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Editors'-in-Chief Message

Literary Druid is an online Peer-reviewed International Journal of English Language and Literature which is committed to academic research, welcomes scholars and students all over the world who to advance their status of academic career and society by their ideas. The journal welcomes publications of quality papers on research and other mentioned forms in English Language and Literature

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 Volume 7, Issue 4, October 2025 Issue contributed by the academicians and research Scholars of the literary field.

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

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Selectional Restrictions as a Semantic Problem for a Second Language Learner in the Generation of Igbo Sentences

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Abstract

This paper examines selectional restrictions as a major semantic challenge faced by second language learners in generating grammatically and meaningfully acceptable Igbo sentences. Selectional restrictions refer to the semantic constraints that govern which lexical items can co-occur within a syntactic structure. While learners of Igbo as a second language may master the grammatical rules, they often violate semantic compatibility between verbs and their complements, resulting in semantically odd expressions. The study adopts a descriptive approach to analyse examples of selectional restriction violations in the Igbo language. Findings reveal that second language learners' errors stem from inadequate semantic awareness, first language interference, and insufficient exposure to native Igbo usage. The study recommends pedagogical emphasis on meaning relations and contextual learning to enhance semantic competence in the second language acquisition of Igbo.

Keywords: Selectional Restrictions, Semantics, Second Language Learning, Sentence Generation, Meaning Compatibility.

1. Introduction

Language learning entails more than acquiring grammatical competence; it involves understanding how words combine meaningfully in context. In Igbo, words co-occur according to semantic rules that specify compatible combinations. This semantic constraint, known as selectional restriction, determines the acceptability of sentences. For instance, while a native Igbo speaker naturally says *Nwoke ah*n *riri an*n (The man ate meat), a second language learner might erroneously say *Nwoke ah*n *n*n*r*n *an*n (The man heard meat), which is grammatically correct but semantically ill-formed.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Second language learners of Igbo frequently violate selectional restrictions because they focus primarily on grammatical correctness without adequate understanding of semantic appropriateness. This leads to expressions that lack semantic coherence or sound unnatural to native speakers. Such semantic deviations hinder effective communication and distort intended meanings.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate selectional restriction as a semantic problem among second language learners in generating Igbo sentences. The specific objectives are:

a. To identify common selectional restriction violations in Igbo sentences produced by second language learners;
b. To analyse the semantic causes of these violations;
c. To examine the communicative implications of selectional restriction errors, and

    d.   To recommend pedagogical strategies for improving learners' semantic competence.

1.3 Research Questions

    a.   What types of selectional restriction violations are common among second language learners of Igbo? What semantic factors cause these violations?

    b.   How do these violations affect the naturalness and intelligibility of Igbo sentences?

    c.   What instructional approaches can help minimise these errors?

2. Literature Review

Selectional restrictions are semantic constraints on how words combine based on meaning features (Katz & Fodor, 1963). They define which lexical items can occur together in a syntactic structure. For example, in English, *drink* selects [+liquid] nouns, while *eat* selects [+edible] nouns. Similarly, in Igbo, the verb *rie* (eat) requires objects with the semantic feature [+edible]. (Uwasamba, 2022). Hence, *rie an*n (eat meat) is acceptable, but *rie akwa* (eat cloth) violates selectional restrictions. Various scholars such as Emenanjo (1978), Nwachukwu (1983), Okeke (2019), and Uwasamba (2024) (a) have analysed verb complementation and semantic constraints in Igbo syntax. Their works establish that while grammar governs sentence formation, semantics ensures meaningfulness.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Generative Semantic Theory (Katz & Fodor, 1963) and Componential Analysis. Generative Semantics posits that meaning is generated from deep structures and that each lexical item carries inherent selectional features determining its semantic compatibility within a sentence. Componential Analysis explains meaning in terms of semantic features such as [+animate], [+edible], and [+liquid]. Violating these leads to semantic anomalies.

4. Research Methods

The study adopts a descriptive qualitative design to analyse naturally occurring errors in Igbo sentences produced by second language learners. Data were collected from twenty (20) students learning Igbo as a second language. Their oral and written outputs were analysed using componential analysis to identify selectional restriction violations and semantic mismatches.

5. Data Analysis and Presentation

The lexical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, Adverbs and prepositions are assigned heads in their phrases (Uwasomba, 2023, p. 130). The verb 'ri' *eat* selects the NP as its complement. The data selected for this research show that verbs have strong inherent complements with their NPS. The strict selectional rules in Igbo are rooted right from the deep structures level of the language. The lexicon of each language is scattered in the internal dictionary of every native speaker of that language. The native speaker who knows his or her language naturally selects the words and combines them semantically and syntactically in an utterance.

The listener who knows his or her language is in a position to accept or reject what he or she hears. This is applicable in all languages of the world. The inherent semantics complements in Igbo are determined by the sub-categorisation of the verb for the NP complement (Uwasomba, 2024 (a).

A learner of Igbo finds it difficult to select different words that can go together with a particular verb. The wrong selection of lexical items in the formation of Igbo sentences renders the sentences ungrammatical.

Examples of violations include:

    1. **O n*nr*n nri ah*u (He drank the food) instead of

2. *O riri nri ah***u (He ate the food);**
3. ****O kporo akwa ah***u *mmiri* **(He called the cloth water) instead of**
4. *O sachara akwa ah***u***' mmiri* **(He washed the cloth in water); and**
5. ****Anu ahu juru o***ku **(The meat rejected fire) instead of**
6. *Anu ahu j***u***ru oyi* **(The meat became cold).**
7. O riri ji   'He ate yam'.
8. Chikwe gburu ewu ahu.   'Chikwe killed the goat'.
9. *O gburu oche ahu.   *He killed the chair'.
10. O zutara azu.   'He bought fish'.
11. *O zutara ugwu.   *'He bought mountain'.
12. *O zutara Osimiri.   *'He bought sea'.

Mountain, *sea, valley*, are not marketable; they are deviant. A second language learner does not know how to combine the NPS for meaningful sentences

      -ri   **rie eat**   ➡   **[edible]**
      -gbu   **gbuo kill** ➡ **-[+animate]**
      -zuta **buy**   ➡   **[+marketable]**

    These errors arise from first language interference and poor understanding of semantic compatibility.

Tree Diagrams

Figure 1
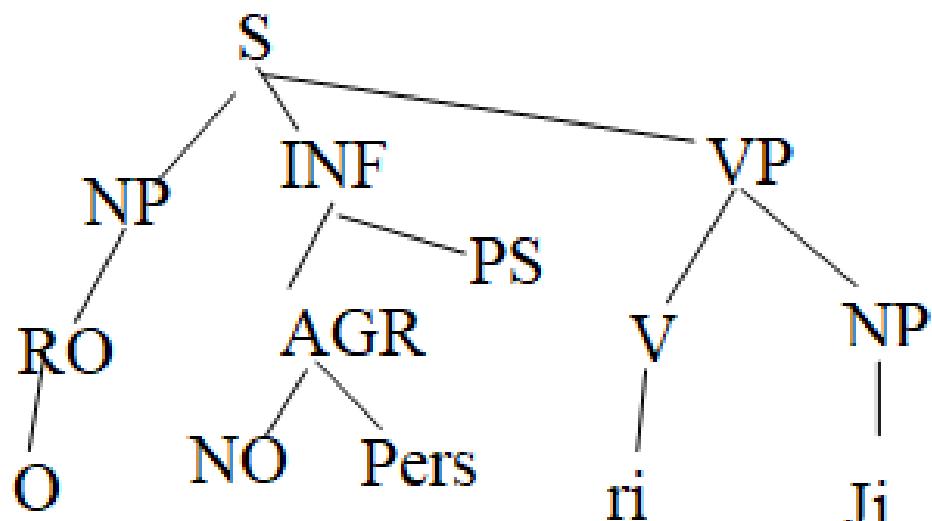
1. O riri ji (Igbo)
He ate yam (English)

Figure 2
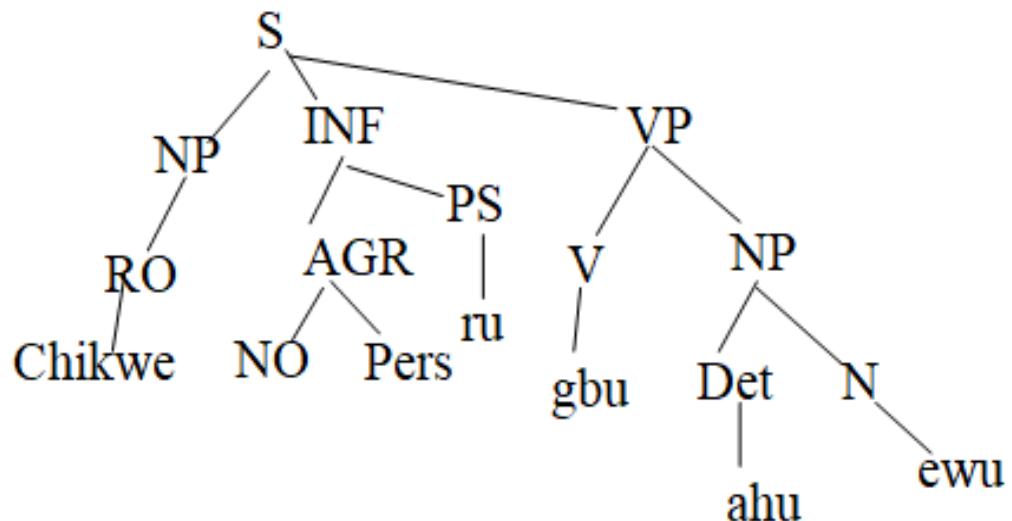
1. Chikwe gburu ewu ahu. (Igbo)
Chikwe killed a goat. (English)

Figure 3
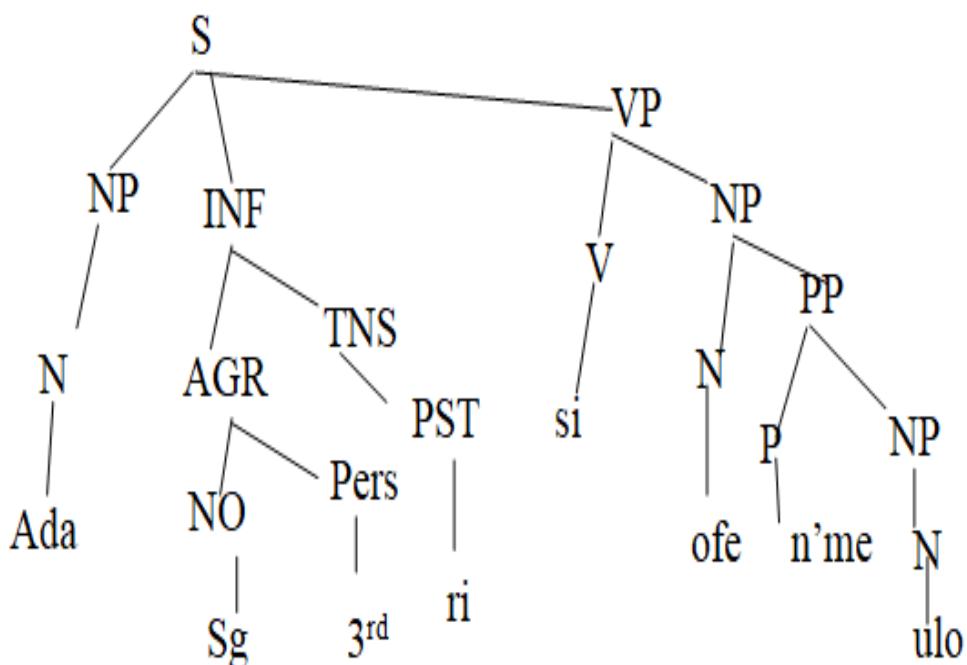
2. Ada Siri Ofe n'ime Ulo. (Igbo)
Ada cooked soup inside the house. (English)

6. Conclusion

Selectional restrictions are an integral part of semantic competence in Igbo. Second language learners often violate these restrictions, resulting in semantically ill-formed sentences. Teachers should incorporate semantic drills and contextual learning to develop learners' awareness of word compatibility and meaning relations. A second language learner of Igbo has difficulty in selecting nouns for complementation. He transfers the knowledge he has in English to Igbo. The determiner in English, as in 'the goat', turns to 'ewu ahu' in Igbo. In English, the determiner comes first before the noun, while in Igbo, the noun comes first before the determiner. The word order arrangement comes into play for a second-language learner. Pedagogically, second language learners should first understand the word order arrangement of the particular language in question. Igbo has SVO (Subject- Verb- Object) word order arrangement just like English, but there are some deviations in the placement of words. The selectional restriction in Igbo contributes to grammaticality in the language.

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Abbreviations

ASP	Aspect
Conj	Conjunction
CP	Complimentizer
ISG	First person singular
2SG	Second person Singular

3SG	Third person singular
GB	Government and binding
NP	Noun phrase
PERF	Perfective
POS	Possessive
PST	Past tense
PT	Present tense
PP	Prepositional phrase
I	Inflection
INFL	Inflection phrase
VP	Verb Phrase

Biographical data

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Author (s) Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.

A Theoretical Analysis of Speech Acts in Political Speeches; A Review of Governor Douye Diri's Selected Speeches

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Abstract

Speechmaking has become an essential component of political leadership and governance across the world, serving as a tool for persuasion, mobilisation, and political communication. This study critically examines the linguistic and rhetorical features of selected political speeches of Governor DouyeDiri of Bayelsa State, Nigeria, with the aim of uncovering the unique stylistic and discursive strategies embedded in his political discourse. Despite the prominence of political speech analysis in Nigeria, little attention has been given to Governor Diri's oratorical style, hence the need for this investigation. The study employs textual analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its methodological frameworks, focusing on the linguistic structures, rhetorical devices, and persuasive techniques used in the governor's speeches during major political events such as inaugurations, policy declarations, and state addresses. The analysis explores rhetorical tools such as metaphor, metonymy, analogy, repetition, contrastive pairs, and call to action, as well as broader communicative strategies including theatricality, ideology, aggression, and power relations in political communication. Drawing insights from speech act theory, the research further examines how Governor Diri's use of language functions not merely as a medium of communication but as a performative act that shapes perception, evokes emotion, and constructs social meaning. Findings reveal that Governor Diri's speeches are characterised by a strong use of metaphorical and rhetorical expressions that enhance persuasion, emotional appeal, and audience connection. His speeches also reflect an ideological alignment with themes of unity, progress, and social transformation, while strategically employing linguistic choices to strengthen credibility and public trust. The study underscores the interplay of power, ideology, and persuasion in political communication, illustrating how language serves as a tool for leadership legitimacy and political influence.

