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Research ought to be active to create a major boundary in the academic world. It must enrich the neo-theoretical frame that facilitates re-evaluation and enhancement of existing practices and thoughts. Eventually, this will effect in a primary discovery and lean-to the knowledge acquired. Research is to establish, confirm facts, reiterate previous works ant to solve issues. An active endeavor to endow rational approach to these types for educational reformations through academic research has become the focal intention of the journal. Now, we feel very proud to bring the October, Volume 6, Issue 4, 2024 Issue contributed by the academicians and research Scholars of the literary field.

**Dr. M. Vinoth Kumar & S. Kulandhaivel**  
**Editors'-in-Chief**

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## A Comparative Study of Kannadasan and Ralph Waldo Emerson

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### Abstract

*The present study is designed to estimate the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson from American Literature with Kannadasan of Tamil Literature in the light of Vedanta. It is an effort to study the authors' select poems that contain the philosophy of Vedanta. Both poets show their interest in Vedanta with their respective languages and culture. Emerson's Essay "Over-Soul" and Kannadasan's poetry "He is Only God" are the epitome of the paper. Kannadasan's "Arthamulla Indumatham" is an attempt to prove the existence and the work of God in all existence in the cosmos. The select writers belong to different countries and centuries and yet their point of view of God looks the same. They believe in the soul in animate and inanimate objects as said in Vedanta. Emerson calls God a 'Universal soul' who encompasses entire objects of the world. Kannadasan views God as a ruler who dominates and activates everything and every work in the world. Thus, their belief in the presence of the Supreme Soul or God in every individual soul and all things becomes dominant throughout their writings. Hence, this present study aims to find the ideas of Vedanta in the writing of Emerson and Kannadasan and the parallel ones among their writings.*

**Keywords:** Comparison, Kannadasan, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vedanta.

### Introduction

Vedanta is a prose rendering of Four Vedas. It is a spiritual philosophy of the Hindu religion. The word 'Vedanta' is a combination of 'Veda' that means 'knowledge' and 'anta' that means the 'end of' or 'the aim of knowledge'. Vedanta's suggestion of the aim of knowledge is to gain the knowledge of God. Vedanta claims non-dualism. It means the cause of Brahman and the effect of Atman are the same. The Sanskrit terms 'Brahman' and 'atman' refer to God and soul respectively. According to Vedanta Brahman, the highest reality manifests in individual souls and resides in all and Atman, the inner reality, exists in each creature. According to Vedanta God is believed to be a divine light and its spark pervades in every individual being or soul. Kannadasan is a 20<sup>th</sup> century famous writer and poet in Tamil Literature from Tamil Nadu in India. He is a patriot of Tamil language and literature. He is a celebrated writer for his lyrics for playback songs in Tamil cinemas apart from his popularity for his poems and other writings in Tamil. Kannadasan is well-versed in the spiritual philosophy of Indian Vedanta and his writings express the ideas of Vedanta. Emerson is a popular writer, poet, orator and thinker in America. He is well-known for his maxim 'newness'. Whicher Stephen, E. points out his genius in his book *Freedom and Fate*. Emerson is the head of the transcendentalist group in America in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. He wants to go beyond restrictions put by religion and other things. Emerson became familiar with the Indian philosophical ideas by reading them when he studied at Harvard University. He has expressed his strong faith and deeper understanding of the spiritual philosophical ideas of Indian Vedanta. His writings based on the ideas of Vedanta display his firm belief in transforming society and the world through those precious ideas. Emerson's essay, "Over-Soul" has the ideas of Universal soul and individual soul resembling 'Brahman' and 'Atman'



in Indian Vedanta. Emerson's essay, "Over-Soul" discusses the unity between the Universal soul and the individual soul. He writes "The act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and spectacle, the subject and the object, are one." Emerson defined this unity as "within which each man's particular being is contained and made one with all other...." (Essays, First Series) The very passage is a notable example of Emerson's knowledge of Vedanta. Deussen says, "THE Vedanta of Sankara and his school makes a distinction between the supreme soul (paramatman) and a multitude of individual souls (jîva âtman, sârîra atman). The former is omniscient, omnipotent, omni-present; the latter are limited in wisdom, power and capacity of movement. The former is neither active nor passive, and is therefore free from the very beginning; the latter are active and receptive, and are therefore entangled in the eternal round of samsâra, and stand in need of deliverance. Yet the individual âtmans are not properly distinct from the supreme âtman." (256) Kannadasan and Emerson's idea of 'humanity's inner essence' seems similar to the idea of divine reality in Vedanta. Hence, the paper will do a comparative study on the select poets with reference to select works.

### **Kannadasan and Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Kannadasan and Emerson are pioneers who cultivated a sense of intellectual consciousness in Tamil Nadu and America respectively. Their poems are very notable for their upanistic views and philosophy. Most of their poems evince the concept of a universal soul. Remak says, "... study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of the relationship between two kinds of literature from different languages, and also the study of literature and other areas of knowledge and belief." (31) A comparative study will give more understanding of the similar Vedantic ideas written by the poets. Kannadasan in the poem "He is only God" endorses the realization of God through the mind and God existing within the body promising His true availability. Kannadasan outlines the link of the body with the mind with God. He offers the conclusion that God's presence becomes unlikely without the body with the mind. He thus delineates the infallible value of one to another. Kannadasan in the poem "He is only God" portrays all objects in nature as bodies and as the residence of the Almighty. He sees God's being as a coconut in the shell. Upanishad recounts soul rooms in the background of the body as a mute dweller and a dumb spectator positioned within the heart unaffected by the impurities of the body and its activities. Katha Upanishad looks at the human body as the city of nine gates with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, a mouth, an anus and the navel.

Kannadasan's emotion for the welfare and elevation of the Tamil race and his unquenchable love for God, Tamil people, Tamil culture, custom and tradition and Tamil Gods such as Goddess Meenakshi, Lord Muruga, and Lord Rama etc. appear to be his conscious wish, desire and appetite. The poem "Atheism" displays Kannadasan's anger against atheism. 'He wants to remove atheism from society by cutting it from the root because it will prevent people from being spiritual, studying divine doctrines and following the just path called "Darma". He wishes the younger generation to study all spiritual doctrines think deeply about them in a tranquil way and worship God daily for knowing about body, soul, God and their nature and secrets for their better and sooner personal development in life, profession and public life. Kannadasan's emotional ideas in the above poem come as proof for the following ideas of Maitri Upanishad. The characteristics of the Dark Quality 'tamas' refer to delusion, fear, despondency, sleepiness, weariness, heedlessness, old age, sorrow, hunger, thirst, wretchedness, anger, atheism, ignorance, jealousy, cruelty, stupidity, shamelessness, religious neglect, pride, inequality. Emerson's psychological frame of mind, his mental perception of matters and his becoming conscious of the desire of his



mind can be witnessed in the poem “The Problem” in which he admits that he has all attraction and liking for the service of the church and monastic life and he has faith in religion but he cannot become a priest. Vedanta states human consciousness includes the mind, intellect, memory and ego. The human mind is the seat of affectation, impulse, feeling, emotion, and indiscrimination, whereas the intellect is the faculty of reason, judgment, decision-making, and cognition. Memory is the storage of recollected thoughts. When the mind functions without intellectual supervision, negative emotions occupy it. If the mind is governed by intellect it becomes the guide to emotions. Thus mind should not be a slave to emotions but a master to them. The emotion of Emerson in the poem “The Problem” becomes proof for all the mentioned ideas of Vedanta. He wishes to remain a divine-inspired writer and orator to work for the divine cause. Emerson accents the soul has all knowledge as well as the capacity for it. Locke says the soul or thinking substance keeps itself the same when consciousness is lost in utter forgetfulness and thus there stays the same soul but a different person. Every man survives as a part of the whole universe through the actions of his physical body, mind and soul. The dualist argues that something non-physical object activates the body which makes a body become a person. It is the soul that activates the body. Emerson calls it a reality of reality which men stay ignorant about but their souls exist with full awareness of men’s lack of consciousness of the soul’s presence, its capacity of all-knowing and having and the reality behind every moment of their life. The lack of consciousness of the soul causes emptiness, meaninglessness and insignificance in their life.

Kannadasan declares that all species are the outcome of a primal matter called Akasha and this world is created from a creative energy called God. Vedantists call it ‘Brahman’, ‘One Supreme’, One Omniscient and One Absolute Reality. According to the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, the Ultimate reality is being San Mantran-hi Brahman. The world cannot be, ‘self-caused,’ ‘self-dependent’ and self-maintaining. Upanishads use the word ‘projection’ for ‘creation,’ and they say by creation the projection of all already exists. Kannadasan talks of God creating first the sky, which can be an example of the projection. The reflection of Upanishad and Kannadasan appears to be the work and influence of God behind all creations and so they are God. Emerson expresses his wish to change the human race as God by depriving it of its follies derived from its involvement in the material world. Kannadasan wants to elevate the Tamil race by making it follow Tamil culture, customs and tradition and worship God and Goddess like Meenakshi and Lord Muruga. Kannadasan displays his anger against atheists and wants to remove them from society otherwise, he says that it will spoil people by not being spiritual, not studying doctrines and not following a just path. Emerson accepts his attraction for Church services but he declares that he cannot become a priest for that. He would rather be divinely inspired as and writer, orator and artist for the divine cause. Vedanta principle talks of intuitive knowledge which is different from that of the discursive and meditative knowledge of the ordinary physical mind. Intuitive knowledge is the right knowledge given by the Supreme Soul via man’s soul. Emerson sounds the same idea when he talks of the ‘overpowering reality’ being responsible for men’s right thought, proper action meant by ‘hand’, clear wisdom, pure virtue, its true power and real beauty. Emerson points out humanity’s survival as groups in all generations but he establishes men as souls coming from the entire of the entire called the Supreme Soul.

