian society as it shifts from old values to new capitalist realities. Balram's movement from the village to Delhi and finally to Bangalore reflects India's journey from tradition to modernity. Each place reshapes Balram's identity and transforms his understanding of power.

Another important aspect of capitalism in the novel is the role of globalisation. American culture, English language, multinational companies and outsourcing industries influence every part of Indian life. Balram's employers try to behave like Americans by partying, eating Western food, and adopting a modern lifestyle. Balram learns that to succeed in this new India, he must speak English and understand global business models. His desire to become a modern entrepreneur comes partly from observing the capitalist culture introduced through globalisation.

Adiga shows that Indian identity is becoming a mixture of local traditions and global influences. This mixture creates confusion, ambition and new social tensions. Although Balram becomes a successful businessman, the ending of the novel is not fully optimistic. He escapes poverty, but he also commits a crime and continues to use questionable methods in business. His success does not automatically make him morally better. Instead, it shows that capitalism rewards cleverness and survival skills more than honesty. He also fears that one day, someone may kill him the way he killed Ashok. This fear suggests that capitalism simply replaces old chains with new ones. Balram has reshaped his identity, but he remains trapped in a system built on competition and insecurity.

In this way, the novel shows how capitalism allows people to change who they are. But this change is not simple. Balram has to give up his family, his values, and even his morals. He becomes successful, but at a great personal cost. This shows that the new Indian identity shaped by capitalism is based on individual success, not community or tradition. People are judged by what they have, not where they come from. In modern India, English is a symbol of power and progress. In the novel, Balram learns English by listening and observing. His ability to speak and write in English helps him enter the world of the rich. The novel is written as a letter from Balram to the Premier of China. Through this format, Adiga shows how Balram uses English not only to tell his story but also to prove that he is now part of the global world. However, access to good education and English is limited for the poor. This creates a new kind of inequality in India. People who know English have better jobs and more respect, while others are left behind.

Conclusion

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* presents a sharp and critical picture of capitalism in modern India. Through Balram's rise from a poor villager to an entrepreneur, Adiga explores how economic forces reshape identity, morality, and social relationships. Capitalism offers opportunities for change, but it also creates new forms of inequality, corruption, and psychological pressure. Balram's transformation shows the complex journey of individuals trying to escape traditional identities while struggling within a competitive and often unethical system. The novel suggests that while capitalism has the power to reshape Indian identity, it also forces society to confront serious moral questions about justice, freedom and the meaning of success.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Adiga, Aravind. (2008.) *The White Tiger*. Harper Collins, U.K.
2. Chakrabarty, Dipesh. (2000) *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
3. Harvey, David. (2005.) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, U.K.
4. Hall, Stuart. (1990.) "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart. U.K.

Revisiting Class Structures in Contemporary Indian Fiction: A Study of the White Tiger

Dr. Sandeep Sambhaji Dhore

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026-030230



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20793190

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20793190>

Volume: 3
Issue: 2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Suryadatta College of Management,
Information Research & Technology,
Bavdhan, Pune
Email- sandipdhore100@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Sandeep Sambhaji Dhore (2026).
Revisiting Class Structures in
Contemporary Indian Fiction: A Study of
the White Tiger. International Journal of
English and World Languages &
Literature Paradigm Shift in
International Research, 3(2(I)), 119-121.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Sandeep Sambhaji Dhore,
Suryadatta College of Management,
Information Research & Technology,
Bavdhan, Pune
Email- sandipdhore100@gmail.com

Abstract

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), a Booker Prize-winning debut novel, offers a sharp and darkly humorous critique of India's entrenched class and caste hierarchies in the backdrop of globalization and capitalist expansion. Through the retrospective narration of Balram Halwai—a chauffeur turned entrepreneur—the novel explores the stark binaries of “Light” and “Darkness” that define contemporary Indian society. Balram's journey from servitude in rural Laxmangarh to entrepreneurial success in Bangalore exposes systemic inequalities rooted in caste, corruption, and economic disparity. His act of rebellion—murdering his master to escape the “Rooster Coop” of oppression—symbolizes both liberation and moral ambiguity, reflecting the compromises demanded by a capitalist order. This research paper critically examines how Adiga uses satire, symbolism, and retrospective narration to portray class conflict and social mobility, while also interrogating the costs of individual freedom in a society divided by wealth and power. By situating the novel within the larger context of postcolonial India's rapid globalization, this study highlights *The White Tiger* as a compelling commentary on the aspirations and anxieties of the nation's underclass, ultimately positioning Balram as a complex emblem of resistance and transformation.

Key words: Class conflict, Caste hierarchy, Capitalism, Globalization, Social inequality, Resistance and transformation

Introduction-

Aravind Adiga, one of the most celebrated voices in contemporary Indian English literature, was born on 23 October 1974 in Chennai. He was born into a well-educated and prominent family. His father, Dr. K. Madhava Adiga, and his mother, Usha Adiga, originally hailed from Mangalore, a coastal town in Karnataka. His paternal grandfather, the late K. Suryanarayana Adiga, had been the chairman of Karnataka Bank, a position that symbolized not only social standing but also a tradition of financial knowledge and responsibility. On his maternal side, his great-grandfather, U. Rama Rao, was a respected doctor in Madras as well as an active Congress politician. This legacy of both professional excellence and civic engagement helped to shape Adiga's outlook on society and politics.

Adiga spent most of his childhood in Mangalore, where he studied first at Canara High School and then at the well-regarded St. Aloysius College. His academic brilliance was evident early in life: in 1990, when he appeared for the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination, he secured the first rank in the entire state of Karnataka. Interestingly, academic excellence was something of a family tradition, as his elder brother Anand had earlier placed second in SSLC and first in the Pre-University Course (PUC) exams. These achievements marked Adiga as a bright student destined for a significant career in academics and beyond.

In the early 1990s, Adiga's family emigrated to Sydney, Australia, where he continued his secondary schooling at James Ruse Agricultural High School, one of the top-performing schools in the country. His education abroad broadened his worldview and gave him direct experience of life outside India. From Sydney, he moved to the United States for higher education. He pursued English literature at Columbia University in New York City, where he studied under the guidance of professors such as Simon Schama. At Columbia, he graduated in 1997 with distinction, serving as salutatorian of his class. His intellectual curiosity and love of literature then took him to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he studied under the supervision of the distinguished literary critic Hermione Lee. This combination of Indian upbringing and Western education deeply influenced Adiga's literary voice, which blends intimate knowledge of Indian realities with the stylistic sophistication of global literature.

After completing his studies, Adiga began his professional career in journalism. He initially worked as a financial journalist, interning at the Financial Times. His early assignments included covering stock markets and investment trends. During this period, he wrote several articles for Financial Times and Money, and even had the opportunity to interview prominent business figures, including Donald Trump. He also contributed to literary criticism, writing a review of Booker Prize winner Peter Carey's *Oscar* and *Lucinda* for *The Second Circle*, an online literary review platform.

Adiga's career progressed when he joined TIME magazine, where he served as the South Asia correspondent for three years. Based in India, he covered political, social, and economic developments in the region. However, despite his success in journalism, he eventually left his full-time role to become a freelance writer. It was during this freelance phase that he began to focus seriously on fiction. This transition led to the writing of his debut novel, *The White Tiger*, a work that would not only change his career but also leave a deep mark on Indian English literature. Today, Adiga lives in Mumbai, Maharashtra, continuing to write and observe the shifting socio-economic landscapes of modern India.

The White Tiger and Its Significance

The White Tiger was Adiga's first novel Published in 2008, and it quickly established him as a major literary voice. The novel won the prestigious 40th Man Booker Prize in the same year, making him the second youngest writer at the time, as well as only the fourth debut novelist to receive the award. The novel was praised for its originality, bold voice, and its unflinching portrayal of the darker realities of modern India. It also became a commercial success, appearing on the New York Times bestseller list.

The White Tiger is narrated retrospectively by Balram Halwai, a village boy who rises from poverty to become an entrepreneur. Structured as a series of letters written over seven nights to the visiting Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, the narrative is at once confessional, satirical, and reflective. Through Balram's voice, Adiga examines the deep and troubling inequalities of Indian society, ranging from caste discrimination to the corruption embedded in politics and business.

The story follows Balram's journey from his humble beginnings in the rural village of Laxmangarh. Born into the Halwai (sweet-maker) caste, he was a bright student but was forced to leave school to help support his family by working in a tea shop. There, he learned about politics, government, and economics by listening to conversations among the shop's customers. Ambitious and observant, he decided to become a driver. After training, he found work driving Ashok, the son of one of Laxmangarh's wealthy landlords. Balram worked as a chauffeur for Ashok and his wife Pinky Madam, and then gradually moved with them to Delhi, where he was exposed to the massive corruption of government and the stark contrast between rich and poor.

One night Pinky Madam takes the wheel from Balram, while drunk, hits something in the road and drives away; we are left to assume that she has killed a child. Ashok's family puts pressure on Balram to confess that he had been driving alone. Ashok becomes increasingly involved in bribing government officials for the benefit of the family coal business. Balram then decides that killing Ashok will be the only way to escape India's Rooster Coop. After hitting Ashok with a bottle and stealing a large bribe, Balram moves to Bangalore, where he bribes the police in order to help start his own taxi business. Ashok too is portrayed to be trapped in the metaphorical Rooster Coop: his family controls what he does and society dictates how he acts. Just like Ashok, Balram pays off a family whose son one of his taxi drivers hit and killed. Balram explains that his own family was almost certainly killed by Ashok's relatives as retribution for his murder. At the end of the novel, Balram rationalizes his actions and considers that his freedom is worth the lives of his family and of Ashok. And thus ends the letter to Jiabao, letting the reader think of the dark humour of the tale, as well as the idea of life as a trap introduced by the writer.

Social class/caste:

One of the novel's central themes is the stark divide between "the Darkness" and "the Light." The Darkness represents the rural, impoverished India where people live under crushing poverty and servitude. The Light symbolizes the urban centers of progress, wealth, and opportunity. Balram, in his journey, attempts to move from the Darkness to the Light, but his path is paved with corruption and violence.

The metaphor of the "Rooster Coop" is one of Adiga's most powerful symbols. Balram describes the poor of India as roosters in a cage, aware of their exploitation and eventual slaughter but unwilling or unable to rebel. This metaphor captures the social conditioning that keeps the underclass subservient. Balram's murder of Ashok represents his own escape from this Coop, though at the cost of betraying his family and moral conscience.

Another recurring metaphor is the "White Tiger" itself. Early in his childhood, an inspector singles out Balram as exceptionally intelligent and calls him a "white tiger," a rare creature that appears once in a generation. Balram adopts this identity, seeing himself as unique, destined to break free from the oppressive cycle of poverty that traps others. *The White Tiger* becomes both a symbol of his ambition and his justification for breaking social rules.

The novel also engages with globalization and Americanization. Ashok and Pinky Madam, who return from the United States, bring with them consumerist values and Western lifestyles. Their move to Gurgaon, a rapidly modernizing suburb of Delhi filled with shopping malls and multinational offices, reflects the influence of global capital on Indian cities. Balram too is affected by globalization, aspiring to be an entrepreneur and adapt to the changing economy. His statement, "I'm always a man who sees tomorrow when others see today," reflects his desire to stay ahead in a rapidly transforming world.

Critical Analysis

Critics have noted that *The White Tiger* is more than just a novel about personal ambition—it is a scathing critique of India's social, political, and economic systems. Adiga gives voice to the "colossal underclass" of India, people often ignored in mainstream narratives of development and globalization.

Balram represents both resistance and complicity. On one hand, he refuses to remain trapped in servitude like his family, embodying a rare courage to break free. On the other hand, his success is built on violence, betrayal, and bribery, showing that upward mobility in a corrupt system often requires becoming part of that corruption. His journey

illustrates the paradox of freedom in a capitalist society: to liberate oneself from oppression often means adopting the very practices of exploitation one seeks to escape. Adiga's choice of narrative style also strengthens the critique. By having Balram directly address a foreign leader, the story takes the form of a confessional yet ironic guide to "real" India. It contrasts the shining image of India as a rising economic power with the grim realities of poverty, corruption, and social immobility.

Balram's reflections on caste are particularly revealing. He notes that in modern India, caste is increasingly intertwined with class and economic status. He summarizes the division starkly: there are "Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies," or in other words, the exploiters and the exploited. This reduction strips caste to its economic function, highlighting how capitalist growth has not erased but reshaped social inequalities.

Conclusion

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* stands as one of the most significant novels in contemporary Indian English literature. Through the journey of Balram Halwai, Adiga sheds light on the harsh realities of caste, class, corruption, and globalization. The novel's power lies in its dark humor, its unflinching portrayal of systemic inequality, and its refusal to offer easy moral judgments. Balram's rise from servant to entrepreneur captures both the possibilities and the perils of ambition in a capitalist world.

In portraying India as divided between "Light" and "Darkness," Adiga forces readers—both Indian and international—to confront the contradictions of a rapidly globalizing society. While India celebrates its progress, the novel insists on remembering those left behind, those trapped in the Coop. Ultimately, *The White Tiger* is not only a story of one man's quest for freedom but also a commentary on the cost of that freedom in a deeply unequal world.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Adiga, Arvind. *The White Tiger*. India: Atlantic Books Ltd, 2008. Print.
2. Abrams, M. H. and Stephen Greenblatt. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2000: 2768 – 2785.
3. Stiglitz, Joseph. *Globalization and its Discontents*. Penguin London, Books: 2002.
4. Chatterjee, Subhankar. *Globalization in India: Effects and Consequences*, Web: India, 2015.
5. Krishna, Sankaran. *Globalization and Post colonialism*. Rowman and Littlefield publishers: US, 2009.
6. Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
7. Gupta, Suman. *Globalization and Literature*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 2009.

An Analysis of Speculative Themes in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, Focusing on Transhumanism, Science, and Technology

Nitin Annasaheb Varpe

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030231



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20793260

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20793260>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research Scholar

Department of English and PG Research
Centre, Sangamner Nagarpalika Arts,
D.J. Malpani Commerce & B.N. Sarda
Science College, Sangamner, Dist.
Ahilyanagar (M.S.), India
(Affiliated with Savitribai Phule Pune
University)

Email ID: nitinvarpe95@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Varpe, N. A. (2026). An Analysis of Speculative Themes in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, Focusing on Transhumanism, Science, and Technology. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 122–125.

Address for correspondence:

Nitin Annasaheb Varpe
Research Scholar
Department of English and PG Research
Centre, Sangamner Nagarpalika Arts,
D.J. Malpani Commerce & B.N. Sarda
Science College, Sangamner, Dist.
Ahilyanagar (M.S.), India
(Affiliated with Savitribai Phule Pune
University)
Email ID: nitinvarpe95@gmail.com

Abstract

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* presents a dystopian vision. Scientific and technological advancements shape human life and society in profound and speculative ways. Speculative fiction is an umbrella genre. This covers stories that depart from realism, focusing on "what if" scenarios involving imagined worlds, superhuman elements, or futuristic concepts. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* stands as a seminal work of speculative fiction. That offers a chilling vision of a future society. This world is deeply designed and heavily relies on advanced science and technology. (Ehsan & Sheenam, 2024). This paper analyses the representation of transhumanism, science, and technology through the novel. The paper mainly focuses on their roles in social control, human enhancement, and dehumanisation. This paper analyses the speculative elements in *Brave New World*, specifically exploring its themes of transhumanism, the role of science, and technological control. The novel, written in 1932, describes a future society shaped by biotechnological manipulation, psychological conditioning, and systemic control mechanisms. Significant attention is paid to the role of technology and scientific advancement, not just as tools of control but as catalysts in reshaping human relationships and self-perception. The study further explores the implications of such a society, drawing parallels with contemporary socio-technological trends, thereby highlighting the enduring relevance of Huxley's vision. The analysis places significant emphasis on how technology and scientific progress function not merely as instruments of societal control but also as forces that fundamentally alter human interactions and personal identity.

Through textual analysis, the paper investigates themes such as genetic engineering, artificial reproduction, and the manipulation of human experience. It also situates the novel within contemporary debates on transhumanism, drawing parallels between Huxley's dystopia and emerging technologies in the 21st century. The findings suggest that *Brave New World* remains a critical lens through which to evaluate the promises and dangers of technological progress. Ultimately, this paper aims to break down these themes, focusing on how Huxley's representation of science and technology examines the possible consequences of unchecked scientific advancement and the loss of human freedom. This paper argues that Huxley's speculative vision remains relevant, raising urgent questions about autonomy, identity, and the future of humanity in an increasingly technologised world.

Keywords: science fiction, transhumanism, Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, science, technology, human enhancement, dehumanisation.

Introduction

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) serves as a foundational text in speculative fiction. Analysing the relationship of totalitarian control with revolutionary advancements in science and technology. Huxley presents a dystopian future where humanity is 'improved' via genetic engineering and technological manipulation, sacrificing individuality, emotional depth, and truth for stability, consent, and artificial happiness. The novel addresses transhumanist ideas of improving humanity through technology by demonstrating that such activities, when combined with authoritarian power, lead to profound alienation and dehumanisation. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley offers a chilling exploration of a future society wherein science and technology are manipulated to engineer human beings and regulate social order. Central to the narrative are issues of transhumanism, the transformation of human nature through science, and the pervasive role of technology in shaping society. The paper's core objective is to decode these themes, specifically analysing how Huxley uses his depiction of science and technology in the novel.

Science fiction has long served as a medium for exploring the possibilities of technological and scientific advancements. Among the most influential works in this genre is *Brave New World*, which presents a dystopian vision of a society controlled by technological efficiency and engineered order and stability. Huxley's narrative predicts a key development associated with transhumanism, a movement that advocates enhancing human capabilities through technology. The central idea discussed in this paper is the extent to which Huxley's speculative themes reflect and address modern technological ideologies.

Specifically, it examines how the novel portrays the intersection of science, technology, and human identity. The objectives of this study are as follows: (1)

to analyse the representation of transhumanist ideas in the novel, (2) to explore the role of science and technology in shaping social order, and (3) to review the relevance of these themes in contemporary discourse.

1. Transhumanism and Human Enhancement

Transhumanism is broadly defined as the enhancement of human capacities through technology. It is a core speculative theme in *Brave New World*. Huxley discusses several transhumanist concepts, particularly in the manipulation of human biology and psychology. Huxley's narrative foregrounds transhumanism through its depiction of genetic engineering, psychological conditioning, and pharmacological manipulation. The speculative use of biotechnology by the World State, specifically through 'decanting' and the 'Bokanovsky process'. It is a fictional central genetic engineering technique in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, used to mass-produce humans by cloning, thereby enabling the mass production of genetically fixed castes. While this aligns with transhumanist aims of overcoming natural human limits, this enhancement is fundamentally degraded, serving instead as a means of enforcing conformity and suppressing individuality. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, 'decanting' is the artificial birth process. In that process, factory-produced embryos are removed from bottles after 267 days of pregnancy, replacing natural birth. The 'Bokanovsky process' is a fictional, dystopian cloning method where a single fertilised human egg is split to create up to 96 identical embryos, ensuring mass production of identical, lower-caste citizens (Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons) to maintain social stability.

Decanting: In *Brave New World*, 'decanting' is the dystopian, technological replacement for natural birth, where babies are grown in bottles at the 'Hatchery' and conditioning centre and 'poured out' (decanted) in artificial factories rather than being born. The term is used to describe pouring babies out of the bottles. It is the final step after months of laboratory incubation. This process signifies the eradication of family and natural motherhood, allowing the state to clone, engineer, and label humans into social castes.

Bokanovsky Process: This is a 'super cloning' process described as a 'biological version of the assembly line, utilising X-ray exposure, alcohol dosing, cold, and oxygen elimination to force them to 'bud' (split). It involves subjecting fertilised eggs.

Unlike contemporary transhumanist philosophies that emphasise liberation and personal growth (Bostrom, 2005). Huxley's society employs enhancement technologies to eliminate reliance on individuality, independent thinking, and authentic human experiences. The rigid caste system, underpinned by genetic manipulation, ensures social stability at the cost of freedom, illustrating the ethical dangers of reducing humans to engineered products.

2.1 Genetic Engineering and Biological Individuality

The novel presents genetic engineering in predetermining individual capabilities and social roles through the Bokanovsky process and the caste system. Human embryos are artificially created and conditioned to fit into predetermined castes, challenging notions of natural birth and individual potential. This mechanisation of reproduction embodies a transhumanist vision where biology is subject to technological control.

2.2 Psychological Conditioning and Behavioural Engineering

Beyond genetics, Huxley explores psychological manipulation through hypnopaedic conditioning and pharmacological intervention (e.g., the use of soma). These techniques serve to suppress individuality and enforce conformity, highlighting the extension of transhumanist control from the physical to the mental sphere. The novel interrogates the ethical implications of such interventions, questioning the cost of engineered happiness and stability.

3. Science and Technological Control

Science in *Brave New World* serves as an instrument of power, shaping not only citizens' bodies but also their minds and emotions. The novel's portrayal of 'hypnopaedia' (sleep-teaching) as a method of behavioural conditioning reflects the speculative use of psychological technology to embed state ideology unquestioningly.

Hypnopaedia, through conditioning, which means 'sleep learning', aims to convey information to a person while they sleep. Hypnopaedia is the primary method for teaching moral behaviour.

Soma, a state-supplied drug, symbolises pharmacological control that suppresses pain, dissent, and critical thought, producing artificial happiness and emotional repression. This speculative use of science to manufacture consent and comfort for the people challenges the potential for technology to mask oppression with pleasure.

Soma is a fictional, habit-forming drug in the novel used by the World State to maintain social stability by producing euphoria and hallucinations. It acts effectively as an "opiate of the masses". It eliminates unhappiness, stress, and anger, preventing rebellion, and serves as a tool of control. This 'ideal pleasure drug' represents the ultimate speculative technology: a way to chemically bypass existential suffering and political criticism.

The Feelies are an advanced, immersive form of cinema that stimulates sight, sound, and touch, serving as a primary, superficial entertainment for the World State's citizens. They represent a fully engineered, sensory-driven pleasure, aimed at suppressing deeper emotions and intellectual thought through constant, shallow stimulation. Technology is used to saturate the senses, ensuring that citizens are obsessed with shallow entertainment to engage in critical thought.

3.1 Science as a Tool of Control and Social Stability

In *Brave New World*, science is not merely a means of human enhancement but a mechanism of social control. The state's use of scientific knowledge to regulate reproduction, behaviour, and consumption reflects a technology-based governance model.

The World State's control over scientific progress, as demonstrated by its suppression of innovations that could destabilise society, highlights the rigidity of this technologically driven dystopia. Mustapha Mond's characterisation

as the 'head cook' controlling scientific 'recipes' metaphorically represents the monopolisation of scientific knowledge to maintain power.

4. The Role of Technology in Sustaining the Social Hierarchy

Technological interventions reinforce the rigid caste system, ensuring social stability by limiting mobility and diversity. Science and advanced technology become an instrument to maintain the existing order, raising questions about the ethical use of technology in governance and the potential for dehumanisation.

4.1 Dehumanisation and Loss of Identity

Huxley's speculative vision extends to the mechanistic dehumanisation of individuals. Through the process, humans are objectified and brainwashed into passive conformity. The mass production of humans strips individuals of uniqueness, reducing them to commodities designed for predetermined social functions. The novel illustrates the way the 'World State' utilises scientific statements and administrative authority to shape societal standards and suppress individual thought. The denial of emotional sensitivity and cognitive openness results in a population characterised by coldness and rigidity, incapable of authentic relationships or critical reflection.

This mechanical dehumanisation raises serious ethical questions about the costs of technological progress when it surpasses human dignity and freedom of choice. Huxley's narrative warns against the sacrifice of individuality and genuine human experience in pursuit of social stability and technological mastery. The tension between collective stability and personal freedom is central to the narrative, highlighting the dangers of sacrificing autonomy for social order. The manipulation of human life leads to the decline of individuality. Characters are conditioned to accept their roles, resulting in a uniform society lacking critical thought, as a result of soma, hypnopaedia, and the feelies. These techniques suppress individuality and blur the boundaries between humans and technology.

5. Ethical and Philosophical Perspectives

Huxley's speculative themes invite reflection on the ethical boundaries of scientific intervention and the philosophical understanding of humanity. *Brave New World* challenges the fixedness of human nature by presenting a dynamic, engineered humanity. This raises philosophical debates about identity, authenticity, and the essence of being human in a technologically mediated world.

The novel's engineered uniformity and psychological conditioning result in the erosion of individuality.

5.1 The Illusion of Utopia While the society appears stable and content, the novel reveals underlying alienation and existential emptiness. Huxley questions the idea that scientific progress equates to human progress, emphasising the need for ethical considerations in technological development.

5. Contemporary Relevance and Conclusion

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* offers a thoroughly speculative exploration of transhumanism, science, and technology. It predicts many contemporary concerns about the future of humanity. It's a depiction of genetic biology, psychological conditioning, and technologically centred governance. The novel interrogates the prospects and dangers of scientific progress. It serves as a critical reminder that technological advancement must be balanced with ethical reflection to preserve human dignity, individuality, and freedom. Huxley's *Brave New World* remains a far-sighted exploration of speculative scientific and technological pathways, particularly in the context of modern transhumanist debates. Contemporary transhumanism promotes human enhancement for empowerment. Huxley's dystopia warns against the possibility of such technologies being co-opted for social control, leading to a loss of freedom, authenticity, and ethical principles.

The novel's exploration of genetic engineering, psychological conditioning, and pharmacological manipulation foregrounds the tension between technological progress and human values. Its depiction of mechanistic dehumanisation underscores the risks of reducing humans to mere objects within technological systems of power. It mirrors contemporary concerns about genetic engineering, surveillance, digital distractions, and the use of pharmacological tools to manage happiness. The use of 'soma', a drug to maintain instant happiness and suppress negative emotions, is similar to the usage of depression medications and recreational medicines today. The 'Bokanovsky process' correlates with modern genetic technologies. The novel highlights a world where science, technology, and social engineering are used to create a stable but artificial, dehumanised world. 'Sleep-teaching' matches the role of mass media and social media in shaping public opinion and encouraging conformity, resulting in a loss of individuality.

In conclusion, *Brave New World* offers a complex speculative vision that challenges readers to critically examine the ethical and social implications of science and technology. Urging precautions against the degradation of humanity in the desire for technological advancement.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Bostrom, Nick. "A History of Transhumanist Thought." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–25.
2. Firchow, Peter Edgerly. *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World*. Bucknell University Press, 1984.
3. Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Chatto & Windus, 1932.

4. B.S.S. Bhagavan. "Loss Of Individuality And Dehumanization: A Critical Analysis Of Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World'". *Elementary Education Online*, vol. 19, no. 4, Dec. 2020, pp. 8562-71, <https://ilkogretim-online.org/index.php/pub/article/view/7738>.
5. Zou, Yawen. "Genetic Enhancement from the Perspective of Transhumanism: Exploring a New Paradigm of Transhuman Evolution." *Medicine, Health Care, and Philosophy*, vol. 27, no. 4, Aug. 2024, pp. 529–544, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-024-10224-9>.
6. Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava. "TRANSHUMANISM AS A SECULARIST FAITH." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 47, no. 4, Dec. 2012, pp. 710–734, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2012.01288.x>.
7. Dr. R. V. Sheela,, "THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIETY IN ALDOUS HUXLEY'S BRAVE NEW WORLD", *IJRAR - International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138, Volume.3, Issue 3, Page No pp.897-903, August 2016, Available at : <http://www.ijrar.org/IJRAR19D4146.pdf>
8. Ehsan, Bazila, and Sheenam. "Dystopia and Technological Domination: An Analysis of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. S2-July, July 2024, pp. 57–62, <https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12is2-july.7875>.
9. Klonowska, Barbara, et al. "Brave New Human in (Trans/Post)Humanist Utopias: Introduction." *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, vol. 66, no. 11 Zeszyt specjalny, 2018, pp. 7–14, <https://doi.org/10.18290/rh.2018.66.11s-1>. Accessed 19 Nov. 2019.
10. Frost, Laura. "Huxley's Feelies: The Cinema of Sensation in 'Brave New World.'" *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2006, pp. 443–73. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20479785>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2026.
11. 'Glyn, Mrs Clayton, (Elinor), (died 23 Sept. 1943)' (2007) *Who Was Who* [Preprint]. doi:10.1093/ww/9780199540884.013.u225893.
12. Mirenayat, Sayyed Ali. "Evolutionary Transformation Into Transhuman and Posthuman in Selected 21st Century Science Fiction Novels." *Universiti Putra Malaysia Institutional Repository (Universiti Putra Malaysia)*, 1 Apr. 2018, psasir.upm.edu.my/id/eprint/75545/1/FBMK%202018%2044%20IR.pdf.
13. Clayton, Jay. "The Modern Synthesis: Genetics and Dystopia in the Huxley Circle." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 23, no. 4, Jan. 2016, pp. 875–96. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2016.0078>.
14. Pijnenborg, Robert. "Manipulating Human Reproduction: A Retrospective View on Aldous Huxley's Brave New World" *Gynaecologic and Obstetric Investigation*, vol. 61, no. 3, Jan. 2006, pp. 149–54. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000090627>.

A Cultural-Existential Study of Middle-Class Consciousness in R. K. Narayan's Selected Fictions

Ajit Atmaram Wable¹ Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad²

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030232



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0

International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20793417

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20793417>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹ Ph. D Research Scholar,
S.P.S.'s S. N Arts, D. J.
Malpani Com. &
B.N. Sarda Sci. College
(Auto) Sangamner.

² Head & Guide, Assistant
Professor, English,
MGV's Arts, Science &
Commerce College, Nampur, Tal-
Baglan, Dist-Nashik
E-mail: wableajit5@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Wable, A. A., & Gaikwad, K. B. (2026).
A Cultural-Existential Study of Middle-
Class Consciousness in R. K. Narayan's
Selected Fictions. *International Journal
of English and World Languages Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research*, 3(2(I)), 126–129.

Address for correspondence:

Ajit Atmaram Wable, Ph. D Research
Scholar, S.P.S.'s S. N Arts, D. J. Malpani
Com. & B.N. Sarda Sci. College (Auto)
Sangamner.
E-mail: wableajit5@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the cultural and existential dimensions of middle-class consciousness in R. K. Narayan's selected fictions. It on novels such as *The Guide*, *The Financial Expert*, and *The Vendor of Sweets*, it analyses how characters negotiate the tension between real and ideal within a socio-cultural framework. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines cultural studies and existential philosophy to explore themes of identity, morality and selfhood. It argues that Narayan's fictional world, particularly Malgudi, reflects the complexities of Indian middle-class life shaped by tradition, modernity and socio-economic change. By situating Narayan's work within emerging trends in English studies, the research highlights the significance of cultural-existential analysis in interpreting postcolonial literary texts.

Keywords: Middle-Class Consciousness, Cultural Existentialism, R K Narayan, Malgudi, Indian English Fiction

Introduction

R. K. Narayan's fictional universe, particularly the imagined town of Malgudi, offers a nuanced and layered representation of Indian middle-class life situated within a dynamic socio-cultural milieu. His narratives capture the lived experiences of ordinary individuals which negotiate between inherited cultural values and emerging modern aspirations. It thereby reflects a distinct form of middle-class consciousness embedded in postcolonial India. The middle class in Narayan's fiction is neither merely an economic category nor a passive social entity; rather, it emerges as a site of cultural negotiation, moral tension and existential questioning.

Narayan's protagonists frequently inhabit a liminal space where the ideal rooted in tradition, morality and social expectations collides with the real. It is shaped by economic pressures, individual desires and changing societal structures. This conflict produces a subtle yet persistent existential anxiety, manifested through dilemmas of identity, ethical ambiguity and self-realisation. For instance, the moral contradictions in *The Guide* and the psychological tensions in *The Vendor of Sweets* reveal how individuals oscillate between illusion and reality while attempting to sustain social legitimacy (Hossain et al., 2025; Subramony, 2025). In the context of emerging trends in English studies, there is a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches that integrate literary analysis with cultural and philosophical frameworks. This study, therefore, seeks to examine Narayan's fiction through a cultural-existential lens, foregrounding the complex interplay between society, culture and individual consciousness. Such an approach not only redefines his realism but also situates his work within broader global discourses on middle-class identity and existential thought.

Review of Literature

Recent scholarship has increasingly foregrounded R. K. Narayan's engagement with socio-cultural realities and middle-class life. It emphasises that Malgudi functions as a representative microcosm of Indian society, wherein middle-class aspirations, anxieties and value systems are vividly articulated. Similarly, Yendrembam (2025) highlights Narayan's subtle social critique, arguing that his use of quiet humour exposes deeper structural contradictions within middle-class existence. Studies focusing on moral and psychological dimensions further enrich this discourse. It analyses themes of deception and self-discovery in *The Guide*, demonstrating how moral ambiguity becomes central to character development. Subramony (2025) revisits *The Vendor of Sweets* to explore civilizational tensions and ethical fragility, particularly in the context of modern consumerism. Likewise, Raghav (2026) interprets masculinity and moral disintegration in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, revealing how social power structures shape individual consciousness.

Gendered perspectives have also contributed significantly, with Rajput (2024) and Harisha and Guptha (2024) examining representations of women and their role within patriarchal middle-class frameworks. Additionally, Rukhsar and Lal (2025) brought out the metaphysical and existential dimensions in *The English Teacher*, thereby linking Narayan's narratives to broader philosophical concerns. Even, despite these diverse contributions, there remains a noticeable absence of a unified framework that integrates cultural analysis with existential philosophy in understanding middle-class consciousness. This study seeks to address this gap by offering a comprehensive cultural-existential interpretation of Narayan's selected fictions.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant in advancing a nuanced understanding of R. K. Narayan's fiction beyond conventional realist interpretations by situating it within a cultural-existential framework. While existing studies have examined themes of society, morality and identity in isolation, this research integrates these dimensions to foreground the complexity of middle-class consciousness in postcolonial India (Arya, 2025; Raghav, 2026). By analysing the conflict between real and ideal, the study highlights how cultural values and existential dilemmas intersect in shaping individual experience.

Moreover, in alignment with emerging interdisciplinary trends in English studies, the research bridges literature with cultural studies and existential philosophy, thereby contributing to contemporary academic discourse. It also offers a relevant comparative perspective by linking Narayan's work to global discussions on middle-class identity and consciousness (Nag, 2026; Szulc-Obłóza & Szczepaniak, 2024). Thus, the study holds both theoretical and pedagogical significance.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the representation of middle-class consciousness in R. K. Narayan's selected fictions within a socio-cultural context.
2. To analyse the interplay between cultural values and existential dilemmas, particularly the conflict between real and ideal in Narayan's narratives.
3. To develop a cultural-existential interpretative framework for understanding identity, morality and selfhood in Indian English fiction.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative, interpretative research design grounded in close textual analysis of selected novels, namely *The Guide*, *The Financial Expert*, and *The Vendor of Sweets*. It employs a cultural-existential framework integrating insights from cultural studies and existential philosophy to examine middle-class consciousness within its socio-cultural context. Primary texts are analysed thematically, focusing on identity, moral ambiguity and the conflict between real and ideal. Secondary sources include recent journal articles and critical works are used to contextualise the analysis.

Cultural Construction of Middle-Class Consciousness in Malgudi

R. K. Narayan's Malgudi is not merely a fictional setting but a carefully constructed cultural space that embodies the lived realities of the Indian middle class. As a literary creation, Malgudi functions as a microcosm of Indian society, reflecting its social structures, cultural values and everyday practices in a condensed yet representative form. Through this imagined geography, Narayan captures the rhythms of ordinary life, thereby transforming the middle class into a central subject of literary inquiry.

The middle-class consciousness in Malgudi is shaped by a delicate balance between tradition and transition. Characters inhabit a social world governed by familial obligations, religious beliefs and community expectations, yet they are simultaneously exposed to modern influences such as education, commerce and urban aspirations. This duality produces a distinctive cultural sensibility marked by negotiation rather than rupture. Narayan's narratives reveal that middle-class individuals do not abandon tradition but reinterpret it in response to changing socio-economic realities. In this sense, Malgudi becomes a site where continuity and change coexist, often generating subtle tensions within everyday life.

A significant aspect of this cultural construction lies in Narayan's portrayal of the "ordinary individual" as a bearer of social meaning. His protagonist's teachers, shopkeepers, clerks and small entrepreneurs represent what may be termed the "everyday Indian hero," whose struggles are neither heroic in the classical sense nor trivial in their implications. Their lives are structured by modest aspirations, moral anxieties and social limitations, which together constitute the psychological fabric of middle-class consciousness. This ordinariness is not incidental; rather, it is central to Narayan's literary project of humanising social experience.

Furthermore, Malgudi's cultural environment is deeply embedded in social relationships and institutions. In particular family emerges as a primary site of identity formation, where values are transmitted and conflicts are negotiated. At the same time, institutions such as markets, schools and local governance bodies reflect the broader socio-cultural dynamics of Indian life. Narayan's subtle irony often exposes the contradictions inherent in these structures, suggesting that middle-class stability is frequently sustained through compromise and adaptation.

Importantly, the cultural construction of middle-class consciousness in Malgudi is not static but dynamic. Social and political changes permeate the everyday lives of its inhabitants, altering their perceptions and choices. Yet, Narayan ceases from obvious ideological commentary; instead, he allows these changes to manifest through the lived experiences of his characters. This narrative strategy lends authenticity to his representation and enables a deeper understanding of how culture operates at the level of everyday life. Thus, Malgudi emerges as a symbolic and experiential space where middle-class consciousness is culturally produced, negotiated and sustained. Narayan's achievement lies in rendering this process with simplicity and depth which offers a profound commentary on Indian society through the lens of ordinary existence.

Existential Conflict and the Real Ideal Contrast in Selected Novels

The existential dimension of R. K. Narayan's fiction is most vividly spoken through the persistent conflict between the real and the ideal, which defines the inner lives of his characters. This contrast is not presented in abstract philosophical terms but emerges organically from the socio-cultural conditions of middle-class life. Narayan's protagonists are often caught between their aspirations shaped by moral ideals, social expectations and personal

desires and the constraints imposed by reality. It includes economic limitations, social norms and psychological vulnerabilities.

In *The Financial Expert*, the character of Margayya demonstrates this conflict through his persistent pursuit of wealth and social status. While his aspirations reflect an idealised vision of success, his actions reveal the precariousness of such ambitions, ultimately leading to his moral and financial downfall. Margayya's journey illustrates how the desire to exceed one's circumstances can generate existential anxiety, particularly when the ideal becomes separate from ethical grounding. His rise and fall thus symbolise the instability inherent in middle-class aspirations.

Similarly, *The Vendor of Sweets* presents the conflict between traditional values and modern impulses through the relationship between Jagan and his son Mali. Jagan's devotion to Gandhian ideals and cultural traditions stands in sharp contrast to Mali's embrace of Westernised modernity, creating a generational and ideological divide. This tension reflects a broader existential dilemma: the struggle to settle inherited values with changing realities. Jagan's eventual withdrawal from worldly life suggests a form of existential resolution, though one marked by renunciation rather than reconciliation.