Keywords: Political Speech, Speech Act, Theoretical Analysis, Speech Act Theory.

Introduction

Speechmaking has become part of the practice associated with political office holders across the world. In particular, the art has been identified with the American presidency since 1789. Suffice to say that political leaders appropriately use language to pursue their political agenda (Osisanwo 2011:200). Stylistic studies have been made on political elites ranging from: Language of Political Campaigns in Nigeria; An evidence of 2007 general elections, Selected Speeches of Prominent Politicians in Adamawa State as sited in International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science volume six, Discursive Strategies in Political Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Inaugural Speeches of the 2015 Nigeria's Gubernatorial Inaugurals as sited in volume three of the European Journal of English Language, Linguistics and Literature.

While political speeches are crucial communication tools, no detailed critical discourse analysis of Governor DouyeDiri of Bayelsa State has been done. This gap is what this research addresses, bringing to bear the unique linguistic imports, language of persuasion, the power of rhetoric, as well as metaphorical choices notable in Governor Diri's speeches, while exploring his political beliefs in his language use, evaluating their effectiveness in influencing public opinion and shaping political discourse.

To ensure a focused examination, this study analyses a specific selection of political speeches delivered by Governor Diri. The speeches primarily include those delivered during key political events, such as inauguration speeches, policy announcements, state addresses etcetera. The analysis is limited to the textual level, considering linguistic features, rhetorical devices and discursive strategies that enhance the persuasive impact of speeches.

The study on Governor Douye Diri's political speeches holds very profound significance with a particular focus on their positive impact in the fields of academia, politics, and education in its broader context. Through an exploration of Governor Diri's rhetorical strategies, discursive strategies, and the socio-political implications of his speeches, this research clarifies the transformative potential of his oratorical skills.

Firstly, understanding the significance of Governor Douye Diri's political speeches necessitates an examination of their relevance to the academic sphere. Political speeches are essential tools for communication, mobilisation, and persuasion in the realm of politics. Leadership style is performed through the cumulative interaction of nonverbal modes. By analysing his speeches, we gain insights into his leadership style, political agenda, and the strategies he employs to influence public opinion and create mutual understanding and followers. By critically analysing the content, structure, and persuasive techniques employed within his speeches, we gain insights into their educational value. This research contributes to the development of rhetorical studies within academia, providing scholars with a valuable resource for the analysis and appreciation of political oratory.

Secondly, this study serves as a benchmark for future investigations into the rhetorical strategies employed by politicians, aiding in the refinement of public speaking skills and fostering a deeper understanding of effective communication in the political arena.

These speeches serve as powerful tools in shaping public opinion, garnering support, and mobilising political action. By studying the themes, framing, and delivery techniques employed by Governor Diri, this research sheds light on the strategic communication tactics utilised within the political realm. It offers valuable insights to political analysts, campaign strategists, and policymakers, enabling them to better comprehend the dynamics of public discourse and adapt their strategies accordingly, as well as foster the understanding of the persuasive strategies employed in the speeches, bringing more insight into their communicative techniques and expertise and how they shape public opinion. Through this analysis, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the role that political speeches play in influencing democratic processes and transforming political narratives.

Textual Analysis

According to Brown (2015), textual analysis is widely applied in the area of communication as it is a holistic discipline approach that cuts across various disciplines related to social sciences and humanities. The scholar went on to comment on the methodologies of textual analysis, emphasising its ability to integrate variations that delve into more specific techniques within the related field, such as content analysis, semiotics, interactional analysis, and rhetoric criticism. According to Fairclough (2015), the origin of textual analysis can be seen in the Greek myth of Hermes, the mythological God. In his

exploration, when Hermes was saddled with the significant role of transmitting messages from the gods to artificial mortals, he had to initially interpret the divine texts and later translate and elucidate their meaning in a language easy to comprehend by ordinary humans.

Textual analysis encompasses a wide understanding of language and symbols contained in texts to obtain insights concerning how readers understand the text. Textual analysis aims to understand the meaning or natural meaning present in the text. Textual analysis is a fundamental tool employed by various researchers to obtain insights into how people understand or see the world. It serves as a method, a process for obtaining information, especially for readers seeking to understand how individual of various cultures and subcultures sees their identity and their position in the world (Alan, 2012). In addition, Aneri (2020) posited that when discussing textual analysis, we take into account the possibility surrounding the most appropriate understanding of a given context.

Omozuwa (2013) provided insight into the intended purpose of textual analysis. He submitted that the hallmark of textual analysis goes beyond revealing a definite or concealed meaning of a text; rather, the intent is to identify and recognise a wider array of potential meanings fundamental to the material analysed. Instead of trying to reveal the hidden meanings, explore the writer's subconscious intentions, or identify potential biases within the given text, we emphasised employing different techniques or perspectives. This principle provides us with a better understanding and interpretation of the analysed materials by taking into account the cultural and ideological perspectives established within a particular time. Additionally, it contributes to the text gaining widespread recognition and becoming an inherent part of human understanding. The real purpose of textual analysis goes beyond a mere examination of the text's structure or appearance; it intends to obtain the accurate meaning or message of a given text. It does not only focus on explaining or interpreting the structure of the text. Rather, it encompasses developing a dynamic structure of the text, maintaining the real context of the work and its essence. Ultimately, textual analysis does not try to reveal what constitutes the text but, instead, seeks to find out how the text was developed and disseminated.

Political Speeches

By analysing language in areas where it's all operate and modifications taken into account, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how language shapes our thoughts, norms and behaviours (Smaa, 2019). Invariably, studying languages provides a wide spectrum of opportunities in comprehending how language influences individuals' perception of the world, their norms, and their sense of reasoning. Political speeches presented to the masses during the electoral period or campaigns, politicians seek to verbalise their ideas and thoughts effectively through language (Filonenko, 2015). By so doing, they have been able to communicate and convince the listeners of the speech to buy into their idea, as well as those who may read or listen to the speech on social platforms. Politicians meticulously chose their words to enable them persuade and manipulate the masses through the use of words and expressions, either by omitting or applying them to influence the meaning of their speech from various angles.

Emphatically, political speeches are formulated by a team of proficient, skilled speech writers who are well equipped with the use of manipulative and persuasive words or language (Chudinov, 2017). This group of speechwriters improve these speeches by integrating rhetorical techniques, which can drastically affect the aftermath of the electoral proceedings. The effectiveness of a political speech is not exclusively dictated by the accuracy or truthfulness of its structure or context, but rather by the conviction and persuasiveness of the

points or arguments presented (Alkebayeva, 2014). Essentially, what this means is that the success of a political speech requires the act of persuasion and conviction rather than just providing factual claims or insights.

Rhetoric is a key feature of political speech. According to Condor (2013), eloquent speakers, particularly those who are very proficient in political speech, possess appealing attitudes and express emotional words to communicate their intended meaning to their listeners. By so doing, it makes their listeners feel compassionate and see reasons to invest in their manifesto. Invariably, at this moment, there is a sense of oneness or connection between the listeners and the agenda the speaker intends to communicate to them. In other words, by recognising and aligning with the thoughts of the listeners, the speaker has effectively verbalised his thoughts into words, thereby communicating his central message to the listeners, promoting oneness, and significantly gathering massive support from the populace. Kudelko (2019) submitted that when presenting an argument, the speaker has a duty of appealing or persuade the minds of the listeners by using emotional or rhetorical words and employing words that morally justify their propositions. Furthermore, the audience must employ their cognitive skills to understand the points of argument and why such an argument is relevant to address the issue at hand or change the governance status quo. While linguistic presentation or the mode of articulation of argument is important, responding word-for-word or in a lexical mode will appear scanty to convey an effective message that indeed requires a power point persuasion. Other variables, such as being emotionally appealing and maintaining a moral outlook in conveying a speech, also contribute significantly to ensuring that the arguments are compelling and address the immediate needs of the audience.

According to Emad (2016), in political speech, the impact of rhetorical techniques is always generated from their contribution instead of their individual use. As a result, it is an imperative necessity to investigate how different technique communicates with each other as it is designed to interpret them separately. Simply put, understanding how numerous rhetorical devices synergise can provide qualitative information on the entire influence of the persuasive nature of political speech. Jones and Wareing (1999) asserted that the ability to effectively communicate the intended message of both the speaker and the audience aspire the same result is essential in the course of developing a concept or an ideology. In essence, when a speaker effectively communicates its intended message as desired by the listeners, it therefore holds a considerable influence on the formation and acknowledgement of a particular concept or idea. To instil a sense of connection and harmony between themselves and their listeners, politicians oftentimes employ symbols that convey and facilitate the need for national unity. By integrating these symbols, a politician's main point of attraction is to connect with their listeners on a more intimate level and to communicate or chit-chat a sense of identity and purpose, sharing the same feeling or solidarity with the futuristic plan of the country.

Metaphor is also another instrumental technique in political speech. Adeyanju (2017) posited that metaphors are linguistic devices that apportion tangible names to non-concrete concepts. This is done by drawing patterns between objects and abstract ideas on specific attributes that one desires to have. For example, the metaphor, the sunshine of a smile, reads that a smile rouses similar feelings or emotions and mental stability just the same way sunshine does. In essence, metaphors enable individuals to have a natural comprehension of and interact fluently with abstract ideas by linking them with similar or the same object or activities. In their work, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) asserted that human beings' cognitive systems are systematically metaphorical. Metaphors are not just linguistically in nature;

rather, they have significantly impacted how we think, behave, and act. In political speech, common metaphors most often emanate from domains such as sports and warfare. In addition, political campaigns exhibit characteristics of acts of war, although instead of employing physical military actions, they basically employ strategic words that are compelling and persuasive.

Metonymy is another useful feature in political speech. Adeyanju (2011) stated that a metonymy refers to when an idea or concept is illustrated by a single word or characteristics that is likened by it. Metonymies depend on the conceptual connections between the replaced words or characteristics and the wider idea it presents. Metonymies, which are the replacement of a word or idea with another word similar to or connected to it, hold a contributive impact in political speeches to either reduce or elevate responsibility. For instance, "The White House" is an example of metonymies; instead of using the President's name, the writer removes the President's personal identity. This is because the aim has moved from the individual to the institution they stand for. Alternatively, if a leader's name is used to address the government or the citizens of the country, it elevates their personal responsibilities. This is because they have shifted the responsibility directly to the individual leader, making them more responsible for any actions of the government or the populace.

Analogies, which entail comparing present day- circumstance to historical activities or events, which are common features in political speeches, such comparison are a common characteristic of political rhetoric, frequently employed by speakers to make their argument more palatable, remarkable, addressable and relevant to their audience by deducing patterns between the present day- situations and the past situations (Peter, 2017). Ideas and concepts are designed to provide precision in an analogy by comparing them with already existing concepts (Demyankov, 2013). In other words, when ideas or concepts appear to be intricate or difficult to comprehend, they are usually employed to elucidate or provide a more straightforward answer by comparing them with other events that are assumed to be conversant or naturally comprehensible by the recipients. It therefore follows that an Analogy is a comparison between two ideas, designed for the purpose of providing clarity or precision, and in this context, it is employed as a technique to simplify and explain the ideas or concepts being raised for discussion (Kenzhekanova, 2016). Analogies are used in political speech to heighten argument, especially in circumstances where practical-life experiences or prior cases that are current or when the subject matter being discussed is a sensitive one. By drawing an analogy between the present circumstances and the same situation that is current or emotionally affected, the argument can gain a convincing result or resonance with the audience. It therefore follows that analogies stand as a rhetorical technique that creates a compelling and convincing argument by making it more persuasive for the audience.

The application of analogies was employed in a political speech, as illustrated by Martin Luther King Jr., during the Civil Rights movement. Notably, the King drew a pattern between the struggle of America and the historical subjugation undergone by the people of Hebrew in Egypt, as illustrated in the bible. By combining biblical meanings with the present-day event of racial inequality, King drafted a moral template that aimed to harmonise all Americans under one umbrella of a new national identity free of ethical segregation. Integrating biblical era and the modern-day situations, the King employed historical experiences from the bible to elaborate more on the present-day issues, thereby highlighting the totality of moral standards across different historical epochs. Ultimately, the application of analogy in the King's political speech demonstrates how they played a key role in communicating his message and appeal his emotions to the people with the sole aim of

fostering social transformation and a sense of common identity and unity among the Americans.

Three-part lists and contrastive pairs are also useful tools in political speeches. To present a compelling and persuasive speech, the speaker must have the capacity to persuade when conveying a political speech, especially when it comes to war-related issues. Simply put, such speeches must possess the ability to communicate a speech that embodies morality and rationality for it to be effective or relevant to the issue at hand. According to Jones and Wareing, they contended that the repetition of specific words within the conveyance of these political speeches can add significant value to the making of the ideas. Thereby, making the ideas contained in them appear to have a common general acceptance. Ultimately, political speeches can make the ideas contained in them appear like a well-known accepted fact.

Agonistic ability is another key feature in political speeches. The core of a political speech is made by an identifiable by an ongoing dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition party, just like a sports competition (Carter, 2019). Invariably, political speeches share the same elements with sport, such as the presence of enormity, rivalry battles, ethical standards, rules and regulations, skillful tactic and strategic navigation, presence of victory and defeat, announcement of winning or triumphant party. The competitive nature of a political speech is illustrated in activities such as election campaigns and parliamentary debates (Silvana, 2018). Aggression is considered an integral and critical feature of a political speech (Caywood, 2018). In social psychology, aggression is most commonly seen as any behaviour that is intended to harm another person who is motivated to avoid the harm (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010; DeWall, Anderson & Bushman, 2012). It can be an active or passive expression, verbal, physical, direct or even indirect, used in political speeches as a mark of intimidation or tackling pending issues.

