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## Current English Review



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**CHAITANYA (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)**

(Declared u/s 3 of UGC Act, 1956 by MHRD, Government of India)

GANDIPET, HIMAYATHNAGAR, RANGA REDDY DISTRICT  
HYDERABAD-500 075, TELANGANA

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# Current English Review

(An Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal of  
Critical, Creative Writings and Reviews)

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## **EDITORIAL**

**Dear Readers,**

*“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies.*

*The man who never reads lives only one.” – George R.R. Martin*

As we turn the pages of this third issue of our enriching journal, we find ourselves stepping into a vibrant mosaic of ideas, narratives, and explorations that traverse time, culture, and intellect. This issue is a testament to our contributors’ boundless energy and creativity, who delve deeply into the fabric of human thought and experience. This edition strives to be a nexus of critical inquiry, creative reflection, and academic rigour, a space where diverse perspectives converge to inspire dialogue and understanding.

**In Part A: Critical Section, the articles weave a tapestry of scholarly pursuits illuminating diverse realms of culture, language, and literature.**

**Dr G. Damodar** states that NEP 2020 envisions English as a tool for bridging educational inequalities, equipping students with twenty first century skills, and fostering global competitiveness. Despite its transformative potential, its implementation faces hurdles such as regional disparities, resource constraints, and resistance to change. By addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, teacher training, and innovative strategies, Dr Damodar argues that ELT can emerge as a cornerstone of India’s progressive educational framework, nurturing a generation adept at navigating local and global contexts.

**Mr. Rupak Midya’s** exploration of the Baul tradition of Bengal offers a fascinating look into this unique cultural heritage’s corporeal and spiritual negotiations. By dissecting the philosophical underpinnings of the Baul community, the article challenges readers to rethink notions of the body, soul, and their intertwined existence. It’s a piece that calls for re-evaluating spiritual practices within the modern context.

**Ms. Chahak Gupta’s** comparative analysis of Gabriel García Márquez and Derek Walcott revives the ghosts of history, memory, and language, rendering the past alive with poignant clarity. The piece bridges linguistic landscapes and offers a rich critique of how these literary giants weave narratives that speak to postcolonial identity and cultural memory.

**Dr. N. Padmanabha Rao’s** philosophical journey reimagined Keats’ Hellenistic ideals through an Indian lens. In this spiritual voyage, Keats’ “Pagan conception of beauty” is intertwined with Indian metaphysical thought, creating a dialogue between East and West that enriches our understanding of beauty and transcendence.

**Dr. T. Kalpana** delves into the layers of tradition and transformation in Shashi Deshpande's works, which mirror the complexities of modernity intertwined with heritage. Her article sensitively navigates the spaces between societal expectations and personal evolution, compelling it for anyone interested in feminist literature.

**Ms. Erra Namratha's** incisive reading of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* offers a fresh lens on the multifaceted portrayal of religions. Through her analysis of the Prologue and select tales, the piece illuminates Chaucer's nuanced critique of ecclesiastical practices and societal hypocrisy.

**Mr. K. Balaguravaiah** discourse on second-language acquisition opens fresh vistas in linguistic praxis, presenting an innovative framework for understanding how English is acquired as a second language. His study emphasises practical methodologies that are especially relevant for educators in multilingual environments.

**Dr. Adi Ramesh Babu's** bold examination of Heteronormative boundaries in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* is a standout contribution. The article challenges societal norms, delving into the emotional landscapes of lesbianism and the subversion of traditional marital constructs.

**Dr. G. Rajesh** and **Dr. E. Satyanarayana** breathe new life into Indian mythology through contemporary English fiction. Their exploration underscores the resilience of mythological narratives, highlighting their adaptability and relevance in addressing modern societal questions.

**Ms. Thaduri Purnima's** practical insights into teaching English in Zilla Parishad schools provide a grounded perspective on educational challenges and triumphs in rural India. Her study is a valuable resource for policymakers and educators alike.

**Dr. E. Ram Bhaskar Raju's** exploration of AI in English Language Teaching demonstrates the transformative potential of technology in education. His forward-looking analysis envisions a future where AI bridges learning gaps and personalises pedagogy to empower students across diverse demographics.

**Mr. S. Venkata Ramana's** paper explores how two stalwarts of Indian drama negotiate the tension between socio-cultural traditions and the encroaching forces of modernity. Examining selected plays including Karnad's *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana* and Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Silence! The Court is in Session*, the paper analyzes their representation of cultural conflict, individual agency, and societal transformation.

**In Part B, the Creative Section invites us into a world of imagination and introspection.**

**Mr. Srikanth K.'s** "The Cold Moon" paints a luminous portrait of nature's quiet majesty, weaving imagery long after the final line. **Dr. E. Satyanarayana's** "Unsold

Apples” captures the poignancy of human struggles and unspoken stories, offering a heartfelt commentary on loss and resilience. Dr. Naveen Amapasayya’s “Vultures,” masterfully translated by **Prof. Rajeshwar Mittapalli**, delivers a visceral narrative of stark realities, stripping bare the intricacies of human conflict and survival.

**Dr R. Subhashini** and **Ms. M. Rebeka**’s poems make an interesting reading with good images and symbols.

**In Part C: Reviews, esteemed works’ intellectual rigour and lyrical elegance are celebrated.**

**Dr. E. Ram Bhaskar Raju, Dr. A. Ramesh Babu, and Dr. Ch. Jaiwant Rao** pay tribute to Mittapalli’s *Nalanda Lectures on World Literature, Volume I, Drama*, bridging world literature with Indian Traditions. Their review sheds light on the interplay between cultural heritage and universal themes, reaffirming the enduring relevance of classical dramatic structures.

**Dr. Raju**’s reflective critique of Susheel Kumar Sharma’s poetic oeuvre draws us into the rhythms of self-discovery. His nuanced analysis of Sharma’s lyrical web resonates deeply, urging readers to explore the confluence of personal and collective experiences in poetry.

**Ms. Erra Namratha**’s “Decoding Dr. Enjapoori” provides a nuanced lens through which to appreciate the creative genius behind a pioneering literary figure. Her critique balances admiration with analytical depth, making it an essential read for those seeking to understand Dr. Enjapoori’s contributions.

Together, these contributions create a symphony of voices, each resonating with its unique cadence yet harmoniously blending into the collective melody of this issue. We invite you to immerse yourself in this vibrant dialogue, question, reflect, and celebrate the boundless spirit of inquiry and expression that defines the human experience. As described by William Faulkner, “*The past is not dead. It’s not even past.*”

I am grateful to the Hon’ble Chancellor, **Dr. Ch.V. Purushotham Reddy, C.A.O. Dr. Ch. Sathvika Reddy**, esteemed members of Advisory Board and Editorial Board of *Current English Review*. I do appreciate the extra pains taken by our Associate Editors, **Dr E. Ram Bhaskar Raju** and **Dr Adi Ramesh Babu** in bringing out this issue.

Welcome to this issue—a journey of discovery awaits.

**Prof. G. Damodar**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

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# The Role of ELT in NEP 2020

— G. Damodar

## **ABSTRACT**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, seeks to transform the educational landscape, emphasizing multilingualism, inclusivity, and global competencies. As part of this framework, English Language Teaching (ELT) has garnered significant attention due to its dual role in fostering international communication and local cultural integration. This paper examines the implications of NEP 2020 for ELT, analyzing its objectives, pedagogical recommendations, and challenges. It highlights the policy's emphasis on leveraging multilingual strategies, technology integration, and outcome-based assessments to enhance English proficiency. Furthermore, the policy envisions English as a tool for bridging educational inequalities, equipping students with 21st-century skills, and fostering global competitiveness. Despite its transformative potential, the implementation of NEP 2020 faces hurdles such as regional disparities, resource constraints, and resistance to change. By addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, teacher training, and innovative strategies, ELT can emerge as a cornerstone of India's progressive educational framework, nurturing a generation adept at navigating local and global contexts.

(**Keywords:** English Language Teaching, NEP 2020, Multilingualism, Education Policy, Global Competence, Technology in ELT, Teacher Training, Inclusive Education.)

## **Introduction**

Language is the cornerstone of education, serving as both a medium and subject of instruction. In India, a country characterized by linguistic diversity, English occupies a unique and multifaceted role. Historically introduced during British colonial rule, English has become a key medium for higher education, governance, and international communication. Its status as a global lingua franca has made it a valuable skill for Indians seeking economic, educational, and social mobility.

However, this prominence of English often exists alongside the rich tapestry of India's regional and local languages. Balancing this linguistic diversity with the

practical demands of English proficiency is one of the central challenges addressed by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The policy articulates a vision for an equitable and inclusive education system, emphasizing “multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning.” This approach seeks to preserve and promote India’s linguistic heritage while equipping students with the skills necessary to engage in a globalized world.

As stated in the policy, “English will be encouraged as a medium of instruction while preserving the integrity of regional languages” (NEP 2020, 15). This dual emphasis raises critical questions about the future of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India. How can ELT be effectively integrated into a multilingual educational framework? What strategies can ensure that English proficiency does not come at the expense of regional languages? And how can India’s socio-economic disparities be addressed to ensure equitable access to quality ELT?

This paper explores these questions by examining the objectives of NEP 2020 relevant to ELT, its pedagogical implications, and the challenges and opportunities it presents. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on language education and its role in shaping India’s future.

### **Objectives of NEP 2020 Relevant to ELT**

- **Promotion of Multilingualism:** NEP 2020 advocates a three-language formula, encouraging proficiency in the mother tongue, a regional language, and English. This aligns with its goal of “building cognitive flexibility and cultural awareness through language learning” (NEP 2020, 11).
- **Skill Development:** The policy emphasizes 21st-century skills, including communication, critical thinking, and creativity, where English often serves as the primary medium.
- **Global Competence:** By strengthening English proficiency, NEP aims to prepare students for international opportunities in education and employment.

### **Pedagogical Shifts in ELT under NEP 2020**

#### **◆ Integrating Multilingual Approaches**

NEP 2020 encourages teaching English through multilingual strategies, leveraging students’ existing linguistic resources. Researchers argue that “a multilingual approach not only aids comprehension but also fosters inclusivity in the classroom” (Kumar 45). For instance, translating complex English texts into local languages helps bridge gaps in understanding.

#### **◆ Technology in ELT**

Digital tools and e-resources are central to NEP 2020’s educational reforms. The policy underscores the role of technology in enhancing language learning, stating, “Digital platforms will be harnessed to provide quality content in

multiple languages, including English” (NEP 2020, 24). This opens avenues for blended learning and interactive modules.

◆ **Assessment Reforms**

Traditional rote-based assessments are to be replaced by formative and competency-based evaluations. This shift emphasizes functional English proficiency, aligning with NEP’s broader objective of outcome-oriented education.

**Challenges in Implementing ELT under NEP 2020**

◆ **Regional Disparities**

India’s vast linguistic and socio-economic diversity poses challenges in uniformly implementing ELT reforms. As Patel observes, “While urban schools may embrace advanced ELT methodologies, rural institutions often struggle with basic infrastructure and trained educators” (67). Limited access to quality educational materials and technology in rural areas exacerbates these disparities. Bridging this gap requires targeted interventions, such as subsidized resources and specialized programs tailored to rural contexts.

◆ **Teacher Training**

Effective ELT requires skilled teachers proficient in modern pedagogical techniques. However, a significant gap exists in teacher training programs. To realize its vision, NEP’s commitment to continuous professional development must address this gap. Many educators lack exposure to technology-based teaching tools crucial for modern ELT practices. Establishing regional training centres and e-learning modules for teachers can mitigate this issue.

◆ **Balancing Multilingualism and English Proficiency**

While promoting multilingualism, maintaining a balance between regional languages and English can be complex. As Mishra observes, “an overemphasis on English risks marginalizing local languages, undermining cultural identity” (89). Conversely, inadequate emphasis on English proficiency can limit students’ global opportunities. Developing context-sensitive curricula that integrate both regional languages and English seamlessly is essential. Collaboration with local stakeholders to create inclusive content can ensure this balance.

◆ **Resistance to Change**

Educational reforms often face resistance from stakeholders, including educators, parents, and policymakers. Many traditionalists view the increased focus on English as a threat to cultural identity, while others are apprehensive about adopting new methodologies. Effective communication of NEP’s vision and pilot programs demonstrating its benefits can help alleviate these concerns.

◆ **Resource Constraints**

Implementing NEP's ambitious agenda for ELT requires substantial resources. Schools, particularly in underprivileged areas, often face a shortage of funds, infrastructure, and teaching aids. Public-private partnerships and government incentives for resource development can play a vital role in overcoming these constraints.

**Opportunities for ELT in NEP 2020**

◆ **Strengthening Global Competence**

By integrating English with global skills, NEP 2020 positions Indian students to thrive internationally. "Proficiency in English is not merely a linguistic asset, but a gateway to global citizenship" (Rao 102). Students proficient in English gain better access to higher education and career opportunities abroad, making them competitive in a globalized world.

◆ **Encouraging Inclusive Education**

ELT under NEP promotes inclusivity by accommodating diverse linguistic backgrounds. For example, using bilingual teaching aids ensures that no student is left behind. Inclusive ELT practices also address the unique needs of marginalized groups, such as first-generation learners, creating equitable opportunities for all.

◆ **Innovation through Technology**

The policy's emphasis on technology fosters innovation in ELT. AI-based tools, language apps, and virtual classrooms can revolutionize language teaching and learning. Virtual reality (VR) simulations and gamified learning platforms can make English learning more engaging and accessible. Technology also enables personalized learning, allowing educators to tailor lessons to individual student needs.

◆ **Professional Development for Educators**

NEP 2020 provides an opportunity to enhance teacher training programs, equipping educators with the skills needed for modern ELT methodologies. Workshops, online courses, and international collaborations can help teachers adopt innovative practices, ultimately improving learning outcomes.

◆ **Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships**

NEP encourages collaboration between public and private sectors to develop resources for ELT. Partnerships with ed-tech companies, NGOs, and international organizations can bring expertise, funding, and state-of-the-art teaching tools, enriching the ELT landscape in India.

### ◆ Promoting Research and Development

The policy creates a platform for research on effective ELT strategies. Studies on bilingual education, digital learning, and context-specific methodologies can inform best practices, driving evidence-based reforms.

### Conclusion

NEP 2020 marks a transformative phase for English Language Teaching in India. Promoting multilingualism, leveraging technology, and fostering global competencies sets a progressive agenda. However, realizing its full potential requires proactive solutions to address the existing challenges:

1. **Bridging Regional Disparities:** Initiating targeted outreach programs, providing rural schools with subsidized educational materials, and ensuring equitable access to technology can reduce the urban-rural divide in ELT.
2. **Enhancing Teacher Training:** Establishing regional teacher training centers and integrating modern, technology-based pedagogical techniques into training programs can improve teacher readiness.
3. **Balancing Multilingualism and English:** Developing curriculum frameworks that integrate English and regional languages in context-sensitive ways ensures cultural preservation alongside global readiness.
4. **Securing Resources:** Fostering public-private partnerships, incentivizing educational investments, and leveraging community support can address resource constraints effectively.
5. **Addressing Resistance to Change:** Promoting awareness campaigns and piloting successful models can build trust and encourage stakeholders to embrace NEP's vision.

By implementing these solutions, ELT under NEP 2020 can transform India's educational landscape, nurturing a generation of learners equipped to navigate local and global contexts.

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# The Human Body and its Negotiations in the *Baul* Tradition of Bengal

— *Rupak Midya*

## ABSTRACT

The Baul tradition is a mystic and devotional music tradition from Bengal and Bangladesh. The paper studies the centrality of the human body in the tradition. The song metaphors describe the various practises of the Bauls that are body-centric. The paper argues that constructions and studies of the *Baul* tradition have variously interpreted these corporeal relations. Using the phenomenon of the ‘amateur *baul*’ in 20th-century Bengal, the paper shows how the Bhadrakol population in Bengal appropriated the Baul tradition through an erasure of bodily relations. Such relations are essential in understating the development of the *Baul* tradition through history and understanding the corporeal worldview of the practitioners central to the tradition and the songs.

(**Keywords:** Body; *Baul*; Corporeality; Religion; Bengal; *Bhadrakol*)

The *Baul* tradition is a mystic and devotional music tradition from West Bengal, India and Bangladesh. The paper uncovers how religious cultural behaviour operates, having its locus as the human body in the context of The Bauls of Bengal. The research problem this paper intends to address is that much of the early twentieth-century thinking about the *Baul* tradition has often overlooked the centrality of the human body and the specific body-centric practises of the *Baul* culture for a merely romanticised, idealised, and unworldly figure. Such representation led to simply projecting and perceiving the culture as a purely isolated musical practice emblematic of a pure, rural, and regional culture.

As David Morgan says, discussions on religion that do not consider the body and the associated practices run the risk of providing a skewed account of the subject. ‘Religions take the shape of embodied practices that configure the world of mortals and others (Morgan 15).’ ‘Material Culture’ includes all aspects of religion that pertain to bodies, objects, places, and artefacts of any kind. Religions are not only ‘essentially ideational, conceptual, or volitional, as had been the focus of textual studies’. Alongside, ‘they are formed of feeling, sensation, implements, spaces, images, clothing, food, and bodily practices, exhibiting the corporeal

nature of human existence'. The believer's body is made to mediate the individual, his tradition, the individual, and the divine. The role of practice is fundamental to the study of lived religion, a central point of investigation for anthropologists, sociologists, media scholars, material culturalists, and scholars on religion. Rather than defining religion in terms of creeds or doctrines, these scholars find it more helpful to read religion as constitutive of practices (18). This shifts the study away from the centrality of beliefs to framing religion as constituted of things people do. For the Bauls, the body is the site of all realisation. As Baul says, '*ja ache brahmande, ta ache ei dehobhande*' (whatever is in the universe is in the body itself).

Lalan Sai's *dehotattva* songs (songs with the human body as their central theme) recur with symbols like the 'broken boat', the 'broken house' or 'robbed house/city', all metaphors for the human body. 'So, this is the happiness I find here/and yet I don't know where else to go/ I got a broken-down boat/ and spent my life bailing water' (Salomon 145), 'I've been bailing water for ages/ I can't plug the leak in this broken-down boat' (285).

*Sixteen gangsters  
Of the city  
Are running loose,  
Looting all.  
The five wealthy ones are nearly lost  
Trade is at the breaking point  
The king of the king  
Is also the king of the thieves  
To whom can I complain?* (Bhattacharya 152)

The 'Sixteen gangsters' constitute the five sense organs (*jñanedriya*), ears; skin; eyes; nose; tongue and the five organs of action (*karmendriya*), anus; genital; hands; feet; tongue and the six inimical forces (*ripu*), lust; anger; greed; ignorance; pride and envy. These bandits rob the wealth of the home or, in other words, are hindrances to the devotee's practice. The songs are composed in *Sandhya Bhasa*. Harapada Shastri translates *sandhya bhasa* as 'twilight language' that is half revealed and half concealed. Dasgupta views *sandhya bhasa* as camouflage to hide the practices and beliefs of the Bauls from the uninitiated. They often form riddles that end with the question, 'Does anyone know the secret?' which opens the songs for a kind of interaction, *palla* (duel) (Openshaw 67). The varying levels of intended meanings are intentional. They shall invoke specific meaning for Bauls and non-Bauls who fall on either of the four stages – *sthula* (one who is inert), *pravartak* (one who is beginning one's practice), *sadhak* (a disciplined practitioner) and the *siddha* (one who has succeeded in one's practice).



*A stranger has the keys to my house  
 So how can I unlock the door  
 and see with my own eyes  
 the treasures inside?  
 It's my house that's full of gold  
 But the stranger makes all the deals.* (Salomon 97)

In this song of Lalan, while the pun on the word *par* (stranger) with *Parmeshwar* (Supreme Being) is apparent, the *par* (other) has an added dimension to it. This stranger is also the keeper of the house. In a Bengali household, the women are the keepers of the wealth of the home, with the keys tied to their saris in a knot. In this particular Bengali version of Lalan's song, the doorkeeper is mentioned as female (*darowani*) (98). The knowledge of the self is intrinsically related to the knowledge of the other, here the other being feminine and hence the practice of *yugal sadhan*, i.e., the spiritual path in the company of a partner.

Explanations for the secrecy in the language are it prevents the practitioner from persecution, prevents misuse by the non-Bauls and inability of ordinary language to express higher experiences (Openshaw 2002: 67). According to Eliade *Sandhya Bhasa*,

It is not only to hide the Great Secret from the noninitiate that he is asked to understand bodhicitta at once as 'thought of awakening' and semen virile; through language itself (that is, by creation of a new and paradoxical speech replacing the destroyed profane language)  
 (as cited in Openshaw 67)

However, I argue that while studies on *sandhya bhasa*, notably that of Upendranath Bhattacharya and Jeanne Openshaw, are foundational in understanding the *baul* practices involved, they altogether neglect to read the language with a consideration of the socio-historical climate of Bengal in which the Bauls and other similar sects operated. The syncretic sects of Bengal were constituted of people from the lower order. They cultivated a free assimilation of ideas and rituals from various religious schools, threatening the purity of the religious doctrines. As Sumanta Banerjee states, these sects empowered the lower castes with an assertive sense of individuality. This grew to the point where systematic repression by the orthodox religious groups of these sects began as early as the 18 th century. Hence, using *sandhya bhasa* could be a consequence of such forceful circumstances. Banerjee narrates an incident in Nadia where the Brahmin landlord took offence on a lower caste man of the *Balarami* sect, who refused to bow down his head in front of anyone except his guru, Balaram Harhi. Leading religious figures of the *bhadralok* society (gentry), from Sibnath Sastri to Sri Ramakrishna, denounced the Karta-bhaja sect (Banerjee 14).

*Sixteen gangsters  
 Of the city  
 Are running loose,  
 Looting all.  
 The five wealthy ones are nearly lost  
 Trade is at the breaking point  
 The king of the king  
 Is also the king of the thieves  
 To whom can I complain?* (Bhattacharya 152)

McLane's study of the post-permanent settlement in rural Bengal notes a rise in banditry due to the Cornwallis administrative reforms of the 1790s. As a result of the transfer of police powers from the *zamindar* (landowner) to the company, the village ideal of the social order was destroyed and led to the creation of groups of bandits out of the village watchmen (*chaukidar*) from the twin pressures of government resumptions and landholder usurpations of service lands,

First, the company declared that the amount of service land kept off the revenue rolls was in excess of the need, and it, therefore, resumed some revenue-free lands and dismissed from the police the men who had held them. The second form of pressure came from landholders who illegally ejected village watchmen from their revenue-free lands in order to increase their rent rolls. This process continued well into the nineteenth century (28).

The *chaukidars* were no longer passive witnesses of the crime but leaders of the dacoits (*sordaar*). The ones responsible for the security of the house or locality were the very ones who committed the crime. The symbols 'The king of the kings/Is also the king of the thieves' and the 'five wealthy ones' (conscience, wisdom, restraint, renunciation and devotion) that are corrupted, underline this anxiety. The threat to the home (*ghor*) is sometimes due to natural factors. The riverine districts of Bengal were prone to floods and draughts whose descriptions we find in *Baul* songs such as this by Fikirchand, "*Bhut koreche goto sorter jhore/ Abar ei bahatto sale ghor okale lokkhi gechhe chhere*", "Last year's cyclone made the country as barren as Bhutan; once again, this seventy-second year a severe drought has forced the Goddess of wealth to desert us" (Majumdar 2009: 136). The "seventy-second year" is the Bengali year 1272, which saw the cyclone and a flood in the district of Nadia and the subsequent food scarcity in the villages. We can infer that the baul songs depict an amalgamation of the esoteric body with the lived body of the people. Studies that have read baul songs in light of their socio-historical backdrop, notably that of Manjita Majumdar, have failed to account for a discontinuity in the category 'Baul', leading us to my concluding arguments.

Harinath Majumdar (1833-96) was born into an urban middle-class family and was initiated into Tantra later in his life. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Harinath and his band of 'amateur bauls' (*sokher baul*) were gaining popularity as Openshaw writes,

He [Harinath]... and a host of similar groups sprang up in surrounding towns and villages. Such performers dressed up in long robes... wore false beards and long curly hair. Their largely mofussil town audience greatly appreciated their performances... from banter and mimicry, through light, sentimental ditties, to idealistic religious songs (42).

These urban-educated middle-class Bauls had their professions elsewhere. They made it fashionable to compose songs in what can be called the 'baul style'. This idea of a shared 'baul style', irrespective of the subject matter of the songs, leads to the notion that whoever composes in a *baul sur* (melody) is a *baul*, and whatever he composes in that style becomes a baul gaan. As Sukumar Sen mentions, these songs were *kirtim* (artificial), which is writing songs on subjects ranging from current affairs to the benevolence of Queen Victoria for an urban educated audience of Calcutta or Shantiniketan. This *bhadralok* (gentry) imagination of the Bauls was informed by a mixed but selective perception of the Bauls and the Baul themes, often not differentiating between the 'traditional' and the 'amateur' Bauls.

In his arguments, Tagore used the 'I' (*ami*) theme in the Baul songs to construct a specific regional identity. In contrast, for the Bauls, the 'I' theme was an attempt at erasing all identities and *jat* (Openshaw 39). In doing so, commentators like Tagore and K. Sen gave preferences to the more spiritualised Baul themes often such as the '*moner manush*' and the '*achin pakhi*', which became established in the *bhadralok* imagination as defining principles of not only *baul gaan* but also the Bauls. Furthermore, the translations and interpretations of these themes as 'the man of the heart' and the 'caged bird' were spiritualised and masculinised. The theme of the search for the '*moner manush*', which for Tagore and K. Sen meant, as Sen called it, 'the mutual love of the individual and Supreme self', for the 'traditional Bauls' meant many things such as the *guru*, *radha* (which also meant the partner in *sadhana*) and semen. The *bhadralok* imagination to which the 'amateur bauls' catered preferred subtler, respectable and romanticised themes, glossing over the gross or physical registers found in *baul* songs, thus neglecting the corporeal relations.

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## Past and Patois: History, Memory and Language in Marquez and Walcott

— Chahak Gupta

### ABSTRACT

Through the selective works of Marquez and Walcott, this essay analyses three overlapping concepts: the postcolonial subject's fraught relationship with (H)istory; their ability to access, formulate and re-formulate a collective and personal memory; and language formation as a part of reclamation of the right to self-identification. Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, as a piece of journalistic writing, presents the question of historiography and the politics of factual acceptability in creating a public memory. Walcott's poems "The Sea is History" and "Names" explore the possibility of reforming history and language in the Caribbean.

(**Keywords:** postcolonial, objectivity, self-identification, Marquez, Walcott, past, history, language, Lacan)

This article seeks to explore the writings of Derek Walcott and Gabriel Garcia Marquez and how the subjects of history, memory and language work in distinct ways in their subjective works. Language and identity formation are closely linked, and Lacanian psychoanalysis can explain this process. First, the essay seeks to understand what it means to be a postcolonial subject in the Caribbean, the islands of hybridity, and whether Walcott supports a classicist or a modern revolutionary view of history. To what extent the Caribbean can have a relationship with the past has to be asked. Second, it is necessary to understand Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* as journalistic fiction and ask if memory can be an authentic tool to re-formulate an experience. If not, what alternatives does Marquez offer? Marquez's novella has been analysed for its narrative techniques, as by Radolph D. Pope. Still, the analysis has often either been looked over or discussed only briefly a significant question the novel raises— the question of memory and the novel as an act of rewriting history. Walcott's works, too, have been closely analysed for their ideas of history, as in the works of Edward Baugh. Still, the paradoxes and contradictions in Walcott and the anxieties of his political duality have been overlooked. This paper attempts to answer or rather problematise some of these questions.

For Lacan, recognising one's self also comes with the consciousness of the 'other', forming a distinct ego. The Saussurean signifier for Lacan is always denoted with

the big 'S', as it exists concerning other signifiers related to but independent of the signified. This differentiation generates meaning, a phenomenon often employed to negate the identity of the 'native', the 'savage' who is always in contrast to the conceptualised epitome of the evolved man: the white coloniser. Derek Walcott, the St. Lucian poet, interrogates this complex question of language as a functional generator of power structures and a resistive force against the same. Walcott envisions the Caribbean as a melting pot of various cultures, an assimilation of individuals with distinct histories, often enrooted in the trauma of enslavement, but trying to re-imagine a New World. This group of fragmented islands inhabited by people from various cultures represents a hybridisation, which is celebrated in Walcott's works as he also tries to reconcile but leaves the paradoxes of this conflicted existence unresolved.

In postcolonial theory, there is extensive discussion on the erasure of the history of postcolonial subjects by the colonisers, the act of writing a historiography which doesn't account for the voices of the colonised. Walcott is engaging in its negation on two levels: first, for him, the 'nothingness' assigned to the Caribbean is not to be mourned; instead, he presents it as an opportunity for renewal, for reclamation of the agency to write on the blank page; as he mentions in *The Muse of History*, he's envisioning an Adamic world, a society which will write its story afresh (Baugh). Walcott is not trying to go back to a pre-colonial symbolic order— he is not trying to move towards a history of wounded existence or revive the memory of an amalgamated traumatic past which is rooted in either nostalgia and vengeance of the revolutionaries or pity and remorse of the oppressor. His view of history is current, something which is in formulation. Second, through his use of the French creole and the Caribbean patois within an English mode of writing, he's representing the voices which had been silenced. The use of these languages in his poetry is a conscious political decision for Walcott, who has defended the 'validity' of these languages against attacks by those who have questioned its legitimacy, a people Walcott would condemn as "purists".