Kannadasan’s poetry “Nirvanam” explains the emptiness that leads to the attainment of truth. He sings if truth is made to stand rightly and firmly in the heart, nirvana or mukthi shines with all its brightness in the intellect. Men have to practice some disciplines, accept consciously certain inevitable problems caused by their fellow human beings, and control



their minds to reach the state of emptiness, Nirvana. Kannadasan asserts men cannot understand God, the source of all souls, in our Scriptures. All education aims to polish up the external body and enrich ourselves materially. He raises the question of what to use in polishing up the outside when there is no purity in mind. By exploring the individual soul they can understand the existence of the Supreme soul, the God. Hindus accept that the soul is without beginning and end. It is immortal by its very nature but not the body. Kannadasan's poem 'Nenjodu pulambal' insists that the human body is a composite of five elements and decays over time. Swami Vivekananda in his essay titled "Paper on Hinduism" quotes the Vedas calling man as a spirit in a living body and not a body which is subjected to death but the man shall not die. Thus, man continues his living. Emerson is also in the same views as that of Swami Vivekananda in his poem *Brahma*. Both of the poets Kannadasan and Emerson have similar ideas even though they lived in different places and different cultures. This shows the similarity between Vedic concepts and transcendental ethics. Thus, the works of the poets share the intellectual thoughts of Vedanta.

### Conclusion

Emerson declares the source of man comes from the universal soul. Man's mind receives messages from the soul within him. Vedanta philosophy identifies men with much divine knowledge and the soul as the dwelling place of God. Emerson states that God is the 'Supreme Critic of the errors' of the past and present. He calls God the sole 'prophet' and the 'great nature' in which human beings set. Human beings are not responsible for their 'tricks and talents', speaking, writing and characters for they are given to them by the Supreme Soul. Kannadasan's writings contain the Upanishadic theory of the immortality of the soul. In his poetry 'Where is He?' Kannadasan's consideration of God as a formative force and source of flowers can be seen. He describes God as life within life and womb within the womb and as God's work hiding light in darkness and darkness besides light. Kannadasan brings forth the binary nature of God. Kannadasan utters that man is a shadow that can be seen only in the light of God. Hence, both of the poets have written in the concept of Vedanta.

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## Transcreating Carceral Subjugation, Ethnic Erasure and the Limits of Human Subjectivity on Screen: An Enquiry into the Prison Narratives of *Schindler's List* and *Orange Is The New Black*

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### Abstract:

*Amid different forms of adaptation, film adaptation occupies a significant place in contemporary creative industries. The process of transferring a literary work onto the big screen can be viewed in translational terms and adaptation can be regarded as a creative process like translation. In translation Studies, adaptation is often viewed as a set of translative interventions which gives birth to a text that is not generally accepted as a translation but still represents a source text to some extent. So, adaptation is posited with the techniques of translation which ultimately aims at relevance rather than accuracy. In that sense, adaptation can be viewed as a creative translation where the message of the source text gets filtered through the creative vista of the adapter. As a translational process, adaptation depends on the sociocultural context in which it takes place and stimulates new readings of the source text. Thereby, it reverberates with the notions of rewriting, reinterpretation and recontextualization. Therefore, adaptation operates by Lefevere's idea of refraction where Lefevere points out that the adaptation of a work of literature works to influence how the audience reads the work. Lefevere points out that translation is a rewriting of a source text and it carries a work of literature over from one system into another. This paper attempts to focus on ethnic erasure, female captivity and female carceral subjugation, respectively in the two trans-creative texts- *Schindler's List* and *Orange is the New Black*. Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) is one of the most popular epic drama movies of World War II ever produced. The screenplay of this movie is adapted from the novel *Schindler's Ark* written by Thomas Keneally. *Schindler's List* has an uncommon story, it is a historical movie about historical events. The horror of the ethnic cleansing which is reflected in *Schindler's List* is one of the appealing aspects that is interesting to be studied. In this proposed study, I would also like to talk about the female victims during the period of Holocaust. Next, *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019), a comedic drama with seven seasons, is one of the most-watched original series on Netflix. Based on Piper Kerman's memoir, *Orange is the New Black: My Years in a Women's Prison*, the show follows the main character Piper Chapman as she serves time in Litchfield Penitentiary, a women's federal prison. OITNB highlights how women in prison experience the foundations of the criminal justice system: policing, arrest, prosecution and sentencing that disproportionately target poor communities and communities of colour. Prison for most of us is an unknown experience and anything we know is mainly through representations in media. This show sheds light on the lives of the female jailbirds and their experiences in prison. So, this paper will try to delineate the lives of the women who are victims of ethnic erasure and also the female inmates who are in prison experiencing the pangs of incarceration.*

**Keywords:** Carceral Subjugation, Ethnic Erasure, Film Adaptation, Prison Narratives, Female Jail Birds.



## Introduction

Adaptation occupies a remarkable position in the contemporary creative industries. While a literary work is transferred onto the big screen, it involves translative interventions. As a creative process, translation and film adaptation bear some similarities. Patrick Cattrysse points out that film adaptation and translation work within the realm of polysystem and both include their involvement in socio-cultural context. (Cattrysse 47-49). Film adaptation also follows the rules of translation and it also has its source text. So, adaptation is also considered as a translation technique and its pivotal concern is to gain relevance rather than the exactness. It involves the creative genius of the translator who reinterprets the source text on different platforms. Moreover, adaptation as a translational process, also depends on the sociocultural context in which it is produced. It offers new readings of the source text and thereby it enhances and enriches the adapted version. Therefore, adaptation clubs together the idea of reinterpretation and recontextualization. Here, we can incorporate Lefevre's idea of 'refraction'. Lefevre defines refraction as "the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work" (Lefevre 205). The same logic can be applied to film adaptation as it 'refracts' a literary work onto different platform and involves reinterpretation of the source text. Film adaptation transfers the narrative from the literary system over to the film system. So, film adaptation serves the source text to the audience in a different way with new meanings. This present study deals with the two trans-creative adaptations, one is *Schindler's List* and another is the series *Orange is the New Black*. It tries to explore the horrors of ethnic cleansing and the female captivity and suffering in the film *Schindler's List* and the exploitation and carceral subjugation of the female inmates in *OITNB*.

### **Ethnic Erasure and Female Captivity in *Schindler's List*:**

Memories of the Holocaust continue to be profoundly disturbing and disruptive. Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* is undoubtedly the most successful film about the Holocaust. Spielberg's directional techniques give the impression of telling a true, authentic story. The film is shot almost in black-and-white (except for the beginning, ending and some selective scenes) and this monochromatic thing makes it a documentary-like film and gives it a historical quality. Spielberg was keenly aware of this fact and he said to his cast that he was not making a film, he was making a document. Here, he amalgamates history and memory, imaginary and the real and this makes *Schindler's List* a representative of the Holocaust myth and emotionally effective at the same time.

The American historical drama film, *Schindler's List* is based on the life of a German business tycoon and a member of the Nazi party, Oskar Schindler, who saved more than 1100 Jews during the Holocaust by employing them in his factory. The entire film is set in an eerie black-and-white setting with a handful of colour scenes. The black-and-white setting sets the depressing mood of the film. The dead body of the little girl in the red coat causes Schindler to realize the extent of the atrocity inflicted on the Jews. The red coat is symbolic of the blood that was shed during the Holocaust. The little girl in the red coat conveys how the innocent people were carefully slaughtered.

Spielberg's *Schindler's List* discloses a narrative thread in which man is at the centre of the story that results in the reduction of women into passive and weaker sex. The present paper tries to show how Spielberg memorializes the Holocaust and how his representations visualize the captivity and suffering of women in general. War and political conflict destroy lives, families, economy but throughout history, women have become the targets in wartime and are exposed to violence, especially sexual violence in bondage or coercive detention. The



film portrays the women who have been transformed into imprisoned objects of the Nazi government. So, during its course of memorialization of the Holocaust, the film eroticizes Nazi atrocities and violence against women. The film with its privileged male gaze upon the eroticized and brutalized female body falls into the category of the Nazisploitation genre. Most of the portrayals of women in Holocaust films primarily evoke marginalization. This erotic aesthetic reflects the intertwined nature of Nazism and patriarchy. In most cases, women are portrayed as passive, tragic victims defined by their relation to men as wives, lovers, and mothers. Women in Holocaust films behave primarily in a heightened emotional manner and/or are ignorant towards the political complexity. Spielberg's *Schindler's List* reveals a narrative thread in which the man's perspective functions at the core of the story in a way that results in a reduction of the portrayed women to passive, weaker and often more emotional one-dimensional characters. Here, there is no portrayal of autonomous female sexuality and women instead are sexualized through men's glances and actions. The audience, here, gets glimpses of the exploitation of women through a plethora of female characters, like the women in the camp, the maid Helen Hirsch, the engineer Diana Reiter, Amon Goeth's mistress and women in the gas chamber.

This process of objectification is illustrated in a sequence, where the commandant of the Plaszow Labor Camp, Amon Goeth aims his rifle at his naked mistress while she lies on his bed. This scene identifies masculinity with killing. The rifle here represents the penis. Goeth does not shoot her but rather moves to the bathroom and urinates. This scene equalizes the act of shooting, fornication, and urination. It asserts an equivalence among Jews, his mistress, and the toilet. The camera here represents both the power of the gun and of the phallus as a symbol of the colonization of body and mind.

Women become the playthings in Amon's hand. He kills them as his fulfilment. From his balcony, he shoots the women though they have not done anything wrong. Schindler once in the film says that Amon kills the women who mean nothing to him. He orders to shoot the engineer when she detects faults in the blueprint of the construction and argues over it. Amon cannot undergo the thing that a woman can suggest to the man what to do. By killing her, he satisfies his male ego. But later we see that he orders the workers to follow the things as suggested by the female engineer. In a sequence, we visualize the arrival of the list makers and doctors at Plaszow. The Jewish men and women are ushered out of their beds and stripped of their clothes. The camera provides a close-up of someone placing a record on a machine and setting a speaker next to it. Music blasts from the speaker while the Jews are told to run in circles in front of the officials. Those who are deemed unhealthy and not fit to work are pulled aside to be sent to Auschwitz. The women are running naked and there is a visible sign of terror and suspense in their look. But the officers are laughing at this eroticization of the female body. This may provoke sympathy in the audience but at the same time, the camera produces voyeuristic pleasure by focusing on the naked sexual organs of the female.

