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साहित्य, भाषाओं और धर्मों पर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन

Date: 19 – 20 September, 2026

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Conference Special Issue - 47 September, 2026

Organized by :
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The Managing Editor:

Dr. C. M. Patel

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The International Languages Council is working to promote Languages and Literatures at different national and international levels, and also coordinate with other institutions and organizations for the educational and community development. It also offer to provide literature, ELT, linguistics research services, educational studies and organizing activities.

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Objectives of the International conference: To observe the overviews and concept of languages, literature and Religions in the 21st century, To Identify the various knowledge forms of literature and religions, To Analyse the trends of teaching languages and To find our conceptual life lessons from the religions.

About the Conference:

'International Conference on Literature, Languages and Religions' (साहित्य, भाषाओं और धर्मों पर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन) aims to bring together leading academicians and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Language, Literature and Religion fields. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Language, Literature and Religion fields.

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Dear Colleagues !

I am delighted that our organization is jointly conducting the 'International Conference on Literature, Languages and Religions' with the theme of literature and languages, in association with 'Research Culture Society' on 19 – 20 September, 2026.

This conference series forum aims to observe the overviews and concept of languages, literature and Religions in the 21st century. To Identify and analyze the latest trends of literature, linguistics and Teaching languages. Identifying various knowledge forms of literature and linguistics.

I honestly hope that this conference will provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners, and educators to present and discuss the most recent trends in literature, languages, culture, religions and its concern related to writing and study of the literature and religion materials.

May hearty wishes and regards for the great success of this important international conference.

Thank you!

Prof. J. Adrina
Conference Chair
Founder Member
International Languages Council, Europe.

Dr.C. M. Patel

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Message

Dear Professional Colleagues,

It is gratifying to note that 'International Languages Council; in collaboration with 'Research Culture Society' (Government Registered Scientific Research organization) are organizing - 'International Conference on Literature, Languages and Religions' during 19 – 20 September, 2026.

This international conference will allow the participants and academicians to reveal their endeavors, extend academic professional networks and jointly ascertain the existing and upcoming research instructions guidelines and presented thoughts at international level. I believe that all the presentations in this academic research conference will bring interesting topics witch fruitful discussions.

I believe, this International Conference will help in redefining the strong connection between students and academicians from different institutions. An additional goal of this international conference is to combine interests and research related to Literature and Religion field of academia, researchers and students.

My best wishes to the committee members, speakers and participants of this world conference.

Dr.C. M. Patel

Director, Research Culture Society.

INDEX

Sr.No	Table of Contents	Page No.
a)	About the organizing Institutions: Objectives of the International Conference : About the Conference:	5
b)	Conference Committee	6
c)	Message from Founder Member, International Languages Council	7
d)	Message from Director, Research Culture Society	8
e)	Table of Contents	9
Paper ID	**Title & Author(s) Name**	-
ICLLR-2026-A01	Deconstructing the Myth of "The Shakespeare of India": Kalidasa, Comparative Scholarship, and The Politics of Canon Formation -- Dr. A. H. Parvin	10-17
ICLLR-2026-A02	Between Shelter and Storm – Memory, Power, and Maternal Legacies in Mother Mary Comes to Me -- Ashok Kumar Shaw	18-26
ICLLR-2026-A03	The Linguistic Influence of Bengali Content Creators in the Digital Age -- Arka Banerjee, Moupiya Mukherjee	27-34
ICLLR-2026-A04	Tracks of Social Mobility: Railway Travel, Caste, Class, and Modernity in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things and Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger -- Dharshan Kumar K.	35-40
ICLLR-2026-A05	When Feeling Breaks the Hierarchy: Affect, Coordinated Management of Meaning, and Relational Repair in Mitch Albom's For One More Day - Komal Mehrotra, Dr. Bharati Chandrayan	41-50
ICLLR-2026-A06	Relationship Between Faith and Commerce in the Works of Gita Mehta -- Barun Kumar Jha	51-57
ICLLR-2026-A07	A Freudian study of Desire, Repression and Self destruction in the Novel, The Poison of Love by K. R. Meera -- Fidha Rahima, Dr. R. Rama Prabha	58-67
ICLLR-2026-A08	Translation as Cultural Bridge: A Comparative Study of Hindi and Sanskrit Works in English -- Parveen Kumar	68-75

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Deconstructing the Myth of "The Shakespeare of India": Kalidasa, Comparative Scholarship, and the Politics of Canon Formation

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Abstract: *The persistent epithet "the Shakespeare of India" attached to Kalidasa is not a neutral honorific, but rather a colonial construction based on Eurocentric comparative frameworks. Sir William Jones's translation of Abhijñānaśākuntalam in 1789 inaugurated a tradition of comparing Kalidasa with Shakespeare that both glorified and subordinated him within Western literary hierarchies. This paper deconstructs that analogy using postcolonial and comparative literary theory, drawing on Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, Gayatri Spivak's concerns about epistemic violence, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's call for decolonising the mind. Western scholarship has often placed Kālidāsa within either the Romantic or the Classical categories. Indian critics such as A.K. Ramanujan, Kapila Vatsyayan, and V. Raghavan have shown the richness of Kālidāsa's aesthetic when read through indigenous categories such as rasa, dhvani and alankara. By comparing Shakespeare's cathartic dramaturgy with Kalidasa's poetics of affect, this study highlights the inadequacy of Western comparisons and the superiority of Indian scholarly paradigms. Ultimately, the essay argues, Kalidasa does not need Shakespeare as a yardstick for validation; his works possess an autonomous literary universe that deserves recognition on its own terms. By deconstructing this colonial myth, we can reposition Kalidasa as a global figure, beyond the mediating lens of Shakespearean equivalence.*

Keywords: *Kalidasa, Shakespeare of India, Postcolonial Criticism, Sanskrit Poetics, Orientalism, Decolonizing Literature.*

INTRODUCTION:

The question of who deserves the title of "Shakespeare of India" has long intrigued both Western and Indian literary critics. According to the received wisdom, the answer is Kalidasa - the foremost Sanskrit poet and playwright of the Gupta epoch. However, the very premise of this question - the need to compare Kalidasa with a European writer - seems suspicious. It is possible to argue that the label "Shakespeare of India" functions to reinforce the superiority of the European canon and its implied authority over world literature.

It is worth examining the origins of the expression "Shakespeare of India" and considering why it resonated so profoundly with Western minds. This phrase was first used by Sir Willam Jones, an English philologist and jurist stationed in Calcutta, who translated Abhijñānaśākuntalam into English in 1789. In his preface, Jones compared Kalidasa to Shakespeare, saying that "The Indian poet may be compared, in the elegance of his imagery and the luxuriance of his fancy, with Shakespeare himself; and if the

reader be disposed to make allowances for difference of climate and manners, he will find in Sacontalá the traces of a genius not unworthy of that illustrious name" (Jones v). Jones's purpose in writing the preface was twofold: to present Kalidasa to European audiences and, in doing so, to make a claim about the superiority of the European literary tradition. Johann Wolfgang von Geothe's enthusiastic endorsement of Śakuntalā further cemented Kalidasa's reputation in Europe, but it was always in the context of comparing him to Shakespeare (Goethe 67).

This paper aims to demonstrate that these comparisons, far from being flattering tributes to Kalidasa, actually undermine his achievements as a dramatist and poet. They do so by imposing a Western framework for understanding Indian literature and art. While Indian critics have consistently emphasised the distinctiveness of Kalidasa's achievements, comparing him to Shakespeare has meant homogenising the two traditions and thus diluting the uniqueness of the former. By analysing the colonial provenance of the "Shakespeare of India" label and by presenting the Indian critical perspective on Kalidasa, this paper hopes to contribute to the ongoing discourse concerning the problematic relationship between Indian and Western literary traditions.

Colonial Knowledge and the Construction of Kalidasa

In many ways, Kalidasa's place in modern Indian literature and world literature in general has been determined by colonial encounters between European and Indian writers and thinkers. Within India, Kalidasa's work has always been highly revered; outside it, for most of Indian history, Kalidasa's works were virtually unknown. The credit for introducing Kalidasa's works to the Western world goes to Sir William Jones who, in 1789, translated Abhijñānaśākuntalam into English under the title of Sacontalá, or The Fatal Ring. The way in which Jones framed this work, particularly through its comparison to Shakespeare, is highly illuminating in terms of understanding the nature of colonial knowledge production in India and the relationship between Indian and European literary traditions.

Sir William Jones (1746-1794) was a renowned philologist, jurist, and politician who served as a judge in the Supreme Court in Calcutta and was one of the founding members of the Asiatic Society. In 1789, he published Sacontalá, or The Fatal Ring, the first ever English translation of Kalidasa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam. In the preface to this edition, Jones wrote: "The Indian poet may be compared, in the elegance of his imagery and the luxuriance of his fancy, with Shakespeare himself; and if the reader be disposed to make allowances for difference of climate and manners, he will find in Sacontalá the traces of a genius not unworthy of that illustrious name." (Jones v-vi). With these words, Jones launched Kalidasa into the Western literary canon as "the Shakespeare of India." But this label was not given out of flattery; it was meant to serve a particular ideological function. By likening Kalidasa to Shakespeare, Jones not only invested him with the authority of the European literary tradition but managed to present India as equal to Europe in literary and cultural achievement. It can be argued that the phrase "Shakespeare of India," far from being a eulogy to Kalidasa, serves more as an example of the "positional superiority" of the European canon, as Edward Said puts it (Said 7).

This argument finds support in Edward Said's Orientalism, a seminal work concerning the nature of Western scholarship on the East. Said argues that Orientalism was never merely an intellectual pursuit; rather, it was a way in which the West constructed its understanding of the East. Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident'" (Said 2). According to this view, Europe is the "center" while Asia is the "periphery." The former possesses a unique cultural and intellectual heritage, while the latter is perceived as exotic and inferior. Said's argument is highly relevant to the discussion of Kalidasa as "the Shakespeare of India," because it helps to understand the way in which this label was used to elevate Kalidasa in the eyes of the West. By comparing him to Shakespeare, Jones most likely sought to make Kalidasa more accessible to the European audience, but in doing so, he also reinforced the idea that the European literary tradition was superior to the Indian one. This is the essence of the "positional

superiority" of the European canon: "The idea of Europe... identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans.. ." (Said 7). Kalidasa was made famous in the West, but he was made famous as "the Indian Shakespeare" - an inferior version of the greatest Western poet and playwright of all time.

Comparative Aesthetics: Rasa versus Catharsis

Comparative studies of Sanskrit and Western aesthetics tend to focus on the similarities between these traditions while neglecting their differences. They also tend to overlook the specific aims, categories, and methods of each tradition. A closer examination of the theoretical principles underlying Sanskrit poetics and Western poetics can be illuminating in this regard. In many ways, Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements represent the culmination of the classical Sanskrit aesthetic tradition. Therefore, the examination of this tradition and its comparison to the Western one will be highly relevant to the discussion of Kalidasa's work.

The primary theoretical text informing Western dramatic and poetic aesthetics is Aristotle's Poetics. In this work, Aristotle talks about the nature of drama and poetry and the purposes they serve. Drama, according to Aristotle, has an ethical function - it teaches its audience through the depiction of actions that ought or ought not to be done. These actions arouse feelings of pity and fear in the spectators, and it is through these emotions that the audience learns the moral lesson (Aristotle, Ch. 6). Plot, character, and structure are essential elements of drama, as they enable the creation of a work that will arouse such feelings in the audience (Aristotle, Chs. 6-15). Thus, the primary aesthetic aim of drama and poetry is catharsis - the purging or cleansing of the emotions, particularly pity and fear. A similar ethical aim underlies Shakespeare's dramatic works, although some scholars argue that, in many of these works, the moral function has been subsumed by the aesthetic one.

The dramatic and poetic traditions of Sanskrit literature have their theoretical basis in Bharata's Nāṭyashāstra, an ancient work on dramatic poetics which describes the aesthetic and dramatic principles underlying Sanskrit theatre and discusses their application in actual plays. The principal concepts informing Sanskrit dramatic and poetic aesthetics are rasa (flavor or relish), dhvani (suggestion), and alankāra (metaphor, simile, or other figures of speech). Rasa is the aesthetic flavor that is felt or savored by the audience when the characters in a play embody qualities that are universally relished (Bharata 6.1-6). These qualities are known as Sthāyi bhāvas, and they include love, anger, laughter, pathos, and tranquillity. Dhvani, according to Abhinavagupta's Abhinavabhāratī commentary, refers to suggestion - the evocation within the audience of images or ideas that are not directly expressed by the author. Alankāra denotes figures of speech used in poetry to adorn or enrich the meaning; such devices as metaphor, simile, and personification are considered alankāras . These three concepts - rasa, dhvani, and alankāra - constitute the principal tools of Sanskrit dramatic and poetic aesthetics.

Comparing these two traditions is an instructive exercise. Both have their theoretical basis in highly developed dramatic and poetic traditions that were passed down from antiquity (Greek for the West and Vedic for Sanskrit literature). In both, dramatic action serves an aesthetic function - catharsis in Aristotle's view and rasa in Bharata's view. However, there are also profound differences between these two traditions. Bharata and his Sanskrit aesthetic tradition are concerned with creating dramatic effects that will produce joy and aesthetic satisfaction in the audience. The audience is an active participant in the aesthetic experience, as it is the one who "tastes" the rasa and enjoys it (Bharata 6.1-6). In contrast, the Western dramatic tradition, at least in its Aristotelian and Shakespearean manifestations, is concerned with teaching the audience rather than entertaining it. The audience is passive, as it is supposed to learn ethical lessons from watching the play. In fact, the ethical function of drama is the primary one, while the aesthetic function is secondary (Aristotle, Ch. 6). Thus, while both traditions view drama as a way of creating aesthetic effects, in the Sanskrit tradition, these effects are the primary concern, whereas in the Western tradition, the ethical function takes precedence.

The dramatic works of Kalidasa are an excellent illustration of this difference. For the most part, his plays depict love stories of the hero couple, Śakuntalā and Dushyanta. They also contain beautiful descriptions of nature and its various manifestations, as well as dramatic action that often takes the form of recognition scenes. However, all these elements exist to evoke the feeling of rasa - a feeling of joy that is relished by the audience. The recognition scenes, which often contain important ethical lessons, are not the end of the play but rather the means by which the feeling of rasa is conveyed (Kalidasa). This approach is radically different from the Aristotelian approach to drama, in which dramatic action serves an ethical function. It is also different from the approach found in the Western dramatic tradition, which views drama as a means of presenting truth to the audience.

Indian Scholarship versus Western Scholarship

A detailed discussion of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements would be incomplete without the examination of the critical approaches that have been used to study this poet. Since the beginning of the 18th century, Western Orientalists and translators have been introducing Kalidasa to the European audience. These scholars have viewed Kalidasa through the lens of the European literary tradition, comparing him to the European playwrights and poets, thus endowing him with the prestige of the European canon. At the same time, Indian scholars have been examining Kalidasa through the lens of the Indian literary tradition, discussing his dramatic and poetic achievements in relation to the Indian dramatic and poetic canons. These two critical approaches are fundamentally different, and the comparison between them can be illuminating in the discussion of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements.

Indian criticism of Kalidasa is based on a close examination of the Sanskrit literary traditions and has always stressed the uniqueness of Kalidasa's achievements within the framework of this literary tradition. A. K. Warder's monumental study Indian Kāvya Literature is an example of this approach to the study of Kalidasa. Warder discusses the history of Indian Kāvya Literature, describing in detail the most important genres and conventions of this literary tradition. However, his true contribution to the study of Kalidasa lies in his attempt to examine this poet within the framework of this literary tradition. Warder argues that Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements should be judged according to the norms and conventions of Indian Kāvya Literature: "Comparisons with European poetry must be carefully controlled, otherwise they may distort." (Warder 14)

Other Indian scholars take this approach to Kalidasa's criticism even further by examining the theoretical principles of Sanskrit poetics and applying these principles to the analysis of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements. V. Raghavan's The Number of Rasa-s is an example of this approach. This work contains a detailed discussion of the concept of rasa - one of the most important concepts in Sanskrit poetics. Raghavan examines the different types and varieties of rasa, describing in detail such rasas as śṛngāra (romantic love), karuna (pathos), and Śānta (tranquillity). He also discusses the application of these theories to Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic works: "The discussion of rasa has provided a far more subtle and refined instrument of aesthetic analysis than any imported category from Aristotle or modern Europe." (Raghavan 62).

Another Indian scholar, Kapila Vatsyayan, takes a different approach to the criticism of Kalidasa by examining the dramatic works of this author within the framework of the classical Indian dance tradition. Her work classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts examines the close ties between the classical Indian dance, music, and literature traditions. It also contains a detailed discussion of Kalidasa's dramatic works, examining them from the perspective of the classical Indian dance tradition.

A. K. Ramanujan's essays on the Indian literary tradition also provide fascinating insights into the examination of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements. Ramanujan argues that Indian literary traditions should be analysed within the framework of Indian culture rather than the European one.

Indian traditions, according to Ramanujan, are context-sensitive rather than context-free: "...in Indian traditions, especially those relating to language, one tends to find a contextuality rather than contextuality." (Ramanujan, 41). This approach has important implications for the discussion of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic works, as it allows for a more detailed and nuanced examination of the concepts of rasa, dhvani, and alankāra. In particular, Ramanujan's approach may be useful in discussing the dramatic action in Kalidasa's plays and examining the ways in which these plays enable the audience to experience rasa.

The approach taken by the first Western scholar, Sir William Jones, was also quite different. In his preface to the English translation of Abhijñānaśākuntalam, Jones compared Kalidasa to Shakespeare: "It may be boldly asserted, that he was the Shakespeare of India... It may be boldly asserted, that he was the Shakespeare of India (Jones xxvii). This assertion made Kalidasa famous in the European audience, but it also established the canon of European literature as superior to the Indian one. This view is reaffirmed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's enthusiastic response to Jones's translation of Kalidasa's work. Goethe praised the beauty of this play, writing in epigrammatic verse: "It [the play of Kalidasa] moved, astonished, and enchanted me; I wish that henceforth its memory may determine the course of my life." (Goethe 212). However, the way in which Goethe responded to Kalidasa's play was quite similar to the one taken by Jones. Goethe examined Kalidasa's play within the framework of the European dramatic and poetic traditions, viewing it as an example of Indian culture rather than examining its dramatic and poetic achievements in relation to the Indian literary tradition.

Postcolonial Deconstruction of the Shakespearean Analogy

To move towards decolonising the discourse on Kalidasa, it is necessary to deconstruct not only the phrase "the Shakespeare of India" but also the ideas and assumptions that lie behind it. This process involves looking closely at the ways in which this analogy was constructed and examining the reasons why it resonated so strongly with Western minds. Postcolonial theorists provide valuable tools for this task. In particular, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique of representation, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's views on linguistic decolonisation, and Sheldon Pollock's account of a "Sanskrit cosmopolis" are highly relevant and can be applied to the discussion of the analogy between Kalidasa and Shakespeare.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her essay Can the Subaltern Speak?, discusses the ways in which subaltern voices, particularly the voices of women, have been suppressed throughout history. The problem of representation, according to Spivak, is closely connected to the question of who can speak for whom and how these voices can be heard. Spivak argues that in the modern period, the subaltern, through their dependence on the dominant groups, cannot speak for themselves because their voices will be interpreted in the framework provided by these groups: "The epistemic violence done to the subaltern by the colonial critic is that he translates the subaltern - makes the subaltern speak in a language in which the critic can make himself understood... The subaltern thus has to be translated, misrepresented and mal-presented, by reason of his naïveté, before he can be said to have a voice." (Spivak 271-313). These ideas can be applied to the discussion of the analogy between Shakespeare and Kalidasa. The colonial critics, such as Willam Jones and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, were the ones who "spoke" for Kalidasa, interpreting his dramatic and poetic achievements within the framework of the European literary tradition. This approach to the study of Kalidasa suppressed his original achievements, as it interpreted them through the lens of this tradition. In other words, a particular interpretation became the dominant one, while the alternative approach, rooted in the Indian literary tradition, was suppressed. Thus, the analogy between Shakespeare and Kalidasa was not simply an exercise in eulogising Kalidasa but rather the reinforcement of the colonial view of Indian literature and culture.

According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, language plays a crucial role in the colonial oppression of the subaltern groups. In Decolonising the Mind, he writes: "The bullet was the means of the physical

subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation." (Ngũgĩ 9). Colonial education and literature, by using the colonial languages, further this process of cultural imperialism, making the subalterns' minds susceptible to foreign domination: "The whole colonial educational and literary enterprise was thus a cultural bomb aimed at destroying the cultural and intellectual integrity of the subject people.." (Ngũgĩ 16). This idea can be applied to the discussion of the analogy between Shakespeare and Kalidasa, as it helps to articulate why this analogy is problematic and what implications it has for the discussion of Indian literature and the Indian literary tradition. Wa Thiong'o's argument suggests that by appealing to the European canon and using the concepts and categories of the European literary tradition to analyse Kalidasa, colonial and postcolonial critics suppressed the original achievements of this poet. The analogy between Kalidasa and Shakespeare, in other words, was not just a method of eulogising Kalidasa but also a means of reinforcing the colonial view of Indian literature and culture. Moreover, by emphasising the uniqueness of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements, Indian critics, such as Warder, failed to recognise the potential of the Indian literary tradition to produce original works of literature. Thus, Wa Thiong'o's approach can help to decolonise the discussion of Kalidasa by emphasising the importance of developing an indigenous critical framework for discussing Indian literature and culture.