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is the language which determines the imaginary, the ego and the symbolic order and the individual operates within it and since meaning is contingent on the 'otherisation' (here, used in the context of identity formation, different from the coloniser's) language is a means to self-identification, the recognition of an 'I', as in the Lacanian mirror stage. In making space for the language of the colonised, Walcott is also reclaiming their right to self-identification. Hybridisation is a central theme of his poetry, characterised by a "consistent investment in a creolised double consciousness which is situated at the borders of languages, cultures, identities and ethnicities...mimicry and originality" (Edwards 17).

Derek Walcott's celebrated poems "The Sea is History" and "Names" highlight the traumas of dual existence for a population still being burdened with the legacy of colonialism and a complex struggle with "cultural power" (Hassan 3). In his poem "The Sea is History", Walcott talks about a lost time, a collective amnesia of a past undocumented. There are no monuments to preserve the culture and the wounds of the tribes. By drawing references from the Bible, he's trying to construct an origin story of the Caribbean, which has emerged from the sea. The sea, which for so long carried ships full of people enslaved by the colonisers and transported them to the islands, is where the History of the Caribbean finds its genesis and origins. As the sea is ever-flowing and dissolves all the memories it carries within itself, their histories are fluid, free-flowing, dismantling and recreating themselves at each moment. The poem can also be read as an attempt to remind the colonisers of the atrocities inflicted by the colonial trade on the enslaved people and indentured labourers who were brutally forced into ships which carried them across seas.

Although Walcott has condemned the revolutionaries for their engagement with the past, paradoxically, he reignites the wounds of the oppression inflicted by the colonisers. However, for him, this was also the genesis of a new life, a new history, a new identity which the people of the Caribbean would define for themselves; he writes, "in the salt chuckle of rocks/with their sea pools, there was the sound/like a rumour without any echo/of History, really beginning". In the poem "Names", he highlights the power associated with the ability to name something and the reclamation of the agency to name therefore, is an assertion of one's identity, "the loss of memory is simultaneously a wound that cannot be healed and also the site for subjectivity in the colonised self...imagination and by association language allows the colonised subject to create his identity" (Rajeev). He is asserting that his race began with "no nouns", no language, but "my race began like the osprey with that cry, that terrible vowel, that I!" (25-28). His people have only a fragmented memory of the past before they were enslaved, they were coming from different lands, but here there is an assertion of a collective "I" – the self-determination of identity. There is a fraught relationship between the signifier and the signified, as language is relational, and the Caribbean subjects had to begin anew. Walcott celebrates the hybridity; he doesn't deny the relevance of history nor advocate forgetfulness for the trauma inflicted by a colonial past; he merely asks for a re-positioning of focus from trauma to survival.

For Marquez, language and memory have a symbiotic relationship; memories are constantly evolving in time, and they are encoded in language, an interpretive and subjective index which questions the possibility of the existence of an 'objective' truth. The recollection of memories is always selective and, thus, unreliable. Marquez, in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, explores the possibilities of alternative narratives divorced from the realist fiction of the West that has constantly tried to define the

reality of Latin American subjects. In his Nobel prize acceptance speech titled *The Solitude of Latin America*, Marquez discusses history (with a capital 'H') and how, for the longest time, it was written by the colonisers who actively denied the realities of the colonised to be voiced. First, the fact that Latin America is so different and divorced from that of the West makes it necessary to employ techniques like magical realism; in this particular novel, he constantly references dreams and omens.

In an interview with *The Atlantic* in 1973, Marquez says, "Surrealism runs through the streets of Mexico." The reality of the former colonies has its complexities, which may seem unusual or hallucinatory to the West but are lived experiences for the postcolonial subject. The novel begins with a dream and an omen, which is dismissed over 'rational' evidence but which foretells the disaster of his death. Marquez does not dismiss These dreams and omens but is woven into the narrative as the reality of Latin American life. The narrator is trying to formulate a journalistic articulation of Santiago's death, which exists in the bureaucratic official records, a legacy of the colonisers. The official records, however, lack the subjectivity that constitutes human experience; they are always aligned to the perception and the decree of the one who documents them. In a colonial society, it was always the white oppressor. Marquez is trying to combine various fragments of individual memories to piece together a lost past. In doing so, Marquez attempts to engage in a historiography of Latin America that has not found its voice in Western narratives.

Marquez seems to propose that individual memories are subjectively changing, and therefore, no single view of history can be objectively accepted as 'true'. The people of the town have widely different recollections of the weather on the day of the murder. If something seemingly objective cannot be agreed on, then writing history itself is a skewed process. Second, Marquez seems to imply that any narrative seamlessly flows into comprehension, which is deceptive. Reality is so complex and incidental, especially in Latin America, that the coincidences almost seem fictional, like the *Fait Divers*. Tying the loose ends of the narrative would mean being selective with memories without one objective truth. Therefore, a realist text is lying, masquerading as reality while being only a delusive representation of it. Hence, the narrative doesn't flow into a linear timeline; it constantly moves back and forth, suggesting that time is cyclical in most postcolonial societies and that the past is ever-present and in flux.

In *The Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, this partisan process of historiography is most evident in the figure of the investigator. The investigator, fed with the fodder of detective fiction and the crime novel, feels uncomfortable with the dots of the murder left unconnected. Hence, he tries narrating a series of fatal coincidences



and exploits the facts to suit his literary aspirations. For Marquez, bureaucratic privilege and the assertion of the powerful defines history. He attempts to destabilise this hegemony of the West over memory and language by questioning their interpretation and documentation of history. In the *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Marquez doesn't attempt to make sense of the series of coincidences which lead to Santiago Nasar's death. Marquez's novel is reconstructed through disjointed memories in a town taken over by a "plague of forgetfulness".

Instead of looking for easy answers and wholesome closures, he presents memory and reality in their flawed form. Although the novel employs journalistic and factual methods, they are laced with instances of fiction, problematising the very notion of what is fiction and what constitutes the real; as Pope notes, "The narrator attempts to rescue an event from the leanness it has acquired in memory as he tries to flesh out the details of a story that has started to evaporate in memory." (186). The Western legacy institutions of the law, represented by the Court, and the institution of religion, vested in the Bishop and the Church, failed to protect the town and its people. They symbolise the colonists' attempt to rule over the natives by producing deceptions of protection. This is Marquez's appeal to the West in his Nobel Prize acceptance lecture. He talks about how Western authors have exoticised Latin America as the land of the peculiar, unreal, and magical. They fail to acknowledge that for the natives, it is their everyday reality. He talks about the constant political upheaval of his land, the country's continuous attempt to reinvent itself in the face of degeneration and turmoil, and the scrutiny of the West. Marquez emphasises that their lives, their culture, their history and trauma are different from those of the 'Occident'. He questions Europe's emphasis on Latin America to emulate their structures of social change. Europe disregards Latin America as a former colony with entirely different social and political issues and needs to search for unique ways to address them. Marquez speaks for all the postcolonial subjects of Latin America, who have long been denied the right over their own memories, language and social systems.

Marquez and Walcott have two very different yet similar approaches to the recollection of memory and reconstruction of history; for one, he is looking at a "History-less, mapless" world, for the former, history is in flux and has to be rewritten, even though there is an impossibility of having one true believable history. Although this paper doesn't offer a comparative analysis of Marquez and Walcott's ideas of history, it would be helpful to deduce how they both subvert the colonial narrative differently and present the difficulty of simplistic solutions to disjunctured identities. A psychoanalytic reading of their works through the two opposing ideas of Fanon and Lacan can offer insight into the perplexing question of postcolonial identity formation in two very different geographies.

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# Keat's Pagaon Conception of Beauty: A Spiritual Exploration from an Indian Perspective

— N. Padmanabha Rao

## ABSTRACT

This article explores John Keats's pagan conception of beauty, analyzing its spiritual and philosophical dimensions by drawing comparisons with Indian philosophical thought. Initially, Keats viewed beauty as something physical, tied to sensory experiences; however, over time, his perception evolved toward a more metaphysical understanding, where beauty became an abstract, transcendent concept linked to deeper truths about existence. The paper investigates how Keats integrates beauty with truth and joy, primarily through his poetic expressions that emphasize the interconnection of these ideals. By contrasting Keats's pagan view with key elements of Indian spirituality, such as the concepts of *Satyam* (truth), *Shivam* (goodness), and *Sundaram* (beauty), this study seeks to uncover universal themes of beauty that resonate across different cultural traditions. The article ultimately argues that beauty, in its highest form, transcends both temporal and geographical limitations, offering a spiritual experience that can be universally appreciated, regardless of cultural background.

(**Keywords:** John Keats, Pagan Conception of Beauty, Spiritual Significance, Indian Philosophy, Evolution and Perception, Tangible to Metaphysical, Beauty, Truth and Joy, Interconnectedness, Juxtaposition, Indian Spiritual Perspectives)

*The man who only loves beautiful things is dreaming,  
whereas the man who knows absolute beauty is wide awake.*

— Bertrand Russell

## Introduction

John Keats emerged during the Romantic era alongside poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Arnold views Keats as one of the 'very greatest of English poets' (207). His poetic oeuvre, a tapestry woven with threads of emotion, imagination, and sublime beauty, captures the essence of Romantic aesthetics. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats wrote, "I find that I cannot exist without poetry—without eternal poetry—half the day will not do." Keats's odyssey

through life was a symphony of triumph and tragedy, each note composing a melody of unparalleled beauty. Examining his poetry reveals how Keats delved into the intricate pathways of the human psyche, exploring themes of love, yearning, and mortality. From the ethereal beauty of a Grecian urn to the melancholy whispers of an autumnal breeze, Keats's poetry casts a spell that transports the reader to earthly and divine realms. Like a timeless symphony echoing through the corridors of eternity, his poetry continues to enrapture hearts and minds with unparalleled beauty and profound wisdom. Despite his relatively short life, his poetic legacy endures through timeless works that explore themes of beauty, truth, and joy, aligning closely with the spiritual ethos of Indian thought. His poetic exploration, thus, bridges Romantic aesthetics and the timeless wisdom embedded in the sacred texts of India.

### **Keats's Paganism**

Keats's poetry delves deeply into Hellenism, evincing his profound reverence for the rich tapestry of Greek culture, literature, and art. His fascination with the ancient world, mainly Greek and Roman, is evident in his engagement with pagan themes and motifs that account for his poems' charm and mythical allure. The "Ode on Grecian Urn" is a testament to the poet's imaginative prowess, delving into various facets of Hellenic beauty, love, festivities, rituals, and celebrations. The poem effectively captures the essence of the Greek spirit, seamlessly transporting the reader into an unknown world of "*eternal whispering*," a phrase borrowed from Keats's sonnet "On the Sea. Shelley's admiration for Keats and his assertion that "Keats was a Greek" stems from Keats's fascination with Greek art, literature, and culture. Greek paganism is relived again in his poetry in all its mysticism, sensuousness, and joy of life. In one of his letters, Keats writes, "I am with Achilles shouting in the trenches, or with Theocritus in the vales of Sicily, or throw my whole being into Troilus."

Wordsworth aptly noted that Keats's poetry can be described as "very pretty paganism," capturing the essence of paganistic sensibilities with its vivid imagery and evocative language. His affinity with Greek culture manifests in his adoration for beauty and his innate joy in attributing personifications to the forces of nature. He perceived the essence of Proteus within the sea, envisioned Dryads dwelling among the trees, and sensed Naiads inhabiting the brooks. Rather than merely a celestial orb, the rising sun embodied Apollo guiding his chariot across the sky in his perception. Likewise, he envisioned the moon as the goddess descending to bestow a kiss upon Endymion. To him, the embodiment of beauty represented the highest ideal of all artistic expression.

### **Keats's Sensuousness**

Drawing on classical mythology and Renaissance aesthetics, Keats's early poetry exuberantly revels in the sensory delights of the natural world in all its grandeur

and the enchanting allure of feminine beauty. “*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness*” and “*I met a lady in the meads/ Full beautiful, a faery’s child;*” exemplify his unrestrained celebration of beauty in tangible forms. ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is enchantingly and abundantly sensuous, offering a sumptuous feast for all the senses. His longing for the wine “*cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth*” from the beaker “*with beaded bubbles winking at the brim*” and “*purple-stained mouth*” exemplifies Keats’s meticulous attention to sensory imagery. ‘The Eve of St. Agnes,’ one of Keats’s rapturously romantic poems associated with his love for Fanny Brawn, is a medieval legend with an atmosphere of mystery and enchantment. However, the poem was criticised for its sensuous imagery that slipped into sensuality:

*Pillow’d upon my fair love’s ripening breast,  
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, to hear her tender-taken breath,*

Though steeped in sensuality, the poem is a “gateway to a fuller, higher, and more satisfactory comprehension of the mystery of life.” (Dhar, 1996, p. 48). In a letter addressed to George in December 1817, Keats writes, “With a great poet, the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.” Further, in his letter to Fanny Brawne, he explicitly professed, “I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time, I would have made myself remembered.” Even in his last moments, he discovered serene happiness, a soothing solace in envisioning the beauty of his eventual resting place, where violets would gently blanket his grave, offering reassurance to his loyal friend “that he seemed already to feel the flowers growing over him.” (Colvin, 1917, p. 145). Nevertheless, “*He is made one with Nature: there is heard, His voice in all her music...*” writes Shelley in his poem ‘Adonais.’

### **From the Sensuous to the Spiritual**

John Keats’s evolution of poetic vision from the sensuous to the spiritual is a captivating odyssey, marked by a profound spiritual insight that elevated sensory pleasure into a celestial joy:

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever;  
Its loveliness increases;  
it will never pass into nothingness.*

This shift is particularly evident in his later works, where Keats grapples with the idea of beauty as a conduit to more profound truths. His longing for beauty differs from the typical passion of a sensuous or sentimental poet; instead, it is an ‘intellectual and spiritual passion.’ (Arnold, 213). In ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ Keats contemplates the eternal beauty captured in the urn’s artistry: The lines “*Thou still unravish’d*

*bride of quietness/Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time*” symbolise the timeless and the ideal—an inquiry akin to the philosophical pursuit of the ultimate reality. Keats marvels at the frozen moments captured on the urn, acknowledging their enduring allure despite the passage of time. Through vibrant imagery, he reflects on the paradox of beauty: its capacity to transcend mortality while forever preserved in artistic representation. The spiritual significance Keats assigns to beauty elevates it beyond mere aesthetic pleasure, suggesting a transcendent connection to the divine. Similarly, in ‘Ode to a Nightingale,’ “one of the final masterpieces of human work in all time and for all ages.” (Swinburne, 1886, p. 211), Keats expresses a yearning to transcend the confines of mortal existence and connect with something enduring and cosmic. Murry (1933) observes that Keats identified the Nightingale with the eternal melody that consoled Ruth ‘*when sick for home*’ and that ‘*Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam’d Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn*’ thus, enduring through the relentless passage of time.

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tramp thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:*

While Harold Bloom (1961) critiques Keats for idealising and romanticising beauty, overlooking the darker facets of human existence, Keats’s perspective is more nuanced. He discovers beauty within the realm of reality itself, embracing both joy and pain as integral parts of life’s journey. The world of the Nightingale, with all its charms, cannot take away from Keats’s heart his sense of oneness with humanity as his mind is wide open to the “fever, and the fret” of the world: “*Where men sit and hear each other groan.*” and “*where but to think is to be full of sorrow.*” Further, his utterance, “*Forlorn !*” retrieves him to the world of those suffering from “palsy, growing pale, specter-thin and then dying.” The same is true in the case of the urn. He knows the urn as a beautiful piece of art, but simultaneously, he realises that the urn, though immortal, is silent and “cold Pastoral” and lacks the warmth and vigour of life.

Nevertheless, Keats extols beauty as a transcendent and ubiquitous force, portraying it as a source of solace and inspiration amidst life’s transient nature and inherent suffering. Sperry (1994) marvels at Keats’ odes, describing them as a magnificent achievement that epitomises the purest form of ‘Negative Capability’, keeping him alive to the stark realities of life and that his poetry, a fascinating study of the sensuous, the intellectual and the spiritual put together so brilliantly.

### **Keats’s Spiritual Significance**

For Keats, beauty is not just an end but a means of delving into the divine and the eternal, transforming his perception of nature into a profound exploration of

existence. In his analysis, Geoffrey Crump observes Keats's ardour for beauty spurred him on a journey to unveil its mysteries and to extol its timeless relevance to human senses rather than delving into philosophical musings like Shelley. However, his conception of beauty shares significant similarities with Indian spiritual perspectives, highlighting the universal human longing for transcendence, the recognition of beauty's immanence, and its role as a pathway to spiritual enlightenment and liberation.

Murry (1933) unfolds Keats's relentless pursuit of exploration and the exhilaration of discovery on three distinct fronts: the captivating beauty of nature, the enchanting allure of poetry, and his innate ability to express nature's beauty through the art of poetry. Within this multifaceted endeavour, Keats perceives the quest for beauty as inseparable from the pursuit of truth, imbued with profound spiritual significance. In Indian spirituality, aesthetic experience is not merely a sensory pleasure but a spiritual practice to attain union with the divine or the ultimate reality (Brahman) that pervades the universe. Anchored in ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, Indian spirituality is characterised by its emphasis on self-realisation, karma (action), dharma (duty), and moksha (liberation). At its core lies the principle of "Darshan," advocating for the direct perception of the divine in all facets of existence, including the aesthetic realm:

*"Ekaḥsarvagataḥsarvavyāpīsarvabhūtāntarātmakaḥ ||  
Karmādhyakṣaḥsarvabhūtādhivāsaḥsākṣīcetākevalonirguṇaśca||"*

— The Bhagavad Gita

Keats's portrayal of the spiritual dimension, too, suggests an integration of immanence and transcendence, where the divine is both immanent within the natural world and transcendent beyond it. Similarly, Keats's conception of beauty surpasses superficial sensory perception, as his assertion, "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter," signalling a profound, transformative experience that uplifts the spirit. Jack Stillinger (1971) aptly observes Keats's perception of beauty as profoundly infused with the sublime, blending sensory experiences with deep emotional and spiritual resonance. Indian philosophy, too, posits that ultimate truth transcends empirical observation, aligning with Keats's notion of beauty as a gateway to realms beyond the tangible, inviting a deeper understanding of existence.

*"Ekaḥsarvagataḥsarvavyāpīsarvabhūtāntarātmakaḥ ||  
Karmādhyakṣaḥsarvabhūtādhivāsaḥsākṣīcetākevalonirguṇaśca||"*

— The Bhagavad Gita

Both in the literary oeuvre of John Keats and the spiritual doctrines of Indian philosophy, there exists a shared recognition of the cyclic nature of birth, death, and rebirth, fundamentally governed by the principles of karma. Keats's celebrated

poem “To Autumn” is a poignant illustration of this thematic convergence, wherein he intricately portrays the rhythmic progression of the seasons, resonating with the enduring truths embraced within Indian philosophical discourse. The poem’s denouement, encapsulated in the imagery of “gathering swallows Twitter in the skies,” subtly hints at a cyclical rejuvenation, symbolising the eternal continuum of existence that follows the quiet cessation of life. This cyclical motif of birth, death, and rebirth orchestrated by the intricacies of karma echoes the foundational doctrine of samsara in Indian spiritual thought.

*"Vāsāmsijṛṇāniyathāvihāya  
navānigrhṇātinaro" parāṇi  
tathāśarīrānivihāyajṛṇāny  
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī"*

— The Bhagavad Gita

However, the culmination of Keats’ evolution is seen in “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” when his pursuit of beauty and truth becomes a quest for a sublime state of existence and joy that aligns with the Indian philosophical underpinnings of seeking truth:

*Beauty is truth, truth beauty  
that is all Ye know on earth  
and all ye need to know.*

Nevertheless, Keats’s poetic prowess warrants him a place among luminaries such as “Horace, Dante, Wordsworth, Goethe, Schiller, and the rest of that brilliant galaxy of geniuses who not only had ideas of what poetry ought to be but had the power and skill to compose it in forms of truth and enduring beauty.” (Thorpe 1926, p.26) His dedication to the Principle of Beauty was not merely aesthetic; instead, it was an eternal quest for communion with the intrinsic beauty at the core of existence, as Sir Sidney Colvin (1917, p.167) has phrased it, “a parable of the adventures of the poetic soul striving after full communion with this spirit of essential beauty.” Thus, the aesthetic experience is a pathway to contemplate deeper truths and perceive the divine presence that permeates all creation, akin to the Indian scriptures guiding individuals on a profound journey of self-discovery and realising the ultimate truth.

Keats’s conceptualisation of beauty aligns closely with the scriptural interpretation: “Satyam Shivam Sundaram cha sarvam”, which encapsulates the divine attributes. For him, this beauty was inseparable from the truth, and this profound connection offered him solace and tranquillity, even in the face of death. In one of his letters addressed to his friend Benjamin Bailey, Keats asserts this view: “What the imagination seizes, as Beauty must be truth. Whether it existed before or not, for I have the same idea of all our passions as of love; they are all in their sublime,



creative of essential Beauty”. Thus, Keats embodies philosophical enlightenment, possessing a philosophic imagination akin to Plato’s notion that “the man who knows the absolute beauty is wide awake” (Bertrand Russell, 2004, p.107) that explores the intrinsic unity across three domains—Nature, Humanity, and the transcendent spiritual realm.

## **Conclusion**

While Keats is often identified as a Pagan poet, revelling in the worship of beauty for its own sake, his creed of beauty shares conceptual affinities with Indian Philosophical thought, such as the transcendental nature of beauty, the immanence of the divine in the natural world, and the quest for spiritual enlightenment and liberation. Keats’s poetic oeuvre thus resonates with both the timeless reverence for nature inherent in pagan traditions and the profound metaphysical insights espoused by Indian philosophy. The trajectory of Keats’s poetic journey, transitioning from a preoccupation with sensuous love to the attainment of spiritual wisdom and from a focus on the ephemeral to the contemplation of the eternal, embodies a symphony of verse that reverberates with the tenets of the Indian philosophical tradition.

While Keats does not explicitly equate beauty with divinity, his fusion of beauty and truth suggests an implicit association with the divine. This perspective finds resonance in Indian scriptures, where God is often portrayed as the embodiment of beauty and truth. According to these scriptures, the pursuit of truth is synonymous with the quest for God. Whether manifested through various artistic mediums such as art, music, literature, or religious rituals, pursuing beauty and spirituality reflects an intrinsic human inclination to probe the enigmas of existence and seek significance and purpose in life. Thus, examining Keats’s pagan conception of beauty through an Indian lens bears profound implications for fostering spiritual synthesis, enriching our comprehension of universal truths and timeless insights. It encourages cross-cultural dialogue, fosters philosophical inquiry, and enriches cultural appreciation, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced and interconnected worldview.

## **Scope for Further Research**

The article delineates avenues for future research on John Keats’s poetry, highlighting his progression from themes of sensuality to spiritual inquiry and drawing parallels with Indian spiritual ideologies. Key areas include his poetic evolution, examining his engagement with Romanticism and Transcendentalism, contemporary relevance, fostering interdisciplinary discourse, and scrutinising the reception and impact of his work. In essence, the article constructs a robust framework for future scholarly endeavours by pinpointing pivotal themes, defining areas of investigation, and

advocating for comparative scrutiny. Ultimately, this framework contributes to a richer comprehension of Keats's poetry and its profound philosophical significance.

### **Recommendations**

This paper suggests the following to improve language and literature, which could spur sustainable educational progress in the country. Here are some suggestions:

- Curriculum designers must create successful English teaching methods using literature.
- Language teachers require authentic, pedagogically-designed materials from many literary genres for classroom use.
- Open theatres in schools provide literature and literary practises to boost language development.
- National Education Policies, and rigorous syllabus evaluation by curriculum originators, promote literature-centred language activities in language teaching curriculum for academic reform and focus attention in the context of language teaching.
- National seminars and workshops highlighting literary texts as valuable Language Teaching Aids.
- Revisiting the nuances of the National Education Policy 2020 to integrate literary texts into ELT.

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 Easwaran, Eknath, translator. *The Upanishads*. Print.  
 Dalal, Roshen. *The Vedas: An Introduction to Hinduism's Sacred Texts*. Print. If the literary material is significant and entertaining, students will work hard to overcome linguistic challenges. According to Carter and Long (1991), teachers should select literary texts that allow students to respond and participate creatively, creating a memorable, personalised, and collective experience (p.3).

## **Shashi Deshpande: Between the Lines of Tradition and Transformation**

— T. Kalpana

### **ABSTRACT**

Shashi Deshpande, one of the prominent contemporary Indian writers in English, is best known for her nuanced exploration of women's issues, identity, and the complex realities of modern Indian society. Her novels, rooted in the Indian cultural landscape, often grapple with themes of self-realisation, familial relationships, and the internal conflicts of women navigating traditional and modern expectations. This paper critically examines Deshpande's novels, focusing on her representation of women's lives and their psychological intricacies. Through analysing select works such as *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terror*, and *The Binding Vine*, the paper critiques how Deshpande's storytelling, characterisation, and narrative techniques have shaped feminist discourse in Indian Literature. Contemporary criticisms and scholarly perspectives on her work, including striking quotations from current critiques, will be integrated to comprehensively understand her literary legacy and its relevance in postcolonial and feminist literary studies.

**(Keywords:** Shashi Deshpande, Feminism, Women's Literature, Indian English Fiction, Contemporary Criticism, Postcolonial Literature, Psychological Realism, Gender and Identity, Literary Criticism)

### **Introduction**

Shashi Deshpande is a formidable voice in Indian English Literature, mainly celebrated for her candid exploration of female identity, familial structures, and societal expectations. Her work deftly navigates the nuances of women's emotional and psychological landscapes, questioning patriarchal norms and offering complex, relatable characters embodying vulnerability and strength. The paper aims to critically assess the thematic depth, narrative techniques, and feminist undertones in Deshpande's novels, drawing on critical perspectives and creative insights from her fictional world. By incorporating recent scholarly interpretations, the paper examines Deshpande's place within contemporary feminist discourse, postcolonial narratives, and Indian English Literature.

Shashi Deshpande's most prominent works, such as *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), and *Small Remedies* (2000), delve into the lived experiences of women navigating the intersection of personal aspirations, familial responsibilities, and societal constraints. Through her protagonists, Deshpande explores themes of self-realisation, emotional isolation, and the search for autonomy, often within the framework of a post-independence India still grappling with traditional gender roles.

### **Feminist Themes: Silence and Resistance**

Shashi Deshpande's novels provide a powerful lens through which to explore the roles and struggles of women in modern Indian society. Her protagonists, often facing emotional turmoil and societal constraints, reflect a deep psychological realism that makes Deshpande a key figure in contemporary Indian English fiction. The critical approach to her work, particularly in the context of feminism, reveals her intricate portrayal of women who question traditional roles, seeking agency and independence in a world that still holds on to patriarchal values. Deshpande's exploration of gender dynamics, domesticity, and emotional resilience has been extensively critiqued, with contemporary critics offering both admiration and critical insights into her literary contributions.

Contemporary critics, such as Rashmi N. Dube, argue that Deshpande's exploration of silence is a conscious subversion of traditional narratives that seek to restrict women to passive roles. Dube posits that Deshpande "explores the intersection of gender, voice, and authority within the familial and social domains, where women are silenced not just by the structures around them, but also by their self-imposed constraints" (Dube 134). Then, Jaya's silence is a complex mechanism reflecting her struggle to reclaim her voice, making her eventual decision to speak out a powerful feminist act.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the character of Saru grapples with trauma and marital abuse. Her journey is marked by the oppressive silence imposed by her abusive relationship, which leads to her psychological breakdown. However, Saru's narrative arc also illustrates the redemptive power of reclaiming agency over one's voice and body, a theme that resonates with contemporary feminist discourse. As Priya Joshi highlights, Deshpande's work allows women characters to "break the silences of their personal lives and claim ownership of their narratives" (Joshi 87). Therefore, this breaking of silence in Deshpande's fiction becomes an essential metaphor for female empowerment.

### **Characterisation: Psychological Depth and Realism**

One of Deshpande's most notable literary techniques is her ability to create complex, multifaceted characters whose internal conflicts are profoundly personal and

universal. Deshpande's characters often confront the dual pressures of individual desire and familial duty. Her narratives are intimate psychological explorations, marked by long introspective moments where the character's inner turmoil and emotional depth come to the forefront.

*In Small Remedies*, Nalini, the protagonist, embarks on a journey of self-exploration after her mother's death. The novel's structure intertwines the past and present, using memory and reflection to unravel the layers of Nalini's character. Deshpande uses this non-linear narrative technique to give voice to a woman who has long been defined by others — as a daughter, a wife, and a mother — but whose personal aspirations and dreams have been neglected. The reflective nature of the novel allows readers to see how Nalini navigates her identity in the aftermath of personal loss and familial expectations.

As Gita Ramaswamy suggests, *Small Remedies* reflects Deshpande's mastery in depicting the "subtle interplay of memory, emotion, and the unsaid" with characters who are "constantly in dialogue with their pasts, yet striving to carve out space for their futures" (Ramaswamy 56). The novel's quiet yet potent exploration of self-reclamation and the search for personal space resonates deeply with contemporary readers, particularly those who experience the tension between individual desires and social roles.

### **Postcolonial Context: Tradition vs. Modernity**

Deshpande's works also engage with the more significant socio-cultural shifts in post-independence India, where the clash between tradition and modernity often defines women's experiences. In *The Binding Vine* (1993), Deshpande critiques the trauma of partition and its residual effects on women's lives. The novel's protagonist, Urmi, discovers her mother's journals after her death, revealing her mother's painful memories of the partition. Through Urmi's journey of uncovering family secrets, Deshpande addresses the impact of historical events on personal lives and critiques how both the past and present silence women.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan's work offers a compelling postcolonial reading of Deshpande's novels, emphasising the "persistent legacies of patriarchy and nationalism that continue to marginalise women's voices" (Sunder Rajan 120). The postcolonial critique becomes especially pertinent when reading Deshpande's portrayal of women who seek to reconcile their autonomy with the overarching demands of tradition and societal expectations. The dichotomy between tradition and modernity is thus central to understanding the challenges faced by Deshpande's protagonists as they navigate both the freedom and constraints of the postcolonial landscape.