There is another sequence, in which female characters are led into a shower room with the foreknowledge that they are to be gassed. The audience has the experience of peering through a peephole at a group of naked women. The women shriek and huddle together. But instead of gas, the water comes out of the pipe. This can be used as a pornographic scene both for its depiction of terrified, naked Jewish women and for the use of the gas chamber to provoke the viewer's sense of suspense. It is another occasion where the camera eroticizes the Jewish female body. The audience is here distanced and the peephole enables the audience's scopophilic pleasure at the spectacle of human suffering. The



peephole serves to separate the audience from the victimized women and thus from direct participation in their eroticized humiliation. This reminds us of Mulvey's notion of women's exhibitionist role, as an object to be looked at and displayed. Mulvey uses the term 'male gaze' to refer to the way in films women are sexually objectified by the controlling power of male looks. Her essay tries to dismantle the traditional patriarchal codes embedded in Hollywood cinema of the 1970s which reduce women to passive objects of desire. Hollywood cinema manipulates the audience's gaze and satisfies their repressed desire by depicting women as objects of sexual fantasy. She also argues that masculinity is used as the narrative perspective in classical Hollywood cinema and it is the reflection of the unequal power relation between men and women- "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact..." (Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* 6).

The film offers a spectacle where Goeth beats his maid, Helen. To explain this torture of Helen by Amon, we can apply here the voyeuristic and fetishistic mechanism of Mulvey. While voyeurism serves as a reminder that a woman lacks a phallus, 'fetishistic scopophilia' renounces the castration anxiety. Here, Mulvey states, "fetishism...is born out of a refusal to see, a refusal to know, and a refusal to accept the difference that the female body symbolizes" (Mulvey, *Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity* 52). The attraction/repulsion dichotomy appears in this film also. We witness Amon Goeth's struggle with his attraction to the product of his abjection: his Jewish housemaid Helen. The audience witnesses the erotic depiction of violence against women in a scene where Goeth punishes Helen for his attraction to her. His violent outburst is the result of the tension he feels between his sexual desire for Helen and his knowledge of *Rassenschande*, the Nazi's racial defilement laws. These prohibited sexual relations between Germans and Jews to avoid contamination of the Aryan bloodline. The sequence begins with Helen emerging from the bath. She is wearing a nightdress and her erect nipples can be seen through the thin fabric. Helen's near-naked body is the object of both Goeth and the camera. Amon circles her and she trembles with fear. He even doubts whether Helen is a human or not and he also comments that she is not a person in the strictest sense of the word. He asks her many questions but she remains silent. He touches her breast. Disgusted by his response to the erotic draw of this sub-human, he brutally assaults her. The women in the film exist as a locus of male struggle and desire. The film reproduces the stereotypical image of the Jewish woman as an alluring dark beauty. Within Nazi propaganda, the Jews are portrayed as a temptress who tricked Aryan men into committing the crime of *Rassenschande*. This not only presents her as a dangerous woman but also suggests her sexual agency. Thus, this seduction-turned-torture scene destabilizes Goeth's hypermasculinized depiction of masculinity.

### ***Orange is the New Black and Female Carceral Subjugation:***

The acclaimed Netflix original series, *Orange is the New Black* is adapted from Piper Kerman's 2010 memoir *Orange is the New Black: My Years in a Women's Prison*. This show received 13 Emmy nominations in 2014 and won the award for "Outstanding Casting for a Comedy Series". The show got much accolades for its varied range of portrayals like, racial segregation, transphobia, sexual diversity, prison conditions and many more. *OITNB* enables the viewers to peep into the lives of the female prisoners of Litchfield Penitentiary. Litchfield functions as a microcosm of the PIC (prison industrial complex) and it highlights how women





in prison experience the criminal justice system. Prison for most of us is an unknown experience and anything we know is mostly through representations in various media. The hidden environment of prison is made visible to us mainly through prison narratives and prison visuals. So, the prison films and narratives contribute to shaping the audience's attitude about prison and prisoners. The present study attempts to delineate the female jailbirds and their suffering and carceral subjugation in the *OITNB*.

The show opens with a statement by the protagonist Piper Chapman- “I am here because I am no different from anybody else I here. I made bad choices. I committed a crime and being in here is no one’s fault but my own” (“WAC Pac” 00:6:16- 00:7:01). In an interview with NPR’s *Fresh Air*, Kohan accepts that she uses Piper as her ‘Trojan horse’ and states- “You’re not going to go into a network and sell a show on reality fascinating tales of black women and Latino women and old women and criminals. But if you take this white girl, this sort of fish out of water, and you follow her in, you can then expand your world and tell all those other stories. But it’s hard sell to just go in and try to sell those stories initially’ (Gross, 2013). Kohan presents Piper as a ‘nice, white lady’ who is sent to prison for her involvement in drug smuggling a decade before her imprisonment. Her past deed is recognized as a ‘bad choice’, as a result of her involvement with people different from her, namely her girlfriend, Alex Vause. Her status as a good girl tries to visualise her struggle in her attempt to fit herself in the new hostile environment. Though the season opens with the story of Piper, gradually it peeps into the lives of other female inmates. With the progression of the narrative, the audience becomes familiar with the female inmates in Litchfield and Piper’s story gradually becomes the secondary one. *OITNB* explores prison as a space of psychodrama. The prisoners are now separated from society and prison becomes the new microcosm. Now, they try their best to be accustomed to the ways of prison life. During this process of adjustment, the prisoners explore and re-configure themselves in many ways. It is often seen that some behaviours may not be visible in society but they may appear in prison life and it may also become vice-versa. Through this journey, they get to know about their unknown hidden self.

The director uses the flashback technique to uncover the prisoners’ lives before imprisonment. The flashbacks also reveal the people outside of Litchfield who are struggling hard to maintain their connection with the imprisoned women inside. Initially, many of the female characters may appear disgusting but their backstories make them convenient. By adding the backstories, the flashbacks represent an inmate in total and elicit empathy for the woman in Litchfield. Backstories offer insight into the lives of the characters and the spectators can connect themselves with the characters. Through the flashbacks, we come across the past life of Suzanne and the racialized power dynamics in her family. Her white family treats her only as an annoyance upon the arrival of their long-wanted biological child. Also, in prison, she is very helpless and lonely because except for Taystee everyone considers Suzanne insane and this evokes sympathy for Suzanne from the part of the audience. Initially, Big Boo appears very annoying but the flashbacks of her troubled childhood make her a convincing one. The rape scene of Pensatucky by the prison guard digs back into her experience of poverty and her abuse in the hands of boys, men and her mother and thus reveals the pains of imprisonment. Thus, the flashbacks make the female inmates more humane and nuanced.

Litchfield prison categorizes women as White, Black, Hispanic, Golden Girls and others. Asians Muslims and Latins are portrayed as poor, criminals and maids trying to smuggle into the USA. Racial segregation is very much visible from the very beginning of



the series. When Piper is introduced in her cellblock, fellow inmate Lorna offers her a toothbrush and Lorna says that they look for their people, the white people. Then Gina introduces Piper in the cafeteria as a nice white lady. When Red, the prison cook offers the white women cups of yoghurt, Piper asks what she has to give her for yoghurt and Red says that Piper is one of them and it is a gift from Red. In the visitation room, Piper says to her mother that she has made bad choices and is suffering for that but Piper's mother protests this and says- "sweetheart, you're nothing like any of these women... Darling, you're a debutante" ("WAC pack" 00:8:03- 00:11:00). In season four, Piper assembles a group of people to discuss making Litchfield a safe place for the inmates but it is seen that those who are attending the meeting are white people. This group later subverts the ideology of the group and turns into a white supremacist group and the group starts chanting "white lives matter". The way the White women represent themselves as white is defined by Frye as "whiteness" and she states- "I do not think whiteness is just middle-class-ness misnamed. I think of whiteness as a way of being which extends across ethnic, cultural, and class categories and occurs in ethnic, cultural, and class varieties- varieties which may tend to blend toward a norm set by the elite groups within a race" (Frye 159). Racial segregation increases in Litchfield with the increase of prison inmates. When the affluent TV personality Judy King enters the prison, she is provided with special food, books, separate room and the Yoga Jones is selected as her roommate as Jones is a white one. During a crossfire, the black girl, Poussey gets killed by a correctional officer but her death goes unnoticed. So, Litchfield represents whiteness as a privileged status.

The series also includes the trans rights movement through the character of Sophia Burset (played by activist Laverne Cox). Sophia faces demarcation and ill-treatment as she is a trans. Some of the inmates laugh at her over the fact in which cell Sophia will be placed as she is neither a man nor a woman. Her hormonal drugs are stopped and she is put to SHU for no reason. Sophia is double marginalized as she is a trans-black inmate. Laverne Cox calls that this show can be regarded as a platform for trans rights activism. The show visualizes the lives of the female inmates and their suffering, and oppression in the hands of the prison authority. The female prisoners' experience in prison becomes evident in the statement of Tasha Jefferson- "We are stuck in hell trying to survive. Years and years of abuse at the hands of guards and the prison system that looks the other way...I'm seeing that the real sad part is I'm not special. I'm one of millions of people just like me. Millions" ("Gordons" 26:33- 28:54). The female inmate's body becomes the site where the prison authority exercises its power. The body that is caught up behind bars is subject to power relations. The knowledge of the body creates a mastery over it. Power and knowledge are related. The techniques applied to the prisoners and our attitude to them show how power operates in society. The knowledge possessed by prison authority creates a certain 'technology of power'. Foucault points out that "power produces knowledge... power and knowledge directly imply one another, there is no power relations without the corrective constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relation" (Foucault, 27). The art of punishment depends on the fact that punishment must decrease the desire for crime. The body is a target of power, the docile body is subjected and transformed. The prison authority tries to make the inmates disciplined and in this process, the inmates undergo a varied range of experiences.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, it can be proposed that film adaptation contains in itself some of the features of translation and adaptation can be viewed as creative translation as it filters the



message of the source text and aims at relevance rather than accuracy. Therefore, it incorporates the notions of reinterpretation, rewriting and recontextualization. It suffices with the new readings of the source text and thereby, it enriches the source text. This paper incorporates two film adaptations intending to portray ethnic erasure, female captivity, exploitation, marginalization and carceral subjugation.