In *The Guide*, the protagonist Raju symbolizes perhaps the most complex articulation of the real-ideal contrast. His transformation from a tourist guide to a spiritual figure is driven as much by circumstance as by self-deception, blurring the boundaries between authenticity and performance. The narrative raises fundamental questions about identity and selfhood: whether one becomes what one pretends to be and whether moral improvement is possible within the constraints of social reality. Raju's final act of sacrifice, ambiguous in its outcome, underscores the unresolved nature of existential conflict.

Across these texts, Narayan does not offer definitive solutions to the tension between real and ideal. Instead, he presents it as an enduring condition of human existence, particularly within the middle-class context. His characters neither fully achieve their ideals nor entirely yield to reality; rather, they inhabit a space of continuous negotiation, marked by uncertainty, compromise and occasional self-realisation.

What distinguishes Narayan's treatment of existential conflict is its cultural grounding. Unlike Western existentialism, which often emphasises alienation and absurdity, Narayan situates existential dilemmas within a framework of social relationships and cultural values. The individual is never entirely isolated but remains embedded within a network of familial and societal ties. Consequently, the conflict between real and ideal acquires a distinctly Indian dimension, shaped by collective norms as much as individual choice.

Conclusion

The study establishes that R. K. Narayan's fiction offers a profound exploration of middle-class consciousness shaped by cultural values and existential dilemmas. Through the imaginative landscape of Malgudi, Narayan presents the Indian middle class as a site of continuous negotiation between tradition and modernity, aspiration and limitation. The conflict between real and ideal emerges as a central narrative and philosophical concern reflecting the complexities of identity formation within a changing socio-cultural environment. Characters such as Raju, Margayya, and Jagan illustrate how individual choices are conditioned by cultural expectations, yet remain marked by uncertainty and moral ambiguity.

Importantly, Narayan's work redefines existential inquiry by situating it within everyday life rather than abstract philosophy. His fiction demonstrates that ordinary experiences are deeply embedded with philosophical significance. Thus, the study reaffirms Narayan's relevance in contemporary English studies, particularly in understanding the intersections of literature, culture and society.

Discussion

A close reading of Narayan's selected fictions reveals that middle-class consciousness in Malgudi evolves through a continuous negotiation between cultural inheritance and existential uncertainty. Malgudi operates as a socio-cultural microcosm where ordinary lives acquire deeper symbolic meaning. Within this space, characters such as Raju and Margayya embody the fragile balance between aspiration and limitation, reflecting what Yendrembam terms Narayan's "quiet social critique" embedded in everyday experience. The narratives suggest that moral ambiguity is not incidental but structurally rooted in middle-class life, shaped by competing demands of tradition and modernity (Hossain et al.). Furthermore, Subramony's reading of civilisational irony in *The Vendor of Sweets* underscores how cultural values are both sustained and destabilised through individual choices. Thus, Narayan's fiction may be understood as a culturally grounded exploration of existential consciousness within the Indian middle-class milieu.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Arya, Pallavi. "Portrayal of Middle-Class Indian Life in R. K. Narayan's Malgudi: A Socio-Cultural Study through His English Fiction." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications*, vol. 3, no. 7, 2025, doi:10.61877/ijmrp.v3i7.294.
2. Yendrembam, Gautam. "Quiet Laughter and Unspoken Voices: A Study of Social Critique in R. K. Narayan's Short Stories." *International Journal of Fictional Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 7, no. 6, 2025, doi:10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i06.63904.

3. Subramony, Ramaswami. "Moral Fragility and Civilizational Irony: Naipaul's Critique of R. K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* Reconsidered." *Scholarly Literary Journal*, vol. 8, 2025, pp. 49–61, doi:10.29038/2617-6696.2025.8.49.61.
4. Hossain, Md. Sazzad, et al. "Deception and Self-Discovery in R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*: Analyzing the Themes of Morality." *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, vol. 8, no. 5, 2025, doi:10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i5-82.
5. Raghav, Neha. "When Strength Turns Against Itself: Masculinity and Moral Disintegration in R. K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*." *SMJI Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2026, doi:10.24113/smji.v14i2.11674.
6. Rajput, Chetanaba Gulabsinh. "R. K. Narayan's Representations of Women in Indian Society with Reference to *The Guide*." *IJARST*, 2024, doi:10.48175/IJARST-15461.
7. Harisha, D. L., and Arthi Guptha. "Role of Women in R. K. Narayan's Novels." *Shodhkosh Journal*, vol. 5, no. 7, 2024, doi:10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i7.2024.5024.
8. Rukhsar, Sar, and Rajan Lal. "Metaphysical and Mystical Dimensions in R. K. Narayan's *The English Teacher*: A Critical Study." *SPL Journal of Language and Humanities*, 2025, doi:10.64846/SPLJLH.2025.5215.

The Interplay of Religion and Racial Issues in the Context of Slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

More Hrishikesh Suresh

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030233



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20794218

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20794218>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (1)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Abstract

Religion plays a crucial role in shaping human life and promoting the values of humanity. However, basic human nature often becomes an obstacle to putting religious principles into practice. Harriet Beecher Stowe's renowned American novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* explores public attitudes toward African Americans and the institution of slavery during its time. Written in response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required citizens in Northern states to return escaped slaves to the South, the novel demonstrates how Stowe sought to influence public opinion. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became a turning point in the tensions between the North and South, ultimately contributing to the Civil War and the preservation of the United States as a unified nation. Reflecting its impact, Abraham Lincoln reportedly greeted Stowe in 1862 by saying, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war." The novel was not only a powerful antislavery statement but also a remarkable work of literature that inspired compassion and a sense of humanity through its religious themes. Two slaves, Cassy and Emmeline, are hiding from their cruel master, Simon Legree. When Simon threatens to beat Tom if he does not reveal their location, Tom—a devout Christian and a loyal, hardworking slave—refuses. Enraged, Legree vows to conquer or kill Tom. In response, Tom, guided by his steadfast religious faith, offers love and compassion even to his enemy. This deeply frustrates Legree, as the bond of religion and humanity between them obstructs his selfish desire to perpetuate slavery. As the renowned poet Langston Hughes described in 1950, the novel serves as a "moral battle cry for freedom." While Stowe did not explicitly argue for racial equality, her advocacy focused on the power of religion and the sanctity of motherhood and family. She believed these themes would resonate most strongly with Northern readers and influence public opinion toward the abolition of slavery. This belief explains why she chose to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* rather than relying on speeches, newspaper articles, or other forms of activism.

Keywords: Religion, Humanity, Race, faith, abolish, slavery.

Introduction

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* portrays the social condition of individuals in the mid-nineteenth century, offering a realistic depiction of the lives of enslaved people. At the heart of the novel lies the theme of family relationships, which are deeply affected by the institution of slavery. Slavery emerges as a system driven by the selfish motives of those in positions of power within society. The desire for freedom from slavery stands as a central concern of this study. The condition of slavery gives rise to themes such as suppression, contradiction, disorder, confusion, hatred, and the persistent struggle for freedom. It represents a state in which an individual, group, or community is exploited by a dominant force, thus functioning as a process of domination and subordination. This framework raises the question of who enslaves whom and why. Beyond this basic understanding, the dynamics of domination and subordination involve complex theoretical issues. In this context, the philosopher Hegel's concept of the self and the other highlights unequal relationships, privileging the "self" over the "other." Similarly, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the dominant race exercises power over a less powerful one, largely driven by self-interest.

Literature as a mode of discursive expression always measures to give voice to the slavery. It sensitizes us to condition of oppressed, the alienated, the discriminated and the one who exists as if non-human animals. At the level of slavery, the problem has two dimensions. On one side the slavery of all the persons belonging to a particular race. At another side the slavery of female of that race, doubly oppressed—a slave along with sexual object. Further, in critical reading of slave characters they do not draw our attention to their socio-cultural status, but location in unsympathetic, unidentified and voiceless figures. The voice of the slave is mostly muted. The paper highlights a perspective of religion and its impact on race and slavery, expressions of slaves in literature. Harriet Beecher Stowe explains in the last chapter why she wrote the book (she calls herself "the author"). "For many years of her life, the author avoided all reading upon or allusion to the subject of slavery, considering it as too painful to be inquired into, and one which advancing light and civilization would certainly live down. But, since the legislative act of 1850, when she heard, with perfect surprise and consternation, Christian and humane people actually recommending the remaining escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizens, —

Annasaheb Magar Mahavidyalaya,
Hadapsar, Pune-411028
Email id: hrish.more@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

More, H. S. (2026). *The Interplay of Religion and Racial Issues in the Context of Slavery in Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(1)), 130–134.

Address for correspondence:

More Hrishikesh Suresh
Annasaheb Magar Mahavidyalaya,
Hadapsar, Pune-411028
Email id: hrish.more@gmail.com

when she heard, on all hands, from kind, compassionate and estimable people, in the free states of the North, deliberations and as to what Christian duty could be on this head,—she could only think, These men and Christians cannot know what slavery is; if they did, such a question could never be open for discussion. And from this arose a desire to exhibit it in a living dramatic reality.”

Stowe's radical ideas and its traditional presentation are some of the strength of the novel which intensifies the message of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In fact, Abraham Lincoln has quoted about Stowe and her novel as saying, “so this is little woman who caused the great war!” (In reference to the Civil War, qtd. In Seiler 136). The novel ignited great fire and gathered sympathy on behalf of the slaves for the sensitive treatment given to the slave families and their sufferings. In consequence, the entire world was moved to react against the practice of slavery for grand success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It grew to be one of the strongest antislavery books and was even credited with living the movement to initiate the Civil War. Stowe incorporated several strongly debated issues of her time in the novel, including gender roles and slavery. However, she was careful to work within the accepted social boundaries and was thus able to appeal to many groups through her novel. Nevertheless, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was highly controversial and sparked a storm of discussion and action from the entire world. This paper explores the issues contained within the novel and their presentation, and the reactions of the American public and the world.

The writer who makes effort on these kinds of writings like voices of slaves for their freedom that forms the part of literature. Here, the root of such kind of writing arises for some times from such depressed & oppressed situation for the quest of their life. It deals not only with the class struggle, between rich and poor but also the struggle between races and it is seen from the Lower Race's point of view, the suppressed, the 'captive', the slave. The writer stresses on the social exclusion, disorder and spiritual flexibility encourage their ultimate destination. All the voices of slaves are the outcome of their self-experienced feeling of their own point of view. Some examples of voice of slave characters are studied in this perspective like Tom and Eliza. The paper highlights the voice of Slaves in Racial and Religious context in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'.

The contextualized slavery in an Inter-disciplinary framework with reference to past and with its possible effects on life in future and also provides a comparative platform of literary study between Race and Slave discourses with influence of Religious faith. The chief concern of this research paper is to review literature on slavery in this relation.

Objectives

The main aim of this paper is to examine the emergence of modern forms of slavery while analyzing the portrayal of slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, particularly in relation to racial attitudes and the influence of religion. The study explores human relationships in the novel, contrasting the actions of rebellious slaves with those of passive ones, and highlights social and racial conflicts in American society through the characters of the oppressed Tom and the oppressive Simon Legree. The quest for self-respect and recognition as a human being emerges as a central concern in the novel. This paper also focuses on themes of love, humanity, and the struggle for freedom from slavery, emphasizing how Stowe addresses the broader issues of equality and the moral imperative of religion, regardless of race or region.

Main Arguments

Social Issues of Race

The literary approach utilizes strong conflict resolution strategies. It directly address the conflict through controversy and exhibiting themes, encouraging the community to reflect and take responsibility for their contribution from current day race relations in America.

Uncle Tom's Cabin attempts advancement of remedy to the conflict between the two different races and to evoke creative, relevant and suitable solutions for developing and maintaining harmonious relations. Religion transforms the realm of possibilities for conflict resolution, and it can hasten approaches to building peace. Although religion approaches to conflict resolution can lead to peace building, how can these alternative options make a significant impact on race? In order to conflict resolution, religion attempts to achieve social change, it must address the controversy associated with the conflict. The investigation of incorporating themes, like spirituality, assists in accomplishing this goal.

However, Stowe personify how race, with a spiritual undertone, can significantly influence the national dialogue, disrupt the government's hegemony over countrywide contentment, inspire the community to take action, and incite social change within a nation spoiled by injustice. Stowe takes a creative approach to address the destructive conflict of race relations in the nation. Stowe emphasizes the conflict between the in-group of slave owners and the out-group of tortured slaves, artistically unveiling the unthinkable anguish and acts of horror. This exposure evoked praise and criticism from supporters and denouncers of the controversial subject matter. In accordance to Condee (2010) “this tension between *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* initial reception and its racist legacy makes it a unique lens for understanding changing race relations in the United States” (p. 33). Even though, the portrayals of both the races were disturbing, they courageously addressed conflict and created uproar from the community. Stowe utilized literary art to demonstrate the uncomfortable and demoralizing conflict of slavery in the southern region of America.

Stowe used artistic expression to exhibit what Pruitt and Kim (2004) describe as social identity theory. As per theory of Pruitt and Kim, social identity theory leads to the in-group, represented by the Caucasian or *white* or *light-skinned* race slave owners, possessing a prejudice against the out-group, or African slaves. The in-group believed that they were superior to the out-group, contributing to the merciless conflict integrated in scorn of the out-group. This mentality made it possible for the in-group to view the slaves as property, take resources from them, and detach them.

Stowe presents the amicable Caucasian characters in the likeness of God, as the pure savior coming to the rescue of the incompetent African Savage Race. This representation is evident in the case of *Topsy*, the little girl character of African descent. She was a child introduced to Christianity by the white woman character *Ophelia*. Prior to *Topsy* becoming saved, she often described herself as being wicked. Others perceived her as unlovable and unable to love. Eventually, spirituality and the love of *Eva* inspired *Topsy* to want to be a good person, capable of making morally sound decisions. She responded to *Eva*'s heartfelt declarations of love, motivated by her desire to be good, with her own assertions of how she would try extremely hard to do the right thing. She cried out about not caring to do well prior to *Eva* entering into her life, but she became inspired to do right by this symbolization of the "great white hope." The intense encouragement from *Eva* inspired *Topsy* to become more religious and strive for righteousness. *Eva*'s pure heart, shaped by her deep spirituality, was evident in the fact that she genuinely loved the little black girl that nobody cared to acknowledge. Stowe used the character of *Eva* to speak life and positivity into *Topsy*.

The work presented by Stowe provides present day scenarios of how addressing race relations through characters with an emphasis on slave influences society views of African-American people, impacts the literary approaches to conflict resolution, and redefine race relations in America.

Social issues of Slavery

Although many ideas in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are important, the most enduring and significant is that of the evil of slavery. Stowe's focus on the need to eradicate slavery comes from her heard multiple stories of the sexual exploitation of slaves, and she fought against this in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In fact, as Reynolds notes, Stowe's aunt, Mary Foote, once married a Jamaican planter, but when she discovered that he had "sired several of his slaves," she left him and returned to America (Reynolds 59). This and many more events and stories in themselves provided Stowe with adequate motivation to fight slavery, and she thus combated it by directly and indirectly criticizing the injustice of the slave practiced of her times.

Stowe exemplifies ability of literature to capture conflict and impart it through a compelling story, forcing audiences to assess their personal perspectives. This is evident when examining the marriage between the slave George and his wife Eliza. This marriage was not legally recognized, and they were separated and sold off to different slave owners. This would force George to buy back his own wife and child, a revolting sentiment, and arguably soul-stirring ideal as well. This literary interpretation of a real-life occurrence provided a tool to exchange ideas for keeping aside to the people from practicing or supporting slavery.

Eliza, a rebellious slave's successful attempt for freedom of her son Harry and herself shows her gist for existence. In addition, her rebel against owner is symbolic representation of save's search for existence. As search for freedom is the sign of existence most of the characters excluding Tom are in search of their freedom. But, Tom's struggle for freedom and urge for all existence was unlike Eliza. His struggle was for all slaves to get freedom from slavery. He accepts death for all the slaves and proves himself a martyr. Hence everywhere there is struggle for existence. That's why there begins the emergence of voices of slaves to shape their life through their own freedom. It succeeds creating sympathy in the mind of owners of the slaves like George Selby, representing all others of his Race. By presenting Tom the way she does, Stowe manages to create sympathy for the black race and illustrate her idea of perfect humanity. Irrespective of his race, "Uncle Tom's Lament for Eva," clears the fact where the author mourns,

"For 'twas in the night they laid you

Dear Eva, in thy grave,

E'en now my heart is breaking

O, God, in pity save" (Hirsch 314)

Pro-slavery critics condemned Stowe as a dangerous reformer and a woman who disguised her reforming ideas as virtuous and pure Christian notions, citing the tragic and violent scenes as well as the strongly opinionated characters of the novel as indications of Stowe's alarming messages. (Reynolds 45).

Impact of religion on race and slavery

Stowe continuously searched for a loving God as she struggled with the stern doctrine of "natural religion," that she presents through the character of Uncle Tom and his firm idea that faith could come only from the heart; in truth, he believed that faith could only come through belief in religious principles by seeking empathy for others and out of that showing sympathy towards them by restraining human instincts. Tom lost his life for the Christian truth which he so loved. Stowe's contemporaries saw Uncle Tom as symbolizing a man that was truly Christian regardless of skin color.

Religion and slavery are inextricably connected in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Slave-owners were actually extremely limited in their ability to simultaneously comply with the religion and to treat their slaves as human beings. Furthermore, slave-owners were urged not to free their slaves. Slaves were often left to despair because they had no religious protection whatsoever. Many such cases exist in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. For instance, George is legally taken from his profitable and fulfilling employment to a life of hard labor and misery because of his master's jealousy over his slave's success. In addition, Prue's master kills her because of her constant drunkenness, which is brought on because most of her children are sold and her one remaining child dies of neglect and hunger when Prue is not permitted to care for it (Stowe 198-199). In addition, Legree cruelly punishes and eventually kills Tom for his faithfulness and refusal to expose fugitive slaves. These examples are all illustrations of what was religion in Stowe's time.

Stowe idealizes the characters in the novel, especially that of Eva St. Clare and Uncle Tom as being more religious and not reflecting the actions of real people. However, what many contemporary critics fail to see is the deep-rooted

connection Stowe's novel makes with the most popular book and source of her time, The Bible. Furthermore by analyzing the characters of Uncle Tom and Eva St. Clare are carefully constructed call to Christianity. Furthermore, Stowe is able to insert her beliefs into the mouth of Eva as she asks some of the fundamental questions of the time, "Papa, isn't there any way to have all slaves made free" and "Doesn't the Bible say we must love everybody?" (Stowe 237-241). Only briefly touching on the death of Eva is to ignore one of the most heavily scrutinized passages in the novel.

Two slaves, Cassy and Emmeline, are hiding from their cruel master, Simon Legree. Simon threatens to beat Tom if he will not tell where Cassy and Emmeline are hiding. Tom, a Christian who has always been a loyal, hard-working slave, refuses and Simon swears that he'll conquer Tom or kill him. At this point the firm religious belief is visible of Tom, who follows footprints of Christ and accepts Christ-like death to win over Simon: "Tom looked up to his master, and answered, 'Mas'r, if you was sick, or in trouble, or dying, and I could save ye, I'd give ye my heart's blood; and, if taking every drop of blood in this poor old body would save your precious soul, I'd give 'em freely, as the Lord gave his for me. O, Mas'r! don't bring this gear sin on your soul! It will hurt your more than't will me! Do the worst you can, my troubles'll be over soon; but, if ye don't repent, yours wont't never end!'" (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, p.262).

According to Evans (2012), Stowe uses 'Uncle Tom' to teach whites how to suffer and endure in the midst of trying and painful circumstances (p. 499). Evans assesses how the inventive work of Stowe (1852) intervenes during a critical point in the nation's history, and addresses the national crisis and overwhelming conflict of slavery in America. Stowe inspires change on a massive scale by questioning the existence, confronting the expansion, and raising awareness about slavery's moral legitimacy. Stowe uses slave characters to present religious lessons to the White race, encourage them to read the Bible, and help them grasp spirituality and its impact on humanity, regardless of race.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, then, Stowe comes to the final view that, if religion is not in practice by masters, slaves must obey their consciences and do the right thing, even if it is against their masters. This attitude can be seen when George, Eliza, and Harry find the Birds, who help them to escape even though Senator Bird has voted for a law forbidding people even to feed or shelter runaway slaves (Stowe 78). However, Stowe makes it richly clear that such rebellion should not be violent; in contrast, Tom peacefully resists his master by keeping faith in religious principles. Tom accepts death of martyr to prove superiority of religious principles to adhere humanity and dismisses Legree's false pride of superior *white race* to African slaves.

Conclusion

The novel uses spirituality to connect to a deeper and basic side of the religion. Identifying that connection can provoke deep thought, leading to action in the community. Stowe uses God as a catalyst to address topics of morality and its relativity to slavery. This argument is evident through the depiction of pleasant slave owners, portrayed as helping the slaves by imposing their Christian beliefs, introducing their servants to God, and bettering the lives of their captures through this introduction.

Stowe planted seeds for social change through the creation of strong characters and compelling messages. The exploitation of the horrifying damage of slavery, such as, the separation of slave families, the raping of African females, and the violent abuse of people of African descent, led to a national uprising.

Indeed, the book intervenes in the nation's central crisis—the existence, moral legitimacy, and expansion of slavery. But Stowe also uses black characters (and women and children) to teach her audience about true religion, to read the Bible rightly, to feel and see the spiritual realm appropriately, and to deal with doubt and suffering with one's faith left intact or strengthened. She appealed to the emotions of readers. The idea that she could no longer bear the torment of witnessing the brutal captivity of African people alluded to the fact that slavery was not good or morally correct.

Ultimately, the novel attempts to build peace by providing strong conflict resolution devices because it encourages innovation and creativity. It defines the dominance of possible authority and represent an opportunity where imagination can become reality. Religious faith approaches bear potential to fully challenge our imagination in the search for creative, practicable and sustainable alternatives. It tries to build a bridge for peace making alternatives and also to break down barriers and create an environment that allows for open dialogue regarding uncomfortable, unsettling, and painful subjects. The novel puts forth the views as to conflict resolution can resolve the conflict between slaves and slave owners, the in-groups and the out-group, the oppressed and the oppressor because religion is conducive to an environment that promotes expression.

Stowe intended to use literary art as an informational tool to educate those who were not aware that the institution of slavery was morally, emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually wrong, bad, and demeaning. Furthermore, Hart (2008) examines and explores how the "distorted creative expressions are virtually sufficient to convince the masses about their 'role' in society as passive consumers of art and, above all, entrench an apathy and passivity that is difficult to unlearn or transform" (p. 189).

The compelling dialogue on race, religion, and slavery led to candid conversations within the community. The art of literature created by Stowe (1852) was the flame that ignited the Civil War according to Kaufman (2006) and "communicates messages of revolutionary change" according to Hart (2008, p. 189). In this instance, that revolutionary change meant war in order to arrive at peace, raising the issue of whether violence is an appropriate means for achieving peace, and if there are moral grounds for justified war.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Condee, W. F. "Uncle Tom's Cluster: Talking Race." *Theatre Topics*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2010, pp. 33–42.
2. Evans, C. "Religion in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *Journal of Religion*, vol. 92, no. 4, 2012, pp. 498–514.
3. Hart, B., editor. *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*. University Press of America, 2008.
4. Hirsch, Stephen A. "Uncle Tomitudes: The Popular Reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *Studies in the American Renaissance*, 1978, pp. 303–330. JSTOR. Web. 26 Sept. 2015.
5. Kaufman, Will. *The Civil War in American Culture*. Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
6. Pruitt, D. G., and Sung Hee Kim. *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. 3rd ed., McGraw-Hill, 2004.
7. Reynolds, David S. *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America*. Norton, 2011.
8. Seiler, Grace. "Harriet Beecher Stowe." *College English*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1949, pp. 127–137. JSTOR. Web. 26 Sept. 2015.
9. Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Edited by Elizabeth Ammons, Norton Critical Editions, 2010. Originally published 1852.

Cultural Identity and Representation in Literature

Kunal Kalyan Sonawane

Submitted: 13- Mar -2026 Revised: 22-Mar-2026 Accepted: 18-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030234



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Volume: 3
Issue:2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research Scholar (Ph. D.)
Department of English and Research
Centre
C. T. Bora College, Shirur
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune)
Email- kunalsanawane7897@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Kunal Kalyan Sonawane, (2026).
Cultural Identity and Representation in
Literature . International Journal of
English and World Languages &
Literature Paradigm Shift in
International Research, 3(2(I)),135-137.

Address for correspondence:

Kunal Kalyan Sonawane
Research Scholar (Ph. D.)
Department of English and Research
Centre
C. T. Bora College, Shirur
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University, Pune)
Email- kunalsanawane7897@gmail.com

Abstract:

Cultural identity and its representation in literature have emerged as central concerns in contemporary literary studies, particularly in the context of globalization, postcolonial discourse, and multicultural societies. This paper explores how literature functions as a powerful medium for constructing, negotiating, and expressing cultural identity. It examines the role of language, history, memory, migration, gender, and religion in shaping literary representations of identity. The study also investigates how literary texts challenge dominant narratives, resist cultural homogenization, and give voice to marginalized communities. Drawing on theoretical insights from postcolonial and cultural studies, this article argues that literature not only reflects cultural identities but actively participates in their formation and transformation. By analyzing the ethical dimensions of representation and the impact of globalization, the paper highlights the continuing relevance of literature in fostering intercultural understanding and dialogue. Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of literary representation in shaping perceptions of self and other in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: globalization, postcolonial discourse, and multicultural societies cultural homogenization

Introduction

Cultural identity and its representation in literature constitute one of the most compelling areas of critical inquiry, particularly in an age marked by globalization, migration, and intercultural encounters. Literature functions not merely as a mirror of society but as a powerful medium through which identities are constructed, negotiated, and contested. Cultural identity refers to an individual's or group's sense of belonging to a particular cultural community, shaped by shared traditions, language, history, religion, and social practices. In literary texts, this identity is neither static nor singular; rather, it is fluid, evolving, and often fraught with tensions arising from historical, political, and social forces. The relationship between literature and cultural identity is deeply intertwined. Literature reflects cultural realities while simultaneously shaping them. Writers draw upon their cultural contexts to create narratives that preserve traditions, articulate collective experiences, and interrogate dominant ideologies. At the same time, literary texts influence how readers perceive cultures, often shaping attitudes toward difference and diversity. This dual role underscores the importance of representation in literature, as the ways in which cultures are depicted can either reinforce stereotypes or challenge preconceived notions.

Historically, literary representation has often been shaped by power dynamics, particularly during the colonial period. Colonial literature frequently portrayed non-European cultures as exotic, inferior, or uncivilized, thereby legitimizing imperial domination. Such representations were not neutral but ideological, reflecting the interests and biases of the colonizers. The emergence of postcolonial literature marked a significant shift in this paradigm. Writers from formerly colonized societies began to reclaim their voices, rewriting history from their own perspectives and challenging colonial narratives. Through their works, they sought to restore dignity to their cultures and highlight the complexities of identity in postcolonial contexts.

Language plays a central role in the representation of cultural identity in literature. It is both a medium of expression and a repository of cultural knowledge. The choice of language in literary texts is often laden with political and cultural significance. Many postcolonial writers face the dilemma of whether to write in the language of the colonizer or in their native languages. Writing in a colonial language can provide access to a wider audience but may also entail the risk of cultural alienation. Conversely, writing in indigenous languages can affirm cultural identity but may limit readership. Some writers navigate this tension by blending languages, incorporating vernacular expressions, idioms, and oral traditions into their works. This linguistic hybridity enriches the text and reflects the lived realities of multilingual societies.

The concept of hybridity is central to contemporary discussions of cultural identity in literature. In a globalized world, identities are increasingly shaped by interactions between different cultures. Hybridity challenges the notion of a pure or fixed identity, emphasizing instead the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural belonging. Literary texts often depict characters who inhabit multiple cultural spaces, negotiating the complexities of their identities.

These characters may experience a sense of displacement or fragmentation, but they also have the potential to create new, hybrid identities that transcend traditional boundaries. Such representations highlight the transformative possibilities of cultural encounters.

Migration is another key theme that influences the representation of cultural identity in literature. Migrant narratives often explore the experiences of displacement, exile, and the search for belonging. Characters in these narratives frequently grapple with the tension between their homeland and their host country, leading to a sense of in-betweenness. This liminal space can be both challenging and empowering, as individuals navigate unfamiliar cultural landscapes while maintaining connections to their roots. Literature provides a space for articulating these experiences, offering insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of migration.

Memory and history are also integral to the construction of cultural identity in literature. Collective memory shapes how communities understand their past and define their present. Literary texts often serve as repositories of cultural memory, preserving stories, traditions, and historical experiences that might otherwise be forgotten. At the same time, literature can challenge dominant historical narratives by presenting alternative perspectives. This is particularly evident in works that address traumatic events such as colonization, war, and displacement. By revisiting these events, literature enables readers to engage with the complexities of history and its impact on identity.

The representation of cultural practices and traditions is another important aspect of cultural identity in literature. Through detailed descriptions of rituals, customs, and everyday life, writers create a vivid sense of cultural context. These representations allow readers to engage with cultures that may be different from their own, fostering greater understanding and empathy. However, representation is not without its challenges. The risk of stereotyping or cultural appropriation remains a significant concern. Simplistic or reductive portrayals can reinforce existing prejudices and obscure the diversity within cultural groups. Therefore, it is essential for writers to approach cultural representation with sensitivity and authenticity, ensuring that their portrayals are nuanced and respectful.

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and is frequently explored in literature. Cultural norms and expectations often dictate gender roles, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and others. Literature provides a platform for examining these norms and challenging patriarchal structures. Women writers, in particular, have made significant contributions to this discourse by highlighting the intersection of gender and cultural identity. Their works often depict the struggles of women within traditional societies, as well as their efforts to assert their autonomy and redefine their identities. These narratives not only critique existing social structures but also envision alternative possibilities for gender relations.

Religion and spirituality are deeply embedded in cultural identity and are frequently represented in literature. Religious beliefs and practices influence various aspects of life, including moral values, social relationships, and personal identity. Literary texts often explore the role of religion in shaping individual and collective identities, as well as the conflicts that arise between tradition and modernity. These representations provide insights into the diverse ways in which religion intersects with culture and identity, highlighting both its unifying and divisive aspects.

In contemporary literature, the representation of cultural identity has become increasingly complex due to the influence of globalization and technological advancements. The rapid exchange of ideas, images, and information has facilitated greater cultural interaction, leading to the emergence of transnational identities. Writers today often address issues such as cultural homogenization, identity politics, and the impact of digital media on cultural practices. While globalization has created opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue, it has also raised concerns about the erosion of local cultures. Literature serves as a critical space for exploring these tensions, offering nuanced perspectives on the challenges and possibilities of living in a globalized world.

The ethical dimension of cultural representation is an important consideration in literary studies. Writers have a responsibility to represent cultures accurately and respectfully, avoiding stereotypes and acknowledging the diversity within cultural groups. This responsibility extends to readers as well, who must engage critically with literary texts and be aware of their own cultural biases. The interaction between writer, text, and reader plays a crucial role in shaping the meanings of cultural representations. Through this interaction, literature becomes a site of dialogue and negotiation, where different perspectives can be explored and understood.

Furthermore, the study of cultural identity and representation in literature has significant implications for education and social cohesion. Exposure to diverse literary works can enhance cultural awareness and promote empathy among readers. By engaging with stories from different cultural contexts, readers can develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity and the experiences of others. This is particularly important in multicultural societies, where mutual understanding and respect are essential for social harmony. Literature thus serves not only as a source of aesthetic pleasure but also as a tool for fostering intercultural dialogue and social change.

In addition, the role of literature in preserving and revitalizing cultural identity cannot be overlooked. In many communities, especially those facing cultural marginalization or loss, literature plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural continuity. Oral traditions, folklore, and indigenous narratives are often incorporated into written texts, ensuring that these cultural expressions are preserved for future generations. At the same time, literature allows for the adaptation and reinterpretation of these traditions, enabling cultures to evolve while retaining their core values.

In conclusion, cultural identity and its representation in literature remain vital areas of exploration in contemporary literary studies. Literature provides a powerful medium for expressing, questioning, and redefining cultural identities, reflecting the complexities of human experience in a diverse and interconnected world. Through its engagement with themes such as language, hybridity, migration, memory, gender, religion, and globalization, literature offers profound insights into the ways in which identities are formed and transformed. As both a reflection of society and a catalyst for

change, literature plays an essential role in shaping our understanding of cultural identity, fostering empathy, and promoting dialogue across cultural boundaries.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the research guide, faculty members, and the Department of English and Research Centre, C. T. Bora College, Shirur, for their valuable guidance, encouragement, and academic support throughout the preparation of this research paper. Special thanks are also extended to Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, for providing the academic environment and resources necessary for this study. The author is equally thankful to all scholars, writers, and researchers whose works and ideas have contributed significantly to the development of this paper. Finally, heartfelt appreciation is conveyed to family and friends for their constant motivation and support.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 2002.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
3. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–237.
4. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.
5. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.
6. Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton University Press, 2005.
7. Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*. Granta Books, 1991.
8. Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
9. Nair, Anita. *Ladies Coupé*. Penguin Books, 2001.
10. Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Penguin Books, 1980.

Breaking the Silence: Deconstructing Gender and Power Dynamics in Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand*

Arvind U. Kute¹ Prof. Dr. Sanjay H. Zagade²

Submitted: 15-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030235



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20794434

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20794434>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research Student,

¹Department of English and Research
Centre

PDEA's Waghere College of Arts,
Commerce and Science, Saswad

²Department of English and Research
Centre

PDEA's Waghere College of Arts,
Commerce and Science, Saswad

Email- arpal.phd90@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Kute, A. U., & Zagade, S. H. (2026).
*Breaking the Silence: Deconstructing
Gender and Power Dynamics in
Geetanjali Shree's Tomb of Sand*.
*International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research*, 3(2(I)), 138–141.

Address for correspondence:

Arvind U. Kute, Research Student,
Department of English and Research
Centre PDEA's Waghere College of
Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad
Email- arpal.phd90@gmail.com

Abstract:

This research paper analyses the intricate interplay of gender, power, and silence in Geetanjali Shree's acclaimed novel, *Tomb of Sand*. In numerous Indian households, the silence of an elderly woman is frequently regarded as indicative of her "grace" or her detachment from worldly existence. This study, however, asserts that the protagonist, Ma, employs her initial silence not as an indication of weakness but as a profound emotional protest against the patriarchal expectations imposed by her family. Ma's choice to literally turn her back on the world after her husband died is the first step on her path to getting her voice back. The paper examines how Ma transcends the constrictive "widow" identity to regain her agency. A central aspect of this research is the function of Rosie, a transgender character, whose friendship assists Ma in confronting conventional gender norms. This study examines the metaphorical and physical "walls" in the narrative—from the walls of a house to the international boundary between India and Pakistan—illustrating the power shift when a woman declines to remain in her designated position. The study finds that "breaking the silence" in this story is a very radical thing to do. It shows that identity is not fixed and that anyone can get their power back at any age if they are brave enough to break down the walls that society and the state have built.

Keywords: Gender Identity, Agency, Patriarchal Power, Border Crossing, Indian English Fiction, Widowhood.

Introduction

"A woman who has decided to be silent is a dangerous thing; she is no longer a part of the machinery that keeps the house running." (Shree 14)

The old widow is viewed as a cultural remnant of the past rather than a living individual with a future in the traditional Indian social landscape. In a state of "social death," she is completely dependent on the memories of her deceased husband for her identity. Following a strict social script that requires austerity, plainness, and a quiet retreat from the world of want and ambition, women are often expected to retreat into the shadows of the home after the patriarch dies.

In many Indian households or Indian society, the elderly woman is often relegated to the periphery, her voice replaced by a heavy, obedient silence that positions her as a "Dadi" or "Nani" first and a person never. 'Functional invisibility' is a systemic implementation of patriarchal norms rather than merely a personal decision. As Geetanjali Shree wrote her first book in Hindi, it also won the International Booker Prize. This book's refusal to let its protagonist fade into the background presents a major obstacle. The book presents us with "Ma", an eighty-year-old woman who at first appears to follow the clichéd path of grieving, turning her back on the outside world and collapsing into a bed that seems to swallow her whole. A lifetime of repressed agency and domestic captivity culminates in this period of paralysing sadness. However, Ma does not wither away in a rebellious turn marked by both magical realism and psychological liberation; rather, she chooses to rise and recapture a sense of vigour that exceeds her age and social standing. Her emergence from this stupor is a radical act in a culture that equates old age with the end of growth, suggesting that Ma's transformation is not just a personal recovery, but a political statement against the limitations placed upon widows in middle-class Indian society. This paper aims to dissect Ma's journey from deep indifference to a rebellious, boundary-pushing vigour. The study examines how Shree's story undermines established power structures by examining the different "walls" she encounters, such as the physically oppressive confines of her bedroom, the symbolic "Lakshman Rekha" drawn by her domineering children, and the geopolitical division of the international border. Ma turns in a disruptive force, a "living sandcastle" that the winds of tradition cannot dry up or blow away. Ultimately, her character serves to dismantle the patriarchal and ageist frameworks that seek to confine women to stagnant roles, proving that the silence of the elderly is not a lack of depth, but a reservoir of untapped power capable of challenging the borders of history and identity.

The "Bed" as a Symbol of Patriarchal Silence

In the first few chapters of *Tomb of Sand*, Ma, the main character, surprisingly handles her husband's death. Instead of crying or following old customs, she just stays in bed, shutting herself off from everything.

Her son, Bahu, and daughter, Betwa, think she's having a health or mental breakdown. They view her as someone who needs care, feeding, and medicine. But when you consider the power dynamics at play, Ma's decision to stay in bed is her first real move to "break the silence." By turning away, she's choosing not to be involved in the household's endless demands.

In the typical Indian middle-class patriarchal setup, an elderly woman's power is usually tied to her role as a caretaker. When Ma stops being a mother and a grandmother who serves others, she becomes "useless" in the eyes of the family's power structure. Her silence makes everyone uncomfortable because they can no longer control or predict her movements. As the novel describes her state: **"A wall is also a gate. Ma had turned her back on the world and was looking at the wall. But the wall was not a wall. It was a doorway."** (Shree 14). This quote highlights that while the family sees a "tomb" or a dead end, Ma is actually finding a doorway to a new life.

Her bed, therefore, is not just a place of rest; it is a "tomb" for her old identity as a submissive wife and a site where she is secretly gathering strength. In Indian society, a widow is expected to be invisible. Ma takes this "invisibility" to an extreme and uses it as a shield. By staying silent and facing the wall, she is shedding the skin of her past. This section of the novel proves that silence in 21st-century narratives is not always a sign of defeat. Instead, for Ma, silence is a "cocoon" period—a necessary stage of stillness before she eventually transforms and walks out of the house. By refusing to speak or move according to her children's wishes, she successfully shifts the power balance of the house back to herself.