### **Narrative Technique: The Unspoken and the Implicit**

Deshpande's writing style is known for its subtlety and the way it creates a space for the unsaid. Much of her work relies on what is not immediately articulated —

the emotional undercurrents that shape her characters' actions and interactions. The use of silence and non-verbal communication is not just a thematic choice but also a stylistic one, which allows Deshpande to explore the complexities of female identity in a way that feels authentic and relatable. Her protagonists are not given easy solutions or clear paths to self-discovery; their growth is gradual and often painful.

In *That Long Silence*, the novel's structure mirrors the protagonist's internal emotional restraint. The text often shifts from the present to flashbacks, creating a fragmented sense of time that parallels Jaya's fragmented sense of self. Deshpande's narrative choices emphasise that self-identity is not a singular, unified experience but a collection of moments, memories, and emotional responses.

As Arvind Krishna Mehrotra aptly points out, Deshpande's "realism is not about external events alone; it is about the internal emotional and psychological states that define her characters' experiences" (Mehrotra 102). This internal realism allows Deshpande to critique social structures more nuanced, as it's not just the outer world that shapes her characters but also their personal, internal struggles against the roles they are forced to play.

### **Creative Insights: The Power of Language and Silence**

From a creative perspective, Deshpande's work challenges conventional narrative styles by emphasising the fluidity between speech and silence. Through her protagonists' journeys, Deshpande explores the transformative power of language, mainly how language is both an expression and a limitation of the self. In a patriarchal society, women often lack the space to articulate their desires and frustrations, and Deshpande gives them that space through her fiction.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the protagonist Saru's eventual ability to speak out about her abusive marriage and mental health struggles marks her liberation. This transformation is not just about external circumstances but about the reclaiming of her language, the articulation of her trauma, and the rewriting of her own story. Through this, Deshpande underscores the importance of narrative control for women, who, through their voices, can change the trajectory of their lives.

### **The Ongoing Relevance of Deshpande's Work**

Shashi Deshpande's novels, as explored through the lens of feminist and postcolonial theory, open new avenues for understanding the intricate dynamics of silence, identity, and the tension between tradition and modernity. While her works are deeply entrenched in the Indian socio-cultural context, their thematic concerns transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, making them universally relevant. By delving into the lives of her female protagonists, Deshpande uncovers the complexities of their inner lives, bringing forth a nuanced representation of women's

struggles in a patriarchal society. Her characters—often portrayed as quietly defiant and introspective—navigate the subtle power structures that confine them, making their stories relatable to a global audience grappling with similar issues of gender inequality and identity.

A key aspect of Deshpande's writing lies in her portrayal of women who, despite being silenced by societal norms, begin to reclaim their voices in profound ways. This reclamation is not always loud or confrontational but rather a quieter, more introspective process that challenges the limitations imposed by external forces. The inner worlds of her female characters emerge as sites of resistance, where they negotiate their identities in the face of familial, social, and cultural expectations. In this respect, Deshpande's work is a powerful critique of the traditional roles women are expected to play and an invitation to rethink how women can assert their agency within those constraints.

Furthermore, in the context of contemporary feminist discourse, Deshpande's novels invite new research perspectives on the intersections of silence and speech in women's empowerment. The tension between the two becomes a significant site of analysis, where silence is not necessarily a sign of passivity but an expression of inner strength and a tool for self-discovery. A crucial area for future research could be exploring how language—and the lack of it—can become a medium through which women carve out their identities and challenge the status quo. This perspective could extend beyond Deshpande's works, inviting comparative studies across various postcolonial feminist writers to further explore the transformative potential of silence and voice in shaping women's destinies.

Additionally, a contemporary angle to this research could investigate how Deshpande's themes of tradition versus modernity are reshaped in India's evolving socio-political landscape. With the rise of digital platforms, social media, and greater access to global feminist discourses, women's voices are beginning to emerge more loudly in public spaces. How do Deshpande's characters' struggles with silence and identity resonate with the voices of today's Indian women? How can her portrayal of women's inner worlds inform current feminist movements in India, where there is an increasing call for equality, autonomy, and voice in both public and private spheres?

## **Conclusion**

Deshpande's exploration of the complexities of silence, identity, and societal constraints offers a rich foundation for future feminist and postcolonial inquiry. Her portrayal of women's inner struggles and their quest for self-expression provides a compelling lens to examine the ongoing journey toward gender equality and self-realisation. By revisiting her works with a contemporary perspective, researchers



can continue to uncover new layers of meaning, particularly in how language, silence, and resistance intersect in the fight for women's rights and identities, both in India and globally.

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## Portrayal of Religions in Chaucer's *The Prologue* and Select Tales from *The Canterbury Tales*

— Erra Namratha

### ABSTRACT

Chaucer's literary works indicate his strong connection to the Church and his deep knowledge of its principles, rituals, and practices. During the Middle Ages, religion was a central element of English society, with the Church holding a position of great authority and reverence. Chaucer, however, was concerned with ensuring that the Church operated according to its true purpose. Any deviation from this ideal prompted him to criticise the corrupt practices within the institution. In *The Canterbury Tales*, characters such as the Monk, the Summoner, the Friar, the Pardoner, and the Prioress reflect Chaucer's awareness of the moral failings and corruption within the Church. Despite their esteemed roles, the clergy were unafraid to critique Chaucer's England. This research explores the effects of the Church's reforms and how Chaucer's work reflects these changes. It also examines his depiction of characters that represent a genuine Christian spirit, contrasting with those in the clergy who had lost their way. These concepts are explored in depth throughout the study.

(**Keywords:** Religion, Reformation of the Church, Corrupt Practices, Clergy, Preservation of Religion)

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* stands as a vivid and multifaceted portrait of fourteenth-century England, offering a rich commentary on its society, from the workings of religion to the complexities of daily life. The tales unfold as a pilgrimage, bringing together a diverse group of individuals: clergy and laypeople, nobility and commoners, professionals and soldiers. This pilgrimage, a journey of faith, unites characters from all walks of life, each bound by a shared purpose and devotion to the divine. Edmund Reiss, in his essay "*The Pilgrimage Narrative and the 'Canterbury Tales'*", underscores the significance of the pilgrimage as both a narrative framework and a literal expression of medieval England's religious ethos. Yet, Chaucer's characters do not quite belong to the archetype of the devout pilgrims seeking spiritual redemption. They are more earthly than divine, often engaged in worldly vices that need penance and purification. *The Parson's Tale*, which concludes the journey, maybe Chaucer's way of guiding his readers toward

a life of virtue, leading them through repentance and renewal, much like the Parson himself, who embodies the path of spiritual awakening (Reiss 298).

Historical context sheds light on Chaucer's critique of the Church. A devout conservative, Chaucer was deeply concerned by the increasing corruption among clergy members, who, in his view, were more concerned with personal gain than with their sacred duties. In "An Introduction to Chaucer and Langland," Terence Connolly points out that the Church, with its vast wealth and power, had primarily forgotten its responsibility to the poor, the spiritual education of the people, and the upkeep of sacred practices. Instead, it had become a business that grew fat on the piety of the common people while its leaders neglected the true mission of nurturing souls. Connolly further laments how the Church "possessed wealth that is one-sixth of the world's civilisation," questioning how the Church had forgotten its obligations to "care for the poor, educate people, provide infrastructure for the pilgrimage, provide for orphans and widows, and perform all the activities that involved the welfare of the people except for the wars and prisoners" (Connolly 35-36).

Historical calamities exacerbated the corruption of the Church in Chaucer's time. The Black Plague of 1348 decimated the population, leading to a sharp decline in clergy. The Peasant's Revolt of 1381 further revealed the growing tension between the common folk and the ruling classes, while the Western Schism sowed discord in the Church's leadership. The rise of John Wycliffe's reformist ideas only added fuel to the fire, challenging the Church's authority. Acquainted with Wycliffe's movement, Chaucer may have been drawn to Lollardy's focus on reform, although he remained cautious of its more radical elements. Chaucer's religious beliefs, though sincere, were tempered by his sharp wit and satirical eye, and it is through this lens that he critiqued the moral decay within the Church. His works reflect both a desire for reform and a deep respect for the true spirit of Christianity. The Church was not merely a target for ridicule; it was an institution Chaucer believed had lost its way.

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a social commentary, not just a collection of stories. His portrayal of churchmen, from the Prioress to the Pardoner, reveals the extent to which these figures embodied the flaws of the medieval Church. He presents them in the harshest light possible, except for the Parson and the Clerk, whom he respects for their genuine piety and devotion. Chaucer exposes these men's religion's faults, absurdities, monetary greed, hypocrisy, and overall irreligious attitude. Indeed, it is disheartening that religion has generally acted as a cover for the malicious acts of dishonest individuals who use the "religious profession" to advance their selfish interests.

The Prioress, for instance, is shown indulging in vanity and luxury, all things unbefitting of a nun of her rank. A Prioress was not expected to swear, but she

does so in the presence of Saint Loy. She is conversant in French, a language associated with royalty. Nuns were barred from pilgrimage in the fourteenth century, although the Prioress is one of Chaucer's pilgrims. She owns small pets on whom she lavishes affection and care, which is prohibited. The Monk, too, is a figure of excess, rejecting monastic discipline for a life of indulgence, particularly in his love of hunting and expensive apparel. Chaucer's portrayal of the Monk's refusal to live by the rule of St. Benedict highlights the stark contrast between the ideals of the Church and the behaviour of its clergy. As the Monk dismisses the teachings of St. Austin, Chaucer comments, "Lat Austyn has his swynk reserved for him!" (The Prologue, 188). On the other hand, Chaucer adds vitality and vigour to the portrait with a few unique touches.

The Friar, another ecclesiastical figure, is presented as a master of manipulation. He exploits his position to secure money, food, and favours, using charm and deception to extract confessions and absolutions. According to Muriel Bowden's A Commentary on the *General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*, the decline in the friars' moral principles began only with the second generation. These friars, unaware of the purpose of their profession, began serving without a burning desire to succeed. After the social system was refined and St. Francis permitted begging solely as a need, it was exploited and turned into a flourishing industry. The friars began exposing confessions, making allegations, and charming to get privileges in kings' courts. (121-22)

The Summoner and the Pardoner are similarly corrupt. The Summoner uses his power to blackmail sinners, promising absolution for a price. He will readily absolve a gentleman from keeping a mistress for a year in exchange for a quart of wine. He is sexually immoral himself, as he is capable of exploiting a female: "*Full prively a finch eek koude he pulle*" (The Prologue 654). The Pardoner, a figure directly associated with Rome's papal court, carries fraudulent relics and sells indulgences to the gullible. The Pardoner's speech is so eloquent that he impresses the crowd, and his effect compels his hearers to give him as much silver as he desires. According to a critic, the tales through which Chaucer majorly critiqued the corrupt Church officials through his characters were "The Friar's Tale", "The Summoner's Tale", and "The Pardoner's Tale". They talk about the idea of religion being made into a business affair, which Chaucer condemned highly. (Condren 1)

Chaucer's satire of these characters—mainly through the tales of the Friar, Summoner, and Pardoner—paints a damning picture of a Church more concerned with wealth than with the salvation of souls. In "*The Friar's Tale*" and "*The Summoner's Tale*", Chaucer establishes a competition between the two as a satirical criticism of the Church and its leaders. He lightens the accusation by having them disparage one another's views on the Church, providing humorous relief to an otherwise dark portrayal of corrupt church officials.

Despite his biting satire, Chaucer accepts the Church outright. His portrayal of the Clerk and the Parson offers a more sympathetic view. The Clerk, a devoted student of logic and philosophy, is shown as humble, serious, and dedicated to his studies. He never exhibits unsightly lightness in his behaviour. The Parson is a fountain of heavenly thoughts and devoutly imparts the Gospel of Christ to his parishioners. Unlike the Friar, the Parson respects everyone equally, regardless of rank. Self-advancement is never a thought that occurs to him. The Parson is not a parody of the evil priests portrayed in *The Prologue*.

Chaucer had an insight into the consequences of power on human nature from his observations of the Church and the people of the court and employed this information to construct believable characters. The *Parson's Tale* mediates repentance, sin, and salvation, drawing on his deep knowledge of theology and the human condition. The tale's focus on penitence provides a fitting conclusion to the pilgrimage, literally and symbolically. The pilgrimage to Canterbury may represent a journey toward spiritual redemption. Still, Chaucer's final tale suggests that true repentance is an ongoing process, a final confession before the ultimate pilgrimage to the "Heavenly Jerusalem" (Coghill 503).

Chaucer was able to write such an incisive satire and critique of certain aspects of the Church because he was a devout Catholic and well-known at court. He was not only an observer from the outside, casting judgement on others' views, but a believer attempting to effect change in an institution as integral to his existence as royalty and the court. Chaucer's personal religious experience during his lifetime would have been limited to England; hence, his references would reflect this. Chaucer created a literary masterpiece; his tragic demise does not diminish the work's significance. Chaucer wished to alter the institution by changing its members. As a result of his position at court and his favour with the royal family, he was able to influence the institutions that surrounded him.

Nonetheless, it cannot be wholly said that Chaucer was entirely against the Church or the officials of the Church. His strong Christian values remain intact and merely point out certain officials who compromise on the designed initial values they were supposed to uphold. Though there were faulty practices, Chaucer continued to respect the institution. While talking about Chaucer's stance on the Church, E. P. Kuhl pointed out Chaucer's chief concern towards the essence of religion, which is eked out from the sympathetic portrayal of the Parson. His close connections with the state make it difficult to consider him as the one with radical ideologies. His prosperity was dependent on the harmony between the Church and the state. However, it is essential to note that this sincerity towards the religion made him question the corrupt practices and vices in the Church. (322)

## Conclusion

Through this study, an attempt was made to understand how Chaucer tried to reform the Church through his skills by offering a satire on the corrupt practices of the clergy who are supposed to uphold the true spirit of Christianity and its sanctity. The historical events in England that led to a shift in the behaviour of the Church officials were also referred to. Detailed instances in the select tales were highlighted to highlight how the clergy resorted to unethical practices for their benefit in the name of religion. Through the tale of Parson, Chaucer emphasised his understanding of ideal Christian values and reforms required to bring back the glory of religious piety.

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# Acquisition of English as a Second Language: New Praxis

— *Kasula Balaguravaiah*

## **ABSTRACT**

To learn a language, one must begin by learning words. It is vividly clear that we often see children learning a language of their mother tongue. A child can learn its mother tongue within two years or less. Learning English as a second language takes several years, sometimes even a lifetime. This article will explore the favourable conditions that support mother tongue learning and the unfavourable conditions that are unsupportive for learning the English language. In mother tongue acquisition- Parents, relatives, and surroundings gear up the learning speed. In second language learning- there is a dependency on the English teacher. They alone face the battle. Students are biased with a phobia of learning a new language. Students and society have hatred for the then rule of English people in India. It gradually transmits from generation to generation. Very few were able to break it by acquiring the proficiency of the English language. Dialects are pivotal in influencing the learner while attempting to obtain a second language, English. The situations are currently changing. The language learning environment has been predominantly changed- this is the technological era where preconceived notions can be eradicated and make English learning easy and learner-friendly.

(**Keywords:** acquisition, English as SL, MI, syllabus, methods, feedback, transition, use of technology)

## **Introduction**

Anyone who wants to learn a language must begin by learning words. It is vividly clear that a child of any mother tongue learns its language within two years or less. This is possible because environmental factors help a child learn the language rapidly. Enthusiastic parents, relatives, and society assist the child in acquiring the first language. If we closely observe the acquisition of the child's language. It picks up the language where its parents speak. Initially, it begins by uttering sounds; later, the sounds turn into words. If one word is learned on a particular day, the child repeats it several times for all the contexts, irrespective of the suitability. Here, the real mentor, the guide mother, enters, appreciates, and corrects it. Even

relatives such as siblings, uncles, aunts, and neighbours initiate the teaching of a child words that are useful every day. Their manner of teaching is brilliant. The child smiles while they learn the language. The reciprocity is much higher in this context. In this manner, the child mostly learns the language by making trial and error. The child is never afraid to make mistakes. Society never stops them; instead, it encourages the child to speak more words and know their correctness later. Thus, Enthusiasm and happiness play a key role in learning a language.

When it comes to acquiring a second language, English, the learning environment changes quite the opposite to the ambience of the first language. Let us have a close look at English language learning. Most of the parents don't know how to speak it. So, they use their mother tongue at home for daily chores and activities. The mother tongue ultimately drives the society and the environment around the student.

When the student tries to learn English as a second language at school, many more setbacks block their learning. Let us have a close look at them one by one.

1. **Medium of instruction:** Though the students belong to the English medium, the teacher deliberately explains the text in the mother tongue for quick understanding. Students understand the meaning of English texts well but cannot produce sentences in English because of the medium of instruction in their mother tongue.

If the teacher tries to explain the text in simple English, students will get more opportunities to listen to the English and can imitate the teacher.

2. **Lack of Cooperation among other subject teachers:** There are few convents, few government schools, and notable private schools, and most of the schools teach different subjects in the mother tongue only. It hinders the learning of the English language. No teacher dares to speak in English because of grounds such as typical grammar or fear of making mistakes. This has to be changed; the school environment must be in English, then only, one can learn English easily. Management should make sure that the medium of communication must be the English language.
4. **Peer pulling of legs:** If students try to speak in English, they will be ridiculed immediately by other peer group learners by comparing their English with native speakers. Thus, the learners' interest is lost instantly, and gradually, learners avoid trying to speak it. It must be changed.
5. **Syllabus burden:** The English teacher focuses more on syllabus completion than on the output of English learning. Students can write but are not able to speak. The teacher asks questions to those who can answer and ignores the backbenchers who never answer.

Perception has to be changed. Learning should be given high priority instead of syllabus completion.



6. **Knowledge Gap:** students are promoted class by class with a knowledge gap. Not all students have equal knowledge and abilities. This creates a huge gap even in the English language.
7. **More Teacher Talk:** English teachers prioritise teaching instead of learning. Very few students were given a chance to speak in the class. Most of the time, students are never given time to respond in class. A shocking thing is student talk can never be found in the curriculum.

The notion that the teacher is supreme has to be changed to learning. Top priority has to be given to learning. If the class is 45 minutes, the teacher's talk should be around 15 to 20 minutes, and the remaining 25 to 30 minutes should be given for student talk. The time given to students will make them worthy of the learning period. Students should be allowed to speak in class; only the teacher can know their mistakes. They mug up a few essential questions in public exams and pass the English subject easily but never speak in English. It is like an operation success, but the patient dies situation.

8. **Feedback:** feedback in the classroom is essential. But most English teachers ask yes or no questions at the last minute. Have you understood? All students, in unison, say, "Yes", sir. Or "Yes, Madam". Feedback must be obtained immediately after the teacher talks. Also, it must be constructive with examples but not with single Yes/No answers.
9. **Teaching Styles/Methods:** If the English teacher asks one question, what method do you use to teach English? One universal answer is the lecture method.

Though there are over 150 methods, only the lecture method takes the lion's share.

Many books are written on how to teach English effortlessly using various student-centric methods. But they are time-constrained or neglected unconsciously.

10. **Lack of Training:** However, if one is an expert, they need regular training and upgrades in English teaching skills. But most of the English teachers are far away from the training. It is either training is not given, or focus has not existed. It must be changed to frequent training and sharing the latest teaching methods and techniques with the teachers.
11. **Lack of Technology in the Classroom:** Most rural Indian classrooms use the blackboard and chalk method. More student population lives in rural India. It hinders the project of online materials such as videos, pictures, and native speakers' pronunciation etc., It is essential in the classroom to have the latest technology that supports English learning effortlessly.

## Transition in Learning the English Language

1. **Interactive Language Teaching:** In an interactive classroom, there will be, first of all, a lot of listening to authentic materials. The listening will be purposeful as students prepare to use what they have heard in some way. “Authentic Materials” support the teacher and students; if the facilitator is not proficient or fluent, students will rely heavily on audio and videotapes or, for reading, on newspapers, magazines, cartoon books, instructions for products, menus, maps, and so on (*Melvin and Stout*). Teachers can tune the authentic materials to a level accessible to particular groups of students. Interactive activities such as role-play, problem-solving, dramatisation, or skits will be practised in the classroom. If the reading is the activity, there should be lively interaction between the reader and text- interpretation, expansion, discussing alternative possibilities or other conclusions. Often, reading leads to creative production, such as writing poems, making speeches, writing stories, etc. The classroom should be interactive and friendly. If any student makes a sentence awkwardly and reads it, the peer groups and the teacher must be rephrased instead of correcting it while commenting on the content.

If grammar is the activity, it must be taught inductively, with rules developed from living language material and then performed. This process should be interactive. Students internalise rules through the experience of their effectiveness in expressing essential meanings. Many activities can be developed where students use particular structures without feeling they are learning grammar. Simple examples at the elementary level are “Simon Says” for imperatives; Twenty questions for yes/no question forms; “My uncle went to the market and bought me a fan” (some apples, a pair of shoes...); “If I were President” for hypothetical expressions and conditionals.

Grammar can be taught effectively by giving contextual cues to the students. Short cues are beneficial for testing verbs and verb tenses.

*Cues to elicit the past-progressive tense.*

Imagine that I saw you yesterday in the following places. What were you probably doing?

1. In a hotel
2. In the market
3. In office room
4. at the railway station

Similarly, *cues to elicit the future tense.*

Imagine that you are going to the following places next week. What will you probably do?

1. to the hospital
2. to the village
3. to a hotel
4. to a D-Mart

Even names of famous people can be used as cues, as in this exercise dealing with the present participle.

What did the following people spend a lot of time doing?

Example: SP Balasubrahmanyam

He spent a lot of time singing.

1. Shakespeare 2. Peele 3. Sachin 4. Picasso 5. Mother Terissa

For pronunciation and speaking, poems and songs can be helpful.

*Mornings*

Rustling sheet,  
Shuffling feet,  
Creaking bones,  
Stifled groans,  
Toilets flushing,  
Bathtubs gushing,  
Neighbours singing,  
Telephone ringing,  
Radios tuning,  
Traffic booming,  
Jet planes thunder-  
I wonder  
At the NOISE !

*Dialogue poems are also suitable for work on expression.*

*Good Bye*

‘Don’t lie’, she said.  
‘I try’, he said.  
‘My eye’, she said.  
‘Don’t cry’, he said.  
‘I’ll die!’ she said.  
‘Oh my!’ he said.  
‘Goodbye’! She said.

If speaking is the activity, the teacher should teach appropriately how to interrupt the other person while speaking. Three or four alternatives can be given, for example, “I have a question.” “May I ask a question?” “May I interrupt for a second?” “I would like to ask something”. Students also need to practice appropriate intonation. Students should use the above phrases when an opportunity arises in the class.

Testing, too, should be interactive and proficiency-oriented rather than a sterile, taxonomic pen-and-paper process. But it might not be easy where student strength is high.

## Conclusion

So far, we have observed a few setbacks discussed in this article, but there are numerous reasons why a student fails to speak/learn English: Some students are biased with a phobia of learning a new language. Students and society have hatred for the then rule of English people in India. It gradually transmits from generation to generation. Very few were able to break it by acquiring the proficiency of the English language—different grammar patterns of the English language when compared with Indian languages. Even dialects of the mother tongue play a pivotal role in influencing the learner while attempting to acquire a second language, English. However, the situation is currently changing. The language learning environment has predominantly altered- this is the technological era. Technology facilitates many advantages, especially in learning the English language. It auto-suggests, and it corrects the spellings instantly. There are online tutorials, too, to assist the learner. Social media apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube have brought divergent changes in the learning of English. Thus, preconceived notions can be eradicated, making English learning easy and learner-friendly.

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## **Breaking Heteronormative Boundaries: Lesbianism and Emotional Lust in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman***

— *Adi Ramesh Babu*

### **ABSTRACT**

Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* navigates the intricate tapestry of human relationships, unravelling the unspoken conflicts of love, identity, and societal expectations. At its core, the novel fearlessly explores lesbianism in a conservative Indian milieu, where emotional and physical bonds between women challenge entrenched patriarchal norms. Through the lens of Astha's poignant journey, Kapur delves into the suffocating confines of a loveless marriage and the liberating, albeit complex, solace she finds in her bond with Pipee. The novel juxtaposes societal conformity with individual rebellion, portraying Astha as a victim of traditional expectations and an emblem of modern defiance. Kapur masterfully crafts a narrative that underscores the intersection of gender, sexuality, and socio-political turbulence, inviting readers to question the binaries of love and loyalty. The study illuminates how women navigate dualities—of duty and desire, family and freedom—while grappling with their identities in a changing world. *A Married Woman* transcends mere storytelling; it is a clarion call for introspection, urging society to embrace diversity and reimagine love beyond conventional paradigms.

(**Keywords:** Manju Kapur, lesbianism, emotional bonds, patriarchy, societal norms, identity, female agency, *A Married Woman*, gender dynamics, Indian literature)

Numerous female writers have highlighted the struggles and challenges faced by women through their literary works. These writers have focused on portraying the realities of women's lives, shedding light on themes such as dehumanisation, suppression, and oppression. These themes are central to their fiction and offer a deeper understanding of the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Shobhaa De, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, and Shashi Deshpande have significantly contributed to this domain. They have used their novels and stories to voice the concerns of women,

often presenting them as individuals who challenge traditional roles and fight to express their inner anguish.

Among these writers, Manju Kapur stands out for exploring women's issues in modern India. Through her works, Kapur delves into the psychological and emotional conflicts faced by women, addressing themes like love, attraction, desire, passion, marriage, personal freedom, and even complex topics like lesbian relationships. Her novels portray women's internal and external battles while trying to balance societal expectations with their desires. Kapur's ability to bring these struggles to life has earned her widespread recognition. As Saharan (2014) observes, Kapur's novels serve as a powerful record of a woman's struggle to take control of her body and identity, both in a social and biological sense. This statement underscores the essence of Kapur's work, which seeks to break the silence surrounding topics that have long been considered taboo. Her novels reflect a deep understanding of the human condition and give a voice to women often silenced by societal norms.

Manju Kapur has written five novels, each addressing various facets of women's lives in India. Her debut novel, *Difficult Daughters* (1998), explores the story of a woman torn between personal desires and familial obligations during the Partition era. *A Married Woman* (2002) portrays the life of a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, struggling to find her identity and love in unconventional ways. In *Home* (2006), Kapur examines the dynamics of a traditional Indian family and the struggles of women within its rigid framework. *The Immigrant* (2008) highlights the challenges faced by a woman who moves to Canada after marriage, dealing with cultural displacement and personal dissatisfaction. Finally, *Custody* (2011) focuses on the emotional turmoil of a couple going through a divorce and its impact on their children, offering a critique of societal and familial expectations. Through these works, Kapur has established herself as a writer unafraid to confront uncomfortable truths. Her novels resonate with readers because they address universal themes of love, freedom, and identity while deeply rooted in the Indian socio-cultural context. By writing about women's experiences with such sensitivity and honesty, Kapur has contributed significantly to the ongoing dialogue about gender equality and women's rights in literature.

## II

Manju Kapur's second novel, *A Married Woman*, stands out as a significant literary work that delves into the complexities of human relationships, mainly focusing on the love affair between two women. This novel not only brings to light the unconventional bond between the two female protagonists but also reflects the changing image of women in Indian society. Kapur portrays a transition from a traditional lifestyle, where women were largely confined to domestic roles, to a modern way of life, where women begin to explore and assert their identities beyond societal expectations.

The narrative is deeply rooted in the socio-political context of India, which serves as a backdrop for the unfolding events in the novel. Kapur uses the setting to highlight various issues arising from the socio-political disturbances of the time. Through her characters, she captures the nuances of male chauvinism, a pervasive problem in patriarchal societies, and juxtaposes it with female attraction to another woman, thereby challenging conventional norms. The author sensitively addresses domestic relationships and the issues that arise within them, offering a poignant exploration of the dynamics between family members and the emotional strain women face in their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters.

Kapur's deep interest in women's lives is evident in her writing. She brings a wealth of insight into women's challenges in their personal and professional lives. As an academic who has spent years teaching university students, she has had the opportunity to closely observe young women's feelings, thoughts, and experiences. This understanding informs her characters and the situations they encounter, making them authentic and relatable. Kapur is particularly concerned with how women navigate the dual spheres of their lives—the inner, domestic space and the outer, public space. In her own words, Kapur (2006: 01) expresses, "I am interested in the lives of women, whether in the political arena or domestic spaces. One of the main preoccupations in all my books is how women manage to negotiate both the inner and outer spaces in their lives – what sacrifices they have to make to keep the home fires burning – and at what cost to their personal lives do they find some fulfilment outside the Home." These lines encapsulate her commitment to portraying the multifaceted experiences of women, shedding light on the sacrifices they make and the struggles they endure to balance their responsibilities at Home with their aspirations in the outside world.

Through *A Married Woman*, Kapur raises critical questions about societal expectations and the price women often pay to fulfil them. Her portrayal of the female protagonists' emotional journeys offers a voice to countless women grappling with similar dilemmas. The novel is not just a story of love and relationships; it is a commentary on the evolving roles of women in a society that is at once steeped in tradition and moving towards modernity. Manju Kapur's writing thus provides a powerful lens through which readers can examine and reflect on the changing dynamics of gender, relationships, and societal norms.