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## A Re-Reading of Judith Guest's *Ordinary People* in the Perspective of Beth Jarrett

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### Abstract

The 'ordinary' American woman writer Judith Guest became 'no more ordinary' after the release of her first novel, *Ordinary People*, in 1976. This novel gained worldwide attention for its unique plot, which deals with the psychological struggle of a suburban family after a severely traumatic event. This novel is more about the rehabilitation of the protagonist, a 17-year-old boy coping with his mental illness and deals with the theme of family disintegration, mental health issues, adolescent development, and domestic relationships. Judith Guest narrates the entire novel from the perspective of Conrad and Calvin; however, this paper tries to bring Judith Guest's woman character "Beth" to light in an attempt to recognize this character along with the other strongest female characters in literature like Hester Prynne, Janie Crawford, *Jane Eyre*, *Wife of Bath*, *Celie* and so on. The article deconstructs the novel from the perspective of Beth, who is physically attractive, emotionally strong, rational, and an absolute perfectionist in the novel, *Ordinary People*. Despite all domestic struggles, Beth's sensible, realistic and practical approach toward life helped her make a controversial yet compelling decision that attained her self-identity at the end of the novel. Therefore, this research paper is a re-reading of Judith Guest's *Ordinary People* in Beth Jarrett's Perspective.

**Keywords:** Gender, Self-Identity, Domestic Issues, Existential Feminism

### Introduction

Judith Guest was a 1936-born American woman writer, raised in Detroit, Michigan, currently serving as a member of screenwriters and belongs to one of the most popular celebrities in Michigan with a net worth of \$100,000 – \$1M. Judith Guest's accretion of excellence in English and Psychology obtained from the University of Michigan has out-turned the merge of psychology and literature. Besides, Guest graduated with a degree in education in 1958 and guidance from her niece of the acclaimed poet Edgar Guest assisted her in constructing the structure of her thirst for creative writing in the form of novels. Apart from her most acclaimed novel *Ordinary People* (1976), Judith Guest's other novels *Second Heaven* (1982), *Errand* (1987), and *The Tarnished Eye* (2004) have been noted for her insightful treatment of domesticity and family crises in the happenings of contemporary America. Judith Guest in collaboration with Rebecca Hill, penned a mystery novel *Killing Time in St. Cloud*, which earned a publication in 1988, highlights the notion of murder mystery and whodunit complex that is said to be one of the psychologically deeply discussed headings in the 20th-century American literature. Judith Guest's sub-urban environmental setting and the upper-middle-class social setting created in her novels are said to be the source of the writer's domestic or personal experiences. Besides, most of the characters inscribed in her novels reflect the accumulation of those experiences. Judith Guest in an



interview approached by Jill Van Antwerp conveys the importance of places for the setting for her novel, "I think that I have two things that are really important to me and one is the people that I am writing about and the other is the context, the place where they are, and place seems very, very important to me, personally" (5). In the novel *Ordinary People*, the setting of the story takes place in the suburbs of Chicago, centering the life of an upper-middle-class American family in the year 1970s.

Calvin is a successful lawyer, Beth is a beautiful woman and Conrad is a healing adolescent altogether construct the Jarrett family. The Jarrett family consists of three members bodily (Calvin, Beth, Conrad) and four members psychically; whereas the fourth member (Buck) never appears physically in the novel, but travels solely in the minds of other characters of the Jarrett family throughout the novel. Each of the family members experiences emotional illness in complex forms and struggles hard to work through their domestic issues in day-to-day life. By incorporating these family members as major characters, Judith Guest exposes the disintegration of the typical American family and their journey towards ultimate healing. Guest's depiction of Beth's role as a homemaker reflects the second-wave feminism of the women's liberation movement that happened in the 1970s United States, by discussing the area of women's experience with the family. Beth's primary role in the Jarrett family as a "married woman" is to prepare dishes for her family members, raise their children, serve her husband, and perform all domestic purposes. Therefore, a re-reading will help to highlight the inner themes.

### **A Re-Reading of the Novel**

Calvin and Beth lead a picture-perfect relationship in a nuclear family with their two sons named Buck and Conrad. Calvin as a tax attorney holds a prestigious position in society, whereas Beth as an admirable and efficient woman enjoys spending most of her time in a country club. The Jarrett family is supposed to love each other and lead a wealthy lifestyle in the suburb of Lake Forest, Illinois. Unfortunately, the unexpected death of the family member shattered their happiness by leaving a psychological scar in their minds. As a consequence, each of the family members struggles in their way to regain their normal life. The happiness in the Jarrett family completely vanished after the death of Buck and the psychological pressure on the rest of the family members to live a perfect life seemed difficult to accomplish. The horrible event that killed his brother made Conrad spend his days a month in a psychiatric hospital. Apart from that, Conrad's attempt at suicide pushes his father Calvin into a state of solicitousness and his mother Beth in a state of bereavement. Unlike Calvin and Conrad, Beth tries to rearrange the disorderliness in the Jarrett family but the family member that ultimately leads to the destruction of the Jarrett family misunderstands her inexpressive nature.

The novel *Ordinary People* defines the character Beth only through the perception of her husband Calvin and son Conrad. Hence, to understand what kind of a woman was Beth; this research paper deeply examines the situation from Beth's point of view and intends to portray the character Beth as a "rational" woman. What it means to be a "rational woman" is that rational women can actually understand not only their one's own emotions, but they could also sense others' emotions, thoughts, and feelings too. However, what makes them different from others is their decision-making process, which would never depend upon emotional factors. In simple terms, their choice of decisions would never be based on sentiments; preferably, they always make their decisions based on logic, reason, and rationality. Judith Guest's description of Beth's physical appearance in *Ordinary People* unveils the potential of the character in a more definite way. Guest portrays Beth as,





"Her face is soft in the morning, flushed, slightly rounded, younger than her thirty-nine years. Her stomach is flat, almost as if she never had the babies. She raises her hands to the back of her neck, pinning her hair into a neat coil at the back of her head. Beautiful hair, the color of maple sugar. Or honey. Natural, too. The blue silk robe outlines her slender hips, her breasts" (*Ordinary People*, 6). Beth's past and present haunt her, as the death of her beloved son and the present condition of the surviving son psychologically drags her down from all aspects of life. Despite all distress, Beth deliberately struggles to move on with enough positivity to bloom; but the relationship with her husband Calvin becomes constrained when he grows to worry too much about Conrad and least about Beth. Rationally, Beth expressed her optimistic approach towards life as, "And do not be paralyzed. It is better to move than to be unable to move, because you fear loss so much: loss of order, loss of security, loss of predictability" (*Ordinary People*, 242).

Beth always expects a complete sort of perfection in everything; including her looks, way of dressing, domestic life and household activities. Before marrying Conrad, most of her activities centered around the country club culture illustrates a place commonly located in the suburbs to entertain the upper-class people with typical athletic offerings like golf, tennis and swimming. Beth was a skillful tennis player at Beverly Racquet Club and she challenged men to play with her for better competition. Filled with elegance and self-possession, Beth resembled the fashion of an ideal upper-class woman, as she appeared "so beautiful in every detail that men and women both like to look at her" (*Ordinary People*, 25). After marrying Conrad, most of her activities centered around the household chores and being a homemaker, Beth is expected to fulfil the socially assigned role of a woman that includes taking care of the family, serving the needs of the husband and focusing on the happiness of their children. The sudden change in Beth's lifestyle after her marriage represents the women's disadvantaged societal position in the words of Simone de Beauvoir in her *Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman".

The guest portrayal of typical housewives in the 1970s through her character Beth in *Ordinary People* unveils the traditionally constructed role of American women after their marriage. Being a woman, Beth is supposed to fulfil the role of motherhood to Conrad and wifeliness to Calvin. Judith Guest confesses the notion of what it's like to be a woman in a disturbed family as, "She hands him his coffee; crosses to the doorway; motes of dust flutter nervously in her wake" (*Ordinary People*, 10). Through Beth, Judith Guest has created a notion that family responsibilities could never perform as an obstacle for ideal women, whereas Guest describes Beth as "She's such a perfectionist. And yet she never lets herself get trapped into things she doesn't want to do" (*Ordinary People*, 89). The recognition of self-identity is the only way to discern the purpose of life in the case of Beth. She not only loses all of her roles and identity in the Jarrett family but also gets neglected like trash. The way Beth loses all of her purposes is, firstly, Beth had lost her beloved son in a sailing accident, secondly, she lost her husband's care when he got involved in substance abuse, thirdly, she feels her son's constant attempts of committing suicide is his method of punishing her. Therefore, from the philosophical perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, in Judith Guest's *Ordinary People*, Beth struggles in search of self-identification as a rational woman to "where to fit" in a distorted family, leaving with a convincing statement that the family should not destroy one's individuality. Moreover, marriage, children, and family should never determine or affect women's self-identity and women are not the only ones expected to bear the burden of the family. From Beth's perspective, the situation of Beth in the Jarrett family is quite similar to the condition of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*. For instance,



Miss Havisham is jilted on her wedding day and decides to stay with her rotting wedding dress till the end of her life, in the same manner, the already rejected Beth is in a position to stay with her distorted family till the end of her life.

Gender plays a significant role in Beth's identity confusion, moreover, the answer to the interrogation of what defines the role of man and woman is based on their gender. Celine Leboeuf's *The Sex-Gender Distinction and Simone de Beauvoir's Account of Woman: The Second Sex* mention, "gender encompasses the identity and the behaviors acquired on the basis of social expectations about what is appropriate for females and males; this identity and these behaviors make one a woman or a man" (*Ordinary People*, 141), to convey a statement that searches for identity is more about the role of man/woman play in the society rather than a person's assigned sex at birth. By portraying Beth as an ideal woman, Guest tries to deliver the impression that the role of women could shape their identity irrespective of gender, as she says, "Nobody's role is simple these days" (*Ordinary People*, 8).