3. Rosie: Breaking the Gender Binary

One of the most powerful "power shifts" in the book happens through Ma's friendship with Rosie, a transgender (*hijra*) character. In a conventional patriarchal setup, both an elderly widow and a transgender person are "marginalised"—they exist on the edges of society and are rarely given a voice in family or state matters. However, in *Tomb of Sand*, Rosie is the catalyst who helps Ma "wake up" from her deep, silent depression. Unlike Ma's biological children, who try to control her under the guise of "caring" for her, Rosie offers her a version of gender and identity that is fluid, joyful, and free. Ma learns from Rosie that she does not have to be a grandmother. She does not have to follow all the rules. This is a problem for the family because Rosie does not care about what people think. She does not care about what's acceptable. Rosie shows Ma that people can be things. They do not have to be one thing. The person telling the story says that Rosie is like a door that opens in two directions. When Ma is with Rosie, she starts to see that she is not a mother or a widow. Ma is a person with sides. This is what the story says about Rosie: This fluidity is reflected in the text when the narrator describes Rosie's presence: **"Rosie is a door that opens both ways... In her company, Ma began to realise that she was not just a mother or a widow, but a person with multiple layers."** (Shree 156).

Rosie is an important person in Ma's life. She helps Ma to see things in a way. Rosie helps Ma to understand that she can be things. She can be a grandmother, a mother, a widow and more. Through Rosie Ma learns that she does not have to be one thing. When Ma starts wearing clothes and trying out new looks and when she has long secret talks with Rosie, she is doing something that people do not expect from a woman of her age. This is a change for Ma. Her son does not like this change because he wants Ma to be the quiet and predictable mother she has always been. The novel notes the radical change in Ma's perspective: **"Everything was shifting. The old stories were being rewritten. Ma was no longer the wall; she was the wind passing through it."** (Shree 182).

This part of the research shows that when people who are not treated equally in society form their support systems, like alternative families, the power balance changes. Rosie gives Ma the support she needs to stop acting like a widow and to remember who she was before her country was divided. Ma can reclaim herself as the person she was before the Partition. By choosing Rosie over the stifling atmosphere of her son's home, Ma proves that agency is found when one stops seeking approval from patriarchal institutions and starts seeking it from oneself.

Reclaiming Agency: The Daughter-Mother Dynamic

The relationship between Ma and her daughter Betwa is really interesting in the novel. Betwa seems like the kind of woman who's modern and independent. She has her own money, lives by herself and says she is a feminist. Geetanjali Shree shows us that even women who seem very modern can sometimes behave like men who want to be in charge. Betwa wants to help Ma and make her life better after her husband dies. However, when she does this, she treats Ma like a child who cannot make her own decisions. This makes Ma quiet in a way. While the son, Bahu, ignores Ma and makes her feel silent, Betwa makes Ma feel silent by trying to take care of her too much. The way Betwa behaves towards Ma is like a kind of silence. Ma feels silenced by her son because he does not pay attention to her, and she feels silenced by Betwa because she is too protective. The relationship between Ma and Betwa is complicated and layered. It shows that women like Betwa can also act like they are in charge even if they do not mean to.

In this dynamic, power is often disguised as concern. Betwa's apartment is full of progressive ideas, yet Ma feels suffocated there because her every move is monitored and judged. The novel highlights this tension by showing how Ma's silence is actually a defence mechanism against Betwa's loud, dominating personality. As the text observes: **"Betwa wanted her mother to be a certain kind of woman. A woman who was liberated in the way Betwa understood liberation. But Ma had her own map of freedom"** (Shree 214). Ma has to break away not just from the traditional expectations of men, but also from the stifling "feminist" expectations of her daughter. When Ma finally decides to get up, change her lifestyle, and eventually leave for Pakistan, she is reclaiming her "Agency"—her fundamental right to choose her own path, even if that path seems "irrational" or "dangerous" to her children.

This transformation in the mother-daughter relationship completely breaks down power because it reveals that true empowerment isn't about having a job or living a modern life; it's about being free to define yourself at any age. Ma's journey shows us that "breaking the silence" means not letting anyone else write your story for you. By the end of the book, Betwa no longer takes care of Ma; instead, she is the "subject" of her history. The narrator explains, "She was no longer the mother who needed to be looked after. ***She had taken care of herself for eighty years and was finally ready to see the world***" (Shree 302).

By the end of the narrative, the power dynamic is completely reversed. Betwa, who thought she was the "teacher" or the "saviour," becomes the observer, learning that her mother's long silence was actually a deep well of untapped strength and hidden history.

The Border: Crossing the Ultimate Wall

The climax of the novel takes Ma to the border between India and Pakistan, where the "Gendered Body" finally meets the "Nation State." This is the most significant part of the story because it shows that power dynamics are not just limited to the home; they are also maintained by governments and national boundaries. Just as a traditional family tries to guard a woman's movements and keep her inside the house, the government guards the border with fences, checkpoints, and soldiers. By reaching the border, Ma is not just escaping her children; she is challenging the very idea of how a woman's identity is "protected" or "contained."

Ma's journey to find her past—her original identity as Chanda before the Partition—is the ultimate act of breaking the silence. For decades, her history as a young girl during Partition was buried under her roles as a wife and a mother. By travelling back to Pakistan, she crosses the "Radcliffe Line" both physically and metaphorically. The novel captures this powerful moment of transition: ***"A border does not just divide land; it divides hearts and memories. Ma was walking across a line that everyone said was fixed, but for her, it was as fluid as sand"*** (Shree 380).

She shows that her identity is more than just her husband's name, her caste, or what her kids need. She has a past and a memory that are all her own. Crossing the border is a way to break down power because it shows that patriarchal authorities can't control or map a woman's spirit. The "Tomb" of her past silence has finally become "Sand," which is always changing and can't be pinned down. As the narrator notes near the end, ***"Women are the biggest borders. Once they start moving, every other border starts to tremble"*** (Shree 421).

Ultimately, Ma's presence within the border allows readers to see that the act of "breaking the silence" is political. It's about regaining a life that had become obscured by the walls around home and the fences of nationalism. But Ma does not simply cross a border; she becomes the border-crosser who reminds us that gender and power are ideas that people can interrogate and rewrite at any point in life.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* is a path-breaking narrative of the 21st century that reconfigures, at its very roots, how gender, power, and silence intermingle with each other. The gothic tropes come to life here, and through the transformative journey of Ma — an eighty-year-old protagonist whose age hardly seems like one but rather a chance for rebirth herself — the novel shows us that "breaking the silence" is not just gritting your teeth and only screaming bloody murder; it's a multi-layered process of reclaiming oneself. By dismantling the different kinds of "walls" that society constructs around women — physical walls (e.g., those of a bedroom), social walls (i.e., widowhood) and political ones (i.e., national borders) — Shree demonstrates that real power is never unqualified.

As this research shows, Ma's initial silence was not a sign of giving up but a smart move away from a system that treated men as more important than women. Her friendship with Rosie helped her to see beyond the idea that people have to be either a man or a woman. Her fight with her daughter, Betwa, showed how women can still wield power in relationships even when they think they are equal. Ma took back her history by going into Pakistan, which had been hidden for a time because of the way India was divided and her family responsibilities.

Ultimately, the novel shows that "Tomb" and "Sand" are actually two sides of the same thing. The tomb is like the quiet rules that society imposes on women. On the other hand, the sand is like a strong and non-stop force that cannot be controlled. Ma's story proves that you are never too old to make a change. By changing the idea of the "widow", *Tomb of Sand* gives a new way to talk about fighting against the system in Indian English literature. It says that real power comes from being brave enough to be different in a world that always tries to make women fit into one type. The novel *Tomb of Sand* shows that being "fluid" and not being stuck is very important. The story is about women and their roles. *Tomb of Sand* offers a way to think about women's power. It is about being strong, like sand.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the research guide, Prof. Dr. Sanjay H. Zagade, for his constant guidance, valuable suggestions, and continuous encouragement throughout the completion of this research work. The author is also thankful to the Department of English and Research Centre, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, for providing academic support and a conducive research environment.

Special appreciation is extended to all scholars, critics, and researchers whose books, articles, and critical insights contributed significantly to the development of this paper. The author also acknowledges the inspiration drawn from the literary works of Geetanjali Shree and the translated text by Daisy Rockwell.

Finally, heartfelt thanks are offered to family members, friends, and well-wishers for their moral support, motivation, and encouragement during the course of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Penguin Books India, 1998.
2. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
3. Das, Veena. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. University of California Press, 2006.
4. Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1989.
5. Lau, Lisa. "Re-Orientalism: The Perpetuation and Development of Orientalism by Orientals." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2009, pp. 571-590.
6. Menon, Ritu, and Kamla Bhasin. *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. Kali for Women, 1998.
7. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *boundary 2*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1984, pp. 333-358.
8. Nanda, Serena. *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. Wadsworth Publishing, 1999.
9. Reddy, Gayatri. *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*. University of Chicago Press, 2005.
10. Rockwell, Daisy. "Translator's Note." *Tomb of Sand*, by Geetanjali Shree, Tilted Axis Press, 2021, pp. 5-12.
11. Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press, 2000.
12. Shree, Geetanjali. *Tomb of Sand*. Translated by Daisy Rockwell, Tilted Axis Press, 2021.
13. Taneja, Anup. *The Indian Female: A Study in Mother-Daughter Relationship*. Northern Book Centre, 2004.

Tradition Remixed: Cinematic Craft and the Limits of Eliot's Impersonality

Zameer Salim Sayyed

Submitted: 15-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030236



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20794791

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20794791>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research Scholar, Department of
English
Postgraduate and Research Center
PDEA's Waghere College of Arts,
Commerce & Science
Saswad, Tal. Purandar, Dist - Pune –
412301 [Maharashtra]
Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University
Pune – 411 007
Email-
zameer.sayyed@poonacollege.edu.in

How to cite this article:

Sayyed, Z. S. (2026). Tradition Remixed: Cinematic Craft and the Limits of Eliot's Impersonality. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 142–148.

Address for correspondence:

Research Scholar, Department of
English
Postgraduate and Research Center
PDEA's Waghere College of Arts,
Commerce & Science
Saswad, Tal. Purandar, Dist - Pune –
412301 [Maharashtra]
Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University
Pune – 411 007
Email-
zameer.sayyed@poonacollege.edu.in

Abstract:

This paper reconsiders T. S. Eliot's theory of impersonal poetry through the work of Anand Bakshi, a prolific songwriter in Hindi cinema. Revisiting Eliot's ideas such as the separation of the suffering man from the creating mind, poetry as disciplined craft, the poet as catalyst, and the objective correlative, it explores their resonance within a non-Western, popular, and oral context. Taking Bakshi's "Zindagi Ke Safar Mein" from *Aap Ki Kasam* (1974) as a focal case, the paper argues that his practice both demonstrates and reinterprets Eliot's vision of impersonality. A close reading of the lyrics, together with Bakshi's faith in narrative immersion ("kahani sunao") and the film's tragic movement, shows how impersonal artistry can thrive within the collaborative and commercial ecology of Hindi cinema. Bakshi's work places Eliot's Eurocentric "tradition" in dialogue with India's oral parampara, revealing that mass-circulating popular song can uphold the same discipline and restraint associated with modernist poetry. In doing so, it reimagines impersonality as a collective, rather than solitary, art – expanding the reach of modernist aesthetics across cultures and media.

Keywords: T. S. Eliot; Impersonal Poetry; Objective correlative; Anand Bakshi; Film Lyrics; Hindi Cinema; Popular culture; Global modernism

Introduction: The Limits of a Literary Paradigm

For centuries, critics have debated whether art springs from personal confession or rises above it. T. S. Eliot's theory of impersonal poetry, first proposed in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), delivered one of modernism's most decisive challenges to Romantic ideas of expression. Where William Wordsworth saw poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263), Eliot asserted the contrary: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (Eliot, "Tradition" 53). More than a change in vocabulary, this shift redefined how a generation would read, evaluate, and produce art. New Criticism with its close reading methods, its suspicion of biography, and its dismissal of the "intentional fallacy" (Wimsatt and Beardsley 3-18) drew much of its confidence from Eliot's impersonal ideal.

Yet Eliot's theory has seldom been tested beyond the Anglo-American literary sphere. While scholars have explored its reach in Bengali, Arabic, and Japanese poetry, popular and oral traditions (especially commercial cinema) remain largely untouched. That absence exposes the cultural assumptions embedded in Eliot's vision. His "tradition" is written, European, and elite; his poet, an isolated craftsman wrestling with inherited forms. But what happens when we step out of that quiet study and into a Mumbai film studio? Can impersonality survive when the lyricist answers to a director, a composer, a star, and an audience of millions? Can the objective correlative operate when the "objects" are not private symbols but shared cinematic images meant to move a crowd?

This paper argues that Anand Bakshi's lyric practice both confirms and complicates Eliot's account of impersonality. Over a five-decade career, Bakshi (1930-2002) wrote more than three thousand songs – marked by plain diction, structural precision, and a discipline that subordinates the self to story and melody. Focusing on "Zindagi Ke Safar Mein" from *Aap Ki Kasam* (1974), it is shown how Bakshi achieves an impersonal poise that mirrors Eliot's principles yet surpasses them. Where Eliot's poet battles the weight of a textual canon, Bakshi's impersonality evolves through collaboration. Where Eliot's tradition is archival and closed, Bakshi's *parampara* is oral, porous, and alive. Where Eliot's poet escapes personality through inner restraint, Bakshi does so by yielding to the demands of narrative, music, and commerce.

The title "Tradition Remixed" captures this double motion. A remix reworks existing material, as both Eliot and Bakshi do, but it also implies collectivity, accessibility, and technological mediation, qualities absent from Eliot's individualist model. Tracing the limits of his theory, this paper does not reject Eliot so much as extend him, suggesting that the highest form of impersonality may reside not in the poet's solitude but in the lyricist's coordination of shared emotion: an art of self-effacement created for, and through, the many.

Theoretical Foundations: Eliot's Impersonal Architecture

To see what Bakshi shares with T. S. Eliot, and where he diverges, we need a clear sense of Eliot's theory of impersonality.

“Tradition and the Individual Talent,” written in 1919 in the wake of World War I and amid modernism’s formal experiments, stages a direct challenge to Romantic self-expression. For Eliot, the Romantic cult of personality misconstrues how art actually works. The great poet is not the one who feels more intensely or speaks more eloquently about those feelings, but the one who acquires the technical mastery and emotional discipline to turn raw experience into shaped form – to convert private anguish into impersonal art (“Tradition” 42–53).

Eliot develops this position through three interlocking principles. First is the separation of the man who suffers from the mind which creates. “The more perfect the artist,” he famously claims, “the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates” (“Tradition” 43). Personal pain supplies necessary material, but it is not sufficient; the act of making art demands a distinct mental operation that organizes and transforms suffering. This distinction protects art from becoming mere emotional discharge.

Second, poetry is fundamentally a matter of craft and discipline rather than spontaneous inspiration. The poet, Eliot insists, must absorb a wide literary tradition and must possess a “receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images” (“Tradition” 44). Conscious selection, deliberate arrangement, and technical skill relocate poetry from the unpredictable realm of inspiration to the learnable realm of craft.

Third, the poet’s mind functions as a catalyst. Eliot’s chemical analogy is well known: a platinum filament enables oxygen and sulphur dioxide to combine into sulphurous acid, yet the platinum does not appear in the final compound. In the same way, the poet’s mind fuses disparate emotions, images, and memories into the poem; personality is necessary for the reaction to occur, but ideally leaves no visible residue in the finished work (“Tradition” 51).

Closely related to these ideas is Eliot’s notion of the objective correlative, developed in “Hamlet and His Problems” (1919). The concept addresses a central tension: if the poet must escape personality, how does the work still move its audience? Eliot’s answer is that emotion in art operates not through direct self-expression but through the careful arrangement of objects, situations, and events that reliably evoke particular emotional states. The reader or spectator is affected not because the artist declares feelings, but because the work has constructed a situation in which those feelings become almost unavoidable (“Hamlet” 940–41).

Within European literary culture, these claims proved transformative. Yet they also rest on assumptions that often pass without comment. Eliot’s catalyst is imagined as a solitary mind; his “tradition” is written, canonized, and predominantly European; his objective correlative presumes a reader who shares the same repertoire of cultural references. When we turn to Hindi cinema, these premises begin to show as limits – not fatal flaws, but boundaries that any genuinely cross-cultural poetics must acknowledge and learn to cross. The next section turns to Anand Bakshi and the collaborative ecology of Hindi cinema as a testing ground for how far Eliot’s impersonal architecture can genuinely travel across media and traditions.

Anand Bakshi and the *Parampara* of Hindi Cinema

Before turning to a single song, we need to understand the world in which Anand Bakshi worked. Hindi cinema is, by design, collaborative. A film song is never the work of a solitary author: the lyricist writes for a character, within a story, to a tune composed by a music director, framed by a director, embodied by actors, and finally received by millions who bring their own memories and expectations. This is not the lone poet wrestling with the past in a library; it is a distributed, commercial, oral system of creativity.

Bakshi’s working method, as described by colleagues and in later interviews, reveals a practice that is both close to and distant from Eliot’s ideal. He repeatedly emphasized that the song emerges from the narrative itself, remarking: “Story mein hi gaane hote hain (The songs are in the story)... I always picture how the song will play on the screen while writing” (“Anand Bakshi on His Legacy as a Film Lyricist”). Here the echo of Eliot is clear: the self yields to structure. Yet the terms of that surrender differ sharply. Eliot’s poet absorbs a long literary tradition; Bakshi absorbs the particular narrative of a single film. Eliot imagines a struggle with the past; Bakshi responds to an immediate demand: a director’s narration, a scene that needs a song. Eliot’s “tradition” is cumulative, written, and canonical; Bakshi’s *parampara* is situational, oral, and tied to performance. He does not pore over a canon in isolation; he listens, visualizes, and writes for a role within a shared cinematic universe.

Bakshi’s stylistic simplicity further clarifies both the convergence and the limit. With only a modest formal education, he turned what might seem a liability into a principle of craft, favouring “everyday patois, the chatty line converted, with deftness, into a song which had a little more than [was] obvious at first glance” (“Tribute & Features Part 2 – Anand Bakshi”). As later observers note, he chose words that a character could plausibly sing and “would use words that the character could sing, and not use words to impress upon others his knowledge of Urdu or Hindi” (“Tribute & Features Part 2 – Anand Bakshi”). This restraint is a form of discipline Eliot would recognize: the song serves the situation, not the lyricist’s ego. But the underlying motive is not only aesthetic; it is also commercial. The line must be intelligible to a mass audience, playable on the radio, and memorable enough to be sung back. Eliot’s framework leaves little room to explain why such external pressures might sharpen impersonality rather than corrupt it – why, in an industrial art like Hindi cinema, the demands of accessibility can intensify, rather than dilute, the self-effacing rigor of the lyricist.

The Film *Aap Ki Kasam*: Narrative as Emotional Substrate

Aap Ki Kasam (1974), directed by J. Om Prakash, tells the story of a marriage undone by groundless suspicion. Kamal (Rajesh Khanna) slowly convinces himself that his wife Sunita (Mumtaz) harbours feelings for his closest friend Mohan (Sanjeev Kumar), and this unfounded jealousy corrodes his trust until he drives her away. Sunita leaves believing she is pregnant; she remarries in order to give her unborn child a stable home. Only after the

separation does Kamal discover that his suspicions were baseless, but by then Sunita is married to another man, and reconciliation is no longer possible (“Aap Ki Kasam (1974) – Plot Summary”; “Aap Ki Kasam”; “When Suspicion Eats Up the Marital Bliss – Aap Ki Kasam Review”).

This destruction by failed perception and the irreversibility of its consequences forms the emotional ground on which “Zindagi Ke Safar Mein” rests. Crucially, the song appears before the full tragedy has unfolded: Kamal sings it as a reflective interlude, unaware of the losses that lie ahead, while the audience can sense the direction in which the story is moving. That dramatic irony functions as a kind of objective correlative that Eliot’s lyric-centered theory only partially anticipates; the song’s affective force arises not solely from its images and phrases but from the viewer’s foreknowledge of the plot, a temporal and cinematic dimension Eliot never counts among his materials (“Zindagi Ke Safar Mein Guzar Lyrics and Translation: Let’s Learn Urdu-Hindi”; “Zindagi Ke Safar Mein Guzar Lyrics and Translation”).

Recasting Impersonality: From Objective Correlative to Collective Catalyst

“Zindagi Ke Safar Mein” both inhabits and stretches Eliot’s architecture of impersonality. The song stages something close to an objective correlative, but in cinematic rather than purely verbal terms. It begins with the refrain “Zindagī ke safar mein guzar jāte hain jo maqām / Wo phir nahīn āte, wo phir nahīn āte” (“In the journey of life, the stations that pass by... they never come back”), which frames the lyric as a meditation on irretrievable moments. The metaphor is disarmingly simple – life as a journey, moments as stations – yet it yields a powerful structure of feeling. We are not told that “loss is inevitable”; instead, we watch a train roll past a platform that will never be visited again. Strikingly, the refrain contains no first-person pronoun: there is no “I have lost,” only “stations pass.” By withholding the personal subject, Bakshi turns Kamal’s particular tragedy into a more impersonal law.

The first stanza extends the metaphor through nature: “Phool khilte hain, log milte hain” (“Flowers bloom, people meet”) – before the rupture “Magar patjhar mein jo phool murjhā jāte hain / Wo bahārōn ke āne se khilte nahīn” (“But the flowers that wither in autumn... they do not bloom again even when spring returns”). The human analogue follows in “Kuchh log ik roz jo bichhar jāte hain / Wo hazārōn ke āne se milte nahīn” (“Some people who get separated one day... they are not found even if thousands of others arrive”) and “Umr bhar chāhe koī pukārā kare un kā nām / Wo phir nahīn āte” (“Even if one keeps calling their name for a lifetime... they never come back”). Nowhere does the lyric say “I am devastated”; instead, it offers a train journey, seasons, separations, and belated calls – situations in which loss and irreversibility are felt rather than stated. The observation is almost biological: while the season cycles back, the individual flower does not. That distinction between cyclical recurrence and singular existence maps onto human experience without the need for explicit commentary.

Eliot’s objective correlative, however, is largely built from static objects and situations. In “Zindagi Ke Safar Mein,” the correlative operates at multiple levels: natural imagery (withering flower, passing station), structural progression (from observation to warning to resignation), and, crucially, cinematic temporality. The song is placed before the film’s climax, so its meaning shifts with each viewing. A first-time viewer hears a general meditation on loss; a returning viewer hears a specific prophecy of Kamal’s fate. When the lyric reaches “Ādmī thīk se dekh pātā nahīn / Aur parde pe manzar badal jātā hai” (“A person is not even able to see clearly... and on the screen, the scene changes”), the film medium itself enters the correlative: Kamal’s misperception and the audience’s clearer sight are both folded into the changing “manzar” on the “parda.” Impersonality here is dynamic, not static – temporal, medium-specific, and dependent on dramatic irony – adding a moving dimension that Eliot’s page-bound theory does not register.

At the same time, the three Eliotic principles are unmistakably at work. The “man who suffers” is Kamal; the “mind which creates” is Bakshi’s, yet the song offers no direct interior monologue. It speaks from a vantage of impersonal witness, echoing Eliot’s claim that “the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates.” Bakshi’s craft shapes a clear emotional arc, from universal observation to moral injunction to philosophical reflection, and deploys disciplined simplicity rather than ornate display. The direct address, “Suno dostoñ, shak dosti kā dushman hai / Apne dil mein ise ghar banāne na do” (“Listen, friends, suspicion is the enemy of friendship... do not let it build a home in your heart”) and “Kal tarāpnā parē yād mein jīn kī / Rok lo, rūth kar unko jāne na do” (“Those for whom you might have to suffer in memory tomorrow... stop them now, do not let them leave in anger”), uses craft in the service of warning without slipping into confession. The closing variation, “Ek bār chale jate hain jo din-rāt, subah-o-shām / Wo phir nahīn āte, wo phir nahīn āte” (“Once they have gone – those days, nights, mornings, and evenings – they never come back”), finally shifts the focus from the loss of a person to the loss of shared time, achieving a radical depersonalization that resonates strongly with Eliot’s ideal.

Yet Bakshi’s practice also exposes the limits – and thus the expandable edges – of Eliot’s paradigm. First, Eliot’s impersonality presumes a single author whose mind acts as catalyst. In popular cinema, authorship is distributed: the lyricist, composer, director, actors, and audience all participate in the making and reception of the song. Impersonality can emerge from collective constraint; the industrial demand to serve narrative, character, and audience may produce a more thorough depersonalization than a solitary poet’s voluntary self-effacement. Second, Eliot’s “tradition” is literary and written, anchored in a European canon. Bakshi’s *paramparā* is oral, popular, and ongoing. He does not wrestle with the past in a library; he listens to a story, visualizes a scene, and writes for a character and a star persona. This is not a diminished tradition but a differently configured one, which Eliot’s Eurocentric frame cannot fully see. Third, Eliot’s objective correlative is essentially static and lyric-centered, whereas

Bakshi's is cinematic and temporal, relying on montage, repetition, and the viewer's shifting knowledge of the plot. Impersonality, in this context, becomes narrative and medium-specific.

These limits do not amount to a refutation so much as a remix. Bakshi realizes the core of Eliot's impersonality – the escape from personality, the subordination of self to structure, the construction of emotion through objective configurations – but through means Eliot did not imagine: collaboration, commerce, cinematic time, and an oral popular *paramparā*. The highest form of impersonality may therefore be found not in the poet's solitary study but in the lyricist's skilled orchestration of collective emotion for millions, where the self disappears into a network of narrative, music, image, and audience response.

Conclusion: The Paradox Remixed

The central paradox of impersonal art is that when the author's personality recedes, the work can feel more intimate; when it moves beyond the particular, it can speak more universally; when it "escapes" emotion, it can acquire greater emotional force. Eliot formulated this paradox with clarity, but he could scarcely have anticipated its full realization in a Hindi film song written within the routines and pressures of a commercial studio (Eliot, "Tradition" 41–43).

Anand Bakshi's "Zindagi Ke Safar Mein" demonstrates that impersonality is not the exclusive hallmark of Anglo-American modernist poetry; it is a principle of artistic rigor that surfaces wherever craft consistently subordinates self to structure (Bakshi). The song's carefully staged metaphors, disciplined simplicity, and refusal of confession show how private anguish can be transmuted into shared reflection. At the same time, Bakshi's practice exposes the limits of Eliot's framework: its assumption of a single, isolated author, its privileging of written literature over oral and popular forms, and its largely static conception of the objective correlative (Eliot, "Hamlet" 940–41; Wimsatt and Beardsley 3–18). Placing Eliot's theory in conversation with the oral, collaborative, cinematic *paramparā* of Hindi film music – through Bakshi's working method and stylistic choices – yields a more flexible account of impersonality that can travel across media and traditions.

The song continues to move listeners who know nothing of *Aap Ki Kasam* because Bakshi has translated Kamal's particular anguish into a more general philosophy of time, loss, and belated recognition (Bakshi). He refuses to speak in the first person about "his" feelings, and in doing so, he speaks to anyone who has experienced irreversible loss. In that sense, he approximates Eliot's ideal poet, one who turns "numberless feelings, phrases, images" into an impersonal pattern rather than a personal confession (Eliot, "Tradition" 42). Yet Bakshi reaches this ideal by other means: not through solitary struggle with a written canon, but through collective craft in a studio; not in dialogue with a select literary lineage, but in response to directors, composers, stars, and mass audiences; not for a narrow coterie of readers, but for millions of listeners. What appears, from Eliot's vantage, as the limit of impersonality – its entanglement with commerce, collaboration, and popular form – turns out to be its most revealing expansion.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the research supervisors, faculty members, and the Department of English, Postgraduate and Research Center, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and academic support throughout the completion of this research work. Special thanks are also extended to Savitribai Phule Pune University for providing the academic environment and research facilities necessary for this study.

The author is deeply thankful to all scholars, critics, and researchers whose works on T. S. Eliot, Anand Bakshi, and Hindi cinema contributed significantly to the development of this paper. Gratitude is also extended to the creators and contributors associated with the film *Aap Ki Kasam* for providing rich literary and cinematic material for analysis.

Finally, heartfelt appreciation is conveyed to family members, friends, and well-wishers for their constant motivation, encouragement, and moral support during the course of this research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. "Aap Ki Kasam (1974) – Plot Summary." *IMDb*, www.imdb.com/title/tt0175423/plotsummary/. Accessed 2 Apr. 2026.
2. "Aap Ki Kasam." *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aap_Ki_Kasam. Accessed 2 Apr. 2026.
3. "Anand Bakshi on His Legacy as a Film Lyricist: 'My Songs Will Beat Just as Our Heart Beats.'" *Scroll.in*, 5 May 2021, scroll.in/reel/994174/anand-bakshi-on-his-legacy-as-a-film-lyricist-my-songs-will-beat-just-as-our-heart-beats. Accessed 7 Apr. 2026.
4. Bakshi, Anand, lyricist. "Zindagi Ke Safar Mein Guzar Jaate." *Aap Ki Kasam*, directed by J. Om Prakash, music by R. D. Burman, performance by Kishore Kumar, Rajesh Khanna, and Mumtaz, 1974.
5. Eliot, T. S. "Hamlet and His Problems." *The Athenaeum*, no. 4647, 1919, pp. 940–41.
6. Eliot, T. S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, Methuen, 1920, pp. 42–53.
7. "Tribute & Features Part 2 – Anand Bakshi." *AnandBakshi.com*, anandbakshi.com/tributes-part-2/. Accessed 7 Apr. 2026.

8. "When Suspicion Eats Up the Marital Bliss – Aap Ki Kasam Review." *MouthShut.com*, www.mouthshut.com/review/aap-ki-kasam-review-smptrtllln. Accessed 2 Apr. 2026.
9. Wimsatt, W. K., Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley. "The Intentional Fallacy." *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, University Press of Kentucky, 1954, pp. 3–18.
10. Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, 10th ed., vol. D, W. W. Norton, 2018, pp. 257–270.
11. "Zindagi Ke Safar Mein Guzar Lyrics and Translation: Let's Learn Urdu-Hindi." *Mr. & Mrs. 55 – Classic Bollywood Revisited!*, 31 Dec. 2013, mrands55.com/2013/12/31/zindagi-ke-safar-mein-guzar-lyrics-and-translation-lets-learn-urdu-hindi/. Accessed 2 Apr. 2026.

Her son, Bahu, and daughter, Betwa, think she's having a health or mental breakdown. They view her as someone who needs care, feeding, and medicine. But when you consider the power dynamics at play, Ma's decision to stay in bed is her first real move to "break the silence." By turning away, she's choosing not to be involved in the household's endless demands.

In the typical Indian middle-class patriarchal setup, an elderly woman's power is usually tied to her role as a caretaker. When Ma stops being a mother and a grandmother who serves others, she becomes "useless" in the eyes of the family's power structure. Her silence makes everyone uncomfortable because they can no longer control or predict her movements. As the novel describes her state: **"A wall is also a gate. Ma had turned her back on the world and was looking at the wall. But the wall was not a wall. It was a doorway."** (Shree 14). This quote highlights that while the family sees a "tomb" or a dead end, Ma is actually finding a doorway to a new life.

Her bed, therefore, is not just a place of rest; it is a "tomb" for her old identity as a submissive wife and a site where she is secretly gathering strength. In Indian society, a widow is expected to be invisible. Ma takes this "invisibility" to an extreme and uses it as a shield. By staying silent and facing the wall, she is shedding the skin of her past. This section of the novel proves that silence in 21st-century narratives is not always a sign of defeat. Instead, for Ma, silence is a "cocoon" period—a necessary stage of stillness before she eventually transforms and walks out of the house. By refusing to speak or move according to her children's wishes, she successfully shifts the power balance of the house back to herself.

3. Rosie: Breaking the Gender Binary

One of the most powerful "power shifts" in the book happens through Ma's friendship with Rosie, a transgender (*hijra*) character. In a conventional patriarchal setup, both an elderly widow and a transgender person are "marginalised"—they exist on the edges of society and are rarely given a voice in family or state matters. However, in *Tomb of Sand*, Rosie is the catalyst who helps Ma "wake up" from her deep, silent depression. Unlike Ma's biological children, who try to control her under the guise of "caring" for her, Rosie offers her a version of gender and identity that is fluid, joyful, and free. Ma learns from Rosie that she does not have to be a grandmother. She does not have to follow all the rules. This is a problem for the family because Rosie does not care about what people think. She does not care about what's acceptable. Rosie shows Ma that people can be things. They do not have to be one thing. The person telling the story says that Rosie is like a door that opens in two directions. When Ma is with Rosie, she starts to see that she is not a mother or a widow. Ma is a person with sides. This is what the story says about Rosie: This fluidity is reflected in the text when the narrator describes Rosie's presence: **"Rosie is a door that opens both ways... In her company, Ma began to realise that she was not just a mother or a widow, but a person with multiple layers."** (Shree 156).

Rosie is an important person in Ma's life. She helps Ma to see things in a way. Rosie helps Ma to understand that she can be things. She can be a grandmother, a mother, a widow and more. Through Rosie Ma learns that she does not have to be one thing. When Ma starts wearing clothes and trying out new looks and when she has long secret talks with Rosie, she is doing something that people do not expect from a woman of her age. This is a change for Ma. Her son does not like this change because he wants Ma to be the quiet and predictable mother she has always been. The novel notes the radical change in Ma's perspective: **"Everything was shifting. The old stories were being rewritten. Ma was no longer the wall; she was the wind passing through it."** (Shree 182).

This part of the research shows that when people who are not treated equally in society form their support systems, like alternative families, the power balance changes. Rosie gives Ma the support she needs to stop acting like a widow and to remember who she was before her country was divided. Ma can reclaim herself as the person she was before the Partition. By choosing Rosie over the stifling atmosphere of her son's home, Ma proves that agency is found when one stops seeking approval from patriarchal institutions and starts seeking it from oneself.

Reclaiming Agency: The Daughter-Mother Dynamic

The relationship between Ma and her daughter Betwa is really interesting in the novel. Betwa seems like the kind of woman who's modern and independent. She has her own money, lives by herself and says she is a feminist. Geetanjali Shree shows us that even women who seem very modern can sometimes behave like men who want to be in charge. Betwa wants to help Ma and make her life better after her husband dies. However, when she does this, she

treats Ma like a child who cannot make her own decisions. This makes Ma quiet in a way. While the son, Bahu, ignores Ma and makes her feel silent, Betwa makes Ma feel silent by trying to take care of her too much. The way Betwa behaves towards Ma is like a kind of silence. Ma feels silenced by her son because he does not pay attention to her, and she feels silenced by Betwa because she is too protective. The relationship between Ma and Betwa is complicated and layered. It shows that women like Betwa can also act like they are in charge even if they do not mean to.

In this dynamic, power is often disguised as concern. Betwa's apartment is full of progressive ideas, yet Ma feels suffocated there because her every move is monitored and judged. The novel highlights this tension by showing how Ma's silence is actually a defence mechanism against Betwa's loud, dominating personality. As the text observes: **"Betwa wanted her mother to be a certain kind of woman. A woman who was liberated in the way Betwa understood liberation. But Ma had her own map of freedom"** (Shree 214). Ma has to break away not just from the traditional expectations of men, but also from the stifling "feminist" expectations of her daughter. When Ma finally decides to get up, change her lifestyle, and eventually leave for Pakistan, she is reclaiming her "Agency"—her fundamental right to choose her own path, even if that path seems "irrational" or "dangerous" to her children. This transformation in the mother-daughter relationship completely breaks down power because it reveals that true empowerment isn't about having a job or living a modern life; it's about being free to define yourself at any age. Ma's journey shows us that "breaking the silence" means not letting anyone else write your story for you. By the end of the book, Betwa no longer takes care of Ma; instead, she is the "subject" of her history. The narrator explains, "She was no longer the mother who needed to be looked after. **"She had taken care of herself for eighty years and was finally ready to see the world"**" (Shree 302).

By the end of the narrative, the power dynamic is completely reversed. Betwa, who thought she was the "teacher" or the "saviour," becomes the observer, learning that her mother's long silence was actually a deep well of untapped strength and hidden history.

The Border: Crossing the Ultimate Wall

The climax of the novel takes Ma to the border between India and Pakistan, where the "Gendered Body" finally meets the "Nation State." This is the most significant part of the story because it shows that power dynamics are not just limited to the home; they are also maintained by governments and national boundaries. Just as a traditional family tries to guard a woman's movements and keep her inside the house, the government guards the border with fences, checkpoints, and soldiers. By reaching the border, Ma is not just escaping her children; she is challenging the very idea of how a woman's identity is "protected" or "contained."

Ma's journey to find her past—her original identity as Chanda before the Partition—is the ultimate act of breaking the silence. For decades, her history as a young girl during Partition was buried under her roles as a wife and a mother. By travelling back to Pakistan, she crosses the "Radcliffe Line" both physically and metaphorically. The novel captures this powerful moment of transition: **"A border does not just divide land; it divides hearts and memories. Ma was walking across a line that everyone said was fixed, but for her, it was as fluid as sand"** (Shree 380).

She shows that her identity is more than just her husband's name, her caste, or what her kids need. She has a past and a memory that are all her own. Crossing the border is a way to break down power because it shows that patriarchal authorities can't control or map a woman's spirit. The "Tomb" of her past silence has finally become "Sand," which is always changing and can't be pinned down. As the narrator notes near the end, **"Women are the biggest borders."** **"Once they start moving, every other border starts to tremble"** (Shree 421).

Ultimately, Ma's presence within the border allows readers to see that the act of "breaking the silence" is political. It's about regaining a life that had become obscured by the walls around home and the fences of nationalism. But Ma does not simply cross a border; she becomes the border-crosser who reminds us that gender and power are ideas that people can interrogate and rewrite at any point in life.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* is a path-breaking narrative of the 21st century that reconfigures, at its very roots, how gender, power, and silence intermingle with each other. The gothic tropes come to life here, and through the transformative journey of Ma — an eighty-year-old protagonist whose age hardly seems like one but rather a chance for rebirth herself — the novel shows us that "breaking the silence" is not just gritting your teeth and only screaming bloody murder; it's a multi-layered process of reclaiming oneself. By dismantling the different kinds of "walls" that society constructs around women — physical walls (e.g., those of a bedroom), social walls (i.e., widowhood) and political ones (i.e., national borders) — Shree demonstrates that real power is never unqualified.

As this research shows, Ma's initial silence was not a sign of giving up but a smart move away from a system that treated men as more important than women. Her friendship with Rosie helped her to see beyond the idea that people have to be either a man or a woman. Her fight with her daughter, Betwa, showed how women can still wield power in relationships even when they think they are equal. Ma took back her history by going into Pakistan, which had been hidden for a time because of the way India was divided and her family responsibilities.

Ultimately, the novel shows that "Tomb" and "Sand" are actually two sides of the same thing. The tomb is like the quiet rules that society imposes on women. On the other hand, the sand is like a strong and non-stop force that cannot be controlled. Ma's story proves that you are never too old to make a change. By changing the idea of the "widow", *Tomb of Sand* gives a new way to talk about fighting against the system in Indian English literature. It says that real power comes from being brave enough to be different in a world that always tries to make women fit into one type.