### III

The novel *A Married Woman* explores the different stages in a woman's life, both before and after marriage. It has been translated into Spanish and remains controversial in Indian literary circles. The story begins with the line: "Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear (1)" Astha, the main character, comes from a middle-class Indian family. Her life is controlled by her

mother, who is strict and makes all the decisions for her. Her mother forces her to do things the way she wants. Astha married Hemant, a man who studied in America and started a television factory. He is modern in his views on women, ambitious, and adventurous in his sexuality. Since he is busy with work, Astha takes on the traditional role of a wife. She is good at painting but wants to teach. As time passes, their marriage starts to lose love and intimacy.

Like many women, Astha becomes a loving wife and mother to two children, Anuradha and Himanshu, but she feels something is missing. She cannot find her true identity and feels unnoticed. Astha feels trapped by her daily duties as a wife and mother. Like many Indian women, she longs for peace and true love but cannot find it. Her husband fails to understand her emotions; to her surprise, her mother supports Hemant. "When she was with Hemant, she felt like a woman of straw, her inner life dead, with a man who noticed nothing" (287). She realises that, for a married woman, her role in the family is that of an "unpaid servant" or "slave." She is seen as "a willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day, and an obedient mouth." (231). These are the expectations placed on a married woman like her.

Astha experiences a deep sense of loneliness until Aijaz joins the school where she works as a teacher. She enjoys his company and values his presence. Aijaz, a street play artist, approaches her one day for assistance in writing a screenplay for a drama centred on the theme of the Babri Masjid chaos. This marks the first time Astha interacts closely with a man outside her family. However, tragedy strikes when Aijaz is brutally murdered due to the controversial nature of the play, which touches upon the sensitive issue of Ram Janmabhoomi. Devastated by his death, Astha yearns once again for companionship and genuine love. Despite living with her husband and two children, she continues to feel an overwhelming sense of loneliness. In a few days, she meets Peeplika, who is called Pippe. She is Aijaz's wife, a history lecturer, and a "political activist in her own right" (120). Pippe, a Hindu, marries Aijaz, a Muslim, despite her mother's warnings against the union. Meanwhile, Astha and Pippe share a deep and passionate bond, highlighting the profound connection they have with each other. Astha accompanies Pippe to Babri Masjid, where they spend several days together. However, even during her time with Pippe, Astha's thoughts often drift back to her children, reflecting her inner conflict. She is suffocated by the growing needs of her family and "always adjusting to everybody's needs." (227) Astha and Pippe spend together. They lust on each other. At the novel's end, Peepee leaves for the United States to pursue a Ph.D in communalism and says, "I don't think she could take it, and I couldn't take her not taking it." (303)

#### IV

The term "lesbian" refers to female homosexuality or romantic and sexual attraction between women. However, being a lesbian is not solely about physical attraction;



it also encompasses the universal human need to love and be loved. While sexual attraction between males and females is biologically common, emotional and physical connections between two women often develop through mutual understanding and shared experiences. These connections may lead to more profound attraction and intimacy. Emotions, sensations, and sexual feelings are natural and universal, transcending gender. Lesbian relationships have evolved in this context. The activities they engage in as a couple are personal and varied, just like any other relationship. Although lesbians live and function within society, they often experience their relationships through a unique lens that may set them apart. This difference sometimes leads to misunderstandings or stereotypes, such as being seen as living in a distinct or “intoxicated” world. Their lives, though unique, are as meaningful and complex as any other. Saharan (2014: 5) says that “the lesbian pair creates their world within the larger mainstream heterosexual world, thereby effecting a crucial reversal in the subject position.” Can we use the word ‘lesbian’ in the society? There is hardly any discussion of lesbianism in any public forum.

Chandra (2006: 02) says, “The struggle for decriminalising homosexuality is being waged by a couple of gay non-governmental organisations (NGOs)—Naaz Foundation and Voices against 377.” There are a few writers who explore lesbian themes in their works. These writers are commonly referred to as lesbian writers. “Because of society’s reluctance to admit that lesbians exist, a high degree of certainty is expected before historians or biographers are allowed to use the label. Evidence that would suffice in any other situation is inadequate here...A woman who never married, who lived with another woman, whose friends were mostly women, or who moved into known lesbian or mixed gay circles may well have been a lesbian...But this sort of evidence is not ‘proof.’ What our critics want is incontrovertible evidence of sexual activity between women. This is almost impossible to find” (Norton, 1997: 184). It is always a highly contentious issue. Nobody can say whether there is sex between two women or not. The friendship among them might be called lesbian.

Many books address the theme of lesbianism, but they are often marketed to heterosexual men. In *My Story*, the autobiography of Kamala Das, the author explores the theme of lesbianism by expressing her longing for a female friend. Her attraction towards her friend is evident in her writing. Similarly, lesbian feminist Suniti Namjoshi delves into this theme in her autobiographical work *Goja*. Her sexual choice is not a man; it is a lady. Shobha De gives that lesbianism is a dangerous thing through the character Minx in her novel *Strange Obsession*. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem ‘Christabel’ presents lesbianism with vampirism. (Faderman, 1981: 277) All these works deal with female homosexuality. That is why Terry Castle (1993: 15) rightly says that a lesbian is a “woman whose primary emotional and erotic allegiance it to (her).... own sex.” It is an undeniably introspective idea whether a woman is lesbian or not. How can one girl say she has affection and love for another woman?

It is not possible. To express such ideas outside the Home, one should have courage. Namjoshi (2000: 110) daringly and courageously says, “I should like to point out to all the queens and princesses that ever there were that no woman is a first-class human being. She’s second-class. And anyway, I was a lesbian, so presumably, I would have been a third-class human being in any society, wherever it was in the wide world.”

Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman* openly addresses the theme of lesbianism, presenting it through the relationship between Astha and Pippe. Critics suggest that this portrayal complicates the understanding of female religious identity in India. However, Kapur deserves credit for authentically expressing the suppressed emotions and desires of Indian women. While lesbianism is widely accepted as a regular aspect of identity in European countries, it remains stigmatised in India. Society often disapproves of two women openly expressing love for each other. Indian lesbians face dual challenges—being women in a patriarchal society and being marginalised for their sexual orientation. Just as we acknowledge the existence of male friendships, female friendships, and heterosexual friendships, it is essential to recognise same-sex relationships as part of human connections. Kapur (2011: 1) says about using lesbianism in this novel: “I wanted to explore female friendships. Women both support and harm each other. For example, at Home, we have a more traditional joint family, where women are not necessarily supportive of each other. In *A Married Woman*, I was looking at how women relate to each other. It turned out to be sexual only because of the plot’s exigencies. Female friendship didn’t look very interesting when I wrote it, but it developed its dynamics, disappointments, and expectations when I changed it into an affair. So, to that extent, perhaps, I wasn’t true to my initial theme. Some people tried to ask if I was trying to emulate “Fire,” the movie, and that made me very angry.”

The protagonist of the novel, Astha, is Kapur’s new woman: “conscious, introspective, educated, wants to carve a life for herself, to some extent she even conveys a personal vision of womanhood by violating current social codes.” (Malik, 2002: 171). Astha’s physical relationship with Pipee can be viewed as a deep emotional and physical connection between two women, often interpreted as a form of lesbian bonding. However, the term “lesbian” might not fully encapsulate the complexity of their relationship. Astha feels a strong attraction toward Pipee, challenging the traditional patriarchal norms that dictate love and intimacy must occur only within the confines of a heterosexual marriage. This profound attachment occupies Astha’s mind so completely that she struggles to focus on her familial responsibilities. Hemant says: “....Mummy said you are neglecting the children, you do not sleep in the afternoons, you are exhausted in the evenings, you are spreading mess in the house, everything smells of turpentine. And all for what?” (148).

Astha enjoys spending time with Pippe and often reflects on her presence and actions when Pippe is not around. With Pippe, she experiences a sense of freedom and happiness that she doesn't find elsewhere. Astha confides her innermost thoughts and emotions to Pippe, choosing not to discuss her problems with her husband. This unique connection awakens in Astha a more profound longing for emotional and physical intimacy. She recollects her sexual life with her husband Hemant: "Now sexually involved with another, (Astha) realised how many facets in her relationship between her husband and herself reflected power rather than love" (233). When a woman spends time with a young man, others might question if their relationship involves a romantic or sexual connection. In Astha's case, her frequent visits to Pippe don't raise concerns for her husband, who willingly allows her to spend time with him. However, Astha neglects her family, devoting much of her time to Pippe. Frustrated by her absence, Hemant attempts to manipulate her into staying at Home, but Astha resists his control. Reflecting on her deeply ingrained beliefs about traditional relationships, Astha reevaluates her experiences. Eventually, she understands that her bond with Pippe is unique and not what she initially perceived. Kapur has in the novel given as:

*'Does he suspect you are having an affair?' (asked Pipee)*

*'It's not the same thing.'*

*'Why not?'*

*'You're a woman.'*

*'And that makes you a faithful wife?'*

*'No. But it is different, surely.'* (253)

Astha and Pipee enjoy themselves. They want to be each other. It is a passionate sexual union between two ladies. A touch can do anything, although it is a male touch or a female touch. It provides immense pleasure to them. Astha says, "(Pippe) closed her hands over me, and I could scarcely breathe with the pleasure." (256). The narrator tells us that "they had been skin on skin, mind on mind with nothing in between." (303). It is not a friendship. It is intoxication. It is love among lovable co-women.

Regarding the passion of women for women, Kumar (2008: 165) says: "Manju Kapur has exposed a woman's passion with love and lesbianism, an incompatible marriage and ensuing annoyance. With a passion to revolutionise Indian male sensitivity, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer and perish for their triumph." Kapur always brings internal ideas of women. Astha refers to many women, but they won't accept it because they live in traditional Indian society. She makes predominantly female readers think twice about her character. Mentioning Astha's role, Sharma (2011: 2) says: "Astha's growing and evolving at various stages through various relationships, and she

becomes the first Indian novelist who highlights a woman's desire for homosexuality. The roots of tradition, living up to the benchmark of the Ideal Indian Woman, sacrificing for the family, putting self behind, devaluing herself, and being content to live in the safety and security of the husband, Home, and family continually come in conflict with her post-modern sensibilities that lend her wings to question established norms, to search for her identity, to long for a soul mate, to develop, to enter socially forbidden relationships." Her longing for Pippe cannot entirely suppress the constant presence of her family in her thoughts. Even with Pippe, her mind often drifts back to her familial obligations and emotional ties. Kapur emphasises that, for Indian women raised in a traditional and culturally rooted society, breaking free from the deep-seated connections and expectations of a family is never straightforward. These ties are woven into their identity, making it nearly impossible to separate personal desires from their ingrained sense of duty and belonging. Astha says, "I live my life in fragments; she is the one fragment that makes the rest bearable." (264). She mentally and spiritually wants freedom from her family but emotionally wants sex with Pippe. For example, she feels like Pippe's husband, Aijaz. The surprising thing in the novel is that her attraction is to a couple, Pippe and Aijaz. Astha's final decision is to be with her family.

## Conclusion

Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* is a poignant exploration of women's inner turmoil in navigating personal identity amidst the societal constraints of patriarchy. It challenges the traditional definitions of love, sexuality, and duty, offering a deeply personal and universally relatable narrative. Through Astha's journey, the novel provides a lens into the emotional and physical yearnings often suppressed in conventional domestic roles. To address the problems accommodated in the study, this research paper offers the following suggestions and recommendations accordingly.

- **Encouraging Open Conversations:** To reduce stigma around different sexualities and relationships, society needs to talk openly about them. Discussions in schools, communities, and cultural events can help make topics like lesbianism and personal independence more acceptable.
- **Supporting Equality Through Laws:** Protecting everyone's rights, no matter their sexual orientation, is crucial. Stronger anti-discrimination laws and representation in decision-making can create a more inclusive society.
- **Highlighting Individuality in Relationships:** Women should be seen as independent individuals, not just in roles like wife, mother, or daughter. Books, media, and local campaigns can celebrate diverse forms of womanhood.

- **Improving Education:** Schools should teach about gender equality and inclusivity. This can help children grow up with respect for different relationships and create a more accepting future.
- **Building Support Systems for Women:** Women facing societal pressures need safe spaces and emotional support. Organisations, counselling centres, and community groups can provide this help.
- **Rethinking Traditional Family Roles:** Families should move toward shared responsibilities and equal partnerships. This can break down strict roles that often lead to unhappiness and inequality.

By addressing these issues holistically, *A Married Woman* can inspire reflection and actionable change. In celebrating love in its many forms and championing individuality, the novel invites society to embrace complexity and diversity, forging a path toward true equality and self-realisation.

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# Legends Reborn: Contemporary Perspectives on Indian Mythology in English Fiction

— G. Rajesh and E. Satyanarayana

## **ABSTRACT**

Indian mythology is a fertile ground for literary reinterpretations in contemporary Indian English fiction. Writers such as Amish Tripathi and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, among others, have reimagined ancient myths to resonate with modern audiences, blending tradition with contemporary relevance. This paper explores the retelling of Indian myths, focusing on the narrative strategies, thematic reinterpretations, and cultural implications of their works. The research identifies a critical gap in traditional mythological narratives, which often lack contemporary inclusivity and relevance, particularly regarding gender equity and identity. Through close readings of *The Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi and *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, along with other significant texts, this study examines how these authors reconstruct mythological figures and events to address issues of gender, identity, power, and morality. By incorporating feminist and postmodern perspectives, these reinterpretations offer solutions for bridging the gap between mythic pasts and present realities, creating inclusive, relatable, and dynamic mythological frameworks for modern readers. The study of this research paper contributes to understanding the dynamic interplay between myth and modernity in Indian English literature.

(**Keywords:** Indian mythology, contemporary fiction, Amish Tripathi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, mythological reinterpretation, Indian English literature, gender and power, narrative strategies, feminist perspectives, postmodern literature, contemporary critique.)

## **Introduction**

Indian mythology has been a cornerstone of cultural and literary traditions, offering timeless stories and characters that continue to inspire modern narratives. Contemporary Indian English writers have increasingly engaged with these ancient texts, reinterpreting myths to reflect modern sensibilities and social concerns. This paper delves into how Indian myths are retold in contemporary fiction, focusing on Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* as primary texts. These works exemplify how mythological narratives

are adapted to address contemporary issues such as feminism, identity, and morality while preserving their mythic essence.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing textual analysis to explore thematic and narrative strategies in selected works. Key critical frameworks, including myth criticism and feminist literary theory, are applied to analyze these texts' transformation of mythological characters and narratives. Secondary sources supplement the primary analysis, including scholarly articles, reviews, and author interviews.

### **Reinterpreting Mythology in *The Shiva Trilogy***

Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* ("The Immortals of Meluha," "The Secret of the Nagas," and "The Oath of the Vayuputras") reimagined Lord Shiva as a human being elevated to godhood through his actions and values. Tripathi's approach democratizes mythology, portraying Shiva as a relatable and flawed hero. Themes such as duty, free will, and the nature of evil are explored through a modern lens, engaging readers in philosophical and ethical debates.

### **Narrative Techniques**

Tripathi employs a cinematic narrative style, blending historical and speculative elements to create an immersive experience. His language, while contemporary, retains the grandeur of mythic storytelling, making the trilogy accessible to a global audience. The humanization of divine figures invites readers to reflect on universal human experiences, bridging the gap between myth and modernity.

### **Gender Dynamics**

While the trilogy focuses primarily on Shiva, female characters like Sati are given significant depth and agency. Sati's portrayal challenges traditional depictions of women in mythology, presenting her as a warrior and an equal partner in Shiva's journey. This reimagining aligns with contemporary feminist discourses, highlighting the evolving role of women in both myth and society.

### **Feminist Reinterpretations in *The Palace of Illusions***

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* retells the Mahabharata from the perspective of Draupadi, offering a feminist reinterpretation of one of India's most iconic epics. The novel challenges patriarchal narratives and explores themes of autonomy, desire, and power by centring on Draupadi's voice.

### **Draupadi's Perspective**

Divakaruni's Draupadi is a complex, multi-dimensional character who defies traditional stereotypes and reclaims her narrative voice in *The Palace of Illusions*.



Far from being a passive participant in the grand events of the Mahabharata, Draupadi is portrayed as a strong, intelligent, and resilient woman who actively engages with her circumstances, challenging the limitations imposed by her patriarchal society. The novel delves deeply into her inner thoughts, emotions, and desires, offering readers a nuanced understanding of her struggles and aspirations.

As a daughter, wife, and queen, Draupadi's journey is marked by moments of intense external and internal conflict. She grapples with her roles and responsibilities while questioning the inequities and injustices around her, particularly those tied to gender and power. Her voice becomes a lens through which the epic is reimagined, focusing on characters' emotional and psychological dimensions and events often overlooked in traditional retellings.

Through Draupadi's perspective, Divakaruni transforms the Mahabharata from a tale of war, valour, and dharma into a profoundly poignant exploration of gender and power dynamics. This retelling highlights women's often-unacknowledged sacrifices, ambitions, and vulnerabilities in ancient epics, making her story resonate with modern readers. Draupadi's agency is central to this reinterpretation, as she challenges societal norms, asserts her identity, and navigates complex relationships with the men around her—including her husbands, her father, and Karna—while maintaining her dignity and strength. Divakaruni reclaims a silenced voice by centring Draupadi and redefines the Mahabharata as a story that belongs to everyone, not just its traditionally celebrated heroes.

### **Themes of Identity and Desire**

Identity is a central theme in *The Palace of Illusions*, as Draupadi grapples with her roles as daughter, wife, and queen. The novel also addresses her unspoken love for Karna, adding emotional depth to her character. This focus on personal desires and struggles humanizes Draupadi, making her relatable to contemporary readers.

### **Other Notable Works**

Several other Indian English writers have contributed to the retelling of Indian myths. For instance:

Devdutt Pattanaik's works, including *Jaya* and *Sita*, offer simplified yet profound retellings of Indian epics, emphasizing their philosophical and cultural significance. Devdutt Pattanaik's works, such as *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata* and *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*, are celebrated for their accessible yet profound interpretations of Indian epics. Pattanaik weaves traditional narratives with philosophical insights, making them relevant for modern readers. In *Jaya*, he delves into the Mahabharata's complex characters and moral dilemmas while highlighting its timeless lessons on dharma and human nature.

Similarly, *Sita* focuses on the Ramayana from Sita's perspective, exploring themes of resilience, choice, and devotion. His unique approach simplifies intricate mythologies without diluting their cultural depth, fostering a deeper appreciation of India's rich heritage.

**Anand Neelakantan's** *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* provides a counter-narrative to the Ramayana by telling the story from Ravana's perspective, challenging conventional notions of heroism and villainy. Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* offers a compelling counter-narrative to the traditional Ramayana by narrating the epic from Ravana's perspective. The novel humanizes Ravana, portraying him as a complex and multifaceted character rather than a one-dimensional villain. It also highlights the struggles and aspirations of the Asura community, presenting their side of the story often overlooked in conventional retellings. By challenging the binary notions of heroism and villainy, Neelakantan invites readers to question established norms and explore the shades of grey in mythology, making *Asura* a thought-provoking reinterpretation of a timeless epic.

**Arshia Sattar's** translations and reinterpretations focus on the nuanced humanity within mythological characters, offering fresh insights into their motivations and choices. Arshia Sattar's translations and reinterpretations of Indian epics, particularly her acclaimed work on the *Ramayana*, highlight the nuanced humanity of mythological characters. Her scholarly yet accessible approach delves into the emotional and psychological dimensions of figures like Rama, Sita, and Ravana, offering fresh insights into their motivations, dilemmas, and choices. Sattar's interpretations emphasize these ancient tales' moral ambiguities and human struggles, encouraging readers to engage with them as complex, relatable narratives rather than rigid moral allegories. Her work bridges the gap between traditional scholarship and contemporary readership, enriching the understanding of India's mythological heritage.

### **Cultural and Social Implications**

The retelling of Indian myths in contemporary fiction reflects broader cultural and social changes. These narratives challenge traditional interpretations, offering inclusive and diverse perspectives that resonate with today's readers. They also serve as a medium for addressing contemporary issues such as gender equality, caste discrimination, and ethical dilemmas, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and modern realities.

### **Conclusion**

The reinterpretation of Indian myths in contemporary Indian English fiction demonstrates the enduring relevance of these ancient narratives. Authors like Amish Tripathi and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reimagined mythology to engage with contemporary concerns, creating stories rooted in tradition and forward-looking.

By blending myth with modernity, these works preserve cultural heritage and inspire new ways of thinking about identity, morality, and society.

#### **Findings and Future Directions**

- **Encouraging Diverse Narratives:** Future authors should explore lesser-known myths and regional folklore to ensure the representation of India's vast and diverse mythological heritage.
- **Integrating Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Collaborating with historians, anthropologists, and cultural theorists can enrich the reinterpretation process and provide more authentic contexts for mythological retellings.
- **Promoting Feminist Retellings:** Building on the success of works like *The Palace of Illusions*, writers should continue to offer feminist reinterpretations that challenge patriarchal norms in traditional narratives.
- **Expanding Reader Engagement:** Publishers and educators can promote these reinterpretations through book clubs, literary festivals, and academic curricula to reach a wider audience and encourage dialogue on their themes.
- **Leveraging Digital Platforms:** Digital media, including audiobooks and web series adaptations, can help modern mythological retellings reach global audiences and younger readers who consume content through non-traditional means.
- **Addressing Contemporary Issues:** Future retellings should explicitly address pressing issues such as environmental sustainability, mental health, and social justice, linking ancient wisdom with modern challenges.

The reinterpretation of Indian myths in contemporary Indian English fiction highlights these ancient narratives' timeless relevance and adaptability. Authors like Amish Tripathi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and others have successfully reimaged mythology to address pressing contemporary issues, offering readers a lens to explore questions of identity, morality, gender, and societal dynamics in a rapidly changing world. These authors create a dialogue between the past and the present by anchoring their stories in traditional frameworks while infusing them with modern sensibilities. This blending of myth and modernity preserves and revitalizes India's rich cultural heritage and enables a deeper, more nuanced engagement with universal themes that resonate with global audiences. These reinterpretations challenge conventional perspectives, promote critical thinking, and inspire readers to question and redefine their understanding of the myths, making them a powerful tool for cultural continuity and social transformation. In doing so, contemporary Indian English fiction ensures that mythology remains a living tradition, relevant and meaningful for future generations.

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# Teaching of English to Zilla Parishad High School Students in Telangana State – A Study

— Thaduri Purnima

## ABSTRACT

English language education in Zilla Parishad High Schools (ZPHS) in Telangana State represents a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic factors. This study explores the challenges and opportunities in teaching English to rural students, shedding light on contemporary criticisms and pedagogical innovations. The paper aims to provide actionable insights into improving English language education in rural schools by analysing curriculum frameworks, teacher preparedness, and the socio-linguistic context. The focus highlights systemic barriers and offers practical recommendations for transformative educational practices.

**(Keywords:** ELT to ESL Students, Zilla Parishad High Schools in Telangana State, Rural Students, linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic factors, challenges, opportunities, contemporary critique, pedagogical innovations, curriculum frameworks, teacher preparedness, practical recommendations, transformative educational practices)

*“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”*

– Nelson Mandela.

The teaching of English in rural India has been a subject of extensive debate among policymakers, educators, and scholars. Telangana, a state with significant rural demographics, faces unique challenges. While English is perceived as a gateway to better opportunities, implementing English education in ZPHS often falls short of the desired outcomes. Urban and rural educational standards exacerbate the disparity, leaving rural students disadvantaged. As Kumar notes, “The rural-urban divide in English education is not merely a matter of resources but also cultural and systemic neglect” (Kumar 15).

This paper examines the various facets of English education in ZPHS, focusing on curriculum, teacher training, socioeconomic barriers, and the potential of technology and community involvement. This study seeks to contribute to the discourse on

equitable and effective English language education by critically analysing existing practices and integrating contemporary criticisms.

### **Historical Context**

English education in India has colonial roots, initially designed to create a class of intermediaries between the British rulers and the Indian populace. Post-independence, English transitioned into a symbol of aspiration and upward mobility. Despite its colonial baggage, English is now essential for global competitiveness and socioeconomic advancement.

In Telangana, the establishment of Zilla Parishad High Schools aimed at providing accessible education to rural students. However, the focus on English education in these schools has historically been inadequate. Limited resources, teacher shortages, and a lack of emphasis on language skills have contributed to a persistent gap in English proficiency among rural students.

The Directorate of School Education, Telangana, the State Council of Educational Research and Training and The Telangana State Board of Secondary Education (TSBSE) have been putting in efforts to modernise the English curriculum. Despite these initiatives, the historical neglect of rural education continues to cast a long shadow. Rao et al. argue that “the legacy of underinvestment in rural education remains a significant barrier to achieving language proficiency” (Rao 20).

### **Current Pedagogical Practices**

#### **Curriculum and Textbooks**

The English curriculum in ZPHS is aligned with the guidelines of the SCERT, Telangana. The syllabus includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, but its implementation is often uneven. Textbooks are the primary teaching tool, with little emphasis on supplementary materials or interactive activities.

The reliance on rote learning undermines the development of practical language skills. Students are often required to memorise grammar rules and literary passages, leaving little room for creativity or real-world application. Mishra observes, “The emphasis on exam-oriented learning stifles critical thinking and communicative abilities” (Mishra 22).

#### **Teacher Training and Preparedness**

Teacher preparedness is a critical factor influencing English language education. Many ZPHS teachers lack specialised training in English language pedagogy. Most teachers are generalists, handling multiple subjects, which dilutes their focus on English. Additionally, inadequate professional development opportunities exacerbate the problem.

As Singh remarks, “The quality of English instruction is directly proportional to the linguistic competence of the teacher” (Singh 34). Effective training programs must prioritise practical teaching strategies, including technology and innovative pedagogical techniques.

### **Classroom Environment**

The classroom environment in ZPHS often poses significant challenges to effective English learning. The strength of students being abominably low and emerging from the rural milieu in Zilla Parishad High Schools in Telangana State is also one of the terrible reasons for teacher demonisation. This makes it difficult for teachers to handle the students, particularly those struggling with the basics of the English language. A realistic classroom scenario in ZPHS reveals insufficient students (for most students admitted to government Gurukul residential schools), lacking ventilation, and noise from adjacent classrooms or external surroundings. Such physical conditions add to the cognitive load on students, making it harder for them to focus on language acquisition.

The lack of adequate teaching aids further hampers interactive learning. Teachers often rely solely on blackboards and textbooks, with limited or no access to visual aids, audio recordings, or digital tools that could enrich the learning experience. Many classrooms lack an essential English dictionary, language labs, or computers.

Moreover, the diversity of proficiency levels among students is a persistent issue. In a single classroom, some students may have exposure to basic English at home or through private tuition, while others might be encountering the language for the first time. Teachers are often forced to adopt a generalised approach, leaving both advanced and beginner learners inadequately supported.

Behavioural dynamics also play a role. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds often exhibit low confidence in using English. Fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed by peers discourages participation, which is critical for language practice. Constrained by time and curriculum demands, teachers rarely incorporate activities such as role-playing, group discussions, or storytelling, which could foster a more inclusive and engaging environment.

To improve the classroom environment, a multipronged approach is necessary. Infrastructure upgrades, such as better seating arrangements, adequate lighting, and reduced noise levels, are essential. Introducing modern teaching aids—like projectors, audio-visual equipment, and access to online resources—can make lessons more interactive. Training teachers to manage diverse classrooms and employ differentiated instruction techniques is equally crucial. Additionally, fostering a supportive culture where students feel encouraged to participate without fear of judgment can significantly enhance the classroom environment.

## **Challenges**

### **Socioeconomic Barriers**

Most ZPHS students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Their families often prioritise immediate economic needs over education, limiting students' time and resources to learn. The lack of access to supplementary learning resources, such as private tutoring or digital tools, further widens the learning gap.

As Bhatia observes, "Economic disparity manifests in educational outcomes, particularly in subjects like English, which require sustained exposure and practice" (Bhatia 12). Addressing these socioeconomic barriers is crucial for creating an equitable educational environment.

### **Linguistic and Cultural Factors**

Telugu is the primary medium of instruction and communication in most ZPHS. Students' limited exposure to English at home and in their communities creates a significant linguistic gap. This gap is further compounded by the cultural distance between the students' lived experiences and the content of English textbooks.

Rao highlights, "The linguistic disconnect between home and school environments creates a cognitive burden for students" (Rao 45). Bridging this gap requires culturally relevant teaching materials and methods that resonate with students' realities.

### **Policy and Implementation Gaps**

While government policies emphasise English education, the implementation at the grassroots level is inconsistent. Budgetary constraints and administrative inefficiencies often dilute the impact of well-intentioned programs. The lack of accountability mechanisms further hampers progress.

For instance, initiatives like introducing English-medium instruction in government schools face resistance due to inadequate teacher training and infrastructure. Sharma notes, "Policy changes without corresponding capacity-building measures lead to superficial compliance rather than meaningful outcomes" (Sharma 50).

## **Opportunities and Innovations**

### **ICT in English Education**

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers promising solutions for English education in rural areas. Digital tools such as language apps, e-learning platforms, and virtual classrooms can supplement traditional teaching methods. These tools provide interactive and personalised learning experiences, making English more accessible and engaging.



“Technology bridges the resource gap, providing rural students access to quality English education,” asserts Sharma (Sharma 67). Successful initiatives, such as Telangana’s digital classrooms and government-sponsored e-learning programs, demonstrate the potential of ICT in transforming rural education.

### **Community Participation**

Engaging parents and local communities in the educational process can create a supportive ecosystem for English learning. Grassroots initiatives, such as reading clubs, peer-learning groups, and community libraries, have shown encouraging results in fostering language skills.

Community participation also helps address socio-cultural barriers. Involving parents in school activities and sensitising them to the importance of English education can create a more conducive environment for learning.