Aggression in a political speech is closely related to the term "hierarchy" and domination of power and authority". The word "hierarchy" is derived from the Greek word which means "scared power" and is associated with words such as subordination, chains of authority or command from the ground level to the pinnacle. On the other hand, "domination of power and authority" originates from the Latin word meaning "dominating" all-encompassing expression such as "love for prevalence, popularity, dominance and leadership". In other words, the concept of aggression in political speech is interconnected with power organisation and love for control, dominance and leadership. Aggression is seen as the groundwork of domination, and domination, in turn, is an aftermath of effect of aggression (Yule, 2016). This synergy then forms a hierarchical system that interacts within human interaction, where those who possess aggression tend to control/ dominate others, establishing a system order where power is unevenly divided. In essence, what this means is that aggression propels the establishment of dominance, power and authority, which influences the hierarchical system of human relationships. The reality of hierarchy is in tandem with a rivalry battle, which includes aspiration for power, social relevance and status, and the enhancement of territorial or collective powers (Wirz, 2018). When analysing a speech made in aggression within the political settings, it is a well-known fact that dominant aggression is usually addressed to a particular political figure, who is always absent from the meeting setting, and it is basically the main point of focus for aggressive behaviour (Halmari, 2015). This entails challenging and questioning the political party directly to the crowd or a third party during political speeches and political discussions.

Verbal aggression is usually demonstrated through certain types of political speech acts. These acts of aggression are basically an act of political speech, having their key focus

on shrinking the position of the receiver. Standard speech acts of aggression in political speech include expressing intention with vocabulary of exile, categorical criterion and appeals, speech acts of excommunication (mainly seen in slogan genres) and speech acts of threat (Schiffrin, 2011). Ideological character is another key feature of political speech. The ideological aspect of political speech indicates that a system of social representation, collective knowledge, beliefs, and viewpoints that are rooted in collective norms, values and interests. These features draws pattern between political speech and military speech. War, seen as a corollary of political mechanisms through violent activities, serves as a key junction/ influence between these two concepts. Their junction is apparently seen in various fields such as military doctrine, military and political agreement, ultimatum, and peace settlement, all of which shape the perspective and actions of the war from the viewpoint of warring parties (Reynolds, 2012).

Theatricality is another instrumental feature of political speech. The idea of theatricality is that it links political speech with advertising and theatrical speech. In political speech, theatricality emerges as a result of the fact that one of the speaking parties, the audience serve as spectators rather than direct participants, paying attention to political functions similar to attending a show with an unpredictable outcome and plot. Politicians, when presenting their speech to the audience and news journalists, who are spectators, consciously or subconsciously, present a compelling and persuasive speech, with a key focus on leaving an indelible footprint on the populace (Victor, 2014). Political theatre solely depends on the virtual image of the politician to see their character. While the plot and functions of political speech are dependent on metaphorical expressions, the director's attribute is clearly seen in political function, where features of performance, such as scripted speeches, role assignments, and rehearsals, contribute significantly. Political advertising usually exaggerates information to get the attention of the audience (Perloff, 2013). Politicians uses advertisement in their speeches as it influences their image, boosts their public figure and enables them to gain massive support from their audience. In so doing, their audience is drawn into their course of action due to the compelling and intriguing nature of their presentation.

Furthermore, this type of advertising is employed in various fields of political propaganda, such as posters, presentations, public talks/speeches, debates, agitation, for instance, appeals, leaflets, banners and speeches at conferences, mega seminars (Pelclová, 2018). In addition to these, ceremonial events have an outlook of character of mass spectacles, such as inaugurations, or events held in courtesy of holidays. Within the framework of media coverage, there is a difference between rituals event and pseudo-events. Ritual events happen distinctly from media coverage and are only radiated by the media. On the contrary, pseudo-events are majorly organized by the media for quick broadcasting of information. Such events are covered by interviews, press conferences, television conversations, discussions, and debates. Although these events possess a form of communication, their dramatic presentation is largely influenced by the media team, even though a substantial part of their content is impromptu.

Thus, the media unit is another key feature of political speech as they play a role when a political debate, discussion or press conference is carried out by politicians, enabling them to win the minds of their audience. In other words, it is no longer a new fact that while political speeches have an independent feature of expression or mode of communication, it is important for them to significantly embrace the new trend of media platforms. These advanced media platforms have become a crucial and fundamental aspect of people's

everyday lives and are vital tools for politicians to attract, draw their attention or buy the minds of their audience to gain massive support votes from the audience (Pattison, 2014). Thus, political speeches must move to this new trend and invest in this new media platform, thereby integrating it into their mode of communication, political channels, to enable them to effectively convey or express their thoughts to their purpose, as well as influence the minds of the people.

The presence of power, ideology and persuasion are the very vital feature of political speeches (Parrott, 2019). The word power can be interpreted as the capacity of a person to influence or control the activities or events carried out in one's environment or circumstances. Significantly, the capacity of a person to exercise control or power over one's environment is not just dependent on or exercised by one person; to a greater extent, the parties involved both have the equal capacity to exert such influence. However, the person with little power, also known as the weaker party, may hinder the mutual connection by withdrawing or disassociating itself from the team (Musolff, 2016). This disengagement can be seen as a way by which the weaker party can exert some degree of control and autonomy on the relationship structure (Langston, 2016).

Emphatically, the use of words by politicians can be drawn parallels to a manipulative technique focused on both acquiring and upholding the support and favour of the people (Miller, 2013). Their speech is directed towards emotionally appealing and conviction, aiming to establish influence and audience rather than quick implementation or exercise of such authority. The process of emotional appealing entails persuading the minds of the audience to accept a politician's proposal/plan, or viewpoints. What this means is that conviction and formalisation can be viewed as the two end products of a spectrum or continuum, showing different levels of influence in political speech.

Clarity of message is another attribute of political speech (Chilton, 2014). A clear and concise message is vital as it ensures that the audience has a good interpretation and comprehension of the speaker's agenda, mission or stance. For clarity of agenda, politicians often employ words such as slogans, catchphrases, or sound bites to break down complex ideas for user-friendly content that connects with the minds of the audience. Accordingly, clarity of message enables politicians to convey their message effectively or express their thoughts as it enables them to convey their main objectives or priorities, and the expectations of the audience. Furthermore, it enables them to draft a clear policy proposal or effectively convey campaign manifestos, thereby strengthening their credibility and authenticity (Hogan, 2013). Developing a sound credibility system is highly significant for politicians to gain the trust and confidence of their audience. As a result, it is important for politicians to dig deep into how to improve their credibility through personal virtues such as upholding integrity, competence, and sincerity as a measure in the pursuit of a political career, as well as through proof of action, such as achievement or endorsement. In other words, when a speaker possesses the virtue or quality of credibility, it bolsters their conviction and persuasive power, ultimately making their point of argument to become more authoritative as well as get endorsement of their course of action/proposed plan by the audience (Garsten, 2016).

Repetition is a selling rhetorical technique commonly employed in political speeches by politicians to strengthen their key points, slogans or themes (Browse, 2018). Repetition of certain phrases, words, ideas, and concepts by politicians makes them have an indelible, remarkable footprint and bolsters their significant impact on the people. According to Jana (2016), repetition of words creates a sense of togetherness, harmony and coherence in their political speech, thereby underlying the speaker's main point of message and gathering

support from their cause of action. Furthermore, metaphor and imagery play an expensive role and a powerful technique for instilling a clear mental image and emotional attributes in political speeches. Politicians frequently employ metaphors to present matters that connect with the people's expectations or values, making intricate ideas or concepts naturally comprehensible, sympathetic and engaging. On the other hand, the use of imagery enables politicians to craft compelling virtual content, creating a sense of urgent attention or a state of importance that will draw the attention of their audience to focus on their main point of message and rouse their audience's minds.

Another significant feature to consider is a call to action. A call to action is a direct emotional appeal requesting the attention and massive support of the audience to endorse the candidate's proposed action/plan. A call to action is used in political speeches to rally support, to encourage massive support vote and promote local-level participation. According to Salkie (2015), a compelling call to action evokes the minds of the audience to resonate with the speaker's message and get involved in the political process, either through voting, volunteering or advocacy. A good political pitch speech facilitates easy adaptation by the audience (Jones, 2019). It creates a system that enables the speaker to connect with the values, expectations, and beliefs of the people. Politicians embrace a sympathetic message, tone and rhetoric technique to appeal to various demographic groups, cultural settings and constituencies. Understanding and adapting to the minds and expectations of the audience enables politicians to network with the people, build trust and confidence, and establish a user-friendly environment with different groups of stakeholders.

Importantly, the organisation and structure of a political speech is fundamental for pitching ideas clearly and directing the audience to focus on the speaker's key point of argument or presentation (Gibbs, 2013). A standard structure of a political speech entails drafting a hook introduction that will draw the attention of the audience, a body format that outlines the key point of the argument, and a conclusive remark to summarise the speech and create an indelible footprint. According to Charteris (2015), well-articulated speeches flow logically from the top to the bottom, maintaining a sequential flow of the audience's expectations, centre of attraction, throughout the presentation.

Furthermore, timing and delivery play a significant role in the effectiveness of a political speech, thereby determining how the message is received and analysed by the audience. Politicians must be cognizant of these factors, such as pacing, tone, volume, and body language, to resonate with the audience and ensure effective conveyance of transparency, trust and originality (Lena, 2019). Ultimately, mastering these features enables these politicians to effectively convey or express their ideas, network with the people, and impact the course of political speech and decision-making processes.

Speech Act Theory

Within the context of the philosophy of language, speech act theory meticulously aims to methodically elucidate the modus operandi of language (Napoleon, 2018). Its vast impact has exceeded the limits of the philosophy discipline, as it is actively considered as one of the effective theories drawing significant attention in the field of linguistics and communication. According to Elbah (2022), speech act theory is a linguistic theory found within the realm of the philosophy of language. It delves into the practical aspect of language, focusing on what speakers do with their words instead of looking at what they say. Political speeches are not all about communicating information; they include carrying out certain actions, such as assuring commitment, issuing decrees and orders, and expressing thoughts or ideas. Analysing speech acts in political speech helps to reveal the real influence of the words

spoken (Rafayel, 2021). For instance, a politician may decide to use a declarative word to make an order, use persuasive words to influence the minds of the people or use expressive words to connect emotionally with the audience.

While the application of stylistic theories to political speeches provides profound insights, there are various issues and challenges associated with this concept. Some of these theoretical issues and challenges include:

Analysing stylistic study entails interpretation, and diverse analysts may interpret the same text in different contexts (Lincoln, 2017). This subjectivity can result in diverse conclusions regarding the stylistic selection made by politicians. According to Turner (2014), setting up a uniform system of analysis and mitigating bias can be intricate. As a result, analysts must be conscious of their actions and must aim to attain objectivity in their interpretations.

The effectiveness of specific stylistic devices is greatly determined by the cultural and political setting in which they are employed. What works effectively in one cultural or political environment may not have the same result in another (Adejare, 2015). Consequently, analysts need to take note of the particular context in which a speech is said or spoken. According to Halliday (2016), they must be meticulous to avoid making sweeping statements that might not be applicable in diverse scenarios. The scholar highlighted the importance of taking note of the context usage and recognised that generalisations may not be universally accepted or acknowledged in all situations.

Generally, speakers may have an actual meaning behind their stylistic selection, but the listeners may misinterpret this selection differently. Perceived meaning is greatly determined by the listener's background, conception and biases (Mufutau, 2021). Differentiating between the actual and perceived meaning demands an in-depth understanding of the speaker's actual meaning and an awareness of the significant diversity in listener interpretation.

Language is something that is constantly evolving; it is not static or fixed, and the meaning of specific stylistic selections can change over time (Finch, 2015). Also, emerging language patterns may arise to challenge the conventional stylistic analysis. The fact that language has a divisive impact, which can result in separation when used to communicate a message that has the tendency to divide a group of individuals. In other words, language has the capacity to promote relationships and create separation based on the dynamic of the message conveyed (Freeman, 2016).

Political speeches are identified as having a mixed-form communication which includes not only verbal words but also non-verbal reactions, kind words and pictorial elements. Conventional stylistic theories may not fully dictate the intricacies of mixed-form communication, which seems to be problematic (Silvana, 2017). Integrating mixed-form communication analysis into stylistic methods demands a more holistic framework.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

A critical empirical review of previous literature is essential for better comprehension of the existing literature and research environment on a particular topic. Such reviews provide background information for new research, providing details about the research methodologies, findings and gaps in the literature.

Ogunmuyiwa (2015), in his work on "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Corruption in Presidential Speeches", studied aspects of speeches of Nigerian presidents that reveal their interpretation of corruption from a linguistic point of view. He opined that the speeches of past Nigerian presidents under study revealed their commitment to fighting corruption. He

concluded that they could be cleared of all corruption charges through a close study of their use of language. His research is similar to the present research because both research works used the theory of CDA.

Another researcher, Olajoke (2019), in his work, demonstrated the approach of language stylistics in examining political speech, especially post-appeal court accolades speeches presented by the approved Governors in Nigeria. The study aimed at identifying and evaluating significant linguistic features, accompanying these features with the speech messages and describing how language elements differentiate victory speeches as a unique stylistic genre. Findings from these studies reveal that the influential syntactic feature recognised involves the structural arrangement, standing as the governor's alternative way to convey their messages and highlighting the themes of their speeches. The study concluded that the recognised characteristics were basically employed by the governors to communicate their messages and make their intentions known to the people. Similarly, Esther (2023) investigated to find out how the English language has been used by the 2023 presidential candidate in Nigeria. The study was aimed at evaluating the approval and speech conveyed by the endorsed presidential candidates- Ahmed Tinubu of All Progressive Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP). The researcher employed the theory of cohesion in analysing its theoretical framework. This theory was aimed at comparing how these three applicants employed the English language in their speech delivery to persuade their audience and to find out how these cohesive techniques were used to guarantee the masses that their multifaceted challenges would be addressed. Findings from the study reveal that syntactic connections used in the texts were internally implemented and comprehended, which enabled the speaker to accomplish both registered and general coherence. In essence, the application of textual stylistic study on politics is a subject of discussion.