The novel *Tomb of Sand* shows that being "fluid" and not being stuck is very important. The story is about women and their roles. *Tomb of Sand* offers a way to think about women's power. It is about being strong, like sand.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the research guide, Prof. Dr. Sanjay H. Zagade, for his constant guidance, valuable suggestions, and continuous encouragement throughout the completion of this research work. The author is also thankful to the Department of English and Research Centre, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, for providing academic support and a conducive research environment. Special appreciation is extended to all scholars, critics, and researchers whose books, articles, and critical insights contributed significantly to the development of this paper. The author also acknowledges the inspiration drawn from the literary works of Geetanjali Shree and the translated text by Daisy Rockwell. Finally, heartfelt thanks are offered to family members, friends, and well-wishers for their moral support, motivation, and encouragement during the course of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Penguin Books India, 1998.
2. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
3. Das, Veena. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. University of California Press, 2006.
4. Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1989.
5. Lau, Lisa. "Re-Orientalism: The Perpetuation and Development of Orientalism by Orientals." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2009, pp. 571-590.
6. Menon, Ritu, and Kamla Bhasin. *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. Kali for Women, 1998.
7. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *boundary 2*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1984, pp. 333-358.
8. Nanda, Serena. *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. Wadsworth Publishing, 1999.
9. Reddy, Gayatri. *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*. University of Chicago Press, 2005.
10. Rockwell, Daisy. "Translator's Note." *Tomb of Sand*, by Geetanjali Shree, Tilted Axis Press, 2021, pp. 5-12.
11. Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press, 2000.
12. Shree, Geetanjali. *Tomb of Sand*. Translated by Daisy Rockwell, Tilted Axis Press, 2021.
13. Taneja, Anup. *The Indian Female: A Study in Mother-Daughter Relationship*. Northern Book Centre, 2004.

Narrating Brahmanical Patriarchy: Gender, Caste and Structural Inequality in Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*

Harishchandra Vasantrao Shelke¹ Dr. Rohidas Babasaheb Dhakane²

Submitted: 15-Mar-2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030237



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20795030

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20795030>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Scholar,
Department of English, PDEA's Waghire
College, Saswad

E-mail: harry.shelke4565@gmail.com

²Associate Professor and Head of the
Department of English,
PDEA's, Shankarrao Bhelke College,
Nasrapur, Pune

How to cite this article:

Shelke, H. V., & Dhakane, R. B. (2026).
Narrating Brahmanical Patriarchy:
Gender, Caste and Structural Inequality
in Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste:
Through a Feminist Lens*. *International
Journal of English and World Languages
& Literature Paradigm Shift in
International Research*, 3(2(I)), 149–
152.

Address for correspondence:

Harishchandra Vasantrao Shelke,
Research Scholar,
Department of English, PDEA's Waghire
College, Saswad
E-mail: harry.shelke4565@gmail.com

Abstract:

Critical scholarship is essential for comprehending the various dimensions of inequality in society. Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* offers a robust framework for examining the intricate relationship between caste and gender within the Indian context. Chakravarti demonstrates that caste and patriarchy function in tandem to perpetuate social hierarchy and inequality, rather than being viewed as distinct systems. She elucidates that behaviours such as the regulation of women's sexuality, marital norms, and unequal resource distribution are fundamental to the perpetuation of caste. This study offers a comprehensive textual analysis of *Gendering Caste*, emphasizing critical topics such as Brahmanical patriarchy, graded inequality, the invisibility of labour, the denial of subjectivity, and quotidian forms of resistance. It looks at how these themes can help us comprehend the lives of women and other oppressed groups. The research contends that caste transcends a mere social label. It constitutes a system perpetually recreated through social practices and power dynamics. The paper examines Chakravarti's work to illustrate how her concepts contest conventional feminist frameworks and underscore the significance of caste in gender studies. It says that *Gendering Caste* is a significant contribution that enhances the comprehension of gender justice in India.

Keywords: Gender, Caste, Brahmanical Patriarchy, Feminism, Social Inequality, Textual Analysis

Introduction:

There has been a big change in how gender is studied in India over the past few decades. In the past, gender studies mostly looked at patriarchy as the main cause of women's oppression. This helped us understand many kinds of unfairness, but it often saw women as one big group. This approach disregarded the distinctions among women stemming from caste, class, religion, and regional backgrounds. Consequently, the experiences of marginalized women, particularly those from lower caste backgrounds, were inadequately represented in academic discourse.

As time went on, researchers started to see that many social factors work together to shape women's lives. Caste is a big part of how people get resources, opportunities, and social respect, so gender can't be studied on its own. Women from lower castes not only face discrimination based on their gender, but also exclusion based on their caste, which makes the inequality even worse. This made it clear that India needed more inclusive frameworks that could show how different women's lives are. Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* is an important step in this direction. The text shows that caste and gender are not separate systems, but rather deeply connected structures that affect how people interact with each other. Chakravarti says that caste can't work without controlling women's roles, especially when it comes to sex and having children. She demonstrates that the subjugation of women is fundamental to preserving caste demarcations and perpetuating the caste system.

She asserts that "caste-based marriage and control over women's sexuality have been crucial for the continuation of the caste system in India" (Chakravarti 1). This observation underscores the significant connection between women's lives and the maintenance of caste hierarchy. Marriage and family are not neutral; they are set up in ways that make caste divisions stronger. Women must adhere to stringent social norms that restrict their options and preserve caste integrity. Chakravarti also questions the idea that caste is a stable or peaceful system. Instead, she talks about caste as a system of power and inequality. She says that caste means "unequal access to material resources and power" (Chakravarti 12). This inequality doesn't just affect money; it also affects social status, dignity, and how people interact with each other every day. It influences the manner in which individuals perceive opportunities, relationships, and identity. This paper expands upon Chakravarti's arguments by providing a comprehensive textual analysis of *Gendering Caste*. It looks at how caste and gender work together to create different kinds of inequality and how these show up in everyday life. This paper seeks to demonstrate how Chakravarti's work enhances a more profound and comprehensive understanding of gender within the Indian context by concentrating on essential themes in the text.

Thematic Dimensions of Gendered Marginalization and Caste Hierarchy:

1. Brahmanical Patriarchy as a Structural Mechanism

One of the most important ideas in Gendering Caste is "Brahmanical patriarchy," which helps us understand how caste hierarchy is closely related to gender relations. This idea says that patriarchy in India can't be understood without caste, because both systems work together to keep social order and hierarchy. Brahmanical patriarchy functions as an organized framework wherein the regulation of women is pivotal to maintaining caste demarcations. Brahmanical patriarchy is not solely characterized by male supremacy or authority within the familial structure. It is instead closely linked to the concepts of caste purity and social control. This shows that controlling women's sexuality is a main way that caste identity is passed down from one generation to the next.

This shows that women play an important role in how caste works. Social norms and expectations carefully control how they act, move around, and make decisions. Marriage, family, and community are some of the institutions that help enforce these rules. Women are often expected to follow strict rules about how to act in relationships and in public, which limits their freedom. The idea also makes it clear that patriarchy isn't the same in all parts of society. Instead, it works differently depending on where you are in the caste system, which leads to different kinds of oppression. Women from various caste backgrounds encounter varying degrees and forms of restrictions, illustrating the complex nature of inequality.

B. R. Ambedkar's analysis corroborates this perspective, asserting that "caste is perpetuated through stringent endogamy, which relies on the regulation of women's marital decisions" (Ambedkar 45). This strengthens the notion that the subjugation of women is pivotal to the preservation of caste hierarchy. So, Brahmanical patriarchy is a system in which gender oppression is needed to keep caste-based inequality and social hierarchy going.

2. Graded Inequality and the Logic of Hierarchy

Chakravarti's idea of graded inequality helps us understand caste as a complicated and layered system of hierarchies. She says that "castes are arranged according to an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt" (Chakravarti 8). This idea shows that caste is not just a way to divide people into two groups. Instead, it is a structured order with many levels of hierarchy that exist at the same time. This structure makes sure that inequality is a normal part of life in society. In this hierarchy, each caste has a specific and unchanging place, and this place decides who has access to dignity, resources, opportunities, and social power. Over time, people internalize these positions, which makes the system seem normal and unquestionable. Graded inequality, on the other hand, creates a layered hierarchy where each group is both better and worse than others. This setup makes it less likely that oppressed groups will come together because each group tends to see itself in relation to the groups below it instead of the groups above it. Consequently, the system persists without substantial collective opposition. Chakravarti characterizes caste as "institutionalised inequality" (Chakravarti 11), signifying that inequality is profoundly entrenched within social institutions, including family, religion, education, and cultural practices. These institutions are very important for keeping the caste system going from one generation to the next. Gail Omvedt contends that "caste constitutes a material system that influences economic and social relationships" (Omvedt 23). This means that caste is not just an idea; it also affects people's ability to get land, work, and make money. Because of this, the caste system works through both ideas and material conditions, making it a deeply rooted and long-lasting part of society.

3. Regulation of Women's Sexuality and Social Control

Controlling women's sexuality is an important part of keeping caste boundaries and caste identity. Chakravarti asserts that "endogamy... is primarily the instrument for retaining caste" (Chakravarti xiii). This shows that marrying someone from the same caste is a key way that caste is passed down from one generation to the next.

Endogamy keeps caste identity strong by limiting women's options when it comes to relationships and marriage. Women are expected to follow strict social rules that limit their freedom and keep the caste system in place. Family pressure, community expectations, and social surveillance often make these rules stick.

Chakravarti also points out that violence based on caste is often connected to controlling women's sexuality. She notes that this kind of violence is "too sedimented, internalized, too normalized" (Chakravarti xiii). This indicates that violence is perceived not as an anomaly but as an integral component of the system that upholds caste hierarchy. This normalization shows how deeply ingrained caste ideology is, where controlling women is seen as necessary to keep the social order. Women's bodies become places where caste power is used and enforced. So, controlling sexuality is not just a personal thing; it's also a bigger social and political thing. It is an important part of keeping the caste system going because it makes sure that the lines between different groups stay strong and unchanging.

4. Invisibility of Labour and Economic Dimensions

Chakravarti's examination of caste and gender transcends social and cultural frameworks, penetrating the economic sphere, where inequality is conspicuous and entrenched. She stresses that caste makes it "unequal access to material resources and power" (Chakravarti 12). This statement makes it clear that caste is not just a way to rank people socially, but also a way to rank people economically and give them access to resources. The economic aspect of caste significantly influences the daily lives of individuals, especially women from marginalized communities. Women from lower castes often do more than one kind of work. They do housework like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the family. At the same time, a lot of them also work for pay, like on farms, doing manual labor, or in other low-paying jobs. Even though they have two jobs, their work is rarely acknowledged or appreciated. People often think of their work as natural or expected, not as productive and worthy of praise. This invisibility of labor

illustrates the convergence of caste and gender oppression. Women's labor is crucial for the maintenance of families and larger economic systems; however, it is predominantly unrecognized in both social and academic discussions. The devaluation of their labor is not coincidental but is intricately connected to their caste status. People often think that work done by lower castes is less valuable, and this includes the women who do it. Sharmila Rege says that "the work of Dalit women is often left out of mainstream conversations, which makes them even more marginalized" (Rege 42). Because of this erasure, their experiences and contributions are not well represented in literature, policy discussions, or academic studies. Because of this, their problems stay hidden, and the systems that take advantage of their work go on without any problems.

Also, the fact that work is invisible hurts women's ability to be financially independent. They often get paid less or not at all because their work isn't valued. This makes it harder for them to get resources and have a say in decisions that affect both their family and society. Economic dependence bolsters patriarchal dominance and diminishes avenues for empowerment.

Chakravarti's analysis demonstrates that labour is not solely an economic activity but a fundamental arena for the reproduction of power relations. The division of labor based on caste and gender keeps inequality going from one generation to the next. Women from marginalized communities continue to engage in labor that is both physically strenuous and socially undervalued. So, the fact that work is not visible is a big part of caste and gender inequality. It shows how economic exploitation is closely linked to social hierarchy and how the contributions of marginalized women are still not recognized, even though they are important to how society works.

5. Denial of Subjectivity and Representation

Chakravarti's work also highlights the profound psychological and cultural aspects of caste oppression, especially the negation of subjectivity. She says that caste ideology "denies subjectivity... by taking away their dignity and personhood" (Chakravarti 8). This statement stresses that caste oppression doesn't just affect people's material conditions; it also changes how they see themselves and how others see them. When people are denied subjectivity, it means that those who are on the outside are not seen as full human beings in the dominant social structures. People don't pay attention to or care about their feelings, experiences, and points of view. This leads to a lack of representation in mainstream stories, where the voices of marginalized groups are either missing or not accurately portrayed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assertion that "The subaltern cannot speak" further underscores this issue. Spivak says that groups that are pushed to the edges of society often can't speak for themselves in dominant systems of knowledge because their voices are filtered through existing power structures. Even when they talk, people might not hear them or take them seriously. Chakravarti's work seeks to bridge this gap by illuminating marginalized experiences. By looking at caste from a feminist point of view, she shows how important it is to understand the real lives of people who are often left out of mainstream conversation. Her work fights against systems that make it hard for marginalized groups to be seen and treated with respect. The refusal to recognize subjectivity also influences the development of identity. When people are always left out or made to feel less important, it hurts their sense of self-worth and belonging. Social systems reinforce these exclusions by keeping strict boundaries that make it hard for people to speak up and take part. So, representation is a very important part of understanding how caste and gender oppression work. If they aren't properly represented, the experiences of marginalized groups stay hidden, and their problems go unrecognized. This lack of visibility lets current power structures go on without being challenged. Chakravarti's analysis underscores that acknowledging subjectivity is crucial for attaining social justice. Recognizing the voices and experiences of marginalized groups enables the challenge of dominant narratives and the establishment of more inclusive frameworks. The denial of subjectivity is a central element of caste oppression that impacts both identity and representation. To solve this problem, we need to do more than just study it in school. We also need to change the way society thinks about and values voices that are not heard.

6. Resistance and Everyday Negotiations

Chakravarti stresses that marginalized groups are not just passive victims of caste and gender oppression, even though it is widespread. Instead, they actively interact with and react to the circumstances imposed on them. She says that they "interpret their own identities differently from the way the upper castes have constructed them" (Chakravarti 9). This new way of looking at things is a powerful form of resistance because it questions the dominant stories and pushes for new ways of thinking about identity. In this case, resistance doesn't always mean big movements or open acts of rebellion. Instead, it is often found in everyday activities and small talks. People and groups find ways to stand up for their rights, challenge social norms, and make room for self-expression in places where it is not allowed. These everyday ways of fighting back could be going to school, making connections with other people in your community, questioning traditional roles, or changing how you see yourself in society. These actions may seem small, but they are very important for fighting the systems that keep inequality going. Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai say that "lived experience is necessary to understand social inequality" (Guru and Sarukkai 52). Their research underscores that resistance originates from the quotidian experiences of marginalized individuals. By contemplating their lived experiences, individuals cultivate novel approaches to comprehend and address oppression. Chakravarti's study also shows that resistance means changing how you see yourself. People who are on the outside of society don't just accept the identities that are forced on them. Instead, they actively change these identities to fit their own experiences and points of view. This process questions the most common ideas and makes new stories. Resistance, on the other hand, does have some limits. Social structures are still strong, and people often have to deal with a lot of different limits. Nonetheless, the existence of resistance, even in subtle manifestations,

indicates that inequality is neither absolute nor unchallenged. Chakravarti's work shows that people can still have power even in systems that are unfair. People who are on the outside can think critically, adapt, and change. Their actions, whether obvious or not, are part of ongoing efforts to change and challenge social structures. So, resistance and everyday negotiations are important parts of understanding how caste and gender affect each other. They show that even though systems of oppression are deeply ingrained, the people who live under them are always questioning and changing them.

Conclusion

Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* gives us a strong and helpful way to think about how caste and gender are related in India. The text makes it clear that caste is not just a social hierarchy; it is also a system that has a lot to do with how men and women interact with each other. The work shows how complicated and layered social inequality is in Indian society by looking at Brahmanical patriarchy, graded inequality, regulation of sexuality, and economic exploitation. One of the most important things that Chakravarti's work does is show that caste and gender can't be looked at separately. These two systems are very similar and work together to shape how we live our lives every day. Controlling women's sexuality, marriage practices, and the unfair distribution of resources are all important parts of keeping the caste system in place. By pointing out these links, the text goes against earlier ideas that looked at gender as a separate issue without taking caste into account.

This paper has shown that caste and gender are two systems that affect social relationships, identity, and access to opportunities. The idea of Brahmanical patriarchy helps us understand how keeping caste lines clear depends on controlling women. In the same way, the idea of graded inequality explains how hierarchy is set up to make inequality seem normal and make it harder for people to work together to fight it. The fact that work is invisible and that people deny their own subjectivity shows even more how women and other marginalized groups are left out of recognition and representation. Chakravarti's work does not show marginalized groups as passive, though. It shows how they can take charge and fight back by changing their identities and doing things in their daily lives. Even though these forms of resistance are often subtle, they are important for questioning dominant structures and making change possible. Chakravarti challenges dominant narratives and helps to create a more inclusive understanding of feminism by focusing on perspectives that are often left out. Her work makes scholars and readers rethink the frameworks they already have and think about how caste affects how men and women interact.

The study's conclusion is that *Gendering Caste* is both an academic work and a necessary action that reveals structural inequality and calls for social change. It stresses the need for a more inclusive and intersectional way of studying gender that takes into account the different experiences of women in India. The text is still very useful for understanding current issues related to caste, gender, and social justice because it goes into such great detail.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the research guide, Dr. Rohidas Babasaheb Dhakane, for his valuable guidance, continuous encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research work. The author is also thankful to the Department of English, PDEA's Waghire College, Saswad, and PDEA's Shankarrao Bhelke College, Nasarapur, for providing academic support and a conducive environment for research.

Special appreciation is extended to Uma Chakravarti for her pioneering scholarly contributions, which inspired and informed this study. The author also acknowledges the works of scholars such as B. R. Ambedkar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sharmila Rege, and Gail Omvedt, whose critical insights contributed significantly to the understanding of caste and gender discourse.

Finally, heartfelt thanks are extended to family members, friends, and well-wishers for their constant motivation, moral support, and encouragement during the course of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited:

1. Chakravarti, Uma. *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*. SAGE, 2018.
2. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1988.
3. Rege, Sharmila. *Writing Caste/Writing Gender*. Zubaan, 2006.
4. Guru, Gopal, and Sundar Sarukkai. *The Cracked Mirror*. Oxford UP, 2012.
5. Ambedkar, B. R. *Annihilation of Caste*. Navayana, 2014.
6. Omvedt, Gail. *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*. Sage, 1994.
7. Sangari, Kumkum, and Sudesh Vaid. *Recasting Women*. Kali for Women, 1989.
8. Ilaiah Shepherd, Kancha. *Why I Am Not a Hindu*. Samya, 1996.
9. hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1984.
10. Chakravarti, Uma. *Rewriting History*. Kali for Women, 1998.

Ritual Practices and Beliefs Associated with Holi by Korku Tribe

Anjali Shriram Sawalkar

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030238



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20795471

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20795471>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research Scholar
Email-

anjalisawalkar68@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Anjali Shriram Sawalkar, (2026). Ritual Practices and Beliefs Associated with Holi by Korku Tribe. International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 153-156.

Address for correspondence:

Anjali Shriram Sawalkar
Research Scholar
Email- anjalisawalkar68@gmail.com

Abstract:

The Korku are an indigenous Adivasi known for their Munda (Austroasiatic) roots, believed to be among India's oldest inhabitants, predating many Dravidian groups. Their unique cultures and traditions, close ties to nature, often living in forest satpura areas, practicing traditional healing methods and practicing animistic worship, developing profound ecological knowledge for community betterment. Adivasi Group mainly in Maharashtra (Melghat region) and Madhya Pradesh. The origin of Korku believed to be hunter gatherers, part of the Munda/ Kolarian linguistic family (Austroasiatic). Originally an oral language. The Korku language is spoken mainly by the Korku tribe in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. This indicates that spoken word, not written language, has preserved its entire history, low and culture. Since Korku lacks an ancient script of its own (it is usually written in Devanagari).

Holi is Korku's most well known festival, and it is celebrated with great enthusiasm. They celebrate the Holi festival for **Five** days, with each day including a different rite/custom. Holi is the penultimate celebration in Hindu calendar. For most, Holi is simply a festival of colors, but for Korku people, it is more than that. Korku perform several rituals from day one, and the Holi festival is a return ticket to home for them, because the celebration brings them back home and allows them to spend time with their family members. As we all know, Korku people travel to other cities of farther away to work hard for a living, separating themselves from their families and children. Despite being indigenous, they still struggle to make a living. During the Holi celebration, there are numerous rituals performed such as singing a song in Korku and requesting money from wealthy individuals and the landowner where they work, that is called **Phagava** in Korku. They perform the well known Folk dance of Korku Tribe that is **Gaduli**. **Sidu** (mahua liquor) is prepared by them, and it serves while they celebrate Holi. The first two days of Holi festivals. The villagers feel that the evil or wicked person in the community used their power on these days, and they only want to defend their village. Draw a line encircling the village using Holika dhahan ashes

Keywords: Korku Tribe, folk dance, Sidu, Phagava,

Introduction :

The origin of Korku believed to be hunter gatherers, part of the Munda/ Kolarian linguistic family (Austroasiatic). Originally an oral language. The Korku language is spoken mainly by the Korku tribe in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The indigenous Korku tribe is well-known for its innocent ways. They inhabit isolated places encircled by forests. For a living, they travel great distances. They always fight to preserve nature and believe that it is their deity. They are familiar with all forms of natural medicine and utilize them to improve themselves. They use natural elements to commemorate all of their festivals throughout the year. They view nature as a god and are constantly grateful to it for the resources it provides. Sidu, a liquor prepared from mahua (Madhuca longifolia), consumed during Holi. Since the Korku are indigenous, they are well-versed in using the fruits and flowers of the forest. For the Holi festival and other celebration, they employ a lot of natural materials. The main traditional flower used to create the color of Holi is the Palash flower, which is still called Keso/Keshari Phool in Korku. During their five days ritual, they overindulge in dancing, singing Korku songs and performing Gaduli, traditional dance of the Korku people. During Holi they gathered in groups and asked for Phagva/Phagava (Phagava song called as Faganay in Korku) from known people and wealthy people for example from their farm owner, where they work on their land all year. Phagava indicates that Korku people want to celebrate their festival with other religious, that's why they are asking for money from people to enjoy their rituals with them and use colors and water for Holi celebration. All Korku People live in villages and in the remote area which is surrounded by forests, thus they are connected to nature and use all natural resources in their everyday lives. In the village Korku community the Phagava ritual performed on first day in Bhumka house. Bhumka is the village Priest who performs all of the hamelt's worship ceremonies. A large number of Korku Tribe members reside in the Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh regions. They practice various customs and rituals related to their community, which they continue to preserve for future generations. They sing a song in Korku, drink Sidu, and play dhole (a bass drum), all while remembering the Mahadeva (Lord Shiva). They form two groups, one female and one male, for Phagava.

Here is the Five days of Holi Festival /Celebration of Korku Tribe

First Day: The Korku community assembled in the village on the first day, for Jita huli (living holi). In Korku first day Holi called as Jita huli. They build tiny Holi for all the village people ,They use sugar stone(rock sugar) and blueberry leaves to adorn it. They use a little round stone from the sea and place it in the holi's surface area for worship; they regard the stone as a god. After worshipping the holi, they set it on fire (Holika Dahan). In some village, people used the same method to construct a tiny holi within their homes.

Below is Picture of Goch Holi bu Korku Tribe



Second Day : On the second day of Holi, they name it Goch Huli (Death Holi), and they build a large Holi outside the village or in a specific spot where all of the village inhabitants can enjoy the procession. On the second day in the village, in the morning and afternoon, all of the young boys look for bamboo trees in the forest farm that will be used to build a holi. They also visit all of the homes and ask for wood or an old bamboo-made object for decorating. All the boys and some old people make holi out of all the gathered items, and they use the tall green bamboo stick to make the holi so big and tall. In the evening, everyone met in front of Bhumka's house (the village priest), sang a Korku song about Holi, performed the Gaduli (Korku folk), and Bhumka prepared the worship plate. After that, everyone prepared to accompany Bhumka to the holi, which is located beyond the village. After arriving at the location, Bhumka began to worship while the villagers surrounding the holi performed Gaduli, creating a variety of noises. They had bass drums, flutes, and other musical instruments, and the combination of these sounds as music and song was quite pleasing. Following the fire that Bhumka gave to Holi(Holika Dahan). The village lads attempt to catch the tall bamboo stick and take a round of the holi once it has caught fire after Bhumka gives it to them. Korku think that if you have a stomach problem or a minor illness, you should apply a mild stinging/burning sensation to your last finger of hand and stomach using a burning stick. They regard it as a divine blessing, and they believe that all anguish will be alleviated. We sometimes term it stupidity, but from their perspective, it is an overly innocent confidence in God. And this has a positive impact on them since they follow the same method that their forefathers did. There are on goch huli lots of puri(deep fried bread) hanging on bamboo sticks. In the Korku tribe, they believe that some supernatural powers are used by self-centered villagers during Holi days. The Korku people think that if the sorcerer/black magic mind people secure the puri, they will do something bad in the village, which is why they watch it too carefully. They don't want anyone to catch the puri, so they wait until everything catches fire. Following all of the rites, they return to Bhumka House, where members of Bhumka's family offer Sidu to all of the hardworking individuals who contribute to the success of that Holi day. These individuals include bass drummers, gaduli dancers, and old people who desire Sidu. They then sing a song and form groups for Phagava throughout the entire evening, having a great time. Below is picture of Goch Huli By Korku Tribe



Goch Holi – Holika Dahan

Third day: The following day, the Bhumka and elderly residents of Bhumka gather the ashes from the holi burned area and draw a line around the entire village for safety. They also carefully carry out their work so that no one can see them because they fear that if a sorcerer/ witchy person sees them, they will violate the security/safety line drawn around the village. To protect themselves from bad things, the Korku tribe in some areas just gives ashes to every home. On the third day, they celebrate the Holi Festival by playing using colors, requesting phagava from anyone visiting their village. The Phagava male and female groups went to every home that day and requested Sidu and



Phagava.

Fourth day : On Fourth/ fifth day they repeating the Phagava asking for ceremony. When they asking for phagav, they always sing a song in Korku, and those who give them the phagav affectinate teasing/ josh them by asking for first sing a song and perform the gaduli folk dance, then giving them the phagav and throwing color water and other colors on them. Following the completion of the Phagava ritual, all groups divide the money gathered from Phagava among themselves.

Fifthday:

On the fifth day of the Holi festival, they prepare delicious cuisine to commemorate the final day of the festival. The most interesting thing is that during the Holi festival, young people look for their soulmate, while family members look for their daughter-in-law for their son and son-in-law for their daughter for marriage.

Korku Phagnay gana (Phagava song):

phagava jiv mka jili ja dai
bara mahinan mya bar heje va ja dai

Phagava jiv mka jili ja dai
mya satti bari satti jiv mka jili ja dai
Phagava jiv mka jili ja dai(song in korku(korku language is
in oral form not in written form))

korku translation in Devanagari:

फगवा जीव मका जिली जा दई
बारा महिनान म्या बार हेजे वा जा दई
फगवा जीव मका जिली जा दई
म्या सत्ती बरी सत्ती जीव मका जिली जा दई
फगवा जीव मका जिली जा दई

Translation in English:

brother give me phagava(money)
Holi festival comes once in twelfth months
brother give me Phagava
brother give me phagva of hundred or two hundred
rupees as phagava

Translation in Marathi

“भाऊ, मला फगवा (पैसे) दे.
होळीचा सण बारा महिन्यांत एकदाच येतो.
भाऊ, मला फगवा दे.
भाऊ, मला शंभर-दोनशे रुपयांचा फगवा दे.
फगवा म्हणून मला पैसे दे.”

Conclusion:

For them, the Holi celebration is significant because they follow their ancestors' belief of sharing happiness to everyone. They only think that energy may be either good or negative. They put a lot of work into celebrating each and every event. They drink Sidu and perform Gaduli as they celebrate the holi days with everyone in the hamlet. They use resources from the forest to create their own instrument. Men wear new dhotis and headgear during Holi, while women wear khachinis, which are drapes of soft sarees, and polkas, which are blouses. This is especially the case for those who play gaduli, beat drums, and sing songs. The first two days of Holi festivals—Jita Huli, or "living holi," and Goch Huli, or "dead huli"—are the most significant. The villagers feel that the evil or wicked person in the community used their power on these days, and they only want to defend their village. Draw a line encircling the village using Holika dhahan ashes. Holi, as we all **know, is a celebration of the victory of good over evil.**

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the research supervisors, faculty members, and the Department of English for their valuable guidance, continuous encouragement, and academic support throughout the completion of this research work. Special thanks are also extended to Savitribai Phule Pune University for providing an enriching academic environment and necessary research resources.

The author is deeply thankful to the members of the Korku Tribe for sharing their traditions, cultural practices, songs, rituals, and valuable indigenous knowledge related to the Holi festival. Their cooperation and lived experiences greatly contributed to the authenticity and depth of this study.

Special appreciation is also extended to scholars and researchers whose works on tribal culture, folklore, and indigenous traditions provided important insights for this paper. The author sincerely acknowledges the support of family members, friends, and well-wishers for their constant motivation, encouragement, and moral support during the course of this research.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude is conveyed to all those who directly or indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References:

1. Kamble, Urjayani N., and Jivan A. Solanke.
2. "Traditional Celebration of Holi Festival among the Korku Tribe in Melghat." *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2024.
3. Gaikwad, Manish Shrihari, and Gajanan A. Wagh.
4. "Rhythms of Celebration: Korku Songs and Dance Traditions in the Holi Festival." *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2024.
5. Sawalkar S. Sangita and Sawalkar S. Shriram belongs to Korku Tribe

Underlying Forces of Domesticity, Masculinity and Women's Agency in *The Homemaker*, a Story by Ismat Chughtai

Shital Pratap Shirawale

Submitted: 14-Mar-2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr-2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030239



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA
4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20795471

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20795471>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

PhD Research Scholar
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.
Email ID:
shitalshirawale13@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Sawalkar, A. S. (2026). Ritual Practices and Beliefs Associated with Holi by Korku Tribe. *International Journal of English and World Languages Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 153–156.

Address for correspondence:

Shital Pratap Shirawale
PhD Research Scholar
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.
Email ID: shitalshirawale13@gmail.com

Abstract:

Women's gender identity and sexuality are used to define honour of family and community in a very forceful way in the name of religion and culture, which subdues their self-identity. Social control and cultural policing became so fierce in the process of making women docile. The formation of strong family values and marital ties is said to be an operative source of civic cohesion. Ironically, a woman becomes a victim of the imposition of cultural policing and dominating domestic values in a normal way. Family and domesticity are seen as a representation of the most primary form of social institution, wherein women, mostly within the domestic sphere, are likely to feel the burden of intra-household subordination, be it from any class and caste. The normalized form of hegemonic masculinity has become part of everyday performance validated by patriarchal culture; this normalization tend to create gender discrimination, female subjugation and suppression of female sexual behaviour. The present research paper discusses female agency, sexual desire, hegemonic masculinity, gender performance and the role of domesticity in the life of the couple Mirza and Lajo from the story *The Homemaker* (Gharwali) by Ismat Chughtai. The primary intention of the research is to highlight the idealized form of patriarchy as detrimental to the emancipation of women.

Keywords: Domesticity, Masculinity, Cultural Constraints, Female Desire, Chughtai

Introduction

Ismat Chughtai was born on 21 August 1911 in Badayun, Uttar Pradesh, India. She is a prominent writer who mainly focused on the inner lives of female desire, rigid patriarchal culture at her time, and class conflict. *Lihaf* (1942), *Tehri Lakeer* (1944), and *Ziddi* (1941) are some of her notable literary works. She was also involved in screenplay writing through her director husband. Chughtai highlighted empathetic approach toward working class women and rejection of conventional femininity through her works. She is considered a renowned writer for her contribution to literary legacy and tradition of voicing marginalized. She was awarded the Padma Shri award in 1976 by the government of India.

The Homemaker is a story by Ismat Chughtai regarding a free-spirited woman named Lajo. As a lower class, she works as a maid or domestic helper. She works for a bachelor, middle-aged man, Mirza, who is a more socially idealistic person and is concerned about his social dignity. She exhibits her sexuality openly towards Mirza. Her emotional and physical relationship with Mirza is that of unconventional and without marriage. In such a relationship, they are both life partners; therefore, Lajo, as a woman, enjoys her role and manages the household with efficiency. However, due to consistent inference of society and cultural values, Mirza wants to get married to Lajo. However, when they got married, the dynamics of their relationship changed, and the decline of Lajo's free-spirited personality and her freedom began. Mirza's position from lover to husband changed his behaviour. His exhibition of hegemonic masculinity, traits of demanding husband and imposing nature, subjugated Lajo's position as a domestic wife. In such domesticity, Lajo feels suffocated by fake decorum. Due to the compulsion of the marriage system, love and the spark of their relationship disappear. Therefore, they eventually divorced. After the divorce, Lajo returns to her previous emancipated version, and Mirza again gets attracted toward her natural form as a woman but not as a wife.

Female Desire and Agency

Lajo is a woman who displays opposite characteristics of bashfulness and shows her sexual explicitness. She considers her body as her asset, therefore she mentions herself as a 'freewheeling mare'. When Bakshi, a man, brings Lajo to Mirza as a gift to him, who provides for his homemaking and physical needs. Initially Mirza refuses to keep Lajo, but she also refuses to go with Bakshi because she is not married to anyone; she has the freedom to choose her own life partner. Lajo is not economically dependent on men; she understands her agency as free will to make her own choices. When Mirza is unwilling to keep Lajo at his home, she firmly tells him of her decision to stay at his house. Her decision making skill and expertise in homemaking give no option to Mirza but to keep her. 'She had a very large-hearted concept of the man-woman relationship' (Chughtai 49). Wherever she already worked, she had shown her performance at work and also in her personal life. However, Mirza has treated her with dignity and never shown licentious behaviour towards her.

Therefore, she has an attraction toward Mirza. Lajo is not ideologically bound to society; she is defiant, vigorous and free-willing. 'She had no mother or grandmother to teach her what was right and what was wrong' (Chughtai 49). This line shows that Lajo has not formed preconceptions of her life, and no other custodian of patriarchy has told her to be a decent family woman. Although Lajo's condition does not differ to other women in the patriarchal society. She has to face male gaze- be it milkman, shopkeepers, schoolteacher or Mullahji however, she opposes their advances in her rogue language. In patriarchal culture, Lajo is not an ideal woman. She rebukes the system with her agency and autonomy. She tries to break the dichotomy of public and domestic while she visits to Mirza's grocery shop, bazar and bania wala, playing with the mohalla lads and so on. Lajo also exercises her agency and dismisses the need to marry Mirza; she is ready to become his lover forever, but without marriage, it is because she acknowledges that marriage would snatch her freedom and harm her agency. Lajo has no prejudices about her virginity, and she does not even remember when she lost it. She accepted herself even though she knows only virgin get married. However, she marries Mirza despite their religious differences.

Patriarchal Marriage System, Domesticity and Hegemonic Masculinity

Mirza, as a patriarch, holds the characteristics such as male chauvinism, misogyny and manipulative behaviour toward Lajo. He is attracted to Lajo in a way that he would not think of separation from her. However, ideologically obliged to adhere to social constraints and dignity, he often refers to Lajo as a whore. 'How can I form such a sacred bond with this whore? After warming the bed of so many, she had made herself unfit to become his bride.' (Chughtai 54) These lines from the story show the hypocrisy in Mirza's statement because he has gone to courtesans many times, but he still considers himself a decent family man. Lajo, as a woman, has been stigmatized by people based on her character, not because of her licentious nature, but also because of the advances of the mohalla men towards her. Mirza loves Lajo but also wants her to be his property; therefore, he decides to marry her against family honour.

Marriage as hegemony comes with very socio- cultural constraints on gender roles. Women have to go through drastic changes in their lives. In the story '*The Home maker*', Mirza imposed rules on Lajo to become free-spirited to domesticated, and here Mirza is portrayed as a manipulative husband. Initially, Mirza put a ban on her clothing style; instead of a lehenga, she had to wear tight- fitting churidar pyjamas. Lajo is not used to wearing such tight cloths therefore she feels suffocated. When she once tried to wear a lehenga, Mirza threw it into the fire. Secondly, Lajo's coquetry, which Mirza used to find enchanting before their marriage, but after their marriage, he discards her behaviour and tries to tame her. Before their marriage, when Mirza used to be excited to go home to meet Lajo, now he deliberately lingers outside and spends more time with friends, has drinks and enjoys outside by keeping Lajo dissatisfied and suffocated at home. The purpose of doing such things is to display the disparity between a married man's and a woman's life. Mirza resolves to exhibit his masculinity over a woman who cannot be tamed, only to show his power in their marriage. Therefore, repetitive performance and behaviour by Mirza of suppressing Lajo would be thought of as a successful way of taming a storm like Lajo. 'Mirza's constant chastisement had put restrictions on her freewheeling ways, and eventually she was tamed and reformed.' (Chughtai 58) Judith Butler, in her essay *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* pointed out that gender reality is created through sustained social performances, which means that the very notion of an essential sex, true or abiding masculinity and femininity, is also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed. (Butler 528) Mirza's repetitive performance of his role as a husband is not to save Lajo from the patriarchal society, although it was a diplomatic effort to save his own reputation and social dignity. His attempt to make her a decent family woman is to control her sexuality.

Michel Foucault, in his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, describes that 'those that have been subjected to the subtle coercion of a power that is both external and internal to them, a power that seeks to transform them into useful and obedient subjects' (Foucault 136). Mirza's insistence on creating a submissive and obedient body through constant surveillance, chastisement and normalisation put Lajo's agency into question.

Simon de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* notes that women's capability is entirely defined in terms of their physical capacities: 'When a woman is given over to man as his property, he demands that she represent the flesh purely for its own sake. Her body is not perceived as a radiation of the subjective personality, but as a thing sunk in its own immanence; it is not for such a body to have reference to the rest of the world'. (MacNay 17)

In the same way, to maintain the code of masculinity, Mirza has tries to program Lajo's gender performance by purely using her body as his own property. Mirza acknowledges that masculinity in marriage is valorized in patriarchal culture. Though after his marriage, Mirza behaves the way other men around him do, but still he is not happy the way he used to be before his marriage.