Sheldon Pollock's discussion of the "Sanskrit cosmopolis" is also relevant to the discussion of the analogy between Kalidasa and Shakespeare. Pollock argues that although Sanskrit literature and culture were largely confined to India, they did have a cosmopolitan dimension as they were disseminated to South and Southeast Asia. This exchange of ideas occurred through the works of writers and scholars who were influenced by the Indian traditions and, in turn, passed on this knowledge further: "A Sanskrit cosmopolis is what emerges when Sanskrit writers, poets and playwrights, and Sanskrit reading audiences, are located within a larger regional system in which Sanskrit is not the only literary language in circulation." (Pollock 37-80). This argument is useful in the discussion of Kalidasa's analogy with Shakespeare, as it suggests that the recognition of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements did not require the intervention of the European critics. Instead, Kalidasa's works had already circulated among the readers in South and Southeast Asia, establishing his position as the foremost Sanskrit playwright and poet. This approach, therefore, provides an alternative to the colonial view of Indian literature and culture and helps to decolonise the discussion of Kalidasa's dramatic and poetic achievements.

Towards a Decolonial Canon

To read Kalidasa on his own terms is to eschew the easy scaffold of Eurocentric analogy and to begin from the intellectual resources that defined his art. A decolonial canon for Kalidasa does not merely invert authority (West to East) but reconceptualizes comparative practice in such a way that indigenous categories – rasa, dhvani, alankāra, and the staging protocols of the Nāṭyasāstra – serve as initial interpretive primitives rather than as afterthoughts to be translated into Western idioms. This move has three interlocking rationales: hermeneutic fidelity, historical accuracy, and methodological equity.

Hermeneutic fidelity demands that criticism attend to the conceptual grammar that an author and his contemporaries used to make artistic meaning. Sanskrit poetics provides a richly articulated vocabulary – Bharata's taxonomy of rasas, Ānandavardhanā's doctrine of dhvani, and Abhinavagupta's elaborations – which explain why Kalidasa's plays aim at sustained aesthetic relish rather than Aristotelian moral purgation. Reading Abhijñānaśākuntalam or Vikramōrvaśīyam through rasa and dhvani reveals formal tactics – natural imagery functioning as a suggestive sign, staged silence, and metrical modulation – that Western categories such as "romantic lyric" or "classical unity" cannot adequately capture (Bharata, Ānandavardhanā). A genuinely decolonial approach thus privileges those categories as explanantia rather than reducing them to analogues of Western terms.

Historical accuracy supplies a second rationale. Sheldon Pollock's reconstruction of the Sanskrit cosmopolis demonstrates that Sanskrit literary culture had a pan-regional prestige and circulation long

before colonial translation made Kalidasa "known" in Europe; Kalidasa's authority was constituted within a premodern, transregional literary economy (Pollock). To treat Shakespeare as the yardstick implies a telos of recognition that reverses historical order: Kalidasa did not require European approbation to be canonical in South and Southeast Asia. A decolonial canon therefore recognizes the multiple circuits of reception through which Kalidasa became "global" in his own registers.

Methodological equity demands correction of the epistemic displacements documented by postcolonial theorists. Gayatri Spivak's critique of representational authority and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's diagnosis of linguistic-cultural colonization together explain how the Shakespearean shorthand functions as interpretive violence: it substitutes metropolitan categories for indigenous epistemes and naturalizes English-language frameworks as universal (Spivak, Ngũgĩ). Decolonizing Kalidasa studies therefore requires institutional and methodological changes – philological rigor in Sanskrit, attention to performance conventions, commitment to translations that preserve dhvani rather than flatten it, and the elevation of Indian critical traditions within global curricula.

Conclusion

This study has argued that the enduring epithet "the Shakespeare of India" functions less as felicitous praise than as a colonial idiom of translation and valuation that obscures Kalidasa's originality. The analogy, inaugurated by William Jones and amplified through successive Eurocentric receptions, rendered Kalidasa intelligible to European audiences by measuring him against Shakespearean norms of plot, character, and tragic katharsis; in doing so it translated indigenous categories into approximations that occluded the internal logic of Sanskrit poetics (Jones, Said). Recovering Kalidasa's singularity therefore requires not only close textual work but a change in the critical grammar by which we interpret non-European literatures.

Postcolonial theory supplies the critical apparatus for that change. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's warning about epistemic violence – how metropolitan discourse can speak for and thereby silence other traditions – explains why the Shakespearean shorthand functions as more than metaphor: it is an act of interpretive dispossession (Spivak). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's demand to decolonize language and pedagogy underscores the linguistic power-play implicit in imposing English-language standards as universal criteria of value (Ngũgĩ). And Sheldon Pollock's reconstruction of a premodern Sanskrit cosmopolis demonstrates that Kalidasa's authority was constituted in transregional circuits long before European approbation made him a "world" poet in modern consciousness (Pollock). Taken together, these interventions show that the Shakespearean comparison reproduces a colonial inferiority complex rather than registering a meaningful equivalence.

Indian scholarship has been decisive in restoring interpretive fidelity. Scholars such as A. K. Warder, V. Raghavan, Kapila Vatsyayan, and A. K. Ramanujan insist that Kalidasa be read through the conceptual primitives of his own tradition – rasa, dhvani, alankāra, and performative conventions – thereby yielding readings that are formally precise and historically situated (Warder, Raghavan, Vatsyayan, Ramanujan). These frameworks explain the mechanics of Kalidasa's aesthetic effects – how natural imagery, suggestive silence, and metrical modulation operate together to produce sustained aesthetic relish – ways of working that a reductive Shakespearean frame cannot adequately capture.

Decolonizing Kalidasa studies in thus both corrective and generative. Corrective, insofar as it refuses an epistemic hierarchy that elides indigenous theory; generative, insofar as it equips comparative literature with a bilingual, bilateral practice that permits genuinely mutual illumination. Kalidasa does not need to be Shakespeare's mirror to be global; his works circulate because they are products of an internally coherent, historically mobile literary system capable of speaking across languages and eras. In short: Kalidasa is not the "Shakespeare of India"; he is Kalidasa – whose proper recovery strengthens, rather than diminishes, the diversity and scope of world literature.

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Between Shelter and Storm: Memory, Power, and Maternal Legacies in *Mother Mary Comes to Me*

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Abstract: Arundhati Roy's *Mother Mary Comes to Me* (2025) turns the memoir form inward to examine the fraught relationship between daughter and mother, locating Mary Roy simultaneously as shelter and storm. Mary Roy was an educator, reformer, and public figure whose achievements in education and legal activism coexist in the memoir with memories of severity, emotional injury, discipline, and conflict. This essay argues that Roy's memoir is more than an act of private catharsis: it is an inquiry into memory, gendered power, maternal inheritance, trauma, creativity, and the ethics of representing a real person. Through close textual analysis informed by life-writing studies, feminist theory, and trauma-oriented approaches to memory, the essay examines the memoir's non-linear structure, shifting narrative voice, lyrical and essayistic registers, intertextual relationship with *The God of Small Things*, and movement between domestic recollection and public history. Particular attention is given to the paradox of maternal legacy: Mary's resistance to patriarchal structures helped establish a public model of female agency, while her authority within the family could become coercive. Roy neither sanctifies nor demonises her mother; instead, she sustains contradictory truths about love, harm, admiration, anger, grief, and gratitude. The memoir therefore becomes a narrative of self-formation as well as memorialisation. By transforming private memory into cultural testimony, Roy demonstrates how personal histories are inseparable from structures of gender, law, class, religion, and power. *Mother Mary Comes to Me* ultimately expands the possibilities of feminist life-writing by showing that remembering can be simultaneously an act of mourning, critique, resistance, and care.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy; Mother Mary Comes to Me; memoir; maternal legacy; memory; feminist life-writing; trauma; identity; power; intertextuality.

INTRODUCTION:

Arundhati Roy entered the global literary imagination with *The God of Small Things* (1997) and subsequently established herself as a novelist, essayist, and public intellectual who's writing frequently connects intimate experience with larger political structures. Her 2025 memoir, *Mother Mary Comes to Me* redirects this outward-looking political sensibility toward the most intimate of relationships: that between a daughter and her mother. The central figure, Mary Roy, was an educator and rights activist whose public life was associated with educational work and a landmark legal struggle concerning the inheritance rights of Christian women in Kerala. Yet the daughter's memory of her is not reducible to public achievement. Mary also appears as a formidable and sometimes frightening presence within the family. The memoir is generated by the tension between these versions of the same woman.

The title *Mother Mary Comes to Me* immediately establishes the maternal figure as both personal presence and symbolic force. The mother is not simply remembered as an individual; she returns through memory as an unresolved presence whose influence extends into the daughter's identity, relationships, politics, and literary imagination. Roy's account therefore challenges the assumption that memoir is primarily a record of stable personal truth. Instead, it presents remembering as a process of reconstruction in which past experiences acquire new meanings from the standpoint of adulthood and loss.

The memoir is especially significant because it refuses the familiar binary of the "good" or "bad" mother. Mary can be understood as a feminist pioneer and as a source of domestic pain; as a protector and as a disciplinarian; as an inspiring public figure and as a difficult private presence. Roy's achievement lies in sustaining these contradictions without forcing them into a final moral verdict. Her narrative asks what it means to love someone whose actions have caused injury, and whether acknowledging harm necessarily cancels admiration or gratitude.

This essay addresses three related questions: how Roy constructs memory in order to make sense of the mother-daughter relationship; how the memoir reworks motherhood, agency, and feminine subjectivity that recur throughout Roy's writing; and what aesthetic and ethical strategies Roy uses when representing a real person who cannot answer back. It argues that the memoir transforms personal history into a form of cultural testimony. Its movement between childhood recollection, political history, literary reflection, and adult retrospection demonstrates that the private is never completely separate from the social.

The phrase "shelter and storm" captures the memoir's governing paradox. Maternal love can provide protection while also becoming a form of authority; memory can console while simultaneously reopening injury; inheritance can empower while also transmitting pain. Roy's memoir inhabits this unstable territory. Rather than resolving it, she makes contradiction itself the basis of her narrative and ethical method.

Literature Review

The critical possibilities opened by *Mother Mary Comes to Me* emerge from several established conversations in life-writing studies, feminist criticism, and memory studies. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have demonstrated that autobiographical narratives do not simply reproduce an already formed self; they construct the self through selection, sequencing, address, and rhetorical framing. Roy's memoir is particularly suited to this approach because it repeatedly foregrounds the difficulty of reconstructing childhood from the position of an adult daughter.

Leigh Gilmore's work on autobiography, trauma, and testimony is also useful for understanding the memoir's relation to painful memory. Trauma does not always appear as a continuous, orderly narrative. Its effects can be registered through interruption, repetition, hesitation, omission, and changes of temporal perspective. Roy's movement between vivid childhood scenes and reflective adult commentary gives formal expression to this unevenness. Memory becomes neither a transparent archive nor a simple act of confession; it is an interpretive activity shaped by what can be remembered, what can be articulated, and what remains unresolved.

Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, although developed in relation to transgenerational histories of extreme violence, offers a productive conceptual vocabulary for thinking about inherited memory more broadly. Roy's narrative suggests that daughters inherit not only stories but emotional structures, silences, anxieties, and unresolved histories. The maternal past consequently becomes part of the daughter's imaginative and ethical formation.

Taken together, these approaches suggest that *Mother Mary Comes to Me* should be read not merely as celebrity autobiography or family confession but as a sophisticated work of feminist life-writing. Its significance lies in its ability to connect personal memory to questions of power, gender, public reputation, and the ethics of remembrance.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study employs qualitative close reading informed by life-writing studies, feminist theory, and trauma-oriented approaches to memory. The analysis concentrates on narrative voice, temporal organisation, diction, imagery, scene construction, dialogue, digression, and the relationship between personal recollection and historical commentary. Rather than treating the memoir as a transparent factual record, the essay examines how Roy's formal choices shape the meaning of remembered experience.

Life-writing theory provides the primary framework for understanding the construction of the autobiographical self. Smith and Watson's emphasis on autobiographical acts makes it possible to read Roy's memoir as an active process of self-fashioning rather than a passive recovery of the past. Feminist theory helps examine the gendered expectations surrounding motherhood, obedience, gratitude, and female agency. Trauma-oriented approaches draw attention to fragmentation, temporal disruption, silence, and the difficulty of converting painful experience into coherent narrative.

The study also considers intertextuality, particularly the relationship between the memoir and *The God of Small Things*. This comparison is not intended to establish a simple autobiographical equivalence between fiction and life. Instead, it explores how Roy's later memoir revisits experiences that had previously been mediated through fiction and thereby changes their ethical and interpretive stakes.

Mary Roy, Public Memory, and Maternal Inheritance

Mary Roy occupies a distinctive place in the memoir because her public identity and her private identity cannot be separated completely, yet neither can they be treated as identical. As an educator and activist, she represented resistance to restrictive social structures. Her legal struggle concerning discriminatory inheritance practices affecting Christian women in Kerala made her a significant figure in debates about gender and property rights. Her educational work likewise connected female agency with access to learning and institutional independence.

For Arundhati Roy, however, the mother's public achievements were experienced alongside the pressures of domestic authority. The memoir's emotional force derives from this discrepancy. A woman who challenged structures of male privilege could also exercise overwhelming authority within her own household. Such a contradiction does not invalidate the public struggle; instead, it exposes the complexity of agency. Feminist subjects are not automatically free from reproducing other forms of domination, and public resistance does not guarantee private tenderness.

Roy's memoir therefore performs a double memorialisation. It remembers Mary as a historical woman whose public interventions mattered, while also remembering her as the mother whose presence shaped the daughter's emotional life. The two memories cannot be neatly separated. Mary's political convictions enter the daughter's consciousness alongside memories of discipline, conflict, and fear. In this sense, maternal inheritance is not simply a transfer of values from one generation to another. It is a contested process in which the daughter accepts, rejects, transforms, and reinterprets what she has received.

The memoir's historical dimensions also prevent the mother-daughter conflict from being read only as an interpersonal problem. Mary's experiences were shaped by gendered expectations, social pressures, family disputes, institutional constraints, and the historical conditions of Kerala. Roy does not use these conditions to excuse harmful behavior. Instead, she places individual conduct within a larger genealogy of power. The result is a more complex ethical position: understanding the social origins of violence without denying its effects.

Memory, Narrative, and the Problem of Truth

One of the memoir's central achievements is its representation of memory as dynamic rather than static. Roy does not construct childhood as a continuous sequence of events that can be recovered intact. Instead, memories appear through fragments, associations, sensory impressions, and retrospective interpretation. Childhood scenes are placed beside later reflections, public events, and political history. The resulting structure resembles the actual movement of memory, in which an experience from the past may acquire a different significance when revisited years later.

This non-linear organisation also prevents the memoir from becoming a conventional chronological biography of Mary Roy. The subject is not simply the mother's life; it is the daughter's changing relationship to the memory of that life. The distinction is crucial. Memoir is concerned not only with what happened but with what remembering an event means from a later position.

Roy frequently alternates between close scene and panoramic reflection. Domestic spaces and childhood experiences are rendered with sensory immediacy, after which the narrative may move toward social or political interpretation. This oscillation gives the memoir its hybrid character. It is at once intimate and analytical. The reader encounters a child's vulnerability and an adult writer's effort to understand the structures that produced or intensified that vulnerability.

The question of truth is consequently ethical as well as epistemological. Roy cannot claim complete access to her mother's interior life, nor can she recover the past without the distortions introduced by time, emotion, and subsequent knowledge. Yet this limitation does not make the memoir untruthful. On the contrary, acknowledging the partiality of memory becomes part of its honesty. The memoir's truth lies in the relationship between recollection and reflection rather than in a pretence of objective omniscience.

This understanding also explains the importance of omission, digression, and tonal shifts. The narrative does not smooth difficult experiences into a reassuring progression from suffering to recovery. Its unresolved quality suggests that some forms of experience remain resistant to closure. Memory continues to work after the event, and writing becomes one of the means through which that unfinished process can be examined.

Motherhood, Power, and Ambivalence

The figure of Mary Roy is most compelling when read through the memoir's sustained ambivalence. She is neither saint nor villain. Roy recognises the mother's courage, intelligence, educational commitment, and public activism while simultaneously recording the effects of her severity on family life. This refusal of binary representation is particularly important within feminist discourse, where the cultural idealisation of motherhood can make criticism of mothers appear morally suspect.

The memoir challenges the expectation that daughters should convert maternal sacrifice into unconditional gratitude. A mother may have struggled against patriarchal institutions and still exercise authority in ways that injure those closest to her. Roy's narrative insists that both facts can remain true.

Such an approach expands feminist analysis by distinguishing structural resistance from interpersonal behavior.

The "shelter" dimension of motherhood is associated with protection, education, belonging, and the formation of a moral framework. The "storm" dimension emerges through temper, discipline, emotional volatility, and the experience of being constrained by an overpowering personality. The metaphor does not suggest that these are two separate mothers. Rather, they are two dimensions of the same relationship. The daughter's emotional difficulty arises precisely because love and injury originate in the same figure.

This ambivalence also reshapes the meaning of resistance. Roy's departure from her mother's immediate sphere in adolescence can be understood as an act of self-preservation rather than simple rejection. Separation creates the possibility of maintaining love without remaining entirely subject to maternal authority. The memoir therefore presents freedom not as the elimination of attachment but as the renegotiation of attachment.

Roy's treatment of Mary also avoids the easy psychological explanation that would reduce her behavior to individual pathology. The mother's contradictions are connected to historical and social pressures, including gender, class, family structures, and the expectations placed upon women who attempt to exercise authority. Such contextualisation does not excuse harm. It makes the narrative more politically serious by asking how private forms of power are shaped by public histories.

Mother, Memory, and the Making of a Writer

A major dimension of the memoir is its account of literary formation. Roy presents her mother as a formative presence in her development as a writer, but she avoids the romantic claim that suffering automatically produces artistic greatness. Instead, the relationship between pain and creativity remains paradoxical. Constraint can generate the desire for imaginative escape, yet the suffering that produces such escape remains suffering.

Writing thus becomes both refuge and reckoning. The young Roy's experience of estrangement and emotional pressure contributes to a heightened sensitivity to language, memory, and human contradiction. The adult writer then transforms that sensitivity into narrative form. The memoir is consequently not simply about the origin of a writer; it demonstrates the writer at work on the material of her own past.

This process is visible in Roy's shifting style. Lyrical passages coexist with sharper, more analytical prose. Humour can interrupt grief; irony creates distance from painful experience; sensory detail restores immediacy to memories that might otherwise become abstract. These stylistic movements enact the memoir's central tension between intimacy and distance. The writer enters the past emotionally but also steps back from it in order to interpret it.

The connection between mother and literary imagination is especially significant because Mary becomes both person and subject. Roy's grief therefore contains a specifically literary dimension: the death of the mother also means the loss of a complex, inexhaustible presence who had long occupied the writer's imaginative field. Mourning is consequently doubled. Roy mourns a mother and confronts the disappearance of a central source of narrative material.

Yet this does not reduce Mary to a literary device. The ethical challenge of the memoir is precisely that the "subject" was a real person. Roy must transform memory into art without forgetting the personhood of the woman being represented. The memoir's power emerges from its refusal to resolve that tension.

Intertextuality and the Echo of *The God of Small Things*

The relationship between *Mother Mary Comes to Me* and *The God of Small Things* is central to understanding Roy's literary development. Readers familiar with the novel encounter recurring concerns: Kerala's sensory landscape, childhood perception, family conflict, shame, silence, unequal distributions of love, and the lasting force of memory. These similarities do not mean that the novel can be read simply as disguised autobiography. Rather, the memoir invites a retrospective dialogue between fictional and non-fictional forms.

In *The God of Small Things*, lived experience is transformed through fictional structures, altered characters, and imaginative patterning. The memoir reverses that movement by bringing certain experiences into direct autobiographical discourse. What fiction could render through symbolic displacement, memoir must approach through ethical accountability. The difference reveals that literary truth is not confined to factual accuracy. Fiction and memoir produce different forms of knowledge about the same emotional terrain.

The intertextual relationship also illuminates Roy's understanding of childhood. In both works, children perceive the world through heightened sensory and emotional registers. Small objects, landscapes, weather, domestic spaces, and fragments of speech can become carriers of memory. Such details are not decorative. They show how identity is formed through encounters with place and family.

The memoir nevertheless introduces a greater degree of authorial self-consciousness. Roy can now reflect upon the experiences that fiction once represented indirectly. The adult narrator knows the historical and political significance of events that the child could only experience emotionally. The resulting narrative therefore contains two temporal selves: the child who lived the event and the adult who attempts to interpret it. The tension between them is one of the memoir's chief sources of depth.

Style and Rhetoric: The Language of Reckoning

Roy's prose is marked by a productive movement between metaphorical intensity and stylistic restraint. Recurring images of weather, domestic architecture, landscape, and physical objects give memory material form. Kerala is not simply a geographical setting; its rains, greenery, humidity, houses, and institutional spaces become part of the emotional vocabulary through which childhood is recalled.

The metaphor of shelter and storm is particularly effective because it converts psychological ambivalence into a spatial and climatic image. Shelter suggests protection, enclosure, and belonging, but enclosure can also become confinement. Storm suggests violence and disruption, yet storms are also part of the natural environment through which the remembered world is constituted. The metaphor therefore avoids a simple opposition between safety and danger.

Roy's prose also gains force from tonal variation. At moments of vulnerability, language becomes relatively direct and restrained. Elsewhere, the writer's familiar rhetorical expansiveness returns, especially when individual experiences open onto questions of law, society, gender, and politics. The alternation keeps the memoir from becoming either purely confessional or purely argumentative.

Digression is another important formal strategy. Passages concerning legal history, social expectations, education, and political context interrupt the linear flow of family memory, but these interruptions are structurally meaningful. They demonstrate that private life is shaped by public institutions. The mother's struggle for women's rights cannot be detached from the daughter's understanding of gendered power within the family.