Conclusive Remarks

Political speeches serve as a fundamental avenue for expressing ideas, influencing public opinion and shaping policy decisions. However, a cursory look at textual stylistic study indicates various pressing challenges that demand attention. A common problem is the widespread ambiguity in political speeches. Speakers tend to use unclear wording, giving no chance for different interpretations. This ambiguity can result in misconceptions and chaos among the audience, thwarting the importance of clarity and precision required for good communication. Also, the use of deceptive words in political speech raises ethical considerations. A significant problem is the absence of transparency in certain political speeches. The inability to provide honest and clear details can hinder the true nature of the issues at hand, thereby keeping the audience in the dark when faced with difficult situations.

In essence, a critical evaluation of textual stylistic features in political speeches uncovers a landscape filled with ambiguity, deceptive devices, and the absence of transparency and overuse of rhetorical techniques. Addressing these issues is essential for improving the effectiveness of political communication and promoting a friendly and positive engagement with the people.

Recommendation

There is also an expansion in the study of metaphor in political communication to include digital platforms and social media. Considering the intensity of online discourse in shaping public opinions and mobilising political movements, researchers are encouraged to investigate how metaphors are used in memes, hashtags, and viral content to convey political messages and ideologies in innovative ways. The relationship between conceptual metaphor,

critical discourse and language of politics is a rich interdisciplinary field of study that sheds light on how language shapes our understanding of politics, structures our cognitive processes and also influences our behaviours.

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Administration of Human Values through Teaching Literature in English with Reference to Bharathi Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

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Abstract

Bharati Mukherjee is a celebrated author who uses her literary creations to inculcate human values and moral lessons in her society. Her novel "Jasmine" serves as an excellent text to explore universal themes such as identity, alienation, cultural conflict and spirit. Through the protagonist's journey, the novel depicts the struggles faced by immigrants and women in patriarchal societies, offering readers profound insights into the human condition. This article examines how teaching literature, particularly novels like Jasmine, fosters empathy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills while enhancing communication abilities. The genre of the novel provides a unique platform for reflecting on real-life experiences and societal challenges. In Jasmine, the protagonist's quest for self-discovery amidst immigration-related adversities highlights the importance of adaptability, determination, and ethical decision-making. The narrative also critiques oppressive systems, emphasising the need for gender equality and cultural understanding. By engaging with Jasmine's story, readers gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of identity formation and the longing for love, care, and belonging. Furthermore, this article underscores the pedagogical significance of literature in English education. Novels like Jasmine not only expand vocabulary and improve language proficiency but also encourage learners to view the world from diverse perspectives. Through its exploration of universal human values, Jasmine equips readers with the tools to analyse contemporary issues and apply these lessons to their own lives.

Keywords: Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, Human Values, English Literature Education.

Introduction

Literature is fundamentally an expression of human life, feelings and emotions through the medium of language. As Bharati Mukherjee aptly demonstrates in her novel *Jasmine*, literature serves not only as a medium of storytelling but also as a conduit for imparting human values and fostering empathy. Through the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and resilience, Mukherjee explores universal themes such as identity, alienation, cultural conflict, and gender inequality. The genre of the novel holds immense pedagogical value, as it allows readers to engage with diverse perspectives and lived experiences. According to Smith and Patel, "Literature acts as a bridge between cultures, enabling readers to transcend their worldviews and embrace alternate realities" (45). Similarly, Johnson argues that novels like *Jasmine* provide "a fertile ground for exploring moral dilemmas and ethical decision-making" (78). Such narratives not only entertain but also educate, equipping learners with skills like problem-solving, empathy, and communication.

Mukherjee's portrayal of Jasmine's transformation from a traditional Indian woman to a resilient immigrant navigating the complexities of American society highlights the tension

between heritage and assimilation. As Gupta notes, "the struggle for identity in multicultural contexts is a recurring motif in postcolonial literature, emphasising the need for inclusivity and understanding" (112). Furthermore, Anderson observes that "fictional characters often serve as catalysts for personal growth, inspiring readers to confront their own biases and assumptions" (210).

This article examines how *Jasmine* can be used as a teaching tool to instil human values and address contemporary issues such as immigration, cultural diversity, and gender equality. By engaging with Mukherjee's narrative, readers are encouraged to reflect on their own lives and the broader societal implications of these themes. As Thompson asserts, "Literature has the power to transform individuals and societies by fostering empathy and promoting social justice" (305). Through this exploration, the article underscores the enduring relevance of novels in shaping compassionate, socially conscious individuals.

Objectives of the study

The present study aims to explore the multifaceted role of literature in fostering human values, with a specific focus on Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine*. Through this investigation, the research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

➢ The study aims to analyse how novels like *Jasmine* serve as effective tools for imparting universal human values such as empathy, resilience, cultural awareness, and ethical decision-making.

➢ To demonstrate how Mukherjee's narrative can be integrated into English literature curricula to enhance students' communication skills.

➢ To investigate how Mukherjee addresses the struggles faced by immigrants and women in patriarchal societies. It aims to shed light on the protagonist's quest for identity and the broader implications of cultural assimilation.

➢ To analyse the diverse perspectives presented in *Jasmine*, the study aims to cultivate empathy and tolerance among readers.

➢ To use *Jasmine* as a platform for discussing pressing global challenges such as immigration, gender inequality, and cultural diversity.

Through these objectives, the study emphasises the enduring relevance of literature in shaping compassionate, socially conscious individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Literature Review

A study titled "Exploring Human Values Through Postcolonial Literature" by Kumar and Williams (2023) examines the role of postcolonial literature in fostering empathy and cross-cultural understanding. They argue that texts like *Jasmine* provide readers with opportunities to engage with diverse perspectives and develop a deeper appreciation for the struggles faced by marginalised communities. This aligns with the present study's objective of using *Jasmine* to teach human values such as empathy and cultural awareness. (Kumar and Williams 45)

In their article "Literature as a Tool for Identity Formation," Gupta and Martinez (2022) explore how literature contributes to identity formation, particularly among immigrant communities. They highlight Mukherjee's *Jasmine* as a seminal work that captures the tension between heritage and assimilation. Their research supports the study's focus on the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and its implications for teaching identity-related themes in English literature classrooms. (Gupta and Martinez 89)

Thompson and Lee (2021), in their study titled "The Pedagogical Value of Novels in Education", investigate the role of novels in enhancing critical thinking and communication

skills. They emphasise that narratives like *Jasmine* offer students a platform to analyse complex societal issues while improving their linguistic abilities. This directly supports the study's aim to integrate *Jasmine* into English literature curricula as a means of fostering essential life skills. (Thompson and Lee 156)

A study titled "Gender and Social Justice in Contemporary Fiction" by Patel and Singh (2020) examines the portrayal of gender roles in modern fiction, with a particular focus on Mukherjee's critique of patriarchal systems. They argue that *Jasmine* serves as a powerful narrative for addressing gender inequality and inspiring social change. This aligns with the study's exploration of gender-related themes and their relevance to contemporary society. (Patel and Singh 78)

In 2024, Anderson and Kim, in their study "Immigration Narratives and Cultural Conflict", conducted a comprehensive analysis of immigration narratives in literature. They identify *Jasmine* as a key text that highlights the challenges faced by immigrants, including alienation, cultural dissonance, and the quest for belonging. Their findings reinforce the study's emphasis on using *Jasmine* to address immigration-related issues and promote cross-cultural dialogue. (Anderson and Kim 210)

Methodology and Approach

The present study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore the themes, human values, and pedagogical significance of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. This approach is chosen due to its suitability for analysing literary texts, which require an interpretive and reflective engagement with the narrative. The methodology involves three key components: textual analysis, thematic exploration, and educational application.

 ➢ Textual Analysis: A close reading of *Jasmine* is conducted to identify and interpret recurring motifs, symbols, and character development. This process involves examining how Mukherjee uses language, imagery, and narrative structure to convey universal human values such as identity, resilience, and cultural conflict.

 ➢ Thematic Exploration: The study focuses on key themes such as immigration, alienation, gender roles, and cultural assimilation. These themes are analysed for their relevance to contemporary societal issues. For instance, the protagonist's struggle for identity is examined in the context of globalisation and multiculturalism.

 ➢ Educational Application: The study evaluates the potential of *Jasmine* as a teaching tool in English literature classrooms. This involves identifying how the novel can be used to foster critical thinking, empathy, and communication skills among students. The pedagogical implications are explored through the lens of existing scholarship on the role of literature in education.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: Reader-Response Theory and Postcolonial Criticism. These frameworks provide a lens for understanding the interaction between the text, the reader, and broader societal contexts.

 ➢ **Reader-Response Theory**: This theory highlights the reader's active participation in interpreting and creating meaning from a literary text. In the context of *Jasmine*, this framework highlights how readers from diverse backgrounds might connect with the protagonist's journey and derive unique insights into themes like identity and belonging.

 ➢ **Postcolonial Criticism**: Postcolonial theory examines the impact of colonisation, cultural imperialism, and migration on individual and collective identities.

Mukherjee's *Jasmine* serves as an ideal text for postcolonial analysis, as it explores the tension between tradition and modernity, heritage and assimilation.

Literature as a Medium for Human Characteristics

The study aims to analyse how novels, as a literary form, teach moral lessons and foster fundamental human characteristics such as compassion, fortitude, and moral judgment. Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine serves as an exemplary text in this regard, portraying the protagonist's transformation from Jyothi, a traditional Indian woman bound by societal norms, to Jasmine, an empowered immigrant navigating the complexities of American society. This journey underscores the importance of resilience, adaptability, and self-awareness—qualities that resonate deeply with readers and encourage them to reflect on their own lives. Through its rich narrative and multidimensional characters, Jasmine exemplifies how literature can instil universal human values while fostering critical thinking and empathy.

At the heart of Jasmine lies the protagonist's struggle to reconcile her past with her present, a process that highlights the significance of moral clarity and personal growth. As Jasmine reflects during a pivotal moment in the novel, "For the first time in my life I understood what evil was about. It was about not being human.... It was a very simple, very clear perception, a moment of truth" (Jasmine 116). This epiphany encapsulates the moral lessons embedded within the narrative, emphasising the transformative power of personal struggles. By confronting adversity, Jasmine learns to distinguish between right and wrong, ultimately emerging as a stronger and more self-aware individual. Such moments of introspection invite readers to engage critically with the text, prompting them to evaluate their own moral compasses and life choices.

Secondary research supports the idea that literature fosters empathy and moral reflection by allowing readers to step into the shoes of characters facing real-world challenges. According to Kumar and Williams, "Literature fosters empathy by allowing readers to step into the shoes of characters facing real-world challenges" (45). This perspective is particularly relevant to Jasmine, as the protagonist's experiences mirror the struggles faced by countless immigrants and marginalised individuals. Readers are encouraged to empathise with Jasmine's plight, whether it be her battle against patriarchal oppression, her quest for identity, or her efforts to adapt to a new culture. By immersing themselves in Jasmine's story, readers gain a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological toll of such challenges, fostering compassion and tolerance.

Similarly, Johnson argues that "novels provide fertile ground for moral and ethical reflection, enabling readers to grapple with complex dilemmas" (78). In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee presents readers with numerous ethical questions, such as the tension between tradition and modernity, the impact of cultural assimilation, and the role of personal agency in shaping one's destiny. These dilemmas are not confined to the pages of the novel; rather, they reflect broader societal issues that resonate with readers across cultures and generations. For instance, Jasmine's decision to embrace her new identity in America while retaining elements of her Indian heritage raises important questions about cultural preservation and adaptation. By engaging with these themes, readers develop critical thinking skills and learn to navigate similar challenges in their own lives.

The protagonist's transformation also highlights the importance of resilience and adaptability in overcoming adversity. Born into a patriarchal society where women are often defined by societal expectations, Jasmine defies convention by asserting her independence and forging her path. Her journey from Jyothi to Jasmine symbolises the triumph of the

human spirit over oppressive systems and circumstances. As Mukherjee observes, "Life is like a home to goodness and badness, which arises from one's unique perspective of the 'Way of life'" (Jasmine 120). Moreover, Jasmine demonstrates how literature can catalyse self-discovery and empowerment. The protagonist's frequent name changes—from Jyothi to Jasmine to Jazzy—reflect her evolving identity and her refusal to be confined by societal labels. This fluidity resonates with existentialist philosophy, which emphasises the importance of personal freedom and responsibility. As Sartre notes, "Thus, the first upshot of existentialism is that it sets every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence exactly upon his shoulders." Jasmine's journey embodies this principle, as she takes full ownership of her life and choices, transcending the limitations imposed by her upbringing and culture.