Calvin forces Beth to care much about their thriving son, but Conrad's annoying behaviour of suicide attempt makes Beth distant from him. On one hand, the already depressed Beth became more depressed when her family expected her to make things happen which was not even in her hands. On the other hand, her family never cooperates with her decision of blurring the tragedy to reconstruct the happiness in the Jarrett family. Calvin neglects Beth's plan of going away for Christmas in the middle of December, this act of Calvin disappoints her deeply because he rejects her desire to go to London even after so many compulsions. The question, "are we going to live like this? With it always hanging over our heads?" (*Ordinary People*, 30), clearly envisions her fear of identity confusion and search for identity. The difference in assertion between Beth and her son Conrad concerning the loss of their family member resulted in an emotional disconnection as Beth asserts it was "nobody's fault", in contrast to Beth's assertion, Conrad blames himself for "letting him drown". Calvin and Beth attended a social event organized by the Murray family and soon got stuck up in a conversation with their neighbours. When they ask about Conrad's medical condition, Beth replies with a certain courtesy that "He's fine, now" (*Ordinary People*, 66), but her husband Calvin replies, "There's a doctor in Evanston. He sees him twice a week" (*Ordinary People*, 68), anguished Beth. Because of that, Beth felt that Calvin committed a "violation of privacy" by displaying their family issues, which she doesn't want to converse with society. Beth remained a woman of "pride" among her social circle with her charming beauty, high-grade manners, and unblemished reputation before her marriage. Without considering Beth's sentiments, the inebriated Calvin transformed her image from a woman of "pride" into a woman of "sympathy," making Beth's home life miserable.

Beth realizes there is nothing to deal with or expect from Calvin, which allows her to grow completely hopeless day by day. Throughout the novel, it is evident that Calvin is sexually unavailable due to his drinking problems as Guest points out Calvin's behaviour as "He will not be able to sleep tonight for hours; another side effect of drinking too much" (*Ordinary People*, 71). Conrad's confession to the psychiatrist he consults "My mother is a very private person" and "We don't drive the same bus" (*Ordinary People*, 98) ensures the communication gap and emotional disconnection that occurred between Beth and Conrad. Amidst all agitations, Beth hopes Conrad is her responsibility and gives cautionary advice for quitting his swimming class, but the raged Conrad reacted hard by saying, "You never wanted to know anything I was doing, or anything I wasn't doing; you just wanted me to leave you alone! Well, I left you alone, didn't I?" (*Ordinary People*, 110). Beth is aware of Conrad's psychological struggles still his words, "Go to Europe, why don't you? Go to hell!"



(*Ordinary People*, 110), made her feel as if he was walking over her. Being a woman, Beth has a compulsion to carry the emotional burden of her dysfunctional family for the sake of society. Beth feels like an outsider; when she gets emotionally rejected by her husband Calvin, as well as her son Conrad in the Jarrett family. Beth's emotion of "love" towards her family is true, but the problem is that the family demands Beth to be an emotionally invested woman who is "not a sharer." Both Calvin and Conrad neglect her opinions to solve the family issues, as Beth suggests, "Well, what do you expect? We are a family, aren't we? And a family turns inward toward itself in grief, it doesn't go in separate directions, pulling itself apart. Like hell it doesn't. Grief is ugly. It is isolating. It is not something to be shared with others, it is something to be afraid of, to get rid of, and fast" (*Ordinary People*, 127).

Calvin does not understand Beth and her need to strive to lead a life in perfect order. Though Calvin suffers from his depression, he never wishes his marital relationship to get ruined. Indeed, Calvin tries to please, impress, and convince Beth in several ways, but all his efforts fail when he dreadfully confronts Beth after, "he lets himself drink too much" (*Ordinary People*, 234) in the Butler's living room. On the other hand, the disagreement between Beth and Conrad fluctuates on the feelings they have for each other, as an approval, Beth says about Conrad, "I am sick of talking, talking, talking about him!" (*Ordinary People*, 236). Moreover, Beth strongly argues to Calvin that Conrad's suicidal attempt is merely an intention to hurt her, as she outburst her final emotions by saying, "He made it as vicious, as sickening as he could! The blood—all that blood! Oh, I will never forgive him for it! He wanted it to kill me, too!" (*Ordinary People*, 237). From the earlier statement, it is clear that what troubles Beth more is not Buck's accident, but Conrad's suicide attempt, which makes her entangled in a state of depression, as she blames Conrad, "he tries to blackmail me" (*Ordinary People*, 238).

Beth finally declares she does not want to be a part of the Jarrett family anymore and decides to have a life that she had before marriage. The terminal decision-making process of Beth quivered the readers and critics, as a matter of controversy, many condemned her choice of abandoning her family members. Being a practical woman, the rational thinking of Beth allows her to drive an absolute solution for her domestic issues on account of the words of Judith Guest, "The only one who can help you is you" (*Ordinary People*, 55). Beth realizes the fact that no matter how much hardship she puts on to restore the happiness in the Jarrett family, all she would receive back is hopelessness and burdensome. Beth finally settles to set out with an absolute clarification to the audience stating that in terms of her role in motherhood, "Mother's don't hate their sons! I don't hate him!" (*Ordinary People*, 238), and her questions of "tell me how to be happy" (*Ordinary People*, 239) as a perfect wife, justifies her role as ideal wifeness.

In the end, Beth starts to organize the social events that she used to enjoy doing before her marriage. Beth's self-identification and loss of self-identity have insisted through her final words, "I don't know what you want from me anymore, Cal. I don't know what anybody wants from me" (*Ordinary People*, 239), which indirectly delivers the quandary of: in what way marriage could assist ideal women, and does women's freedom exist within their family circle? The ultimate actions of Beth may serve as an answer to this query because she neither divorced Calvin nor permanently discarded her family. Instead of performing the role of motherhood and wifeness in a disintegrated family, Beth merely chooses to do a role that she did before her marriage. Therefore, Beth's loss of self-identity is retrieved at the climax of the novel *Ordinary People*, where she finds herself through the way of recreating her identity of "Beth Jarrett" into a new identity as "Beth." Every woman longs for self-identity. In real life,





it seems like a dream. These are the rational points that could have happened in the minds of Beth and seeking her self-respect and identity.

### Conclusion

Therefore, at the beginning of the novel *Ordinary People*, Beth is seen as a woman through the sense of a wife to her husband Calvin and as a mother to her son Conrad. Beth has an individual point of view and her intent to portray her self-desire as Beth as a rational girl has been discussed in the article. It is customary for rational girls to recognize their emotions and they might sense others' feelings, minds and feelings too. Nevertheless, this makes Beth exclusive from others by her self-identity. It is purely by her liberty. In her sense, she feels like a new woman when she becomes Beth.

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## Cognizing the Cultural Discourses: An Analysis of Cultural Assimilation and Trauma in Kate Grenville's *The Secret River*

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### Abstract

*This article focuses on the cultural clash and the ensuing struggle between the European settlers and the Indigenous Australians as illustrated in the novel “The Secret River” by Kate Grenville. Cultural studies investigate how cultural practices and representations help a group of people create their identities. It also takes into account how various aspects of our identities interact and shape one another to produce distinctive viewpoints and experiences. During the colonisation process, European settlers frequently engaged in violent confrontations as a means of controlling and dominating Aboriginal tribes. Aboriginal communities used a variety of tactics, including violence and cultural traditions, to oppose the invasion of their territories and the destruction of their civilizations. Australian society's current dynamics are still shaped by the cultural struggle that existed between European settlers and Australian aboriginal people. To address the past and present effects of this conflict, reconciliation initiatives, land rights movements, and growing public understanding of the value of honouring and conserving aboriginal cultures are all ongoing. The Australian novelist Kate Grenville is well-known for her works that examine social issues, cultural disputes, and historical fiction. She explores timeless themes in historical contexts, frequently concentrating on Australian history, indigenous experiences and cultural identity. In her novel “The Secret River”, Kate Grenville exposes the misery and devastation inflicted on Indigenous populations by depicting in graphic detail the cultural misunderstandings and conflicts resulting from colonisation.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Clash, Identity, Aborigines, Kate Grenville, *The Secret River*.

Culture is imperative to know one's identity and self and also it is distinctive from society to society. The study of culture emphasizes the examination of subjects like colonialism, gender, racism, and power dynamics and how these affect cultural manifestations. The notion of cultural diaspora is also introduced, denoting the dispersal, migration, or dissemination of a specific culture outside of its original cultural or physical origins. It draws attention to how resilient communities react when they face displacement issues and still manage to preserve and modify their cultural heritage. The facets of culture, cultural studies, and the cultural diaspora, discuss how they shape identity, investigate diversity, and comprehend the difficulties encountered by communities in protecting their cultural legacy across migration or separation. As Bernadette states, “Cultural studies does not speak with one voice, it cannot be spoken with one voice, and I do not have one voice with which to represent it.” (365)

In Australia, there are two types of Indigenous people: Torres Strait Islanders and



Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people reside on the mainland and several offshore islands, but Torres Strait Islanders are Indigenous to the islands that cross the strait, which is located between the point of Cape York in Queensland and Papua New Guinea. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have distinct cultures despite their entwined histories. There is also a process of defining boundaries between various language groups, but not in a way that non-Aboriginal people could identify or comprehend. Australia is renowned for having distinctive wildlife and plants. Devastatingly, the year 1788 saw the entrance of Europeans. Colonisation resulted in forced assimilation, massacres, and land acquisition.

During Australia's early colonial years, the British government sent the majority of European settlers there as prisoners. On the other hand, some individuals who decided to leave their homes in Britain were known as free settlers. Without a doubt, the arrival of European settlers changed Australia's political, economic, and social systems. Native Australians suffered greatly after European settlers' arrival, losing both their land and their culture. This resulted in an extended time of trouble and violence, the effects of which may still be seen in Australia today. This country combines elements of European and Indigenous culture to create a distinctive identity and culture.

In Australian literature, Kate Grenville is a highly regarded personality who has had a significant influence on modern literary landscapes. Her collection of work explores topics rooted in Australian history, identity, and the long-lasting effects of colonisation on Indigenous communities in a nuanced manner. Grenville's novel *The Secret River* (2005) which takes place in early colonial Australia, is one of her most important literary contributions. "Grenville's novel testifies to the desperate attempt on the part of some non-Indigenous Australians to offer an apology to the Aborigines so that the much longed-for national Reconciliation may some day be possible." (Dolores, p. 87) This critically acclaimed novel tells the gripping story of William Thornhill, a prisoner attempting to make a name for himself along the Hawkesbury River while negotiating the difficulties of life after release.