Hegemonic masculinity is a key feature of patriarchal society. It is a kind of dominant, socially normalized and valued form of masculinity by culture, which validates the secondary position of women and underprivileged men. This form of masculinity is socially and culturally constructed by using the techniques of constant reinforcement, reenactment and idealized by necessity of such manhood to protect culture, society and strengthen tradition, which often leads to inequality in society. In the story *The Homemaker*, Mirza's every decision about Lajo is affected by hegemonic masculinity. Men in Mirza's mohalla induced him to get married to Lajo. Like Bakshi, Miran Mian, Mullahji and Mirza's friends often have a patriarchal watch on Mirza and Lajo's actions, and they directed Mirza to follow hegemonic masculinity. 'Divorce the whore, and get rid of her,' Miran Mian advised him. Had she been from a decent family, it would be different.' (Chughtai 60). This suggestions by Miran Mian indicates that Mirza's hegemonic masculinity is affected by the men around him. However, Lajo's decisions are solely based on her own intuitions and instincts, which are not affected by social ideology and cultural values. The present research also

highlights that Mirza's hegemonic masculinity is not static; it is a fluid construct because it changes as per his position in the society. When he was a bachelor, he did not directly show an objection to Lajo's sexual explicitness; however, marriage changed his social position as a husband, when he objects to the slightest change in her behaviour.

The present research paper demonstrates a woman's position as a subject and how she makes the home as a place of resistance. Mirza's anxiety about Lajo's freely willing sexuality is a product of cultural perceptions about female sexuality. In such a suffocating marriage, Lajo tries to find a breakthrough; she approaches Mithwa, a Mason's son, to bring her some essentials and get pampered by him. This is the only way she finds to reach her essential gender identity. However, when Mirza comes to know her liaison, he had applied punishment and decides to divorce her. Whereas to show his masculinity and freedom, Mirza deliberately goes to courtesans, so that people would not call him a henpecked husband. Michel Foucault, in his interview titled *Politics and Ethics: an Interview*, says that "By interrogating what are held to be necessary boundaries to identify or the limits of subjectivity, the possibility of transgressing these boundaries is established, and therefore the potential of creating new types of subjective experience is opened up". (MacNay 89) Lajo realises that marriage is not compulsory for happy co-existence, rather it is a cage. Therefore, through Mithwa, she tries to find her free existence to happiness. After Divorce with Mirza, Lajo is not unhappy; in fact, she feels liberated, and she throws off the limits on her subjectivity. In the eyes of patriarchy, Lajo is considered a house breaker, but Lajo has made Mirza's house worth living. Lajo is from a lower economic strata and lower caste society that does not hold an ideal image about female sexuality; she flaunts her body with confidence, and that became a transgression to the marriage system and its hegemony.

The research paper highlights the point that after divorce, Mirza again got attracted toward Lajo as an individual and subjective self. He again appoints her as his homemaker- maid and behaves with her the way he used to before their marriage. Somewhere Mirza longs to live a free-spirited life like Lajo; nevertheless, in order to protect his image as a decent family man and dignified person, he undertakes patriarchal roles of masculinity. Furthermore, to intensify hegemonic masculinity, he assumes more patriarchal behavior which is not his innate nature. Lajo understands Mirza's love, respectability and possession for her but rejects her approval of the domesticated role of being his docile wife. After the divorce, Lajo does not agree to stay at Ramu's grandmother's house; she tries to find an economic base for her further happy existence.

Moreover, the research paper scrutinizes that domesticity restricts women's individuality, agency and their sexuality by confining them to a private domain. Domesticity is a cultural realm wherein women are brainwashed to become the real custodians of patriarchal culture to uphold family dignity and morality. The domestic sphere can be seen as a place of surveillance and self-regulation. In Lajo's case, home is a gendered place of control of her speech, desire and identity. Lajo is silenced by patriarchy, but she uses this silence as a storage for unexpressed emotions, which she does not want to hold back. She uses elements of resistance through her outward sexuality.

Helen Cixous in her work *The Laugh of the Medusa* – 'A woman without a body, dumb, blind, can't possibly be a good fighter. She is reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow. We must kill the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing.' (Cixous 880) As Cixous mentioned, a woman needs to experience her body to live fearlessly, in the case of Lajo, who does not just want to be alive but to feel alive with her body, sexuality, desire, wilderness and emancipation. She does not care stereotypical notions about gender, sexuality and social dignity. Even when her marriage with Mirza is dismissed due to her social position as an illegitimate daughter and indecent woman, she cares more about Mirza's social dignity rather than her own.

Conclusion

To conclude, the researcher has explored that Lajo's gender identity and female agency are challenged by cultural constraints and domesticity. However, Lajo's claim over her body as instinct and her inner subjectivity as her own authority blow out patriarchal measures applied by Mirza to tame her. Her peripheral and secondary position in the marriage system faded her charm as an individual, and that proved resisting point of conflict in her life, and she breaks the female notion of commitment in the marriage system. Helen Cixous In her work *The Laugh of the Medusa*, points out, 'When the repressed of their culture and their society returns, it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to most of the forbidding of suppressions.' (Cixous 886) Lajo's repressive status in her marriage has taken the form of explosive force when she returns to her instinct, and that gives her a real experience of happiness. Lajo's female agency is restored by her exercise of emancipation. On the contrary, Mirza's agency is not his natural performance but is shadowed by cultural hegemony and gender ideology. Thus, the research paper also delineates that man and woman as a binary position in the patriarchal society constituted by patriarchal ideologies.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to my guide and mentor for their valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and constructive suggestions throughout the completion of this research paper titled "Underlying Forces of Domesticity, Masculinity and Women's Agency in The Homemaker, a Story by Ismat Chughtai."

I am deeply thankful to the faculty members of my department at Savitribai Phule Pune University for their academic support and inspiration. Their insightful suggestions helped me improve the quality of this work.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the authors, scholars, and researchers whose works and references provided valuable insights for this study.

Finally, I express my sincere appreciation to my family and friends for their continuous support, motivation, and understanding during the course of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

1. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990.
2. Chandra, Suresh. *Essays in Comparative Literature*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1998.
3. Chughtai, Ismat. *The Quilt Stories*. Trans. M. Asaduddin. New Delhi: Penguin Evergreen Group, 2001.
4. Cixous, Helan and Cohen, Keith, *The Laugh of Medusa* vol. 1, London: the University of Chicago Press, 1975 <<http://www.jstore.org/stable/3173239>>.
5. Davies Angela, *Women, Race, and Class*, London: The Women's Press, 1981.
6. Dworkin Andrea. *Intercourse*, New Delhi: The Free Press, Macmillan Publication, 1987.
7. Feagin, Joe. *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
8. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. France: Pantheon Books, 1977.
9. Jones, Mary. ed. *Women studies in India*. New Delhi: Penguin Group, 2008.
10. MacNay, Lois. *Foucault and Feminism*. Cornwall: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

From Silence to Voice: Education as a Tool of Women's Empowerment in Postcolonial Literature

Shital Prakash Maind¹ Dr. Nisha B. Gosavi²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030240



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0

International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20795659

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20795659>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Scholar, S. M. Joshi College, Hadapsar, Pune.
A/P- Galandwadi, Tal- Daund, Dist- Pune (412203)

²Research Guide, S. M. Joshi College, Hadapsar, Pune.
E-mail- maindshil93@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Maind, S. P., & Gosavi, N. B. (2026). From Silence to Voice: Education as a Tool of Women's Empowerment in Postcolonial Literature. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 161–163.

Address for correspondence:

Shital Prakash Maind, Research Scholar, S. M. Joshi College, Hadapsar, Pune.
A/P- Galandwadi, Tal- Daund, Dist- Pune (412203)
E-mail- maindshil93@gmail.com

Abstract

Postcolonial literature frequently depicts women navigating colonial domination, patriarchy, and social marginalization. In these narratives, education serves as a transformative force, enabling women to transition from imposed silence to self-expression and agency. This study examines education as a central mechanism of women's empowerment in postcolonial literary texts. Utilizing feminist and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, it analyzes selected works by Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Bama, and Buchi Emecheta. The analysis contends that education in postcolonial narratives extends beyond formal schooling to encompass intellectual awakening, linguistic empowerment, and social mobility. Through literary representation, education serves as a site where marginalized women reclaim identity, challenge gender hierarchies, and construct autonomous voices.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Postcolonial Literature, Education, Feminism, Voice, Identity

Introduction

Postcolonial societies inherited complex systems of inequality shaped by colonial governance and indigenous patriarchal traditions. Women, situated at the intersection of gender and colonial subordination, frequently faced restricted access to education and public discourse. Consequently, literature from postcolonial contexts often explores women's struggles to articulate identity within oppressive social frameworks.

Education frequently appears in these narratives as a catalyst for transformation. Beyond institutional training, education fosters critical consciousness and self-recognition. Feminist scholars argue that literacy and intellectual development enable women to reinterpret cultural expectations and resist imposed silence (hooks 45). Postcolonial writers depict education as a pathway enabling women to transition from passive subjects to active participants in social and intellectual life. Literature thereby becomes a space where empowerment is both imagined and enacted.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Perspectives on Education

Feminist theory conceptualizes education as a means to dismantle gender inequality. Simone de Beauvoir argues that womanhood is socially constructed rather than biologically determined, indicating that social conditioning restricts female autonomy (de Beauvoir 283). Education challenges these constructions by fostering independent thought.

Similarly, bell hooks conceptualizes education as a practice of freedom that encourages marginalized individuals to question domination and reclaim agency (hooks 52). In literary narratives, educated female characters frequently develop self-awareness that challenges patriarchal expectations.

Postcolonial Theory and Voice

Postcolonial critics analyze how colonial discourse silenced subaltern populations. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famously questions whether the subaltern can speak within dominant representational structures (Spivak 271). Postcolonial women writers address this dilemma by depicting characters who acquire voice through education and language acquisition. Thus, education symbolizes entry into discourse itself, representing the ability to narrate one's own experience.

Education and Female Agency in Indian Postcolonial Fiction

In Shashi Deshpande's novels, education functions as a psychological awakening rather than solely a social rebellion. Female protagonists often confront expectations of silence within domestic spaces. Exposure to education facilitates introspection and articulation of suppressed emotions.

Deshpande's characters demonstrate how intellectual growth fosters self-definition. Although education does not immediately dismantle patriarchy, it equips women with the language necessary to question it. Scholars observe that postcolonial Indian fiction often portrays empowerment as a gradual negotiation rather than sudden liberation (Nayar 102). Similarly, Anita Desai portrays educated women struggling between individuality and societal duty. Her protagonists experience education as a heightened consciousness that intensifies awareness of gender constraints while simultaneously offering possibilities for autonomy.

Education and Marginalized Voices: Dalit Feminist Perspective

The autobiographical narrative *Karukku* by Bama presents education as a form of resistance against caste and gender oppression. Access to schooling reveals systemic discrimination and enables the narrator to critique it. Education empowers marginalized women by conferring linguistic authority. Literacy enables the narrator to reinterpret religious and social institutions that perpetuate inequality. As Spivak suggests, access to discourse transforms marginalized subjects into speaking agents (Spivak 285).

In this context, education functions as both an emancipatory and politically disruptive force.

African Postcolonial Context: Education and Economic Independence

Buchi Emecheta's works extend this theme within African postcolonial literature. In novels such as *Second-Class Citizen*, education enables female protagonists to pursue economic independence and self-respect.

Emecheta portrays learning as a survival strategy within migrant and patriarchal environments. The protagonist's educational aspirations challenge cultural expectations confining women to domestic roles. Critics note that postcolonial women writers frequently associate education with social, intellectual, and geographical mobility (Ashcroft et al. 198).

Language, Literacy, and the Emergence of Voice

Language plays a central role in empowerment narratives. Colonial education systems introduced English as a global language, which postcolonial writers transform into a tool of resistance. Writing in English enables marginalized voices to reach wider audiences while reshaping the language through local experiences.

Education, therefore, facilitates:

- articulation of personal identity,
- participation in public discourse,
- Reinterpretation of cultural norms.

The transition from silence to voice symbolizes the movement from objectification to subjecthood.

Education as Transformative Consciousness

Across postcolonial texts, empowerment arises not solely from degrees or employment but from consciousness. Education cultivates critical thinking, enabling women to recognize injustice and envision alternatives. Paulo Freire describes education as a process of conscientization, defined as the development of critical awareness that challenges oppression (Freire 35). Literary representations reflect this process by portraying learning as awakening rather than assimilation.

Contemporary Relevance

The relationship between education and women's empowerment remains globally significant. Access to inclusive education continues to influence gender equality, economic participation, and social justice. Postcolonial literature anticipates contemporary discussions evident in international frameworks such as gender equality initiatives and inclusive learning policies.

By narrating individual journeys toward voice and agency, these literary works demonstrate how education reshapes personal identity and collective social structures.

Conclusion

Postcolonial literature powerfully illustrates education as a transformative instrument that enables women to move from silence to self-expression. Through intellectual awakening, linguistic empowerment, and social mobility, education permits female characters to challenge patriarchal and colonial hierarchies.

The writings of Deshpande, Desai, Bama, and Emecheta reveal that empowerment constitutes an ongoing process of negotiation and self-realization rather than a singular event. Education functions as a bridge between marginalization and agency, enabling women to claim authorship of their own narratives.

Ultimately, postcolonial literature affirms that voice itself constitutes an achievement of empowerment, cultivated through knowledge, awareness, and the courage to speak.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to my research guide Dr. Nisha B. Gosavi for her invaluable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research paper titled "From Silence to Voice: Education as a Tool of Women's Empowerment in Postcolonial Literature."

I am deeply thankful to the faculty members of S. M. Joshi College for their academic support and motivation during the course of this research work.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the scholars, authors, and researchers whose valuable works and references provided the foundation for this study.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my family and friends for their continuous support, patience, and encouragement, which helped me complete this research successfully.

Finally, I thank everyone who directly or indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. Routledge, 2002.
2. de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage, 2011.

3. Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, 2000.
4. hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.
5. Nayar, Pramod K. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Pearson, 2008.
6. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.
7. Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence*. Penguin, 1988.
8. Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*. Vintage, 2001.
9. Bama. *Karukku*. Oxford UP, 2012.
10. Emecheta, Buchi. *Second-Class Citizen*. Allison & Busby, 1974.

Conceptual Analysis of Vocabulary Teaching Models in ESL: Bridging Theory and Classroom Practice

Dr. Mrs. Chaudhary Seema P.¹ Mrs. Mohite Sarika J.²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030241



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20795888

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20795888>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Abstract:

Vocabulary acquisition is the most significant part of ESL i.e. English as Second Language learning and an important determinant of learner's competence for communicative purpose. Yet it has been remaining a challenge in diverse classroom learning activities. It has been observed that the classrooms where students learn English as a second language, particularly in Maharashtra, the teaching of vocabulary is restricted to the traditional methods containing merely rote memorization and translation. This paper presents a comprehensive conceptual analysis of cognitive models and pedagogical models of vocabulary teaching in English as a second language context. Vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary teaching in ESL context, is highly influenced by cognitive learning approaches studying procedure of learner's perceive, process, store, and retrieve lexical items. This paper explores cognitive models of vocabulary acquisition focusing on mental processing, memorizing and effective vocabulary learning. It further explores pedagogical approaches including lexical approach, semantic mapping and recently developed digital vocabulary learning models. The paper also focuses on the limitations of the traditional methods and the gap between conceptual frameworks of different vocabulary acquisition approaches and classroom practices in English as second language. The paper concludes highlighting the need for pedagogical models which are adaptive and learner centred to enhance the learning outcomes of the students. It emphasizes the necessity for such models which go beyond the memorization towards cognitively engaging activities which will help teacher to design more effective vocabulary instructions and useful for learners. The paper argues for the adaption of theoretical but context-sensitive models to classroom learning, aiming to bridge the gap between theory and practice in vocabulary pedagogy.

Keywords: ESL, Vocabulary Teaching Models, Vocabulary Acquisition, Cognitive Approach, Language Pedagogy, Mental Lexicon, Schema Theory, Input Hypothesis, Digital Learning

1. Introduction:

Vocabulary plays a central role in language competency, communication, comprehension and success in Academics. Vocabulary is widely recognized as the foundation of language learning. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners face difficulties in reading comprehension, listening, speaking, and writing (Nation, 2001). Without vocabulary knowledge, learners in ESL context, particularly countries or states like India where multiple languages are used for communication. Vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary teaching become more complicated due to the influence of the mother tongue on the second language. Traditionally, vocabulary teaching uses rote memorization, translation methods but such methods result into short term recall of the vocabulary. In ESL, there has been the limited exposure and contextual learning which leads learners into struggle with words to be retained. It has been observed that in spite of numerous theoretical models explaining vocabulary acquisition methods and classroom activities, learners fail advancement in vocabulary acquisition and its contextual use. This paper analyses major vocabulary teaching models and highlights the gap between the theory and practice. This paper aims to give the conceptual understanding of vocabulary teaching models, cognitive theories and pedagogical practices. It tries to seek to bridge the gap between the cognitive theory and the classroom implementation of it.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Vocabulary Acquisition:

2.1 Mental Lexicon:

The concept of the mental lexicon explains how words are stored, organized, and retrieved in the human brain. Rather than being stored as isolated units, words are interconnected through semantic, phonological, and syntactic relationships (Aitchison, 2012). In the field of psycholinguistics, it simply refers to the internal dictionary existing in the human mind where the lexical information such as words' meanings, grammatical properties, pronunciations and associations is organised and stored. It is stored in the link or association with other words and relationships such as semantic similarities, phonological resemblance and contextual usages but not in isolation. Field (2003) explains the mental lexicon as: "a network of words stored in the brain, linked through semantic, phonological, and syntactic association." Repetition of words in different context help to understand the connection between different lexical items and making them easier to recall. This approach emphasizes the importance of association or relation among lexical items, pattern recognition and memorization in vocabulary acquisition.

How to cite this article:

Chaudhary, S. P., & Mohite, S. J. (2026). Conceptual Analysis of Vocabulary Teaching Models in ESL: Bridging Theory and Classroom Practice. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 164–168.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Mrs. Chaudhary Seema P.
Associate Professor, Amruteshwar
College, Vinzar, Pune
Email- seemabagul09@gmail.com

In ESL, this approach is very influential as learners often draw on the existing linguistic knowledge of mother tongue to interpret and store new words resulting in cross linguistic connections with the mental lexicon. Though it is important to facilitate learning, there is always a need for careful instructions by the teacher. The concept of the mental lexicon sets the framework for understanding the process of vocabulary acquisition in ESL classrooms. It gives the importance to context based, meaningful, cognitive engagement in teaching methods for lexical knowledge.

2.2 Schema Theory:

Schema Theory was initially proposed by Bartlett (1932) and later developed by Anderson (1977) and Rumelhart (1980). In his **Foundational Definition**, Bartlett, views Schema is “an active organization of past experiences which influences the perception and interpretation of new information.” The concept explains how individuals organize, process, and interpret new information based on their prior knowledge in cognitive psychology and language learning.

In vocabulary teaching, identifying and activating Learner's prior knowledge helps enhancing the retention. For Example introducing new words through their known contexts or situations help learners to connect new words with their prior knowledge base. This approach suggests that learners rely on the existing mental Framework i.e. schemas to make the sense of a new linguistic or lexical input. In ESL classroom, this theory highlights the importance of activating Learners' background knowledge before introducing new vocabulary. Strategies like contextualization, discussions or use of familiar examples enable learners to connect new words with their known context. It facilitates understanding and strengthens memory also.

2.3 Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis is one of the influential theories in second language acquisition proposed by Stephen Krashen, gives stress on the importance of comprehensible input in language learning. It suggests that learners are able to acquire the language effectively when they are exposed to the language that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. “Language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence ($i + 1$)” (Krashen, 1985). It presents the next stage of language development through input of little more advanced language than what they already know. In the context of vocabulary teaching, the Input Hypothesis emphasises the importance of learners' exposure to meaningful and context-rich language. Instead of memorizing isolated word lists, learners acquire vocabulary through listening, reading and engaging with authentic language materials. This approach supports natural language development and helps learners to understand how words function in various contexts.

2.4 Connectionist Models

Rumelhart & McClelland (1986) as per, foundational Definition, states that “Connectionist models describe learning as a process in which knowledge is represented through patterns of activation across a network of interconnected units.” Connectionist model is also called neural network model which provides a cognitive framework for understanding how language specifically vocabulary is acquired and processed by a learner. It is emerged from the development in cognitive science and Artificial Intelligence and works as an alternative theory of language learning. The Model suggests that learning occurs through the formation and strengthening of connections between units of information in the brain. In vocabulary acquisition context, learners develop knowledge of vocabulary through repeated exposure and association in various contexts. Learners are supposed to identify patterns in language input rather than merely memorizing. It emphasizes on vocabulary acquisition through usages and context then instructions in isolation. The model supports the use of listening activities, extensive reading, repetition or practice in vocabulary teaching. Language acquisition is the result of learners extracting patterns from input through repeated exposure and usage (Ellis 2003).

3. Pedagogical Models in Vocabulary Teaching

3.1 The Lexical Approach

Lewis (1993) says that “Language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar.” This means that vocabulary (lexis) plays a primary role in language and grammar develops from lexical patterns. The lexical approach is very significant pedagogical model used in language teaching which emphasizes the vocabulary as the central part of language learning. This approach focuses on real life language use in communication. This also focuses acquisition of vocabulary in context rather than isolation. The model stresses the integration of receptive skills like reading and listening as well as productive skills as speaking and writing. This approach emphasizes the lexical chunks, phrases, collocations and idioms to improve fluency and language use. The Lexical Approach emphasizes that vocabulary should be taught as chunks and collocations, reflecting natural language use and improving fluency (Lewis, 1993, 1997).

3.2 Semantic Mapping

Heimlich & Pittelman (1986) state that Semantic mapping is “a visual strategy that shows the relationships among words and concepts, helping learners organize and understand vocabulary.” Semantic mapping is an effective method used in vocabulary teaching that visually presents the relationships between words and concepts or ideas. It supports the cognitive learning principles, particularly that the learner effectively understands and recalls new words better when they organise information meaningfully and realise the connections among words. It is the diagrammatic form or representation of the central concept of words which includes associations, examples, categories or attributes of words. By organising vocabulary in such a manner, helps learner to participate actively in the learning process and

develop understanding. This method integrates the prior knowledge and the new information of words of learner by promoting categorization and association. It enhances comprehension and retention through visual representation. The method also encourages critical thinking and organisation skills and supports contextual learning. Semantic mapping is a visual strategy that organizes vocabulary into categories and relationships. It helps learners visualize connections between words, enhancing comprehension and retention (**Johnson & Pearson 1984**).

3.3 Digital Vocabulary Learning Models

The integration of digital technology has revolutionized vocabulary teaching. Features such as, adaptive learning, gamification and spaced repetition enhance motivation and retention. **“Technology Perspective** Digital language learning involves the use of mobile and online technologies to develop vocabulary and other language skills through interactive and contextualized input **Godwin-Jones (2018)**.

Digital vocabulary learning model refers to the digital platforms, technologies or Digital tools to support vocabulary acquisition in ESL classrooms. With the Rapid advancement of Technology, learning also has been shifted from traditional classroom teaching to digital learning. It includes online platforms, mobile applications, AI based systems which provide personalised and interactive learning experiences. These tools are mobile apps (e.g., duolingo, quizlet), online platforms and AI based language tutors, digital flashcards and spaced repetition systems, etc.

Digital vocabulary learning models are based on cognitive and constructive theories focusing on contextual learning, repetition and active engagement of learners. It suggest the learner’s access to new words and information in multimodal forms such as images, audio, text and videos to enhance understanding and memory. It highly supports self-paced learning, gives more flexibility to learners to practice vocabulary as per their convenient time and place. **Perspective** Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) enhances vocabulary acquisition through accessibility, personalization, and learner engagement (**Burston 2022**). However, digital learning has challenges, of unequal access to technology, lack of contextual depth and potential overdependence on digital tools. Therefore, technology should be integrated thoughtfully into teaching practices.

4. Limitations of Traditional Vocabulary Teaching Models

Traditional vocabulary teaching models are limited by their focus on memorization, lack of contextualization, and failure to engage learners cognitively, highlighting the need for more interactive and theory-driven approaches. Traditional vocabulary teaching methods, such as memorization and translation, have several limitations. They often ignore context, fail to engage learners, and do not promote meaningful use of language (Schmitt, 2000).

The limitations can be discussed as follows:

- a) It lacks contextual learning. Most of the time, words are taught in isolation without context, so learners fail to understand how words function in real life situations.
- b) It ignore the importance of context emphasized by schema theory.
- c) It focus on memorizing word meanings rather than understanding its use which leads to short term retention.
- d) It neglects cognitive processes involved in the mental lexicon. It does not consider how learners process store and retrieve vocabulary.
- e) Learners know meanings but cannot use words properly in communication.
- f) Vocabulary teaching remains passive rather than active.
- g) Many times words are presented or taught as independent units and not interconnected once, it may lead to failure to understand collocations, antonyms, synonyms, and lexical chunks.
- h) It lacks exposure to authentic language.
- i) Same method is used for all types of learners regardless of their different learning styles and proficiency or understanding levels.
- j) It gives over emphasis on examination oriented learning instead of focusing on application.
- k) Traditional methods rarely use digital platforms or tools or resources in vocabulary learning models.

Consequently, there is a need to move toward more effective and learner-centered approaches in vocabulary teaching.

5. Gap between Theory and Practice

Despite significant advancement in cognitive theories and vocabulary teaching models, a noticeable gap exists between theoretical models of vocabulary acquisition and their practical implementation in ESL classrooms. The gap between theory and practice in vocabulary teaching is influenced by pedagogical, institutional, and contextual constraints, emphasizing the need for integrated and adaptable teaching approaches (Nation, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). This results into inefficiency of vocabulary instructions and prevents learners from getting full benefits from pedagogical applications. In many ESL contexts, especially in India, teaching is influenced by exam-oriented systems, large class sizes, and limited resources. It can be discussed as follow:

- a. Theories like mental lexicon model explains the procedure of vocabulary acquisition, how vocabulary is stored and learned through associations but classroom teachings rarely incorporates activities based on lexical networks and lack of emphasis on patterns, word relationships and collocations.
- b. Classroom teaching focuses on scoring marks rather than communicative competence. In many ESL contexts, particularly in India, teaching is heavily influenced by examinations, leading to a focus on memorization rather than communicative competence (Ramanathan, 2005).
- c. Vocabulary is also taught through definitions or synonyms or examples no practical usage and fluency is considered.

- d. Teachers face challenges to complete syllabus within the restricted timeline so insufficient time for interactive activities is given. Teachers prefer quick and traditional teaching methods.
- e. In ESL classrooms teachers experience difficulties in implementing learner centered approaches as there is wide variation in learners' levels.
- f. Sometimes, teachers may not be fully aware of modern vocabulary models or approaches so they find difficulty in translating theory into practical strategies.
- g. Unavailability of Classrooms of digital infrastructure or training for interactive and personalized learning through Technology.
- h. There is emphasizes on learning through context but practice often focuses on isolated vocabulary items.
- i. There is lack of integration of multiple models for better results.
- j. Research findings remain confined to academic studies. "There is a lack of effective communication between researchers and practitioners, resulting in limited application of research findings in real classrooms" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

6. Bridging the Gap: Implications for ESL Teaching

To bridge this gap, teachers need professional development and support to implement innovative strategies. A flexible and context-sensitive approach is essential for effective vocabulary teaching and learning.

- a) Emphasize should be given on context-based vocabulary learning.
- b) There is need for encouragement of collaborative and interactive classroom activities.
- c) There should be Integration of digital tools effectively.
- d) Focus should be given on meaningful use of language using visual and interactive teaching methods.
- e) Teachers should provide balanced explicit and incidental learning opportunities.
- f) There should be Integration of cognitive theories with classroom activities.
- g) Teachers should promote repetition and recycling of vocabulary.
- h) Providing teacher training and support.

Conclusion:

The present study underlines that vocabulary acquisition is a complex cognitive activity involving multiple mental processes. The cognitive theories such as the mental lexicon, schema theory, and connectionist models offers an understanding of how learners attain vocabulary. Pedagogical models such as the lexical approach, semantic mapping and digital learning tools offer effective strategies for improving vocabulary teaching. In ESL classrooms, it is essential to adopt, cognitive, dynamic and technology-supported models by balancing traditional and modern methods for enhancing vocabulary teaching and learning process.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Mrs. Chaudhary Seema P. for her valuable guidance, continuous encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research paper titled "Conceptual Analysis of Vocabulary Teaching Models in ESL: Bridging Theory and Classroom Practice."

I am also deeply thankful to the faculty members of Amruteshwar College and Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science for their academic support and motivation during this research work.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the scholars, authors, and researchers whose books, articles, and studies provided valuable insights and references for this paper. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my family and friends for their constant support, patience, and encouragement, which made the successful completion of this work possible.

Finally, I thank everyone who directly or indirectly contributed to the completion of this research paper.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Reference:

1. Agnihotri, R. K. Towards a Pedagogical Paradigm Rooted in Multilinguality. 2007.
2. Aitchison, Jean. Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
3. Anderson, Richard C. "Schema Theory and Its Implications for Reading." 1977.
4. Burston, Jack. "Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: A Review of Recent Studies." ReCALL, vol. 34, no. 2, 2022, pp. 123–140.
5. Ellis, Nick C. "Connectionism and Second Language Acquisition." 2003.
6. Godwin-Jones, Robert. "Using Mobile Technology to Develop Language Skills." Language Learning & Technology, vol. 22, no. 3, 2018.
7. Heimlich, Joe E., and Susan D. Pittelman. Semantic Mapping: Classroom Applications. 1986.
8. Krashen, Stephen D. The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications. Longman, 1985.
9. Kumaravadivelu, B. Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Postmethod. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.
10. Lewis, Michael. The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward. Language Teaching Publications, 1993.
11. Nation, I. S. P. Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

12. Ramanathan, Vaidehi. *The English-Vernacular Divide: Postcolonial Language Politics and Practice*. Multilingual Matters, 2005.
13. Rumelhart, David E., and James L. McClelland. *Parallel Distributed Processing: Explorations in the Microstructure of Cognition*. MIT Press, 1986.
14. Schmitt, Norbert. *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
15. Tickoo, M. L. *Teaching and Learning English: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Teacher-Trainers*. Orient Longman, 2003.

Reflection of Ecological Aspects and It's Degradation in Arvind Adiga's 'The White Tiger'

Karche Dhanesh Kisan¹ Dr.Hanumant Lokhande²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030242



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20796061

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20796061>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar , Savitribai Phule Pune University,

PDEA's Waghere College of Arts

Commerce & Science, Saswad,

Tal: Purandar, Dist: Pune, Pin 412301,

²Research Guide Savitribai Phule Pune University,

Professor, Department of English, Nowrosjee Wadia College (Autonomous)

, Pune-01

E-Mail:-karchedhaki@yahoo.com

How to cite this article:

Karche, D. K., & Lokhande, H. (2026). Reflection of Ecological Aspects and It's Degradation in Arvind Adiga's 'The White Tiger'. International Journal of English and World Languages Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 169–172..

Address for correspondence:

Karche Dhanesh Kisan, Ph.D. Research Scholar , Savitribai Phule Pune University, PDEA's Waghere College of Arts Commerce & Science, Saswad, Tal: Purandar, Dist: Pune, Pin 412301 E-Mail:- karchedhaki@yahoo.com

Abstract :

Aravind Adiga's novel 'The White Tiger' which was awarded the 'Man Booker Prize' in 2008. The novel is in the form of seven- parts letter written by the protagonist Balram to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. In the novel the protagonist not only explains his struggle story, from his native place Laxmangarh to shining city Delhi and then bright metropolitan city Bangalore, but also presents the condition of environment or ecological aspects around us which is getting affected for the sake of development of cities. The present paper is an attempt to focus on the environmental issues in the novel through Eco- Criticism. This emerging theory focuses on the relationship between literature and environment. It takes an earth or nature centered approach to literary studies. It is unique among contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relation with the science of ecology. Ecology is an interconnection between all living organisms and their environment. Ecological problems are like climate change, all types of pollution, deforestation and animals which are vanishing from the earth. Even India is facing an acute river pollution crisis these days. The river Ganga is home to a rich diversity of vegetation and animal life and sustains a vast human population with water for drinking, irrigation, industries and other purposes. Industry commerce and transport are considered as the main causes of air pollutant. The paper aims at presenting the ecological degradation in both rural and urban India as depicted in Aravind Adiga's first novel 'The White Tiger'.

Keywords: Ecology, Ecological degradation, Environment, Eco criticism, Sustain, Industries, Pollution, Transport.

Introduction

Aravind Adiga's first novel The White Tiger won the Man Booker Prize in 2008. The novel focuses on the society in which many of the negative aspects of a modern society are reflected. It presents the wider gap between rich and poor. It also focuses the breakdown of older agrarian and a dominant social, economic, and political hierarchies. In the novel focus is on the social relations and dependencies, as well as dehumanizing workers or commercializing the working class community. Arvind Adiga focused on the hidden guilt of corruption in the middle class. But this paper aims at presenting the ecological degradation in both rural and urban India as depicted by the author through the narrator Balram .

Ecocriticism is one of the branches of critical study which focus on the relationship between literature and the physical environment in the literary work of art. It adopts an earth centered approach to literary analysis. It is important among contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close connection with the science of ecology. Ecology is interrelation between all living organisms and their surroundings. Climate change, all types of pollution, deforestation, and endangered animals are all ecological problems. Moreover, these days India is facing serious river pollution crisis. The river Ganga is a home to a rich diversity of vegetation and animal life and large number of human population is depend on it for drinking water , irrigation, industries and other purposes. Commercial Industries and transport are the main causes of air pollution. In India transportation is the main cause of air pollution. This paper aims at representing the ecological degradation in both rural and urban India as depicted in Aravind Adiga's novel 'The White Tiger'. In this novel 'The White Tiger' author shows how the south Indian cities are also polluted. He describes the atmospheric pollution in the novel 'The White Tiger'. The author through the narrator thus says:

"We live in a glorious land. The Lord Buddha received his enlightenment in this land. The river Ganga gives life to our plants and our animals and our people. We are grateful to God that we were born in this land" (Page 34)

At least a third of the country, a fertile place, full of rice fields and wheat fields and ponds in the middle of those fields choked with lotuses and water lilies, and water buffaloes wading through the ponds and chewing on the lotuses and lilies. Here the holy river in India which is worshipped by the people. It is considered as the goddess. Nowadays it is polluted because of sewage, industrial waste, and religious offerings. Even at the ghats, the bones and ashes of the dead and half burned dead bodies are thrown into the water after burning. Her the narrator describes the Ganga as a Black river and the River of Death.

"India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India—the black river." (Page 14)

The banks of the Ganga River are full of rich, dark, sticky mud whose grip traps everything that is planted in it.

"Mother Ganga, daughter of the Vedas, river of illumination, protector of us all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth. Everywhere this river flows, that area is the Darkness." (Page 15)

It is the religious custom that if people take a holy bath in the Ganga they get rid from all types of sins in their life. The narrator describes how it is unhygienic to dip in the Ganga as it is full of dirt and waste material like solid waste, straw, buffalo carcasses and different kinds of industrial wastes etc. . . .

When the narrator was six to eight years old as no one in his village knows his exact age, he went to the holiest spot on the banks of the Ganga—the city of Benaras for the funeral of his mother after the death. He smelled the river before he saw that time he felt unpleasant smell of decaying flesh was coming from it.

The narrator Balram reports how air pollution is created by the automobile drivers. He describes how the drivers in Delhi smoke cigars and cigarettes made of tobacco which increases lot of air pollution to the city. Balram reports in his words; that harmful gas or smoke of air pollute the environment.

"Fumes filled the air. Wisps of blue exhaust glowed in front of every head light; the exhaust grew so fat and thick it could not rise or escape, but spread horizontally, sluggish and glossy, making a kind of fog around us. Matches were continually being struck- the drivers of automobiles lit cigarettes, adding tobacco pollution to petrol pollution" (page 137).

Adiga describes even the living conditions of the Rich and the Poor people contribute to the air pollution in Delhi. The people in Delhi use the electric heaters or gas heaters or even they burn the logs of wood in their fire places to survive in the cold in winter season. On the contrary the homeless or servants like watchmen and drivers are forced to spend outside in winter. They used to burn cellophanes, it is like plastic material used to wrap fruits, vegetables and business books in, to keep warm themselves in the winter season. It gives off a white smoke and makes the environment polluted. Balram says "white smoke that makes your stomach churn".

Adiga portrays not only the air pollution in Delhi but also sound pollution and traffic jam of the automobiles which is responsible for the serious health threat to the urban people in Delhi. Balram explains the traffic jam in his own words about the rush hours in Delhi. Cars, scooters, motorbikes, auto rickshaws, black taxis, jostling for space on the road. The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces each time. If you stop at a red light at traffic signal you see a row of men with black glasses and masks on their faces, as if the whole city were out on a bank robbery or any secret mission that morning

"Rush hours in Delhi. Cars, scooters, motorbikes, auto -rickshaws, black taxis, jostling for space on the road. The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces each time you stop at a red light, you see a row of men with black glasses and mask on their faces, as if the whole city were out on a bank heist that morning" (page 133).

Here again the author describes the environment of the village Laxmangarh, in the district of Gaya in a different way.

"There is a small branch of the Ganga that flows just outside Laxmangarh; boats come down from the world outside, bringing supplies every Monday. There is one street in the village; a bright strip of sewage splits it into two" (Page 18-19).

"At the end of the market is a tall, whitewashed, conelike tower, with black intertwining snakes painted on all its sides- the temple. Inside, you will find an image of a saffron-coloured creature, half man half monkey: this is Hanuman, everyone's favourite god in the Darkness." (page 19)

The description includes the market and the temple of Hanuman, everyone's favorite god in the Darkness. He author presents a typical Indian village with the unused electricity poles, broken water tap, families of hogs are sniffing through sewage, roosters flying up and down the roofs of the house. It gives idea about the villager's dependency on cows and buffalo for their livelihood. The water buffalo is one of the animal in every house in the village. All day long, the women feed fresh grass to these animals. It is the main task of their life. Their hopes are in her fatness or good health and giving more milk. If she gives enough milk, the women sell some of it to get a little money at the end of the day.

The author portrays the condition of a pond which is the habitat for the buffaloes instead of the source of water for the people. It shows how water is dirty because of their presence in it.

"Boulders from the walls of the fort have rolled down the hill and tumbled into the pond, where they lie, moist and half submerged in the muddy water." (Page 22)

In the novel the author presents the actual condition of schools in remote villages in our country like Laxmangarh where the classroom is not well-lit and the three walls around are like red wallpaper because of spitting of paan on it by the schoolteacher. The narrator is afraid to go to school because it has two-foot long lizards which hide in its cupboards. Here also the presence of Lizards in the school signifies the animal as one ecological aspect. Ironically he says,

"If the Indian village is a paradise, then the school is a paradise within a paradise." (Page 32)

The author feels bad at the worst condition of hospitals. The narrator takes his father who has Tuberculosis with lots of difficulty to a hospital. He describes thus:

"There were three black goats sitting on the steps to the large, faded white building; the stench of goat feces wafted out from the open door. The glass in most of the windows was broken; a cat was staring out at us from one cracked window" (Page 48).