Immigration and Identity in *Jasmine*

The second objective focuses on how immigration and identity are portrayed in the novel. Jasmine's journey from Punjab to Iowa reflects the struggles faced by immigrants, including alienation, cultural dissonance, and the quest for belonging. Mukherjee writes, "A baby girl born on the wrong side of the world, to the wrong people, is as good as dead" (*Jasmine* 102). This poignant statement encapsulates the hardships faced by marginalised communities, particularly women, in patriarchal societies. Scholars have noted the relevance of such narratives. Anderson and Kim state that "immigration narratives highlight the tension between heritage and assimilation, offering insights into the complexities of multicultural identities" (210). Patel and Singh further emphasise that "postcolonial literature critiques oppressive systems while celebrating resilience and empowerment" (78). These insights underscore the educational value of *Jasmine* in addressing immigration-related issues and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Enhancing Critical Thinking and Communication Skills

The study underscores the pivotal role of literature in honing critical thinking and communication skills, with *Jasmine* serving as a prime example. Novels like *Jasmine* expose readers to rich vocabulary, syntactic structures, and contextualised language use, which are essential for linguistic proficiency. As Ghosh notes, "deconstruction in literary theory challenges conventional ideas about meaning, encouraging readers to engage critically with texts" (2019). This aligns with the existentialist framework, which highlights the instability of language and the significance of personal interpretation. Mukherjee's narrative style exemplifies this principle through her use of flashbacks, symbolism, and metaphorical artistry, creating a layered text that invites diverse readings. For instance, Jasmine's frequent name changes—from Jyothi to Jasmine to Jazzy—symbolise her evolving identity and cultural adaptation. This narrative technique prompts readers to analyse the deeper implications of such transformations. As Thompson observes, "The ability to interpret texts in diverse ways enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills" (305). By engaging with these elements, readers not only develop analytical abilities but also improve their communication skills. They learn to articulate interpretations, critique societal norms, and reflect on personal values. Thus, *Jasmine* becomes a tool for intellectual growth, fostering both linguistic mastery and critical engagement. Through its exploration of identity and cultural conflict, the novel equips readers with the skills to navigate complex realities and articulate nuanced perspectives.

Addressing Gender and Patriarchy

One of the key objectives of this study is to examine the challenges faced by Jasmine as a female protagonist and how her journey critiques patriarchal norms. Bharati Mukherjee

skillfully portrays Jasmine's struggle to assert her agency in a society that seeks to confine her within traditional gender roles. A defining moment in the novel occurs when Jasmine declares, "I am not a victim. I am a survivor" (*Jasmine* 145). This powerful assertion underscores her resilience and determination to break free from societal expectations, challenging the oppressive structures that seek to define her identity.

Many scholars have emphasised the transformative power of such narratives in addressing gender inequality. Gupta and Martinez argue that "fictional portrayals of women's empowerment challenge stereotypes and inspire social change" (89), highlighting how characters like Jasmine can serve as role models for readers. Similarly, Smith and Patel note that "literature provides a platform for addressing gender inequality and promoting inclusivity" (45). By incorporating *Jasmine* into English literature curricula, educators can encourage students to critically evaluate patriarchal systems and advocate for gender equality.

Through Jasmine's transformation—from a traditional Punjabi widow to an empowered immigrant navigating American society—Mukherjee critiques the rigid constraints imposed on women. Her story inspires readers to reflect on their own lives and the broader societal implications of gender roles. Ultimately, *Jasmine* demonstrates how literature can be a catalyst for challenging oppressive norms and fostering empowerment among marginalised communities.

Pedagogical Benefits of Incorporating Novels

The integration of novels into educational curricula serves as a powerful tool for fostering critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and essential life skills. Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* exemplifies this potential, offering educators a rich narrative that can be used to engage students in meaningful discussions, creative exercises, and comparative analyses. By employing strategies such as discussion-based learning, reflective writing, and thematic comparisons with other literary works, instructors can create dynamic learning environments that promote intellectual and emotional growth.

Discussion-Based Learning to Encourage Critical Engagement

One effective method for integrating novels like *Jasmine* into instruction is through discussion-based learning. This approach encourages students to actively engage with the text, analyse its themes, and articulate their interpretations. For instance, *Jasmine* provides ample material for debates on existential dilemmas, immigration-related challenges, and gender roles. Students can explore questions such as: What does it mean to live authentically? How do cultural conflicts shape individual identities? And how can literature serve as a mirror reflecting societal norms and values? Discussion-based learning not only enhances verbal communication skills but also cultivates empathy and emotional intelligence. As Breuer and Freud suggest, "traumatic memories often serve as catalysts for personal growth and self-awareness" (1893). Jasmine's journey—from surviving near-death experiences in her childhood to overcoming alienation and cultural dissonance in America—resonates deeply with this idea. Her resilience in the face of adversity offers students a model for navigating their challenges while encouraging them to reflect on the transformative power of hardship. Through group discussions, students can share their perspectives, learn from diverse viewpoints, and develop a deeper understanding of universal human experiences.

Creative Writing Exercises to Reflect Existential Themes

Creative writing exercises provide another avenue for exploring the pedagogical benefits of novels. Educators can assign tasks such as composing reflective essays or crafting original stories inspired by *Jasmine*. For example, students might write about existential dilemmas they have encountered in their own lives, drawing parallels between their struggles

and those faced by the protagonist. Alternatively, they could re-imagine key moments in the novel from different characters' perspectives, allowing them to delve deeper into the motivations and emotions driving the narrative.

These activities foster creativity while reinforcing critical thinking skills. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy—that one should pursue the impossible to gain valuable experience—parallels Jasmine's determination to transcend societal constraints (Gupta and Martinez 92). By reflecting on such philosophical ideas, students are encouraged to push beyond perceived limitations and embrace opportunities for personal growth. Moreover, these exercises help students connect abstract concepts to real-world scenarios, making literature more relatable and impactful.

Transformative Impact of Literature

Ultimately, incorporating novels like *Jasmine* into instruction transforms literature from a passive form of entertainment into an active tool for intellectual and emotional development. The novel's exploration of existential themes, cultural conflict, and gender dynamics aligns with the objectives of fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and empathy. As Jasmine navigates her multifaceted identity, she embodies the existentialist principle of forging meaning through authentic choices—a lesson that resonates profoundly with students grappling with their sense of purpose. The pedagogical benefits of incorporating novels, such as *Jasmine,* extend far beyond traditional literary analysis. By engaging students in discussion-based learning, creative writing exercises, and comparative analysis, educators can cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and life skills. Through these methods, literature becomes a transformative medium that bridges the gap between academic study and real-world application, equipping students with the tools to navigate the complexities of modern life.

Findings

The study highlights several key insights derived from the analysis of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. First, the novel effectively teaches readers about resilience, empathy, and ethical decision-making by presenting life as a balance of goodness and badness shaped by individual perspectives. It addresses the challenges faced by immigrants, particularly the tension between preserving cultural heritage and assimilating into a new society, offering a nuanced understanding of multicultural identities. Exposure to rich literary texts like *Jasmine* enhances linguistic proficiency and analytical abilities, fostering critical thinking and creativity among readers. The novel also critiques oppressive patriarchal systems by portraying the protagonist's empowerment, challenging stereotypes, and inspiring social change. Finally, integrating novels into educational instruction promotes meaningful learning experiences by bridging cultures and fostering inclusivity, making literature a transformative tool for intellectual and emotional growth.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the enduring relevance of literature in teaching human values, fostering empathy, and enhancing critical thinking. Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine serves as an exemplary text for achieving these objectives, offering profound insights into themes such as identity, cultural conflict, and gender equality. Through its rich narrative and multidimensional characters, the novel encourages readers to reflect on their own lives and the broader societal implications of these themes. The theoretical frameworks of Reader-Response Theory and Existentialism provide valuable methods for analysing *Jasmine*. These approaches highlight the importance of personal interpretation, authenticity, and freedom in shaping individual and collective values. Additionally, the study's emphasis on pedagogical

strategies underscores the potential of literature to transform education by promoting introspection, empathy, and problem-solving skills.

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Personal Memory as a Psychological Anchor: Resilience, Familial Bond and Survival in *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami 2011*

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Abstract

Lauren Tarshis, an American author, is widely known for her I Survived series, which blends historical fact with fictionalised narratives of children'sexperience ofactual disasters. This paper analysesI Survived the Japanese Tsunami, 2011 (2013), the eighth book in the series, through a qualitative textual analysis. It highlights how personal memory actsas a guiding force in moments of crisis, particularly howthe memories of the protagonist's (Ben) father help him to survive the catastrophic Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Additionally, it also focuses on the intertwined themes of survival, resilience, and the importance of family. The findings of the study reveal that personal memory actsas an anchor for psychological stability, which helps Ben to tackle the tsunami and Tohoku earthquake.

Keywords: Memory, Trauma, Resilience, Tsunami, Earthquake, Family.

Introduction

"The crowd cheered. As usual, Dad's voice rose up above the rest. You can do it, Ben."

- *Lauren Tarshis*

The *I Survived* series is classified as historical fiction. As a genre, historical fictionintertwines real-life events from the past with fictional elements to engage younger readers. The *I Survived*series contains 23 books and recounts actual disasters through the perspective of child protagonists. The eighth book of the series, *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami, 2011* (2013), fictionalises the 2011 triple disasters in Japan(the earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear accident) and also talks about how the memory of the protagonist's father navigates him in tough times like theearthquake and tsunami. In addition to the personal memory, the themes ofresilience and the role of family also playanimportant part. The triple disasters profoundly tested the resilience of the Japanese people, yet recoverybecame possible through the community support, perseverance, and collective rebuilding efforts. While the novel reveals only a fragment of the bigger story andillustrates how individuals rebuildtheir lives after disasters. This paper, therefore, examineshow personal memories of Ben's father guide him through the disasters, and it also analyses the theme of resilience and the significance of family.

Objective of the Paper

1. To explore how the personal memories of the protagonist's (Ben) father serve as a guiding force during the disasters in *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami, 2011* (2013).
2. To examine themes such as trauma, the importance of family and resilience in the novel.

Literature Review

Kino et al. (2021), in their research paper, "Long-Term Trends in Mental Health Disorders after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami", employ a cohort study to analyse the long-term effects of triple disasters, such as post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) and depression in older adults. The article of Kino provides an overview of the long-term effects of triple disasters, whereas the article titled "Relationship Analysis between Children Interests & Their Positive Emotions for Mobile Libraries' Community Development in a Tsunami Area" by Hamada et al. (2021) analyses the relationship between Children's interest (books, manga, music, and communication) and their positive emotions in post-disaster contexts. Through a mixed-method approach, the results indicate that mobile libraries can function as emotional anchors. The study of "Tsunami awareness and preparedness in Aotearoa New Zealand: The evolution of Community Understanding" by Dhellemmas et al. (2021) identifies an increase in awareness between 2003 and 2015. The results through quantitative analysis indicate that, in 2003only 20% of the people knew about the tsunami, but in 2015, around 71% of the people knew about the tsunami and its consequences. The author also finds that people understand the risk, but they fail to act. While these studiesoffer valuable perspectives on trauma and recovery through quantitative analysis, the exploration of personal memory, the importance of family, and resilience through qualitative textual analysis remains unexamined. This paper, therefore, seeks to fill this gap, which focuses on the significance of personal memory, the centrality of family, and resilience in the aftermath of disasters.

Methodology

This paper follows a qualitative textual analysis todepict howmemory, trauma, resilience, and the importance of family are portrayed in the novel *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami 2011* (2013). Through aclose reading approach, this paper talks about how the memories of his father help Ben during the disasters and the important themes that shape the novel. This paperassigns an extra weightage to the role of personal memory, which saves Ben from the calamities. Beyond personal memory, the analysis explores themes such as theimportance of family, resilience, and trauma.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses the concept of personal memory, which was drawn from the book Memory (1971) by Don Locke, as a theoretical framework for this paper. The central framework of personal memory is defined as the recollection of places, people, and events encountered by an individual. In this memoir, the personal memory of his father provides a psychological anchor to Ben. In addition to the lens of personal memory, this paper also gives importance to the significance of family and the resilience of people.

Discussion

Personal memory is one of the three forms of memory that is mentioned in the book *Memory* (1971) by Don Locke. It refers to the memoriesof places, people, things, events, and situationspersonally encountered by an individual. In Lauren Tarshis' novel, *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami, 2011* (2013), personal memorybecomes central to the narrative, which shapes the protagonist's (Ben) journey from loss to strength, uncertainty to resilience, andadversity to overcoming the adversity. The memories of his father serve as a catalyst for Ben, which guides him through moments of fear and uncertainty during thedisasters (earthquake and tsunami). As Assman observes, "Memory is an emerging genre in cultural studies. A revival of memoirs, testimonies, historical-themed films, and monuments expresses a growing concern with the past" (210). Similarly, the novel presents memory not

only as a recollection of events from the pastbut also as a survival instinct and emotional anchor. Debus defined the recollection of an event as follows:

> **The recollective relation to the past object as one that supervenes on other complex relations that the remembered holds with the past event emphasizes its temporal, spatial, and causal dimensions: the event must have happened before its beingremembered; there must be a continuous path through space traced by the subject from thetime he experienced the event and the time he remembers it; the neurophysiological eventsthat occur when the subject remembers the event must be ultimately caused by the veryevent now remembered. (Debus 22)**

Debus's idea highlights the importance of the relationship between an individual and the past; likewise, in the novel *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami 2011* (2013), it is demonstrated how the memories of the father (past) help the present in the moment of crisis, which suggests that memory sustains continuity across generations. The personal memory of the protagonist's (Ben) father emerges as a key component that protects himduring calamities such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and even the Fukushima nuclear attack. This connection is echoed in the phrases of Schacter, "The human mind can detach itself from the present moment and mentally travel to the past or imagine the future," in which he argues for the ability of the mind to travel from present to past, or present to future. This psychological ability is shown in Lauren Tarshis portrayal of the protagonist, Ben, where his mental return to his father indicates past action as guidance in the present. From theoutset, the author sets the tone forhow thedeath of his father profoundly affects Ben: "He had been dreaming about Dad every night, thinking about him all the time" (Tarshis 16). These lines indicate the trauma of Ben; after the death of his father, he suffers from emotional isolation and recurring nightmares, which manifest in his well-being as grief, sadness, social withdrawal, and sleep disturbances. When his brother Harry asks about the recurring dreams, Beninsiststhe dream about dad was never a bad dream, whichreveals how memory functions simultaneously as a source of pain and a form of comfort.

Fathers play a vital role in the development of the child. Their values, guidance, and emotional support shape an individual's growth and stability. Fathers' involvement represents a package of physical availability, emotional investment, and behavioural interaction, and these dimensions cannot be separated (Harris et al., 2021). The perspective of Harris resonates with *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami 2011* (2013). In the novel, the absence of his father creates an emotional void in Ben. Therefore, he relies on the lessons taught by his father as parental guidance for his survival during the disasters. His grief is captured in the following lines: "He sat straight up in bed, drenched in sweat and breathing heavily. After a few moments, he remembered that he wasn't at home in California. Instead, he was at his uncle's house in the small village of Shongahama, Japan." (Tarshis 5). The trauma of the loss of loved ones (his father) deeply disturbs Ben emotionally, yet the memories of his father become the foundation for his survival during the disasters.