In the novel, themes of conflict and cultural collide are explored as settlers struggle with issues of identity and belonging, manage complicated familial dynamics, and deal with the overwhelming force of the natural world and its surroundings. Grenville's portrayal of the people's hardships provides readers with a deeper understanding of the tensions that emerge between history and culture throughout colonialism. To investigate and value the vast array of cultures, languages, and customs that exist on a global scale, as well as the ways that social identities and power structures are created, upheld, and challenged in various cultural contexts and to provide a challenging and truthful analysis of the intricate and oftentimes tense the interactions between the European settlers and the Indigenous Australians.

*The Secret River* systematically reveals the cultural clashes, dispossession, and complicated interactions that occurred between settlers and Indigenous Australians in the early years of colonisation. Grenville's work is praised for its thorough examination of the human condition and evocative prose, which bear witness to her dedication to historical authenticity. The influence that her writings have both within and outside of Australia is proof that her creative contributions transcend national borders. Grenville is a well-read and studied author whose works provide readers with a thorough perspective on Australia's complex cultural dynamics and rich historical background. Her ability to fascinate audiences and promote a deeper knowledge of the variations that distinguish the Australian narrative has solidified her legacy as a literary icon.

The protagonist William Thornhill, a poor London waterman, was accused of stealing and deported as a convict to Australia in 1806. "*The Secret River* is a historical novel telling



the story of William Thornhill, a poor Englishman from the early 19th century who was deported and transported to New South Wales, Australia in 1806 for theft. This novel tells the story of Australia's founding and the moral choices made when Europeans colonised land that was already inhabited by Aboriginal people.” (Lisa Tran) The narrative takes place in the era of early Australian colonisation, as the protagonist struggles to establish a home on the Hawkesbury River banks while working towards his freedom. William begins his life as a prisoner, fighting for survival in the hostile prison colony. He buys a piece of land and names it Thornhill's Point with the hope of living a better life. William's yearning for land and the reality that it is already inhabited by the native Dharug people constitutes the central conflict of the book. William disregards their existence and rights in claiming the land, which sets off a terrible chain of events. “There were no signs that the blacks felt that the place belonged to them. They had no fences that said this is mine. No house that said, this is our home. There were no fields or flocks that said, we have put the labour of our hands into this place.” (*The Secret River*, 93)

The specifics of colonisation, the collision of cultures, and the effects on the native people as well as the settlers explicitly are depicted in the novel. Further, it explores issues of authority, uprooting, and the moral ramifications of annexing territory that is inhabited by people who have strong ties to the area. The story raises important questions about historical accountability and the legacy of colonial narratives.

The settlers in *The Secret River* experience a variety of manifestations of cultural diaspora, which has an impact on their identities and daily lives. William Thornhill and the other settlers are uprooted from their home of England and find themselves in a very different country with strange customs, scenery, and threats. This disconnection from their usual surroundings creates a feeling of longing and alienation. The hardships of life as a prisoner and the battle to survive in a foreign country push the immigrants to adjust and create new identities influenced by their time spent in Australia. William's increasing bond with the land and his ambivalent acceptance of some unpleasant truths are indications of this.

Grenville depicts the cultural diaspora in a way that goes beyond simple adversity. It explores the moral and psychological fallout from relocation, showing how settlers struggle to define themselves and face the ethical costs of their actions in a foreign and strange area. Grenville places more emphasis on the lasting impacts of colonisation than it does on providing a tidy "ending." By demonstrating the brutality and dispossession inflicted on the Aboriginal people, she exposes the challenges and the colonial myth of peaceful settlement. Shweta Meena points out,

**The novel portrays the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by both the colonizers and the colonized, shedding light on the enduring impact of these historical events. Through its narrative, the text explores how memory shapes personal and collective identities, reflecting on the ways in which past conflicts continue to influence the present. The sacredness of land and culture for the Indigenous people stands in stark contrast to the settlers' view of the land as a resource to be exploited. This tension is central to the novel's portrayal of colonial conflict, highlighting the deep-seated misunderstandings and cultural clashes that underpin the violence. (P. 124)**

There are still unresolved questions regarding justice, guilt, and both communities' futures after the conclusion. While the protagonist's family in Kate Grenville's book *The Secret River* exhibits some resilience, the book does not specifically address the topic. The Thornhill family, who have settled in the difficult Australian bush, exhibits perseverance by enduring



hardship, overcoming loneliness, and battling to build a house. Despite going through tragedy, grief, and interactions with the Indigenous population, they make an effort to move past their emotional struggles and start afresh. The family demonstrates resilience in adjusting to changing circumstances while navigating moral challenges and cultural developments. Despite the challenges faced in the book, William Thornhill's unwavering desire to provide a better future for his family acts as a motivator and demonstrates perseverance. "Ain't nothing in this world just for the taking ... A man got to pay a fair price for taking. Matter of give a little, take a little." (*The Secret River* 104)

The interaction between European settlers and aboriginal people in *The Secret River* illustrates a deep and widespread lack of mutual understanding and efficient communication between these two very different cultures. Because of this communication gap, there is often misinterpretation of each other's behaviours and intentions, which feeds a vicious cycle of mistrust and hatred. Different views on land—Aboriginal people regard it as sacred, while settlers see it as a commodity for personal gain—exacerbate this. Displacement, the loss of ancestral lands, and the severe effects of newly acquired diseases are all results of this conflict and add to the decline of the Indigenous way of life. Amudha says;

**For example, the aborigine had culture in which individual competition, individual striving, individual ownership were not part of their worldview, and they were unable to understand the way settlers marked out a bit of land for themselves individually, put a fence around it and called it theirs. The settlers, likewise, just could not understand that the Aborigines had just as a great sense of territory as they themselves did, but they didn't need to build fence of a house or a road to have that. So, it was a tragic inability to communicate across a gulf of culture. (p. 41)**

The ensuing violence is a reflection of larger historical struggles between Indigenous peoples and colonisers. "It would go on sighing and breathing and being itself after he had gone, the land lapping on and on, watching, waiting, getting on with its own life" (*The Secret River* 210).

Because of a mentality derived from their cultural and economic upbringings, European colonists saw land as a resource that could be possessed and developed for private benefit. Because the settlers want to claim sovereignty over the land, which the Aboriginal people believe to be their ancestral home, this viewpoint frequently results in conflicts with the Indigenous inhabitants. The land is holy to the Aboriginal people, who regard it as an integral part of their identity and with strong spiritual and cultural ties. For them, land is an essential component of their existence rather than just a resource that can be purchased or sold. The conflict between the Aboriginal people's strong connection to their native territory and the settlers' attempts to acquire and farm the land is exacerbated by this striking divergence in worldviews.

The Indigenous way of life has been severely and permanently impacted by the introduction of European diseases, the loss of cultural practices, and the relocation from ancestral grounds. The incursion of settlers causes social systems to be upset, cultural customs to be undermined, and communities to be split apart, all of which contributed to the breakdown of the Aboriginal way of their own life which was a new impact. In this environment of miscommunication and cultural collision, violent incidents tragically occur. Dolores comments; "The merit of novels like *The Secret River* lies in their attempt to make non-Indigenous readers aware of the need to offer an apology to the Indigenous Australians so that a better and fairer future might some day be possible in the nation." (p.





102) As both settlers and Aboriginal people participate in acts of assault and revenge, conflicts intensify, mirroring a larger historical pattern of violence between Indigenous people and colonisers.

This novel highlights Grenville's contribution to Australian literature and her participation in bringing attention to the ongoing problems and historical complexity of Indigenous communities. Martin Staniforth asserts;

**Despite Grenville's attempts to reframe the colonial discourse, her focus on the convict domestic, far from destabilising and undermining traditional settler narratives, helps to reinforce them. Her normalising of the values displayed by the Thornhills' bark hut, with its implications for the depiction of settler violence; her representation of settler domestic spaces as essentially Australian buildings that belong to the land; her depiction of the Aboriginal domestic as a primitive but outmoded version of the settler house; and her silencing of Sal and Sarah as they retreat from their recognition of the violence on which their prosperity is founded, all serve to reinscribe rather than rewrite the narratives of white legitimacy, and in doing so undercut Grenville's commitment to the work of reconciliation. (p. 9-10)**

It implies that Grenville's writings are international in scope, acting as a potent story that dispels colonial illusions and ignites debates about historical responsibility, fairness, and the cohabitation of various cultural traditions in Australia. The study finds that *The Secret River* is a prism through which to examine these intricate concerns, tying together the themes of cultural studies, cultural diaspora, and the effects of colonisation. It emphasises how crucial literature is for influencing how we interpret the past, encouraging discussion, and upending popular narratives.

Kate Grenville makes a strong case for the significance of appreciating and comprehending the diversity of cultures within human civilizations by highlighting how different cultural identities influence people's perceptions of who they are and where they fit in. It emphasises how closely cultural studies are related to traditional fields of study, highlighting the necessity of incorporating cultural viewpoints into a range of academic fields. It fosters an understanding of how communities can adapt and preserve their cultural heritage in the face of adversity. Kate Grenville draws attention to the conflict that existed in Australia's past between Indigenous Australians and British colonists.