Once narrator carries his father in the government hospital in his illness where, three black goats were sitting on the ground. There is no doctor in the hospital. The ward boy, after they bribe him ten rupees, says that a doctor might come in the evening as he works for a private hospital. The doors to the hospital's rooms are wide open; the beds have metal springs sticking out of them, and the cat begins snarling at them when they step into the room. He lowers his father onto the newspaper sheets. Narrator's father dies because of Tuberculosis as he could not get proper treatment. Here this example shows the unhygienic condition of hospitals which is responsible for not curing the disease but leads to the decease.

Balram reports about the slum locations and sewages are also major environmental issues in the city Delhi in India. Industrial sewage, municipal sewage are dumped in everywhere. It becomes a major threat to the people living in the city. In his words Aravind Adiga describes the heaps of sewages. The unpleasant smell of faeces was replaced by the industrial sewage. The men were defecating in the open in front of the slum. The wind moves the smell of fresh shit towards the narrator. The Slum ended in an open sewer- a small river of black water which creates unpleasant surrounding. Even white bubbles sparkling in it and little circles spreading on its surface as the waste drainage water comes there. Here the author shows how the south Indian cities are also equally polluted.

Aravind Adiga observes and describes the environmental pollution in the city, Bangalore. Bangalore is a city where humans can live like humans and animals can live like animals, "a decent city, where humans can live like humans and animals can live like animals". When the narrator drives down to the Hosur Main Road and turns into Electronics City Phase, he is excited to see the companies in Bangalore. Balram is surprised to see the piles of mud and bricks everywhere when he drives down to Hosur Main Road. Balram says there is a construction everywhere due to which there are piles of mud, stones and Piles of bricks everywhere. The entire city is masked in smoke, smog, powder, cement dust etc.. It is under veil.

"The entire city is masked in smoke, smog, powder, cement dust. It is under a veil. When the veil is lifted, what will Bangalore be like? Maybe it will be a disaster: slums, sewage, shopping malls, traffic jams, and policemen." (Page 317)

Industries and vehicles are the biggest sources of pollution in the city. The rate at which vehicles traffic is growing is astonishing. This is no less true in Bangalore.

To conclude, the author has depicted all the elements of the environment and its degradation. Water is the lifeline of the citizens and habitants of earth or that particular area. Nearly all of the country's major rivers are polluted due to the large amounts of municipal sewage, industrial effluents, solid waste and other harmful substances. Agricultural runoff solid waste and the waste which is generated due to the religious worship are also the sources of pollution. The slow death of India's river is part of the nation's much more serious environmental problem. Author has thought deeply over how the sacred river, Ganga is polluted to the extreme level and the air that man breathes is polluted by industrial and automobile emission. It leads to the critical condition of the life of the people living in rural as well as urban India.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to my respected research guide Prof. (Dr.) Hanumant Lokhande for his invaluable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research paper titled "Reflection of Ecological Aspects and It's Degradation in Aravind Adiga's 'The White Tiger'."

I am deeply thankful to Savitribai Phule Pune University, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts Commerce & Science, and Nowrosjee Wadia College for providing academic support and encouragement during this research work.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks to all the scholars, authors, and researchers whose books and critical studies greatly contributed to the successful completion of this paper.

I am sincerely grateful to my family and friends for their continuous support, patience, and motivation throughout the research process.

Finally, I thank everyone who directly or indirectly helped me in completing this research work successfully.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References:

1. Aravind Adiga. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi. Harper Collins Publishers, India(3rd Edi.), 2008.
2. “A Glossary of Literary Terms” (page 98): M H .Abrams; & Geoffrey Galt Harpham; Cengage Learning, United States of America (11th Edition) 2013.
3. Swarna Iathe Rangarajan. “Eco criticism: Big Ideas and practical strategies” (Literary |Cultural Theory); Orient Black Swan. Publishers(Hyderabad(1stEdition)2018).
4. Pramod K Nayar. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From structuralism to Eco criticism*; Pearson Publications; Delhi.
5. Greg Garrard. *Eco criticism (The New Critical Idiom)*; Routledge- Talyor and Francis Group. London and New York.

A Critical Study of Cultural Conflict and Hybridity in the Works of Salman Rushdie

Vilas Kashinath Karvande

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030243



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20796328

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20796328>

Volume: 3
Issue:2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Research Scholar,
Department of English and Research
Centre,
PDEA's Waghere College of Arts,
Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune.
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune
Email- vilaskarvande@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Karvande, V. K. (2026). A Critical Study of Cultural Conflict and Hybridity in the Works of Salman Rushdie. International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research, 3(2(I)), 173–175.

Address for correspondence:

Vilas Kashinath Karvande
Research Scholar,
Department of English and Research
Centre,
PDEA's Waghere College of Arts,
Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune.
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune
Email- vilaskarvande@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper critically examines the themes of cultural conflict and hybridity in the works of Salman Rushdie, one of the most influential voices in postcolonial literature. His novels, particularly *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, explore the complexities of identity, migration, and cultural negotiation in a globalized world. Using postcolonial theory, especially Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, this study analyzes how Rushdie portrays fragmented identities shaped by colonial history and diasporic experiences. The paper argues that cultural conflict in Rushdie's fiction is not merely oppositional but generative, producing hybrid identities that challenge rigid notions of culture and nation. Through textual analysis and critical references, this research highlights Rushdie's contribution to redefining cultural identity in contemporary literature.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, cultural conflict, hybridity, postcolonial theory, diaspora, identity, Indian English literature

Introduction:

The emergence of postcolonial literature has significantly transformed the understanding of culture, identity, and nationhood. Among the writers who have contributed profoundly to this discourse, Salman Rushdie stands out for his innovative narrative techniques and thematic engagement with cultural plurality. His works reflect the tensions and negotiations that arise when different cultural systems intersect, particularly in the context of colonial history and migration. Rushdie's fiction often portrays characters that inhabit multiple cultural spaces, leading to conflicts that are both external and internal. These conflicts arise from the clash between tradition and modernity, East and West, and past and present. At the same time, his works celebrate hybridity, the blending of cultural identities, as a creative and transformative force. As Rushdie himself asserts, "The migrant is not simply transformed by his new environment; he transforms it as well" (*Imaginary Homelands* 278). This paper explores how cultural conflict and hybridity function as central themes in Rushdie's novels, examining their implications for identity formation and postcolonial discourse.

Theoretical Framework:

This study is grounded in postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Homi K. Bhabha, along with insights from Edward Said and Stuart Hall. Rushdie's fiction can be effectively examined through the framework of postcolonial theory, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity. Bhabha argues that cultural identity is not fixed or essential but is formed in a "third space" where different cultures interact and negotiate meaning (Bhabha 37). This theoretical perspective is central to understanding Rushdie's characters, which often exist between cultures and embody multiple identities. Additionally, Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a continuous process rather than a stable essence further illuminates the fluid nature of selfhood in Rushdie's works. These theoretical insights provide a foundation for analyzing how cultural conflict and hybridity operate in his narratives.

Cultural Conflict in Rushdie's Works:

Rushdie's novels are deeply rooted in the cultural and historical complexities of postcolonial societies. Cultural conflict is a recurring theme, often depicted through characters struggling to reconcile conflicting identities. Cultural conflict is a recurring theme in Rushdie's fiction, often arising from the clash between tradition and modernity, as well as between Eastern and Western cultural frameworks. In *Midnight's Children*, the protagonist Saleem Sinai symbolizes the newly independent nation of India, struggling to define itself in the aftermath of colonial rule. His fragmented narrative reflects the fractured identity of the nation, caught between its colonial past and its aspirations for the future. Rushdie emphasizes the interconnectedness of personal and national histories when he writes, "To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world" (*Midnight's Children* 109). This statement underscores the idea that individual identity cannot be separated from broader cultural and historical contexts, thereby highlighting the depth of cultural conflict experienced by the characters. Similarly, *The Satanic Verses* explores the cultural tensions faced by migrants living in a foreign land. The characters Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha represent contrasting responses to cultural displacement.

Chamcha, in particular, attempts to assimilate into British society by rejecting his Indian identity, only to experience profound alienation and psychological conflict. His transformation into a devil-like figure symbolically represents the dehumanizing effects of cultural rejection and identity crisis. However, his eventual reconciliation with his roots suggests that embracing hybridity, rather than denying one's origins, is essential for achieving a sense of belonging. Through such portrayals, Rushdie illustrates the psychological and emotional impact of cultural conflict on individuals navigating multiple cultural worlds.

Religious and ideological conflicts also play a significant role in Rushdie's works. His narratives often challenge rigid belief systems and question the authority of established traditions. By doing so, he encourages a more pluralistic and inclusive understanding of culture. These conflicts are not merely external but deeply internal, shaping the characters' perceptions of themselves and their place in the world. The tension between faith and doubt, tradition and change, further intensifies the cultural conflicts depicted in his fiction.

While cultural conflict is a source of tension in Rushdie's narratives, hybridity emerges as a creative and dynamic response to these conflicts. His characters frequently embody hybrid identities that reflect the blending of diverse cultural influences. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Moraes Zogoiby represents a fusion of Indian, Portuguese, and Jewish heritage, symbolizing the multicultural nature of Indian society. This multiplicity challenges the notion of a singular or pure cultural identity and instead celebrates diversity and complexity. Rushdie's assertion in *Imaginary Homelands* that "the past is a country from which we have all emigrated" (12) reinforces the idea that identity is fluid and shaped by continuous movement and transformation.

Language itself becomes a site of hybridity in Rushdie's works. His distinctive narrative style incorporates elements of Indian vernacular languages into English, creating a rich and dynamic linguistic texture. This blending of languages not only reflects the multicultural reality of postcolonial societies but also challenges the dominance of standard English. By reshaping the language of the former colonizer, Rushdie asserts the agency of postcolonial writers and redefines literary expression. This linguistic hybridity mirrors the cultural hybridity experienced by his characters, further emphasizing the interconnectedness of language and identity.

Hybridity in Rushdie's Fiction:

While cultural conflict is a source of tension, hybridity emerges as a creative resolution in Rushdie's narratives. Hybridity in Rushdie's fiction also functions as a form of resistance against cultural domination. By creating new identities that transcend traditional boundaries; his characters subvert the binary oppositions imposed by colonial discourse, such as East versus West or tradition versus modernity. Instead of choosing one identity over another, they inhabit a space of negotiation where multiple influences coexist. This perspective aligns with Bhabha's idea of the "third space," where new cultural meanings are produced through interaction and exchange. In this sense, hybridity is not merely a condition but a powerful tool for redefining identity and challenging established norms.

The interplay between cultural conflict and hybridity in Rushdie's works is complex and dynamic. Cultural conflict often acts as a catalyst for hybridity, forcing characters to confront their fragmented identities and seek new ways of understanding themselves. However, hybridity is not presented as a simple resolution to conflict. Rather, it is an ongoing process marked by ambiguity, contradiction, and negotiation. Rushdie's characters do not achieve a stable or fixed identity; instead, they continue to evolve, reflecting the fluid nature of culture in a globalized world. As Timothy Brennan observes, Rushdie's fiction "redefines identity as a site of negotiation rather than a fixed essence" (65), highlighting the transformative potential of cultural interaction.

Discussion: Rushdie's exploration of these themes has significant implications for understanding contemporary identity in an increasingly interconnected world. His works challenge the limitations of binary thinking and emphasize the importance of embracing diversity and multiplicity. By portraying characters who navigate complex cultural landscapes, he offers a nuanced and realistic depiction of the postcolonial condition. His use of narrative techniques such as magical realism and nonlinear storytelling further enhances the representation of fragmented identities, capturing the complexity and unpredictability of cultural experience.

Conclusion:

Salman Rushdie's fiction provides a profound and insightful exploration of cultural conflict and hybridity within the framework of postcolonial literature. Through his richly layered narratives and complex characters, he captures the struggles and transformations of individuals navigating multiple cultural identities. Cultural conflict in his works highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity, East and West, and past and present, while hybridity emerges as a creative and transformative response to these tensions. By redefining identity as fluid, dynamic, and multifaceted, Rushdie challenges conventional notions of culture and offers a compelling vision of a world shaped by interaction and exchange. His contribution to contemporary literature lies in his ability to articulate the complexities of identity in a globalized society, making his works both relevant and enduring.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to my respected research guide Prof. (Dr.) Hanumant Lokhande for his valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research paper titled "A Critical Study of Cultural Conflict and Hybridity in the Works of Salman Rushdie."

I am deeply thankful to PDEA's Waghere College of Arts, Commerce and Science and Savitribai Phule Pune University for providing academic support, resources, and encouragement during the course of this research work.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks to all the scholars, critics, and authors whose valuable works and critical insights contributed significantly to the successful completion of this study.

I express my sincere appreciation to my family and friends for their continuous support, motivation, and understanding throughout this research journey.

Finally, I thank everyone who directly or indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited:

1. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
2. Brennan, Timothy. *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*. Macmillan, 1989.
3. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–37.
4. Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*. Granta Books, 1991.
5. Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. Jonathan Cape, 1981.
6. Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. Viking, 1988.
7. Rushdie, Salman. *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Vintage, 1995.
8. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 1978.

Rebellious Reverberations: Kamala Das's Feminist Manifesto in her Personal Life and Its Reflection in her Poetry

Ganesh Mukund Pawar¹ Dr. Rohidas Babasaheb Dhakane²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030244



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.20796507

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20796507>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Student

¹Dept. of English and Research Centre,
Pune District Education Association's
Waghire
College, Saswad)
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University)

²Research Guide

²Assoc. Prof. Dept. of English, Pune
District Education Association's
Shankarrao Bhelke
College, Nasarapur)
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University)

E-mail ID: prgmpawar@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Pawar, G. M., & Rohidas Babasaheb
Dhakane. (2026). *Rebellious
Reverberations: Kamala Das's Feminist
Manifesto in her Personal Life and
Its Reflection in her Poetry.*
*International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature Paradigm
Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)),
176–179..

Address for correspondence:

Ganesh Mukund Pawar, Research
Student
(Dept. of English and Research Centre,
Pune District Education Association's
Waghire College, Saswad)
(Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune
University)
E-mail ID: prgmpawar@gmail.com

Abstract:

In general, it is said that literature is a medium through which writers and poets explore their individual experiences. As a result of it, we have representation of joy, sorrow, love, loss, pathos, or conflict in the literary texts as per the experiences, observations, emotions and interactions with the world around the poets. Concerning Kamala Das and her poetry, she tried to represent her individual life experiences, emotions and personal struggles in her poems. The present study intends to interpret Kamala Das, her childhood, upbringing, marriage, and her relationship with men and tries to offer deep insights into gender dynamics and man-woman relationships in the Indian cultural and social context presented by her poetic creations. It also tries to comment on her personal life and its representation in her poetry as a result of her audacious attitude. Her poetry is a frank expression of gender inequality, patriarchal oppression, physical exploitation of women, objectification of women and her rebelliousness against societal and cultural norms. It interrogates her individual experiences and sense of rebelliousness against social constraints and expectations imposed on women, particularly in the context of marriage, sexuality, gendered roles and emotional suppression of women. The present research article explores her life experiences and interrogates and examines a few selected poems to understand the articulation of her sense of exploitation, sexuality, and inner conflicts of women. Thus, it is significant to explore Kamala Das's poems by considering anecdotes in her life and reflections of these anecdotes and incidents in her poetry.

Keywords: Feminism, gender, sexual, objectification, rebellious, etc.

Introduction:

Kamala Das's real name was Kamala Suraiyya, and she was also pen named as Madhavi Kutty (Malayalam). She was born in Kerala but spent her childhood in Calcutta. She started writing her poetry in her childhood; it was believed that she wrote her first poem when she was six years old. She wrote and published several poems at an early age, presenting themes like her personal life, emotions, and inner conflicts. These poems include *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973). These poems deal with personal issues like love and desire, sexuality, loneliness, marriage and oppression, women's sufferings, etc. These powerful, fearless representations of her personal life and conflicts earned her recognition and fame as a prominent confessional poet in Indian English writing. According to M. H. Abrahams, a confessional poet reveals private or clinical matters about himself or herself, including sexual experiences, mental anguish and illness, experiments with drugs and suicidal impulses (Abrams). Thus, her openness in presenting her personal life experiences in her poetry popularized her as a confessional poet.

She lived a neglected child's life in her childhood as her father was busy with his professional work (sailing Rolls Royce, Humbers, and Bentleys) and her mother used to spend all her time writing Malayalam poetry. They hadn't full time servant at that time. The cook who accompanied them had no affectionate nature. Her parents' relationship was also not affectionate and loving with each other. Balamani Amma, the mother of Kamala Das, descends from the royal family of Raja, and her father, V. Madhavan Nair, comes from the peasant stock and was influenced by the Gandhian principles of austerity. Her father was, for the first time in the family, a bridegroom who neither belonged to any royal family nor was a Brahmin; a combination of royal heritage of maternal family and peasant tradition of paternal side could not harmonise to make a happy house. Mother did not fall in love with Kamala Das's father. They were dissimilar and horribly mismatched. Due to the dissimilar and horribly mismatched parents, Kamala Das faced a lot of suffering before her adolescence. Because of humiliation and repercussion, she wanted to disappear like Sita into the bowels of the earth. Discrimination between male child and female child, deprivation of affection, longings of love and admiration, even of hugging by father, tore her as a child (Rahaman 1-8). Thus, she grew up as a neglected child since her childhood. She also lacks the affection and love from her parents. She got married to a bank officer at the age of 15. But after their marriage, she also experienced a loveless and unromantic relationship with her husband. In the beginning, her husband, Madhav Das, supported her poetry and writing. She was married at an early age and gave birth to her first son.

She thinks that she was mature enough to satisfy her husband. But when her husband visited to see his child, he completely ignored her and didn't show any interest in her and only insisted on having intimate relations with her. He also did not interact with her affectionately. It is observed in her biographies that her husband has a special attraction and interest in the sister of his wife's cousin. Her husband's disinterest in having a conversation with her and his special attention and intimacy with her cousin hurt her. This negligence and loveless life reached at its peak when her husband reached Bombay from Kerala, and he wrote his first letter not to his wife but to his girl cousin, who allowed him to hug her in the evening (Rahaman). She faced the same negligence, alienation and loveless relationship in her marital life. She was humiliated by this negligence. All of her poetry represents her intense personal feelings, emotional loneliness, mutual respect, and desire for platonic and real love. She boldly confesses her desire for love and sex; she speaks openly about her emotional involvement and her failure to achieve any relationship in which she got a real emotional attachment with her partner. She failed to find real love. She frankly represents her sexual desires and experiences of Indian women in her poetry. All of her poems exposed her personal life experiences, feelings and her individual reactions to the situations.

Her autobiographical poem 'An Introduction' deals with the theme of love, marriage and freedom. She advocates for the freedom of free choice for women. According to Kamala Das, women always crave for the love and union with men, but it becomes humiliation and disillusionment if this love turns into physical pleasures, lustfulness and sexual hunger. Most of her poems present the theme of unfulfilled love and celebration of sex. Similarly, in her poem 'An Introduction', she presents her craving for real love and how she was victimised by sexual love. She tries to record her own experiences and observations regarding her unfulfilled love in its real sense and the objectification of her physical body by her husband. Her marriage was a failure as her husband had neglected a real sense of the world and focused on only physical pleasures and satisfying his physical desires. Her husband failed to provide her with love, care and sympathy that she wanted. Her innocent childhood was destroyed by a rough manoeuvre of her husband (Khan). In the beginning of the poem, she discusses her background and language, intending to focus on her desire to create her own identity and agency. The poetess clearly rejects and criticizes the socio-cultural and traditional feminine roles and formation of womanhood. She also highlights the traditional patriarchal roles, her early marriage, and her forced transition into womanhood. She vigorously represents the bodily objectification by her husband through openly portraying a relationship between husband and wife, and also underlines how her husband values physical love, completely ignoring her emotions, feelings, and desires.

I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.

(Name of the Poem: An Introduction)

In the above lines, the poetess describes her married life. She explains her own experiences during puberty. She was a child, which indicates her innocence and the state of immaturity. Being a child, she asked for love, and her husband humiliates her physically and uses her to satisfy his sexual urges in bed.

In her autobiographical poem, 'Old Play House,' she is protesting against married life, against the pressure of domesticity and male domination. As compared to her poem 'An Introduction,' she presents more intense objectification of a woman by her husband in the poem 'Old Play House.' The poetess compares herself with the bird Swallows and her husband with a captor who wanted to control his wife to fulfil his sexual urges. In the poem, the poetess discussed her personal life as a confessional poet, and she explained her mismatched married life and its disastrous consequences on her life. According to the poetess, marriage is an institution that is not only limited to the gratification of sensual desires but also a relationship based on trust and mutual understanding.

But the second stanza of the poem talks about her husband's lustful and loveless relationship with her. She said that in her marital life, she experienced that she was only a physical object for the entertainment of her husband, who used to satisfy his sexual desires. She lost her identity as an individual and slowly degenerated into a puppet, only to perform her domestic duties as a housewife (Khan). She also lived a neglected and loveless life in her childhood as she was always craving for her parents' love, and after her married life, she lost her identity as a woman. She was ignored and neglected by her husband, who was dominant and self-centered. She expected a spiritual and emotional love relationship, but her husband objectified her to satisfy his physical urges.

There is No more singing, no more dance, my mind is an old
Playhouse with all its lights put out. The strong man's technique is
Always the same, he serves his love in lethal doses,
For, love is Narcissus at the water's edge, haunted
By its own lonely face, and yet it must seek at last
An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors
To shatter and the kind night to erase the water.

(Name of the poem: The Old Playhouse.)

These lines present the poetess' miserable post-marital life. She said that all her romantic dreams about married life are shattered because of her husband. She faced complete darkness and a lack of freedom for herself. She feels that she has lost her own identity as a woman because there is no dance, singing and happiness in her life. She faced a colorless and meaningless life after her marriage as she became a slave to her husband instead of a true companion. According to her, their relationship lacks tenderness, understanding, mutual respect, and platonic love. She was fed up because of her husband's stereotyped and worldly ways of lovemaking. Her approach to her married life is like everything has ended in her life because now she is just a puppet in her husband's hand.

In her poem 'Sunshine Cat', she tries to distinguish between true love and lust. She is expressing her disillusionment with the yearning for love. She tries to compare the love of her husband and other lovers. She enlisted the similarities between all her lovers and their longing for sensual and physical love only.

Her husband could not fulfil her desires and dreams about spiritual and emotional love; as a result, she approached various men in search of true love. But all the men she approached for true love were not good human beings. They turned out to be cynics, which means having no faith in the goodness of human nature. Her lovers had a similar lustful and selfish approach towards love. She submitted herself to her lover as she expressed in the line "clinging to their chests where new hair sprouted like great-winged moths, burrowing her Face into their smells and their young lusts to forget". She submitted herself to them, but she got only sensual love as all of these men tried to satisfy their sexual urges. Her dreams of romantic and spiritual love remained unfulfilled even though she engaged in many extra-marital affairs.

The poetess used the metaphor of a sunshine cat. The woman and her identity are compared to the helpless cat. Both of these creatures, the woman and the cat, crave warmth and affection. But the cat seeks sunlight for comfort, and the woman longs for realistic love and warmth. Instead of getting realistic love and warmth, women are getting only objectified and used by men. The imagery used by the poet presents the vulnerability and emotional deprivation of women by men. She used the following lines to describe this theme.

.....and the band
Of cynics she turned to, clinging to their chests where
New hair sprouted like great-winged moths, burrowing her
Face into their smells and their young lusts to forget
To forget, oh, to forget, and, they said, each of
Them, I do not love, I cannot love, it is not
In my nature to love, but I can be kind to you.

(Name of the poem: Sunshine Cat)

In the above lines, Kamala Das presents the picture of emotional states and inner conflicts. She paints painful imagery of a woman who seeks to search for emotional love and mutual respect. Here, the poetess highlights her emotional emptiness as a cause for searching for emotional affection from other men. She justifies her search for love from someone else after she was neglected and unloved by her husband. Along with her husband, Kamala Das criticized all of her lovers, mentioning that they are emotionally detached and only interested in physical love. Poetess exposes tragic traps and cycles of physical love in which the woman is trapped. In her personal life, she tried to move from one relationship to another, hoping to find love, but in every relationship, she only experienced lust and physical love from her partner.

Throughout her life, Kamala Das continued to search for true love and emotional fulfilment. In her childhood, she never got affection from her parents, experienced gender discrimination in her family and lacked affectionate relations with cooks and family maids. She lived a loveless, emotionally unfulfilling and genuinely unaffectionate married life, confined to physical intimacy. She entered into several post-marital affairs in search of emotional love and affection from her partner. However, most of these partners seek physical love, objectification of her body, and fulfilment of their sexual desires. These experiences filled her life with emotional emptiness, loneliness and dissatisfaction. It also transformed her as a confessional and rebellious feminist poetess who challenged traditional socio-cultural constructions of women, rejecting passive and sacrificial gender roles of women imposed on her by patriarchal structures and society.

The entire works of Kamala Das are known as the depiction of her personal experiences and the representation of the same. Her poetic contribution is really praiseworthy which includes the works like: *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1957), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973), *Stranger Time* (1973), *The Sirens* (1964), *The Anamalai Poems* (1985), *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (1996) and *Yaa Allah* (collection of poems) (2001). Das has also written her biography, which she gave the title *My Story* (1975). All other poems by her, like 'Freaks', 'Substitute', 'Maggots', 'Looking Glass', 'Relationship' and 'Invitation', etc., deal with her isolation, longing for romantic, spiritual and emotional love, and the theme of objectification of women as a sex object by her husband and lovers. She presented loveless and lustful relationships based on sensual love in all her poems.

Readers of Kamala Das indeed think that the writing and presentation of Kamala Das made them ponder about her personal life and the difficulties she faced in her entire life. It also made us think that Kamala Das tried her level best to represent all the personal aspects and experiences in her works. Her autobiography created sensations among Indian people. Her frank description of love and sex created controversy.

She also tried to justify her extramarital affairs as she approached various men in search of spiritual, emotional and romantic love. But she failed to find such love, as all men are interested in sensual and lustful love. Thus, the poetess lived a miserable and humiliated life. Like other confessional poets, such as Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, Emily Bronte, Hilda Doolittle, and Maya Angelou, Kamala Das makes her own life, her personal emotional experiences, disillusionment and frustrations, the centre of her poetry (Dar).

Conclusion:

Exploring the relevance between the poetess's personal life and poetry can reveal connotative meanings, and it also gives a deeper understanding of the poems. Poems always present emotions, feelings, and experiences. Kamala Das's poetry was a complete reflection of her own experiences as a typical Indian woman. She presents the recurring themes of love, desire, lust and objectification of women, often challenging traditional norms and customs. She exposes the approach of a male-dominated society towards women, as women are always treated as objects. Throughout her poetic creations, she rejects passive femininity and boldly raises her voice against the roles and expectations imposed on her. In her poetic creations, we found that she has presented taboo subjects like sexuality, the quest for identity and women's status and empowerment. She inspired female writers to present their confessional writings without hesitation and also promoted individuals to question and challenge the oppression and exploitation of women.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Research Guide, Dr. Rohidas Babasaheb Dhakane, for his valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research work. His scholarly support and constructive criticism helped me shape this study in a meaningful manner. I am also thankful to the Principal, Head of the Department, and all the faculty members of the Department of English at Pune District Education Association's Waghire College and Pune District Education Association's Shankarrao Bhelke College for providing academic support and necessary facilities during my research. I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family members, friends, and well-wishers for their continuous motivation, cooperation, and moral support throughout the preparation of this research paper. Finally, I express my gratitude to all the authors, critics, and researchers whose books, articles, and scholarly works proved valuable in completing this study successfully.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

1. Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of literary terms*. Eleventh Edition. Delhi: Cengage Learning India Private Limited, 2015. 24 February 2024.
2. Dar, Showkat Hussain. "KAMALA DAS: A CONFESSIONAL POETESS." *International Journal of Advance Research in Science and Engineering* 06.04 (April, 2017): 1086-1089. 25 February 2024. <http://ijarse.com/images/fullpdf/1503495071_ijarse_725.pdf>.
3. Khan, Ismet Jerin. "Kamala Das: Tragedy of Contrast between Childhood and Adulthood." *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Legal Studies* 4.2 (2022): 51-57. 28 February, 2024 February 2024.
4. Rahaman, Dr. Nazibar. "Treat of Trauma in Kamala Das." *Glacier Journal of Scientific Research* (n.d.).

Cultural Studies in the 21st Century

SantoshP.Sutar¹ Dr.Seema P.Chaudhary²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030245



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20796612

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20796612>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Scholar, Waghire College, Saswad.

²HOD Amruteshwar ACS College, Vinjar

How to cite this article:

Sutar, S., & Chaudhary, S. P. (2026). Cultural Studies in the 21st Century. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 180–183.

Address for correspondence:

SantoshP.Suta, Research Scholar,
Waghire College, Saswad
Email- santoshpsutar@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is related to cultural studies and especially emphasizes on the position of cultural studies in the 21st century. In the 21st century, cultural studies have been playing a substantial role in the history of ideas for last five decades. Most over it this paper see the status of popular culture and defines as popular culture is associated with a set of practices, belief and subjects that are consumed by the majority of society's population. Cultural studies are a multidisciplinary arena, starts from the research centre 'Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' in 1964 at the university of Birmingham in U.S.A. Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall who gives the first sign of popular culture through cultural studies approach. From 1964 to 2022, popular culture was widely recognized in the discipline of culture studies. However, the sole purpose of this article is to analyze data from 2000 to 2022 in order to determine what popular culture will look like in the future. In this manner, the pop figure will be examined and many facets of popular culture will be presented. This study will incorporate the works of numerous authors who contribute to cultural studies in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary, Cultural studies, Popular culture.

Introduction

One of the most prestigious disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary fields in the postmodern era is cultural studies, which encompasses a number of disciplines, including literature, politics, geography, sociology, linguistics, and many theories, such as structuralism, post-colonialism, Marxism, culture materialism, post-structuralism, etc. The relationship between culture and power is examined in Vol. 7 Spl. Issue 1 2020. II. To put it simply, cultural studies consist of the phrases "culture" and "studies." First of all, culture refers to a specific way of living. And there are many different factors, such as the food you eat, the God you serve, the clothes you wear, the music you sing, the language you speak, etc. Customs, traditions, festivals, and other human accomplishments, such as art, music, architecture, philosophy, literature, religion, and science, can all be considered parts of culture. The term "culture" is broad. According to Cristina De Rossi:

"Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things," (Rossi)

The second "studies" refers to the "Study of" the combination of cultural studies, which implies "the study of culture." However, this is untrue: "Cultural studies are like other academic disciplines because higher education is the primary institutional site for cultural studies." However, because cultural studies is an institutional area of origin, it differs from the study of culture in that it seeks to establish linkages with social and political movements, employees of cultural institutions, and cultural management outside of the academic setting. The primary goal of cultural studies is to offer detailed conceptualization analyses of how social relations and power are established, sustained, and structured through culture. In Cultural Studies, there are many disciplinary to examine and relative to culture ad power, gender, race, feminism, class etc to explore the commission between these of forms of power. It is Bennet who divides the explanation of Cultural Studies into four points which are:

"Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary field in which perspectives from different disciplines can be selectively draw on examine the relation of culture and power."

"Cultural Studies is concerned with all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct."

"The prime institutional sites for cultural studies are those of higher education and as such, cultural studies is like other academic disciplines. Nevertheless, it tries to forge connections outside of the academy with social and political movements, workers in cultural institutions, and cultural management." (Bennett.T.)

When Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall founded the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964, they were the first to apply the cultural studies method to popular culture. In contrast to folk culture, working-class culture, or high culture, popular culture refers to the preferences of common people rather than the educated elite. The majority of people in society consume a certain set of behaviors, beliefs, and topics that are linked to popular culture. Pop, the shortened form of popular, is specific and relates to a variety of media, such as dance, film, music, literature, radio, fashion, television, and cyber-culture. The 21st century has seen a realignment of mass media.

Television, newspapers, books, movies, and other forms of mass media were used before to 2000. But today, it is used for the internet, mobile, magazine etc. The distinguish meaning between the term 'popular' and the phrase 'popular culture' is given by Stuart Hall in his essay 'Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular''. He first defines popular:

"Take the most common sense meaning: the things which are said to be popular because masses of the people listen to them, buy them, read them, consume them and seem to enjoy them to the full" (Hall.S.)

Second, he defines "popular culture" as people's cultural practices. Johann Gottfried Harder first used the phrase "popular culture" to describe everything that permeates the daily lives of common people in a society, including ideas, beliefs, entertainment, language, fashion, and politics. The law of life is change, just as nature and society are subject to change. The inhabitants of the modern world are linked to previously unheard-of lifestyles. Popular culture is a contemporary phenomenon that uses the internet to exchange ideas, opinions, and experiences. Songs, movies, and videos that are viral on the internet are especially influenced by culture. People have many emblems of popular culture, such as authors, singers, actresses, and dancers who have achieved extraordinary levels of renown and entered the modern period. These days, anyone may become famous on social media. YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, and other social media platforms appear to be the new icons of popular culture. President Barack Obama invited a number of YouTubers to the White House in March 2014 to hear their message for youth. As a result, YouTube represents popular culture in the twenty-first century.

Pop culture can be divided into a number of categories, such as sports, news, politics, fashion, and entertainment. Examples of popular culture in video games are *Gone Home* (2010) and *Player Unknown's Battlegrounds* (2017). Pop culture in music includes American Idol, Indian Idol, American Got Talent, and Indian Got Talent. Project Runway and What Not to Wear are examples of pop culture in fashion. Examples of popular culture on television include the reality series Big Boss, The Kapil Sharma Show, The Bachelor, and The Biggest Loser. Fast food, hamburgers, and Rice A Rani are examples of popular culture in food culture, whereas Rachael Roy and The Kitchen are cooking-related television programs. WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat etc are the best examples of popular culture in social media. There are a lot of main figures in pop culture such as Bob Dylan, Chetan Bhagat, Shakira, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Stephen Hawking, Justin Bieber are the famous icon of popular culture in the 21st century.

In Cultural Studies, such writer often who gives the contribution to popular culture such Matthew Arnold, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thomson etc in 20th century and Lawrence, Graneberg Siman Frith, Angela McRobbie, Maggahm Morris etc in the 21st century. In the twenty-first century, Angela MacRobbie teaches communication at Goldsmith College and integrates the study of popular culture. It is Lawrence Grossberge, a pupil of Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. He is well-known for popular culture, with a particular emphasis on popular music in Culture Studies. In his book *Media Making: Mass Media in Popular Culture* (2005), he presents information regarding the relationship between media culture and society in a novel way. Simon Firth is well-known for his analysis of popular culture. use a method known as "popular music studies." He published a four-volume book titled "Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media Cultural Studies" in 2004 and a collection of essays titled "Talking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays" in 2007. He concludes that it is accurate to say that popular culture is in opposition to high culture and has a prominent position in cultural studies. Popular culture has taken on a new form in our society in the twenty-first century. Thus, popular culture became a part of mass media. Paul Gilroy refers to this work as the surrender of race in his 2000 book *Against Race*. He provides us with a new political vocabulary and promotes consumption. American critical race theorist Patricia I. Williams wrote *Blind Goddess*, in which she discusses how race affects every stage of life. As a result, numerous other theorists have contributed to critical race theory in the twenty-first century, including Richard Delgado, Kimberlie William Crenshaw, Camara Phyllis James, and others. Within the field of Cultural Studies In the 20th century, writers like Matthew Arnold, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thomson, and others contributed to popular culture; in the 21st century, these authors include Lawrence, Graneberg Siman Frith, Angela McRobbie, Maggahm Morris, and others. In the twenty-first century, Angela MacRobbie teaches communication at Goldsmith College and integrates the study of popular culture. It is Lawrence Grossberge, a pupil of Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. He is well-known for popular culture, with a particular emphasis on popular music in Culture Studies. In his 2005 book *Media Making: Mass Media in Popular Culture*, he offers a distinctive method of presenting information regarding how media culture and society interact with popular culture. Simon Firth is famous for analyzing popular music culture. He uses an approach as called popular music studies. In 2004, he publishes a four volumes "Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media Cultural Studies and a collection of essays about *Popular Music: Talking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays in* (2007)

A prominent member of the New Left, Raymond Williams was a Welsh Marxist theorist, novelist, critic, public intellectual, author, academic, and socialist. He developed a new approach to critical analysis known as Culture Materialism, which is founded on the idea of culture and identifies cultural practice as a component of an active, dynamic, historical process. The contingent and the subjunctive are two successive trends in cultural form that are reflected in his work. The first of these is the figure's history, which has been influenced by human activity. Later on, we come into times when we want to know what options are available and how. From this point on, Williams created a number of timeless theoretical ideas: He recognized a "structure of feeling; which he called the field of interaction between the official consciousness of an era and the whole process of actually living its consequences"; he insisted on viewing culture as "normal" every day and (possibly) democratic, constantly being made and re-made; and he identified three forces or tensions in the development of cultural form: the emergent, the dominant, and the residual. All of these offer a means of analyzing and critiquing cultural change, along with its relevance and impact. Raymond

Williams describes how Western nations, particularly Great Britain, evolved culturally from the 18th to the 20th century in his book *Culture and Society*.

Richard Hoggart was a British The phrase "The Long Revolutions" refers to a cultural revolution that Raymond Williams believes is open to both the industrial and democratic revolutions. In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams examines how images of the country and the city have been used in English literature since the 16th century and how they have come to represent the idea of social and economic transformation linked to the growth of capitalism in England. academics who focus on British popular culture in the fields of sociology, English literature, and culture studies. The Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded by Richard Hoggart, whose institutional roots gave rise to a worldwide subject of cultural studies. Richard Hoggart had imagined that the center would feature sections where he would receive literature reviews on comic books, girl's magazines, and Hollywood films, among other types of mass culture. Hoggart began his career as an adult education teacher and specialist in W.H. Auden's writings. He came from a working-class household in Leeds. Richard Hoggart examines how mass media affects the UK in *The Uses of Literacy*. This work has been cited as having had a significant impact on the development of cultural studies as well as the history of English and media studies. This book was an attempt to comprehend how "Massification" had altered British culture.

Along with Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, a British Marxist sociologist, political activist, and cultural theorist, was one of the pioneers of the school of thought known as British cultural studies or The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. In 1964, Hoggart invites Stuart Hall, a founder of the powerful New Left Review, to join Birmingham University's Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall, a cultural studies scholar, initially developed the Encoding/Decoding model of communication under the title *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. A theoretical perspective on the creation, distribution, and interpretation of media messages is offered by Hall's essay. According to Hall, audience members may be able to alter their message through group action and actively participate in the decoding of message distortions based on their social settings. To put it simply, encoding and decoding is the process of translating a message so that it is understandable. You interpret a message in ways that make sense to you when you decode it. Both spoken and nonverbal communication are included in decoding: When someone is depressed, furious, or agitated, there are other body language indicators that can be used to decipher behavior without using words. When someone is attempting to communicate with someone, the message may occasionally have different meanings for different people. Understanding who knows what based on the information provided at the time of receiving the message is necessary to prepare for decoding.