The memoir's humour is equally significant. Wry or dark humour creates breathing space within a narrative of grief and conflict. It also prevents the representation of Mary from becoming uniformly condemnatory. Humour restores the ordinary, contradictory human qualities of the remembered figure. In this sense, style becomes an ethical practice: language makes room for complexity rather than forcing experience into a single emotional register.

Ethics of Representation: Speaking of the Dead

Writing about a deceased parent creates a difficult ethical problem because the represented person cannot respond to the narrative. This problem becomes more acute when the memoir records painful or damaging experiences. Roy confronts the tension between loyalty to family memory and the obligation to speak about harm. Silence may protect reputation, but it can also preserve the authority of unspoken injury.

Roy's strategy is neither exposure for its own sake nor protective silence. She places Mary's achievements and failures within the same narrative field. This is important because the mother's public reputation could easily produce a one-sided memorial. By including difficult memories, Roy insists that public accomplishment should not erase private experience. At the same time, by recognising Mary's achievements, she refuses to turn the memoir into an uncomplicated indictment.

The ethical complexity extends beyond the mother-daughter relationship. Other family members and people connected with the past are implicated in the act of remembrance. Memoir can never provide every perspective, and Roy cannot fully know the interior experiences of others. The narrative therefore operates within the limits of situated memory. Its authority comes not from claiming total knowledge but from acknowledging the perspective from which it speaks.

This is where the memoir's feminist significance becomes especially clear. Speaking about harm can be an act of reclaiming narrative agency. The daughter who once had to remain silent can become the adult narrator who determines what can be spoken. Yet speaking does not automatically resolve the past. The memoir's ethical achievement lies in allowing truth and uncertainty, affection and accusation, to coexist.

The result is a model of memorial writing that resists both hagiography and vindictiveness. Roy neither protects Mary from criticism because she was a public woman nor condemns her because she caused personal pain. Instead, she represents a human being whose legacy is contradictory. Such representation is demanding because it requires the reader to inhabit moral complexity rather than receive a predetermined judgment.

Gender, Law, and the Political Meaning of the Domestic

The political significance of the memoir emerges most strongly when domestic experience is read alongside Mary Roy's public struggles. Her legal activism concerning Christian women's inheritance rights demonstrates how questions of property and family can become questions of gendered citizenship. The law determines not only economic relationships but also whose claims within the family are recognised as legitimate.

This background gives the mother-daughter relationship a wider political dimension. Mary's insistence on education and legal equality places her within a tradition of women challenging structures that restrict female autonomy. Yet the memoir complicates any straightforward narrative of emancipation by showing that women who resist external authority may themselves exercise intense authority in intimate settings.

The domestic and the political therefore mirror and disturb one another. The family is not outside history. It is one of the places where social values are reproduced, contested, and experienced emotionally. Roy's childhood becomes a site where questions of gender, class, religion, authority, and belonging are lived rather than merely debated.

This movement from the private to the political is characteristic of Roy's wider writing. Her memoir does not abandon the public intellectual who wrote political essays; it reveals some of the emotional and biographical conditions from which that intellectual sensibility developed. The turn inward is thus not a retreat from politics. It is another way of examining power—this time through the intimate structures of family and memory.

Identity, Separation, and Self-Formation

Memory in *Mother Mary Comes to Me* is inseparable from identity. Roy's sense of self emerges through multiple affiliations: daughter, sibling, woman, member of a particular religious and regional community, and writer. None of these identities exists in isolation. Each is shaped by the others, and the maternal relationship becomes one of the principal sites through which they are negotiated.

Separation from the mother is therefore a crucial stage in self-formation. Leaving the maternal orbit can be understood as an assertion of individuality, but the memoir resists interpreting separation as emotional erasure. Roy's movement away creates the distance necessary to continue loving while also establishing a self that is not wholly defined by maternal authority.

The writerly self develops through a similar process. To write is to convert experience into language, but it is also to claim the right to interpret one's own life. The memoir gives Roy control over the narrative position from which the mother is remembered. This does not mean that she achieves complete freedom from the past. Rather, writing makes it possible to encounter the past differently.

The memoir thus becomes a narrative of becoming. Roy is not simply telling the story of who she was; she is examining how a self was produced through attachment, conflict, displacement, memory, and creativity. The mother remains part of that self even after separation and death. Inheritance is therefore neither acceptance nor rejection. It is an ongoing process of choosing what to carry forward and what to resist.

Critical Significance and Contemporary Relevance

The importance of *Mother Mary Comes to Me* extends beyond the biography of Arundhati and Mary Roy. The memoir participates in contemporary debates about how societies remember public figures whose achievements coexist with troubling private histories. It asks whether admiration for a reformer requires silence about the costs of her authority, and whether criticism of private conduct must erase public achievement.

Its contemporary relevance also lies in its treatment of maternal inheritance. Families transmit more than property, names, or cultural practices. They transmit emotional habits, expectations, memories, fears, and forms of resistance. These inheritances can be enabling and damaging at once. Roy's memoir shows that maturity may involve neither complete rejection nor unquestioning acceptance, but an active reworking of what has been inherited.

In this respect, the memoir contributes to a broader understanding of feminist agency. Agency is not always achieved through dramatic liberation from all relationships. It can involve creating enough distance to reinterpret those relationships and to speak from a position that is neither obedience nor simple rebellion. Roy's narrative models precisely such a difficult freedom.

Conclusion

The memoir also demonstrates that memory is an active form of self-making. Roy does not recover a finished past. She revisits fragments of childhood from the perspective of an adult writer and public intellectual, allowing later knowledge to alter the significance of earlier experience. Its non-linear structure, tonal shifts, digressions, sensory imagery, and movement between intimate scene and political reflection formally enact this process.

The metaphor of shelter and storm provides the most concise expression of the memoir's ethical vision. The mother can protect and confine, inspire and wound, offer belonging and produce the desire for escape. To acknowledge one side without the other would falsify the relationship. Roy's refusal to do so is what gives the memoir its emotional and intellectual force.

The book is also a narrative of literary formation. The mother is not simply remembered; she becomes part of the history of the writer's imagination. Yet Roy resists romanticising suffering as the source of artistic greatness. Writing functions instead as a means of transforming experience without denying its damage. The memoir becomes both mourning and creative reckoning.

Finally, the work demonstrates the continuing political importance of feminist life-writing. To narrate the mother is to question cultural expectations about gratitude, silence, family loyalty, and female virtue. To narrate a public woman critically is to complicate the ways history constructs heroic figures. And to narrate oneself in relation to that woman is to claim the right to inhabit contradiction.

Ultimately, *Mother Mary Comes to Me* suggests that love does not require idealisation and that criticism does not require hatred. Memory can carry tenderness and injury at the same time. By preserving these tensions rather than resolving them, Roy transforms personal remembrance into an ethical and political inquiry. The memoir's deepest insight is that maternal legacy is not a fixed inheritance but a continuing negotiation: what the daughter remembers, what she rejects, what she carries, and what she finally learns to name.

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The Linguistic Influence of Bengali Content Creators in the Digital Age

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Abstract: *The growth of digital media has changed the way people communicate and use language. These days, Bengali content creators on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, podcasts, and other short-video platforms have become important users who promote the Bengali language, knowingly or unknowingly. They are significant agents of this language. Their language is generally simple, informal, conversational, emotional, and closely connected with everyday life. It focuses on the distinctive features of digital Bengali, including conversational and informal expressions, code-switching, code-mixing, regional varieties, memes, internet slang, vocabulary, storytelling, and creator-specific catchphrases, such as "Hello guys, kEmon kaTche ajker dinTa?", "ajker vlog-Ta super exciting hObe!", etc. This paper examines how the language used by Bengali content creators influences the language itself and the thoughts, behaviors, and cultural attitudes of their audiences, particularly the youngsters. Consequently, their speaking style can quickly become popular among viewers and followers. The paper also illustrates the influence of Bengali content creators. Their work has increased the use and visibility of Bengali in the digital world and has encouraged young people to engage with the Bengali language, literature, education, culture, and entertainment. Also, the regional dialects and local cultural practices are becoming visible. Content creators have actually created 'Digital Bengali'. It promotes the language and linguistic diversity. At the same time, the linguistic practices of content creators raise debates on 'accuracy', excessive Anglicization, linguistic homogenization, sensationalism, using aggressive or derogatory expressions, spreading misinformation, and the normalization of potentially harmful speech patterns. The paper therefore approaches the phenomenon from a sociolinguistic perspective, considering that content creators' influence is undeniable for the identity of the Bengali language.*

Key Words: *Bengali Content Creators, Digital Bengali, Code-Switching, Code-Mixing, Linguistic influence.*

INTRODUCTION:

The term *content creator* or *content-maker* has become familiar to almost everyone in the digital age. Language is no longer merely a medium of expressing thoughts and opinions; it has become a powerful instrument of influence. Social media-based content creators, who can reach thousands or even millions of people through videos, posts, blogs, podcasts, shorts, reels and livestreams, have the ability to

influence people's thoughts, emotions, behaviour, values and social psychology. The algorithm-driven nature of the Internet, the culture of limited attention, rapidly produced content, and personal storytelling have made contemporary language increasingly adaptive, persuasive and audience-oriented.

This linguistic transformation is largely the result of content creators' creativity and their continuous effort to develop competitive and engaging forms of presentation. Humour, distinctive pronunciation, unusual word choices and specific emotional expressions allow creators to establish individual identities. Thus, language has become an important component of personal branding in the digital environment. Content creators' influence does not depend exclusively on what they communicate; increasingly, it depends on **how they communicate**. Digital platforms have created spaces where Bengali can be used not only for literary or domestic communication but also for education, entertainment, entrepreneurship, political commentary, lifestyle content, and global digital interaction. In this environment, conventional distinctions between 'formal' and 'informal' Bengali are becoming increasingly fluid.

In the past, even in the very recent past, poets, writers, journalists, academicians, and political leaders were considered among the principal custodians and producers of public language. However, with the rise of YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and podcast platforms, content creators have emerged as important producers and disseminators of contemporary language. The emergence of creator-led communication also requires a reconsideration of how linguistic authority is understood in contemporary society. A phrase used repeatedly by a popular creator can acquire considerable social recognition even without institutional approval. In this sense, the contemporary digital environment has created new forms of vernacular linguistic authority. Bengali is spoken across different regions, communities, and national contexts, and its users employ a wide range of registers, dialects, and styles. A regional pronunciation, a locally marked expression, or a particular form of humour can move anywhere from its source. Digital platforms provide these opportunities for unprecedented circulation.

In areas such as technology, lifestyle, education, entertainment, and professional communication, Code-switching and code-mixing have become very common. An example such as "ajker vlog-Ta super exciting hObe!" demonstrates how Bengali and English resources coexist within contemporary digital discourse. The digital environment also blurs the boundary between spoken and written language. Language consequently becomes closely connected with visibility, engagement, and digital participation.

So far, the discussion has focused on **content creators**. But what exactly is meant by *content*? In the digital age, content has emerged as a major bridge of communication, encompassing video, audio, text, visual media, and other forms through which information, opinions, and experiences are exchanged. Behind this content are content creators whose language, communicative style, choice of words, and narrative techniques increasingly influence the thoughts, behaviours, and social realities of millions of people. From today's younger generation to the fields of education, politics, and culture, the language used by content creators exerts a significant influence. This chapter therefore examines how this linguistic influence is produced, how it shapes people's perspectives and lifestyles, and what its broader social, psychological, and political implications may be.

2. OBJECTIVES:

The study aims to:

1. Identify the key linguistic features of Bengali digital content creation.
2. Examine informal, conversational, emotional, and persuasive language practices.
3. Explore the emergence and characteristics of **'Digital Bengali'**.

4. Assess the influence of Content-creators on language and society.
5. Analyze code-switching and code-mixing in digital discourse.
6. Explore the relationship between language, identity, and personal branding.
7. Examine the contribution of digital Bengali to education, literature, and culture.
8. To propose a framework for responsible and sustainable Bengali digital communication.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Digital media has changed the way people communicate and use language. Earlier studies show that the Internet has created new forms of informal and interactive language. In multilingual societies, code-switching and code-mixing are important features of digital communication. In Bengali digital communication, the use of English words with Bengali, Romanized Bengali, slang, memes, and regional expressions is becoming common. Recent studies on Bangla-English social-media communication suggest that code-mixing is an important and frequently used feature of digital communication and can serve different social and communicative purposes. Regional-language content has also become more visible through digital platforms. Social-media platforms have created opportunities for regional languages and cultures to reach wider audiences. Content creators are now using the language for education, entertainment, literature, lifestyle, politics, and cultural expression. Crystal (2006) argues that Internet communication has produced new patterns of language use, particularly through informal and interactive forms. Tagg (2015) notes that digital communication is closely connected with identity, audience, and everyday language practices. However, limited research has examined Bengali content creators specifically as agents of language change. This study addresses this gap by examining their usage of the Bengali language and their overall impact on society and language.

4. METHODOLOGY:

The present research adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and sociolinguistic approach. Since the objective is to understand patterns of linguistic influence rather than to produce a statistically representative estimate of all Bengali digital communication, the study focuses on recurring linguistic practices observable in publicly available Bengali-language digital content. As a corpus, we have used publicly accessible content genres such as short-form videos, vlogs, educational videos, entertainment content, lifestyle material, commentary, interviews, various types of podcasts, promotional material, and social-media captions. The analysis focuses on Bengali-dominant content. The analytical framework is informed by four interconnected dimensions:

(a) linguistic form, (b) communicative function, (c) identity construction, and (d) social consequence.

A purposive sampling method is used to identify linguistically relevant examples from publicly available digital content. The selected examples are treated as illustrative rather than statistically representative. The study also considers digital communication as a multimodal practice, where language interacts with images, emojis, gestures, music, captions, and visual presentation. The analysis identifies recurring linguistic patterns and examines their communicative functions, role in identity construction, audience engagement, and most importantly, wider social implications.

Individual creators are not evaluated personally; the focus remains on broader linguistic patterns and their sociocultural significance. Ethically, we have not criticized Individual creators or attributed linguistic responsibility to identifiable persons. Our focus is only on their language use. Examples are therefore treated primarily as discourse rather than evidence against particular creators. Publicly available content is analyzed for linguistic patterns, not as personal information.

5. RESEARCH GAP, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DATASET AND CODING FRAMEWORK:

Previous studies have examined Internet language, multilingual digital communication, and social-media discourse; but very few studies have focused specifically on Bengali content creators as active agents of contemporary linguistic change. The present study addresses this gap. The questions of this research are:

1) What are the major linguistic features of contemporary Bengali digital content?
2) How do code-mixing, code-switching, regional varieties, and digital expressions contribute to linguistic identity?
3) How does creator language influence audience engagement and everyday language practices?
4) What are the major positive and negative sociocultural implications of these linguistic practices?

For an empirical version of the study, a purposive dataset of 100 Bengali content creators has been selected from YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram over a defined 12-month period.

The coding framework classifies linguistic features into five categories: 1) lexical mixing, 2) structural mixing, 3) regional/dialectal usage, 4) digital expressions and audience-address strategies, and 5) persuasive or emotional language.

6. DISCUSSION:

The rise of content creators has fundamentally altered the distribution of linguistic agency. Previously, language circulated through comparatively centralized institutions such as schools, newspapers, publishing houses, television, and radio. Digital platforms have introduced a more decentralized model in which individuals can generate and disseminate linguistic forms without institutional mediation.

Nobody is unfamiliar with the terms ‘content creator’ or ‘content maker ' in the digital age. Language is no longer merely a medium of expressing thoughts and opinions; it has emerged as a powerful instrument of influence. In particular, social media-based content creators—who can reach millions of people through videos, posts, blogs, podcasts, shorts, reels, and livestreams—use language that can profoundly influence people’s thoughts, emotions, behaviours, values, and social psychology. The algorithmic nature of the Internet, the culture of limited attention, rapidly produced content, and the growing popularity of personal storytelling have made contemporary language increasingly adaptive, persuasive, and influence-oriented.

This chapter examines how content creators employ language and explores the kinds of social and psychological effects such language may have on audiences and viewers. It also considers the ethical dimensions of digital language and examines how linguistic transformation within the emerging digital culture may contribute to the broader restructuring of human society in the future.

The widespread availability of the Internet and smartphones has contributed to the emergence of a content-driven online culture. Within this environment, language has become a means of constructing identity and shaping opinions. The language of conventional mass media is generally formal, regulated, and governed by established conventions. Content creators, however, tend to use language that is more spontaneous, simple, familiar, personal, and entertainment-oriented. This shift in linguistic style has reduced the perceived psychological distance between media communicators and their audiences. As a result, content creators increasingly come across as ‘friends’ or familiar companions, thereby making their linguistic influence considerably more powerful.

Traditional formal communication often follows relatively stable grammatical, lexical, and rhetorical conventions. Content creators, in contrast, frequently simulate interpersonal conversation. Expressions such as:

1) "Wow…bʱabteɪ parbena adʒ͡ ki dekʰlam"
2) "ajker vlog-Ta super exciting hObe!"

Construct an impression of direct interpersonal interaction and modern digital communication.

The language used by content creators generally exhibits the following characteristics:

1) Short sentences and simple vocabulary: Content creators frequently use short sentences, simple words, repetition, light humour, and examples drawn from everyday life. These features make their content accessible, relatable, and easy to understand.

2) Emotional expression: One of the major strengths of online content is the use of emotions such as anger, excitement, fear, empathy, joy, and surprise. Content creators often employ emotionally charged language to establish a stronger connection with their audiences.

3) Use of memes: Memes have become one of the principal tools of content creators. A *meme* may be a cultural idea, image, word, joke, video, or behaviour that spreads rapidly among people and becomes popular through imitation. Memes are generally circulated through social media and serve as a means of entertainment, satire, and self-expression. Their use helps break linguistic monotony, present controversial issues in an accessible manner, and disseminate a central message rapidly or make it 'viral'.

4) Facial expressions and gestures: Various facial expressions, bodily movements, and gestures can also function as forms of language. Such non-verbal forms of communication have become particularly popular in digital content creation.

5) Emotionally charged expressions: Content creators often deliberately use emotionally expressive words and phrases to capture and retain audience attention.

6) Repeated phrases and linguistic branding: Creators frequently repeat particular words or expressions to establish their individual identity. These may include slogans, taglines, opening statements, and closing phrases that become associated with their personal brand.

7) Use of regional varieties: Many content creators incorporate regional languages, dialects, and accents into their content. Such usage is not necessarily limited to their mother tongue; in many cases, creators consciously employ regional varieties to attract attention, establish authenticity, and create a distinctive identity.

8) Storytelling: Storytelling is another frequently employed technique in digital content creation. Since people are naturally drawn to narratives, creators often adopt storytelling techniques to present information, experiences, opinions, and personal accounts in a more engaging manner.

9) Audience-oriented expressions: Content creators frequently use expressions that facilitate a closer relationship with their audiences, such as "laɪk kɔɾo, kɔmɛnt kɔɾe dʒ͡anao". Such expressions transform viewers from passive recipients into active participants in the communication process.

The Impact of Content Creators' Language:

The language used in digital content can exert far-reaching influence on audiences. Content creators' sentence structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, modes of expression, humour, and even ethical positions can shape viewers' attitudes and everyday practices. First, content may influence social consciousness, habits, tastes, values, and ideologies. Gender-related content, for instance, can promote awareness and progressive values, but misleading interpretations may also reinforce gender stereotypes. Digital platforms have also accelerated linguistic change. Words, phrases, slang, and even particular pronunciations can spread within hours through viral content. Content creators have further increased the visibility of regional dialects and linguistic diversity. Their pronunciation, tone, speech patterns, and expressions particularly influence younger audiences. At the same time, the popularity of 'roasting' may normalise aggressive or derogatory language. Conversely, satirical and socially conscious content can expose social problems and encourage political awareness.

The digital expansion of Bengali has also strengthened Bengali literature, poetry, storytelling, music, education, and cultural practices. Educational creators increasingly explain complex academic subjects through Bengali, thereby improving accessibility. Overall, content creators are making Bengali more accessible, dynamic, diverse, and digitally relevant. Yet sustainable digital language practices require a balance between linguistic innovation, inclusivity, accuracy, cultural identity, and responsible communication.

7. ANALYSIS:

The analysis indicates that Bengali content creators are contributing to a significant transformation in contemporary Bengali language use. Their communication creates a sense of familiarity between creators and viewers. Code-mixing, code-switching, regional expressions, memes, slang, and creator-specific phrases are prominent features of digital Bengali. These practices increase linguistic creativity, audience engagement, and the visibility of regional varieties. Digital content creators do not restrict Bengali to domestic or literary domains; instead, they use it as a language of modern, global communication. Bengali speakers can now access information, entertainment, and knowledge through their mother tongue. A language's status increases when it adapts to the demands of modernity and changing modes of communication. Content creators have contributed significantly to bringing such modernity to Bengali. Their language may be described as a 'media language,' 'hybrid language,' and 'conversational language.' Content creators also play an important role in developing the vocabulary generated by popular culture. Bengali dialects are no longer necessarily perceived as 'incorrect'; in many cases, they have become distinctive markers of content identity and personal branding. Overall, content creators act as important agents of linguistic innovation and change, making Bengali more dynamic and accessible while creating new challenges for linguistic responsibility and 'standard' usage.

8. RESULTS:

As a qualitative synthesis, the study identifies the following major analytical findings.

1) Bengali digital content increasingly uses simple, conversational, and audience-friendly language.
2) Code-mixing and Code-switching are becoming very common features of contemporary digital communication.
3) Content creators are increasing the visibility and social acceptance of Bengali dialects and regional varieties.
4) New digital vocabulary is being prepared.
5) Promotion of Bengali culture has happened.