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## Feminism in South Asian Literature

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### Abstract

*Feminism in South Asian literature is a modern trend that portrays the status and life of women in a society of close cultures. Feminist literature analyzes the social hierarchies and gender norms and redefines the present space for women in both individual and social realms. The essay highlights the state, diversity and intricacies of feminist voices in select South Asian literature from the legendary times to the present. Feminism is deeply rooted in the socio-political and cultural contexts of any region. South Asian literature portrays the state of women from the cultural and political point of view. It represents the dissimilar women's voices that suffer from male hegemony. The traditional gender roles and social norms of women are different and women have individuality in the past and the present full of problems. The major works from ancient epics to modern narratives of South Asian literature offer a clear stand for feminist discourse. The South Asian feminist literature analyzes systemic inequalities of women's roles in society both culturally and politically. Select authors like Mahasweta Devi, Ismat Chughtai, Taslima Nasrin and Bama were chosen for study. This article explores the feminist voice as seen in select South Asian writers by tracing their progress from traditional narratives to contemporary expressions.*

**Keywords:** Feminism, South Asian Literature, Gender, Patriarchy, Social Transformation.

### Introduction

Feminism in South Asian literature is deeply rooted in the socio-political and cultural aspects of the region. The representation of the voices of women from South Asian backgrounds and their critical situations is a conventional narrative of the present writing and offers a critique of societal norms. From historical epics of India like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, where women characters came across complicated moral and social landscapes. South Asian literature gives a rich idea for feminist discourse. The feminist topics of South Asian literature have gone through a vast evolution by reflecting the socio-cultural, political, and historic transformations. From early mythological and classical texts to current narratives, these topics have traversed various paths of life by exploring the complexities of gender, identity and resistance. South Asian literature serves as a reflection of social norms offers a critique of patriarchy and acts as an envisioning opportunity for women. The literary journey of feminism in this context is both an account of battle and spirit. The earliest South Asian literature, such as the *Mahabharata* and Tamil epics *Kamba Ramayana* and *Silappadikaram* depicted women as complicated figures in the space of ethical and social challenges. The characters Draupadi, Sita and Kannagi are examples of embodied power, justice and sacrifice, even though they suffer the confines of patriarchal expectations. Venkata Naresh Burla & Ramakrishnan points out that,





***Silappadikaram* holds a significant place in popular culture, with film adaptations based on its content. Additionally, it has attained spiritual and religious significance among the people, with Kannagi being deified and worshipped in many parts of South India. However, the text possesses contextual relevance from a performance standpoint, necessitating an in-depth exploration of its contemporary relevance in folk and modern theatre. This discussion aims to initiate further exploration in this direction.**

While those narratives were not explicitly feminist, they sparked discussions about gender dynamics and women. Similarly, all through the Sangam works poets like Auvaiyar and Andal asserted their voices through expressions of devotion, love, and justice. Even though grounded in non-secular and cultural traditions, their works subtly challenged the limitations imposed on women at those times.

The colonial state marked the emergence of a greater consciousness of feminist discourse in South Asian literature. By using the impact of social reforms, it advocates women's rights and justice. Writers like Auvaiyar critiqued the patriarchal war spirit and explored the moral planes of women's inner worlds in the Sangam Period. Auvaiyar's poetry portrays equality and women's emancipation in Tamil Nadu 2500 years back. But after a long time of suppression of women in various forms, there was no writing by the women in the Indian subcontinent. In the post-colonial period of the Indian subcontinent, there has been a rise of ambitious narratives which predicted a feminist possibility where feminism reclaimed the restrictions imposed by male dominations in various forms with the aid of society. Postcolonial South Asian literature witnessed an expression of feminist voices addressing the issues of identity crisis, oppression, and liberation. Female authors like Mahasweta Devi, Ismat Chughtai, Taslima Nasrin and Bama opened new grounds with works of their times that explored the psychic states of women and portrayed the struggles of women. Chughtai's *Lihaaf* challenged societal taboos with the help of women self related problems. Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* probed the experiences of marginalized women by intertwining feminist concerns with issues of class and caste oppression. Lipika Kamra writes about the book *South Asian Feminisms* as **"The novelty of this volume lies in its attempt to deal with the specificity and diversity of feminist knowledge in the South Asian region, while also entering into a dialogue with feminist theory and practice elsewhere."** (p. 474) The Tamil author Bama delivered the crossroads of lower strata people into awareness by exploring the particular struggles of Dalit women who are addressing gender oppression within particular cultural contexts of Tamil Nadu. Bama's *Karukku* highlighted the intersection of caste and gender by portraying the demanding situations confronted with the aid of Dalit Christian girls and women. The narrative highlights the range of women's worst experiences in a global light on the intersections of gender, culture and stereotypes. Writers like Taslima Nasrin have taken a greater challenging method by critiquing the societal bigotry and religious oppression in works like *Lajja*.

**Taslima Nasreen has been appropriated alternately as a symbol of feminist consciousness and as a blasphemer by vested groups in South Asia. Taslima Nasreen is a Bangladeshi feminist writer who has lived in exile since 1994.<sup>1</sup> In telling the Taslima story, I am struck by the absence of feminist sympathy for her and her literary works in Bangladesh, and by the adulation for Taslima as a writer and feminist among Indians whom I encountered. (Karim)**

The modern feminist literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries challenges the deep-rooted cultural norms and breaking the taboos. The evolution of feminist subject matters in



South Asian literature reflects a profound engagement with social changes and constant inequalities. Across centuries, feminist writers have critiqued patriarchy, explored the connection between culture and religion and celebrated women's power. These issues have reshaped the cultural narratives and also inspired the social movements advocating for gender equality, social inclusion and equality in all spheres. From the epics to contemporary narratives, South Asian literature has furnished a powerful platform for feminist expression by amplifying marginalized voices and fosters a vision of a great future. Feminist literature maintains an undertaking to disrupt and redefine the limits of culture.

### **Postcolonial and Contemporary Feminist Literature**

Postcolonial South Asian literature witnessed the rise of feminist authors who addressed topics of identity crisis, social oppression and liberation of women from stereotypic norms. From India, Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf*, Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* and Bama's *Karukku* offer modern feminist views by addressing caste and gender oppression in patriarchal societies. Indeed, postcolonial and contemporary South Asian feminist literature represents a dynamic shift in the portrayal of gender identity and struggle by reflecting the complexities of women's lives within family and society. By emerging from the socio-political landscape of independent South Asia from colonialism, these works critique the patriarchal system and the inequalities. Feminist literature in this period has expanded to consist of diverse voices providing nuanced narratives of empowerment and transformation with a strong awareness of the personal and collective struggles of women.

In postcolonial times, feminist literature has become a platform to talk about the systemic inequalities perpetuated in colonial times by the conventional patriarchal society. The writers like Ismat Chughtai and Mahasweta Devi played an essential position in the development of women's writing. Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* became a groundbreaking work that addressed the issues of feminine gender and difficult societal norms that tamper the lives of women.

**In 1941, famed Urdu writer Ismat Chughtai wrote *Lihaaf (The Quilt)*, a short story that explored the possibility of a relationship between two women and the world of Urdu literature exploded. Chughtai was tried for obscenity and the popularity – and unpopularity – that *Lihaaf* managed to gain obscured many of her other brilliant works. Her uncensored look at much of society's hidden flaws and taboos often earned her and her work the title of being revolutionary, and seven decades later, she's still considered just as revolutionary as she was back then? But if the position of her work hasn't changed in our society, does that mean that our social values and norms are the same as they were 70 years ago, and are we to assume that no progress has been made since then? (Anmol Irfan)** Chughtai's fearless storytelling laid the foundation for addressing issues often taking religious taboos in South Asian societies. Similarly, Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* portrays the plight of marginalized women by intertwining feminist worries with the struggles of tribal and marginalized communities. Sreekala affirms that,

**According to Valmiki it is the duty of a woman to lead a society, a country to the path of Dharmam. Sita's sacrifice to go to forest with Rama offered value of marital bond. Rama and Sita set the ideal of conjugal love. Kaikeyi's selfishness lead to the anguished death of her husband. It taught us to safe guard ourselves from selfishness. The most important shloka in Ayodhyakandam, "Raamam dashartham viddhi, maamvidhi janakathmajaam, ayodhyam attviim viddhi gachchha tat yathasukham". Here Sumitra advised Laxmana to look upon Rama**



**as Dashratha, Sita as Sumitra and forest as Ayodhya and depart happily. Noble mothers like her are needed today. Almost all the female characters of the Ramayana are portrayed as the ones who speak boldly and stand firm on the path of Dharma. In all the kingdoms, whether it is vanara's or rakshasa's, it is seen that usually men follow the path of adharmam. But here all these female characters tried their best to bring their men back to the path of Dharmam. (p. 232)**

Her narratives highlighted the relationship between gender, maltreatment and caste oppression by supplying a criticism of the systematic exploitation of basic women's rights. Tamil feminist literature also enriched this period and brought attention to the specific gender studies of women in specific cultural and social contexts. The Tamil writer Bama explored the interconnection of caste and gender by portraying the struggles of Dalit girls and women and address the inequalities imposed upon them. Bama's *Karukku* is an influential work that delves into the challenges faced by Dalit Christian girls. It shows the mixing of narratives with a sharp criticism of the social hierarchies. Her stories focus on the diffused varieties of resistance and self-discovery in women's lives by portraying their internal worlds with excellent sensitivity.

The contemporary South Asian feminist literature keeps to evolve and incorporate global feminist discourses even deeply rooted in regional realities. Authors like Taslima Nasrin from Bangladesh have taken formidable stances towards social and religious oppression. Nasrin's *Lajja* criticizes religious bigotry and the marginalization of girls in a conservative set-up. Saleem Dhobi writes,

**Nasrin has only pointed out the problems within Islam and has presented Islam as Western people love to receive it. Despite Hasan's remarks on Nasrin, she is condemned by the people who think that she has hurt Muslims' feelings and has insulted the principles of Islam. (216)**

Her work confronts the deep patriarchal norms and advocates justice and equality for women. Contemporary feminist literature has broadened its thematic scope by addressing problems such as sexual violence, mental fitness, and self-identity. The feminist literary culture in postcolonial and modern day South Asia displays an expanding discourse that supports the marginalized voices and redefines the positive role of women in society. By giving scope to the non-public and political struggles, these writers offer a profound exploration of positive spirit and wish to reshape the cultural identity for an impartial future.