### **Teacher Empowerment**

Capacity-building programs focusing on English language pedagogy can equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence. Effective training programs should include workshops, mentoring, and exposure to best practices in language teaching. Patel suggests, “Teacher training programs should prioritise practical teaching strategies over theoretical knowledge” (Patel 30).

Empowered teachers can act as change agents, fostering a culture of learning and innovation within their schools. Recognising and rewarding teacher excellence can further motivate educators to enhance their teaching practices.

### **Contemporary Criticisms**

Teaching English in rural schools has been criticised for perpetuating social inequalities. Critics argue that the emphasis on English undermines regional languages and cultural identities. “The hegemony of English threatens linguistic diversity and local knowledge systems,” writes Nair (Nair 78).

The focus on English as a skill for economic mobility also often overlooks its broader cultural and intellectual dimensions. Critics advocate for a more balanced approach that values multilingualism and promotes the integration of regional languages into the educational framework.

Another criticism pertains to the commodification of English education. Private coaching centres and English-medium schools capitalise on the perceived value of English, creating a parallel system that disadvantages rural students. “The commercialisation of English education exacerbates existing inequalities, leaving rural students at a distinct disadvantage,” argues Kumar (Kumar 88).

## Conclusion

Teaching English in Zilla Parishad High Schools (ZPHS) in Telangana is fraught with challenges but also holds immense potential for transformative change. The interplay of socioeconomic barriers, limited resources, and gaps in teacher preparedness creates a complex educational landscape. However, with targeted interventions and sustained commitment, these challenges can be converted into opportunities for empowering students and fostering long-term development. Addressing these issues impacts English education and has broader implications for social equity and economic mobility.

To overcome these hurdles, a multifaceted and inclusive approach is necessary. Policymakers must proactively revise curriculum frameworks to make them more contextually relevant and student-centric. Investing in teacher training is critical to equip educators with the pedagogical tools and linguistic skills necessary to teach English effectively in diverse rural settings. Furthermore, promoting active community involvement can foster a supportive ecosystem for students and ensure their sustained engagement with learning.

Leveraging technology can also serve as a game-changer in bridging the resource gap. Digital tools like language learning apps, interactive online platforms, and virtual classrooms can provide students with additional opportunities to practice and refine their English skills. However, to make technology accessible and practical, robust infrastructure and digital literacy programs must be prioritised in rural schools.

Lastly, fostering collaboration among educators, policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders is essential for sustained progress. This collaboration can help design localised solutions that align with the specific needs and aspirations of rural communities in Telangana. By implementing these strategies, the state can create a more inclusive and effective English education system that empowers students to compete globally while preserving their local identities and values.

Telangana is a turning point where meaningful and inclusive reforms can transform the English education landscape in rural schools. With a shared vision and sustained efforts, the state can pave the way for equitable, quality education that equips students with the linguistic skills and confidence to excel in an increasingly interconnected world.

*“Language is the roadmap of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.” – Rita Mae Brown.*

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# Empowering Language Learning: Unleashing the Potential of AI in ELT in India

— *E. Ram Bhaskar Raju*

## **ABSTRACT**

In the world of language, technology opens doors, creates pathways, and transforms how we engage with each other. Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English Language Teaching (ELT) is increasingly recognized as a transformative force in the educational domain. AI presents unique opportunities and challenges in India, where language learning is deeply intertwined with diverse cultural and socioeconomic factors. This paper explores the potential of AI-driven technologies—such as speech recognition, natural language processing (NLP), intelligent tutoring systems, and adaptive learning platforms—in revolutionizing language education. It examines how these tools can address the challenges faced by Indian ELT environments, including resource limitations, access disparities, and linguistic diversity. Additionally, it critically analyzes the ethical, socio-cultural, and educational implications of AI integration, focusing on equity, inclusivity, and pedagogical effectiveness. Eventually, this paper aims to comprehensively evaluate AI's role in empowering language learning in India, offering optimism and critical insights for future development. AI doesn't replace teachers; it empowers them to do more of what they do best—teach, mentor, and inspire !

**(Keywords:** AI, ELT in India, Language Learning, Speech Recognition, NLP, Intelligent Tutoring Systems, Adaptive Learning Platforms, Resource Limitations, Access Disparities, Linguistic Diversity, Transformation of Language Education, Future Implications)

Artificial Intelligence is not just the future of technology. It is the future of education. The educational landscape of India, with its vast linguistic diversity, rich cultural heritage, and varying access to resources, faces significant challenges in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). English proficiency is crucial for access to global opportunities, higher education, and career advancement, making it a central focus of India's educational policies. However, conventional methods of language

instruction often fail to address the complex needs of learners from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Learning a new language is a way to open up a whole new world. AI is the key to unlocking that world for millions in India. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a potential game-changer in this context, offering innovative solutions to longstanding challenges in ELT. AI-driven tools, ranging from speech recognition software to adaptive learning systems, promise to personalize learning, provide real-time feedback, and enhance teacher effectiveness. Yet, integrating AI in language teaching is not without its critiques. Concerns about data privacy, the digital divide, and the depersonalization of education are critical issues that require careful consideration.

This paper delves into the role of AI in empowering language learning in India, focusing on both its potential and the limitations of AI technology within the Indian educational context. Through a balanced analysis, this paper invites contemporary criticism of AI's impact on educational equity, pedagogical authenticity, and the preservation of human interaction in the learning process. The future of language learning is about fluency, communication competence, cultural awareness, and adaptability.

### **The Role of AI in ELT**

AI technologies in education have expanded beyond simple tools to become integral components of modern teaching methodologies. AI offers many applications in ELT, from personalized learning systems to real-time speech correction and grammar analysis. Language learning is not just about words but bridging cultures and building empathy.

#### **◆ Personalized Learning through Adaptive Systems**

One of the primary advantages of AI in ELT is its ability to cater to each student's learning pace and style. Adaptive learning platforms use machine learning algorithms to monitor a learner's progress and adjust the difficulty of tasks and the content provided accordingly. This approach is particularly valuable in India, where large class sizes and diverse student needs often make personalized attention difficult. For instance, platforms like *Duolingo* or *Rosetta Stone* use AI to tailor lessons based on the user's strengths and weaknesses, offering real-time feedback and dynamically adjusting content as the learner progresses. These systems have been shown to improve student engagement and help learners achieve better outcomes.

In the Indian context, adaptive learning technologies are particularly promising in addressing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners. With over 22 official languages and hundreds of dialects spoken nationwide, AI-driven platforms can provide content tailored to the learner's native language, bridging the gap between

the learner's first language and English. This personalized approach caters to varying levels of language proficiency and provides an inclusive environment for students from rural or underserved areas.

However, critics argue that several factors, including inadequate access to digital infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, and the underrepresentation of regional languages in many AI applications, can limit the effectiveness of such technologies. While AI can be designed to accommodate diverse languages, the complexity of India's linguistic landscape means that many AI-based tools might fail to adequately serve students who speak non-standard dialects or regional varieties of English.

#### ◆ **AI-Driven Feedback and Engagement**

AI's ability to provide instant, automated feedback is one of its most compelling features. Tools like *Google Speech-to-Text*, *ELSA Speak*, and *Grammarly* have revolutionized how learners receive feedback on their pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary usage. For Indian students, especially those in rural areas, AI-based speech recognition can be a personal tutor, offering feedback without needing a native-speaking instructor.

Such technologies can correct mistakes in pronunciation or grammar instantly, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. For instance, students can use speech recognition tools to practice speaking in English. AI can provide corrective feedback on pronunciation, intonation, and grammar in real-time, which can be particularly valuable for learners who lack access to conversational practice opportunities.

However, this aspect of AI in language teaching has drawbacks. There is a growing concern about the effectiveness of AI feedback in capturing the nuances of human language. While AI can detect common pronunciation errors, it may struggle to recognize more subtle mistakes or the intricate aspects of regional accents. Furthermore, the feedback provided by AI is often limited to linguistic accuracy. It may not consider cultural context or the emotional aspects of communication, which are vital for effective language learning.

Critics like Gonzalez (2020) argue that AI-driven tools, while efficient, could lead to a "one-size-fits-all" approach to language learning that overlooks the personal, emotional, and sociocultural dimensions of language acquisition. The over-reliance on technology for feedback may dehumanize the learning experience and reduce the learner's exposure to fundamental human interactions, essential for developing cultural fluency and empathy.

#### **AI in the Indian Context: Opportunities and Challenges**

In India, where educational access and quality vary dramatically across regions, AI presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While it holds the potential to

overcome barriers such as teacher shortages and limited resources, it also risks exacerbating the digital divide. Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.

### Opportunities

- ◆ **Expanding Access to Quality Education:** AI-driven platforms can provide quality English language instruction to students in remote or underprivileged areas who may not have access to well-trained teachers. Programmes like BYJU, which have integrated AI into their learning models, already serve millions of students nationwide, demonstrating the reach of AI technologies in education.
- ◆ **Supporting Teachers:** AI can be a powerful tool for enhancing the effectiveness of teachers. For example, AI-based grading systems can help teachers reduce administrative workloads, enabling them to focus more on interactive teaching. Additionally, AI systems can provide teachers with insights into individual students' progress and areas where they may need additional support, thus facilitating more targeted instruction.
- ◆ **Enhancing Learner Engagement:** AI can create engaging, interactive experiences for learners through Gamification, adaptive assessments, and real-time feedback. These features particularly benefit younger learners who struggle with traditional, static teaching methods.

### Challenges

- ◆ **Digital Divide:** Despite rapid progress in India's digital infrastructure, the digital divide remains a significant challenge. Access to high-speed internet, smartphones, and modern computing devices is still limited in rural areas. Many low-income students may be unable to afford the devices or internet services needed to benefit from AI-powered learning tools. As a result, AI risks further entrenching existing educational inequalities.
- ◆ **Teacher Training and Adaptation:** While AI offers many tools for language instruction, the effective implementation of these technologies requires teachers to be trained in their use. In many parts of India, teachers may not possess the technical skills to integrate AI into their teaching practices. Additionally, there may be resistance to adopting AI tools due to concerns about job displacement or a lack of understanding of how these tools can complement traditional teaching.
- ◆ **Cultural and Linguistic Relevance:** AI systems used in ELT often come from global, predominantly Western contexts. This phenomenon raises concerns about the cultural and linguistic relevance of AI-based teaching methods in India. While AI has the potential to accommodate diverse linguistic needs, it must also address the sociocultural aspects of language learning.

India's multilingual landscape necessitates AI tools that are linguistically inclusive and culturally sensitive.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As AI becomes an integral part of education, addressing the ethical concerns surrounding its use is essential. One of the most significant issues is data privacy. AI-driven educational tools collect vast amounts of personal data to optimize learning experiences. In India, where data privacy laws are still evolving, the risk of data misuse or breaches is a critical concern. Students' personal information could be exposed to third-party corporations or misused for commercial purposes if not adequately protected.

Additionally, there are ethical concerns regarding algorithmic bias. AI systems are only as good as the data they are trained on. If these datasets are not representative of the diverse Indian population, AI tools may reinforce stereotypes or fail to address the needs of marginalized groups. For example, an AI tool trained primarily on data from English-speaking countries may not fully understand or support regional accents or dialects familiar in India.

The limits of our language mean the limits of our world. To ensure the successful and equitable integration of AI in English Language Teaching (ELT) in India, the following solutions can be implemented:

#### **1. Bridging the Digital Divide:**

- **Government Investment in Infrastructure:** The government must improve internet connectivity, especially in rural and remote areas, and provide affordable access to digital devices for students from underserved communities. Initiatives such as subsidized smartphones or internet data plans for students can help ensure that AI tools are accessible to all learners.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborations between the government and private tech companies could provide free or affordable AI-powered educational tools tailored to the Indian context. These partnerships can ensure the scalability of AI resources in low-income areas.

#### **2. Culturally Relevant and Linguistically Inclusive AI Tools:**

- **Localization of AI Content:** AI tools should be designed to cater to India's linguistic and cultural diversity. This proposal includes integrating regional languages, dialects, and culturally relevant content into AI-powered language platforms. AI should also be sensitive to the sociocultural nuances of language use, offering more than just linguistic accuracy.
- **Multilingual AI Systems:** AI language learning platforms must incorporate support for India's multiple official and regional languages, allowing students



to learn English in a way that connects with their first language. This approach can significantly improve the accessibility of language learning.

### 3. **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:**

- **Professional Development Programmes:** Teachers should receive ongoing training on effectively integrating AI into their teaching practices. These programs should focus on using AI tools to supplement traditional teaching methods rather than replacing human interaction.
- **AI Pedagogy for Educators:** Besides technical training, educators need to be taught the pedagogical principles of using AI. It includes understanding when AI should be used in the learning process and how to maintain human engagement and emotional connection in the classroom.

### 4. **Ethical and Data Privacy Protections:**

- **Strict Data Protection Laws:** The Indian government should develop robust data privacy regulations that govern the use of AI in education. This deal would ensure that student data is protected and that AI tools are transparent when collecting and using data.
- **Ethical AI Development:** Developers of AI tools should adhere to ethical standards, ensuring that AI systems are designed to be fair, non-discriminatory, and free from biases. Additionally, AI should be continuously evaluated to detect and address emerging biases, especially concerning gender, socioeconomic status, or linguistic background.

### 5. **Human-AI Collaboration, Not Replacement:**

- **AI as a Complementary Tool:** AI should be seen as a supplementary tool that enhances, rather than replaces, the role of the human teacher. While AI can automate specific tasks, such as providing feedback and personalized content, it cannot replace the emotional and social aspects of learning, which are essential for language acquisition. Teachers should continue to play a central role in guiding, motivating, and emotionally connecting with students.
- **Hybrid Learning Models:** A blended or hybrid learning model, where AI tools are integrated into traditional classroom settings, can help maintain the balance between technology and human interaction. AI can support teachers by offering real-time data and insights into student progress, but teachers should remain the primary agents of teaching and learning.

### 6. **Promoting Inclusivity and Equity:**

- **Targeted Support for Disadvantaged Groups:** AI solutions should be designed with a focus on supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as

those with disabilities, those from rural areas, and those from lower socioeconomic classes. AI tools can be adapted to provide accessible formats, like text-to-speech or speech-to-text, to help students with different learning needs.

- ***Affordable and Open-Source AI Platforms:*** To ensure that all students have access to AI-powered tools, there should be a push for developing and using open-source AI platforms that are cost-effective and easily accessible to both public and private educational institutions.

## **7. Ongoing Research and Evaluation:**

- ***Continuous Assessment of AI Tools:*** Regular evaluation and feedback from educators and students can help identify potential issues and improve the design and functionality of AI tools. This iterative process will ensure that AI tools remain relevant, effective, and pedagogically sound.
- ***Longitudinal Studies on AI's Impact:*** The impact of AI in ELT should be studied over time to assess whether it meets educational goals, such as improving English proficiency, fostering learner engagement, and enhancing teacher effectiveness. Data from such studies can guide future AI development and inform educational policies.

By adopting these solutions, India can harness the full potential of AI in English Language Teaching while ensuring its integration is equitable, culturally relevant, and pedagogically sound. The role of AI should be seen as one that complements and enhances human instruction, empowering teachers and students while maintaining the humanistic values essential to effective education.

## **Conclusion**

AI holds immense promise for the future of English Language Teaching in India, offering opportunities for personalized learning, real-time feedback, and increased access to education. However, its integration into the classroom must be done cautiously, ensuring that it does not exacerbate existing inequalities or compromise the humanistic elements of language learning. While AI can certainly empower language learners and enhance teaching effectiveness, its use must be carefully regulated to address issues of accessibility, equity, and cultural relevance.

As India continues to embrace AI in education, it is essential to foster a dialogue about its potential risks and benefits, ensuring that the implementation of AI in ELT is done in an inclusive, ethical, and pedagogically sound manner. AI should not be seen as a replacement for human educators but as a powerful tool that, when used appropriately, can complement and enhance the teaching and learning experience.

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# **Tradition versus Modernity: A Comparative Analysis of Socio-Cultural Dynamics in the Plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar**

— *S. Venkata Ramana*

## **ABSTRACT**

The liaison between tradition and modernity has long been a central theme in Indian Literature, especially in Girish Karnad's and Vijay Tendulkar's dramatic works. This paper explores how these two stalwarts of Indian drama negotiate the tension between socio-cultural traditions and the encroaching forces of modernity—examining selected plays—including Karnad's *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana* and Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Silence! The Court is in Session* — this study analyzes their representation of cultural conflict, individual agency, and societal transformation. Employing the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial and sociological critique, the paper highlights how these playwrights use their narratives to critique oppressive structures while celebrating cultural heritage.

**(Keywords:** Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, tradition, modernity, Indian drama, socio-cultural dynamics)

*“Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.”*

— Gustav Mahler.

## **Introduction**

Indian drama has always reflected the evolving socio-cultural landscape, capturing the oscillation between tradition and modernity. Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar, two towering figures in Indian theatre, have masterfully portrayed these dynamics in their works. Their plays mirror the socio-political tensions of their times and transcend them to offer timeless insights into the human condition. Drawing from diverse sources such as mythology, history, and contemporary realities, these playwrights craft narratives that interrogate entrenched traditions while grappling with the promises and pitfalls of modernity.

This comparative analysis situates the works of Karnad and Tendulkar within the broader context of Indian drama's evolution. It examines how their plays critique societal norms, explore power dynamics, and question identity constructs. By juxtaposing the mythic-symbolic approach of Karnad with the stark realism of

Tendulkar, the study sheds light on the nuanced ways in which tradition and modernity intersect, conflict, and coexist in Indian drama. Through this lens, the paper aims to uncover how their works contribute to the ongoing dialogue about cultural continuity and change in postcolonial India.

### **Socio-Cultural Context of Indian Drama**

Indian theatre has historically been a medium for socio-political commentary. Post-independence Indian drama witnessed a resurgence of interest in indigenous themes, with playwrights exploring the conflicts arising from the coexistence of traditional values and modern aspirations. This period saw Karnad and Tendulkar emerge, and they redefined the contours of Indian drama by engaging with these tensions.

Karnad's work is rooted in mythology and history, which he reinterprets to address modern dilemmas. For instance, in *Hayavadana* (1971), Karnad uses a folk tale to examine questions of identity and completeness, thereby linking personal conflicts to broader cultural concerns. Similarly, Tendulkar's works, such as *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), reflect the disillusionment with political corruption and societal oppression, offering a scathing critique of modernity's promises.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary texts to examine the socio-cultural dynamics in the plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar. The primary sources include selected plays by the two dramatists, while secondary sources comprise critical essays, reviews, and theoretical works. The analysis adopts a comparative approach, focusing on thematic and stylistic elements to explore how tradition and modernity are negotiated in their works. Postcolonial and sociological theories provide the conceptual framework for understanding these plays' interplay of historical and contemporary contexts.

### **Review of Literature**

Aparna Dharwadker's *Theatres of Independence* provides a comprehensive overview of Indian drama post-independence, highlighting the contributions of Karnad and Tendulkar. Dharwadker underscores Karnad's use of myth and history to address contemporary issues and Tendulkar's realist approach to exposing societal hypocrisies. Anjum Katyal's *Vijay Tendulkar: A Critical Reader* delves into the thematic and stylistic elements of Tendulkar's plays, particularly his critique of patriarchal and political structures.

Several scholars have analyzed specific plays to uncover their socio-cultural significance. For instance, Amrit Srinivasan's essay on *Hayavadana* examines its exploration of identity and incompleteness, while Rustom Bharucha's analysis of *Tughlaq* focuses on its allegorical critique of governance. Similarly, critiques of

*Ghashiram Kotwal* often highlight its satirical portrayal of power dynamics and studies of *silence!* The Court is in Session emphasizes its feminist undertones. These works form the foundation for this paper's comparative analysis.

### **Girish Karnad: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity**

Karnad's plays are characterized by their ability to weave traditional narratives with contemporary relevance.

#### ***Tughlaq*: A Historical Lens on Modern Governance**

In *Tughlaq* (1964), Karnad presents a historical narrative that mirrors the disillusionment of post-independence India. The protagonist, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, embodies the conflict between visionary ideals and pragmatic governance. As Karnad himself notes, "Tughlaq's dreams were noble, but his means were suspect" (Karnad 10). The play critiques the failures of modern governance while underscoring the persistence of historical patterns.

#### ***Hayavadana*: The Search for Identity**

In *Hayavadana*, Karnad explores the theme of incompleteness through the story of Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini. The play employs traditional folk theatre techniques, such as a Bhagavata, to address modern existential dilemmas. As Aparna Dharwadker observes, "Karnad's use of myth becomes a vehicle for examining the fragmentation of identity in a rapidly modernizing society" (Dharwadker 215).

### **Vijay Tendulkar: Exposing the Hypocrisies of Modernity**

Tendulkar's works adopt a starkly realist tone, shedding light on the darker facets of modern society. His plays often critique the erosion of ethical values and the dehumanizing effects of modernization.

#### ***Ghashiram Kotwal*: Power and Corruption**

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Tendulkar presents a biting satire on political corruption and the abuse of power. Set in 18th-century Pune, the play reflects the systemic failures of contemporary governance. The titular character's rise and fall symbolize the cyclical nature of exploitation, highlighting how tradition can be manipulated to serve modern ambitions. As Tendulkar states, "The past is not dead; it continues to influence the present" (Tendulkar 48).

#### ***Silence! The Court is in Session*: Gender and Modernity**

In *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967), Tendulkar critiques the patriarchal underpinnings of modern society. The mock trial of Miss Benare exposes the societal double standards that oppress women, even as modernity promises liberation.

As Anjum Katyal notes, “Tendulkar’s feminism is not idealistic but confrontational, forcing the audience to confront uncomfortable truths” (Katyal 89).

### **Comparative Analysis: Tradition versus Modernity**

The plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar serve as critical case studies in the negotiation of tradition and modernity. Through their works, these dramatists reveal how interweaving cultural heritage and contemporary values creates a fertile ground for conflict and transformation. Their approaches differ significantly, yet both dramatists converge on cultural identity and power dynamics.

### **Thematic Convergence**

Karnad and Tendulkar explore authority, identity, and societal structures. Shanta Gokhale notes, “Both playwrights use their characters as metaphors for the larger societal forces that shape and constrain human agency” (Gokhale 56). In *Tughlaq* and *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the central characters’ ambitions mirror the aspirations of a society caught between preserving its traditions and embracing new paradigms. These plays reflect how modernity often exploits tradition to consolidate power, creating cyclical patterns of dominance and resistance.

Similarly, gender dynamics occupy a central place in their narratives. In *Hayavadana* and *Silence! The Court is in Session*, female protagonists grapple with the constraints of patriarchal traditions while seeking autonomy in a modernizing society. As Meenakshi Mukherjee observes, “Karnad’s mythological frameworks and Tendulkar’s stark realism converge in their exploration of the feminine struggle against oppressive norms” (Mukherjee 78).

### **Stylistic Divergence**

Karnad’s plays rely on allegory and symbolism to evoke the timeless conflicts within cultural paradigms. His use of myths, such as in *Hayavadana*, transforms the personal into the universal. In contrast, Tendulkar’s stark, realist style strips away any romanticization of tradition. Sunil Khilnani states, “Tendulkar’s works mirror the hypocrisies of modern Indian society, exposing the uneasy coexistence of archaic values within a progressive veneer” (Khilnani 134).

This stylistic divergence underscores their differing perspectives on the relationship between tradition and modernity. Karnad’s works suggest that tradition and modernity can coexist and enrich each other, while Tendulkar’s plays highlight the irreconcilable tensions between the two.

### **Cultural Critique**

The plays of both dramatists also serve as incisive critiques of societal structures. Karnad’s *Tughlaq* presents an allegory for the post-independence disillusionment

with governance and idealism. As Aparna Dharwadker notes, “Karnad’s historical narratives are deeply embedded in contemporary realities, reflecting the cyclical nature of power and its abuse” (Dharwadker 223).

Tendulkar’s *Ghashiram Kotwal* similarly critiques the misuse of traditional power to sustain corrupt modern systems. The titular character’s fall illustrates the dehumanizing effects of power, showing how tradition can be co-opted for personal gain. Tendulkar’s realism is evident in his unflinching portrayal of societal hypocrisies. As noted by Anjum Katyal, “Tendulkar’s theatre is an unrelenting exploration of the fault lines in Indian modernity” (Katyal 97).

### **Expanding the Dialogue**

The comparative analysis of Karnad and Tendulkar’s works reveals the multifaceted nature of tradition and modernity in Indian society. Their plays do not provide easy resolutions but encourage audiences to engage with these tensions critically. As Sudhir Kakar suggests, “Indian drama’s strength lies in its ability to hold a mirror to society while simultaneously offering a space for introspection and dialogue” (Kakar 102).

By highlighting these complexities, the works of Karnad and Tendulkar remain pivotal in understanding the socio-cultural fabric of modern India. Their exploration of tradition and modernity extends beyond the binaries, suggesting that the true essence of cultural progress lies in an ongoing negotiation of values, identities, and power structures. The works of Karnad and Tendulkar reveal differing approaches to the theme of tradition versus modernity. While Karnad’s plays often seek a synthesis between the two, Tendulkar’s works highlight their inherent contradictions.

### **Thematic Convergence**

Both playwrights address issues of power, identity, and societal transformation. For instance, in *Tughlaq* and *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the protagonists’ downfall underscores the fragility of traditional or modern power structures. Similarly, the exploration of gender dynamics in *Hayavadana* and *Silence! The Court is in Session*, reflecting their shared concern with an individual agency within oppressive frameworks.

### **Stylistic Divergence**

Karnad’s reliance on myth and symbolism contrasts with Tendulkar’s realist approach. As Dharwadker notes, “Karnad’s plays are grounded in the timeless, while Tendulkar’s are rooted in the immediate” (Dharwadker 218). This stylistic divergence reflects their differing perspectives on tradition and modernity—Karnad sees them as interconnected, while Tendulkar views them as conflicting.



**Recommendations for Future Research:** Future research can expand on this comparative analysis by exploring the following areas:

- **Intersectionality:** Investigating how caste, class, and gender intersect with the themes of tradition and modernity in the works of Karnad and Tendulkar.
- **Global Perspectives:** Comparing their plays with works of contemporary dramatists from other postcolonial nations to understand universal and localized narratives of cultural conflict.
- **Performance Studies:** Analyzing how stage adaptations and performances of their plays reveal the nuances of tradition and modernity.
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Examining how the themes in their plays resonate with the socio-political dynamics of 21st-century India.

### Conclusion

Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar's plays offer profound insights into India's socio-cultural dynamics. These playwrights illuminate the complexities of individual and collective identity in a rapidly changing world by juxtaposing tradition and modernity. Their works not only serve as artistic expressions but also as critical commentaries on societal structures and values. Karnad's mythic and symbolic narratives advocate for synthesizing the past and present, emphasizing the potential for cultural dialogue and renewal. In contrast, Tendulkar's realist depictions confront the contradictions and inequities perpetuated by traditional and modern frameworks, urging introspection and reform. Together, the contributions of Karnad and Tendulkar underscore the enduring relevance of Indian drama as a medium for exploring the human condition. Their plays challenge audiences to reflect on their roles within the continuum of tradition and modernity, ensuring that the dialogue between them remains vibrant and transformative.

*"Tradition is a guide, not a jailer."*

— W. Somerset Maugham.

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## Cold Moon

— Srikanth, K.

*My mother sits in the  
verandah and  
stares at  
the full  
moon  
  
through  
the branches of  
a neem  
tree –*

*Her face glistens -  
the reflection  
of a pale  
yellow  
moon*

*in a lake*

*on a cold, cold  
December  
night!*

*Leaves rustle, wind  
blows, and as*

*she looks  
at me*

*I know, I know*

*it is true that her  
face will be  
washed  
away*

*to that  
other shore*

*very  
soon  
and I  
will be  
left alone*

*on a cold, cold  
December  
Night*

*as white  
and as blue as  
tonight.*

## Unsold Apples

— E. Satyanarayana

*At a make shift market by the road  
An assortment of street vendors  
Settles apart with their fruit load  
Hollering to attract the customers.*

*Convincing the buyers is a secret  
Some have learnt it by practice  
And is mastered with an effort  
For whom fruit selling is not a choice*

*There sat an aged woman  
With a basket of shrivelled apples  
None waited to have glance at them  
She bore the scorching mid day sun  
With a hope to sell some before day down  
Her man at home was sick and alone  
She knew he needed her company  
more than remedy from her earnings  
Eager was she to sell them off to some  
And was dejected finding none  
Then appeared a boy in rags  
He came to her to buy apple one  
For his hungry sister waiting in the shack  
With the money he earned by panhandling  
He lost his parents too early  
and was deserted by all his kin  
She offered the frail boy one for free  
When he came nigh  
He made off to his place in glee  
To tell his sis of the mother in  
the apple vendor  
He would tell her they are not alone  
Somebody on the margins  
Is always there to care for the urchins.*

## The Loom of Thought, the Weaver of Dream

— *Munjagalla Rebaka*

*Oh, drapery spun with golden thread,  
Where poets dance and sages tread,  
A kaleidoscope of words, you shine,  
Each phrase a jewel, each line divine.  
From Chaucer's quill to Byron's fire,  
Your echoes hum, your songs inspire.  
With Shakespeare's brush, the soul laid bare,  
A kingdom of dreams beyond compare.  
A treasure chest, unlocked with care,  
You paint the sky, you tame despair.*

*A river flowing, wild and wide,  
You carry hearts on every tide.  
Your idioms leap like sparks from flame,  
Setting minds alight, no two the same.  
For bartering deals or wooing hearts,  
You're the artisan of all fine arts.  
From whispers soft to cries of might,  
You're the torch that blazes through the night.  
Oh English, world's relentless stream,  
You're the loom of thought, the weaver of dream.*

## Thou art a heart in my heart

— R. Subhashini

*Oh ! My dear, thou art a heart in my heart  
Unable to befriend thee  
Thou art a thought in my thought,  
A breath in my breath much like  
A dream in my dreams far alike  
Thoughts flow from heart to heart barring  
All man made unseen manacles.  
Oh what a fusion of minds and moods,  
Though appears, never to depart,  
I often fear the imminent threat  
That contempt befriends familiarity  
Henceforth could dare not to familiarise  
What so ever makes me further realize  
Sweet is the union of unseen souls  
Melodiously musical and infinite  
Thou art in thy eternal presence ever  
That does not fade away forever  
Love is a priceless possession to eternity  
The more you pass on,  
So much more to regain*

## Vultures

*(A short story by Dr.Ampasayya Naveen and translated by Rajeshwar Mittapalli)*

“Hello, Uncle! Namaskar,” said Ashish, entering the hall where Aravind Rao was seated.