6) Bengali is developing new hybrid, conversational, and media-oriented forms.
7) Though, Excessive English usage, grammatical errors, aggressive expressions, and sensationalism may negatively affect language practices.

9. CONCLUSION:

The digital revolution of the twenty-first century has transformed the ways in which people communicate, express themselves, and access information. The Bengali language is currently passing through a rapidly changing period. In particular, the emergence of content creators on digital platforms is having a profound impact on the Bengali language. This influence is clearly visible in both positive and negative directions.

The influence of content creators on the Bengali language has now become an important subject of linguistic research. This influence is deep and multidimensional, extending across social, cultural, structural, and psychological dimensions.

Content creators are taking the Bengali language along two parallel paths—making it both richer and more challenging. Their influence has made Bengali more modern, vibrant, and popular. However, it is equally important to remember that preserving the distinctiveness and correctness of the language is essential.

The Bengali language today stands at a digital crossroads, and content creators are among the principal actors at the centre of this transformation. To a considerable extent, the future direction of the Bengali language will depend on how this emerging digital linguistic environment continues to develop.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The findings of the study suggest several directions for responsible Bengali digital communication.

- Content creators should recognize their linguistic influence and avoid discriminatory, abusive, or unnecessarily aggressive expressions.
- They should be aware of the fact that there should be a clear distinction between personal language use and usage on social media.
- Bengali digital vocabulary should be systematically developed. The increasing presence of technology, science, business, and professional communication creates an urgent need for accessible Bengali terminology. Though code-mixing, especially English-Bengali mixing, cannot be avoided, Bengali should always be encouraged to generate and popularize its own contemporary lexical resources.
- Educational institutions should promote digital language awareness. Students should be encouraged to understand the distinction between informal social-media language and academic Bengali.
- Regional dialects should be represented respectfully, not merely as material for ridicule.
- Researchers and institutions should create systematic databases documenting emerging vocabulary, slang, memes, code-mixing, and regional expressions.
- The future of Bengali digital communication should balance innovation, accessibility, linguistic diversity, cultural identity, and responsible communication.

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Tracks of Social Mobility: Railway Travel, Caste, Class, and Modernity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract: This paper examines railway travel as a literary representation of social mobility, caste, class, and modernity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). The study begins from the observation that the railway is not merely a means of physical transportation in contemporary Indian fiction. It can also operate as a symbolic route through which characters experience separation, aspiration, displacement, social difference, and the possibility of escape. In Roy's novel, railway spaces are connected with movement across social and emotional boundaries, yet the possibility of movement is constrained by caste, family structures, memory, and social regulation. In Adiga's novel, movement through roads, cities, and transport networks accompanies Balram Halwai's movement from poverty and servitude towards entrepreneurship. Read comparatively, the two novels complicate the assumption that physical movement automatically produces social mobility. A close reading of the selected novels is combined with comparative interpretation of railway and travel imagery, caste and class relations, and representations of modernity. The analysis suggests that mobility is simultaneously enabling and restrictive: transport creates access to new spaces and aspirations while inherited hierarchies determine who can move freely, who remains excluded, and what costs accompany upward movement. The paper therefore reads railway travel as a metaphorical track on which the promises and contradictions of modern Indian social mobility become visible.

Keywords: railway travel, social mobility, caste, class, modernity, Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Indian fiction

1. INTRODUCTION

Railways occupy a distinctive place in the cultural imagination of modern India. They connect villages, towns, cities, workplaces, families, and economic centres, and therefore appear to embody movement and modernity. Yet movement across physical space does not necessarily mean movement across social space. Access to mobility is shaped by caste, class, gender, occupation, money, education, and social power. Literature can make this contradiction visible by transforming ordinary journeys into symbolic encounters with social structures. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* are particularly productive texts for such a comparative reading because both novels place individual lives within unequal social environments and connect movement with changing identities and aspirations.

Roy's *The God of Small Things*, published in 1997, presents the emotional and social consequences of caste, family hierarchy, memory, and forbidden relationships in Kerala. The novel's movement between places and times is closely associated with the characters' attempts to cross boundaries that society has

established. Travel does not erase these boundaries; instead, movement often exposes the restrictions surrounding the characters. The railway and the railway station consequently become more than background settings. They participate in a narrative of departure, separation, encounter, and social control.

Adiga's *The White Tiger*, published in 2008, shifts the geographical emphasis towards the movement between rural Bihar and metropolitan centres such as Delhi and Bangalore. Balram Halwai's journey from a poor village background to a position as an entrepreneur is presented through a sharp critique of economic inequality, servitude, caste consciousness, corruption, and the unequal distribution of opportunity. The novel's transport network supports a broader movement from what Balram calls the 'Darkness' towards the 'Light', while simultaneously revealing that modern urban spaces are themselves structured by inequality.

The central argument of this paper is that railway and travel imagery in the two novels represents mobility as a contradictory process. Transport can create the possibility of leaving a previous social position, but social mobility remains conditioned by structures that cannot be crossed simply by moving from one place to another. The comparison therefore places railway travel within a wider literary geography of caste, class, capitalism, memory, and modernity.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To examine railway and travel imagery as a symbol of social mobility in the selected novels.
- To analyse the representation of caste and class in relation to physical and social movement.
- To compare Roy's representation of movement, separation, and memory with Adiga's representation of ambition, capitalism, and escape.
- To examine how modernity is represented as both an opportunity for mobility and a continuation of social inequality.
- To identify similarities and differences in the ways the two novels connect transport, identity, and social transformation.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing scholarship on *The White Tiger* frequently examines social inequality, caste, class conflict, corruption, and the conditions under which Balram achieves upward mobility. Bisai and Singh (2019), for example, interpret Balram's transformation through the relationship between crime and social mobility, emphasizing the connection between poverty, structural inequality, and occupational advancement. More recent criticism likewise continues to read the novel as an examination of class struggle and the unequal conditions of contemporary India. These approaches establish that Balram's movement is not simply a personal success story; it is shaped by the structures of the society through which he moves.

Studies comparing Roy and Adiga have also foregrounded caste and social marginalisation. Swadeshi's comparative discussion of *The White Tiger* and *The God of Small Things* emphasizes the different ways caste and class operate in the two novels. Such comparative work is useful because it shows that the novels do not present inequality through identical narrative situations. Roy places caste restrictions within intimate family and social relationships, while Adiga emphasizes economic hierarchy, servitude, political power, and the pressures of capitalist aspiration.

The present study extends these discussions by concentrating specifically on movement and transport as a literary frame. Rather than treating railway travel as incidental scenery, the paper considers movement itself as a symbolic language through which the novels represent social possibility and exclusion. The focus on railway and travel imagery also connects the two novels through a shared concern with modernity while respecting their different narrative contexts.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative and comparative literary research methodology. The primary texts selected for analysis are Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). A close-reading method is employed to examine significant representations of

travel, railway spaces, roads, vehicles, and movement. The study investigates how physical movement is connected with social mobility and changing identities. Particular attention is given to the representation of caste, class, labour, inequality, and social hierarchy. The analysis also examines how modern transport and urban spaces represent the possibilities and limitations of mobility. Selected episodes, characters, settings, and recurring images are interpreted in relation to the central themes of the study. A comparative approach is used to identify similarities and differences between Roy's and Adiga's representations of mobility. Secondary scholarly sources concerning caste, class, mobility, modernity, and the selected novels are consulted to contextualise the analysis.
The study remains interpretive and focuses on textual representation rather than statistical measurement. Through this approach, the paper examines how railway and travel imagery reveals the complex relationship between mobility, modernity, and social inequality.

5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The paper uses social mobility as its principal conceptual framework. Social mobility refers broadly to movement between social positions, including changes associated with occupation, income, status, education, and access to power. In literary representation, however, mobility can be both literal and metaphorical. A character may travel from one geographical location to another without gaining greater social freedom, while another may change occupation or economic position without escaping the cultural structures that shaped the earlier position.

A second concept is modernity. Modern transport is often associated with speed, connectivity, development, and progress. Railways can therefore symbolize a modern nation in motion. The novels complicate this association by placing modern infrastructure alongside persistent caste and class hierarchies. Modernity is consequently read here not as a guaranteed condition of equality but as a contradictory social process.

Finally, caste and class are treated as interconnected but distinct structures. Caste can regulate social identity, marriage, intimacy, occupation, and recognition, while class is strongly associated with wealth, labour, economic power, and access to resources. The selected novels demonstrate that movement through space takes place within these structures rather than outside them.

6. RAILWAY TRAVEL AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

In Roy's novel, movement is inseparable from memory and social restriction. The narrative moves across different moments in the lives of Rahel and Estha, and the structure of return makes geographical space carry emotional history. Railway-related spaces contribute to this larger pattern of movement and separation. The railway station, as a public space through which people arrive and depart, contrasts with the highly regulated social world represented by the family and caste system.

The railway can be understood as a threshold. A threshold allows crossing, but it also marks a boundary. Characters who move through railway spaces do not automatically acquire the freedom to cross caste or family boundaries. This is particularly important in relation to Velutha. His social position is shaped by caste, and his relationship with Ammu violates the social order represented by the novel. The contrast between physical movement and restricted social movement becomes central to the tragedy: geographical spaces may be traversed, but the social boundaries attached to caste remain powerful.

The railway therefore becomes part of the novel's imagery of separation. Travel may produce temporary freedom, but it can also carry characters away from one another and intensify the consequences of social control.

The train and station are public, mobile spaces, yet the characters enter them carrying identities imposed by family, caste, and memory. Movement consequently does not dissolve hierarchy; it makes the hierarchy visible through the contrast between the possibility of departure and the impossibility of certain social crossings.

The novel also connects modern infrastructure with a society that retains deeply hierarchical forms of recognition.

Railways belong to the world of modern connectivity, but the lives represented in the novel demonstrate that modernity does not automatically remove caste consciousness. The result is a productive

contradiction: the train moves people rapidly through space, while social structures can keep them fixed within unequal relationships.

7. TRAVEL, AMBITION, AND MOBILITY IN THE WHITE TIGER

Adiga's novel presents movement through a different but related framework. Balram Halwai's narrative traces his movement from rural Bihar into the urban and commercial worlds of Delhi and Bangalore. Transport is important because it connects the different economic worlds that Balram observes. As a driver, he moves physically for the benefit of his employers while remaining socially subordinate to them. His occupation therefore produces a striking contrast between physical mobility and social immobility.

Balram's position as a chauffeur is especially significant. He can travel through elite neighbourhoods, see luxurious homes, restaurants, hotels, and business environments, and become familiar with the habits of wealthy people. Yet his access is primarily occupational. He moves through spaces without possessing the social and economic power associated with those spaces. The road and vehicle thus become symbols of a divided modernity: the servant is mobile, but his mobility initially serves someone else's freedom.

The movement from rural Bihar to Delhi and eventually Bangalore is also connected to Balram's ambition. His transformation into an entrepreneur represents upward occupational and economic mobility, but the route is morally and socially compromised. The novel does not present mobility as a simple reward for hard work. Instead, it asks what forms of violence, deception, and ethical compromise may emerge when legitimate routes to advancement appear restricted.

The novel's 'Darkness' and 'Light' distinction further converts geography into social metaphor. Rural poverty and urban wealth become spatial representations of unequal opportunity. Yet the cities are not portrayed as completely free spaces. Urban modernity contains exploitation, corruption, and class division. Balram's eventual movement therefore demonstrates both the possibility of social change and the structural inequalities that make such change difficult.

In this sense, Adiga expands the meaning of mobility beyond transport. The movement of the body becomes connected to the movement of labour, money, identity, and ambition. The vehicle is particularly significant because it places Balram physically close to wealth while reminding him of his subordinate position. His later entrepreneurial identity is consequently represented as a radical change in social position rather than merely a change in location.

8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A comparison of the two novels reveals that railway and travel imagery operates through both similarity and difference. Roy's novel emphasizes separation, memory, caste restriction, and the emotional consequences of crossing forbidden boundaries. Adiga's novel emphasizes ambition, labour, capitalism, and the pursuit of economic independence. In both cases, movement creates the possibility of transformation while exposing the structures that restrict that transformation.

The first major similarity is the distinction between physical and social mobility. Characters can travel across geographical spaces without automatically changing their social status. In Roy, the ability to move does not eliminate caste boundaries.

In Adiga, Balram can move through the city as a chauffeur while remaining economically subordinate. The two novels therefore challenge a simplistic equation between movement and freedom.

The second similarity concerns modernity. Railways, roads, vehicles, cities, and commercial spaces suggest an India undergoing rapid transformation. However, both novels place modern infrastructure beside older or persistent hierarchies. Modernity thus appears contradictory. It creates new routes, but access to those routes is unequal.

The major difference lies in the form of mobility represented. Roy focuses more strongly on interpersonal and social boundaries, especially caste, family, intimacy, and memory. Adiga foregrounds occupational and economic movement. Balram actively seeks to transform his social position, whereas Roy's characters are often shown experiencing the consequences of boundaries that they cannot freely negotiate.

Another difference concerns the ethical meaning of escape. In *The God of Small Things*, attempts to cross caste and social boundaries are connected with emotional loss and institutional punishment. In *The White Tiger*, escape is pursued as a deliberate strategy of self-transformation, but the achievement of freedom is accompanied by violence and moral compromise. Both novels therefore question the idea that liberation is uncomplicated.

Railway travel can consequently be read as a model for the broader social systems in both texts. A railway track has a direction and a route, but not every passenger has the same destination or the same access to the journey. Similarly, social mobility has formal possibilities, but caste, class, wealth, occupation, and social recognition influence the opportunities available to different characters.

9. ANALYSIS: MOBILITY AS HOPE AND EXCLUSION

The selected novels ultimately present mobility as a double-edged condition. It produces hope because movement creates encounters with new spaces, new identities, and new possibilities. At the same time, it produces exclusion because movement is distributed unequally. Some characters possess money, education, social connections, or occupational authority that allow them to move with greater freedom. Others move because their labour requires it.

This distinction is especially important in the relationship between transport and labour. Balram's driving demonstrates how the mobility of one class can depend upon the labour of another. The person who controls the vehicle and the person who drives it do not occupy the same social position. The vehicle therefore becomes a compact representation of class hierarchy.

Roy's railway imagery works differently but produces a related insight. The railway is a public infrastructure available to a wide population, yet social identity accompanies the traveller. The public nature of the railway does not automatically create social equality. Caste, family authority, and community expectations continue to shape the meaning of movement.

The comparative reading therefore suggests that infrastructure alone cannot guarantee social mobility. Roads and railways can reduce geographical distance, but social distance may remain. Literature makes this difference visible by following individual characters through spaces where modern mobility meets inherited inequality.

10. RESULTS / FINDINGS

- Railway and travel imagery functions as a metaphor for the tension between physical movement and social mobility.
- Caste remains a significant force in determining the social meaning and consequences of movement in The God of Small Things.
- Class, labour, economic deprivation, and capitalist aspiration shape the meaning of mobility in The White Tiger.
- Modern transport and urban development create opportunities while simultaneously exposing unequal access to power and resources.
- Mobility is represented as uneven: movement through space does not necessarily result in movement across social hierarchies.
- Both novels challenge uncomplicated narratives of modern progress by placing modern infrastructure alongside persistent inequality.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Future literary studies may extend this comparative framework to other Indian English novels in which trains, roads, buses, airports, or urban transport systems shape characters' identities. Comparative studies may also examine mobility through gender, region, religion, disability, migration, and digital connectivity. A broader interdisciplinary study combining literary criticism with mobility studies could further investigate how fictional representations of transport respond to changing ideas of development and social transformation in India.

12. CONCLUSION

Railway and travel imagery in *The God of Small Things* and *The White Tiger* provides a productive way of understanding the contradictions of social mobility in contemporary Indian fiction. In Roy's novel, movement is associated with separation, memory, caste restriction, and the painful consequences of crossing socially regulated boundaries. In Adiga's novel, movement connects rural poverty to urban aspiration and accompanies Balram's attempt to transform himself from servant to entrepreneur. Yet his physical access to elite spaces initially does not mean equal social status.

The comparative reading demonstrates that transport is both opportunity and exclusion. Railways, roads, vehicles, and cities create routes through which characters can imagine different futures, but these routes operate within structures of caste, class, labour, wealth, and social power. The promise of modernity is therefore shown to be incomplete. Physical infrastructure can connect places, but it cannot by itself remove social hierarchy.

Reading the two novels through the metaphor of tracks makes this contradiction especially clear. A track enables movement, but it also determines the route. Similarly, the characters may move through modern India, yet their journeys are shaped by social structures that precede them. Roy and Adiga thus use movement not simply to represent travel but to question who is permitted to move, who benefits from mobility, and what a journey towards freedom actually costs.

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When feeling breaks the hierarchy: Affect, the Coordinated Management of Meaning, and relational repair in Mitch Albom's *For One More Day*

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Abstract: *There are moments in fiction when a single sensory detail carries more weight than pages of dialogue. This article takes that observation as a theoretical problem. It proposes the Affective Meaning-Making Model (AMMM), an integrated framework placing Silvan Tomkins's affect theory, as extended by Sedgwick, Massumi, and Ahmed, into conversation with the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) developed by Pearce and Cronen. The framework is applied to Mitch Albom's For One More Day (2006), a novel that stages the collision between bodily feeling and the architecture through which people organise meaning. The AMMM argues that affect, as a pre-cognitive somatic force, does not merely colour the communicative episodes CMM describes; it initiates, saturates, and sometimes destroys them, forcing meaning to be rebuilt at every level of the hierarchy. Four constructs organise the reading: Affective Episode Nodes (AENs), moments of peak disruptive intensity; Affective-Hierarchical Resonance (AHR), the movement of affect across CMM's levels; the Relational Affect Archive (RAA), the accumulated emotional substrate of a dyad; and Coordinated Affective Repair (CAR), the rebuilding of relational meaning through simultaneous affective re-experience and communicative re-coordination. Tracing Charley Benetto's grief through theoretically driven close reading, the study finds Albom doing something more demanding than sentimental storytelling: he dramatises the conditions under which broken relationships can be, and sometimes must be, repaired.*

Key Words: *Affect theory; Coordinated Management of Meaning; Mitch Albom; grief narrative; relational communication; shame-humiliation; Coordinated Affective Repair.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Mitch Albom's *For One More Day* opens with a sentence its narrator has evidently carried for a long time. His father tells him that a boy can belong to his mother or to his father, but never to both (**Albom**). Everything the novel goes on to do is folded into that inheritance. Charley "Chick" Benetto obeys the instruction, chooses the father who leaves, and spends four decades failing to notice the mother who does not.

The book is short, commercially enormous, and almost entirely absent from the scholarly record. A systematic search of the indexes returns no sustained peer-reviewed treatment of this novel, and only scattered work on Albom generally, most of it concerned with *Tuesdays with Morrie* and situated in medical humanities rather than literary studies. That absence is the occasion for this article, though not its argument. It also carries a consequence worth stating plainly: the reading offered here cannot position itself against an established critical conversation, because none exists.

The argument concerns something the novel does that our available critical vocabularies handle badly. Albom's narrative insists that meaning is made not only through language and structure but through the body, through sensation, through feeling that arrives before words and persists after them. A thematic reading registers this as content; a formal reading registers it as technique. Neither quite accounts for the way feeling in this novel behaves as a force acting on the structures through which its characters understand one another.

Charley, a former professional baseball player whose career and marriage have collapsed into alcoholism, learns he has been excluded from his daughter's wedding. He drives north, crashes, climbs a water tower, and falls. In the dislocated space that follows he finds himself in his childhood home with his mother, Posey, dead eight years. They are given one day. The supernatural premise is the least interesting thing about the book. What matters is the communicative and affective work the two characters do with the time, and what that work reveals about how people remake meaning under the pressure of extreme feeling.

This article proposes the Affective Meaning-Making Model to describe that process. The model brings affect theory, as articulated by Tomkins (**Tomkins, vol. 1**; **Tomkins, vol. 2**), recuperated for the humanities by Sedgwick and Frank (**Sedgwick and Frank**), radicalised by Massumi (**Massumi, "Autonomy"**; **Massumi, *Parables***), and socialised by Ahmed (**Ahmed, *Cultural Politics***; **Ahmed, *Promise***), into dialogue with the Coordinated Management of Meaning developed by Pearce and Cronen (**Pearce and Cronen**) and elaborated by Pearce (**Pearce**). The central claim is straightforward. Affect is not noise in the communicative channel; it is what gives the channel its charge. And CMM's hierarchy of meaning is not a container that holds affect in place; it is the structure that affect, at sufficient intensity, breaks open and rebuilds.

The approach is qualitative and interpretive, grounded in theoretically driven close reading of the kind described by Culler (**Culler**) and Tyson (**Tyson**) and adapted to affective criticism by Gregg and Seigworth (**Gregg and Seigworth**). The model was built in dialogue with the text rather than imposed on it: its claims were tested against close reading and the reading refined by theoretical interrogation. Two limits should be acknowledged at the outset. The study analyses a single novel, which maximises depth at the cost of generalisability; and the intensity ratings reported in Figure 2 are the present author's ordinal judgements, offered as a heuristic representation of the reading rather than as measurement. Every source cited here was verified against an indexed record as a condition of inclusion.

2. AFFECT THEORY: THE FORCE THAT ARRIVES FIRST

The systematic theorisation of affect begins with Silvan Tomkins, whose *Affect Imagery Consciousness* identified nine primary affects, among them interest-excitement, distress-anguish, and shame-humiliation (**Tomkins, vol. 1**). His central and still-contested claim was that these are innate motivational programs, prior to and more fundamental than either drives or cognition, operating largely through facial and vocal expression.