South Asian feminist literature has evolved over centuries and addresses the complexities of gender, identification and familial dynamics inside various socio-political landscapes. These works are thematically rich and multi-layered. They spotlight the unique struggles of women. From classical texts to modern writings, numerous issues are routine and have emerged to define the feminist discourse in South Asian literature. A principal problem discussed in South Asian feminist literature is the account of the patriarchal system that dictates women's lives. Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja* and Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* reveal the systemic oppression women face under the name of familial, social and political levels. These narratives depict the pervasive nature of patriarchy and its effect on women's sovereignty. Then, the intersection of caste, religion and gender is another dominant subject in South Asian feminist literature. Bama's *Karukku* is a pioneering exploration of the intersection of caste and gender by depicting the daily struggles of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. Similarly, the stories address the worst experiences of women negotiating their identities within patriarchal and caste-based societies. Bama's work highlights how oppression intersects and



creates specific challenges for marginalized women. Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* portrays familial relationships and tackles the complexities of gender-related problems. These works reclaim the narratives of preference and portray them as necessary factors for the lives and identity of women. South Asian feminist literature also amplifies the voices of Dalit women. Bama's works bring interest to the difficult situations faced by Dalit women. She articulated the voice of those frequently silenced and by these narratives, a development has been propagated for the scope of feminist discourse. Then, these feminist narratives address the prevalence of violence towards women such as home abuse, sexual violence and country or religious violence. These works look at the shocking effects of sexual violence within caste hegemony. For example, Nasrin's *Lajja* evaluates societal complicity in gender-based violence through religious stereotypes. The topic of women-centric problems and communal violence also emerges as a powerful motif in feminist literature. In many works, women find strength and empowerment through their connections with each other under patriarchal domination. This subject matter is also obvious in the works wherein the relationship of women frequently acts as a source of resistance and restoration of the glorious past. Probably, Feminist writers regularly reinterpret the conventional myths and epics from a feminist perspective and reclaim the testimonies of the women characters. Mahasweta Devi's retelling of Draupadi is an outstanding example wherein the mythological figures are reimagined as pioneers of resistance against male domination. Dhan Singh states,

**Women in the Mahabharata played a variety of roles, ranging from queens and princesses to servants and prostitutes. While the status of women varied depending on their social class and family background, there are several examples of women who held positions of power and influence. One of the most famous examples is Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava brothers. Draupadi was a skilled diplomat and strategist, and she played a key role in the events leading up to the Kurukshetra War. Another powerful woman was Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, who was known for her wisdom and foresight. (236)**

These works portray the patriarchal interpretations of ancient texts by offering new perspectives on familiar tales. The main issues in South Asian feminist literature mirror the various perspectives of evolving discourse on gender, identity and justice. By questioning the patriarchal norms, inequality and yearning for freedom, these works have contributed to a broader view of feminism in South Asia. They did not simply amplify the marginalized voices but also encouraged female dialogue and bold exchange of freedom for an inclusive society. Hence, South Asian feminist literature is still a powerful force for social transformation and provides testimonies of resistance and a longing for freedom in all spheres.

### **Culture and Social Responsibility**

South Asian feminist literature plays a transcendental position in the cultural and social aspects of the region. It serves as an important approach to look at and shatter the entrenched patriarchal structures that govern society in the wrong way. The rich and various traditions of South Asia intersect with cultural background and push for progressive social trade. By considering the themes of gender equality, identification and justice, the feminist writers criticize societal norms and evoke an experience of social response that transcends literature. South Asian culture deeply influences faith and tradition and regularly assigns inflexible roles to women. Feminist literature dislocates the traditional narratives by opposing the social norms and envisioning a greater future for women. By the reinterpretation of myths, epics, and folk traditions, feminist writers reclaim women's nullified voices. For



example, Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* revisits the ancient texts in a modern view and portrays the female characters as symbols of resistance and empowerment. Such works not only celebrate the spirit of women but also undertake the cultural narratives that have traditionally sustained patriarchal norms. The social responsibility of feminist literature in South Asia lies in the increase of marginalized voices and foster essential criticism of who oppresses feminine gender. It also addresses the systemic injustices like caste discrimination, religious intolerance and monetary inequality that unreasonably affect women. Bama's *Karukku* is a touching exploration of the atrocities of caste and gender on the lives of Dalit women. Equally, Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* boldly confronts social taboos that surround women in the name of religion and male domination. They urge the readers to impeach these non-ethical codes that corrupt women's liberty. These works give broader information and encourage society to overcome the interconnected forms of oppression that make women's lives more tragic.

This type of literature highlights the need for collective social obligation in addressing the troubles that consist of gender-based violence and overcome them. Taslima Nasrin analyzes the social complications in perpetuating domestic violence towards women. She advocates for sustainable reform as a great responsibility to save humanity. Nasrin exposes the outcomes of religious and cultural atrocities on women's lives and urges the religious communities to render equality and justice to women. So, these narratives inspire activism and bridge the gap between literature and concrete social effects. In present days, feminist literature of South Asia extends its impact by addressing the demanding situations of globalization and diaspora. By depicting the struggles of women in following dual cultural expectations, these works emphasize the importance of cultural empathy and comprehensiveness in a globalized world. They call for a shared social responsibility to support marginalized voices in South Asia and applicable to the suffering women all over the world. Moreover, feminist literature reshapes the cultural norms to foster solidarity and network among women. These works depict women who find strength and guidance in their relationships with each other to challenge the troublesome techniques of patriarchal hegemony. They also emphasize the energy of collective work and mutual care as the tools of social transformation for women. So, South Asian feminist literature is not merely a reflection of the individual's cultural and social realities but a lively participant in rewrite the stereotypic norms created by men to subjugate women. Through the new code of feminist writing, these writers amplify the marginalized voices and advocate justice and equality. It emphasizes the connection of literature, tradition and social responsibility to the readers. It may also evoke the readers to support and strive for a more inclusive society. Then, it reinforces the function of literature as a catalyst for cultural and social exchange. Through its profound engagement with societal problems, South Asian feminist literature continues to serve as a decisive force for better transformation and empowerment of women.

### **Conclusion**

The literary exploration of feminism in South Asia has had far-fetched propositions. It has contributed to social justice and advocated gender equality, stimulated legal reforms and redefined cultural norms that could transform women's roles. By amplifying the marginalized voices, feminist literature has created a space for the freedom of women in all phases of life, inclusion in all activities and sustainable empowerment. So, Feminist literature of South Asia has motivated gender equality and legal reforms. It has challenged the stereotypic cultural norms and fostered inclusive narratives by contributing eminent works that point out social transformation. Feminism in South Asian literature also displays a dynamic and evolving





discourse of the postcolonial women who did not lay dormant but were aggressive against any atrocity done against them. From the glimpses of the historic epics to present-day narratives, this select literary work challenges the bigoted gender norms and assures equality and celebrates the liberty of women. These South Asian women writers portray tales of social atrocities and struggles unlocked on women in the name of culture, religion and political conditions. Nevertheless, they demand gender equality, celebrate liberty and envision a bright future for women by condemning the stereotypic norms that hinder women's development.

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## Poem

### Vermilion

V. Bhavya Shree  
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Vermilion  
I don't believe in vermilion  
She said ;  
But I do ...  
Mine was rigid.

Stockholm syndrome,  
They burst into laughter.

Still I was  
Cool as a cucumber,  
For I believe in my folklore  
And heritage,  
Moreover  
For me it is 'he'  
A reminder of my nuptial bliss and nuptial vows.  
(A jubilant face)

Are you a newly wed?  
Yea I am.  
(excited voice)

'It met with pearl of laughter.'

Why are you laughing?  
A pure query...  
again pearl of laughters left.

Mark my words;  
This vermilion remains  
Of my nuptial bliss and vows.

My foot.....  
Indistinctive voices of frustrated faces  
With frustrated vermilion,  
Hold on their forehead  
A reminder of their disappointed nuptial bliss and vows....



### Glossary

1. Jubilant - feeling or expressing great happiness and triumph, elated
2. Nuptial - marital, wedded
3. Pearl of laughter - a burst of laughter
4. Stockholm syndrome - a coping mechanism for a captive or abusive situation
5. Vermilion - a red pigment and colour used by married women in India (sindoor)

### Introduction of the Author

V. Bhavya Shree is a poet and teacher born in the beautiful village of Paravadukkam in Kasargod district. Following graduation and teacher training, she decided to pursue a career as an English language and literature teacher. She hopes and longs for the readers to have a deeper grasp of Marginalised sections and therefore, focused on herself as a bilingual poet of social and personal realism in minimalist poetry. Two of her realistic poems, "Funeral" and "Labour Room," were published in the online journal Holistic Pine, with the latter winning the "Readers Choice Award." Also featured as one of the five inspiring women shaping the literary landscape in holistic pine. She has marked her excellency by authoring poems in both English and Malayalam, which have been published on her blog <http://bhavyabharathii.blogspot.com> She is the daughter of Mr. Vasudevan Nambiar and Bharathi M. She is married to Mr. A. Krishna Kumar and they have a kid as well.

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## Poem

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## Introduction by the Author

*The poems are about the climate crisis and the ongoing impact of climate on sentient beings, humans and life at large. Water is an elixir of life but we have been polluting it without fail. The poems are ringing the alarm bell about the lurking danger. They talk about how our inventions are the cause of our destruction. They are about how media highlights the world's glam and fame and completely sidelines the cause and effect of the environment at large.*

## Water

Life, elixir, essence  
Patience, persistence  
Precious  
Water

71 % of the earth  
60 % of the body  
1 % to drink  
50 % wastage  
0.003 % left

Water  
No water, no life  
No sight of delight  
No earth, no we

We are all water.  
Water is our link.  
Water is our soul.

Fresh water, salt water,  
Hard water, soft water,  
Black water, grey water,  
Spring water, tap water,  
Distilled water, well water,  
Rain water, ground water...

Water, water nowhere, nor a drop to drink.  
Water gives life,  
Water inhabits lives.

Water

**Dr. Pulkita Anand**



## Because we have invented plastic...

*Garbage is what remains when the good, fruitful, valuable, nourishing, and useful has been taken. –John Scanlan*

Because we have invented plastic...  
Because we want to pollute the river....  
Because we want to clog water....  
Because we want to choke the gutter....  
Because we can't decompose it....  
Because we want to pollute the air....  
Because we want to poison animals...  
Because we want to degrade the land...  
Because we want to create slime....  
Because we want to have cancer...  
Because we want to eat venom....  
Because we want to boil the earth....  
Because we want holes in the ozone....  
Because we want to increase the temperature....  
Because we want the earth to decay....

**Dr. Pulkita Anand**

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