“Namaskar,” replied Aravind Rao.

“Are you going out? You’re all dressed up in a full suit,” commented Ashish, sitting on the sofa in front of Aravind.

“The S-TV people are coming to interview me shortly,” said Aravind.

“The S-TV people are interviewing you? What’s the occasion? Have they announced that you’re getting a Nobel Prize?” asked Ashish with a hint of sarcasm in his voice.

“Who would give me a Nobel Prize? My close friend Ravinder Reddy started S-TV. He found out that I returned from England to India a week ago and wanted to interview me,” explained Aravind.

“Oh yes... We lived in London for forty years. Ravinder Reddy must be interviewing my uncle to talk about those forty years,” said Aravind’s wife, Nirmala, as she entered the room.

As they were talking, Ravinder Reddy arrived with two cameramen, getting out of the S-TV OB van and coming inside.

“Good morning, Aravind,” said Ravinder Reddy upon entering.

“Good morning, Ravinder. How are you! It’s been a long time since I last saw you,” said Aravind.

“Yes, until you went to London, we used to meet every day, share stories, jokes, laugh together, and enjoy so much. When you suddenly left the country, it created a huge void in my life.”

“Never mind, Ravinder. We can talk about all that later. Let’s start your interview,” said Aravind.

“Right away. As soon as they finish setting up the cameras, we’ll begin,” said Ravinder.

One of the cameramen came and attached a small microphone to Aravind’s shirt.

“Please say something, sir. We’ll do a voice test,” said the cameraman.

“Hello! Hello! How are you, Ravinder?” said Aravind.

“Okay, sir. The microphone is picking up your voice. Ravinder will ask you questions, and you should answer while looking at this camera,” said the cameraman.

“Okay, okay,” said Aravind.

“The questions I ask will be normal ones, so there’s no need to discuss them with you beforehand. Is that okay?” asked Ravinder.

“Okay,” said Aravind.

“While the interview is ongoing, no one should talk, and please switch off your cell phones. Are there just the two of you here?” asked Ravinder.

“Yes, there’s no one else,” said Nirmala.

“This is an air-conditioned room, so there won’t be any noise from the fans. Everything is ready. Please switch off your cell phones. Aravind, adjust your coat and tie and sit properly,” said Ravinder.

“Okay,” said Aravind, adjusting his coat and tie while looking in the nearby mirror.

“Ready, Aravind. Here’s my first question,” said Ravinder.

“Okay,” said Aravind.

“Namaskar, Aravind garu!” said Ravinder.

“Namaskar,” said Aravind, joining his hands.

“In which year did you move from India to England?”

“I went in 1968.”

“Can you tell us why you had to leave your motherland and move to another country?”

“I struggled a lot to complete my MBA here and then also obtained a Chartered Accountancy degree. However, I didn’t get promising opportunities as a Chartered Accountant here. I had a good friend in London, called Murahari Rao. He said, ‘Why are you staying in a country with no opportunities for merit? Come here. I’ll show you many great opportunities. For someone as brilliant as you in accountancy, there are plenty of opportunities here. You can earn a lot of money and live comfortably. What’s there for you in India? There’s no place for merit there. Caste issues, religious issues, politics, reservations, favouritism, superstitions. Will they let anyone live in peace? Relatives are like vultures. If someone starts to rise, they’ll try to pull him down. If any of our relatives are better off financially, they’ll die of jealousy. Seeing all this, I left India and am living comfortably here. That’s why I’m asking you to come too,’ said Murahari Rao. To be honest, it was because of my friend Murahari Rao in London that I moved there.”

“Did your family members agree when you decided to go to London?”

“Our family is quite large. We’re four brothers. We also have four sisters. I’m the youngest. When I was five years old, our father passed away. Shortly thereafter, our mother also passed away. My eldest sister raised me and provided me with an education. My three brothers were busy with their own work and didn’t pay much attention to me. My eldest brother, Raghavendra Rao, was obsessed with politics and served as the village sarpanch for a long time. My second brother, after passing his tenth grade, joined teacher training and later became a teacher. My other brother didn’t pursue much education and took care of the farming activities. Only my

eldest sister looked after me. The other three sisters got married at a young age and moved in with their in-laws. My eldest sister was married before I was born, but her husband passed away within a year of their marriage. Therefore, she came back to live with us. We didn't arrange another marriage for her. Thus, my eldest sister became my mother and father. She always wanted me to receive a good education. None of my brothers showed much interest in my studies. When I passed my tenth grade, my eldest brother told me to find a job. However, my sister argued with him, pleading, 'All the teachers say he is very intelligent in his studies. Even the headmaster once told me that he should be allowed to study as far as he wants. Don't stop his education, Raghava!'

'How can we afford his education? We managed to educate him up to the tenth grade because the high school is in our village. Now, sending him to the city for further education will be very expensive. Where will we get the money for that?' my eldest brother said.

'We have three brothers and plenty of land inherited from our father. You earn a good amount from your involvement in politics. Can't you all support the education of our younger brother? Wouldn't our father have ensured his education if he were alive?' my sister argued.

'You speak well, but I haven't earned anything from politics; I've only incurred losses. What good is the land if it doesn't yield crops due to a lack of water? We can't produce anything unless there are abundant rains. How do you expect to send him to a city like Hyderabad for education in such conditions? If he does teacher training, won't he get a job like our Murali did?' my brother said.

'He won't go for teacher training. He will continue his studies,' my sister said firmly.

'How will he continue his studies? Will you support him?' my brother asked.

'Yes, I'll support him,' my sister replied. She kept her word. After her husband passed away, she inherited some property from her in-laws. She also had some gold.

Our village is very close to Hyderabad, near Patancheru on the Vikarabad route. My eldest sister sold her gold chain and sent me to Hyderabad. I accompanied a classmate who was also going to Hyderabad for higher studies and enrolled in college. That was it! I never looked back. I kept completing one degree after another. Although my brothers disliked it, my sister faced constant humiliation from them and their wives for sending me to Hyderabad for higher education. They'd criticise her, asking, 'Why don't you go back to your in-laws' place instead of staying here?' This forced her to rent a separate house in our village. Whenever I came home during holidays, I stayed with my sister," Aravind said.

"When did you go to London? What challenges did you face upon arriving there? Could you tell us about them?" Ravinder asked.



“While I was pursuing my MBA, I became good friends with Venkatesh, who was a year senior to me. Despite the age difference, he became very close to me because he admired my intelligence, especially in mathematics. He came from a wealthy family, while I was poor, struggling to make do with the little money my sister managed to send me. Although I received a scholarship, there were times when I had no money and went hungry. Once I caught Venkatesh’s attention, my struggles eased. He took me to live with him in his room and covered all my expenses, including food, college fees, and examination fees. After completing his Chartered Accountancy, Venkatesh moved to London. Before leaving, he ensured that I had everything I needed to complete my CA without any issues. He also told me to come to London as soon as I finished my CA. But, after I completed my CA, my sister didn’t agree to me going to London. She said, ‘I’m living because of you. If you leave, who will I have?’ and shed tears. Seeing her pain, I also felt distressed. I couldn’t leave her and go. After about six months, my sister seemed to have a change of heart. During those six months, Venkatesh wrote many letters from London asking me to come. I kept writing back, explaining I couldn’t leave my sister. Eventually, my sister realised that I wanted to go to London,” Aravind explained.

“You better leave for London, Aravind! I don’t wish for you to sacrifice your promising future for my sake. I’ll manage somehow. It is said that God looks after those who have no one else. Trusting that some God will take care of me, you should go, Aravind. You have a dear friend there who loves you a lot. You will find good opportunities there. My wish is for you to live a better life than all your brothers. Don’t stay for my sake. Go ahead and leave.”

Saying this, my sister held me close and cried for a long time. I too cried. All the arrangements for my departure to London were complete. Before leaving, I went to inform my brothers. All three of them told me to go. However, my eldest sister-in-law sarcastically remarked, “Are you not even taking your beloved sister with you?”

I paid no heed to her words. Neither my eldest nor my youngest brother asked how I would manage, who would look after me there, or where I would stay. When I was about to take leave, I clearly heard my eldest sister-in-law commenting, “This good-for-nothing will get stranded somewhere.” My quiet and innocent demeanor led people to label me as a “good-for-nothing.”

Before leaving, I approached a relative in our village—a very good man—and requested him to look after my sister. I also requested my three other sisters to take care of our eldest sister. They outwardly agreed. With a heavy heart, I bid farewell to my sister and set off for London. My sister meant everything to me, and the pain of leaving her was indescribable. Despite trying hard, I couldn’t hold back my tears.”

As Aravind spoke these words, his voice faltered, and he could not hold back his tears. The interview was paused for five minutes before resuming.

“What happened after you went to London?”

“Everything went well. Venkatesh took care of me in every way, treating me as dearly as his own life. I considered him to be like my sister. Soon, I found good opportunities and started earning well. I used to send some money to my sister. When my eldest brother learned that I was earning well, he angrily wrote letters questioning why I wasn’t sending money to them. I sent money to them whenever possible. Meanwhile, my sister wrote to say that she had found a match for me and asked me to come and see the girl, and if I liked her, to get married and return. I went to our village, saw the girl my sister had chosen, and liked her. I married this Nirmala and came back to India. Knowing that I was earning well, my brothers arranged my wedding grandly. After a month of marriage, I took my wife to London.”

“How many children do you have, sir?”

“Unfortunately, we don’t have children. Some people, whenever we visited India, advised us to adopt. For a long time, my wife believed she would have children, which is why she never considered adoption. Even after realising, post 40, that we wouldn’t have children, neither I nor my wife felt the desire to adopt. Meanwhile, my dear friend in London, who brought me there and treated me well, Venkatesh, died in a road accident. Words can’t express my grief. After his passing, I lost the will to stay in London and returned to India.”

“Can you say a few words about your life in London?”

“London is a magnificent city, a symbol of democracy. People of all religions and ideologies can live in London. When all European cities exiled Karl Marx, it was London that provided him refuge. He wrote the monumental work that is like a Bible to all Marxists, *Das Kapital*, in London. Many of his admirers visit his grave there. I visited it many times. It is remarkable how the British preserve democracy while respecting an ancient monarchy. They manage to harmonise modernity with ancient heritage, which is truly admirable.”

“While living in London and earning well, did you do anything for your village or the school you studied at in India?”

“I did. To the best of my ability, I built a good building for the school I studied at and set up a good library. I have done many other things, but I don’t like to boast about them.”

“Thank you, sir. We’re very pleased that you shared your life story with us. Namaste, sir!” said the interviewer, and Aravind also responded, “Namaste.”

After packing up their equipment, they left. As they departed, Ashish said, “Some things you mentioned didn’t sit well with me, uncle.”

“What things, son?”

“Was it solely your sister who supported you? Did none of your brothers support you? Although they didn’t send you for higher education, it was our father who ensured you studied up to the 10th grade, wasn’t it? The eldest brother took care of the entire family, didn’t he? It’s unfair not to mention a single word about your eldest brother,” said Ashish.

“Unfair to whom?” asked Nirmala.

“To my father, aunt,” replied Ashish.

“We’ve not been unfair to anyone. Since there was a high school in the village, he was able to study up to the 10th grade. There’s nothing extraordinary about that,” said Nirmala.

“Never mind, aunt. Now that you’ve come back to our country, from now on, we’ll take care of you as if you’re the apple of our eye. Whether anyone else does or not, I’ll take the responsibility of looking after you. If you face any problems, call me, uncle. You are now in your seventies. Whether you need to visit doctors or require any other assistance, please let me know,” said Ashish.

“Thank you, Ashish,” said Aravind.

“I have a small request, uncle. I feel very proud looking at the Benz car parked in your portico. This house you have built is like a palace where a king might reign. Your house stands as a landmark in all of Jubilee Hills. How did you accumulate so much wealth, uncle?” asked Ashish.

“How I earned it isn’t important now,” replied Aravind.

“Do you want me to tell you how he earned it? He earned it by working tirelessly day and night, saving every penny without indulging in corruption, fake accounts, or evading taxes. We’d planned to stay in London, but suddenly he felt the call of his motherland, remembered his siblings, and came here with the desire to spend the rest of his life in his motherland and to breathe his last here,” said Nirmala.

“Great, aunt. I salute your patriotism. I have one small request, uncle,” said Ashish.

“What’s that request?” asked Aravind.

“I’d like to take a short drive in your Benz car to visit a friend nearby. I’ve always wanted to drive a Benz,” said Ashish.

“Do you want my car?” asked Aravind.

“Just for half an hour, uncle. I’ll be right back,” said Ashish.

“Do you have a driving licence?” asked Aravind.

“Why wouldn’t I have a driving licence, uncle? I even own a Maruti WagonR,” said Ashish.

“All right, take it,” said Aravind, getting up and handing him the car keys.

“Thank you, uncle!” said Ashish, getting up from his seat.

“That’s fine, Ashish, but could you find me a good driver?” asked Aravind.

“Why would you need another driver when I’m here, uncle? Drivers are demanding 15 to 20 thousand rupees per month. Whenever you call, I’ll come and take you wherever you need to go. Consider me your driver,” said Ashish.

“All right then, we’ll see,” said Aravind.

Ashish went out, started the car in the portico, and drove away.

“Do you think the car will come back to you? You handed it over to him just because he asked. Do you know what kind of person he is?” asked Nirmala.

“Do you know what kind of person he is?”

“Yes, my younger brother Naresh has told me a lot about him. He dropped out of his B.Tech studies midway, has no job, and always roams around the village with five or six friends, teasing girls. He has also caused two or three accidents by driving at high speed,” said Nirmala.

“I was really unaware of all this. He’ll be back in half an hour. I’ll not give him the car again,” said Aravind.

“Half an hour, God knows. Let’s be happy if he returns the car safely even after six hours,” said Nirmala.

“Let’s see. We’ve come back after a long time. Let’s see what everyone is up to,” said Aravind.

“Now that your brothers know we are wealthy, they might shower us with a lot of affection,” said Nirmala.

“Let’s see,” said Aravind.

As Nirmala predicted, Ashish returned four hours later, parked the car in Aravind’s house, and left.

\* \* \*

The next day, Aravind, along with Nirmala, decided to visit their village to see his sister and bring her back to stay with them. Just as they were about to leave, Aravind’s elder brother Raghavendra Rao arrived with Ashish.

“Greetings, brother!” Aravind said upon seeing his brother.

“It looks like you are about to leave for somewhere,” said his brother, sitting down on the sofa in the hall.

“Not somewhere far, just to our village, to see all of you,” replied Aravind.

“Oh, really! Then let’s go,” said Raghavendra Rao.

“You’ve just arrived. Let’s leave after lunch. Tell me, brother, how is everyone? How is our village? Has there been any development since then?”

“There hasn’t been much development, just a few changes here and there. You will see when you come. Thanks to your donations, our village high school has developed quite a lot. It has now been upgraded to a junior college. Also, because of you, every house in the village now has water connection, ending the water scarcity. Everyone in the village always thinks of you. Still, there’s one

thing. You always serve others, but don't you intend to do something for your own family?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"We're your brothers, but how are we doing? Won't you do anything for us?"

"Why wouldn't I? I've sent you some money, haven't I? And when we divided the land, I gave my share to the three of you, didn't I? I relinquished my share, didn't I?"

"What did we gain from that? What's growing on those lands? There's always a water shortage. But never mind that. Do you know why I came to you now?" asked Raghavendra.

"Tell me, brother!"

"You don't have any children. You went abroad and accumulated a lot of wealth. What should become of your wealth? That's why I thought of something. I came to tell you about it. Listen carefully. Adopt our Ashish. Consider him your son. He'll always be at your side, assisting you in every way. You're getting old. Your health isn't in ideal shape. So, choose an auspicious time and formally adopt him. If you do this, we'll all support you. This will be beneficial for both you and your wife," said Raghavendra.

Hearing this, Aravind remained silent for a while. Nirmala's expression showed that she had anticipated this.

"What do you say, Aravind? Why are you sitting silently like a rock striking jaggery? What's your opinion?" asked Raghavendra.

"I've never thought about what you are suggesting. Even when I was in London, many people advised me to adopt someone. My father-in-law, that is, Nirmala's father, also called two or three times suggesting that I adopt his son. Neither Nirmala nor I wanted to adopt," said Aravind.

"Is that the same answer you want to give me?"

"Yes, brother! We have no intention of adopting. Please forgive us," replied Aravind.

"If you don't adopt, who will perform your last rites when you die?" asked Raghavendra.

"It doesn't matter if no one performs my last rites, brother. I'll die my own death. I don't believe in the superstition of performing last rites or offering pindas," said Aravind.

"Don't talk foolishly. If there's no one to perform your last rites, how will your funeral be conducted?"

"I'm not concerned about how it'll be conducted. A long time ago, there was a great philosopher named Socrates. When his disciples asked him what should be done with his body after his death, he said, 'It's none of my business.' That means

it isn't my concern. Do whatever you want. Once the life is gone, I'm not in that body. It becomes an inert object. You can do whatever you want with it," said Aravind.

"Stop telling tales, Aravind. If you don't adopt our Ashish, it won't be good for you. You need to listen when told nicely. If you don't, the consequences will be severe," said Raghavendra.

"What do you mean? What will you do?"

"I won't tell you, I'll show you. It would be better for you to heed your elder brother's advice. Take two days to think it over and then let me know," said Raghavendra, as he and Ashish stood up.

"Please have lunch before you leave, brother!"

"There's no need. I'll have lunch at your house only on the day you adopt our Ashish. If you adopt him, it'll be in the best interest of us all. If you refuse, just see what happens." With that, both of them left.

The husband and wife exchanged glances.

"I always suspected something like this would happen. As long as we were in another country, no one bothered us. Now, they'll not leave us alone," said Nirmala.

"What can they do if they don't leave us alone? This property is our hard-earned wealth. No one else has any right to it. We can give it to whomever we wish," said Aravind.

"That's true, but you are too kind. You never want to hurt anyone and believe in loving even your enemies. They'll surely take advantage of your kindness," said Nirmala.

"You always talk like this. Our kindness will protect us. Don't unnecessarily worry and imagine things. Anyway, tomorrow morning, let's go to our village and visit my sister," said Aravind.

\* \* \*

The next morning, Aravind and Nirmala travelled by car to their village near Vikarabad.

Being close to the city, the village had undergone many changes. It had developed a town-like atmosphere, with wider roads and many new shops. The government junior college building near the village looked very beautiful, and everyone in the village knew it was built with the money donated by Aravind. In the centre of the village were the houses of Aravind's brothers. Initially, it was one large mansion, but it had been divided into three parts, diminishing its grandeur. A little distance from there, Aravind's sister Rajamma lived in a rented house. Aravind parked the car in front of his sister's house.

The couple got out of the car and went inside the house. It was a small two-room house. Rajamma was lying on a bed in the drawing room. Upon seeing her, Aravind called out, "Sister!"

“Who is it?” Rajamma asked, sitting up.

“It’s me, sister! Aravind.”

“Have you come, my dear? Ever since I heard you were coming, I’ve been eagerly waiting for you. I was so afraid that I might die without seeing you! Now that I’ve seen you, I can die in peace,” said Rajamma, pulling her brother close to her.

“Don’t say that, sister! I’ve come to take you with me. From now on, you will stay with us.”

“Yes, sister-in-law! Your brother has been dreaming of keeping you with him and treating you like a queen,” said Nirmala.

“That may be true, but I can’t leave this village, Aravind. I wish to die where I was born and raised,” said Rajamma.

“Don’t say that, sister! I’ve decided to take you with me, show you to a doctor, and get any health issues you have treated. Please don’t refuse me,” said Aravind.

“Other than blood pressure and diabetes, I have no major health issues. There are now two or three good doctors here. One of them, Dr. Chandramouli, an MBBS, is taking good care of me and prescribing my medications. I also have a cook who prepares my meals and a maid who keeps the house clean. The money you send me monthly is sufficient for all my needs. You can visit me occasionally. Please let me spend the rest of my life here,” said Rajamma.

“Won’t you fulfil my desire to keep you with me, sister?” asked Aravind.

“No matter where I am, Aravind, I always think of you. You are always in my heart.”

“Won’t you let me repay my debt to you, sister?”

“If you want to repay your debt to me, Aravind, build a temple in my name in this village. When you went abroad, I prayed to Lord Venkateswara for your safe return and that you shouldn’t face any hardships. Build a temple for that Lord in this village that will stand the test of time, brother!”

“I’ll certainly build it, sister! No matter the cost, I’ll construct a magnificent temple in your name in this village. The construction will be completed within six months.”

“That’ll be enough for my lifetime, brother! By the way, I heard that our elder brother came to see you,” said Rajamma.

“He did, sister. He wants me to adopt his eldest son, Ashish,” said Aravind.

“He threatened us that the consequences would be severe if we didn’t adopt his son,” added Nirmala.

“I heard about that too. Under no circumstances should you adopt Ashish. He’s fallen into bad company and has gone astray. Don’t let him into your house. In fact, don’t let anyone claiming kinship enter your house. They’ve come to

know that you have a lot of money, and they're here to take advantage of it. As the saying goes, 'When the pond fills, frogs gather by the thousands,' these relatives too will swarm you for your wealth," said Rajamma.

As they were talking, Rajamma suspected someone was listening outside.

"It sounds like someone is outside. Go and check," said Rajamma.

Nirmala went and saw a man standing near the front door.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" she asked.

"I saw a beautiful car outside and came to see who had come," said the man before leaving.

"He said he came to see who had come after noticing the car outside," said Nirmala.

"Is he dark-skinned and short?" asked Rajamma.

"Yes, he matched your description," Nirmala replied.

"He is one of your eldest brother's men. Occasionally, he sends him to check on what I am doing and who is visiting me. Since you came today, he must have sent him to find out what we are discussing. Your elder brother has been eagerly waiting to see how he can take your wealth. Along with him, your two younger brothers are also hoping to get a piece of the cake. Be cautious with them, Aravind," said Rajamma.

"I'll be careful, sister," replied Aravind.

"I told the cook that you were coming and had food prepared. Please have lunch before you leave," said Rajamma.

They continued talking about many things while having lunch. Before leaving, Aravind gave his sister a cell phone and explained how to use it. He also programmed his phone number into it and told her to call him immediately if she had any problems. Then, Aravind and Nirmala went to visit their brothers' house. They spoke formally.

"As long as you have your sister, you seem to have no need for us, your brothers. Forgetting your own brothers isn't right," said their elder brother.

"Uncle, if you had called me, I'd have come with you," said Ashish, who had just got out of a car. Four of his friends accompanied him.

After talking with everyone for a while, Aravind and Nirmala went outside. They then visited the junior college in the village.

There, Aravind called the village sarpanch and other prominent people and said, "It is my sister's wish to build a Venkateswara Swamy temple in our village. Please decide on a suitable location and let me know."

"That's wonderful news, Mr. Aravind. We'll hold a meeting and find the right place. We'll inform you by phone," said the sarpanch.

Aravind gave him his phone number.

\* \* \*



A couple of days after Aravind and Nirmala returned from their village, Nirmala's parents, her two sisters and their husbands, and her brother all arrived at their home.

After they had all had lunch and were relaxing, Nirmala's father, Ranganatham, revealed the real reason for their visit.

"I'm very happy that you've returned here after all this time. We've never told you how we've been or how many hardships we've been facing. You know that we all rely on farming for our livelihood. The income from agriculture isn't enough to meet our needs. We've had to take out substantial loans for investment," said Ranganatham.

"The government has announced that it is waiving farmers' loans, hasn't it?" asked Aravind.

"That's merely a temporary relief. Those small waivers don't solve our problems. You see how many farmers are committing suicide," replied Ranganatham.

"Yes, every day the news is full of such reports," said Aravind.

"We've heard that you've earned well during your long stay abroad. Please don't take this the wrong way. We've come hoping that you might help our struggling families," said Ranganatham.

"Tell me what you want me to do," said Aravind.

"My son, your brother-in-law's son, Sireesh, somehow completed his B.Tech. He now wants to go to America to do his M.S. To send him to America, we need around ten lakh rupees," said Ranganatham.

"We'll take care of sending Sireesh to America, father," said Nirmala.

Aravind was surprised that Nirmala promised this without consulting him.

"Thank you so much, auntie! Thank you, uncle!" said Sireesh, bowing to touch their feet.

"It feels as if a huge burden has been lifted off my shoulders, son-in-law," said Ranganatham, folding his hands in gratitude.

"You've promised immediate help to them. We also need your assistance. We have two daughters and are struggling to arrange their marriages within our means," said Nirmala's sister, Sunanda.

"We're in a similar situation. Although Sunanda has two daughters, they're well-educated and might get jobs soon. They're also quite attractive, so arranging their marriages won't be a big problem. But I have only one daughter. She is a bit overweight and not well-educated. Every match we find rejects her because of her weight. Unless we offer a large dowry, she won't get married. You must help us, brother-in-law," said Nirmala's other sister, Swaroopa.

"If everyone dumps all their troubles on us at once, how can we manage? Do you think we have millions of rupees lying around? After assessing what we have and what we don't, we'll see what we can do to help. We're also ageing and have

many health issues. Both of us have blood pressure and diabetes. Recently, the doctor said that his kidneys aren't functioning properly. We're spending a lot on doctors and medicines. Just recently, he promised to build a temple in the village for his sister. That will cost around thirty lakh rupees. After considering everything, we'll help you to the extent that we can," said Nirmala.

"How can we not do at least that much for the sister who raised us like a mother? All right, you said you'd help to the best of your ability. That's enough for us," said Ranganatham.

They all stayed at Aravind's house for two days and then left.

A few days later, the sarpanch called Aravind. He said they had found a good site just outside the village, owned by a devotee of Lord Venkateswara who was willing to donate the land for the temple. The sarpanch said that now the delay was on Aravind's part.

"I'll come to the village in five or six days with an architect, finalise the plan for the temple, and start the work," said Aravind.

While thinking about who to entrust with the construction of the temple, Aravind remembered his childhood friend, Vasanth Rao.

Vasanth Rao had completed his civil engineering degree and a diploma in architecture, gaining a reputation as an excellent architect by designing many buildings. Aravind and Vasanth Rao had studied in the same college and had become good friends. Even after Aravind moved to London, they occasionally kept in touch by phone.

Remembering Vasanth Rao, Aravind called him and said, "We need to meet."

"Give me your address, and I'll come to meet you," said Vasanth Rao. Two days later, they met. After reminiscing about their college days, Aravind told him about the temple construction.

"After visiting your village and inspecting the site, I'll offer suggestions on how best to construct the temple. I know a reputable builder who can handle the entire project," said Vasanth Rao.

"Thanks, Vasanth. What do you estimate the budget to be?" asked Aravind.

"Let's aim to complete it within 25 lakh rupees," replied Vasanth Rao.

"All right, draft a plan that can be executed within that budget," said Aravind.

Vasanth Rao and Aravind visited their village, inspected the site for the temple, created the construction plan, entrusted the work to the builder, made an initial payment of ten lakh rupees, and the construction began—all these steps were swiftly executed.

One day, after returning home from a check-up with his doctor for his blood pressure, Aravind received a call from his sister. As soon as he answered with "Hello," he heard his sister sobbing.

"Sister! What happened? Tell me, sister!" Aravind asked anxiously.

She continued to sob uncontrollably.

“What happened? Are you unwell? Did someone say something to you?”

After a while, her sobbing subsided, and there was a brief silence.

“It wasn’t just anyone. It was your elder brother himself. He came and verbally abused me, accusing, ‘You told your dear brother not to adopt our Ashish, didn’t you? And now you want him to spend 50 lakh rupees to build a temple in your name, but you don’t want to give us anything? Aren’t we his siblings too? Aren’t we as important to him as you are? You want all of his wealth for yourself or for his wife’s family. Recently, all of her family members visited and she promised them lakhs for sending their children to America and for arranging their daughters’ marriages. Are we less deserving than them? I’m warning you, you cunning bitch, tell him to adopt Ashish. He’ll listen to you. If you don’t, I’ll strangle you to death.’ After saying this, he left,” said his sister, resuming her sobbing. “His behaviour and words are terrifying, Aravind. He truly seems capable of killing me,” she added.

“I’ll speak to him right away, sister. Stay strong. I’ll come tomorrow and bring you here,” said Aravind.

Immediately, Aravind called his elder brother. “Brother, why such injustice? How could you speak to our sister like that? Is this your sense of decency? If you need money, I’ll give you some to the best of my ability, but don’t ask me to adopt Ashish,” said Aravind.

“We don’t need just some money. You must adopt Ashish. After your time, all your wealth must go to him. The sooner you agree, the better. Don’t test my patience,” replied his elder brother.