What makes Tomkins useful to literary criticism is his insistence on the relative autonomy of affect from its trigger. Once activated, an affect follows its own logic: it amplifies, spreads to associated objects, and generates its own urgency (**Tomkins, vol. 2**). The relationship between a narrative event

and a character's response is therefore not one of simple cause and effect. A smell, a tone of voice, the quality of afternoon light can activate an affect whose force far exceeds its occasion. Sedgwick and Frank performed the crucial work of recuperating Tomkins for the humanities, arguing that his non-dualistic account offered cultural theorists a way of thinking about feeling that bypassed the exhausted choice between biology and construction (**Sedgwick and Frank**). Their intervention opened onto what became the affective turn (**Clough and Halley**; **Gregg and Seigworth**).

Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect," developed at length in *Parables for the Virtual*, distinguishes sharply between affect, a pre-personal intensity circulating across bodies before language captures it, and emotion, the named and socially qualified version of that intensity (**Massumi, "Autonomy"**; **Massumi, *Parables***). Affect, on this account, always exceeds the emotions that partially express it. The distinction matters for reading Albom because it accounts for the novel's most charged moments, where a character cannot say what they feel, not from inarticulacy but because the feeling exceeds what language is equipped to carry.

Ahmed moved the conversation in a sociological direction without abandoning its bodily commitments. Her account of how emotions become sticky, adhering to objects and persons through histories of repetition, is germane here (**Ahmed, *Cultural Politics***): the shame attaching to Charley's memories is not freshly generated in each scene but residue, a deposit of decades. Her emphasis on the directionality of affect, the way feeling orients bodies toward or away from others, maps onto CMM's account of how episodes establish relational orientations over time (**Ahmed, *Promise***). Berlant's cruel optimism names something further (**Berlant**): Charley's attachment to the absent father is not neglect of Posey but active displacement, a fantasy of paternal recognition substituted for the material fact of maternal devotion.

3. THE COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

CMM was first systematically presented in Pearce and Cronen's *Communication, Action, and Meaning* (**Pearce and Cronen**). It begins from the premise that persons do not transmit pre-formed meanings but co-create social realities through the coordinated enactment of episodes. The theory organises meaning into a hierarchy of contexts, from content and speech acts through episodes, relationships, life scripts, and autobiographies to cultural patterns, in which higher levels frame lower ones. Crucially the determination runs both ways: lower-level acts can, given sufficient force or repetition, transform the contexts that nominally constrain them. That reciprocity is what makes CMM productive for literary analysis.

Cronen, Johnson, and Lannamann elaborated the strange loop, in which two or more levels generate mutually implicating structures that resist resolution (**Cronen et al.**). Strange loops model a familiar human predicament: shame about a relationship produces exactly the behaviours that confirm it. Charley's narrative is, for most of the novel, precisely such a loop. Pearce later deepened the model's philosophical commitments (**Pearce**), and its therapeutic applications demonstrate that deliberate renegotiation of meaning across levels can produce real relational change (**Cronen and Lang**; **Pearce and Pearce**). This is the process the novel dramatises: one day's episodes retroactively restructuring the meaning of decades.

4. THE AFFECTIVE MEANING-MAKING MODEL

The AMMM rests on three premises. The first is that affect is not the emotional colouring of communication but a generative force that initiates, saturates, disrupts, and under the right conditions transforms communicative episodes and their higher-order contexts. This challenges the cognitivist tradition in communication studies, which treats feeling as signal noise, and equally the tradition in

literary criticism that attends to feeling at the expense of the structured and relational dimensions of meaning.

The second is that CMM's hierarchy is not static architecture but an affectively charged system. Its higher levels accumulate what the model calls a Relational Affect Archive: a deposit of felt experience exerting both constraining and constitutive pressure on every new act. The archive is not available on demand. It is triggered by sensation, by bodies in proximity, by the accidental recurrence of a familiar detail. This is why the domestic textures of Posey's kitchen do more communicative work than several of the novel's explicit dialogue scenes.

The third is that the most consequential communicative events in relational life are those in which affective intensity exceeds the containing capacity of existing meaning structures. The model calls these Affective Episode Nodes. They are moments of communicative crisis that are simultaneously moments of possibility: the rupture is the precondition of the reconstruction. Albom's novel structures its whole arc around this dynamic, from the extreme node of the opening fall to the quiet one of the final embrace. **Figure 1 sets out the integration.**

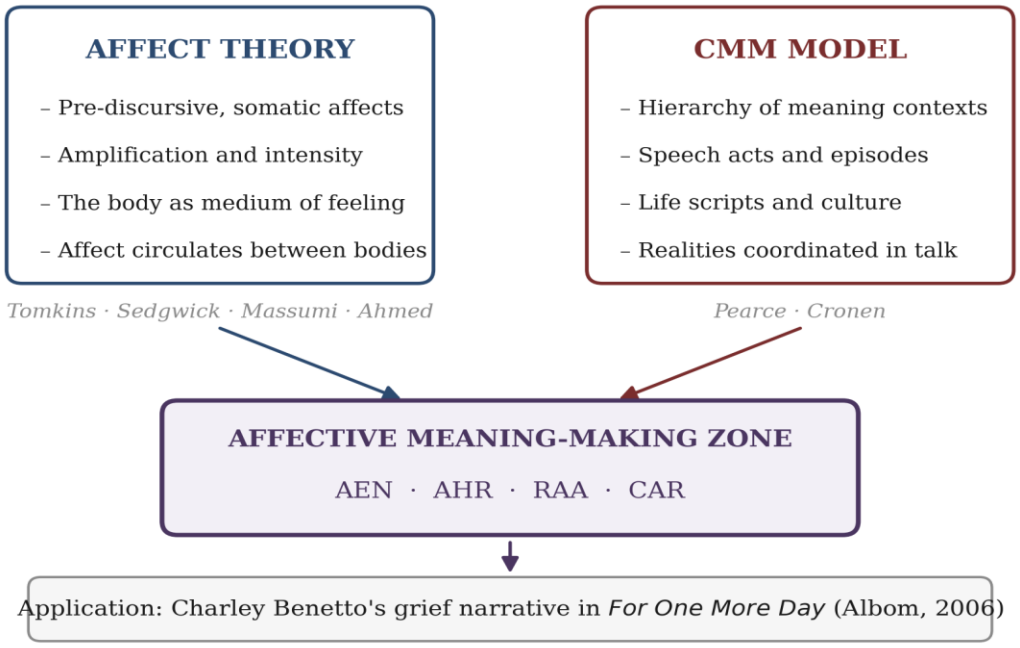


Figure 1. Theoretical integration of affect theory and the Coordinated Management of Meaning. The Affective Meaning-Making Zone represents the operational site of the four constructs. Author's original figure.

Four constructs carry the analysis. *Affective Episode Nodes* (AENs) are discrete narrative or communicative units in which affective intensity crosses a threshold that destabilises the ongoing episode, compelling reorganisation of the hierarchy. In Massumi's terms they are moments where the virtual register of affective potential erupts into the actual register of communicative event (**Massumi, *Parables***); in CMM's, moments where the meaning of an act cannot be stabilised by reference to its episode, because the episode itself is being destabilised.

Affective-Hierarchical Resonance (AHR) describes the process by which an affect activated at one level propagates through the hierarchy, generating meaning-effects at several levels at once. It draws on Tomkins's account of amplification (**Tomkins, vol. 2**) and combines it with CMM's contextual logic. Charley's failure to attend his mother's occasions reads at the speech-act level as omission; at the

relationship level as betrayal; at the life-script level as the working out of a masculine-success narrative that was never his own; at the cultural level as the full weight of American ideologies of self-making.

The Relational Affect Archive (RAA) is the cumulative store of felt experience encoded into a shared relational script. Unlike psychological emotional memory, which locates affect inside the individual, the RAA is relational: it exists between persons, inscribed in the patterns of their recurring episodes and the valences attached to shared objects and rituals. The construct synthesises Ahmed's sticky affects (**Ahmed, *Cultural Politics***) with CMM's account of how scripts accumulate.

Coordinated Affective Repair (CAR) is the process by which partners co-construct new meaning at multiple levels through shared re-narration and re-experience of charged episodes. Drawing on the therapeutic applications of CMM (**Cronen and Lang**; **Pearce and Pearce**) and Ahmed's account of reorientation (**Ahmed, *Promise***), CAR holds that genuine transformation requires both an affective re-experience and a structural re-coordination. Neither suffices alone: catharsis without re-coordination yields temporary relief; re-coordination without affective re-engagement yields cognitive restructuring and little else. Table 1 sets out what each component framework contributes and what each leaves underdeveloped, which is the ground on which their integration is justified.

Table 1. Theoretical comparison matrix: affect theory and the CMM model.

Dimension	**Affect theory (Tomkins; Sedgwick; Massumi; Ahmed)**	**CMM (Pearce and Cronen; Pearce)**
Primary unit	Pre-cognitive, sub-personal affective states; somatic intensities preceding articulation	Speech acts coordinated within hierarchically nested social realities
Ontology	Realist-materialist: affect has a bodily substrate independent of discourse	Social constructivist: realities are constituted through communicative practice
Role of the body	Central: facial patterns, vocalisation and autonomic response are the medium of affect	Peripheral: the body is the locus of speech acts but not an independent affective site
Temporality	Instantaneous and non-linear; archived somatically and re-activated out of sequence	Sequential and emergent; meaning accumulates across episodes and biographical time
Principal limitation	Under-theorises how social structure mediates the expression and recognition of feeling	Under-theorises the bodily, pre-discursive dimensions of communication that exceed language
Contribution to the AMMM	Supplies the affective charge that initiates, disrupts, and animates episodes	Supplies the structural scaffold through which affective energy becomes durable meaning

5. READING *FOR ONE MORE DAY* THROUGH THE AMMM

The text runs on two temporal registers. The present-tense strand covers the night of the fall, the impossible morning of Posey's reappearance, and the single day that follows; it is saturated with distress-anguish and fear-terror, modulating unevenly toward something approaching peace. The retrospective strand alternates vignettes of Charley's childhood with a structural device that does most of the novel's CMM work: paired lists titled "Times My Mother Stood Up for Me" and "Times I Did Not Stand Up for My Mother." The asymmetry between them is the engine of the archive's revision. Figure 2 plots the relation between affective intensity and hierarchical meaning complexity across the primary episodes.

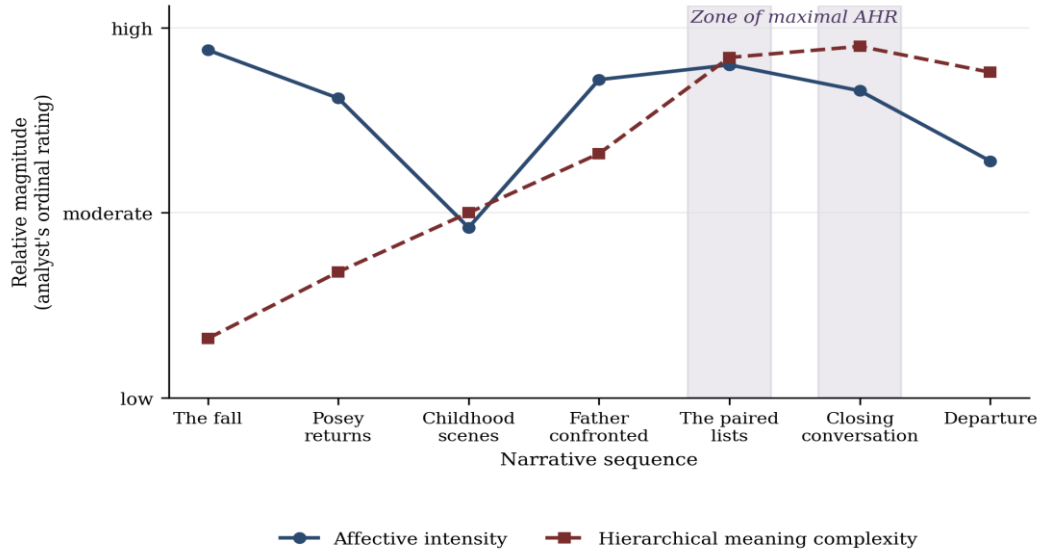


Figure 2. Affective intensity and hierarchical meaning complexity across the novel's primary episodes. Values are the author's ordinal ratings, offered as a heuristic schematic of the close reading rather than as measured data. The shaded region marks the zone of maximal Affective-Hierarchical Resonance. Author's original figure.

The opening node is the fall. Charley's decision is not narrated as deliberation; it arrives as something the body does before the mind has finished deciding. In Tomkins's terms this is not distress being described but a condition of affective depletion, the collapse of interest-excitement, the one affect that sustains engagement with the world (**Tomkins, vol. 1**). In CMM terms the attempt is not a speech act in any conventional sense. It is the communicative equivalent of destroying the transmitter. Every level of the hierarchy has ceased to generate meaning, and the node operates at the point of total meaning-failure: a strange loop closed on itself with no remainder.

The second node, Posey's reappearance, is built in deliberate contrast. Where the first scene is bare of sensation, this one is dense with it, and the sensory markers precede recognition. Albom understands that the first sign of a presence we have lost is rarely visual: the prose registers the kitchen before it registers the mother. What is reactivated is not the memory of a specific morning but the somatic texture of an entire period of life. In CMM terms the node ruptures the present episode by reactivating a buried episode context, producing a paradoxical loop in which Charley occupies two incompatible episodic realities at once.

The structural centre of the novel is Posey's accounting of the times she stood by her son and the times he did not stand by her. Charley has organised his archive around a settled story: his mother was there, but his father was the one who mattered. The accounting challenges that organisation not through argument but through the quiet disclosure of presence. She was at the game, at the school event, on the pavement outside; unacknowledged, but there. The affective impact is a compound: surprise-startle, because the information is genuinely new, and shame-humiliation, because it reveals that a relational archive was organised around an absence that was partly a failure of attention. Something like interest-excitement begins to emerge alongside them, the possibility that the archive is revisable and that the dominant story is not the only one.

Of the nine primary affects, shame-humiliation occupies the most complex position in this novel's economy. Tomkins characterises shame as the affect triggered by the incomplete reduction of interest-excitement or enjoyment-joy: it arises at the moment engagement becomes impossible and the face turns away (**Tomkins, vol. 1**). Charley does not simply neglect Posey; he turns away from her in the

specifically Tomkinsian sense, unable to engage fully with her devotion because doing so would require acknowledging the extent of his own failures. What makes this cultural as well as relational is the resonance of that shame upward through the hierarchy, as Figure 3 represents. His attachment to the father's image is not merely personal psychology but a performance of the proper masculine developmental narrative, sticky in Ahmed's sense with decades of reinforcement (**Ahmed, *Cultural Politics***). The father's opening injunction, that one must choose, is the cultural pattern speaking through the relationship.



Figure 3. The CMM hierarchy of meaning as reconfigured by the AMMM. The gradient indicates affective permeation as a cross-level force operating at all levels simultaneously rather than residing at any one. Author's original figure.

The closing sections stage repair with a restraint that is among the book's real achievements. The temptation in a narrative built around a final reunion is the cathartic scene: the flood of tears, the formal forgiveness. Albom declines it, and the model explains why the refusal is right. Repair requires not only the re-experience of affect but the simultaneous reconstruction of meaning across levels. The mechanism is Posey's strategy of story. She does not ask her son to feel differently; she gives him a different account of what happened, one that reorganises the relationship-level script while triggering a renewed affective encounter with the events described. Her reassurance is the point at which the reorganisation becomes explicit: "You can't lose your mother, Charley. I'm right here" (**Albom 191**).

The sentence performs work at every level of the model at once. As a node it marks a threshold rather than an increment. At the archive level it completes a revision begun with the paired lists, the counter-archive of presence having reached sufficient density to displace the archive of absence. Its resonance travels upward from the relationship to the life script and the cultural pattern that made the mother invisible in the first place. And it is a communicative act: uttered, witnessed, received. The witnessing is what completes the re-coordination.

The novel's last movement enacts the paradox at the heart of repair, that the moment it is complete is also the moment the conversation becomes unnecessary. What remains is transmission, and the novel names it directly: "Sharing tales of those we've lost is how we keep from really losing them" (**Albom 197**). This is where the two frameworks converge most completely. The absence of further explanation is not a failure of communication but communication at its most complete, the point at which the body's

knowledge and the hierarchy of meaning are finally brought into alignment. Table 2 summarises the four constructs with their textual instantiations and analytical indicators.

Table 2. The four AMMM constructs: definitions, textual instantiations, and analytical indicators.

Construct	Definition	Instantiation in the novel	Analytical indicator
Affective Episode Node (AEN)	A unit in which affective intensity crosses a threshold that destabilises the ongoing episode	The fall; Posey's reappearance; the farewell embrace	Lexical intensity; reported bodily sensation; dialogue rupture; temporal dislocation
Affective-Hierarchical Resonance (AHR)	The propagation of an affect activated at one level upward or downward across the hierarchy	Shame at a withheld gesture reaching the cultural level; unwitnessed attendance reconfiguring the life script	Cross-level thematic repetition; motif recurrence; symbol tracking
Relational Affect Archive (RAA)	The cumulative store of felt experience encoded in a dyad's shared relational script	The mother–son history as Charley holds it, and the counter-archive the paired lists disclose	Narrative asymmetry; memory frequency and valence; competing story-structures
Coordinated Affective Repair (CAR)	Co-construction of new meaning across levels through shared re-narration and re-experience	The one day as a whole; Charley's changed relationship with his own daughter afterwards	Speech-act transitions; resolution markers; shift in narrative voice

6. WHAT THE MODEL MAKES VISIBLE

Read through the AMMM, *For One More Day* is a more disciplined book than its reception suggests. Its apparent sentimentality turns out on inspection to be something more exact: a dramatisation of the conditions under which relational meaning can be reconstructed under affective pressure. The novel does not resolve grief. It stages the communicative process by which grief is transformed, not into the absence of pain but into a different orientation toward what was lost. Three features become legible that a thematic reading misses. The supernatural premise is not an evasion of loss but a device for producing the conditions of repair that ordinary communication, constrained by defensiveness and shame, rarely allows. The alternating temporal structure enacts how the archive actually operates: non-linearly, triggered by sensation, reconstructing the past in light of the present. And Charley's misdirected attention is not a private failing but the working out of cultural scripts the novel names in its first sentence.

For affect theory, integration with CMM answers a persistent criticism: that the field struggles to account for the structured and social dimensions of feeling (**Wetherell**). The AMMM does not resolve this by subordinating affect to discourse. It identifies the mechanism, the hierarchy itself, through which intensities are organised into durable relational meaning without being reduced to it. For CMM, integration with affect theory addresses the model's relative silence about what happens before speaking. CMM's hierarchy begins formally at content and speech acts; it does not theorise what drives a speaker to the threshold of utterance. Treating that affective charge as an object of analysis within the model is less a supplement than a reconsideration of what communication is for.

7. CONCLUSION :

The most affecting thing about *For One More Day* is not its premise but the implication running underneath it: that the people who stand by us most faithfully are often the ones we are least equipped to see, because seeing them would require rearranging the structures through which we have organised

our lives. Charley does not fail to see his mother because he is a bad son. He fails because the scripts available to him have no category for what she offers.

The AMMM is an attempt to supply the vocabulary for how such invisibilities are produced and, under conditions the novel dramatises, dissolved. It does so by holding together two claims usually kept apart: that affect is irreducibly material, bodily, and pre-linguistic, and that meaning is irreducibly social, communicative, and hierarchically organised. Neither makes full sense without the other. One detail of the novel's architecture makes the point better than any summary. Albom's narrator is finally revealed to be Charley's daughter, telling her father's story after his death. Repair, on this evidence, does not stay in the dyad where it occurs. It propagates outward, revising the scripts the repaired person carries into every other relationship, and it reaches the next generation as narration.

SUGGESTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS:

The four constructs are offered as an opening rather than a closed system, and three directions seem worth pursuing. First, the model should be tested against other grief narratives; Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* and Lewis's *A Grief Observed* suggest themselves as comparison cases with very different formal commitments (**Didion**; **Lewis**). Second, Coordinated Affective Repair offers practitioners in narrative therapy an account of why some conversations produce durable change while others produce only temporary catharsis, and the dual requirement suggests interventions designed to address both dimensions together; the archive construct further suggests that complicated grief involves a configuration frozen by idealisation or resentment, which progress requires counter-archive material of sufficient affective density to complicate. These are hypotheses generated by literary analysis and require empirical testing before any clinical claim is made. Third, the constructs would benefit from application to a broader corpus by more than one coder, which would establish whether the analytical indicators listed in Table 2 are reliable across readers.

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Relationship Between Faith and Commerce in the Works of Gita Mehta

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Abstract: The writings of Gita Mehta explore different aspects of Indian society. She deals with social, historical, political, economic and religious issues of modern India in her writings. These issues are elaborated in a broader societal storyline. *A River Sutra*, a collection of interrelated tales explores the lives of various kinds of persons from different backgrounds situated around the Narmada River. The stories present a complex picture of Indian culture revolving round economy, trade, faith and spiritualism. Similarly, the historical novel *Raj*, examines the political, economic and social climate of India in the last phase of the British Raj and in the beginning era of Independence. The novel addresses the themes of personal hardship of people caught up in political and historical changes. Gita Mehta describes Indian totems, taboos, way of life and manners of people in an authentic way. *Karma Cola* is a hybrid of the Indian idea of Karma with the American beverage Cola. The first book of Gita Mehta is a collection of linked essays satirizes spirituality of India. In *Karma Cola*, she employs concise and rapid prose to create a non-fiction piece and amusing observations. This book discusses the progress of India towards modernization in contrast to the enduring traditional beliefs that make our nation such a complex conundrum. *A River Sutra* presents the stories as altered Sutras. The spirit of the novel is derived from the rich traditions and mythology of India. The entire text delineates the secular humanistic traditions of India. The work reiterates a variety of sources, including classical Sanskrit drama, Hindu mythology, Sufi poetry, Indian classical music, and much more. In her writings Gita Mehta shows 'The Narmada' as a symbol of unity of diverse culture, and its central theme echoes that many religions and philosophical systems are integrated with the natural features of the river substantiating old Indian culture. However, *A River Sutra* demonstrates the issues encountered by modern India. Thus, Gita Mehta has intertwined the elements of faith and commerce in her writings. The article will include methods, research objectives and conclusion.