The most well-known British historian, writer, socialist, and peace activist was E.P. Thomson. today for Britain's historical endeavors. late 18th and early 19th century revolutionary movements. The English social history book *The Making of the English Working Class* was ranked 30th out of the 100 top nonfiction books of the 20th century by the Modern Library. In the texts, Thomson refers to "working class" rather than "classes," and the creation of a working class consciousness is emphasized throughout.

Dick Hebdige is a British media theorist and sociologist who lived abroad and was involved in all subcultures and their opposition to society's mainstream. Deserts, media, topographies, and formative criticism are among his current areas of study. Hebdige has written a great deal about Takashi Murakami, modern art, media and cultural studies, design, mod style, reggae, postmodernism and style, surrealism, and improvisation. Dick is a metaphorical form of resistance in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, which focuses on the post-war youth subculture trends in Britain. This methodology for examining young subcultures draws from French structuralism, American sociologists, literary critics, and Marxist theorists.

According to Hebdige, every subculture is following the same path. However, they delineate the unique style deference of particular subcultures, such Skinheads, Punks, Mods, Rocker, and Teddy Boys. Hebdige focuses on the socioeconomic, historical, cast, and class circumstances behind the development of each subculture. Hebdige claims that clothing, dance, music, makeup, and drugs are all combined to create styles. Hebdige places a strong focus on each subculture's historical, socioeconomic, class, caste, and mass media circumstances. For instance, Hebdige contends that the rejection of British national iconography by both black and white punk is a shared problem. Hebdige demonstrates this argument by highlighting the similarities of his shape, even if they are unrelated.

British society scientist Poul Willis is well-known for his sociological research. With a focus on consumer culture socialization, music, and popular culture, Poul Willis's work is extensively read in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and education. Willis describes an ethnographic study of working-class lads at a secondary school in England in his book *Learning to Labour*. In this, Willis attempts to clarify how adolescent culture and socialization serve as a conduit for working-class occupations in schools. One of the most frequently mentioned sociological texts in education studies is *Learning to Labour*, a social scientist and researcher in a significant educational and educational study that acknowledged school education as a historical study of culture. The majority of intellectuals, including Lowrence Grossberg, Poul Gilrory, and Angela McRobbie, are part of the 21st-century field of cultural studies. Cultural studies has an impact on education in the twenty-first century. These days, it is studied alongside other subjects like sociology, linguistics, literature, etc. Lowrence Grossberg is well-known for cultural studies and popular culture, particularly in philosophy of commune. Angela McRobbie is a well-known British culture theorist who integrates popular culture, modern media, and feminism to gaze. The focal point for research on racism and race is Poul Gilrory.

Conclusion

As a result, cultural studies is crucial to the development of 21st-century concepts. The diverse fields of racial theory, popular culture, feminism, Marxism, gender theory, mass media, etc. were pioneered by numerous cultural studies theorists. Between 1964 and 2020, authors who frequently contributed to cultural studies included Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thomson, and others in the 20th century, and Lawrence, Graneberg Siman Frith, Angela McRobbie, Maggahm Morris, and others in the 21st. It is undeniable that popular culture stands in stark contrast to high culture and occupies a prominent position in cultural studies. Popular culture has taken on a new form in our society in the twenty-first century. Thus, popular culture became a part of mass media. Above all, this study has been successful in illustrating the true state of cultural studies in the twenty-first century.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who directly and indirectly supported me in completing this research paper entitled "Cultural Studies in the 21st Century." I am deeply thankful to my guide, Dr. Seema P. Chaudhary, for her valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the research work. Her academic support and motivation greatly helped me in completing this study successfully. I also express my heartfelt thanks to the Principal, Head of the Department, and faculty members of Waghire College and Amruteshwar ACS College for providing the necessary academic environment and support. I am grateful to all the scholars, authors, and researchers whose books, articles, and critical works have been valuable sources for this paper. Their contributions have enriched my understanding of cultural studies and popular culture. Finally, I would like to thank my family members, friends, and well-wishers for their continuous encouragement, cooperation, and moral support throughout this research journey.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Reference

1. <https://writology.com/blog/what-is-pop-culture-today.html>
2. Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom, Tylor, E. B. , Volume 1, London, (1871)
3. Hall.S "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'", "People's History and Socialist Theory". Rapheal Samuel(ed.), London: Routledge, 1981
4. Cristina De Rossi, an anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in London, told Live Science.
5. Bennett, T.(1998) Culture: A Reformer's Science. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
6. Barker, Chris. The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies Sage publication 2014
7. Storey John (2001), Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, London, Pearson/Prentice Hall.
8. Wiseman Sue (2009), ' "Popular Culture": a Category for Analysis?', in M. Dimmock and A. Hadfield, eds, Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England, Farnham-Burlington (VT), Ashgate, 15-28.
9. Warren & Vavrus (eds.) (2002). American Cultural Studies. Urbana Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
10. Hartley & Pearson (eds.) (2000). American Cultural Studies: A Reader. Oxford University Press.
11. Frow & Morris (eds.) (1993). Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader. Urbana Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
12. Turner (ed.), Graeme (1993). Nation, Culture, Text: Australian Cultural and Media Studies. London: Routledge.
13. Morley & Chen (eds.) (1996). Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies. London: Routledge.
14. Davies, Ioan. 1991. "British Cultural Marxism." International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 4(3):323–44. p. 328
15. Hartley, John (2003). A Short History of Cultural Studies. London: Sage.
16. Turner, Graeme (2003). British Cultural Studies: An Introduction (Third ed.). London: Routledge.
17. Sardar, Ziauddin, and Borin Van Loon. 1994. Introducing Cultural Studies. New York: Totem Books
18. Williams, Raymond. 1985. Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (revised ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Intersections of Literature, Society, And Identity: A Study of Emerging Cultural Discourses in English Studies

Chandan Ashok Sonkamble¹ Prof Dr Vijaykumar R Punekar²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030246



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20796749

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20796749>

Volume: 3
Issue:2 (I)
Month: April 2026
E-ISSN: 3065-7873

^{1,2} Department of English and Research
Centre
PDEA's Waghire college of Arts,
Commerce and Science, Saswad

How to cite this article:

Sonkamble, C. A., & Punekar, V. R.
(2026). *Intersections of Literature,
Society, And Identity: A Study of
Emerging Cultural Discourses in English
Studies. International Journal of English
and World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research*, 3(2(I)), 184–189..

Address for correspondence:

Chandan Ashok Sonkamble, Department
of English and Research Centre, PDEA's
Waghire college of Arts, Commerce and
Science, Saswad
Email- sonkamblec6@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines the dynamic intersections between literature, society, and identity, with a particular focus on emerging cultural discourses in contemporary English Studies. As literary production increasingly reflects diverse socio-political realities, traditional frameworks of analysis have expanded to include issues of race, gender, class, and transnational identity. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from postcolonial theory, intersectionality, and cultural studies, the study investigates how literary texts function both as mirrors of social conditions and as active agents in shaping identity. The research adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology, employing discourse analysis and thematic reading of selected contemporary texts, including digital and transnational narratives. It explores how evolving cultural discourses such as diasporic identity, eco-consciousness, and digital subjectivity challenge conventional literary paradigms. The findings suggest that literature plays a critical role in negotiating identity within complex socio-cultural contexts. Emerging discourses not only disrupt canonical hierarchies but also foreground marginalized voices and hybrid identities. The study contributes to English Studies by offering an integrated framework that situates literature within broader cultural and ideological transformations, emphasizing the need for inclusive and interdisciplinary approaches in literary scholarship.

Keywords: Literature, Society, Identity, Broader Cultural and Ideological Transformations

Introduction

2.1 Background and Context

Literature has long served as both a reflection and a constructor of social realities. From early canonical works to contemporary narratives, literary texts have mediated cultural values, social hierarchies, and ideological tensions. However, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed a significant shift in literary studies, marked by the rise of identity-based discourses and a growing emphasis on inclusivity.

The expansion of English Studies beyond Eurocentric boundaries has enabled the inclusion of diverse voices, particularly those shaped by postcolonial, feminist, and diasporic experiences. This shift reflects broader socio-political transformations, including globalization, migration, and digital communication, which have redefined the ways in which identity is constructed and represented. Literature has historically functioned as both a mirror and a maker of society, reflecting cultural values while simultaneously shaping them. From canonical texts that reinforced dominant ideologies to contemporary works that interrogate them, literary production has remained deeply entangled with social structures and cultural identities. In recent decades, this relationship has become increasingly complex, driven by global transformations such as migration, technological advancement, and the rise of identity politics. The field of English Studies has undergone a significant paradigm shift, moving beyond the traditional focus on Eurocentric canons toward a more inclusive and interdisciplinary framework. This shift has been marked by the emergence of critical approaches that foreground issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, and diaspora. As a result, literature is no longer viewed merely as an aesthetic artifact but as a dynamic site where identities are constructed, contested, and reimagined.

Scholars such as Stuart Hall have emphasized that identity is not a fixed essence but a continuous process shaped through representation and discourse. Similarly, postcolonial thinkers like Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha have demonstrated how literature participates in the production of cultural meanings, particularly in contexts marked by colonial histories and their aftermaths. These theoretical interventions have opened up new avenues for examining how literature engages with evolving social realities.

2.2 Research Problem

Despite the growing body of scholarship on identity and cultural representation, there remains a lack of integrative analysis that brings together literature, society, and emerging cultural discourses within a single analytical framework. Much of the existing research tends to focus on specific dimensions such as postcolonial identity or gender representation—without adequately addressing how these intersect and evolve in response to contemporary socio-cultural changes.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining how emerging cultural discourses reshape literary constructions of identity. It considers literature not only as a reflection of social realities but also as an active participant in redefining them.

2.3 Objectives

To analyze the intersections of literature, society, and identity within contemporary texts.

To identify and examine emerging cultural discourses in English literary studies.

To evaluate the broader socio-cultural implications of these discourses.

2.4 Significance of Study

This study contributes to ongoing debates in English Studies by offering an integrated approach that connects literary analysis with cultural theory. By situating literature within the broader contexts of globalization, digital transformation, and identity politics, it highlights the evolving role of literary texts in shaping cultural understanding. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of interdisciplinary engagement, drawing on insights from postcolonial theory, intersectionality, and cultural studies to provide a more comprehensive account of identity formation. In doing so, it not only enriches literary scholarship but also responds to the need for more inclusive and critically engaged approaches in the study of literature.

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens for examining how literature engages with issues of power, representation, and cultural identity. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism highlights the ways in which Western discourse constructs the "Other," while Homi K. Bhabha's notions of hybridity and the "third space" emphasize the fluid and negotiated nature of identity.

3.2 Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, underscores the interconnectedness of social categories such as race, gender, and class. In literary analysis, this framework enables a more nuanced understanding of how multiple identities shape character, narrative, and thematic concerns.

3.3 Cultural Studies

Cultural studies, particularly the work of Stuart Hall, foregrounds the role of representation in constructing identity. Hall's theory suggests that identity is not fixed but continuously produced through discourse, making literature a crucial site for examining cultural meaning.

3.4 Feminist and Queer Theory

Feminist and queer theories further expand the analysis of identity by interrogating gender norms and highlighting marginalized voices. These frameworks emphasize performativity, resistance, and the destabilization of dominant narratives.

3.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory offers a critical framework for analyzing how literature engages with histories of colonialism, power asymmetries, and cultural representation. It interrogates the ways in which colonial ideologies persist in literary and cultural texts, shaping perceptions of identity, nationhood, and the "Other." At its core, postcolonial theory seeks to dismantle hegemonic narratives that privilege Western perspectives while marginalizing non-Western voices. A foundational contribution to this field is made by Edward Said through his seminal concept of *Orientalism*. Said argues that the "Orient" is not merely a geographical entity but a discursive construct produced by Western scholarship, literature, and political discourse. This construction positions the East as exotic, irrational, and inferior, thereby legitimizing colonial domination. In literary studies, Orientalism enables critics to examine how texts reproduce or resist such representational hierarchies.

Building on this, Homi K. Bhabha introduces the concepts of *hybridity* and the *third space*, which challenge fixed and essentialist notions of identity. Hybridity refers to the cultural mixing that occurs in colonial and postcolonial contexts, resulting in identities that are neither wholly colonizer nor colonized. The "third space" becomes a site of negotiation where new cultural meanings emerge, disrupting binary oppositions such as self/other or East/West.

In the context of this study, postcolonial theory is instrumental in analyzing how contemporary literary texts represent diasporic identities, cultural displacement, and resistance to dominant narratives. It highlights literature as a space where colonial legacies are both contested and reconfigured.

3.2 Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, provides a critical framework for understanding how multiple axes of identity such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity interact to produce complex experiences of privilege and oppression. Rather than treating these categories as separate or additive, intersectionality emphasizes their interconnected and mutually constitutive nature.

In literary studies, intersectionality allows for a more nuanced analysis of characters and narratives by recognizing that identities are layered and cannot be reduced to a single dimension. For instance, the experiences of a woman of color cannot be fully understood through frameworks that examine only gender or race in isolation; instead, these identities intersect to create distinct social realities. Applying intersectionality to literary texts reveals how power operates across multiple levels. It enables critics to examine how marginalized characters navigate overlapping systems of oppression and how narratives either reinforce or challenge these structures. Furthermore, it draws attention to silences and exclusions within texts, prompting questions about whose stories are told and whose are omitted.

3.3 Cultural Studies

Cultural studies, as an interdisciplinary field, examines the production, circulation, and consumption of cultural meanings within society. It challenges the distinction between “high” and “low” culture, recognizing literature as part of a broader network of cultural practices that shape and reflect social identities. A central figure in this field is Stuart Hall, whose work on representation and identity has been particularly influential. Hall argues that identity is not an inherent or fixed essence but a process that is continuously constructed through discourse, representation, and cultural practices. According to Hall, meaning is produced through systems of representation, including language, images, and narratives, which are embedded within power relations. From this perspective, literature becomes a critical site for examining how identities are constructed and negotiated. Texts do not simply reflect reality; they actively participate in shaping cultural meanings and social identities. Cultural studies thus encourages readers to consider how literary narratives engage with broader social discourses, including media, politics, and ideology. In the context of this research, cultural studies provides a framework for analyzing how emerging discourses such as digital culture and globalization—transform literary representation. It underscores the importance of examining literature within its socio-cultural context, highlighting the interplay between text and society.

3.4 Feminist and Queer Theory

Feminist and queer theories extend the analysis of identity by critically examining gender and sexuality as socially constructed categories. These frameworks challenge normative assumptions about identity and highlight the ways in which power operates through gendered and sexualized discourses. Feminist theory focuses on the representation of women in literature, the critique of patriarchal structures, and the recovery of marginalized voices. It interrogates how literary texts perpetuate or resist gender inequalities, emphasizing the importance of agency, voice, and representation. Contemporary feminist approaches also incorporate intersectionality, recognizing the diversity of women’s experiences across different social contexts.

In this study, these frameworks are essential for analyzing how contemporary literature engages with issues of gender, sexuality, and identity politics. They reveal the ways in which emerging cultural discourses challenge established norms and open up new possibilities for understanding identity.

4. Literature Review

1. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, published by Pantheon Books, New York, in 1978.

Examines how Western discourse constructs the East as the “Other” through literary and cultural representations. Said argues that such representations are not neutral but are deeply embedded in power relations that sustain colonial dominance. His work provides a foundational framework for understanding how literature participates in shaping cultural identities and reinforces or resists ideological structures.

2. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, published by Routledge, London, in 1994.

Introduces the concepts of hybridity and the “third space” to explain the fluid and negotiated nature of cultural identity. Bhabha challenges binary oppositions inherent in colonial discourse and emphasizes the emergence of new cultural meanings through interaction and displacement. His theoretical insights are particularly useful for analyzing diasporic and transnational identities in contemporary literary texts.

3. Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” published in *Stanford Law Review*, Stanford University, in 1991 (Vol. 43, No. 6).

Introduces the concept of intersectionality to explain how overlapping social identities create unique forms of marginalization. Although grounded in legal studies, this work has had significant implications for literary analysis by enabling a deeper understanding of how multiple identity markers shape narrative representation and character development.

4. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” published in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* by Lawrence & Wishart in 1990.

Redefines identity as a dynamic and continuously evolving construct shaped by representation and historical context. Hall argues that identity is produced through discourse rather than being fixed or essential, making his work highly relevant for examining how literature constructs and negotiates cultural meanings in a globalized context.

5. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, published by Routledge, New York, in 1990.

Develops the concept of gender performativity, arguing that gender is not an innate quality but a socially constructed performance. Butler’s work challenges traditional notions of identity and provides a critical framework for analyzing how literary texts represent and subvert established gender norms and power structures.

6. Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” published in *Theory, Culture & Society* by SAGE Publications in 1990 (Vol. 7, No. 2–3).

Explores the impact of globalization on cultural identity through concepts such as ethnoscapen and mediascapen. Appadurai highlights the fluid and complex nature of global cultural flows, offering valuable insights into how contemporary literature reflects and engages with transnational and digital cultural dynamics.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive research design, grounded in the principles of literary and cultural analysis. Rather than relying on quantitative measurement, the research emphasizes close reading, critical interpretation, and theoretical engagement with texts. The qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for examining complex constructs such as identity, representation, and cultural discourse, which cannot be reduced to

numerical data. Through interpretive analysis, the study seeks to uncover underlying meanings, ideological structures, and narrative strategies within literary texts, situating them within broader socio-cultural and theoretical contexts.

5.2 Text Selection Criteria

The selection of texts is guided by their relevance to themes of identity, cultural transformation, and emerging discourses in contemporary English Studies. The study focuses on a diverse corpus that includes contemporary novels, digital narratives, and hybrid literary forms, reflecting the evolving nature of literary production in the twenty-first century. Preference is given to texts that engage with issues such as diaspora, globalization, gender, and environmental consciousness, as well as those that experiment with narrative form and medium. This inclusive selection allows for a comprehensive examination of how different literary modes contribute to the construction and negotiation of identity.

5.3 Scope and Limitations

While the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of emerging cultural discourses, it is limited in scope to primarily English-language texts. As a result, it may not fully capture the richness and diversity of literary production in non-English contexts. Furthermore, the selection of texts, while representative, is not exhaustive and may overlook certain regional or marginalized voices.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into contemporary trends in English Studies and provides a framework for future research that may incorporate a broader range of linguistic and cultural perspectives.

6. Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Literature as a Site of Identity Construction

Literature functions as a crucial site for the construction, negotiation, and expression of identity, offering a space where individual and collective experiences are articulated through narrative form. Through techniques such as characterization, narrative voice, and focalization, literary texts give shape to complex identities shaped by race, gender, class, and cultural context. These identities are not presented as fixed or essential but as fluid and evolving, often reflecting broader socio-political dynamics. Contemporary literary works, in particular, foreground marginalized perspectives, challenging dominant ideologies that have historically excluded or misrepresented certain groups. By centering subaltern voices and alternative subjectivities, literature enables a reconfiguration of identity that resists homogenization. In this sense, literary narratives do not merely depict identity but actively participate in its formation, providing readers with new frameworks for understanding the self and the other.

6.2 Society Reflected and Reimagined

While literature has traditionally been viewed as a reflection of society, it also possesses the transformative capacity to critique and reimagine social realities. Literary texts engage with existing power structures such as colonial hierarchies, patriarchal norms, and class inequalities by exposing their limitations and contradictions. In doing so, they create spaces for alternative visions of society that challenge the status quo.

This dual function of reflection and reimagination positions literature as a form of cultural intervention. Through satire, allegory, and narrative subversion, authors interrogate dominant discourses and propose new modes of social organization and identity formation. Literature thus becomes a site of resistance, where suppressed histories and marginalized experiences are brought to the forefront, enabling a critical re-evaluation of societal norms.

6.3 Emerging Cultural Discourses

Contemporary literature increasingly engages with emerging cultural discourses that reflect the complexities of a rapidly changing world. One of the most significant developments is the rise of digital identities, where online platforms and virtual spaces influence how individuals construct and perform their identities. Literary texts that incorporate digital narratives often depict fragmented, fluid selves, highlighting the tension between authenticity and performance in digital environments.

Another prominent discourse is that of diasporic identity, characterized by themes of migration, displacement, and cultural hybridity. Such narratives explore the negotiation of belonging in transnational contexts, where individuals navigate multiple cultural affiliations. These texts often challenge fixed notions of identity, emphasizing instead its contingent and relational nature.

Additionally, eco-conscious narratives have gained prominence, reflecting growing concerns about environmental degradation and climate change. These works reconceptualize identity in relation to the natural world, suggesting that human identity is deeply interconnected with ecological systems. By foregrounding environmental ethics, such literature expands the scope of identity beyond the human, incorporating broader questions of sustainability and coexistence.

6.4 Intersectionality in Literary Narratives

The application of intersectionality to literary analysis reveals the intricate ways in which multiple identity markers intersect to shape individual experiences and narrative trajectories. Characters in contemporary literature are often situated at the crossroads of various social categories, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, which collectively influence their positioning within systems of power.

This intersectional perspective complicates simplistic or monolithic representations of identity by highlighting internal contradictions and diverse experiences within marginalized groups. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how oppression operates across multiple dimensions, as well as how individuals resist and negotiate these forces. Literary texts that engage with intersectionality often portray layered and multidimensional characters, whose identities cannot be reduced to a single category.

By foregrounding these complexities, literature contributes to a more nuanced discourse on identity, encouraging readers to recognize the interconnected nature of social inequalities and the importance of inclusive representation.

6.5 Language, Power, and Representation

Language plays a central role in the construction and contestation of identity, serving as the primary medium through which meaning is produced and communicated. In literary texts, language is not merely a tool for storytelling but a site of ideological struggle, where power relations are embedded and negotiated.

The question of voice who is allowed to speak and whose voices are marginalized or silenced is fundamental to understanding representation in literature. Dominant narratives often privilege certain perspectives while excluding others, thereby reinforcing existing hierarchies. However, contemporary literary works increasingly challenge these patterns by amplifying marginalized voices and experimenting with alternative forms of expression.

Furthermore, linguistic choices, such as code-switching, vernacular usage, and narrative fragmentation, can serve as strategies for resisting dominant discourses and asserting cultural identity. By disrupting standardized forms of language, authors create spaces for diverse expressions of identity that challenge normative frameworks.

In this way, language becomes both a mechanism of control and a tool of resistance, highlighting the complex interplay between power and representation in literary discourse.

8. Findings

The analysis undertaken in this study reveals that literature functions not merely as a passive reflection of social realities but as an active agent in shaping and negotiating identity. Through narrative strategies, characterization, and representational choices, literary texts construct complex subjectivities that engage with issues of race, gender, class, and cultural belonging. Identity, therefore, emerges as a dynamic and evolving process within literature, continuously redefined in response to shifting socio-cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that emerging cultural discourses have significantly challenged traditional literary hierarchies that have historically privileged Eurocentric and canonical perspectives. Contemporary literary production increasingly foregrounds marginalized voices and alternative narratives, thereby destabilizing established notions of literary authority and value. This shift reflects a broader movement within English Studies toward inclusivity and the recognition of diverse cultural experiences. Another key finding is the centrality of intersectionality in contemporary literary analysis. The study highlights how overlapping social identities such as race, gender, class, and sexuality interact within literary narratives to produce complex and multifaceted representations of experience. This intersectional approach enables a more nuanced understanding of identity, moving beyond reductive or singular frameworks and emphasizing the interconnected nature of social inequalities.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Summary of Key Arguments

This study has examined the intricate intersections between literature, society, and identity, demonstrating that literary texts function as dynamic sites of cultural negotiation rather than passive reflections of reality. Through the application of postcolonial theory, intersectionality, cultural studies, and feminist and queer frameworks, the analysis has shown that identity within literature is fluid, constructed, and deeply embedded in socio-political contexts.

The discussion highlights that contemporary literary works actively engage with emerging cultural discourses, including diaspora, digital identity, and ecological consciousness. These texts challenge traditional literary hierarchies and destabilize fixed notions of identity by foregrounding marginalized voices and hybrid subjectivities. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that literature not only represents social realities but also participates in shaping them, offering alternative perspectives that question dominant ideologies and power structures. Overall, the research reinforces the argument that the relationship between literature, society, and identity is mutually constitutive, with each dimension influencing and reshaping the others in an ongoing process of cultural transformation.

9.2 Implications

In terms of pedagogy, the study advocates for a more inclusive and diversified literary curriculum that reflects the multiplicity of voices and experiences present in contemporary society. Incorporating texts from varied cultural, geographical, and social contexts can foster critical engagement and broaden students' perspectives on identity and cultural discourse. Additionally, the study highlights the need to engage with new forms of literary expression shaped by digital media and globalization. Recognizing these evolving modes of storytelling can help educators and scholars remain responsive to changing cultural landscapes and ensure that English Studies continues to be relevant in the twenty-first century.

9.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that academic curricula within English Studies incorporate a greater diversity of voices, particularly those from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. Expanding the canon to include texts from varied cultural, geographical, and socio-political contexts can foster a more inclusive and representative understanding of literature. Such an approach not only enriches literary scholarship but also enables students to engage critically with issues of identity, power, and representation in a globalized world. In addition, there is a need for continued interdisciplinary research that bridges literature with fields such as cultural studies, sociology, gender studies, and media studies. The complexities of contemporary identity

formation cannot be adequately addressed within a single disciplinary framework. By integrating multiple perspectives, scholars can develop more nuanced analyses of literary texts and their socio-cultural implications. This interdisciplinary engagement is particularly important in addressing emerging cultural discourses shaped by globalization, migration, and technological change.

9.4 Future Research Directions

Moreover, the growing field of digital humanities offers new methodological tools and approaches for analyzing literature, including data-driven textual analysis and digital archiving. Engaging with these developments can expand the scope of literary research and provide innovative ways of understanding cultural patterns and narrative forms. Finally, there is a pressing need to incorporate non-English perspectives into global literary discourse. While this study focuses primarily on English-language texts, future scholarship should seek to engage with multilingual and transnational literatures in order to capture a more comprehensive and equitable representation of global cultural production. Such efforts would contribute to decentring dominant paradigms and fostering a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of literature and identity.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my research guide, Prof. Dr. Vijaykumar R. Puneekar, for his invaluable guidance, encouragement, and continuous support throughout the completion of this research paper titled "Intersections of Literature, Society, and Identity: A Study of Emerging Cultural Discourses in English Studies." His insightful suggestions and academic expertise greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

I am also thankful to the Department of English and Research Centre, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, for providing the necessary academic environment and resources required for this research work.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the authors, scholars, and researchers whose works have served as important references and inspirations for this study. Their contributions to the field of literary and cultural studies have significantly enriched my understanding of the subject.

Finally, I express my gratitude to my family, friends, and well-wishers for their constant encouragement, motivation, and moral support throughout the research process.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

10. References

1. Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, 2004.
2. Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 7, no. 2-3, 1990, pp. 295-310.
3. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.
4. Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. McClelland and Stewart, 1985.
5. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
6. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
7. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241-1299.
8. Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
9. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-237.
10. Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.
11. Nayar, Pramod K. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Pearson, 2008.
12. Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Penguin Random House India, 2017.
13. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.
14. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271-313.
15. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Interactive Smart Board in Blended Learning as a Pedagogical Tool in English Literature

Dr. Tushar Madhukar Kamble

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030247



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21466793

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21466793>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor
Department of English, Shri Shiv
Chhatrapati College, Junnar
Pune, Maharashtra, India
Email- tush_upali@rediffmail.com

How to cite this article:

Kamble, T. M. (2026). Interactive Smart Board in Blended Learning as a Pedagogical Tool in English Literature. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 190–195.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Tushar Madhukar Kamble
Associate Professor
Department of English, Shri Shiv
Chhatrapati College, Junnar
Pune, Maharashtra, India
Email- tush_upali@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the academic sphere has become crucial for teachers to acquire the skills of blended learning strategies. Blended learning facilitates the integration of interactive and multimedia elements, enhancing the dynamic and engaging exploration of literature beyond conventional printed texts. One of the most productive, compelling and potent digital tools supporting the approach of blended learning is the Interactive Smart Board. With the integration of Artificial Intelligence, an Interactive Smart Board enables educators to access relevant, concise and meaningful references to literary elements. For literary teachers, the Interactive Smart Board facilitates the dynamic presentation of texts, audio-visual resources, and annotations, thereby enriching classroom engagement. Consequently, it fosters a more interactive, efficient, and student-centred approach to teaching literature in a blended learning environment. Access to videos, including film and television adaptations of literary works, may help students in understanding the central theme, characterisation and plot of the text. The audio-visual effect creates interest among students by breaking the monotony of the traditional teacher-centric classroom. The use of videos for poetry recitation and dramatic performances allows students to observe proper articulation and pronunciation, voice modulation, tone and dialogue delivery. Additionally, the integration of blended learning with Interactive Smart Boards enables teachers to translate the text not only into students' first language but also into multiple languages instantly. Moreover, teachers can maintain a systematic record of study material, annotations and entire teaching sessions by saving them in formats such as PDFs and editable files. Thus, digital tools are not a rival of the teacher in the educational environment. But they modify the role of a teacher as a facilitator in the literary class.

Key Words: Blended Learning, Interactive Smart Board, Artificial Intelligence, Literature Teaching and Learning, Audio-Visual Aids, Text Translate, Systematic Record, Teacher as a Facilitator

Introduction

Blended learning has become a significant and integral part of contemporary classroom teaching. This educational approach is an amalgamation of the traditional teacher-centric method with online learning through digital tools. According to Charles R. Graham, blended learning integrates online and offline instructional methods to create a flexible and effective learning environment (Graham 173). In the context of English literature teaching and learning, digital learning facilitates student-centric learning by capturing students' attention and interest, thereby encouraging a deeper understanding of the various literary concepts, devices and genres of English literature. In a blended learning mode, face-to-face teaching is exercised with interactive and various activities in the classroom, which enhances the overall quality of teaching and learning. It enables the effective use of audio-visual resources in a tailored manner. After the Covid-19 pandemic, the academic sphere has undergone a drastic transformation. It has become crucial for teachers to acquire the skill of blended learning strategies. Teachers must stay updated about the developments in education through the AI revolution. One of the most productive, compelling and potent digital tools supporting the method of blended learning is the digital whiteboard. Nabeel Al-Qirim highlights that smart boards support dynamic classroom interaction and improve instructional delivery (Al-Qirim 4). Digital whiteboard functions as an interactive sense board suitable for classroom teaching. Interactive Smart Board integrates the features of a traditional blackboard – such as writing and erasing – with advanced facilities like drawing, annotation and multimedia presentation. Furthermore, it promotes interactive learning through audio-visual demonstration. It provides a friendly user interface, a suitable and practically useful operating experience. With the integration of Artificial Intelligence, the Interactive Smart Board enables educators to access relevant, concise and meaningful references to literary elements. As a result, the teaching and learning of English literature becomes more dynamic, energetic and effective. The learning becomes live and interesting through the audio-visual display of the study material. The literature teacher employs various pedagogical methods in the classroom and strives to build a strong rapport with students. The literary teacher remains sensitive to the interplay of multiple factors that influence the teaching-learning environment or process. Every teaching situation involves an interaction among the chosen teaching method, the students, and the broader sociocultural context in which literature learning occurs. Therefore, a teacher must be flexible and adapt their teaching style to meet the demands of different situations.

To function effectively as a facilitator of literature learning, teachers need to incorporate blended learning approaches into their classrooms. According to Jacob and Farrell, “Teachers become facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge” (Jacobs and Farrell). In the contemporary educational context, the success of teaching largely depends on how effectively and efficiently digital tools are integrated into the learning of literature. Hence, blended learning method becomes meaningful as it provides access to offline and online resources, enriching the overall teaching and learning experience.

Significance of Blended Learning

The conventional one-way knowledge transmission can no longer meet students’ increasing need for information and active engagement. The approach of blended learning addresses this limitation by creating the best educational structure and environments for language and literature learners that align with the diverse styles and expectations of literature students.

Blended learning strategies foreground meaningful, interesting and purposeful activities related to literature, which encourages students to learn attentively. The effective incorporation across various contexts equips teachers to design simple and achievable tasks that motivate students to employ digital tools for communication and collaboration with peers, their tutors and the academic community.

The digital revolution has significantly transformed the educational environment. Information, entertainment, companionship and education have been promoted by various digital resources in the classroom. In this evolving digital revolution, active participation and experimentation in the online landscape have become essential for keeping pace with current educational trends.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence further complements blended learning. According to Wayne Holmes et al., AI has the potential to personalize learning, provide instant feedback, and support teachers in content delivery (Holmes et al.). The new age of AI would seem to go hand in hand with task-based and learner-centered approaches. However, many educators remain unaware of the vast potential of digital platforms and the wealth of creativity and study culture. The effective utilisation of these resources offers the ultimate teaching tools for literature teachers.

Advantages of blended Learning

- The integration of face-to-face teaching and technology creates a better learning environment than traditional classes and entirely digital classes.
- Blended learning strategies enable literature teachers to incorporate various learning resources, such as audio-visual aids, interactive text, text translation, saving and sharing study material, catering to different learning styles and levels.
- Blended learning facilitates the integration of interactive and multimedia elements, enhancing the dynamic and engaging exploration of literature beyond conventional printed texts.
- The availability of various online platforms, including digital libraries, research databases and other educational resources, facilitates students with literary reference material quickly and conveniently.
- The integration of Artificial Intelligence helps students access a wide range of literary study material in multiple formats, strengthening and sharpening their literary sense.
- It stimulates deeper literary interpretation and analysis with the help of online tools.
- Blended learning strategies promote the development of digital literacy among students.

Importance of Interactive Smart Board in Teaching Literature

Interactive Smart Board differs significantly from traditional blackboards, whiteboards and interactive boards. It is typically equipped with an android-based system and a 4k resolution display, which ensures enhanced clarity and visibility in the classroom. Functioning as an integrated digital device, it combines the features of a computer with an interactive display.

The importance of the Interactive Smart Board lies in its ability to facilitate real-time interaction, digital content delivery and an instant saving facility for teaching material.

For literary teachers, it facilitates the dynamic presentation of texts, audio-visual resources, and annotations, thereby enriching classroom engagement. Consequently, it fosters a more interactive, efficient, and student-centred approach to teaching literature in a blended learning environment.

Characteristics of an Interactive Smart Board

Ease of operation – Interactive Smart Boards offer a user-friendly interface that allows educators to utilise different tools such as pen, select, erase and navigation features conveniently and easily.

Presentation Tools – Features such as screen zooming and annotation integrate traditional blackboard practices into a digital mode. Teachers can annotate images, PDFs, PPTs, and videos, allowing them to explain complex literary concepts more effectively.

AI-Enabled Features – Interactive Smart Board integrates Artificial Intelligence features, including converting handwritten text into digital text, generating questions and quizzes, creating explanatory notes, translating text into multiple languages and preparing study material aligned with examination formats.

Stick Notes – The sticky notes feature enables teachers to record and revisit key explanations, thereby reinforcing teaching and learning of the literary topic.

File Integration – The facility to insert and access videos, images, PDFs and PPTs enriches the availability of relevant reference materials for better understanding of students. Direct access to online platforms such as

Google and YouTube further enhances the teaching-learning process. From the browsing results, teachers can utilise screenshots, videos, photos and text to elaborate concepts on the Interactive Smart Board.

Magnifier Tool – A magnifier is an important tool used to magnify and zoom in on specific text or content to capture students’ attention and improve clarity.

Save and Share Function – This feature saving enables teachers to save the entire teaching session. It can be saved in formats such as PDF or editable format. The saved information can be easily shared with students via email, WhatsApp or QR code, facilitating revision and accessibility.

Easy Access to Content

Interactive Smart Board facilitates literary teachers with immediate and easy access to diverse content through finger input and multi-touch functionality. These features enable both teachers and students to interact with digital resources in real-time, which enriches the teaching-learning experience. With the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence tools such as ChatGPT and Groks, teachers can generate customized explanations, images and responses related to literature texts. The easy access to content in different forms makes the teaching and learning of literature interesting.

The availability of multimedia content further enhances literature teaching in the classroom. The Interactive Smart Board offers access to videos, including film and television adaptations of literary works, which helps students understand the central theme, characterization and plot of the text. Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani argues that multimedia resources make literature teaching more interactive and effective by combining text, audio, and visual elements (Gilakjani 57). The audio-visual effect of the topic creates interest among students by breaking the monotony of the traditional teacher-centric classroom. The teacher, while teaching a literary text, can play various analytical videos shared by YouTubers. The screening of video clips and images related to stage directions provides students with detailed information of stage techniques and positions for a scene. For instance, the play *Death of a Salesman* is about the life and death of a salesman, Willy Loman. The setting is New York and Boston. The AI-generated images of a large backdrop with skyscrapers, such as the New York skyline, can help students understand the setting of New York and Boston.

Interactive Smart Board enables teachers to use videos for poetry recitation and dramatic performances, allowing students to observe proper articulation, pronunciation, voice modulation and tone and dialogue delivery. In the context of teaching drama in the class, real-time access to internet connectivity and Artificial Intelligence tools also enable students to have a practical exploration of theatrical elements. The basic demonstration of lighting, sound effects and music through an Interactive Smart Board amplifies the students’ deeper understanding. In the drama, music plays an important role. The images or sketches of costumes and make-up designs with historical and thematic relevance assist the teacher, enhancing the delivery of the topic.

Interactive Smart Board facilitates teachers in using visual and biographical information about authors, including images, photographs and contextual details. Bond et al. argue that technology-supported learning environments improve student engagement through interactive and collaborative activities (Bond et al. 1). The visual effects of expressions and gestures portrayed in images and photographs create a deeper connection with the text. AI-generated images of the major and minor characters can further support imaginative engagement by visually representing their specific, strange and distinctive traits.

A significant advantage of easy content access is its role in explaining complex literary concepts. For instance, the critical term allusion is an indirect reference to another literary work, place, person or event. The poem *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot is renowned for its dense use of allusions. The poem begins with the line “April is the cruellest month, breeding,” which is an example of literary allusion. It directly alludes to the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. The visual effects of the AI-generated image help teachers in presenting the purpose of the poet’s use of glaring contrast between the hope of renewal and desolation after World War I in a visual mode. The following AI-generated image amplifies and enriches the literary knowledge and competence of students. Students understand that modern life brings regeneration but no renewal, hope exists, but it is painful and ambiguous. In short, T. S. Eliot inverts Chaucer’s celebration of spring.



AI-generated Image

Thus, easy and convenient access to diverse digital content transforms the teaching of literature into a more engaging, interactive and meaningful experience.

Bilingual or Multilingual Teaching methods have traditionally been preferred by teachers to ensure better comprehension and smoother learning in the classroom. This approach can be effectively facilitated through the text-translation feature available on an Interactive Smart Board. Literary texts often contain jargon, allusions, phrases, idioms, literary devices and diverse cultural references along with critical terms and concepts, which makes the task of teaching complex, especially within limited time constraints.