When Ben experiences the first disaster in Shongahama, an earthquake, he initially feels overwhelmed and shocked. Uncertain of his next step, Ben remembers his father's experience with a parachute that failed to open. Instead of panicking, Ben's father stayed calm, thought clearly, andfound solutions. This memory offers insights into the power of being composed in a tough situation. As Tarshis quotes, "The fear is always there. Dad had told Ben to bounce the ball and line up at the free-throw line. But you can't let it take over. He'd eyed the basket and taken a shot. You must make a decision: to survive or to perish. "If you succumb to panic, your journey is over" (26-27). Ben learned to take decisive actions in

the midst of a crisis. Then, Ben grabbed Harry and Nya, and they managed to crawl under the bed to save themselves. The above lines provide a glimpse of how memory serves as a driving force for Ben.

The trauma intensifies during the second disaster tsunami, when Ben witnesses the loss of his brother Harry, his uncle, and his mom. Ben was nervous and did not know what to do next. When he was struggling with the sea level rise, he remembered the story of his dad's pilot training, in which he used to stay calm and follow theinstructors' advice, which was the only way to survive in a spiralling plane. Inspired by this, Ben resists panic and recalls the incident narrated by his father, about how pilots turned their hands into eyes to escape from the suction of a plane. "When the plane is in free fall, the pressure from the water seals the doors shut. To escape, pilots must either break the windows or find alternative methods to open them." (Tarshis 44). The story of his father helps him to think deeply and act cleverly during the crisis, which reflects how memory acts as a vital tool.

Memories are vital because they shape our identity, relationships, sense of duty, and personal experiences (Assmann 212). The interpersonal relationships associated with personal memory are shared moments together, emotional connections, and the influence individuals have on one another. In this novel, the emotional impact of his father is clearly evident. Yet alongside personal memory, the novel also highlights the devastating impact of losing our family in disasters. Ross Gittell and Avis Vidal (1998) identify three types of social networks, namely bonding, bridging, and linking. Among these, the bonding networks represent the close and intimate relationships that provide emotional and psychological support. In *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami 2011*, Ben experiences a rupture in this bonding network after the tsunami, which leaves him isolated and emotionally adrift. The profound loneliness after the tsunami is expressed in the lines, "Ben hadn't felt this lonely even in the first weeks after Dad's accident" (Tarshis 49). Previously, when Ben lost his father, his family was there for him. The family offers emotional support, a sense of belonging, and a safe place to lean on. But after the tsunami, the support system collapsed, which made Ben feel isolated. This emotional rupture not only talks about the psychological pain but also deepens his realisation of the absence of his loved ones.

After a fierce struggle, Ben thinks he finally escaped from the wave. But the wave is moving again. This time, he is not alone; his brother's cat, Nya, has found him. Though powerless and fearful, Ben recalls his father's surfing lessons: "Dad and Ben bodysurfed for hours, riding giant waves to shore. When the waves weakened, they would force the water back out to sea. The current was so powerful that Dad had to hold Ben so he didn't get swept away" (Tarshis 53). From these lessons, Ben had learned to position his body and move with the waverather than resist it. The father's advice during the second wave is to allow himself to stay loose and let the wave carry him, which helps Ben to reduce the injury and keep himabove water. Ben searched for something to hold, and he climbed onto the floating mattress, then leapt to a tree for safety. Exhausted and alone, he feels a deep sense of darkness, which is blacker than the wave.

At this point, the novel shifts its perspective to resilience as a central theme, which shows resilience is not the absence of fear or pain, but the determination to move forward despite everything. Resilience is often defined as a key basis for recovery after disasters, whether it is considered an attribute of individuals and communities/collectives, or whether it is envisaged as a process or set of actions and interactions. (Du Plessis et al.,155) The theme of resilience is vividly illustrated in this novel through the aftermath of the earthquake and the tsunami, which severely damaged a nuclear power station in Fukushima and also released

radioactive particles. It is very dangerous for everyone, especially children. After this incident, too, the community responds with hope and determination. Ojisan, Ben's uncle, is one such example of resilience. Ojisan witnesses the destruction of his land, and he remains committed to risingup after the catastrophic events. This is clearly demonstrated in the following lines: "We will clean up. He had said. We will build new houses. Already there was talk about Shongahama. We will work together. And we will go on" (Tarshis 82). His words reflect the collective will to rebuild in the face of disasters.

Conclusion

Lauren Tarshis, *I Survived the Japanese Tsunami 2011* show trauma, spirit and survival are all tied to human memory in the context of disaster. Ben uses his memories as an emotional anchor and a guide to stay alive in the disaster. In moments of doubt and fear, the memories of his fatherpush Ben to stay calm, regulate his anxiety and remind him to act with courage. Thus, personal memory becomes a quiet companion in solitude, which rekindles his inner strength to tackle the disasters. The novel also talks about the importance of family and the resilience of the people. The anguish of Ben over the loss of his loved ones emphasises the emotional turmoil left by disasters, yet his journey towards resilience highlights the strength of the familial bonds and memories associated with it. In the same way, the commitment of Ojisan showcases how important it is to be resilient during the crisis. The trait is not only an individual one, but it is also based on hope, cooperation and solidarity. In conclusion, this paper talks about how the personal memory of the father serves as a force that uplifts Ben during a time of crisis. The novel also shows how children's literature engages young readers to cultivate empathy, awareness, and emotional preparedness. Overall, this paper stresses the importance of personal memory, family, and resilience amidst disasters.

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Feminist Rights in Maya Angelou's *"Still I Rise,"* *"Men,"* *"Phenomenal Woman,"* *"Woman Work,"* and *"Equality"*

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Abstract

Literature refers to written works that have artistic or intellectual value, often using language in creative and expressive ways. It can be creative and imaginative writing, which helps readers to engage intellectually and emotionally through the written works. It can be based on someone's own experience, struggles and hardships faced by the author, it reflects the culture, social, political and economic realities. It can be in any form like novels, dramas, prose, poems, short stories, fables and so on. It provides aesthetic pleasure to the readers. Newspapers, scholarly publications, religious texts, press releases, and spreadsheets are examples of informative works that are typically not regarded as literature. There are two types of literature: fiction and non-fiction. Literature may have both positive and harmful influences on a culture. It is an essential component of the self-realisation of man and a representation of his successes and failures. It describes the character and destination of the human being. Feminism is a political, economic, or cultural movement that aims to obtain equal rights and legal safeguards for women. It involves a variety of political, sociological, and philosophical theories dealing with issues related to gender differences. Maya Angelou explains the definition of equality of rights as the guarantee that all persons are given an equal opportunity to achieve their potential and apply their skills. She states that no one should suffer reduced life chances based on their country of origin, religion, or disability. Equality acknowledges the historical pattern of certain groups defined by race, disability, gender, and sexual orientation facing institutional discrimination. The poems "Still I Rise," "Men," "Phenomenal Woman," "Woman Work," and "Equality" elicit the state of women and the need for feminist rights in a bold manner. Hence, this article decodes the feminist rights represented in the select poems of Maya Angelou.

Keywords: Maya Angelou, Feminist Rights, Poems, Feminist Criticism.

Introduction

American literature is produced in the United States, and the colonies belong to it. It began in the early 17th century with the arrival of English-speaking Europeans. Washington Irving is the father of American literature. The works belonging to American literature mainly focus on economic, political and social status. Despite the disparities in their nationality, ethnicity, religion, colour, or form of government, men and women all over the world have powerful feelings and passions that are the foundation of all of the world's literature. They often focused on sarcasm, racism, cynicism and satire. Their language plays a major role in their protest, like *The Great Gatsby* and *The Cather in the Rye*. American literature is a relatively recent development, emerging in the wake of American independence in the 17th century after centuries of colonisation. A significant portion of its works defies conventional writing styles and themes, paving the way for innovative and

distinctive expressions. Because of British Colonialism in America, they tried to resist anything colonial, which is why traditional fashion was ignored. They are more focused on contemporary style, and writers have this modern taste in writing literary works. They attempted to create their genre by writing detective stories, science fiction, and techniques similar to the father of detective stories, Edgar Allan Poe. Edgar Allan Poe's works on mysterious settings and detective stories: *The Rue Morgue Murders*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, and *The Purloined Letter*.

Individualism, romanticism, realism, modernism, and naturalism are emphasised in literary works. Americans are concerned with the value and importance of the individual, as well as democracy. Their society has a concept known as individualist culture, which is the idea of focusing on one's own goals and desires rather than acting on behalf of a company or a group. This idea is reflected in the writings and literary works of American writers, such as Tenesse William's play, *The Glass Menagerie,* which deals with American individualism. Another American theme has this touch of the American Dream, which is the idea that anyone who wants to be successful can achieve it through their efforts, hard work, determination, and perseverance. Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* is an example of this, as he is a hardworking boy who became successful, wealthy, and famous. More themes concern social rebellion and cultural clash. Common Genres of American Literature are Fiction, Drama and Poetry. For the category of fiction, Mark Twain wrote the well-known novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). This novel discusses racism and slavery, the two topics that are American. Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind is a classic novel published in 1936. The book is known for its vivid portrayal of the South, its complex characters, and its exploration of themes like resilience, societal change, and the impact of war. Yankee Doodle, The Epilogue, and Nathan Hale are only a few of the poems mentioned. American literature commonly delves into themes involving the journey from innocence to awareness, seeking the American dream, the role of land and the frontier, and hero versus community dynamics. This journey of change is at the core of many stories. Think about almost any novel you've ever read, in class or otherwise; think about the main character. It is most likely that this person was subjected to experiences that deeply changed their personality. At the end of the story, it is safe to say that the main character has become a very different individual from who they were initially. This is a common theme throughout American literature. Characters like Santiago, John Proctor, Huck Finn, and Biff Loman, whom you will meet this year, all go through their own journey of innocence to awareness. For some, as you will discover, the journey is to their destruction, as they are forever altered by what happens to them. For others, however, the journey is ultimately positive, as they are made stronger by their trials. After the American Renaissance, modernism emerged as the most significant and prolific literary era in American literature. Because Americans accepted innovation and technology by the middle of the 1900s, the era became known as Modernism. After the brutality and fear of the Civil War, enormous advancements in science, technology, and industry served as a beacon of hope for America. Realism was expanded upon by modernism, but in a deeper sense.

World War I and its perplexity drew the attention of many writers during this time. Boldness, hope, and dread were prevalent themes in the books, poetry, and short stories that were written during this time. The development of theatre writing in American literature also started around this time. Some of the notable names in American literature include John Smith, known for his contribution to some of the first literary works; Phillis Wheatley, who is credited with writing the first novel by an African American; Edgar Allan Poe, a

renowned exponent of the Romantic era; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a renowned poet; Emily Dickinson, who wrote poetry during a time that was largely dominated by male authors; Mark Twain, celebrated for his humor and realistic accounts; Ernest Hemingway, a novelist who vividly described the disillusionment of the Lost Generation; and Toni Morrison, who centered her stories on the Black experience and was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1993.

Life of Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou, born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri, and died on May 28, 2014, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, was an American poet, memoirist, and actress whose autobiographies explored themes of economic, racial, and sexual oppression. Maya Angelou's life was anything but ordinary. Born in St. Louis in 1928, she spent much of her childhood in Stamps, Arkansas, where she was raised by her paternal grandmother. The racial tensions of the segregated South shaped her early worldview, but it was personal trauma that would leave the deepest mark. At just eight years old, Angelou was raped by her mother's boyfriend. In the aftermath, when she spoke up about the assault, he was killed—an event that left her so deeply shaken that she stopped speaking for nearly five years. It was during this period of silence that she developed a profound sensitivity to language, absorbing the power of words long before she would wield them herself. Her groundbreaking 1969 autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, was a raw and unflinching account of these early years, offering readers an intimate look at racism, sexual violence, and resilience. The book wasn't just a memoir; it was a revolution in literary history—one of the first to openly explore Black womanhood in America. It faced bans and controversy, yet its impact was undeniable, earning a National Book Award nomination and cementing Angelou's place as a literary force. But writing was just one facet of Angelou's astonishing career. She was a dancer, a singer, and even a calypso performer before finding her true calling as a writer. She worked as a cook, a streetcar conductor—the first Black woman to do so in San Francisco and, at one point, even engaged in sex work to survive. Far from hiding this chapter of her life, Angelou later spoke about it candidly, refusing to let shame dictate her story. By the late 1950s, she had moved to New York City, where the Harlem Writers Guild encouraged her to pursue her literary ambitions. But her journey was never linear— she was also an actress, performing in a State Department-sponsored tour of Gershwin's Porgy and Bess, which took her to 22 countries. Alongside these creative pursuits, she trained with modern dance legends Martha Graham and Pearl Primus, and in 1961, she took on a role in Jean Genet's play *The Blacks*, which became a landmark production for Black theatre.

Maya's time in Africa further shaped her political and intellectual development. Encouraged by a South African activist she briefly married, Angelou moved to Cairo, where she worked as a journalist for the *Arab Observer*. Later, she relocated to Ghana and joined The African Review, embedding herself in the expatriate community that included figures like Malcolm X and W. E. B. Du Bois's widow, Shirley Graham Du Bois. It was during these years that she witnessed firsthand the connections between the American civil rights movement and African liberation struggles, a theme that would echo throughout her later works. Returning to the U.S. in the mid-1960s, Angelou threw herself into civil rights activism, working alongside both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Though devastated by their assassinations, she did not retreat from public life. Instead, she expanded her artistic and intellectual reach, hosting *Black Blues*, *Black*, a television series on African cultural influence in America, and becoming one of the first Black women to write a screenplay for a

feature film with *Georgia, Georgia (1972)*. Her acting career flourished as well, with roles in *Roots (1977) and Poetic Justice (1993),* and she even earned a Tony Award nomination for *Look Away (1973).* Yet, for all her achievements in film and television, it was poetry that defined Angelou's later years. Collections like *And Still I Rise (1978)* and *Phenomenal Woman (1995)* showcased her signature blend of lyrical power, personal history, and political urgency. Her poetry was deeply rooted in Black oral traditions, gospel rhythms, and the cadences of spoken word, making her work both accessible and profound.