“What do you mean by testing your patience? Have I ever said I’d adopt Ashish? My wealth is my hard-earned property. I can do whatever I want with it and give it to whomever I please. You’ve no right to claim it all for yourself. The sooner you understand this, the better,” said Aravind.

“Oh! You think you can do whatever you want with your wealth? You think we have no right to it? You plan to give it all to your wife’s family, is that it? Let’s see how that works out. I warned you that the consequences would be severe. It seems you haven’t understood that yet,” said his elder brother, hanging up the phone.

The entire night, Aravind and his wife discussed this matter. Aravind could not figure out how to silence his elder brother.

As they were talking, around ten o’clock at night, Ashish, along with four of his friends, came to their house and started banging loudly on the front door. Despite the watchman’s attempts to stop them, he was unsuccessful.

“Who could be coming at this hour?” wondered Aravind as he went to open the door.

“Hello, Uncle. Good evening, my dear Uncle. Thank you for opening the door as soon as we knocked,” said Ashish, pushing past Aravind to enter the house. His four friends followed him inside and sat on the sofas. Aravind realised that they were all heavily drunk.

“We need a small favour, Uncle. Our car broke down nearby, and we need to get to a wedding in Kukatpally. We need to borrow your car for a while. Can you give us the keys, Uncle?”

“I won’t give you the car. It’s not in good condition. The brakes aren’t working properly, and the driver will take it to the mechanic to get it fixed tomorrow. All of you need to leave now. It’s time for us to sleep,” said Aravind.

“We’ll leave if you give us the car keys, Uncle. Otherwise, we’ll have to stay here for the night. We’ve had a bit to drink. Please forgive us if we’ve said anything wrong, my dear Uncle,” said Ashish.

“I already told you, the brakes aren’t working,” reiterated Aravind.

“Leave that to us, Uncle. We’ve driven cars without brakes many times. It’s not a big deal,” replied Ashish.

“What do you mean it’s not a big deal? If you get into an accident and kill someone. Please leave immediately, Ashish, or I’ll call your mother right now,” said Nirmala.

“Go ahead, my dear aunt. Tell my mother and father, tell both of them. If not today, then tomorrow, that car will be mine anyway. You will have to adopt me eventually. Then this car, this palatial building, this rich furniture, they’ll all be mine,” said Ashish.

“Who told you we’re going to adopt you? We already told your father that it’s not going to happen,” said Nirmala.

“Do you think my father will just agree because you said so? Nothing doing, nothing doing. If you don’t adopt me, then your sister Rajamma—I mean, my dear aunt—won’t be alive. Decide whether you want her or me,” said Ashish.

“This is blackmail,” said Nirmala.

Turning to Aravind, she continued, “Why aren’t you saying anything? Call the police and tell them he is causing a nuisance at midnight.”

“My uncle is a good man. He wouldn’t call the police. You are the one corrupting him. Give me the car keys, and we’ll leave. If you don’t give them, we’ll take them ourselves,” said Ashish. He then grabbed the car keys hanging from a hook and, along with his friends, started the car parked in the portico and drove away.

“What has happened to you? How can you be so powerless? They’ll never return the car. Will you file a police complaint tomorrow, or not?” asked Nirmala.

Aravind silently went to the room and lay down. His mind was blank. He had no idea what to do.

The next morning, they were hit with another shock. Aravind’s other two brothers and their wives came to his house.

“What’s going on, Aravind? Do you remember that we’re also your brothers?” said one brother.

“When your eyes are blinded by money, why would you remember us?” said the other brother.

“You’re giving everyone else everything. Why not give us something too?” said one brother’s wife.

“This big TV on the wall is ours,” said the other brother’s wife.

“What’s this rudeness? Have you come to take all our belongings?” said Nirmala.

“Indeed, last night, your elder brother’s son took your one crore-rupee car, did he not? If we take this TV, is it wrong? They say you’ve adopted your elder brother’s son and are giving him your entire property. Shouldn’t we get a share of your property as well? Give that big TV to one brother, give this sofa set to another brother, okay?” said the wife of the youngest brother, who is the youngest among them all. As she said this, they went outside and brought in an auto trolley and some people. They dismantled the large TV mounted on the wall. They also took the cups and plates from the dining hall. They opened the bureau and stuffed all the silk sarees into a bag they had brought with them. They loaded the sofas onto the trolley outside. They took anything they could find that was easy to carry. They completed the task within an hour and left. Watching the scene of their house being looted, both of them turned into lifeless statues. It felt as if a stupor had enveloped them. Despite everything that was happening, he stood there like a statue, not uttering a word. She tried to say something but no words came out of her mouth. She too turned into a statue.

Everything that happened replayed before his eyes like a movie. He went into the bedroom and closed his eyes. Various scenes appeared to him as if in a dream. Thieves had broken into the house and were stealing all the valuable items, they even took the watch and rings from his hand and the gold bangles from her hand. Despite such a catastrophe, he could do nothing. He turned into a motionless stone statue. All of them were their close relatives.

The second day after the incident, people from Nirmala’s side came and took away more items. They took the gold on Nirmala’s body, the rings on Aravind’s fingers, and the sarees in the bureau. “If we don’t take these, your brothers and sisters-in-law will come and take everything, leaving us with nothing. Already your elder brother’s son has taken your car. And your younger brothers came and took the TV and the furniture. Knowing this, we also came to take some items. Your brothers will leave nothing for you. Your elder brother’s son is a big rowdy. He is not just after your car. He is trying to take over your house as well. We’ve heard that he plans to bring a gang of rowdies to throw you out of the house and take it over. Knowing all this, we took this risk. Finally, one more thing. You must

send our boy to America somehow. I'll come again. Be careful with the money in the banks, son-in-law! We've heard that your elder brother is trying to take it by forging your signature. Your elder brother has a lot of experience in such matters. He is a politician after all. They say he's had many people eliminated without getting his hands dirty. Be careful, son-in-law." These words from Ranganatham echoed in Aravind's ears. After looting the house, they too left.

Do people really fall so low for money? Do they degrade themselves to the point of killing their fellow humans? The more he thought about it, the heavier his heart became. It felt as if someone was stabbing his heart with spears. Pain... pain... there was pain in his heart. He was having a stroke. His life would blend into the infinite air. It was inevitable.

He had nightmares throughout the night.

By morning, the landline phone in the hall rang. On the line was his elder brother.

"Very bad news, Aravind. Our elder sister passed away last night," he said.

"Elder brother! What are you saying? I don't understand it," Aravind said, almost shouting.

"At midnight, our elder sister, you might understand better if I say 'your sister,' had a heart attack. We called the local doctor. By the time the doctor arrived, her life had already been lost."

"This is a lie. She didn't have a heart attack. You killed my sister. You killed her. You killed her," shouted Aravind as he collapsed.

"What happened?" said Nirmala, who had just woken up, running towards him.

Aravind was unconscious.

"What happened, dear? What happened?" she shouted, but there was no response from him.

"Hello. What happened, Aravind?" hearing this on the phone, Nirmala picked up the receiver.

"Your sister-in-law had a heart attack and passed away last night. It seems he went into a big shock upon hearing this news. She was 90 years old. Such things happen at that age. We didn't expect him to react so intensely to such news."

"He's lost consciousness. We need to show him to a doctor immediately," said Nirmala, hanging up the phone.

When they thought of taking Aravind to the hospital, there was no car. Nirmala immediately called Vasanth Rao.

He came with a car within half an hour.

After taking Aravind to the hospital, the doctor examined him and immediately gave him an injection.

After the injection, Aravind regained consciousness.

“What has happened to me? Why have you brought me here? How is my sister? We must go to our village now. I must see my sister,” said Aravind.

“You shouldn’t go anywhere now. You must stay in this hospital until your condition stabilises,” said the doctor.

“No, doctor. I must go to my sister. Please, doctor,” pleaded Aravind.

Vasanth Rao took the doctor aside and explained that Aravind’s sister had passed away and that Aravind would not survive without seeing her one last time.

“Then take him in an ambulance. A doctor will accompany you,” said the doctor.

\* \* \*

Aravind and Nirmala arrived at their village in the ambulance.

Falling upon his sister’s corpse, Aravind wailed so intensely that it broke the hearts of those present. “Sister! Sister!” he cried, causing tears to well up in the eyes of everyone there.

Nirmala asked Radha, who worked as a maid in Rajamma’s house, “She was fine until yesterday, right? What happened? How did she die so suddenly?”

“She was fine until ten o’clock last night. At ten, Ashish Babu and his friends came. He said, ‘Tell your brother Aravind to adopt me. He will listen to you. If you don’t tell him by noon tomorrow, you won’t be alive.’ After he spoke like that and left, Rajamma fell unconscious. I was scared and ran to the doctor. By the time he arrived, it was all over,” said Radha.

Everyone there said, “Ashish must have killed her.” Some elders in the village suggested filing a police complaint against him. Meanwhile, Aravind’s elder brother arrived. “Don’t believe what they say. She died of a heart attack. She was 90 years old. She had many ailments like blood pressure and diabetes. I’ve arranged for the funeral. I’ve informed everyone in the village. If anyone speaks recklessly, I’ll deal with them. They’re saying Ashish came and threatened her. He didn’t come here last night at all. It’s better for everyone to keep quiet,” he said.

Aravind continued to weep inconsolably. No amount of comforting could calm him.

Aravind’s elder brother conducted Rajamma’s funeral in a very grand manner, ensuring the entire village participated. He made Ashish perform the ritual of placing fire on the pyre.

Ashish’s mother took the ten-tola gold chain and the gold bangles that were on Rajamma’s body.

Ten days later, Aravind’s elder brother conducted the small ritual, and eleven days later, he grandly organised the larger ritual, feeding the entire village.

About a month later, it seemed as though Aravind was slowly recovering.

One day, Aravind's elder brother came to Aravind's house, bringing all the relatives. Seeing them all at once, Nirmala was shocked. She immediately understood that they had come to fight over the property again. His health was already fragile. His kidneys were failing, and he was undergoing dialysis. The doctors repeatedly advised him to remain calm and avoid any stress. Seeing all these people now made her anxious about how much anxiety and tension he would experience.

Aravind's three elder brothers, their wives, their three children, their grandchildren, Aravind's three sisters, their husbands, their children, and their grandchildren—all on one side—along with Nirmala's parents, her two brothers, her three sisters, and their husbands—in total, there were more than twenty-five people. Seeing them gather like this all at once, as if coming for a battle, deeply unsettled Nirmala. They all came in and sat wherever they could find space—on the sofas, stools, dining chairs, or whatever they could find.

"I don't understand why you've all come here without informing us. His health is very poor. He's not yet recovered from the shock of his sister's death. The doctors have advised against any stress or shocks. Please allow him to remain at peace. It'd be best if you all left immediately," said Nirmala.

For a moment, everyone remained silent.

Aravind's elder brother was the first to speak.

"We've not come to cause any trouble. We've come to convey a message to our Aravind. We'll say what we need to in ten minutes and leave. Nirmala, ask him to come and sit here. I'll speak calmly," he said.

Realising that many people had come to his house, Aravind joined them on his own. They cleared a seat for him, and he sat down. Everyone greeted him respectfully. Some of the younger ones came and touched his feet.

Aravind's elder brother began, "Listen, Aravind! I've brought both your wife's relatives and ours to convey a message to you. We know you've not yet recovered from the shock of our sister's death. We don't intend to cause you any distress.

"The only matter is this. We know that you've accumulated enough wealth abroad to live comfortably for two or three generations. Since you've no children, no one can deny that we have a right to enjoy a portion of your property.

"We understand that this property is your hard-earned wealth, and you can give it to whomever you wish. But don't forget us, your closest relatives. None of us is financially well-off. We rely on agriculture for our livelihood. It's well known that those who depend on agriculture in Telangana aren't financially sound. We all have debts and the responsibility of arranging marriages for our daughters. Considering all these factors, we're requesting you to give us a portion of your property.



“I’ve learned how much property you have. This house alone is worth four crore rupees. The gold jewellery your wife has is worth around one crore rupees. Your bank deposits total about ten crore rupees. So your total assets are worth more than fifteen crore rupees. There are twenty-five of us. Even if you give each of us twenty lakh rupees, it will only amount to five crore rupees. So, we’re requesting you to give each of us twenty lakh rupees. “Specifically, I’m requesting that you give me this house as well, in addition to the twenty lakh rupees that are to be given to everyone else. In the olden days, the eldest brother was always given a larger share. Keep that in mind and give this house to me alone, but only after you and your wife are no longer here. As long as you are alive, this will remain your house. I’m asking that you will this house to me after your time,” said Aravind’s elder brother.

“Why should you get more and we get less? You brought us here claiming everyone would get an equal share, what’s this drama? We can’t agree to this at all,” said Nirmala’s father.

“Who cares about your agreement? Shut your mouth. If you talk too much, even the twenty lakh rupees won’t be given to your people.”

“We’ll see how you stop us from getting it,” said Nirmala’s sister’s husband.

“What will you see? He is part of our lineage. To be honest, since he has no children, all his property should come to us,” said Aravind’s elder brother.

That was it! They split into two factions and began shouting at each other.

Then Aravind, almost shouting, said, “Please, no one speak. My elder brother has said what he wanted to. I’ll think about how to resolve this issue and let you know. Please, all of you leave immediately.”

“What we’re asking is very reasonable. Twenty lakh rupees each. Just this house... for me.”

“Elder brother! Please don’t say anything further. I’ll think about it and let you know my decision,” said Aravind.

“They’ve already taken a car worth a crore rupees. Now they want the house too,” said Nirmala’s brother.

“Please, no one speak. Everyone leave. Come back after a month once I’ve made a decision,” said Aravind.

“Please do justice for us,” they said, joining their hands and bowing to Aravind before leaving.

After they left, Aravind and Nirmala discussed the matter at length.

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Two weeks after the incident, Aravind suffered a massive heart attack and died. Upon learning of her husband’s death, Nirmala collapsed from cardiac arrest.

Everyone in the neighborhood praised them, describing them as an ideal couple. They lived together for 50 years and even departed together.

Two weeks after their deaths, Aravind's friend Vasanth Rao called all their relatives to his house.

"Before Aravind passed away, he wrote a will. He registered it and kept it with me. This will be fully legally binding. The essence of it is to donate his entire estate to five orphanages here in Hyderabad, apart from the funds needed to complete the temple he was building in honour of his sister," said Vasanth Rao.

As soon as they heard this, everyone shouted, "No!" Some even fainted.

"Aravind entrusted me with the responsibility of ensuring this will is executed without fail. I'll now read out some key parts of this will. Please listen in silence," said Vasanth Rao, beginning to read the will.

"During my student days, I faced many hardships. After losing my parents at a young age, it was my elder sister who raised and educated me, even sending me to Hyderabad for my studies. Due to my dear friend Venkatesh, I went to England and earned well as a Chartered Accountant. All the property I've accumulated is my hard-earned wealth. Unfortunately, since my wife and I were unable to have children, our relatives began to covet our property as soon as we returned to India. I intended to distribute some portion to everyone. However, our relatives didn't wait until I decided to give it voluntarily. My elder brother put immense pressure on me to adopt his son and transfer all my property to him. His son took away my car. Other relatives also descended upon my house, taking all the valuable items. Our close relatives proved how much mental anguish they could cause us for money. My wife and I decided to change our plan to distribute a portion of our property to our relatives before we leave this world. We felt that donating it to orphanages would be a better use of our assets. Therefore, I've written in this will that my entire estate should go to several orphanages. I know this decision will shock our relatives. But they should understand that they are responsible for this; their greed is the cause of their distress."

As soon as Vasanth Rao finished reading, Aravind's elder brother stood up and said, "I'll see how his property won't come to us. I'll go to court. This will wasn't written by him. You wrote it yourself."

"Wherever you go, you won't achieve anything. I can prove that this will was written by Aravind. Don't waste your energy and money unnecessarily," said Vasanth Rao.

"I'll see, I'll see," said Aravind's elder brother as he left. All others followed him.

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*Note: The Telugu original was published in Palapitta, December 2018 Issue.*

## Echoes of Drama in World Literature: Mittapalli's Timeless Legacy from Nalanda, India

— E. Ram Bhaskar Raju, Adi Ramesh and Ch. Jaiwant Rao

*"Numberless are the world's wonders, but none more wonderful than man."*  
(Sophocles' *Antigone*, Ode I)

Dr Rajeshwar Mittapalli's *Nalanda Lectures on World Literature: Volume I: Drama* is an unusual work encapsulating drama's evolution, diversity, and cultural significance across eras and geographies. As the inaugural volume of a planned four-part series, this volume offers an insightful exploration into dramatic traditions, from ancient Greek tragedies to contemporary plays infused with existential concerns. Delivered originally as a series of classroom lectures, Mittapalli's volume retains the informality and dynamism of spoken discourse, providing an immersive experience for readers. Initially captured in audio, these lectures have been meticulously transcribed over months, bringing the classroom experience straight to the page. It's an unfiltered, authentic glimpse into the vibrant exchange between a brilliant professor and a curious audience—making you feel like you're right there, soaking it all in. His academic legacy is a testament to his remarkable contributions to scholarship, with five influential works of literary criticism, three transformative translations, 30 expertly curated volumes on diverse topics, and 95 articles published in prestigious journals and collections.

Reviewing his latest masterpiece, *Nalanda Lectures on World Literature, Volume I: Drama*, is a privilege and an inspiring opportunity to delve into his profound insights. The volume unfolding across one lakh eighty-two thousand and five hundred words and more than seven hundred pages, this masterpiece weaves together dramatic literature, insightful teaching, and profound cultural critique.

### Drama's Foundations: A Journey to the Origins

Mittapalli's discussion begins with the origins of drama, particularly in the morality and miracle plays of medieval England, before delving into the classical roots of the form. Highlighting Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as a quintessential example, he articulates the enduring power of Greek tragedy, characterised by its moral questions and cathartic structure. He writes, "Drama is an imitation of life, but not a mirror imitation." This assertion underscores the essence of drama as an art form that distills life's complexities into moments of heightened clarity.

His exploration of Sanskrit drama, with Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntalam* as a focal point, is particularly engaging. He draws parallels between the emotional

undercurrents of Kalidasa's work and Shakespearean plays, emphasising love, separation, and reunion themes. By juxtaposing the Gandharva marriage of Shakuntala and Dushyanta with Hamlet's existential dilemmas, Mittapalli bridges disparate cultural traditions, illustrating how drama reflects the human condition universally.

Furthermore, his analysis of the structural innovations in Greek and Sanskrit Drama explores their influence on subsequent theatrical traditions. He points out how the Greek concept of catharsis was found to be parallel to the Indian rasa theory, both aiming to evoke an emotional and intellectual response from the audience. This cross-cultural comparison enriches the reader's understanding of drama as a global phenomenon.

### **Drama as a Mirror of Societal Change**

One of Mittapalli's strengths is contextualising drama within its historical milieu. The book meticulously traces the trajectory of drama as a reflection of societal transformations. For instance, Elizabethan drama, epitomised by Shakespeare, is portrayed as a vibrant reflection of Renaissance humanism and optimism. He opined that the Elizabethan stage captured life's grandeur and contradictions, underscoring the interplay of comedy and tragedy in Shakespeare's works. Drama is the rebellion of the ordinary against the tyranny of silence.

In contrast, the Restoration period's licentious comedies, such as William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, are critiqued as products of an age marked by moral decay and aristocratic indulgence. Mittapalli's analysis is incisive. Restoration drama mirrored its era's preoccupation with wit, intrigue, and superficiality, offering laughter but little substance. Yet, he acknowledges its technical brilliance and influence on later theatrical traditions.

The author's treatment of Victorian Drama provides another compelling example of how drama mirrors societal values and conflicts. He comments on playwrights like Oscar Wilde and explores how George Bernard Shaw used the stage to critique class structures, gender roles, and moral hypocrisies. For instance, Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is analysed as a comedic critique of Victorian social pretensions. Wilde's satirical dialogues remind us that drama can subvert societal norms while entertaining audiences.

The tome's discussion of realism and its evolution during the late 19th and early 20th centuries is equally noteworthy. Mittapalli mentions a passing remark that the contributions of Henrik Ibsen, whose plays like *A Doll's House* revolutionised the portrayal of everyday life and social issues on stage. Ibsen's emphasis on realism challenged traditional notions of heroism and morality, bringing the struggles of ordinary people to the forefront."

### **Philosophy Meets Performance: The Existential Turn**

The author's treatment of modern drama is particularly compelling as he navigates its shift from realism to existentialism. Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* is analysed, and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is mentioned as emblematic of 20th-century drama's preoccupation with alienation and absurdity. In the existential world, drama no longer provides clear answers; instead, it reveals the uncertainties of life.

Delving into Beckett's sparse staging and looping dialogue, he refers to the playwright's knack for stirring profound questions about meaning and futility. In stark contrast, he delves into Pinter's hallmark techniques of 'menace and manipulation,' intricately dissecting the psychological disintegration of his characters. These intertwined explorations illuminate the profound themes of modern drama, daring readers to grapple with its haunting and unflinching truths.

His remarks on absurdist drama extend beyond its themes to its impact on audience perception. He argues that the fragmentation and ambiguity inherent in works like *Waiting for Godot* compel audiences to confront their existential fears. He acknowledges that the absence of resolution reflects life's unpredictability, highlighting the genre's lasting importance in a fast-changing world.

### **The Pedagogy of Drama: Mittapalli's Unique Contribution**

What sets this book apart is its pedagogical approach. Mittapalli retains the vibrancy of his classroom lectures, complete with digressions and episodic moments, creating an intimate connection with readers. The aim of the work is not a polished treatise but a living dialogue between teacher and student. This conversational style makes complex concepts accessible without sacrificing intellectual rigour.

Including abstracts at the beginning of each lecture is a thoughtful touch, allowing readers to navigate the dense material selectively. Mittapalli's decision to present the lectures verbatim preserves their authenticity, though it occasionally results in a lack of structural coherence. However, this minor drawback is outweighed by the overall richness and depth of the volume.

The pedagogical value of the book extends to its detailed analysis of dramatic techniques. The author delves into the elements of drama, such as plot, character, dialogue, and staging, providing readers with a comprehensive toolkit for understanding and appreciating theatrical works. His explanation of concepts like catharsis, the tragic flaw, and poetic justice are particularly enlightening, offering fresh perspectives on age-old theories. According to Mittapalli's perspective, poetic justice ensures that villains are punished, heroes are rewarded, and a sense of moral balance is maintained.

The author also demonstrates a keen awareness of his audience, tailoring his discussions to suit students new to the subject and seasoned scholars. For students, his accessible explanations and vivid examples transform potentially intimidating material into engaging learning experiences. For educators, his lecture-based format serves as a model for teaching complex literary theories in a relatable manner.

Moreover, Mittapalli's inclusion of real-life analogies and cultural references enriches the learning experience. For example, his comparison of soliloquies in drama to moments of personal introspection resonates universally, making abstract concepts more tangible. Similarly, his discussions of dramatic unity and character development are illustrated with anecdotes that bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Another notable aspect of the book's pedagogy is its emphasis on the performative nature of drama. He consistently reminds readers that drama is not merely a literary form but a living art meant to be experienced on stage. He opines that 'Drama' is a visual and auditory medium; its true essence unfolds in performance. This focus on the performative aspects encourages readers to approach dramatic texts holistically, considering the written words and their potential realisation on stage.

Lastly, his pedagogical approach is marked by its inclusivity. He ensures readers understand drama's global scope comprehensively by covering many dramatic traditions—from Greek tragedies to Sanskrit epics, from Restoration comedies to modern absurdist plays. His sensitivity to cultural and historical contexts further enhances this inclusivity, which adds depth and nuance to his analyses. So long as humanity seeks to reflect on its joys, sorrows, and dilemmas, according to Mittapalli, drama will find its stage.

### **Drama's Enduring Legacy: a Conclusion**

Mittapalli concludes with a poignant reflection on the future of drama, questioning its place in an era dominated by film and digital media. His lectures explain that drama, once a communal experience, now competes with solitary forms of entertainment. Yet, he seems to remain optimistic about its enduring relevance to the saga of human life.

The volume's final chapters serve as a call to action for readers and practitioners of drama. Mittapalli emphasises the need to preserve the theatrical tradition in the face of technological advancements and changing audience preferences. He suggests that drama's unique ability to combine storytelling with live performance ensures its continued significance in the cultural landscape.

Mittapalli compares drama to a lighthouse in a particularly evocative metaphor, illuminating the turbulent seas of human emotion and thought. He appears to proclaim that drama guides us through the storms of our existence, providing entertainment and a profound sense of connection and understanding.

This creative framing underscores drama's essential role as a bridge between generations, cultures, and individual experiences. By engaging with Mittapalli's comprehensive exploration, readers are not merely learning about drama—they are invited to participate in its living tradition, ensuring that this ancient art continues to thrive in modern times.

In *Nalanda Lectures on World Literature: Volume I: Drama*, Rajeshwar Mittapalli successfully combines erudition with accessibility. His exploration of drama as a literary and performative art form resonates deeply, offering valuable insights to students, teachers, and enthusiasts alike. The volume educates and inspires us by traversing centuries and cultures, reminding us of drama's unparalleled ability to mirror and shape human experience.

Drama, with its vivid tapestry of emotions and timeless truths, transcends the stage to touch the essence of life itself. As we turn the final page of this remarkable exploration, let us carry forward its wisdom—reminding us that our lives, like the greatest dramas, are shaped by our choices and the stories we dare to tell!

*“The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.”*  
(*Hamlet*, Act II, Scene II).

***Unwinding Self:***  
**The Rhythms and Reflections of**  
**Susheel Kumar Sharma's Lyrical Web**

— E. Ram Bhaskar Raju

In the cacophony of a modern world, where moments slip through our fingers like grains of sand, the *Unwinding Self* stands as a gentle whisper, urging us to pause, reflect, and rediscover the quiet poetry within our lives. Professor Susheel Kumar Sharma, A Professor of English at the University of Allahabad with his profound command of language and human experience, crafts an anthology that serves as both mirror and lamp—reflecting the shared tapestry of our struggles and triumphs while illuminating paths often obscured by the shadows of daily existence.

This collection is not merely an exploration of words but an intimate journey through the emotional landscapes of humanity. Sharma's verses delve into the profound, the mundane, the sacred, and the profane, weaving a narrative that binds the universal with the deeply personal. Each poem resonates like a heartbeat, reminding us of the interconnectedness of our joys, sorrows, and dreams.

Dedicated to the timeless craft of poetry, this book is a tribute to the teachers who inspired Sharma's love for verse and the enduring power of art to transform, heal, and connect. As you turn these pages, you are invited to unwind the threads of your being, to question, to feel, and perhaps, to find solace in the shared rhythms of our existence.

Welcome to Susheel Kumar Sharma's *Unwinding Self*—a sanctuary for the seeker, the dreamer, and the wanderer within us all.

**A Symphony of Themes**

The thematic breadth of *Unwinding Self* is one of its most compelling aspects. Sharma's poetry traverses the personal, the universal, the ephemeral, and the eternal. His exploration of identity and human struggle finds resonance in poems like *The Black Experience* and *Me, A Black Doxy*. In these pieces, Sharma poignantly portrays the alienation and resilience of marginalized voices. Through vivid lines such as, "My skin is black / My soul ain't black / My money ain't black / Their acts is black," he lays bare the injustices of a prejudiced world while asserting the integrity of the Self. These poems resonate with readers who have faced or witnessed societal prejudices, turning personal pain into collective introspection.



Spirituality, another dominant theme, is intricately woven throughout the collection. In *Kabir's Chadar*, the poet reflects on purity and imperfection through a metaphorical tapestry: "*Even the blood stains of abortion / The burn marks of jealousy / The blotches of over-ambition... / Go unnoticed on mine.*" Sharma's invocation of Kabir, a saint-poet known for his egalitarian and mystical views, situates his work within a larger tradition of Indian spiritual and philosophical inquiry. His poems do not shy away from difficult questions about morality and redemption, inviting readers to confront their imperfections.

Themes of modernity and tradition also pervade the collection, often in a state of tension. In *The New Age*, Sharma critiques the superficialities of contemporary life, asking pointedly, "Do the stars matter?" and lamenting the loss of meaningful human connections amidst materialistic pursuits. Conversely, in *Durga Puja in 2013*, he celebrated cultural heritage while acknowledging its evolution: "*The pandal is drenched in rainwater. / Durga Ma's bindi stays. / It is time for Ma to return home.*" Sharma invites readers to reflect on their place in the rapidly changing world through these contrasts.

### **Stylistic Brilliance**

Sharma's stylistic choices elevate the emotional and intellectual resonance of his poetry. His language is simple yet profound, with cultural idioms and philosophical musings. The interplay of imagery and metaphor is particularly striking. In *Snapshots*, he captures fleeting moments with minimalistic elegance: "*The river has hung / A boulder in its neck. / It has got stuck in the dam. / Damn the dam.*" Such lines exemplify Sharma's ability to juxtapose natural imagery with human emotion, creating layers of meaning that unfold with each reading.

His command of tone and voice is equally commendable. In *Thus Spake a Woman*, the poet adopts a defiant and introspective voice to articulate the struggles of a caged spirit: "*Do I need wings to fly / Or the sky to make me soar? / I am the bird of a cage.*" This voice is markedly different from the melancholic yet hopeful tone in *The New Year Dawn*, where he writes, "*In the New Year, / I promise, / I take on life and also death / With equal strides.*" Sharma's ability to shift tones and perspectives showcases his versatility as a poet.

Moreover, Sharma's form use varies across the collection, from compact stanzas to sprawling narratives. This structural diversity mirrors the thematic expansiveness, allowing the reader to experience the poetry as isolated gems and part of a larger mosaic. For instance, *Bubli Poems* offers a series of interconnected vignettes that portray a young woman navigating societal expectations and personal desires. This layered approach ensures that each poem contributes to the collection's overarching narrative without losing charm.