The integration of blended learning with an Interactive Smart Board enables teachers to translate text not only into students' first language but also into multiple languages instantly. Furthermore, the text can be translated into various regional languages, making learning more inclusive and accessible. In contemporary classrooms, students often come from multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic backgrounds. For instance, in a literature class, students may have different mother tongues such as Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, Kannada and Gujarati. In such a scenario, the task of translating the source text into multiple target languages within a limited time-frame to ensure comprehension and proper understanding of the text from students becomes unattainable and virtually impossible. Therefore, the use of an Interactive Smart Board remarkably simplifies this process and enriches students' comprehension and engagement with literary texts.

For instance, while teaching the poem *The Canonization* by John Donne, teachers may translate phrases, idioms, difficult words and cultural references into students' native languages. Similarly, while teaching a play such as *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith, teachers can translate difficult dialogues and rhetorical expressions instantly.

Facility of Saving and Sharing the Study Material

One of the significant features of the Interactive Smart Board is its ability to save and share teaching-learning material, which considerably enriches the efficacy of blended learning in the literature classroom. Teachers can maintain a systematic record of study material, annotations and entire teaching sessions by saving them in formats such as PDFs and editable files. Furthermore, these saved files can be easily shared with students through various platforms such as email, WhatsApp or QR code. The sharing facility ensures accessibility for students who may be irregular or absent from the classroom.

In the context of teaching English literature, this characteristic proves highly effective. While teaching the poem *Kubla Khan* by the romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the teacher can gloss jargon and difficult lines, foreground various literary devices such as imagery, figures of speech and symbolism. The use of audio-visual explanations, further amplifies the effectiveness and engagement of the teaching and learning process. Additionally, teachers can create and share AI-generated images of the "pleasure dome" built in Xanadu in a dream fragment, helping students to better understand the poet's powerful imagination and rich imagery depicted in the poem. For instance,



AI-generated Image of pleasure dome.

The trait of saving and sharing enables students to revisit annotated materials and AI-generated visuals at their own pace, thereby supporting independent learning. Similarly, the teaching of the play *Nagamandala* by Girish Karnad becomes more engaging and fascinating through the screening of film adaptations and theatrical performances. Teachers can save and share materials such as character analysis, act-wise explanations, and recitations for role-play and thematic discussions presented on the Interactive Smart Board. Once shared, these resources help students to revisit the content at any time. Moreover, it facilitates teachers to revisit previously conducted sessions to provide concise summaries and key concepts. Hence, the feature of saving, sharing and revisiting promotes continuous and self-directed learning among students.

Conclusion:

AI and online tools available on the Interactive Smart Board cannot substitute the physical presence of the teacher. The digital tools are not a rival to the teacher in the educational environment. But they modify the role of a teacher as a facilitator in the literary class. The traditional use of blackboard, chalk, duster and teachers hand written notes is replaced by whiteboard, digital pen, screen erasure, and PDF notes. However, exposure to screen may create some problems with sleep, eyes and concentration of the students.

Acknowledgement

I express my sincere gratitude to all those who directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper titled “Interactive Smart Board in Blended Learning as a Pedagogical Tool in English Literature.”

I am especially thankful to my colleagues, mentors, and academic peers for their valuable suggestions, encouragement, and continuous support throughout this study. Their insights and guidance greatly enriched the quality of this research work.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the institution, Shri Shiv Chhatrapati College, for providing a supportive academic environment and necessary resources for carrying out this research successfully.

My sincere thanks are due to the scholars, authors, and researchers whose books, articles, and studies have served as important references and intellectual inspiration for this paper. Their contributions to the fields of blended learning, educational technology, and literature teaching have been immensely valuable.

Finally, I express my deep gratitude to my family, friends, and well-wishers for their constant motivation, patience, and moral support throughout the completion of this work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

1. Al-Qirim, Nabeel. “Smart Boards in Education: A Review of the Literature.” *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2018, pp. 4–16.
2. Boelens, Ruth, et al. “The Design of Blended Learning in Response to Student Diversity in Higher Education: Instructors’ Views and Use of Technology.” *Computers & Education*, vol. 94, 2016, pp. 1–13.
3. Bond, Melissa, et al. “Mapping Research in Student Engagement and Educational Technology.” *Educational Technology Research and Development*, vol. 68, 2020, pp. 1–28.
4. Fowowe, S. S., and S. A. Ogunmade. *Differentiation Methods and 21st Century Teachers: The Inseparable Twins*. ANPIEN Training Series, 2018.

5. Gilakjani, Abbas Pourhossein. "The Impact of Multimedia on Teaching English Literature." *English Language Teaching*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2018, pp. 57–66.
6. Graham, Charles R. "Current Research in Blended Learning." *Handbook of Distance Education*, 4th ed., Routledge, 2019, pp. 173–188.
7. Holmes, Wayne, et al. *Artificial Intelligence in Education: Promise and Implications for Teaching and Learning*. UNESCO, 2019.
8. Jacobs, George, and Thomas Farrel. "Paradigm Shift: Understanding and Implementing Change in Second Language Education." *TESL-EJ*, vol. 5, no.1, [2001](#).
9. Jarvis, Huw. "Internet Usage of English for Academic Purposes Courses." *ReCALL*, vol.13, no. 2, 2001.
10. SenseBoard. *SenseBoard Software User Manual*. Senses Electronics Pvt. Ltd., 2014-2026.
11. Zhao, Yong. "Recent Developments in Technology and Language Learning: A Literature Review and Meta-analysis." *CALICO Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2003, pp. 7-27.

Empire to Emergency: A Postcolonial Critique of Indian History Reflected in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Viren Dixit¹ Dr. Ganesh Sonawane²

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 24-Mar-2026 Accepted: 20-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030248



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0

International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20796939

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20796939>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Scholar, Department of English and Research Centre Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad. Dist. Pune- 412301

² Research Guide, Department of English and Research Centre Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad. Dist. Pune- 412301

How to cite this article:

Dixit, V., & Sonawane, G. (2026). *Empire to Emergency: A Postcolonial Critique of Indian History Reflected in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children*. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 196–198.

Address for correspondence:

Viren Dixit, Research Scholar, Department of English and Research Centre, Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad. Dist. Pune

Email- dixitviren@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines how *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie recounts all the major events of Indian history through a postcolonial lens. Rushdie connects personal experience with national history through the protagonist; Saleem Sinai who was born at the exact moment of India's independence, making the individual life intertwined with that of the newly formed nation. Rather than presenting history as fixed or objective, the novel presents it as a fluid, something shaped by memory, power dynamics and perspective of the individual who get to tell the story. Drawing on ideas from Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Benedict Anderson, this paper argues that the novel questions both colonial and post-independence versions of history. Instead of adhering strict linear, fact-based timeline, Rushdie challenges official narratives and highlights voices that are often overlooked, by using magic realism, fragmented storytelling, and hybrid language. Ultimately, *Midnight's Children* presents history not as a single truth, but as a contested and evolving story from the perspective of individuals.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Indian history, memory, hybridity, plurality, nationhood, magic realism, narrative, identity, power

Introduction

When the most celebrated work of Salman Rushdie; *Midnight's Children* was first published in 1981, it quickly became clear that Rushdie was doing something more than simply telling a story about India. The novel does not just narrate historical events; it questions how those events are remembered, interpreted, and turned into "history" in the first place. What emerges is not a straightforward narrative of the nation, but a multi layered and often uncertain account that forces the reader to rethink what history really means.

Saleem Sinai, one of the 10001 children who were born at the exact moment India becomes independent, remains at the center of this narrative. We are told that he has been endowed with supernatural telepathy. Using his power, he can connect other midnight's children within his mind, forming the "Midnight's Children Conference," a mental space representing India's diversity. His powers are linked to his immense nose and later his ability to smell emotions and lies. He narrates the story of his life's journey amidst the overarching events of India's history from the independence to the partition and beyond that. This coincidence is more than symbolic as it becomes the structural foundation of the novel. Saleem's life unfolds alongside the life of the nation, and the two are constantly deeply intertwined. Yet, from the very beginning, Saleem makes it clear that his story cannot be taken at face value. Saleem's body is portrayed as malleable, capable of being shaped by history and other people, highlighting his connection to the volatile nature of the emerging nation. His memory is flawed, he tends to forget and recollect the events incompletely, his narration is not linear and consistent, and he frequently keep on correcting himself.

As he admits, memory "selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates" (Rushdie 211). This admission is crucial because it signals that the novel is not interested in presenting history as an objective record. Instead, it clearly emphasizes the idea that history is always shaped by perspective of the individuals who get to experience and express.

Such attempt of portraying history resonates strongly with postcolonial ideology. Edward Said has shown how colonial powers constructed knowledge about the colonized world in ways that justified domination. Similarly, Benedict Anderson argues that nations are not natural entities but "imagined communities" created through shared narratives. Homi K. Bhabha extends this idea by emphasizing that identity itself is never fixed, but always formed through negotiation and cultural interaction. Gayatri Spivak's foundational work *Can Subaltern Speak* famously questioned the subaltern has the agency to challenge suppression, suggesting that the subaltern voices are not allowed to present their narrative. Read in this light, Rushdie's novel becomes a powerful critique not only of colonial history but also of the ways in which independent nations construct their own versions of the past. It is important to explore the way it depicts history, suggesting that this narrative is one of the many unsettled versions of past. To appreciate this critique fully, it is important to consider how history functioned under colonial rule. British accounts of India often portrayed it as disordered and backward, a place in need of guidance and control.

These narratives were not neutral descriptions; they were deeply political, helping to legitimize imperial authority. By presenting India as incapable of self-governance, colonial historiography reinforced the necessity of British intervention. Their version tends to justify their role in ruling the colonized nations to help them grow as reflected in Rudyard Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*.

Rushdie's response to this tradition is both subtle and radical. Rather than offering a counter-history that simply replaces one version of events with another, he questions the very possibility of a single, authoritative account. Saleem's storytelling, with all its inconsistencies and revisions, draws attention to the processes through which narratives are constructed. The reader is constantly reminded that what is being told is only one version among many possible versions. We are told that the narrator Saleem is one of one thousand and one children who were born at the midnight, and all of them possessed different magical powers. Saleem comments that there are many tales to tell which comprises of interconnected lives, miracles, rumors, various places, incidents and so on.

This narrative strategy conforms to what postmodern critics like Linda Hutcheon describe as "historiographic metafiction," a form of writing that simultaneously tells a story and reflects on how stories are told. In *Midnight's Children*, this means that history is not presented as something fixed, or complete. Instead, it appears fragmented, layered, open-ended, and subject to reinterpretation.

At the same time, the novel does not ignore the material realities of colonialism. The economic, social and cultural disruptions caused by British rule are woven into the fabric of the narrative. These effects do not simply disappear with independence; they continue to shape the nation in complex ways. In this sense, Rushdie suggests that the legacy of colonialism cannot be easily separated or wished away from the present.

This becomes particularly evident when the novel turns to one of the most traumatic events in the history of the subcontinent- the Partition of India. Rather than treating Partition just as a political milestone, Rushdie focuses on its human consequences. Families are uprooted, identities are fractured, and violence becomes an everyday reality. Through Saleem's experiences, the reader encounters Partition not as an abstract historical event but as a deeply personal and emotional rupture for the ones who got affected by the same.

What makes this portrayal especially powerful is the way it resists simplification. There are no clear heroes or villains, no neat explanations for the violence that unfolds. Instead, the novel emphasizes confusion, loss, and the breakdown of familiar structures. This approach challenges official narratives that tend to reduce Partition to a matter of political necessity or inevitability.

In doing so, Rushdie also questions the idea of the nation itself. If the nation is, as Anderson suggests, an imagined community, then Partition reveals the fragility of that imagination. The divisions imposed during this period expose the limitations of national identity, showing how easily it can exclude, divide, and even destroy.

This tension between unity and fragmentation is reflected in Saleem's own identity. As a character, he is constantly shifting, never fully secure in who he is. His body, like the nation, becomes a site of change and instability. At times, he seems to embody the entire country; at others, he feels disconnected and uncertain. This instability is not a flaw in the narrative rather it is central to its meaning. As the narrator's fate aligns with that of the emerging nation.

Through Saleem, Rushdie suggests that identity, whether personal or national, is always in flux. This idea aligns with Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which emphasizes the mixing and negotiation of cultures. In *Midnight's Children*, hybridity is not presented as a problem to be solved but as a reality to be embraced. The diversity of the midnight's children, each with their own unique abilities, becomes a metaphor for the plurality of India itself.

However, the novel does not romanticize this diversity. As it moves into the period following independence, it becomes increasingly critical of the postcolonial state. The various historical events run parallel and intertwined with the life of the narrator. The episodes include Quit India Movement, Movement of the Muslim League, Riots, Five Years Plan, Bangladesh Liberation and many more. This critique reaches its peak in the depiction of the Emergency in India under Indira Gandhi. During this time, democratic freedoms were suspended, and the government exercised unprecedented control over the population.

In the novel, the Emergency is portrayed as a moment when the promises of independence begin to unravel. The forced sterilization of the midnight's children serves as a stark symbol of this betrayal. What was once a source of hope, their diversity and potential, is now seen as something to be controlled and eliminated. The novel, Indira Gandhi is depicted as "The Widow," an authoritarian, corrupt, and menacing force who acts as the primary antagonist responsible for a 635-day "midnight" that causes massive abuse of power, forced sterilizations, and the destruction of the magicians' ghetto.

This episode suggests that the structures of power established during colonial rule have not disappeared but have been reshaped and continued in new forms. Independence, in this sense, does not mark a complete break from the past. Instead, it reveals the persistence of certain patterns of authority and control.

At this point, the novel's use of magic realism becomes especially significant. Rushdie challenges conventional ways of understanding reality by blending the ordinary with the extraordinary. The magical elements in the story are not simply decorative; they serve to question the boundaries between fact and fiction, history and imagination.

The history that is depicted in the novel is not the exact, linear, stable history but a version which is open ended. The novel presents a wonderful mix of historical and mythological elements. On one hand Saleem's life is intertwined with his other self Shiva, with whom he got exchanged at the time of his birth and it is intertwined with the history of the nation on the other hand. The novel has references of mythological characters from Hinduism, Christianity as well as Muslim ideology.

Through this technique, Rushdie opens up space for alternative ways of knowing. Western historiography often prioritizes rationality and empirical evidence, but *Midnight's Children* suggests that these are not the only ways to understand the world. By incorporating myth, fantasy, and storytelling, the novel validates other forms of knowledge that have often been marginalized.

Language itself becomes a site of this resistance. Although the novel is written in English, it is far from standard or neutral. Rushdie infuses it with rhythms, idioms, and expressions drawn from Indian languages, creating a style that is both familiar and distinct. This blending reflects the hybrid nature of postcolonial identity.

Rather than rejecting English outright, Rushdie reshapes it, turning it into a tool for expressing local realities. In doing so, he challenges the linguistic hierarchies established during colonial rule. Language, like history, becomes something that can be reworked and reclaimed.

All of these elements come together in the novel's treatment of memory. Saleem's narrative is built on recollection, but his memories are often unreliable. He forgets details, mixes up timelines, and occasionally invents connections that may not exist. Yet, instead of weakening the narrative, this uncertainty becomes one of its greatest strengths.

By emphasizing the limitations of memory, Rushdie highlights the limitations of history itself. If personal recollection is subjective and incomplete, then so too is any attempt to record the past. This does not mean that history is meaningless, but it does mean that it must be approached with caution.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* leaves us with a very different understanding of history than the one we might expect. It does not offer clear answers or definitive conclusions. Instead, it invites us to see history as something fluid, ongoing, a process rather than a finished product.

What Rushdie ultimately shows is that history is not a single, unified story but a collection of many stories, each shaped by different perspectives and experiences lived differently by different individuals. By bringing these stories together, even in their contradictions, the novel creates a richer and more complex picture of the past.

Conclusion:

Under such interpretation, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is not a mere critique of Indian history but a stark reflection on the nature of history itself. As a postcolonial and postmodern writer Rushdie challenges conventional idea of history as merely recorded facts. His narrative reflects the same and foregrounds that the past is never fully settled, that it continues to be reinterpreted and rewritten in the present. And perhaps most importantly, it suggests that understanding history requires us to listen to a plurality of voices, rather than searching for a single, authoritative truth which is in resonance with postcolonial thought.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Research Guide, Dr. Ganesh Sonawane, Department of English and Research Centre, Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, for his valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research paper titled "Empire to Emergency: A Postcolonial Critique of Indian History Reflected in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." His scholarly support and motivation greatly contributed to the successful completion of this work. I am also thankful to the Department of English and Research Centre for providing the necessary academic atmosphere and resources for carrying out this research successfully.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the scholars, critics, and authors whose books, articles, and theoretical contributions have enriched this study and deepened my understanding of postcolonial literature and literary criticism. Finally, I express my sincere appreciation to my family, friends, and well-wishers for their continuous encouragement, patience, and moral support throughout the research process.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References:

1. Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. Jonathan Cape, 1981.
2. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.
3. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
4. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.
5. Brennan, Timothy. "Salman Rushdie and the Third World." *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1986, pp. 75–90.
6. Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988.

Power, Environment and Identity Crises: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Birnam Wood

Supriya Dadaso Dighe

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030249



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20806313

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20806313>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Department of English and Research
Centre

Waghire College of Arts, Commerce &
Science Saswad, Maharashtra, India
Email- dighesupriya@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Dighe, S. D. (2026). Power, Environment and Identity Crises: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Birnam Wood. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 199–201.

Address for correspondence:

Supriya Dadaso Dighe
Department of English and Research
Centre
Waghire College of Arts, Commerce &
Science Saswad, Maharashtra, India
Email- dighesupriya@gmail.com

Abstract

The present research paper titled “Power, Environment and Identity Crises: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Birnam Wood” explores the entanglement of environmental activism, capitalist expansion, and identity formation within the context of contemporary ecological crisis. It argues that Eleanor Catton’s *Birnam Wood* stages a conflict between activist collectivism and corporate techno-capitalism through its representation of guerrilla gardening, land commodification, and resource extraction in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the novel demonstrates notable technical mastery in plotting and satirical construction, this study examines how its allegorical structure and reliance on familiar ideological binaries may constrain its capacity to generate radically new ecological insight. Drawing on eco-critical and posthumanist frameworks, the paper further investigates how land operates as an active force that disrupts human assumptions of control and mastery. It also considers how ecological precarity produces fragmented and performative identities among characters, revealing the psychological and ethical instability embedded within the Anthropocene. Ultimately, the study contends that *Birnam Wood* (2023) reflects contemporary ecological and political tensions with clarity and precision, while also raising questions about the limits of literary representation in envisioning transformative environmental futures.

Keywords: Eco-criticism, Anthropocene, Environmental activism, Capitalism, Land commodification, Posthumanism, Identity crisis, Political fiction

Introduction

The present research paper titled ‘Power, Environment and Identity Crises: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Birnam Wood’ explores the complex entanglement of ecological concern, capitalist power structures, and fragmented identity formation in Eleanor Catton’s novel *Birnam Wood*. Set against the backdrop of contemporary environmental precarity, the novel presents a narrative in which activism, corporate ambition, and ecological exploitation intersect, revealing the tensions that define the Anthropocene condition. Through its depiction of a guerrilla gardening collective, the commodification of land, and the intrusion of techno-capitalist logic into natural spaces, *Birnam Wood* offers a fertile ground for eco-critical interpretation.

Eleanor Catton situates her narrative in Aotearoa New Zealand, a landscape marked by both ecological vulnerability and political contestation. Within this setting, the novel stages a confrontation between Birnam Wood, an activist collective committed to reclaiming neglected land for sustainable cultivation, and Robert Lemoine, a billionaire whose ventures expose the extractive impulses underlying contemporary technological capitalism. This collision of ideologies foregrounds broader questions about who controls land, how nature is valued, and whether ecological resistance can remain autonomous within systems driven by profit and surveillance.

While *Birnam Wood* has been widely recognized for its intricate plotting and satirical engagement with modern socio-political realities, this study argues that its deeper significance lies in its representation of ecological instability as inseparable from human identity crises. The novel not only dramatizes environmental degradation but also reveals how such crises destabilize ethical, ideological, and psychological coherence among its characters. In doing so, it invites a reading that extends beyond narrative structure to consider the philosophical implications of living within an increasingly unstable ecological order. Employing eco-critical and posthumanist frameworks, this paper examines how Catton’s novel constructs the relationship between power and environment, and how these forces shape fractured subjectivities in a world defined by ecological uncertainty. The novel takes its title from Macbeth, referencing the moving forest in *Shakespeare’s* tragedy, which symbolizes deception, unpredictability, and the collapse of power central themes that Catton reinterprets in a modern context. Set in *New Zealand*, the story follows a guerrilla gardening collective called *Birnam Wood*, led by the idealistic and determined Mira Bunting. The group occupies unused land to grow food, positioning themselves as eco activists challenging systems of ownership and capitalism. Their activities take a dramatic turn when they encounter Robert Lemoine, a wealthy and enigmatic American investor whose interest in their project conceal darker motives.

Blending elements of satire, suspense, and social critique, *Birnam Wood* offers a timely reflection on contemporary global issues while maintaining the suspense of a thriller. Its layered storytelling and thematic richness make it a significant work for research into modern eco-fiction, political narratives, and character driven

Review of Literature

Eleanor Catton's *Birnam Wood* (2023) has been widely discussed in relation to environmental ethics, capitalism, and moral ambiguity, positioning the novel within the broader field of contemporary environmental literature. Scholars of eco-criticism have long emphasized the role of literary texts in shaping ecological consciousness. Lawrence Buell, in *The Environmental Imagination*, argues that literature is central to fostering environmental awareness by representing the relationship between humans and the natural world in ethically meaningful ways. In a similar vein, Rob Nixon, in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), introduces the concept of "slow violence" to describe environmental harm that unfolds gradually and often remains invisible, particularly affecting marginalized communities. These frameworks are relevant to *Birnam Wood*, which foregrounds the subtle and systemic nature of ecological exploitation and land commodification.

The novel's exploration of environmental degradation and capitalist expansion can also be situated within debates on late modern subjectivity and moral instability. Zygmunt Bauman, in *Liquid Modernity* (2000), argues that contemporary society is characterized by fluidity, uncertainty, and the weakening of stable moral frameworks. This theoretical perspective aligns with Catton's portrayal of characters whose ethical positions are constantly shifting in response to economic pressures and ideological contradictions. In *Birnam Wood*, moral boundaries are not fixed but negotiable, reflecting the instability of values in a globalized, capitalist world.

Together, these critical perspectives provide a conceptual foundation for reading *Birnam Wood* as a text that engages deeply with ecological crisis, socio-economic power structures, and the fragility of moral identity in contemporary society.

Analysis of the novel *Birnam Wood* (2023)

Eleanor Catton's *Birnam Wood* (2023) is a politically and ecologically charged narrative that engages deeply with questions of environmental degradation, capitalist expansion, and moral instability in the contemporary world. Drawing on eco-critical theory, Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," and Zygmunt Bauman's "liquid modernity," the novel can be read as an exploration of how ecological crisis is inseparable from systems of power and fragmented identity formation. This analysis examines land, capitalism, characterisation, narrative form, and identity within the novel.

Kevin Power, in his review of the novel, notes that while *Birnam Wood* is "elaborately plotted, richly conceived, enormously readable," it risks functioning as a "superbly polished mirror" of contemporary reality rather than offering a more transformative vision of the world. (Power 2023) A central concern of *Birnam Wood* is the representation of land as both ecological space and commodified resource. The *Birnam Wood* collective seeks to reclaim neglected land for guerrilla gardening, aiming to "grow food on land that no one is using" (Catton 34). While this practice challenges dominant property systems, the novel quickly reveals that even abandoned land remains embedded within capitalist structures of ownership and control. This tension aligns with Rob Nixon's theory of slow violence, which describes environmental harm as "incremental and out of sight" (Nixon 2). In Catton's novel, ecological destruction is not immediate catastrophe but concealed extraction embedded within legal, corporate, and political frameworks. The revelation that Robert Lemoine is secretly mining rare-earth minerals within a protected national park demonstrates how environmental harm is normalised through institutional systems rather than appearing as external disruption. Lawrence Buell's argument that nature in literature is always "humanly mediated" further clarifies this dynamic (Buell 3). Catton reinforces this idea by presenting land as something already shaped by surveillance, ownership, and economic valuation rather than untouched ecological space. Robert Lemoine embodies a form of late capitalist power that fuses technological surveillance with ecological exploitation. His so-called doomsday project, initially framed as a survivalist bunker system, is later revealed to function as a front for resource extraction, exposing the commodification of ecological crisis itself. The novel explores capitalism that converts environmental anxiety into opportunity, transforming land into both resource and data. Lemoine's surveillance systems render ecological space fully legible to capital, reinforcing systems of control that extend beyond physical territory. It reflects Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, in which social and moral structures become unstable under the pressures of global capitalism (Bauman 5). Within this fluid environment, even ecological resistance becomes precarious, as activist movements must operate within the very systems they seek to challenge. Catton resists clear moral binaries by constructing ethically unstable characters. Mira Bunting articulates the collective's ambition for "radical, widespread, and lasting social change" (Catton 51), yet her decisions increasingly expose contradictions between ideology and survival within capitalist systems. Similarly, Robert Lemoine functions not as a purely evil figure but as a representation of systemic capitalist rationality. His manipulation of ecological discourse demonstrates how environmental language can be absorbed and repurposed by extractive interests, blurring the distinction between activism and exploitation. This moral instability reflects Bauman's observation that in contemporary society, "solid moral anchors have melted into fluid states" (Bauman 7). In *Birnam Wood*, ethical positions are therefore not fixed but continuously negotiated under pressure. Catton resists clear moral binaries by constructing ethically unstable characters who blur the boundaries between activism, complicity, and self-interest. Mira Bunting, as the founder of *Birnam Wood*, embodies the collective's ideological drive toward "radical, widespread, and lasting social change" (Catton 51), yet her decisions increasingly expose tensions between ecological idealism and pragmatic survival. Her interactions with Robert Lemoine highlight how activist intentions are repeatedly compromised within systems

structured by capital and power. Robert Lemoine, meanwhile, functions not as a straightforward antagonist but as a representation of systemic capitalist rationality. His manipulation of ecological discourse and investment in environmental uncertainty demonstrate how capitalist logic can absorb and repurpose even oppositional frameworks. Supporting characters such as Tony Gallo and the Darvishes further reinforce this moral complexity: Gallo's investigative ambition is shaped by institutional pressures of journalism, while Sir Owen and Lady Darvish embody elite privilege masked as civility. Together, these characters create a network of shifting moral positions in which certainty is constantly destabilised. Structurally, the novel operates as a political thriller, gradually revealing the convergence of activism, capitalism, and ecological crime. The narrative builds tension through controlled pacing and escalating exposure of hidden systems of extraction and surveillance. While this structure effectively mirrors the interconnectedness of modern power systems, it also risks reinforcing familiar oppositions between activism and capitalism. As Kevin Power observes, the novel sometimes feels like a scenario of "hippies versus billionaires," suggesting a return to recognisable ideological binaries despite its formal sophistication. Identity in *Birnam Wood* (2023) is unstable and performative, shaped by ecological and economic pressures. The Birnam Wood collective begins with a shared activist identity, but this cohesion fragments as external forces intensify. This reflects Bauman's theory of liquid modernity, in which identity must be continuously reconstructed in response to shifting social conditions (Bauman 6). Mira's oscillation between ideological conviction and pragmatic compromise illustrates this instability, while Lemoine's multiple performative identities further emphasise the fluidity of selfhood under capitalism. Identity in the novel thus becomes a site of negotiation rather than essence, shaped by power, necessity, and ideological contradiction.

Conclusion

Birnam Wood (2023) engages deeply with eco-critical concerns by presenting land as contested space, morality as unstable, and identity as fluid. The novel reflects Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence by revealing how ecological destruction is embedded within capitalist systems rather than occurring as isolated catastrophe. It also aligns with Bauman's theory of liquid modernity, illustrating how ethical and social structures dissolve under contemporary pressures. Ultimately, Catton's novel captures the complexity of ecological crisis while exposing the limitations of imagining alternatives beyond entrenched capitalist and activist frameworks.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to all those who have supported and guided me during the completion of this research paper titled "Power, Environment and Identity Crises: An Eco-Critical Analysis of *Birnam Wood*."

I am deeply thankful to my colleagues and the Department of English and Research Centre, Waghere College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad, for providing academic support, encouragement, and a stimulating research environment. Their valuable suggestions and intellectual discussions greatly contributed to the development of this study.

I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to scholars and researchers whose critical works in eco-criticism and literary studies have served as an important foundation for this research.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family and friends for their constant motivation, patience, and moral support throughout the research process.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited:

1. Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Polity Press, 2000.
2. Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard UP, 1995.
3. Catton, Eleanor. *Birnam Wood*. Te Herenga Waka University Press, 2023.
4. Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard UP, 2011.
5. Power, Kevin. "Birnam Wood by Eleanor Catton review – hippies v billionaires." *The Guardian*, 3 Mar. 2023, <www.theguardian.com/books/2023/mar/03/birnam-wood-by-eleanor-catton-review-hippies-v-billionaires>.

Teaching Communication Skills to Undergraduate Students

Dr. Mahibub Sattar Tamboli

Submitted: 14- Mar -2026 Revised: 26-Mar-2026 Accepted: 21-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:
IJEWLPSIR-2026 -030250



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20806366

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20806366>

Volume: 3

Issue:2 (I)

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Associate Professor and Head,
Department of English
Dadapatil Rajale Arts and Science
College
Adinathnagar, Tal. Pathardi, Dist.
Ahilyanagar (M.S.)
Email- mstamboli10@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Tamboli, M. S. (2026). Teaching Communication Skills to Undergraduate Students. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 3(2(I)), 202–204.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Mahibub Sattar Tamboli
Associate Professor and Head,
Department of English
Dadapatil Rajale Arts and Science
College
Adinathnagar, Tal. Pathardi, Dist.
Ahilyanagar (M.S.)
Email- mstamboli10@gmail.com

Abstract

Communication Skills are quite important for learners. Communication Skills are essential for undergraduate students for a successful academic and professional career. Learning various Communication Skills, such as listening skills, speaking skills or writing skills are great advantage for students to express their ideas effectively. A student from any discipline either Science, Arts, Engineering, or Medicine needs to learn these communication skills to be a successful communicator. This paper is an attempt to highlight the significance of communication skills for every learner. This article examines how integrating communication skills into undergraduate education can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The paper focusses on the important elements of Communication Skills may it be verbal or non-verbal. The paper examines how teaching of communication to undergraduate students can prove a significant addition to the knowledge they require from their specialized area. Learning Communication Skills will keep students more engaged and would be more learner-centric. It would ensure the active participation of the students. The Paper discusses how learners can acquire these skills effectively through the use of different methodologies. It will also observe the role of technology in teaching and learning communication skills. The paper will give a new insight to the teachers and the learners to inculcate communication skills in teaching and learning. The paper shows how communication skills across the curriculum can improve students' academic competence, employability skills, and learning abilities.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Verbal Communication, Non-verbal communication, Digital ,Communication, Employability Skills

Introduction:

Communication is an essential aspect of human interaction and a crucial part of academic and professional success. In higher education, communicating effectively is just as important as knowledge of the subject at hand. Undergraduate learners are expected to participate in discussions, present ideas, work with others and communicate their understanding in writing and speaking. Many students lack in communication skills, which can hinder their ability to perform and confidence. The need to teach undergraduate students communication skills has become crucial in this globally-oriented and technologically-driven environment. Employers no longer want graduates with technical knowledge; they want people who can communicate their ideas clearly, work together in a team, and communicate effectively in a variety of settings. Communication skills need to be taught as part of the undergraduate curriculum, not a supplementary focus. This article is focussed on the importance of communication skills, including their components, teaching strategies, obstacles, and the role of the teacher in facilitating communication skills for undergraduate students.

The Significance of Communication Skills in Higher Education

Communication skills are necessary for student success, job readiness, and personal growth. Students in class are required to take part in discussions, ask questions, give presentations, or complete written assignments. Those who lack communication skills may be unable to articulate their thoughts even if they know what they are talking about. Communication skills are important aspects of the students' professional identity. When in the workplace, workers interact with co-workers, clients, and supervisors, to communicate information clearly, negotiate effectively, and work effectively with a variety of groups. Communication problems can lead to misunderstandings, productivity issues, or missed opportunities. Besides the academic and professional benefits, communication skills contribute to personal growth. They increase self-confidence, improve interpersonal relationships, and can help people cope better in social situations. Students who have improved communication skills are more likely to be able to voice their opinions, manage conflict, and connect effectively. Effective communication is a multidimensional process that involves several interconnected components. Teaching communication skills requires a comprehensive approach that addresses each of these areas.

Components of Communication:

i. Verbal Communication

Communication through oral means includes the use of language to express ideas and information, including clarity, tone, pronunciation, vocabulary, and organization of thoughts.

Many undergraduates are nervous about speaking in front of others. To improve verbal communication, students need to practice speaking in a supportive environment. Activities such as presentations, group discussions, seminars, and debates allow students to express themselves and gain confidence. Teachers can help students organize their speech, use appropriate language, and engage their audience.

ii. Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is a combination of body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact. These communication techniques play an important role in communicating meaning and emotions. There may be instances where non-verbal cues reinforce or contradict spoken words. For example, a student who does not make eye contact and is sitting down may seem unconfident as they deliver a presentation that has very good content. This awareness can lead to higher levels of communication and confidence when students are prepared to interact. Playing role plays and analyzing videos can be used in the classroom to highlight the importance of non-verbal communication.

iii. Listening Skills

Listening is a critical component of communication that is often overlooked. Effective communication is not just about speaking but also about understanding others. Active listening involves paying attention, interpreting the message, and responding appropriately.

Students should be trained to listen without interrupting, ask clarifying questions, and provide meaningful feedback. Exercises such as peer discussions, group tasks, and reflective listening activities can help students develop this skill. Strong listening skills also contribute to better academic performance, as students can understand lectures and instructions more effectively.

iv. Written Communication

Communication through writing is a valuable skill for both school and work. Students must write essays, reports, research papers, and emails. Writing well requires clarity, coherence, organization, and the proper use of language.

Teaching writing will require practice and feedback. Teachers can help students structure their paragraphs, formulate their arguments, and use appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Student revision and editing will help improve their writing over time.

v. Digital Communication

Digital communication is becoming increasingly important in our digital world. Students communicate through email, online platforms, and virtual meetings. Each requires a different style and level of formality.

Teaching digital communication involves teaching students how to write professional emails, participate in discussions, and be well-behaved online. These skills are especially important to learners participating in distance learning and professionals.

Approaches to Teaching Communication Skills

Teaching communication skills effectively involves moving away from lecture-based practices towards more interactive, student-centered approaches.

i. Experiential Learning

Experiential learning emphasizes learning through experience. Role-plays, simulations, and situations in the real world give students the opportunity to practice communication skills in a meaningful context. For example, mock interviews prepare students for job applications, while group projects encourage collaboration and discussion.

ii. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is the process of working together toward a shared goal. Students work together through group discussions, team projects, and peer teaching activities that encourage them to socialize and communicate with each other as well as develop teamwork and problem-solving skills.

iii. Use of Technology

Information technology can also assist with communication skills instruction. Recording student presentations lets them assess their own performances and identify areas for improvement. Online discussion boards encourage participation for those students who may be reluctant to speak up in class.

Electronic tools, like presentation software or a collaboration platform, also allow students to practice different types of communication. The use of technology in the classroom makes the learning process more engaging and relevant.

iv. Continuous Assessment and Feedback

Assessment of communication skills is a necessity. Instead of relying only on final exams, teachers should use ongoing assessments like presentations, assignments, and participation.

Feedback should be constructive, specific, and focused on strengths and weaknesses. Peer feedback can be valuable because it allows students to check out the performance of each other and to learn from other perspectives.

v. Creating a Supportive Environment

Effective communication training must take place in a supportive classroom. Students should not feel that they are judged for having an opinion. Teachers can create this environment by encouraging students to join in, by welcoming opinions, and by providing positive reinforcement.

Challenges in Teaching Communication Skills

Despite its importance, teaching communication skills presents several challenges. Diversity of backgrounds can be a problem. Students may have different languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds, and their communication styles and abilities can be affected.

Another concern is that students do not feel confident about speaking in front of others or that they might make a mistake. They may be reluctant to participate or work hard. Also, school schedules may be short on time. Although communication skills need to be practiced frequently, the available time for such activities may not be available. Teachers may have to find ways to incorporate communication training into existing courses. Small class sizes may make it difficult to give students individual attention and feedback.

The Role of Educators

Educators play an important role in developing the communication skills of undergraduate students. They must be facilitators, guides, and role models. Effective teaching requires not only knowledge of the subject matter but also the ability to communicate clearly and engage the student. Teachers should communicate well by listening, explaining clearly, and being respectful. Then students will follow their example.

In addition, educators should design activities that encourage participation and practice, and they should be sensitive to the needs of their students.

Integrating Communication Skills Across the Curriculum

Communication should not be taught as a separate subject but as a fundamental skill in all areas of instruction. Students need to communicate effectively, whether in science, business, or the humanities.

In other words, science students can present their research results, commerce students can conduct business communication activities, and in the humanities, students can participate in debates and discussions. The more students can apply skills learned in the classroom to their own content, the more valuable the instruction can be.

Long-Term Impact on Students

Communication skills have a lasting impact on a student's life. They improve their academic performance, increase their employability, and improve their social skills. Students who communicate well are more likely to land an interview, build a network of professional connections, and become leaders.

Communication is essential for lifelong learning. Those who communicate clearly and who can understand others will be more adaptable to changing environments and challenges.

Conclusion

A student's communication skills are an integral part of his or her learning experience. Communication is crucial to his or her success in a world where communication is a determinant of his or her success.

Students can learn to be effective and confident communicators through teachers who use interactive techniques, who provide feedback, and who create supportive learning environments. Although it can be difficult, the benefits outweigh the challenges. Communication skills allow students to communicate their ideas, connect with others, and reach their personal and professional goals. They should be an integral part of any undergraduate education program.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the successful completion of this research paper titled "Teaching Communication Skills to Undergraduate Students."

I am deeply thankful to my colleagues and the Department of English, Dadapatil Rajale Arts and Science College, Adinathnagar, for their continuous encouragement, academic support, and valuable suggestions during the preparation of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the scholars, researchers, and authors whose works in the field of communication studies and language teaching have provided important theoretical insights and guidance for this research. Finally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family and friends for their constant motivation, patience, and moral support throughout the research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

Books:

1. DeVito, Joseph A. *The Interpersonal Communication Book*. 15th ed., Pearson, 2019.
2. *Developing Communicative Competence in English*. Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2024.
3. Lucas, Stephen E. *The Art of Public Speaking*. 13th ed., McGraw-Hill Education, 2020.
4. O'Hair, Dan, et al. *A Speaker's Guidebook: Text and Reference*. 7th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018.
5. *Professional Communication Skills*. Orient Blackswan Private Limited. 2024