When Bill Clinton invited her to read a poem at his 1993 inauguration, Angelou became only the second poet in history to hold such an honour. Her poem, On *the Pulse of Morning*, was a call for unity and renewal, a vision of a more inclusive America. Later, she would commemorate Nelson Mandela's death with *His Day Is Done,* and she marked the 50th anniversary of the United Nations with *A Brave and Startling Truth.* Despite never earning a conventional college degree, Angelou was named a professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in 1981, where she remained a beloved figure for decades. Her influence extended beyond academia, earning her more than 50 honorary degrees, three Grammy Awards for her spoken-word albums, and, in 2011, the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian honour in the United States. Even in her final years, Angelou remained an active voice in public life, offering wisdom through works like *Letter to My Daughter (2008),* a collection of essays and reflections addressed to the generations of women she had inspired. She was a storyteller, a truth-teller, and a force of nature, an artist who transformed pain into poetry, struggle into strength, and life into legend.

Feminist Analysis of Maya Angelou's Poems

The part offers a feminist analysis of Maya Angelou's poems: "*Still I Rise," "Men," "Phenomenal Woman," "Woman Work," and "Equality*." Angelou promotes the need for women's education to survive in a patriarchal world, claiming that women must be given the same level of education as men. She also calls for equality in the workplace, especially in terms of wage equality between the sexes. In addition, Angelou believes that no human should undergo physical or verbal abuse since all humans are equal in God's and the community's sight. It gives a comprehensive outline of literary history, encompassing American literature, as well as an account of the author's life and writings. It discusses a feminist critique of Angelou's chosen poems on the themes of fighting for the rights of women, confidence in oneself, and appreciation of inner beauty, with emphasis on her conviction about the excellence of her own abilities compared to men. It also brings the discourse to a conclusion by carefully recapitulating and consolidating the salient points expounded within the main chapter, thus affording a cohesive overview that blends the central strands and observations.

Mary Wollstonecraft suggests that feminism involves cultural and political aspects. Feminist movements have fought for many rights of women, such as the right to vote, to hold public office, to enter employment, to get fair wages, to own property, to access education, to make legal contracts, to have equal rights under marriage, and to gain maternity leave. The writer takes a feminist approach to argue for the equality of rights of women in political, economic, social, psychological, personal, and aesthetic domains. Thematic engagement invites feminist readers to identify with female characters and their concerns. The aim is to challenge dominant assumptions and dissect patriarchal ideologies inherent in literature that is largely male-written.

Feminism has revolutionised dominant thinking in many aspects of Western society, including law and culture. Feminist activists have struggled for women's legal rights,

including contract rights, property rights, and voting rights; for women's autonomy and physical integrity, including abortion rights and access to reproductive health care; for the rights of women and girls to be protected from domestic violence, sexual harassment, and assault; for labor rights such as maternity leave and equal pay; and against misogyny and other gender-based discrimination. Traditionally, most feminist theories and movements have been led by white middle-class women from Western Europe and North America. Yet, women of different racial groups have developed alternative feminist voices since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech to American feminists. The momentum behind these other feminisms picked up pace in the 1960s, paralleling the United States Civil Rights movement and the African, Caribbean, Latin American, and Southeast Asian decolonisation movements.

Women from erstwhile European colonies and the Third World have thereafter championed postcolonial and Third World feminisms. Postcolonial feminists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty are critical of Western feminism for its ethnocentrism. This view is shared by black feminists like Angela Davis and Alice Walker. From *Still I Rise:* "You may shoot me with your words / You may cut me with your eyes / You may kill me with your hatefulness / But still, like air, I'll rise" (Angelou 21-24)

Simone de Beauvoir made the observation in her study of feminist history that the earliest woman to be found defending her gender in writing was Christine de Pizan, who wrote Epitre au Dieu d'Amour (Epistle to the God of Love) in the 15th century. In the 16th century, writers such as Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Modesta di Pozzo di Forzi helped shape feminist theory. The 17th century is witness to Marie Le Jars de Gournay, Anne Bradstreet, and Francois Poullain de la Barre. Feminists and scholars divide the history of the feminist movement into three distinct waves. The first wave is more specifically linked with the women's suffrage movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries, addressing the right to vote. The second wave involved the women's liberation movement, which sprouted up during the 1960s, promoting women's legal and social rights. The third wave, starting in the 1990s, is both a continuation and a reaction to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism.

Poetry of Maya Angelou in Educational Aspect

This chapter analyses the educational aspect of Maya Angelou's poem Men, specifically looking at the lines: "As men walked up and down the street. Wino men, old men / Young men sharp as mustard / See them. Men are always / Going somewhere" (Angelou, 3-6). In these words, Angelou imparts the idea that men have the liberty to move freely within their surroundings, whereas the sentence young men sharp as mustard" compares men to mustard, which is a different spice that adds richness to food. This comparison implies that men are even considered more precious than women in society, so Angelou emphasises the significance of female education in the modern age. Angelou hopes that women all over the world will take up education because she believes that more education makes women more respected by men. Education is a sign of respect, and Angelou believes in the abolition of educational discrimination for women, saying that both sexes need education their whole lives through. Sadly, societal expectations confine education to men and keep women as housewives.

Poetry of Maya Angelou in Occupational Aspect

The theme of occupation in Maya Angelou's poem *Still I Rise* is discussed in this chapter, and specifically through the lines: "You may shoot me with your words / You may cut me with your eyes / You may kill me with your hatefulness / But still, like air, I'll rise" (Angelou 21-24). In *Still I Rise,* Angelou expresses the strength of women who, despite

being subjected to verbal and emotional abuse by men, overcome such adversity, similar to the buoyancy of air. On the other hand, there is a common perception among men that women are not capable of leadership, and they often perceive them as weak by nature and unable to run businesses. This illusion prevents the recognition that women can lead and manage businesses just as well as men, given that they have similar skills. In today's world, women often face obstacles in reaching the pinnacle of their careers. When they reach forty, most women are not satisfied with their career paths. This question has two aspects: one concerning the continuing significance of feminist issues in the workplace, and the other, how leaving a job causes women to become stifled by the tedium of life at home as homemakers. Angelou would want women to gain employment in the business or governmental sectors and thereby free them from the misogynistic comments of men. Angelou seeks to demonstrate that women can gain financial independence without turning to prostitution, even though she herself has had experience in that area for two years. Since prostitution is illegal, the economic benefits derived from it are not long-lasting. Thus, women must seek decent professions to counteract the exploitation they suffer at the hands of men. The author supports occupational equality, claiming that men and women must be treated as equals. She stresses the need to eschew segregationist tendencies, confirming that everyone is equal. The speaker introduces herself and states her capability to face her opponent. She radiates life, as opposed to her opponent's hopelessness. Comparing herself to natural elements like the moon, sun, and tides, which rise again after every fall, she speaks of hope and perseverance. Angelou uses deictic terms to claim her presence and state that there is no force that can suppress her. Using temporal deixis in the fourth stanza, she emphasises her victory over male domination.

The stanza begins with a rhetorical question, followed by two more questions that are posed in the past tense: "Did you want to see me broken? / Bowed head and lowered eyes? " (Angelou 13-14). The speaker neither asks men the purpose behind actions against women, since she is keenly aware of it. With this organisation, she is presenting a feeling of defiance, one that implies even though men attempted to subvert her, they failed because she has not been defeated and stands strong now. By asking three rhetorical questions, she is reminding them that attempts at making women weak and forcing them to submit have been in vain. She changes to the present tense with her questions in the lines to follow. This move demonstrates the dichotomy of how men attempted to control her before and what she is capable of today, displaying self-assurance. Her current state of pride and happiness is a direct rebuke to the brutality of men, which she captures in the following stanza: "You may shoot me with your words / You may cut me with your eyes / You may kill me with your hatefulness" (Angelou 21-23). In this, she concisely captures male aggression against women through strong verbs like shoot, cut, kill, and hate. The stanza culminates in a bold declaration, a sentiment of defiance that resonates throughout the remainder of the poem, with the phrase I rise reiterated seven times.

Angelou artfully structures a series of words that portray men's attempts to take away women's vibrancy, fundamental human life, and independence. However, when faced with opposition, she continues and stands firm. The name of the poem, *And Still I Rise,* forcefully emphasises her strength, especially since it starts with the conjunction and, which is a straightforward answer to the many injustices she has suffered at the hands of men, some of which are mentioned in the poem and the above paragraph. At the end of the poem, she also expresses hope, describing herself as a woman who has gone through a lot of challenges but never gave up. She compares herself to an ocean, which comes back up after every fall, just

like the persistent waves. She has passed through the darkness into the light, towards a brighter future. In so doing, she becomes a symbol of hope and resistance for women who still suffer oppression.

In *Phenomenal Woman*, Angelou references another chapter in the same narrative. In this, womanhood is compared to a book where every page presents a different story. This specific story deals with a woman struggling not just with issues brought against her by men but also those brought by her own gender. In her initial poem, *And Still I Rise,* Angelou tackles racism, pointing out the persecution of women by men, and very briefly touches on intra-racism, wherein women turn against each other. From "Phenomenal Woman": "I'm a woman, phenomenally, phenomenal woman, that's me" (Angelou 10-13). She uses the first-person pronoun thirty times in the course of the poem to define her self-image and herself. The refrain, "I'm a woman, phenomenally, phenomenal woman, that's me" (Angelou 10-13), is repeated at the end of the three stanzas. She delves into her relationships with both men and women and places these in a sociohistorical context. Her everyday experiences tend to put her into difficult situations that force her to move in an intricate world. In the last stanza, the speaker also addresses the dilemmas she undergoes in the patriarchal society. Men seldom understand women, and even when trying to explain who they are, tend to fail as they cannot depict their real form. She screams that she is a human being, that she is made up of physical matter (body) and soul, but men do not hear her, so the spiritual aspect remains a mystery:

> **I've got the children to tend**
> **The clothes to mend**
> **The floor to mop**
> **The food to shop**
> **Then the chicken to fry**
> **The baby to dry**
> **I got company to feed**
> **The garden to weed. (Angelou 1-8)**

The poem "*Woman Work*" is written in poetic form. Maya Angelou attempts to express the indispensable work of women towards balancing their day-to-day chores. A woman cannot be dependent only on her husband, as various daily requirements need to be taken care of, ranging from food, poultry, and infant feeds to cleaning floors, mending clothes, taking care of children, and caring for gardens. Angelou states that a woman can do anything, not just at home but anywhere else; she is strong. Here, we are introduced to a woman who constantly works for everyone around her and enjoys keeping everything neat and pleasant-looking. The first stanza presents a caring figure, a devoted mother who rests only to prepare herself for the trials of a new day, providing a warm home and happy experiences for her family. She cares for her children, cooks, goes shopping for essentials, does laundry, cleans the house, and nurses the sick. Her numerous contributions render it impossible for her to be forgotten, even for an instant. She starts by counting her domestic chores, naming fourteen activities in fourteen poetic lines without any grammatical or stylistic breaks; there is no punctuation until the end of the stanza, where a period is finally added. This stylistic move accentuates the ease with which women accomplish these daily chores, noting that they do not need to pause to think about their labour. It is easy for a woman to remember her life's work. Most interestingly, there is music to her language; she sings. What an amazing creature! A woman! A mother! Throughout the next four stanzas, she uses apostrophes to speak to pieces of nature, such as the sun, rain, snow, and mountains.

She feels intensely alone, abandoned and unhelped; she turns to nature for comfort. She asks nature to give her strength and comfort (cool my brow again), to blow her away from the tireless and exhausting ground for a night of rest (storm, blow me away from here), and to give her a night of peace (let me rest tonight). Unfortunately, a caring mother does not have a human companion! She is forced to find refuge in nature, since it is not available to her people. In the poem *And Still I Rise*, she compares herself to natural elements like the moon and sun, and also uses elements like fire in *Phenomenal Woman.* Nature is the source of her energy, sleep, and happiness in most of her poems.

In the poem, she does not show weariness of her everyday chores since she views them as her responsibilities; however, she resents the human race (men) for their inability to appreciate her physical and mental exertions. As a mother and wife, she feels very lonely. As such, at the end of the poem, she turns to the natural world and classifications, leaving out human beings, declaring that they are all she can call her own (You are all that I can call my own). She condemns the insensitivity of human beings to a woman who invests her entire life in providing comfort and tranquillity to others.

Poetry of Maya Angelou in Social Aspect

The social aspect in Maya Angelou's poem *Still I Rise* deserves examination in this chapter, specifically the meaning of the line: "You can tread me in very dirt, but still, like dust, I'll rise."(Angelou 3-4). This statement means that no matter what, she will rise even when men see women as nothing but dust. This feeling provokes insult and public humiliation against women. In society, Angelou says, discrimination against both men and women is not acceptable. She supports equal status for all people. Even though she feels inferior to men in society, she remains firm in her will to rise, no matter what obstacles face her. Men tend to believe that women are less competent than men, proposing a system where men are superior and women inferior in society. It is, however, important to note that men and women ought to be treated equally because men do not have the power to belittle women.

In her poem "*Still I Rise*," Maya Angelou declares, "I am the dream and the hope of the slave" (Angelou 36). This declaration reflects her determination to abolish slavery throughout the world and establishes her position as a champion of human rights. Angelou poetically pictures a society that does not have slavery, reminding us that such a practice is inherently contrary to the rights of people in society. With my own feminist actions, I seek to end slavery and advocate for the acknowledgement of women of different backgrounds as equal human beings.