Key Words: Faith, Commerce, Spiritualism, Tradition, Mythology, Music.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Mehta portrays the plight of the Indian people throughout colonialism combining beautiful language and vibrant images of India. She depicts Indian history. She talks about a character, Jaya, the princess of Balmer and Maharani of Sirpur, and her awakening, struggle, and eventual triumph. Through Jaya's life, she illustrates the customs, rituals as well as the political pressure which led into a helpless servitude to the British. In order to evaluate the reflected picture of India, we must first understand true India. It is imperative to map out India's past, present, and future. Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen writes:

> India is an immensely diverse country with many distinct pursuits, vastly desperate convictions, widely divergent customs and a veritable feast of viewpoints. Any attempt to talk about the culture of the country, or about its past history or contemporary politics, must inescapably involve considerable selection. (9)

2. DISCUSSION:

India is home to one of the world's earliest civilizations. It would be impossible to condense such a vast era—roughly five thousand years—into a single work. Aside from this, many races later entered the nation and attacked the Indus Valley Civilization. The subcontinent was controlled by diverse invaders belonging to different religious beliefs for a significant period of time. Consequently, little remains of Indian civilization. The past time of India has seen a significant blending of many religious and cultural traditions. It is unquestionable that this merger has been at least somewhat tolerable, even though it might be claimed that it was never peaceful or healthy. Vastness of geography, in addition to vastness of time, is an important characteristic. The breadth of the subcontinent contributes to the diversity habits of the people, customs, cultures, and ways of living

The history of India starts with the Indus Valley Civilization. Following it, there are a number of important phases: the arrival of the Aryans, the development of Buddhism, the Arab and Mongol invasions, the rule of Muslim emperors like Mahmud of Ghazni, Babar, and Akbar, and lastly the arrival of the British and a few other European nations. But there are two reasons why we can defend our choice of the British era. First off, the five millennia of Indian history are outside the purview of this study. Secondly, Gita Mehta also discusses post-independence India with the British.

The establishment of the East India Company is an important event that represents the British entrance in India. A group of merchants and royals were granted exclusive trading rights in the West Indies on December 31, 1600. In 1608, their first ship made landfall in India. As an emissary of James, the First, Sir Thomas Roe appeared before Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1615 to request permission to engage in trade with the subcontinent. They were given permission by Jahangir to open a factory in Surat. The East India Company brought riches from India in the ensuing decades. India joined the British Empire as a colony in the century that followed.

The point of view of the landowner was shared by the feudal and royal members who had arrived from England in 1608. To them, India was the East India Company's enormous empire. They considered the aboriginal people to be the most appropriate and natural stewards of this land, and they held them as tenants. Even when the business turned the subcontinent over to the British Crown, this mindset persisted. The landlord was the Indian British Government. They treated the millions of Indians who lived and worked in India as ordinary tenants, charging them taxes and rent. Any criticism of this institution was a grave offense and a denial of a divine prerogative. The triumph of East India Company against Bengal represented their first significant accomplishment. The corporation was granted permission in the early seventeenth century to open a factory in Surat. It bought a plot of land in the south and founded Madras later in the century. Charles the Second of England received the island of Bombay, or Mumbai, as a dowry from Portugal in 1662. After that, it was given to the Company. The modern-day city of Kolkata, Calcutta, was established in 1690. As a result, at the close of the seventeenth century, the Company had made a lasting impression on Indian Territory. Its major cities, like Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, served as coast-line linking hubs.

However, the expansion was accelerating steadily. The battle of Plassey took place in 1757, and the British won, giving them access to a sizable territory for the first time. Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the eastern coast were all governed by them in a short time. The next significant advancement occurred at the start of the nineteenth century, forty years later. They arrived at the Delhi gates with this step. After

the Marathas were finally defeated in 1818, there was a third significant advance. The artwork was completed in 1849 with the Sikh wars being won.

The establishment of British rule in India was a completely distinct process. It was incomparable to previous assaults. India has already been subjugated, but the victors settled there and assimilated into the nation. She had never been enslaved; she had never lost her freedom. The rulers had never left her territory and had never had a permanently foreign origin or personality. India's social and economic life are structurally united, and every previous ruling class has understood this and made an effort to integrate in. The new group of rulers was very dissimilar. There was an incomprehensible divide between the Indians and the British, and their base was somewhere else. India appears to have been split in two: the India of the millions of indigenous people and the India of the British bureaucrats.

With the publication of *Karma Cola*, Mehta made her literary debut. This book tells the story of the hundreds of Westerners who, 'clashing cymbals and ringing bells,' rushed the Indian subcontinent on their quest. These Westerners, with their preconceived notions of India as a mysterious nation, were looking for quick fixes to their existential problems. Despite their ignorance or foolishness, they believed they could absorb Indian philosophy and experience the esoteric worlds. The prevailing materialism of their home countries demoralized them. To escape the routine and boredom of a consumer-focused life, they left that place. Normally immaculate locations like Haridwar, Banaras, Manali, and Goa were overrun with these Moksha seekers who believed that Karma could solve all of their problems. Thus, they commercialized the Indian concepts of Karma, Moksha, Maya, and Nirvana, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The mere mention of Adidas, a worldwide trade good, alludes to consumerism and trade. However, it actually represents the commercialization of Indian spirituality. A German seeker remarks, a few pages into the book that because many of his friends had gone insane in India, there had to be some sort of quality control on gurus. Here, quality control a word from the business world refers to gurus of inferior caliber, endangering their clients, those pursuing Nirvana. The locals were inevitably going to be impacted by this invasion of thousands of Westerners who were willing to believe in and follow the gurus blindly. Taking advantage of these individuals' naïve faith, the dishonest Indians took advantage of them in every manner conceivable. Many of these tourists experienced trauma and mental instability as a result of this phenomena, and India was incorrectly portrayed on the global stage. Mehta deftly examines this scenario and publishes a fun yet challenging book that criticizes those who desire rapid enlightenment and their 'fake gurus.'

The beginning of the story of *Karma Cola* is an intriguing one. Mehta's irritation at being viewed as an automatic Indian expert set it off. Mehta entered the room where an informal debate about the Karma philosophy was taking place at a publisher's party. Someone simply grabbed her arm upon noticing she was wearing sari and remarked, this girl is going to explain to us what Karma is all about. She was annoyed that people were taking her for granted as an authority on India simply because she was dressed in an Indian sari, so she shot back, saying, 'Karma isn't what it is cracked up to be.' After hearing this discussion, Marc Jaffe from Bantam Publishing advised her to write a book on the subject of karma.

As a result, she wrote *Karma Cola* in just three weeks, and it was well-received upon publication. 'Marketing the Mystic East', its subtitle, is self-explanatory. The book is ,therefore, the result of Mehta's frustration with Westerners' inadequate understanding of Indian philosophy, as they believe that anyone, anywhere, and to anybody can teach the ideas of Karma, Maya, or Moksha. She has been able to effectively direct her rage while highlighting the insignificance of each component contributing to this phenomenon. The book is a satire on both Western naive seekers and Indian fraudulent mystics.

Karma Cola, carries with it an explicit view point that philosophy can have harmful effects when it is misrepresented as pseudo-spirituality and marketed to unworthy customers by unskilled marketers.

These consumers have a silly ambition to instantly achieve self-realization. The black mailing gurus and these immature seekers both damaged the nation's reputation internationally. *Karma Cola* investigates the accounts of immigrants who were cruelly exploited and suffered terrible anguish that utterly destroyed their lives. Thus, it suggests that vulgar patronization and cheap popularity have made Indian culture available for purchase. The subheading of the book, *Marketing the Mystic East*, supports this logical conclusion. The chaos that the author is talking about took place because of the invasion of the Hippies from the USA, closely followed by the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. This band of young Nirvana seekers could easily be identified by these characteristics: use of drugs, shabby lifestyle and irreverence for the authority. Since we have to discuss about these three groups and their experiences in India, an insight into their nature and psychology will be helpful.

In the 1960s, The Beatles emerged as a prominent figure in the pop revolution. The Beatles were founded by four young British men: Ring Starr, George Harrison, Paul McCartney, and John Lennon. They had their first musical performance in Liverpool, which helped them develop their own unique rock sound. Despite having a creative spirit and being exceptionally talented composers, these four founders' outlandish lifestyle was accepted. They wore worn-out clothes, had long hair, showed no respect for the government, and supported drug use. The Beatles met Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in a London Hilton in 1967. The Maharishi's philosophy had an impact on them, and they went to a weekend-long initiation conference in Bangor, North Wales. Every one of them received a unique mantra from the Maharishi. When the Beatles were staying at Maharishi's Ashram in India, their creative output peaked. Their recordings for Abbey Road and The White LP went viral at the time. They gained popularity among Westernized young worldwide because they strongly identified with the teenagers. The British government honored them with the MBE award in recognition of their contributions to music and society. The Beatles were anti-establishment; thus, it was ironic that the issue turned uncomfortable because the prize symbolized the establishment. The Beatles lasted only for a decade and the movement disintegrated in 1907. The air between these three groups was heavy with lofty concepts like Maya, Nirvana, and Karma. The basic philosophical beliefs of these groups were corrupted, turning Indian culture and spirituality into a concept that could be compromised. Karma became a big joke, at least to the Westerners. The inability to understand each other, self-deception, and exploitation are what motivated Mehta to write *Karma Cola*. Many people understand *Karma Cola* to be about the invasion of the East by the Nirvana seekers—the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Hippies—who came in search of peace but ended up in asylums due to drug addiction. This reading stifles the book's potential to examine the problems from several angelic perspectives. Multiple interpretations can be made of the description of the barter system between the gurus and the seekers—exchanging Nirvana for sex, money, or gadgets—marketing of the myths, travel associations, short trip organizers, International Conferences, etc.

The fact that Westerners have trouble in comprehending the oriental philosophy until they understand its logic is one of the basic things that they fail to comprehend. They believe that they may solve this accessibility issue by sitting for prolonged periods of time in the lotus position. Not even these common gurus are skilled enough to recognize this distinction. Hinduism is not so much viewed as a rigidly institutionalized religion as it is as a way of life. There does not appear to be a clear distinction between this religion and manner of life. This fact appears odd to those who are not familiar with India, Hinduism and Hindu way of life:

> Hindu philosophy, religion, though, culture is rooted in the application of the laws of the universe to the human life. Hence, any study of Hindu religion begins not with scriptures, but by observing the universe, from our home to stars. The Rig Veda says: enlightened sages first observe, then make a deep study of God’s creation. Then they repeatedly form their own versions filled with new vigor. (Mehta 54)

The Westerners, who were completely devoid of any psycho-socio-religious matrix, hurried to India in the hopes of quickly grasping its complexities and achieving instantaneous Nirvana. The idea of Nirvana and immortality is another startling misunderstanding. The storyteller portrays how, despite the passing of one of the adherents, the other followers maintain the belief that their guru has granted them immortality. Indian conceptions of immortality are interpreted differently. The sages saw that everything in the universe was changing constantly. Infinity remained the one constant. We could also be shown this in ourselves. Although it is visible, our body is not real. Your true Self has not altered at all. This Self was known as Brahma or Atman by the sages. The key to comprehending Indian philosophy is realizing this. The sages made an effort to improve the abilities needed to arrive at this comprehension. This led to the development of six distinct techniques known as Yoga. Yoga teaches that one must rip apart the outer layers of the body and mind in order to achieve atman. It is comparable to a lake's bottom. The bottom of a lake is invisible if its surface is murky or if waves are present. Thus, one needs a stable, clear, and peaceful mind. It is the necessary condition for realizing the Brahma.

The sensation of human body is irrelevant when your consciousness is focused on the atman and separate from your body. As a result, the detached mind stays steady, serene, and unaffected. The atman then becomes accessible. It wouldn't be overstated to say that the average Hindu would know this much about the East, but he might not be able to put this idea into effect. However, the instantaneous searchers of Nirvana were not even initiated into this comprehension. They consequently began to understand immortality and eternity in terms of physical existence, and the false gurus made their suffering even worse by leading them astray from the path of Brahm, self-realization, and eternity. The narrator presents a significant question on the Westerners' willingness to learn. They come here to get away from there, not to learn about Indian philosophy. These escape artists lack the mental capacity to relearn their perspective. Under such circumstances, degradation and depravity take place. The narrators of different occurrences highlight the gurus' idiosyncrasies. Urine Baba is one such instance where it causes nausea. An Englishman visits a sadhu whose morning urine transforms into fragrant water each morning in a far-off and isolated village. The Englishman is surprised to discover that the taste, color, and smell of the urine are typical. Bringing up the dirty side of the general public, the author makes observations about people's unclean lifestyles and habits:

> It is very well of those who live in cold climate to insist on Defecation for One. For us, that is rather like insisting that people die alone. It is uncivilized. The communal cleansing is one of the more social moments in the Indian villager’s life, and such manners are not singular to the sons of soil.” (Mehta 83)

The fundamental contradiction between Oriental and Occidental perspectives appears to be this. Even though we occasionally celebrate different occasions, there is always a consciousness that lies underlying these vibrant and exuberant celebrations: Nirvana, or the state of not being born again but rather being a part of the eternal truth, Parbrahma, is the ultimate goal of human life. Hinduism's teaching of detachment says that even while you enjoy life and all of its joys and tragedies, you should not allow them to cloud your view of Nirvana. To escape the never-ending conflict between the finite and the infinite, the Oriental looks to the West for its advancement and curious nature, and it is this conflict that draws in the Occidental. At such a juncture it is impossible that the Oriental and the Occidental have the stamina to survive the exchange of views. The narrator brilliantly remarks:

> The Westerner is finding the dialectics of history less fascinating than the endless opportunities for narcissism provided by the wisdom of the East. Except that the prime concern of the wisdom of the East is the annihilation of narcissism. (Mehta 102)

According to an accepted view among Westerners, the East may heal the wounds caused by a materialistic lifestyle in a nation focused on industry: "India can turn nausea into serenity"

(102). The situation was made worse by the pseudo-sanyasis, or gurus. An ordinary Indian believes that the people living in an ashram in Western India who wear saffron clothing and use drugs and hashish are making fun of the sadhus. The idea of "instant Nirvana" fascinates and persuades these Westerners, whereas the average Indian laughs it off because he is aware that Nirvana can only be reached via prolonged struggle. The following paragraph seems to reflect the crux of *Karma Cola*:

> It would appear that when East meets West, all you get is the neo-sanyasis, the instant Nirvana. Coming at the problem from the separate angels, both the parties have chanced upon the same conclusion, namely, that the most effective weapon against irony is to reduce everything to banal. You have the Karma, we'll take the Coca-Cola, a metaphysical soft drink for a physical one. (Mehta 103)

A guru has put together a large group of people in a playground to preach on the existence of God. What he says is stupid to readers, but fantastic to his following. Another Maharishi in Delhi is well-known for providing his disciples with personalized mantras. Not only that, but he has a backup motto in case the original one breaks. Speaking with the scientists, he demonstrates his ability to speak persuasively. Devastating outcome of an immature fusion of two radically disparate ideologies, in which escapists, drug addicts, funny gurus, and avaricious locals play a major role. Fifty Westerners lives were negatively impacted, and many of them were forced to become beggars. They get into oddities and climaxes when they attempt to grasp something that is entirely beyond their reach. The French girl has spent the last seven years living in the bush. She is defending herself against the accusation of murder after her son and husband, who doubled as a guru, died an unusual death. She still fantasizes about having the title of "The Mother" of the Pondicherry ashram, which is surprising. When they read about the French couple, the readers are left feeling shocked.

The French parents who demand payment for their son's funeral and then flee with the money, leaving the body at the cremation site, are not exhibiting Karma or even basic decency. The trafficking of drugs, passport scams, unauthorized cross-border travel, aberrant sexual behavior, and other ancillary anti-social behaviors are all connected to these foreign nationals. Banaras, one of the holiest locations on earth, became the center of all these anti-social acts. The Hindus' burned remains at Banaras' burning 'ghats' have turned into a popular tourist attraction. The dignity of death and cremation were reduced to amusement of the Hippies: 'Anjuna beach had become to the Indians what the burning ghats of Benares to the foreigners, mostly a place to watch others lose their dignity' (Mehta 175).

3. CONCLUSION:

Gita Mehta is interested in an East-West interaction, but it is not the stereotypical post-colonial struggle between the two at the sociocultural level. She also does not explain abstractions like the 'materialistic' West and the esoteric East. She declines to elevate any group, preferring to highlight the harm done to people and cultures as a result of incomplete information, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations. The society is changing from an internal to an external entity due to cross-cultural interactions, the Westernization of Indian culture, and the conflict between the traditional and modern ways of thinking. At this point, it's easy to agree with Mehta that we might as well do away with borders because the East and the West are performing 'rock and roll' together. Karma Cola is particularly valuable not just for contextual reasons related to evaluating and approaching an issue through a literary work but also for understanding the drastic shift in culture that gave rise to the new syncretic society.

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A Freudian study of Desire, Repression and Self destruction in the Novel, The Poison of Love by K. R. Meera

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Abstract: K.R. Meera's *The Poison of Love* narrates the story of Tulsi an IIT graduate, who falls in love with Madhav a journalist and a Casanova. Despite knowing of his philandering nature, she marries him. And the narrative illustrates how Tulsi's love and desire eventually lead to her self-sabotage. This paper applies the Freudian psychoanalytical concepts of Eros (life instinct) and Thanatos (death instinct) in the text. Specifically, the analysis attempts to interpret the interaction of desire, repression, and the death drive in the life of the protagonist, Tulsi. The analysis maps the complex interplay of desire and repression within the psychological landscape of Tulsi's life, particularly her relationship with Madhav. Through a close textual reading, the study explores the psychoanalytical aspects that lead desires to self-destruction. The findings reveal that Tulsi's emotional journey progresses from preserving life and love to obsessive attachment and suppressed emotions and eventually leading to psychological trauma and self-destruction. By integrating psychoanalysis in literary criticism, this research elucidates the psychological mechanisms that underpin oppression and the existential conflict in Tulsi's life.

Keywords: Eros, Thanatos, Libido, Repression, psychology, Freud, Desire, Repression, Self-destruction.

INTRODUCTION:

A novel 'The Poison of Love' by K.R. Meera, originally written in Malayalam language. It was published in the name Meerasathu by the National Book Stall (NBS) on 20th November 2010. Later, it was translated into English by Ministhy S and the novel was published in the name 'The Poison of Love' in the year 2017, April. This study has taken the translated version for literary criticism. Psychoanalytic literary criticism has become one of the most influential approaches for interpreting the text because it examines the unconscious motivation, desire conflict, and psychological transformation in the fictional character (Freud, 1920; Holland, 1975; Barry, 2020).

The novel The Poison of Love narrates the life of a girl named Tulsi. It is a non-linear story and the story is narrated from a single-point narration. Tulsi was the narrator of the story; her journey starts in her home. Being an IIT graduate girl, she has an ordinary life, but after marrying Madhav, her world turns topsy-turvy and later it ends in Vrindavan, a place for widows. This study focuses on the

psychoanalytic dimensions of the character Tulsi, especially the dual instinct theory of Freud, which is Eros the life instinct and Thanatos the death instinct together with the related concepts of Libido the desire, Repression the suppression.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory has been widely employed in literary studies to examine unconscious desire, repression, and the instinctual conflict (Barry, 2020; Holland, 1975). The main character of the novel, Tulsi, whose internal world turns into desire, pain, and suffering, which reflects the psychoanalytic conflicts of " Eros and Thanatos". The Eros, which is the life instinct, encourages Tulsi to seek emotional attachment, love, and ultimately make life decisions in marrying Madhav despite the consequences. And in contrast to the Eros, the Thanatos; the death drive, which lures Tulsi to self-destructive tendencies.

This study examines the operation of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, particularly the dual instinct theory of " Eros and Thanatos", together with related concepts Libido and Repression, in the psyche of Tulsi to understand her psychological transformation from an emotional attachment to the self-destructive mode. The previous studies were focused on the feminist approach and patriarchal dominance in analysing the novel, but this study is mainly focused on the psychoanalytic dimensions of the character, how the desire acts as a driving point for the serving instinct, the suppression, and how the suppression ultimately leads to the death of the lead character in the novel. These psychoanalytic conflicts were analysed using Freud's dual instinct theory.
The study laid two objectives:
1. To explore how the Freudian premises of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos operate in The Poison of Love by K. R. Meera.
2. To examine how Repression and the desire function in the novel through the character of Tulsi, with a particular reference to Freud's dual instinct theory of " Eros and Thanatos".

Against this theoretical backdrop, the present study is guided by the following research questions:
1. How does a Freudian reading enhance our understanding of a literary text about Libidinal attachment, especially in the novel The Poison of Love by K. R. Meera?
2. How do the Freudian concepts of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos operate the behaviour and psychology of the lead character Tulsi, in the novel?

The present study examines previous researches on Freudian dual instinct theory, particularly in the field of literary criticism, as well as articles published on K. R. Meera's *The Poison of Love*. These studies provide the theoretical framework for analysing the novel's Freudian concepts. This literature review examines significant studies on Freudian concepts of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos, and the psychological metamorphosis of literary characters. These backdrop and research gap that the current study aims to fill are established by examining these previous works.