### Cultural and Socio-Political Undertones

Rooted in Indian culture, *Unwinding Self* reflects the socio-political realities of contemporary India. Sharma's poems often serve as a critique of societal norms and systemic injustices. In *Durga Puja in 2013*, he intertwines personal nostalgia with communal celebration and ecological commentary, capturing the multifaceted nature of cultural festivals. The lines "*The monumental pandal / The home for Ma for four days / Well lit to compete with stars and the moon*" evoke the grandeur of the Durga Puja while subtly questioning its environmental impact.

Sharma also grapples with feminism and gender dynamics in poems like *Thus Spake a Woman*. Through the voice of a female speaker, he exposes the constraints imposed by patriarchy: "*My dream will not lie / Snowed and buried / In the heap of broken images.*" This empathetic portrayal of women's struggles against societal constraints lends the collection a progressive dimension, making it relevant to contemporary discourses on gender equality.

The poet's engagement with socio-political issues extends to broader themes of power and inequality. In *The Black Experience*, Sharma critiques colonial and racial injustices with poignant clarity. Similarly, in *Chasing a Dream on the Ganges*, he reflects on the intersection of spirituality and environmental degradation, reminding readers of their collective responsibility toward the planet.

### Critique and Considerations

While *Unwinding Self*'s thematic and stylistic richness is undeniable, some poems may feel overly dense or didactic to confident readers. Profound philosophical inquiries can sometimes overshadow the emotional immediacy that makes poetry relatable and accessible. For instance, the intellectual depth of *On Reading Langston Hughes' "Theme for English B"* may alienate readers unfamiliar with Hughes' work or the cultural context it references.

Additionally, the collection's wide-ranging themes sometimes lack a unifying thread, which might challenge readers seeking a cohesive narrative arc. While the diversity of topics is a strength, it occasionally creates a sense of fragmentation. Readers may yearn for a more pronounced connection between the personal, cultural, and universal motifs.

That said, these are minor critiques of an otherwise remarkable collection. Sharma's ability to interlace personal, cultural, and universal themes makes *Unwinding Self* a valuable contribution to Indian English poetry. His work invites readers to engage with complex questions about identity, morality, and modernity, rewarding those who delve into its depths.

## Conclusion

In *Unwinding Self*, Susheel Kumar Sharma does more than present a collection of poems; he crafts a mosaic of human existence, where every piece—joyous, melancholic, or reflective—finds its place in the larger narrative of life. His poetry transcends mere artistic expression to become a call to arms for the literary world, remembering its sacred duty of entertaining, enlightening, and elevating the human spirit.

Through his evocative verses, Sharma implores the literary community to champion truth, beauty, and introspection in an era dominated by fleeting trends and superficial distractions. His poetry reminds us that the written word can challenge norms, offer solace in times of despair, and nurture hope in hearts seeking direction. He celebrates the resilience of the human spirit, even as he critiques societal apathy and the loss of empathy in a rapidly changing world.

To the literary world, Sharma's work stands as a reminder of literature's transformative potential. It calls on poets, writers, and thinkers to embrace vulnerability, to reflect the unspoken fears and aspirations of the marginalized, and to write not just for acclaim but for posterity. He envisions a literary culture where words are wielded responsibly—where poetry does not merely echo the din of the present but dares to imagine a more compassionate and inclusive future.

*Unwinding Self* is a timeless reminder that poetry is not an escape from reality but an intimate dialogue with it. In honouring the traditions of the past while addressing the challenges of today, Sharma urges us all—readers and writers alike—to preserve the sanctity of the poetic voice as a guiding light in the darkness.

Let this collection serve as an inspiration, a challenge, and a testament to the enduring relevance of poetry in an increasingly fragmented world. The literary world must heed its message, embracing its role as the custodian of humanity's collective conscience and enduring dreams.

## Final Thoughts on Publication

Given its thematic richness and literary craftsmanship, *Unwinding Self* deserves a prominent place in academic discussions and literary studies. It provides valuable insights for scholars in literature, cultural studies, and postcolonial discourse. The book's inclusion in Scopus-indexed publications would significantly enhance its academic and literary reach.

### “Moments of De-Stressing the Soul”

*Beneath Kabir's chadar, thin and white,  
Lies a world of stains, both wrong and right.*

*A tapestry woven with dreams and despair,  
Of lives unspoken, caught unaware.*

*The Ganges winds through ancient plains,  
Her whispers echo joys and pains.  
Pilgrims tread where Bhagirathi prayed,  
Yet nature's fury leaves paths decayed.*

*Bubli, a bubble, restless and bright,  
Seeks her freedom in the city's light.  
Her laughter hides a simmering fight,  
As she dances through shadows of wrong and right.*

*Durga's pandal withstands the storm,  
While traditions bend but hold their form.  
The drums of the dhak, the rain's refrain,  
Call forth the goddess through joy and pain.*

*Black skins cry truths, their scars laid bare,  
Injustice met with a poet's stare.  
Through Hughes's eyes, the world redefined,  
A shared humanity, painfully aligned.*

*Snapshots of life, moments untamed,  
A world that burns yet remains unnamed.  
From love and loss to the poet's plea,  
Sharma unwinds what it means to be.*

*In every line, a voice resounds,  
Through time and culture, it unbounds.  
A mirror held to a fractured earth,  
Seeking redemption, and rebirth.*

## Decoding Dr. Enjapoori — A Creative Critique

— Erra Namratha

In the silent pauses between words, poetry holds the key to unlocking the hidden chambers of our soul, revealing truths we never knew we were seeking. Through its delicate waltz of language, rhythm, and emotion, poetry doesn't just echo the human experience; it distils it into fleeting moments of pure epiphany. This review takes you through verses that speak directly to the heart, gently urging us to stop, reflect, and peel back the layers of meaning in every line. Here, each stanza is a quiet conversation, each metaphor a window into new worlds, and every pause a breath that bridges the personal with the universal. Let us delve into this alchemical dance of words, where language moves beyond simple expression to become a portal—transforming how we see, feel, and understand the world around us. A poem is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you, the less you know!

With great enthusiasm, I delve into the poetry of Dr. Enjapoori Satyanarayana, a distinguished Associate Professor of English at Kakatiya Government College, Warangal. His works offer a profound exploration of the human experience, seamlessly blending personal reflection with incisive social interpretation. Through his powerful poems, Dr. Satyanarayana invites readers to reflect on life's complexities, relationships, and the fragility of human existence, skillfully blending personal insight with universal themes. Here is a succinct yet evocative review of the poems discussed in the brief introduction, capturing their essence precisely in the review concerned.\

### 1. "PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN CITIZEN"

#### Introduction:

This poem is a heartfelt meditation on the passage of time, the loss of innocence, and the disillusionment accompanying adulthood's burdens. The tone moves seamlessly from nostalgic to contemplative as the speaker wrestles with the realities of life, both personal and societal. The critique of the world and its values feels poignant, as the poem presents a sobering view of existence, where dreams are often crushed under the weight of time and circumstance. Ultimately, it reflects the inner turmoil of the human condition—caught between youthful idealism and the world's harsh truths.

*When, to my parents, I was born  
On a star-crossed morn  
Thought they, it'd be alright  
And their joy knows no bounds in sight*

*As is wont, the unforgiving time  
 Stealthily walked away without any chime  
 I, like others, getting stuck into His fold  
 Day by day unselfconsciously, became old  
 The world with all its nuances  
 Seemed to unfold for me manifold chances  
 Before I had the taste of innocent life  
 I found myself in the mortal strife*

*Now I am seven and twenty  
 Weighed with the burdens aplenty  
 In no time, apart from worldly transient luxuries  
 There grew in proportion the taxing queries*

*The word into which I was brought  
 Is, in reality no utopia to be sought  
 Overcome by the business of gains and losses  
 Lost I am in the midst of millions of kindred masses*

*Who, reigned by the successors of Nero  
 Have been rendered into an valid zero.*

#### **Review:**

This poem poignantly reflects the quiet yet profound passage of time, from the innocence of birth to the weight of adulthood. The speaker begins with the hopeful joy of their birth, yet as the years pass, the carefree nature of youth gives way to the harsh reality of life's struggles. At 27, the speaker expresses a sense of disillusionment, burdened not only by the expectations and complexities of adulthood but also by existential questions. Once filled with infinite potential, the world now feels like a maze of transient concerns, overshadowed by the relentless pursuit of material gain. The closing lines, invoking the successors of Nero, suggest a deep cynicism about societal values and a sense of being lost in the crowd—a striking metaphor for modern disillusionment. The poem's reflective tone and vivid imagery capture the tension between youthful optimism and the sobering realities of life, making it a poignant exploration of personal growth, societal disillusionment, and the passage of time.

## **2. "NOSTALGIA"**

#### **Introduction:**

This poem offers a poignant and heartfelt tribute to rural life, the warmth of family, and the timeless beauty of nature, all wrapped in a profound sense of loss and reverence for a past that is now distant. Its understated simplicity becomes

its greatest strength, allowing readers to pause and reflect on the enduring values of home, heritage, and belonging. Through straightforward yet emotionally charged language, the poem resonates deeply with anyone who has experienced the bittersweet pull of nostalgia for a simpler, more grounded time. It invites readers to reconnect with the quiet, powerful essence of life that once was while celebrating the timeless bonds that continue to shape our understanding of place and identity.

*The home I was born in  
Had a roof of thatch though  
Yet it was luxury inn  
As far as I did know*

*Siblings were we all eight  
Used to fight like chicks for the crumbs  
And huddled for bed at night  
In the warmth of mother's limbs*

*The backyard tree that saw father grow  
From a child to man  
Protected us from the Sun's glow  
And while playing underneath, it became a lawn*

*The woodpecker's beat  
And newborn lamb's bleat  
Were the melodies of nature  
That I heard on home pasture*

*Bliss was it to be born then  
Apart from the present brethren  
Pristine life of mine  
Was of a boon of rustic shrine.*

**Review:**

This poem beautifully captures the essence of a simple, rustic childhood filled with warmth, innocence, and family love. The speaker takes us back to their humble home, with its thatched roof and the comforting embrace of a mother, painting a picture of nostalgia that invites us to reflect on the beauty of simpler times and close-knit relationships. The opening stanza contrasts modest living with a sense of hidden luxury—where, for a child, a humble home feels like the most prosperous place on earth. It's a subtle reminder of how childhood innocence often distorts the world in the most heartwarming way. The playful bickering between siblings, followed by the tender image of them huddling together at night, highlights their intimacy and bond, capturing sibling dynamics in their purest

form. The backyard tree stands as a symbol of protection, growth, and continuity. It holds the father's memories while sheltering the speaker's presence, offering physical shade and a metaphorical refuge for shared memories. Nature, with its woodpecker's rhythm and lamb's calls, forms the backdrop of the speaker's childhood, grounding them in the beauty of the world around them. The poem ends on a wistful note, contrasting the "pristine life" of the past with the complexities of the present. The speaker's lament, "Bliss was it to be born then," expresses a yearning for a time that felt purer and more sacred—something modern life seems to have lost. Ultimately, the poem is a quiet celebration of rural life, family, and nature, tinged with a deep sense of loss for a simpler, more innocent time. Its straightforward language packs an emotional punch, resonating with anyone who has ever longed for the simplicity and warmth of their past.

### 3. "FOURLINERS ON TREE"

#### Introduction:

This poem eloquently intertwines the fragility of life with the enduring forces of nature, offering a sobering reflection on the interconnectedness of all actions, whether creative or destructive. Much like the tree it contemplates, these actions are rooted in a delicate balance, reminding us of life's inherent paradoxes. Rich with depth and ripe for contemplation, the poem invites readers to meditate on the profound complexities of existence, where every act—no matter how small—echoes through time and nature.

*On a day driven by hunger and greed  
I chewed a stolen fruit to its core  
And after nothing to do more  
I hid it in earth and let it breed*

*Of all God's creation, noble is tree  
Taste of its fruit caused the first Man's fall though  
Yet it offers man everything for free  
And in its felling lies his fall he'd know*

*Like a mother, the earth bears the pains  
While giving birth to a sapling  
But it forgets all that when it brings down the rains  
From the dark and downy clouds passing.*

#### Review:

This poem unfurls with a masterful blend of metaphor, walking the fine line between human desire and its consequences, offering a reflection on Paradise Lost and a stark warning. From the first stanza, we are thrust into a moment of moral



complexity where hunger and greed intertwine. The “stolen fruit,” chewed “to its core,” conjures an act of transgression, yet burying it hints at an undercurrent of remorse or an attempt at redemption. The notion of the fruit “breeding” speaks to creation and the inescapable nature of consequences. Therein lies the paradox: destruction and rebirth coexist in one fleeting act. The second stanza draws us deeper, where the tree—symbolic of knowledge, life, and death—emerges as a tragic figure. The mention of “the first Man’s fall” invokes the Biblical Eden, where the tree’s fruit marks the beginning of humankind’s loss of innocence. Yet, the tree’s offering of “everything for free” is a poignant reminder of nature’s boundless generosity. It is a metaphor for the eternal cycle of life—a life-giving force unspoiled by human flaws, even as humankind continues to fell the trees that sustain him. The final stanza presents a tender contradiction: the earth is a nurturing mother and a relentless force of nature. It “bears the pains” of creation, echoing the silent labour of motherhood, but this maternal figure also harbours vengeance. “The rains” arrive, perhaps alluding to destructive floods or the inevitable passage of time—suggesting that, though ever-giving, nature also holds the power to undo all it creates. The poem becomes a poignant meditation on life’s cyclical nature—creation and destruction entwined in a constant dance. Through vivid imagery, it explores the rawness of human existence and the inevitable link between humanity and the earth. This meditation on sin, creation, and decay resonates deeply, revealing the unspoken truth that every birth carries the weight of its eventual end. A reflection of the beauty and the brutality of nature’s eternal contradictions, this poem is both unsettling and breathtaking.

#### 4. “LIFE BOAT”

##### Introduction:

This poem beautifully captures the fleeting essence of human existence, reflecting on the folly of prioritizing material wealth over the soul’s nourishment. With a gentle yet profound reminder to seek balance, cherish time, and nurture our inner selves, it resonates deeply, urging us to reflect before it’s too late. The simplicity of its rhyme scheme, far from diminishing its impact, amplifies the clarity and emotional depth, making the message both accessible and stirring.

*Ignorant are the men who always chatter  
Only about the subjects of money matter  
Forgetting how invaluable is the time  
They regret neglecting the soul in their prime*

*When each faculty of the body fails  
They begin to order the things in a hurry  
But finding the life-boat out of control they worry  
And realize it is to no avail now to hoist the sails.*

*They leave a trail of failures behind  
For the young not to imitate in kind  
And they become a thing of the past  
No sooner do they breathe their last.*

**Review:**

This poem offers a heartfelt reflection on life's fleeting nature and the dangers of chasing material wealth at the expense of the soul. The poet critiques those consumed by the pursuit of money, who neglect the intangible treasures of time and inner peace. The first stanza paints a stark picture of men caught in the "chatter" of wealth, blind to the value of time and spirit. The phrase "they regret neglecting the soul in their prime" is a poignant reminder of how people often lose what truly matters in the race for riches—only to regret it when time slips away irretrievably. In the second stanza, urgency emerges as these men face the decline of their physical selves. The metaphor of a "*lifeboat out of control*" vividly captures their desperate struggle, too late to steer back to what they ignored. This symbolizes how the obsession with success leaves one unprepared for life's more profound, meaningful challenges. The final stanza strikes a sombre tone, with the "trail of failures" left behind as a warning to the younger generation. "No sooner do they breathe their last" reminds us of life's transience, urging us to consider how those who live solely for wealth are often forgotten, leaving behind no true legacy—only a shadow of empty pursuit. Ultimately, the poem compels us to reflect on our priorities, urging us not to squander our most precious resources—time, inner peace, and the soul—to pursue fleeting desires. The question lingers: What will we leave behind when our time is up?

**5. "FATHER UNLUCKY"**

**Introduction:**

The poem reflects on the emotional distance that arises as generations evolve, contrasting the quiet, nurturing wisdom of the past with the pursuit of worldly success in the present. In its final lines, a deep melancholy emerges as the grandfather, though weary, finds comfort in the shade of the tree he has tended, symbolizing the enduring love and care he has given. Meanwhile, the father and child focused on their ambitions, remain disconnected from the emotional roots the tree represents. This poignant meditation explores the costs of progress, urging a return to the "green love" of more straightforward, more intimate connections and honouring the quiet wisdom of previous generations.

*Grandfather brought home a sapling  
Father went to a nursery then  
Unwilling to part his company*

*Sapling grew straight and steady  
 With branches spread thick and green*  
  
*Father went to school and then college  
 – Far away in town*  
  
*Grandfather bent with age  
 All the same, he worked with rage  
 He desired to see his son grow---*  
  
*The tree became taller  
 Caressing the rooftop with its tender boughs*  
  
*Father was busy planning for my future  
 He left grandfather alone for city  
 In the shabby house with mud walls giving way  
 He built a house of brick and concrete  
 I left it to make my career in an alien land  
 Grandfather weak and weary  
 Spent his life's evening reclining in the shade of tree*  
  
*Unlucky, father missed the green love  
 Of his only lad and the shade of the aged plant home*

**Review:**

This poem poignantly explores the cyclical nature of life, growth, and the passage of time through the metaphor of a tree and generational relationships. It begins with the image of a sapling, symbolizing hope and potential, cared for by the grandfather and later by the father. As the tree grows, so does the family, and each generation gradually distances itself from the roots that once connected them. The grandfather, who plants the seed, watches with pride and longing as the father moves away for education and work, leaving the older adult to age in the place he once nurtured. The father, in turn, becomes absorbed in his ambitions, losing touch with the simplicity of the tree's shade. Finally, the child, the speaker, follows a similar path, leaving behind the old house and the tree in pursuit of career goals in an unfamiliar place. The poem contrasts the father's material success—a brick and concrete house—with the grandfather's fading life in a "shabby house with mud walls," highlighting the generational shift in values. While the father seeks stability and progress, he overlooks the more profound connection to nature, family, and peace that the tree represents. This suggests that something vital may be lost in pursuing modernity and personal success. The rich imagery, particularly of the tree's branches "caressing the rooftop with its tender boughs,"

beautifully captures the growing distance between the generations. The tree is a silent, steadfast witness to the family's journey, offering shade and comfort to the grandfather while the others remain absorbed in their pursuits.

## 6. "CARICATURE"

### Introduction:

*Caricature* is a profound meditation on survival, gender, and the intricate complexities of societal roles. Its narrative challenges readers to critically examine their assumptions about identity, survival, and the various personas individuals adopt to manoeuvre through a world that is often quick to judge yet slow to understand. The work compels reflection on how societal systems—despite their promises of order—frequently leave individuals grappling for mere survival at the intersection of societal expectations and human needs.

*He is always there at the intersection  
Waiting for the men to halt on red light  
He looks like a lady with motley attire on  
Femininity is sure to feel jealous at his sight.*

*He accosts only the young hearts for alms  
He has a knack to take on the customer  
When he looks away to avoid the encounter  
With a lusty sound in the hollow of his palms.*

*He makes no mistake in judging the age  
Of the men who can be his potential bait  
Lewd remarks he passes with a gaze  
That makes the man to give in without a wait.*

*He eludes all the known labels  
Of social relations in fashion  
Proximity with him while he babbles  
Is that you take in with a caution.*

*It is not easy to don the role  
As he does to earn his living  
But easy money drives youth to enroll  
In the sect that shows the signs of thriving.*

*Appears that to fill one's belly  
It needs the role reversal  
And shaming the parts underbelly  
Is not for him unnatural.*

*He is not as you think a freak  
He becomes a willing eunuch  
Who prefers a lingo-tongue in cheek  
For a dime to douse the fire in stomach.*

*Man already with his insatiable greed  
Has plundered the bounty of nature  
Now he cannot but help the creed  
Witnessing his own unmanly caricature.*

**Review:**

“Caricature” emerges as a searing critique of the human cost of survival within a society that demands conformity at the expense of dignity. The poem sketches a figure entrenched in the margins—an embodiment of contradictions, discomforts, and the dissonance between social norms and personal reality. This character, which exists at the intersection of identity and survival, transcends traditional boundaries of gender, class, and morality, refusing to fit within the neatly packaged labels society so desperately clings to. Through the motif of the “red light,” the poem symbolizes literal traffic and the moral and emotional pauses imposed on those who exist beyond acceptable societal norms. The figure’s “motley attire” speaks to their fluidity and ability to navigate the spaces between identities shaped by and shaping their circumstances, simultaneously a victim and a perpetrator. The portrayal of this character is not merely a critique of individual survival but of a system that demands adaptation in the form of “role reversals” that strip away identity and agency. The poem’s subversion of gender roles is striking—*“Femininity is sure to feel jealous at his sight”*—suggesting a disruption of the gender binary. The character is neither entirely male nor female, embodying a potent ambiguity that exposes the fluidity of identity in a world hell-bent on categorization. Their calculated performance—whether through lewd remarks or a gaze that traps men in submission—is survival in its most strategic, almost clinical form. It’s an unsettling reflection of how far one must go to survive in a world that demands conformity at the cost of one’s essence. Yet, this survival is not without its costs. The line *“Easy money drives youth to enroll / In the sect that shows the signs of thriving”* offers a stark commentary on how economic and social forces push individuals toward dehumanizing roles, sacrificing their dignity for the mere illusion of security. The figure is not just a societal anomaly but a “willing eunuch”—a tragic manifestation of a system that demands the ultimate sacrifice: identity and agency traded for basic sustenance. The poem concludes with a chilling irony, shifting from individual suffering to a more significant societal indictment: *“Man already with his insatiable greed / Has plundered the bounty of nature.”* The “unmanly caricature” reflects a masculinity

tainted by excess and greed, an outcome of exploitation that distorts both nature and identity. In a world where survival is a performance, the poem suggests that what is lost is not just individuality but humanity—twisted, corrupted, and forced into grotesque caricature.

## 7. “TIME IS UP”

### Introduction:

“Time is Up” critically examines the fragile dance between the transient and the eternal, shedding light on the paradox of life’s impermanence. It delves into the complex space between clinging to the past and the inevitable push toward the future, where every moment teeters on escape and permanence. In this exploration, the work speaks to those trapped in the tension between progress and nostalgia—between the desire to move forward and the impulse to remain in the places and experiences that have defined them. It challenges the notion of time as linear, urging a deeper reflection on how our pasts continuously shape our futures, even as they slip away.

*Hey, Man, pack up your things:*

*There is a seed I planted lately  
Has sprouted tender leaves.  
Let me guard it for a while from the pests.*

*Time is up. Make haste!*

*The pet dog I kept  
is now a mother of five.  
Let me caress them to the warmth of kennel.*

*Hurry up. It’s getting late!*

*The boy who left home in the morning  
Has not yet turned up.  
Let me wait to show him  
How to make his own bed.*

*Oh! Stop whining. Let’s move.*

*There is a room I loved to retire  
After a tedious day’s drudgery.  
Let me visit it once to bid it goodbye  
With all gratitude for being a witness  
To my soliloquies in slumber.*

### Review:

“Time is Up” offers a profoundly reflective meditation on the passage of time, framed within the context of personal loss, growth, and the quiet moments that

define a life. The poem's speaker seems caught at a crossroads—grappling with the urgency of departure yet unwilling to let go of the intimate, fleeting details that define their existence. The opening lines, “Hey, Man, pack up your things,” immediately create a sense of pressing action, pulling the reader into a space where time is running out. However, as the speaker reflects on the world around them—the sprouting seed, the new litter of puppies, and the absent boy—there's an almost reluctant nostalgia. The contrast between the immediate need to leave and the tender, still moments of daily life forms the emotional heart of the poem. The use of vivid imagery enhances this emotional pull. Phrases like “*tender leaves*” and “*mother of five*” evoke the gentle cycles of nature, embodying growth, change, and continuity. The absence of the boy who left in the morning, never to return, deepens this sense of loss, adding a layer of unspoken grief to the speaker's reflections. This interplay between the pull of change and the desire to hold onto the past is the poem's emotional core, a quiet recognition of life's transience. The repeated urgency in lines like “*Time is up. Make haste!*” echoes the pressure to move forward. Yet, the speaker's longing for “*a witness to my soliloquies in slumber*”—the room that held their past—adds a beautiful layer of introspection. The room isn't just a physical space but a repository of memories and self-reflection, emphasizing the deep attachment to one's history and sense of self. The tone strikes a delicate balance between resignation and reverence. The speaker's frustration at the inevitable departure, encapsulated in the phrase “*stop whining,*” suggests an acknowledgement of life's impermanence but an appreciation for the life tempers this frustration lived. This tension between resignation and gratitude runs through the poem, underscoring its reflective and bittersweet quality.

## 8. “TO FATHER WITH LOVE”

### Introduction:

“To My Father with Love” is a heartfelt poem that expresses deep admiration, gratitude, and affection for the speaker's father. The poem highlights the father's role as a source of strength, wisdom, and silent support, emphasizing the emotional bond between parent and child. The straightforward language and tender tone convey the speaker's love and respect. However, the poem could have explored the complexities of the father-child relationship more deeply, particularly the potential tensions or misunderstandings that can arise. Additionally, more vivid imagery and metaphorical language could have enriched the emotional depth of the poem. Overall, it is a moving tribute to the father's enduring influence, though it remains somewhat idealized in its portrayal.

*Patience of mountain*  
*Depth of an ocean*  
*Divine bounty of a mother cow*

*In you I see here and now.  
 Pains were ever yours  
 Pleasures were ours  
 Just like fruit of a tree  
 For man to eat free*

*You lent me a shoulder  
 In times of dwindling hope  
 Masking your groans as your grow older  
 To our needs never did you say nope*

*Love was not explicit  
 In your actions  
 Nor is anger implicit  
 In your reactions.*

*Your warnings were mild  
 When mischief I indulged in as a child  
 Gentle and warm was your hug  
 From day's nightmares, it'd cover me like a rug.*

*When you were there standing tall  
 Like a fortified human wall  
 I could feel secure and bold  
 In doing things that I was told.*

*The path you've shown  
 Was full of bumps though  
 Warily, I did read it alone  
 And learnt all I wanted to know.*

*With all my achievements  
 I feel weak and empty today  
 For you are not there to say  
 Words of blissful compliments.*

#### **Review:**

This poem evokes a deep reverence and nostalgia, beautifully capturing the essence of a person—likely a mother or a deeply cherished figure—who embodies strength, sacrifice, and unconditional love. The comparison to natural elements like mountains, oceans, and the mother cow adds a divine, almost ethereal quality to the described person. It's as if the poet is saying that this person's patience, depth, and nurturing nature are as timeless and enduring as nature itself. The line "Pains were ever yours / Pleasures were ours" reflects the quiet suffering that



often accompanies selfless love, emphasizing the disparity between what the person endured and what others benefited from. This creates a poignant sense of imbalance that makes the reader reflect on the quiet sacrifices of those who care for us. The poem's imagery of childhood memories, like mischief, mild warnings, and the comforting hug that protected against the nightmares of the day, paints a picture of someone who was both a guide and a shelter. The comparison of the person to a "*fortified human wall*" is particularly striking—symbolizing physical protection and emotional strength that allowed the poet to explore life boldly. However, the most striking aspect of the poem is the profound sense of loss that creeps in towards the end. The poet's achievements feel hollow without the presence of this guiding figure, leading to a poignant conclusion: "*For you are not there to say / Words of blissful compliments.*" The emptiness felt in the absence of this figure underscores the immeasurable value of love and support that is often taken for granted. This poem beautifully encapsulates love's multifaceted nature—its quiet endurance and irreplaceable role in shaping a person's life. It speaks to the emotional complexity of gratitude, loss, and the deep, unspoken bond between the poet and the person they admire. The poem's tone shifts seamlessly.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, Dr. Enjapoori's poetry offers a profound exploration of human experiences, weaving themes of identity, loss, nature, and societal change. Through his vivid portrayals, he urges readers to reflect on the tension between personal values and external pressures, the passage of time, and the importance of empathy and authenticity in a rapidly changing world. His work challenges conventional views, urging introspection and a deeper connection with the self and the world around us.

*In "Unknown Citizen", the soul fades,  
A cog in the wheel, where life parades,  
In "Nostalgia", the past calls with grace,  
A home, a childhood, in time's embrace.*

*"Fourliners on Tree" whispers of green,  
Silent giants, unseen but keen,  
"Father Unlucky" paints the divide,  
Between old clay walls and steel that hides.*

*"Life Boat" drifts, lost in the tide,  
Chasing the empty, where dreams collide.  
"Caricature" asks us to see,  
The unseen struggle, the unspoken plea.*

*“To Father with Love” speaks of a space,  
A silent grief that time can’t erase.  
“Time is Up”, the hourglass falls,  
A ticking reminder of life’s own calls.*

*In these verses, raw and unrefined,  
Dr. Enjapoori pulls at the threads of the mind,  
Inviting us to question, to feel, to see,  
The dance of time, the heart’s decree.*

### **Final Reflection:**

Life is a fleeting canvas painted with moments of tenderness, sacrifice, and reflection. Through Dr. Enjapoori’s poetry, we are invited to pause and rediscover the beauty in what often goes unnoticed—the embrace of roots, the echo of time well spent, and the unspoken bonds that define us. His verses urge us to honour the simplicity of love, the resilience of nature, and the quiet strength of those who guide us. These poems resonate like a gentle whisper, reminding us that true fulfilment is not chasing what fades but cherishing what endures. They invite us to see beyond the surface, to feel deeply, and to remember that in every fleeting moment, life offers us a chance to connect with its enduring grace.

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