Literature Review

K. R. Meera's The Poison of Love has received considerable scholarly attention for its complex representations of love, female subjectivity, emotional suffering, and psychological fragmentation. The novel has been extensively studied through the lens of feminist, socio-cultural, and psychoanalytic feminist perspectives, but the integrated role of Freudian instincts in shaping Tulsi's psychological transformation has not received much attention.

The emotional aspect of the novel has also been the object of scholarly interest. *Soundari (2018)* analysed with the idea of feminine rage and interpreted Tulsi's emotional pain as stemming from long-repressed frustrations resulting from patriarchal norms. The study revealed that betrayal, neglect, and emotional deprivation gradually build up anger and psychological unrest. Yet the analysis was more

about rage and empowerment than the analysis of a transition from emotional attachment to self-destruction via a Freudian lens.

There are many studies that have dealt with feminist readings of the novel. *Harishma and Bhattacharya (2023)* explored *'The Poison of Love'* through an essential feminist lens and suggested that the novel depicts femininity as a source of power and weakness. The study examined feminine emotions such as love, care, jealousy, rage, revenge, and self-sacrifice, and the move from emotional fulfilment to self-flagellation and negation in Tulsi. The authors also mentioned the symbolic significance of Vrindavan as a space of redemption and feminine suffering. But the study was more preoccupied with female identity and affect than with the unconscious psychological processes that governed Tulsi's transformation.

Similarly, *Meera and Jinu (2025)* explored the novel in relation to feminism, cultural identity, womanhood, and patriarchal expectations. In their study, they argued that Tulsi's experiences challenge traditional gender roles and expose the destructive consequences of obsessive love in Indian society. The authors also further developed female solidarity and resistance to patriarchal structures. The study has presented some insights regarding cultural and feminist aspects; however, the unconscious psychological drives behind Tulsi's actions have not been thoroughly examined.

There have been a few psychoanalytic feminist approaches on the novel. *Arshad (2025)* examined trauma and psychological self-destruction through the lens of Freud's Repression, Lacan's desire of the Other, and Nancy Chodorow's theory of emotional conditioning. The study says patriarchal structures turn emotional dependence into psychological fragmentation and self-destructive behaviour. The findings also reveal that Tulsi's trauma is not just about romantic betrayal but also about internalised patriarchal expectations. Although this research did link emotional dependency with psychological breakdown, it failed to examine Freud's dual instinct theory as an overall explanatory model.

Ejupi, Siljanovska and Iseni (2014) analyse *D. H. Lawrence's 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'* through the lens of Freud's concepts of " Eros and Thanatos". The study examined the constant struggle between the life instincts and destructive forces that operate in the characters, and stated that human behaviour is affected by the ongoing struggle between good and evil, desire and destruction. The authors have shown that psychological conflict and emotional fulfilment coexist throughout the narrative. But the research has focused on the universal struggle of the two instincts, rather than on the interconnected work of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos in the psychological transformation of an individual character.

Xavier Pradheep Singh (2019) has analysed Julian Barnes' *' The Sense of an Ending'* in the light of Freud's dual instinct theory. The study found that " Eros and Thanatos" are in constant interaction within the characters. Thanatos often appears as aggression, guilt, self-destruction, and death, while Eros fosters survival, attachment, and emotional continuity. The results indicate that human behaviour is the result of the constant struggle between the life and death instincts. However, this analysis was based on instinctual opposition and did not include Repression as an integral process resulting in psychological change.

Kiran Latif et al. (2025) analysed *George Orwell's '1984'* through the Freudian psychoanalysis approach of desire, Repression and death drive in a totalitarian society. The study showed how political oppression transforms life instincts into destructive tendencies and love into submission and obedience. The authors also argue that Eros exists in intimacy and human desire, despite the Repression of the system.However, while the study successfully integrated Eros, Repression, and Thanatos, it focused on a political dystopian context rather than an individual's psychological transformation through emotional attachment.

Freud's theory of dual instinct has been taken up in contemporary psychoanalytic research in order to explore the relationships between Eros, Repression, and social structures. In the research on " Eros and Thanatos", it has been proven that the Repression of psychic energy to destructive forms is producing internal psychological conflicts. Other studies have suggested that " Eros and Thanatos" should not be regarded as separate instincts but as interconnected forces that simultaneously affect individual behaviour and emotional development.

The psychological aspects of the novel have been relatively under-explored, whereas The Poison of Love has been extensively explored in previous studies through the lenses of feminism, trauma studies, psychoanalytic feminism, cultural identity, emotional suffering, and patriarchal oppression. The Freudian dual instinct theory of " Eros and Thanatos" has been widely used in psychoanalytic literary criticism to interpret the tension between life-preserving and self-destructive human instincts in literary texts.

Hence, the present study fills this gap by using Freud's dual instinct theory of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos as an integrated psychoanalytic framework to study Tulsi's evolution from emotional attachment to obsessive dependence, emotional suppression, and eventual psychological self-destruction. Instead of analysing these Freudian concepts separately, the study makes a comprehensive psychoanalytic interpretation of the lead character Tulsi, from K. R. Meera's The Poison of Love.

Methodology

This study applies psychoanalytic literary criticism. The novel *The Poison of Love by K. R. Meera* is studied in the light of Freud's psychoanalytic theory of Eros, Thanatos, Libido and Repression. The novel was analysed chapter by chapter, and the portions of narration, dialogue and Tulsi's perspective were coded. In this study Tulsi's character is analysed, particularly focused on her desire, repressed feelings, psychological struggles and change. The recurring patterns in Tulsi's psychological trajectory of desire, suppression, pain, and self-destruction was then analysed through the prism of Freudian concepts of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos. A deductive coding scheme has been constructed referring previous studies (*Singh, 2019; Anu & Boopathi, 2023; Kli, 2018; Latif et al., 2025; Panagopoulos, 2006; Patea, 2015*). These researches helps us identify the codes for love, emotional attachment, desire for union, affection, attraction, longing, sexual desire, suppressed desire, emotional suffering, self-destruction, aggression, obsession, despair, and death images which were subsequently mapped onto the Freudian concepts of Eros, Thanatos, Libido, and Repression (*Latif et al., 2025 and Singh, 2019)*. This approach enables the study to trace the psychological progression of Tulsi.

Theoretical Framework:

Freudian psychoanalytic theory gives a significant framework for understanding the unconscious forces that influence human behaviour. According to Freud, human behaviour is governed by unconscious desires and instinctual drives rather than conscious reasoning *(Freud 1915; Freud 1923)*. Freud's earlier psychoanalytic writings emphasised the pleasure principle and Libido as the primary source of human motivation, suggesting that human behaviour is fundamentally driven by the pursuit of pleasure *(Freud, 1905; Freud, 1915).* However, through his observation of repetitive traumatic experiences, aggression, and self-destructive behaviour, Freud recognised that the pleasure principle alone could not adequately explain all aspects of human psychology. Consequently, he proposed the dual instinct theory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)*. The dual instinct theory was also known as a theory of life and death drives, which introduces the concepts of Eros, the life instinct, and Thanatos, the death instinct, to explain the coexistence of life-preserving and self-destructive impulses within the human psyche *(Freud, 1920)*.

The Eros refers to the life instinct, which is associated with survival-seeking, love, union, sexuality, and creation. It encourages people to seek the fulfilment and sense of emotional belonging. Freud explains that the operation of Eros is sustained by Libido, which is the reservoir of human psychic energy which drives the human, the emotional attachment, desire, intimacy, and creativity. Libido therefore functions as the motivating force through which the life instinct is expressed. At the same time, Freud introduces Repression, as an unconscious defence mechanism through which painful memories, emotional conflicts are excluded, and an individual suppresses the other sufferings. According to Freud the repressed emotions disappear from the conscious thought, they continue to operate within the unconscious, often reflected as anxiety, emotional conflict, or other psychological distress.

In contrast to Eros, Freud introduced Thanatos, which refers to the death instinct, to explain the human tendency towards aggression, destruction, repetition of trauma, and self-destructive behaviour. Thanatos does not mean the physical death alone, but it is a psychological impulse directed towards the emotional disintegration and destructive tendencies. Freud suggests that when instinctual desires associated with Eros are repeatedly frustrated, impulses represented by Thanatos. Thus, Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos are interconnected and altogether explain the dynamics of unconscious human behaviour.

Later scholars expanded Freud's theoretical formulation. In Eros and Civilization, *Marcuse (1955)* offered a new interpretation of Freud's ideas of " Eros and Thanatos", discussing the relationships between instinctual drives, repression, and social structures. Marcuse argued that Eros extends beyond sexuality to encompass freedom, fulfilment, creativity, and enduring human relationships. He also suggested that excessive social repression may redirect the instinctual energy towards aggression and destructive impulses associated with Thanatos. Marcuse's interpretation broadens Freud's psychoanalytic theory by demonstrating that instinctual conflicts are shaped not only by individual psychology but also by social and cultural conditions. *Laplanche (1970)* further explains that drives are dynamic psychological forces operating within the unconscious rather than purely biological instincts, reinforcing Freud's understanding of " Eros and Thanatos" as interacting motivational systems.

The present study adopts this Freudian psychoanalytic framework to examine the psychological transformation of Tulsi in The Poison of Love. Tulsi's emotional attachment and longing are interpreted through the operations of Eros and Libido, while her emotional suppression is examined through the concept of repression. The gradual intensification of her psychological suffering and self-destructive tendencies is analysed through Thanatos. Consequently, the interaction of Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos provides the principal psychoanalytic framework for interpreting Tulsi's psychological journey throughout the novel.

Analysis:

This paper breaks down the dialectic between the " Eros and Thanatos" in K. R. Meera's *The Poison of Love* by applying the Freudian psychoanalytic framework, focusing on Eros, Libido, Repression, and Thanatos. The discussion focuses on the crises of the subconscious mind, desires, suppression, and self-destruction. This highlights the functioning of desire, Repression, and the drive for death in an individual.

K. R. Meera's *The Poison of Love* presents a complex psychological narrative through the character Tulsi. The novel explores the relationship between Freud's dual instinct theory Eros, and Thanatos along with the Libido and Repression, which is revealed through Tulsi's emotional journey from Eros to self-destruction. The duality of Eros (life drive) and Thanatos (death drive) suggested by Freud permits a discussion about the psychological background of the novel. The novel explores the

instincts of human love, intimacy, Repression, and self-destruction. The novel is not just a feministic approach, but it has psychological aspects, which turn Eros into Thanatos and pleasure into self-destruction.

In this regard memory, emotional fixation, emotional suppression, betrayal, self-punishment, and self-destruction are serve as the embodiment of Freudian Repression. Emotional attachment that continuously prevents Tulsi's tragedy is not just a male chauvinistic suppression or a failed romantic relationship but a tragedy of a psyche that becomes imprisoned by its own desire and leads to its own destruction.

The Trajectory of Desire:

K R Meera's The Poison of Love is narrated in a non-linear manner. Tulsi's mental state oscillates constantly between love and self-destruction. The analysis traces the psychological journey through Freud's dual instinct theory of " Eros and Thanatos" along with the concepts of Libido, Repression in the character Tulsi. Her identity is gradually constructed around Madhav, who becomes the centre of emotional existence for Tulsi. Beyond emotional attachment, her love gradually develops into desire. Although Tulsi is aware of Madhav's previous relationships, she continues to choose him, and her desire gradually transforms into obsession. Madhav eventually becomes inseparable from Tulsi's psychological and emotional world. Although Madhav emotionally betrays Tulsi, her inability to accept the loss transforms emotional pain into psychological trauma and eventually leads to self-destructive tendencies. Therefore, the analysis examines how the Eros evolves into the Libido and the repressed emotions lead to a prolonged emotional trauma that eventually leads to Thanatos.

Eros Across the Novel:

According to Freud, Eros refers to the love drive, preservation of life, and nurture of life. At the beginning of the novel, Tulsi's love begins as a life-affirming force; Madhav becomes a central force in Tulsi's emotional existence. More than Tulsi's academic achievement in IIT, she has an belief that her love for Madhav gives her an identity, purpose, and happiness. She abandoned her family and also sacrifices her personal security for her love. In the initial stage of the novel, Eros functions as a constructive force which provides emotional fulfilment.

In Tulsi's life, the Eros characteristics played a dominant role. Tulsi's relationship with Madhav initially embodies the emotional attachment. She experiences love as a transformative force that gives meaning and purpose to her existence. In Tulsi's life, love is presented as a spiritual fire. Tulsi thought that with her love she could purify Madhav, *With love, I would purify him too"(Page 25).* Love is imagined as a redemptive and transformative force. Tulsi carries Madhav as a lifelong emotional attachment, *Madhav is the only man in my Vrindavan"(Page 23).*

Tulsi abandons her familial expectations and sacrifices her emotional security for him. Even after experiencing betrayal and separation, her emotional attachment didn't disappear. The emotional attachment persists in Tulsi even after the betrayal. Her past continuously shapes her decisions. More than a conventional romance, Tulsi's life shows a life of evolving psychic force. Her love transforms from an emotional fulfilment to a state of emotional dependence, which leads to permanent self-destruction.

Libido Across the Novel:

Tulsi's emotional life is endured by profound libidinal energy. Libido is not just merely expressed through sexuality but also through longing, desire, and emotional fixation. Throughout the

novel, the Libido functions as the psychic energy that eventually directs Tulsi's emotional thoughts and desire towards Madhav. Rather than just remaining as a transitory emotional space, her emotional response becomes fixed on Madhav and gradually intensifies, which makes Madhav the dominant part of her psychological world. Consequently, Tulsi's emotional dependency started to increase upon Madhav's presence. He made me acutely aware of my womanhood"; this makes Madhav a primary object of Tulsi's psyche.

My heart was left desolate. I longed to see him again" (Page 14). Tulsi constantly recollects the memory of Madhav,*" I yearned for him, with my entire being, with all of a woman's longing" (Page 72),* an evident reflection in her confession. *The* desire for physical and emotional intimacy is increased in the narration as Tulsi continuously longed for Madhav's presence; *My heart brimmed over whenever I met him and felt drained when he went away" (Page 18).* She firmly believes that her emotional attachment belongs only to Madhav and perceives herself as an ideal companion for him. *He transformed into an omnipresent figure in my life" (Page 18).* Tulsi remains unable to detach herself emotionally from Madhav. Thus, Libido gradually transforms from desire into emotional dependency and the imprisonment of Tulsi within her own psychic attachment to Madhav.

Repression Across the Novel:

Tulsi's emotional attachment prevents her from openly confronting Madhav about his previous actions. At times, when Tulsi felt jealous about his previous relationships, she tries to say about her insecurity, he compared himself with Lord Krishna and normalises his behaviour. When one of the girlfriends from the previous affairs of Madhav came to visit him, Tulsi felt devastated and humiliated. She suppressed her emotions, instead of expressing about her feelings to Madhav. Tulsi feels that she was an unpaid handmaiden, a devotee of Madhavan. *"I, who graduated from IIT with record marks, became the Handmaiden of Madhav. I washed his clothes with affection and ironed them with devotion. I cooked his beloved food with reverence. The places where he stood and sat, I cleaned as if they were sacred. I blissfully surrendered to him and he accepted me with compassion" (Page 46).* Tulsi gradually glorifies her submission and she transforms service into a devotion.

Once she started to glorify the submission, she started to erase her individuality, and begin to act as a girl whom Madhav loves. Tulsi suppressed her feelings because of her emotional attachment to Madhav, so she had to face the emotional resistance. He always fascinated her with his talks, and even he mentions that the god leaves his women when she starts to feel jealous. And because of this, she willingly submitted to him, and this proves that Tulsi's emotional dependency was built around Madhav. She starts to internalise her emotions and chooses silence. But she was only able to conceal her pains up to a limit. When she found out that Madhav, the only man in her Vrindavan, was getting married to another woman and he asked for a divorce, her limits were broken. Though the Repression remained temporary, all the accumulated emotions reached a breaking point and which paved the way to the Thanatos parts of the event in the novel.

Thanatos across the Novel:

According to Sigmund Freud, Thanatos is the innate, unconscious human drive towards self-destruction and death. *"I laughed with self-loathing" (Page 35)*. When Tulsi's suppression was broken, she is no longer the same Tulsi. The emotional attachment no longer protects her; instead, it destabilises her. The betrayal of Madhav becomes her emotional trauma, which makes the suffering innate to her. The love becomes as poisonous as the title suggests; her life was no longer nourished by the emotional sensuality. Love contaminated her emotions, and it turned into suffering. She started to devour the pains and tried to normalise the suffering. This leads to the murder of her children by giving them poisoned milk. Tulsi became devastated, and as a result of the Repression, she killed her own children. She is

admitted to an asylum and later escaped from that and went to Vrindavan. The pain is no longer temporary; it becomes permanent and changes into an identity of Tulsi.

Though she suffered because of Madhav, her emotional attachment still fixed to Madhav, the longing is no longer just a yearning but becomes an obsession and it leads to self-destruction. The actual love turns into hatred, *"I wanted his beating heart, so that I could corrode it myself"(Page 54).* Tulsi started to search for suffering and pain; she lost her sense of self. When her past repeatedly returns to the present, she is no longer able to sustain the Eros and ultimately the Thanatos endured.

Discussion:

Eros as the foundation of emotional attachment:

Eros operated as a life instinct which drives Tulsi towards intimacy and desire. Tulsi started to seek love, companionship, and emotional fulfilment from Madhav. Since she fully submitted herself to Madhav, he became the one and only symbol of hope and completeness. The Eros encouraged her to take life-changing decisions, like marrying Madhav, which is not merely a romantic choice but an expression of her desire for fulfilment and emotional completeness, by breaking and abandoning the social expectations. Initially, love was the driving force of Tulsi; it acted as a constructive force.

Libido transforms attachment into obsession:

Libido extends beyond a sexual desire and functions as a psychic energy that intensifies Tulsi's emotional investment in Madhav. After the marriage, Madhav gradually occupied Tulsi's entire emotional and physical world. Her happiness and sadness were dependent on Madhav's presence and absence, respectively. This excessive emotional attachment became a psychological fixation; she slowly started to lose her individual identity. She willingly submitted herself to him. And that slowly the emotional dependency turned into obsession.

Repression fragments Tulsi's psychological stability:

Instead of confronting her emotional pain, Tulsi internalised her voice. She started to remain silent instead of voicing out her emotions. The silent sufferings of suppressed betrayal, anger, and disappointment destabilised her psychological state. Tulsi continuously tolerated her humiliation and emotional negligence. According to Freud, this continuous Repression pushes the unresolved emotions into the unconscious mind, which gradually makes her mind a destabilised psychological state which leads to self-loathing.

Thanatos Culminates in Self-destruction:

Thanatos emerges when emotional fulfilment collapses. When Tulsi's emotional suffering becomes unbearable, the self-harm emerges. The failure of love, the continuous emotional negligence, the humiliation, and the suppressed regression gradually transformed her suffering into a self-destructive tendency. These reveal the victory of the death instinct over the life instinct. As a result, the withdrawal from the ordinary life increases, and even the Vrindavan phase symbolises psychological exhaustion. This death instinct over the life instinct is illustrating Freud's proposition of unresolved psychic conflict, which eventually lead to self-destruction.

Conclusion:

The present study is mainly concerned with the psychoanalytic dimensions of Tulsi in K. R. Meera's The Poison of Love through Freud's psychoanalytic theory, especially the dual-instinct theory of " Eros and Thanatos" along with the related concepts of libido and repression. The findings reveal the psychological journey of Tulsi from the life-preserving instincts of love, emotional attachment and desire to obsessive emotional dependence, suppressed emotions, psychological trauma and ultimately self-destructive tendencies. Eros, libido, repression and Thanatos are not independent ideas but psychological forces that interact with each other, influencing the emotional change of Tulsi in the story.

The study shows how Tulsi's need for love, closeness and emotional satisfaction is at first driven by Eros and how libido serves as psychic energy to sustain her connection to Madhav. These emotional needs remain unsatisfied and become more and more restricted by personal and social conditions, so that they are repressed, with the resulting inner conflict, emotional distress and psychological instability. Repression, in the long run, only feeds Thanatos' destructive tendencies. This is what has led to Tulsi's breakdown and destructive state. This development is in keeping with Freud's theory that the interplay of life and death instincts determines the complexities of human behaviour.

The study contributes to psychoanalytic literary criticism by showing the relevance of Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the literary text. Previous studies on The Poison of Love have focused largely on feminist perspectives and patriarchal oppression. This study, however, offers a psychoanalytic reading that focuses on Tulsi's unconscious motivations and psychological conflicts. Also, the chapter-by-chapter coding framework, which is influenced by Freudian ideas, provides a structured approach for carrying out qualitative textual analysis and can be a methodological reference for future psychoanalytic studies of literary texts. While this analysis is confined to a single literary text, which may limit the generalisation of its findings, Tulsi's trajectory from emotional attachment to self-destruction mirrors wider psychological phenomena regarding trauma, toxic relationships, and the internalisation of patriarchal expectations. In conclusion, the research proves the persistent relevance of the Freudian psychoanalytic theory in the understanding of the psychological complexity of a literary character and her emotional transformation.

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Translation as Cultural Bridge: A Comparative Study of Hindi and Sanskrit Works in English

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Abstract: Translation functions as a vital cultural bridge that enables the transmission of literary heritage, philosophical thought, and socio-cultural values across linguistic and national boundaries. This paper presents a comparative study of Hindi and Sanskrit literary works translated into English in the 21st century, examining the ways in which translation mediates, preserves, and recontextualizes the cultural essence of these texts for a global readership. Sanskrit literature, with its classical depth and philosophical richness, and Hindi literature, with its modern narrative vitality and regional rootedness, offer distinct yet complementary reservoirs of Indian cultural identity. Through close textual analysis of selected translations of seminal works such as the Mahabharata (including Wendy Doniger's *After the War*), Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi* (*Tomb of Sand*, tr. Daisy Rockwell), Premchand's short stories (*Mansarovar* and related collections), and other contemporary renderings such as Rakhshanda Jalil's *The Temple & The Mosque*, the study investigates the strategies adopted by translators to negotiate linguistic nuances, culture-specific idioms, aesthetic forms, and complex philosophical concepts. It explores how English renderings of these works facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, broaden the accessibility of Indian literary traditions, and contribute to the construction of a shared humanistic understanding. Special attention is given to the tension between domestication and foreignization approaches, the treatment of untranslatable cultural terms, and the translator's dual role as both linguistic intermediary and cultural mediator. The research is qualitative and interpretative in nature, employing methods of comparative literature and translation studies to assess fidelity, creative adaptation, and cultural negotiation. Ultimately, the study argues that translation not only bridges linguistic divides but also serves as an instrument of cultural continuity, intellectual exchange, and soft power, thereby reinforcing the global presence and contemporary relevance of Indian literary heritage in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Cultural Bridge, Hindi Literature, Sanskrit Literature, Comparative Literature, English Translation, Cross-Cultural Communication, Literary Heritage, Domestication, Foreignization, 21st-Century Translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores the 21st-century English translations of select Hindi and Sanskrit literature, aiming to understand the dynamics of cross-cultural communication and literary adaptation. With an increasing interest in global literature and cultural exchange, analysing contemporary translations becomes crucial

to comprehend the nuances of conveying the essence of original texts to English-speaking audiences. Hindi and Sanskrit, as languages deeply rooted in Indian heritage, have produced a rich tapestry of literary masterpieces over centuries. With a desire to share these timeless treasures with global audiences, translators have undertaken the intricate task of rendering them into English, a lingua franca widely understood across the world. The translations not only open up new literary vistas but also present an opportunity to forge connections between cultures that may seem distant geographically and linguistically.

Translation has long been recognised as more than a mere linguistic transfer; it is a profound act of cultural mediation that shapes how one civilisation is perceived by another. In the Indian context, where a vast corpus of classical Sanskrit and modern Hindi literature coexists, translation into English assumes a particularly significant role. Sanskrit literature, embodied in epics such as the Mahabharata, carries centuries of metaphysical inquiry, ethical debate and narrative complexity. Hindi literature, represented by the realist short stories of Premchand and the experimental fiction of contemporary writers like Geetanjali Shree, reflects the lived realities, linguistic diversity and social transformations of modern India. When these texts travel into English, they do not simply change language; they undergo a process of cultural negotiation in which translators must decide how much of the source culture to retain and how much to adapt for the target audience.

The rise of world literature as a field of study and the growing visibility of non-Western literary traditions in global literary markets have further intensified the importance of such translational practices. The International Booker Prize awarded to Daisy Rockwell's translation of Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* in 2022 marked a watershed moment, signalling that experimental Hindi fiction could command serious attention on the world stage. Simultaneously, renewed scholarly and popular interest in the Mahabharata, reflected in partial and complete translations, demonstrates that classical Sanskrit texts continue to speak to contemporary ethical and existential concerns. These developments invite a closer examination of the strategies through which cultural meaning is negotiated in translation.

This paper undertakes a comparative examination of selected English translations of the Mahabharata (including Wendy Doniger's *After the War: The Last Books of the Mahabharata*), Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi* (published in English as *Tomb of Sand* by Daisy Rockwell), Premchand's short-story collections, and related works such as *The Temple & The Mosque*. It focuses on the strategies of domestication and foreignization, the handling of culture-specific terms, and the ways in which translators position themselves as cultural mediators. By analysing divergent translational choices, the study demonstrates that each English version constructs a distinct image of Indian thought and sensibility, thereby functioning as a cultural bridge that both preserves and reinterprets Indian literary heritage for a global readership. The research further investigates the impact of these translations on fostering intercultural understanding and appreciation of Indian literary heritage, highlighting their role in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and mutual respect.

2. Need and Significance of the Study

Hindi and Sanskrit literature represent invaluable cultural treasures that have evolved over centuries. Translating these works into English ensures the preservation of the rich cultural heritage of India. In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding and appreciating diverse cultures is essential for fostering harmony and mutual respect. By examining how Hindi and Sanskrit literature is translated into English in the 21st century, this study facilitates cross-cultural communication and promotes intercultural dialogue.

The study sheds light on the intricacies of literary translation, specifically in the context of languages with distinct linguistic and cultural nuances. Analysing translation choices and strategies provides valuable insights into the art of conveying the essence of a literary work across linguistic boundaries.

As literary works are translated into English, they may undergo adaptations to suit the sensibilities of English-speaking readers. Understanding how these adaptations occur in the 21st century allows us to observe the evolution of literary expressions and the impact of cross-cultural influences. By studying the translations and their impact, the study contributes to promoting Indian literature on the global stage. It showcases the richness of literary traditions from Hindi and Sanskrit and enhances awareness of India's literary contributions. The translations serve as bridges between different cultures, fostering intercultural understanding and appreciation. They encourage readers from diverse backgrounds to engage with Indian literature and gain insights into its cultural context.

Furthermore, the study addresses a noticeable gap in existing scholarship. While individual translations of the Mahabharata, Premchand, and contemporary Hindi fiction have attracted critical attention, comparative analyses that place classical Sanskrit and modern Hindi texts within a single translational framework remain relatively scarce. Such a comparative lens reveals both continuities and ruptures in the ways Indian cultural meaning is negotiated across historical periods and literary forms. The study's findings can be of significant educational value for scholars, translators, educators, and students interested in literature, translation studies and cultural exchange. Through the promotion of cultural exchange and appreciation, the study can contribute to building a more inclusive and interconnected global society, where diverse literary traditions are celebrated and understood. Overall, the study's need and significance lie in its potential to bridge cultural gaps, enrich the literary landscape, and contribute to the broader field of translation studies.

3. Literature Review

The theoretical foundations of this study rest on key contributions to translation studies. Susan Bassnett in her *Translation Studies* examines the role of translation in fostering cross-cultural understanding. She highlights the challenges of translating texts from culturally distant languages and discusses the need for translators to navigate the nuances of language, culture, and context. This is highly relevant to understanding the complexities involved in translating Hindi and Sanskrit literature into English and its implications for promoting intercultural dialogue (Bassnett, 2014).

Lawrence Venuti's influential distinction between domestication and foreignization provides a critical lens for examining how translators either assimilate a foreign text to the values of the target culture or deliberately retain its foreignness to challenge the reader's expectations (Venuti, 2017). Domestication tends to produce fluent, transparent texts that minimise cultural difference, whereas foreignization seeks to disrupt the target language and highlight the otherness of the source text. Venuti argues that domestication often functions as an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, while foreignization exerts an ethnodeviant pressure that registers linguistic and cultural difference. In the Indian context, Sujit Mukherjee's *Translation as Discovery* (1981) remains foundational, arguing that translation of Indian literature into English is a creative act that discovers new possibilities of meaning rather than a secondary, derivative activity.

Postcolonial translation theory has further enriched this discussion. Scholars such as Tejaswini Niranjana and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have drawn attention to the power asymmetries that structure translational exchanges between former colonies and the metropolitan West. Translation, in this view, is never neutral; it participates in the construction of cultural images and can either reinforce or resist colonial and neo-colonial hierarchies of value. When Indian texts are rendered into English, the dominant language of global literary exchange, questions of representation, authenticity and agency become particularly acute. In addition to the theoretical frameworks of Bassnett, Venuti and Mukherjee, the present study is informed by Eugene Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence and by more recent work on cultural translation that emphasises the performative and ethical dimensions of the translator's task. Nida's distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence remains useful for analysing how translators of Sanskrit philosophical discourse attempt to produce effects on the target reader

comparable to those experienced by the source-language audience. At the same time, postcolonial critiques remind us that equivalence itself is never innocent; it is always situated within histories of power and representation.

Daisy Rockwell's translation of Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi* as *Tomb of Sand* (2022) has received significant critical attention. It is not merely a tragic story about Partition; rather, it is an unforgettable tale of the triumph of humanity. Rockwell's inventive handling of linguistic hybridity and cultural trauma demonstrates how contemporary translation can function as a dynamic cultural bridge. In interviews, Rockwell has described translation as a continuum and has emphasised the need to recreate the author's voice in a new language while carefully selecting which source-language words to retain in order to teach international readers without overwhelming them. Stephen Clingman in *Cultural Translation: Theory and Practice* (2021) provides a comprehensive overview of cultural translation as both a theoretical concept and a practical endeavour, covering the translation of literary and philosophical texts, the role of translation in global communication, and the ethics of cross-cultural interpretation.

Wendy Doniger's *After the War: The Last Books of the Mahabharata* (2022) aims at making the ending of the Mahabharata accessible in a more or less contemporary idiom. Her selection starts with the Pandavas visiting their mother and the parents of the vanquished cousins, moves through the death of Krishna and his clan, and ends with the Pandavas' journey to Heaven. Interspersed among these episodes are deliberations on the meaning of time, life, death, and karma. Such recent translations underscore the continuing relevance of classical Sanskrit texts and the evolving strategies of rendering them for 21st-century readers. These works collectively emphasise the need for studying 21st-century English translations from select Hindi and Sanskrit literature and highlight the potential impact of translated literature on intercultural understanding. Recent scholarship has also drawn attention to the material and institutional conditions of translation. The role of publishers such as Speaking Tiger, Penguin India, Tilted Axis Press and others in selecting, packaging and marketing translated Indian literature shapes which texts reach global readers and how they are framed.

4. Research Approach and Selected Works

The present study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach grounded in comparative literature and translation studies. It involves close textual analysis of selected 21st-century English translations alongside their original Hindi and Sanskrit counterparts. The principal works examined include: Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi* and its English rendering *Tomb of Sand* by Daisy Rockwell; selected short stories from Premchand's *Mansarovar* and related collections (including translations that engage with themes found in *The Temple & The Mosque*); and recent English treatments of the Mahabharata, notably Wendy Doniger's *After the War: The Last Books of the Mahabharata*, complemented by other modern complete or partial translations.

The analysis focuses on: (i) strategies employed by translators to convey cultural and literary nuances; (ii) challenges arising from linguistic differences and cultural complexities; (iii) the balance between linguistic fidelity and cultural adaptation; (iv) the treatment of untranslatable or polyvalent terms (such as *dharma*, *karma*, and culture-specific kinship or caste designations); and (v) the impact of translational choices on the image of Indian thought and sensibility constructed for Anglophone readers. Attention is also paid to the evolution of translation practices across the early 21st century and to the dual role of the translator as linguistic intermediary and cultural mediator. The study does not claim exhaustive coverage of all available translations; rather, it selects representative cases that illustrate contrasting translational philosophies and cultural outcomes.

5. Translating the Classical: The Mahabharata in English

The Mahabharata presents formidable challenges to the translator. Its vast narrative scope, intricate philosophical discourses, and dense web of cultural references demand decisions that go far beyond lexical equivalence. Composed over centuries and traditionally regarded as *itihasa* (history) rather than mere poetry, the epic intertwines myth, ethics, politics and metaphysics in ways that resist simplification. Recent 21st-century efforts, such as Wendy Doniger's *After the War* (2022), deliberately adopt a more contemporary idiom while seeking to retain the epic's philosophical depth. Doniger's focus on the final books—encompassing the aftermath of the war, the deaths of key figures, and the Pandavas' journey heavenward—foregrounds deliberations on time, life, death, and karma, making these abstractions accessible to modern readers without stripping them of their cultural density.

A central issue remains the treatment of untranslatable or polyvalent Sanskrit terms. The concept of *dharma*, for instance, resists any single English equivalent. Translators have variously rendered it as "duty," "righteousness," "law," or "moral order," each choice foregrounding a different aspect of the original. Foreignizing strategies retain the Sanskrit term with explanatory notes or glossaries, thereby preserving cultural specificity. Domestication selects the most contextually appropriate English word and risks flattening the term's philosophical richness. Similar challenges arise with *karma*, *moksha*, and kinship terms that carry hierarchical and ritual connotations alien to many Anglophone readers.

Doniger's translation has been noted for its lively and clear style, drawing on a lifetime of scholarship on Hindu and Sanskrit traditions. She works from the Bhandarkar Critical Edition and provides generous notes, including illuminations from the commentator Nilakantha, that assist in clarifying opaque passages. At the same time, critics have observed that her contemporary idiom sometimes produces phrasing that feels almost too natural to 21st-century eyes, raising questions about the degree of domestication involved. Comparative analysis of different English versions reveals that translators continuously negotiate between fidelity to the source culture and the communicative needs of the target audience. These decisions shape the image of Indian classical thought that reaches Anglophone readers and, consequently, influence how the Mahabharata functions as a cultural bridge. The epic's capacity to speak across centuries depends, in no small measure, on the sensitivity with which its philosophical and narrative complexity is rendered in English.

6. Modern Hindi Fiction in English: Premchand and Geetanjali Shree

6.1 Premchand's Realism and Social Specificity

Premchand's short stories, collected in volumes such as *Mansarovar* and related anthologies, are celebrated for their realistic portrayal of rural and small-town India, their critique of social injustice, and their sensitive depiction of human relationships. Influenced by Dickens, Tolstoy and Gandhi, among others, Premchand directed his fiction toward social reform, addressing caste hierarchies, the plight of women, and the struggles of the rural poor. When these stories are translated into English, the translator confronts a range of culture-specific elements: kinship terms, caste designations, agricultural practices, and idiomatic expressions rooted in Hindi and Urdu.

Translations that engage with themes of communal harmony and social tension (as seen in works such as *The Temple & The Mosque*) further illustrate the challenges of rendering early-twentieth-century Indian social realities for contemporary global readers. Domestication tends to produce smooth, accessible narratives that emphasise universal human themes—poverty, dignity, moral conflict—while muting the specifically Indian social texture. Foreignization preserves local colour and cultural density, inviting the reader to encounter the text as a product of a particular historical and social milieu. Comparative readings of different English versions reveal how translational choices can either reinforce or soften Premchand's social critique, thereby shaping the cultural image of modern India that reaches

global audiences. The translator must decide, for example, whether to retain terms such as *thakur* or *chamar* with glosses, or to substitute more general English equivalents that risk obscuring the precise social hierarchies at stake.

6.2 Geetanjali Shree's Ret Samadhi / Tomb of Sand

Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi*, translated into English by Daisy Rockwell as *Tomb of Sand*, represents a contemporary Hindi novel that deliberately plays with language, form and cultural boundaries. The novel's experimental narrative, its blending of Hindi and English linguistic registers, and its exploration of Partition memory, gender and identity pose distinctive challenges for the translator. The title itself required negotiation: the polyvalent Hindi word *samadhi* carries meanings of tomb, deep meditative absorption, and more; Rockwell and Shree eventually settled on "Tomb of Sand," with a definition of *samadhi* provided early in the text.

Rockwell's translation has been widely praised for its inventive handling of the source text's linguistic hybridity and its ability to convey the novel's playful yet profound engagement with cultural trauma. She has described her process as involving multiple drafts—often ten or more—and as requiring a gradual farewell to the Hindi text so that the English version can stand as a literary work in its own right. Rockwell seeks out wordplays, echoes, etymologies and coinages that feel "Hindi-esque," and she includes fragments of poetry, prayer and song in the original language alongside English renderings. The success of the translation—recognised by the International Booker Prize—demonstrates that a carefully calibrated foreignizing approach can both respect the source culture and achieve broad accessibility. *Tomb of Sand* thus exemplifies how contemporary translation can function as a dynamic cultural bridge, carrying Indian narrative innovation into the global literary marketplace while preserving its distinctive voice.

7. Domestication, Foreignization and Cultural Negotiation: A Comparative Perspective

A comparative reading of the selected translations reveals a spectrum of strategies rather than a rigid binary. Doniger's rendering of the Mahabharata's final books leans toward a fluent, contemporary English that makes philosophical deliberation accessible, while still retaining key Sanskrit concepts and providing scholarly apparatus. Rockwell's approach to *Tomb of Sand* is more overtly experimental: she stretches English to accommodate Hindi linguistic play, retains selected source-language words, and recreates a sense of the original's formal inventiveness. Translations of Premchand occupy an intermediate space, often prioritising narrative clarity and social critique while negotiating the density of culture-specific detail.

These differences are not merely stylistic; they produce distinct cultural images. A heavily domesticated Premchand may appear as a universal humanist whose concerns transcend place and time, potentially underplaying the specificities of caste, gender and colonial modernity that structure his fiction. An insistently foreignizing Mahabharata may preserve philosophical density but risk alienating readers who lack the cultural competence to navigate unfamiliar conceptual terrain. The most effective cultural bridges, the study suggests, maintain a productive tension between the two poles—retaining enough foreignness to honour the source culture while ensuring sufficient fluency to engage the target reader. Rockwell's work is particularly instructive in this regard: her translation is neither fully domesticated nor purely foreignizing, but operates along a continuum that allows the text to teach its readers while remaining readable. Similar continuum thinking can be applied to Doniger's choices: her contemporary idiom makes the final books of the Mahabharata approachable, yet the retention of key Sanskrit terms and the provision of extensive notes preserve a sense of cultural and philosophical otherness. Premchand translations likewise navigate this continuum, often seeking a middle path that keeps social specificity visible without rendering the narrative inaccessible. The comparative perspective thus reveals that successful cultural bridging rarely relies on pure strategies; it depends on calibrated,

context-sensitive decisions that respond both to the demands of the source text and the horizons of the target audience.

8. The Translator as Cultural Mediator

Across the translations examined, the translator emerges not merely as a linguistic intermediary but as an active cultural mediator. Decisions about terminology, style, annotation and even the selection of which texts to translate shape the image of Indian literature that circulates internationally. In the case of the Mahabharata, translators mediate between classical Indian philosophy and modern Anglophone readers' expectations of narrative coherence. In Premchand's stories, they negotiate the gap between early-twentieth-century Indian social realities and contemporary global readers' frameworks of understanding. In *Tomb of Sand*, the translator mediates between experimental Hindi fiction and the conventions of world literature.

This mediatory role carries ethical and political implications. Overly domesticating translations risk erasing cultural difference and presenting Indian literature as merely a variation of Western narrative forms. Excessively foreignizing translations, while preserving difference, may limit accessibility and reinforce a sense of exotic otherness. The most effective cultural bridges are those that maintain a productive tension between the two poles. Insights from translators themselves further illuminate the practical and ethical dimensions of this mediation. Rockwell's insistence on recreating the author's voice, her careful selection of retained Hindi terms, and her collaborative dialogue with Shree illustrate a model of translation as ethical encounter rather than unilateral appropriation. Doniger's scholarly apparatus similarly positions the translator as a guide who equips the reader to navigate cultural difference rather than dissolving it.

9. Broader Implications: Soft Power, Intercultural Dialogue and Global Literary Markets

The translations examined in this study contribute not only to literary exchange but also to the soft power of Indian cultural traditions. By making classical philosophy and modern social critique available to global readers, they participate in the construction of India's cultural presence on the world stage. The International Booker recognition of *Tomb of Sand* has amplified this effect, drawing attention to the vitality of contemporary Hindi fiction and encouraging further investment in translation from Indian languages. At the same time, the continued circulation of Mahabharata translations attests to the enduring appeal of classical Indian thought in addressing universal questions of ethics, mortality and justice.

These processes are shaped by market forces, institutional support, and changing technologies of publication and distribution. Digital platforms, open-access initiatives, and new translation technologies are beginning to reshape how Indian literature travels. Yet the quality of cultural mediation still depends on the sensitivity, scholarship and ethical awareness of individual translators. The study therefore affirms the continuing importance of humanistic translation practice even in an age of rapid technological change. Looking ahead, the rise of machine translation and AI-assisted tools will undoubtedly alter workflows, but the interpretive, ethical and creative dimensions of literary translation—especially when dealing with philosophically dense or formally experimental texts—are unlikely to be fully automated. Human translators will continue to play an indispensable role as cultural mediators who make possible the kind of deep, nuanced exchange that this study has sought to illuminate.

10. Conclusion

Translation of Hindi and Sanskrit literary works into English in the 21st century operates as a vital cultural bridge that enables the transmission of India's literary heritage, philosophical traditions and

social imaginaries to a global readership. Through comparative analysis of English renderings of the Mahabharata (including Doniger's recent work), Premchand's short stories, and Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi* / *Tomb of Sand*, this paper has demonstrated that translational choices—particularly those relating to domestication and foreignization, the treatment of culture-specific terms, and the handling of aesthetic form—construct distinct images of Indian thought and sensibility.

The study affirms that translation is not a neutral conduit but a creative and interpretative act that both preserves and recontextualizes cultural meaning. Effective translation of Indian literature requires translators to function as cultural mediators who negotiate the tension between fidelity to the source and accessibility for the target audience. In doing so, they contribute to cultural continuity, intellectual exchange and the soft power of Indian literary traditions in an interconnected world. By promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, these translations help build a more inclusive global literary landscape in which diverse traditions are celebrated and understood.

Future research may productively extend this comparative framework to other classical and modern Indian languages, examine the role of paratexts (introductions, notes, glossaries) in cultural mediation, and investigate how digital platforms and new translation technologies are reshaping the circulation of Indian literature in English. Comparative studies that place Hindi and Sanskrit translations alongside those from Tamil, Bengali, Urdu and other languages would further illuminate the diversity of Indian translational practices. Ultimately, the continued vitality of Indian literary heritage on the global stage depends in significant measure on the quality, sensitivity and cultural awareness of its English translations. As India continues to assert its cultural presence in global forums, the work of translators who approach Hindi and Sanskrit texts with both scholarly rigour and imaginative sympathy will remain central to the project of building genuine intercultural understanding.

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