In the poem "Men," Angelou states, "Their shoulders high like the / Breast of a young girl" (Angelou 10-11). In this, she describes a vision of social equality between men and women. The metaphor of muscular shoulders represents men's work, whereas the use of women's breasts represents women's nurturing aspect. Angelou underlines the point that men do not need to overpower women by comparing shoulder strength with the gentleness of breasts. This contrast appeals to the reader because of its obviousness and normality. Angelou, in *Phenomenal Woman* expresses that she believes that men, being bees surrounding a hive, ought to defend women. Having encountered trauma when young, Angelou wishes to denounce rape and sexual abuse by arguing that those offences are, by definition, unconstitutional. Most women are not aware that they have been restricted by masculine definitions of femininity. The dominant stereotype of strong men and fragile women has had a great impact on women's thinking. According to some feminists, the existence of women's literature refutes the supremacy of men's stories. Female sexuality is

described as revolutionary, subversive, multifaceted, and free; if there is a feminine principle, it should be defined outside male definitions. The word wanton, combined with the words 'moving from man to man,' implies that the speaker is like a prostitute or is viewed as one in her own life: "You proclaim my ways are wanton / that I fly from man to man / But if I'm merely a shadow to you / could you ever comprehend?" (Angelou, 11-14). Interestingly, rather than refuting the accusation, the narrator counters with another claim: that those who judge their actions lack the capacity to understand the circumstances that allow for such behaviour. The vocabulary used is powerful. The speaker identifies themselves as "shadows" in the eyes of their accuser, showing an assumed inferiority in the social ranks. However, they state that the judgment of the accuser is based on ignorance, bringing home the metaphorical gap between them. This way, the speaker advances their position by maintaining their decision rather than refuting the charges. Angelou seeks to portray men and women in society.

The poem *Still I Rise* provides an intersectional perspective towards oppression that is essential to any feminist critique. It is especially important to Black feminism because it speaks to the complicated interactions of race and gender instead of isolating gender alone. The term intersectionality, developed by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, speaks to how these different types of oppression, e.g., racism and sexism, intersect to shape the specific experience of marginalised persons, specifically Black women. Angelou's poetry powerfully captures this tangled fight.

Bell Hooks and Audre Lorde are prominent feminist theorists who have highlighted the need to acknowledge particular struggles under feminism, historically shaped by middle-class white considerations. Black feminism is an ideology that centres upon the reclaiming of agency, as seen with Angelou declaring to have gone beyond these representations. At the root of resistance among women against patriarchal dominance lies a tone of defiance expressed quite vividly in *Still I Rise*. Angelou pushes against the structures of power which utilize economic relegation, prevailing mores, and stereotypes as weapons to belittle women generally and Black women in particular. Throughout history, Black women were projected as fierce or submissive beings whose displays of assertiveness and self-confidence were ignored or demonised. Angelou takes back these characteristics as positives instead of negatives. The rhetorical question raised invites the audience to consider why an empowered and confident woman, a Black woman at that, would be seen as threatening. The reclaiming of the female body and sexuality is a major theme in *Still I Rise*. Historically, patriarchal cultures have used women's bodies as tools of control, objectification, and devaluation. Angelou rebukes puritanical and misogynistic sentiments that attempt to shame women for celebrating their bodies by offering a positive and unapologetic representation of female sexuality.

Feminist theorists like Bell Hooks and Judith Butler have maintained that the freedom of women is dependent on restoring bodily autonomy. By describing sexuality as joyful, powerful, and intimate, Angelou rebukes patriarchal constructs that attempt to limit or discredit women's self-value. In the past, women and particularly women of color have encountered extreme difficulties surrounding poverty and economic disenfranchisement. The ongoing focus on ascension indicates not merely a dismissal of economic marginality but also an assertion of financial and social independence. Furthermore, Angelou's use of natural imagery, e.g., dust, air, and tides emphasize the imminence of this rise. This is representative of the feminist belief in the unrelenting push toward gender equality, regardless of the existence of historical and systemic barriers. *Still I Rise* asserts strength and collective

resilience, another key element of feminism. Feminist movements that highlight the strength of female solidarity are in resonance with this regard for ancestral strength. Black feminist movements specifically have emphasised the value of communal support and intergenerational knowledge transfer as a way to battle structural injustice. Feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and Angela Davis have emphasised the importance of both historical and current feminist movements being inclusive and based on the experiences of oppressed communities. Angelou's acknowledgement of her ancestors' hardships is a powerful reminder that endurance is a shared effort, constructed upon the successes and sacrifices of previous generations, and not solely an individual trait.

Hardships and Injustice to Women

The hardships and injustices that women, especially Black women, have experienced in America are reflected in Maya Angelou's life and writings. Angelou highlighted racial and gender-based discrimination through her activism, autobiographies, and poetry. She wrote candidly about experiencing childhood sexual assault, a subject that many women face but have traditionally been stigmatised from discussing. Numerous essential feminist tenets are embodied in Maya Angelou's life and writings, especially those focusing on self-expression, intersectionality, empowerment, and resilience. Women's empowerment and self-worth are among Angelou's most prominent feminist themes. Her poem *Phenomenal Woman* is a bold statement that embraces a woman's innate strength and rejects conventional notions of beauty. Feminist Principle, rather than fitting in with what society expects of them, women ought to establish themselves according to their own standards. Maya Angelou wishes all women who are interested in educational success. In terms of educational rights equality, men and women are equal. Angelou is a human rights activist in addition to being a writer. She wishes to use her literary work to advocate for human rights. Angelou wished to abolish slavery worldwide, particularly in the United States.

Maya Angelou, in her poem, *Still I Rise* acknowledges that the bitter lies of those who seek to oppress her may have distorted her image in history. They trampled her name into the ground, but she will still rise like the dust. She inquires whether her sassy demeanour has offended anyone. She walks with the assurance of someone who has oil wells pumping in her room, asking why they are so upset. She will rise with the same certainty as the sun, moon, and tides, with her hopes high. The poem, *Men* begins with an unidentified speaker, widely assumed to be Angelou herself, expressing her desire to watch behind the curtains at the men walking through town. Maya Angelou, in her poem, *Still I Rise* acknowledges that the bitter lies of those who seek to oppress her may have distorted her image in history. They trampled her name into the ground, but she will still rise like the dust. She inquires whether her sassy demeanour has offended anyone. She walks with the assurance of someone who has oil wells pumping in her room, asking why they are so upset. She will rise with the same certainty as the sun, moon, and tides, with her hopes high.

The poem, *Men* begins with an unidentified speaker, widely assumed to be Angelou herself, expressing her desire to watch behind the curtains at the men walking through town. As expressed in her works and personal experiences, Maya Angelou places a strong emphasis on emotional fortitude, respect, and mutual empowerment in the connection between men and women. She praised love, relationships, and self-worth while also acknowledging the difficulties and injustices in partnerships. According to Angelou, respect and appreciation for one another should be the foundation of a healthy relationship rather than dominance or submission. According to Angelou, a healthy relationship should be built on mutual respect and admiration rather than control or obedience. Before looking for love from a guy, she

thought women should learn to love themselves. Angelou's autobiographical works, including *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, explore both the joys and struggles of relationships. She experienced heartbreak and betrayal in her own life, yet she never portrayed love as entirely negative—rather, she saw it as a journey of learning and growth. Although Angelou recognised gender-based discrimination, she also appreciated solid marriages. She understood that, especially in patriarchal cultures, men frequently possessed greater authority in relationships. She tackles issues of exploitation and abuse in some of her pieces, which mirror the realities that many women encounter. Men's opinions on Maya Angelou's viewpoint differ greatly based on their views on equality, relationships, and gender. In addition to questioning established power structures, Angelou's writings value personal connection, love, and resiliency. Here are some possible interpretations of her viewpoint by various men, men who advocate for equality and feminism.

Angelou's support of gender equality and emphasis on respect for one another in relationships are admirable to many men. Those who uphold traditional gender roles may view her strong position on women's self-sufficiency as dangerous. Men who are motivated by her work. Men who are looking to grow personally find resonance in Angelou's teachings on love, resiliency, and self-improvement. She is a universal source of inspiration because her lessons on overcoming adversity apply not only to women but to anybody attempting to overcome obstacles. Leaders and activists respect Angelou's role in civil rights movements, where she worked alongside men like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Maya Angelou's viewpoint encourages men to pursue equality, love, and resiliency while also pushing them to reflect more deeply on their roles in gender dynamics. Her criticisms of male privilege may make some men uneasy, but others welcome her insight as a manual for developing into more sympathetic and capable people. They recognise that her feminist ideals do not exclude men but rather encourage collaboration for a more just society. In Maya Angelou's poetry, women are strong, resilient, self-assured, and graceful, frequently going against what society expects of them. She highlights both challenges and victories while celebrating womanhood in all its manifestations via her art. These are some salient features of women in her poems.

Femininity and Sensuality

Angelou's women proudly display their sexiness and are at ease with their bodies. Instead of apologising for their existence, they attract attention with their energy, charisma, and wisdom rather than merely their physical attractiveness.

The poem "Equality" by Maya Angelou makes a strong point on the value of justice, inclusivity, and dismantling structural injustice. The poem is extremely pertinent to the Civil Rights Movement and feminist principles since it advocates for true equality amongst races, genders, and marginalised populations. Maya Angelou discusses the importance of equality for all people. Angelou contends that we will not be able to achieve true greatness as a nation until everyone is treated equally. She encourages her readers to fight for equality for all people, regardless of race, gender, or religious beliefs.

The poem "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou is a potent statement of fortitude, self-assurance, and victory over injustice. Addressing the challenges of women, Black people, and anybody who has experienced discrimination or adversity, it is both intensely personal and inspirational for all. Through its themes of defiance, bodily autonomy, economic empowerment, and collective strength, Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" affirms the feminist principles of self-determination and resistance against patriarchal oppression. The poem's intersectional approach highlights the dual struggles of race and gender, making it a crucial

work within Black feminist thought. This poem is a powerful feminist text that speaks to the resilience of women, especially Black women, in the face of systemic oppression. For women everywhere, Angelou's resolute declaration that she will rise above historical and cultural attempts to stifle her is a source of inspiration and strength. The poem's message is still incredibly pertinent today, serving as a reminder that every act of resiliency is a win in and of itself and that feminist fights for equality and justice must continue. In this sense, the poem keeps encouraging upcoming female generations to take a position, own their strength, and overcome obstacles. By highlighting its main principles of empowerment, intersectionality, and resilience, the conclusion upholds "Still I Rise" as a feminist manifesto. It emphasises how the poem relates to the collective fight of oppressed women, especially Black women, to overcome oppression as well as to individual tenacity. This poem is an important work in intersectional feminism because the end highlights the twin problems of racism and sexism by situating the poem inside Black feminist theory. Feminist concepts of autonomy and emancipation are in line with the mention of self-determination and opposition to patriarchy. Further supporting the idea that development is meaningful even in the face of adversity is the belief that every act of resilience is a victory. Additionally, the conclusion suggests that the poem's message still inspires contemporary feminist movements, extending its importance beyond its initial context. It acknowledges the continued necessity of feminist fights against systemic inequality by presenting Angelou's writing as a source of empowerment and optimism. Angelou consistently rejects the victim narrative and replaces it with self-definition.

Conclusion

Angelou's feminism is not just about gender equality—it includes Black identity, history, and resilience. She connects racism and sexism, showing that Black women experience double oppression. This aligns with Black feminist theory, as argued by bell hooks and Kimberlé Crenshaw, who emphasise that feminism must address both racism and sexism. Traditional feminism often focused on white women's experiences, but Angelou expands the conversation. She critiques male dominance without portraying women as dependent on men. Angelou's redefining of womanhood is one of the main tenets of her feminist philosophy. Women are frequently characterised in relation to men in traditional patriarchal civilisations, either as objects of desire, carers, or subordinates. Angelou challenges these ideas by portraying women as independent individuals with innate strength. Because it acknowledges that racial oppression must be taken into account to analyse gender oppression, Angelou's feminism is profoundly intersectional. Angelou's writings draw attention to the dual burden that Black women bear, in contrast to earlier feminist movements that frequently focused on the trials of white women. When speaking about women's bodies and their agency over their sexuality, Angelou does not hold back. Reclaiming the body has been a major issue in feminist theory, particularly in contrast to the historical commodification and objectification of women. Angelou's poetry honours the sensuality of women without demeaning them. Racist and patriarchal systems have historically suppressed women, particularly Black women, and lowered their voices. Poetry by Angelou is a form of protest against this enforced quiet. Not only does Maya Angelou's poetry support women's equality, but it also calls for it. The fundamental feminist tenets of self-definition, body autonomy, intersectionality, resistance to oppression, and hope are all reflected in her work. Angelou proposes a solution based on resilience, narrative, and empowerment, which is in contrast to feminist theories that primarily concentrate on systemic critique.

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Book Review

Unraveling the Threads of Grief, Love, and Womanhood:
A Feminist Reading of *Thorns in My Quilt: Letters from a Daughter to Her Father* by Mohua Chinappa (Rupa Publications, 2024)

Reviewed by Namrata, Founder of Keemiya Creatives and Bookbots India.
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Introduction

In *Thorns in My Quilt*, Mohua Chinappa writes to her late father in letters that ache with memory, tenderness, and defiance. What begins as a private act of mourning becomes something larger, a meditation on how women are taught to grieve, to love, and to remain silent within the boundaries of family. Beneath its intimate tone, the book carries a distinctly feminist pulse. It asks what it means for women to speak when speech itself has been shaped by patriarchy, and how memory is often dismissed as sentimental or domestic, butit can be a radical act of resistance. The choice of the letter form feels deliberate and deeply political. By writing to her father, Mohua joins a lineage of South Asian women like Ismat Chughtai and Kamala Das, who turned confession into rebellion. The letter allows her to be contradictory, tender yet angry, vulnerable yet unyielding. In that space between love and resentment, she exposes the raw negotiations that define women's emotional lives.

To Father, from a Daughter

The father in *Thorns in My Quilt* is a familiar figure to many South Asian daughters, loving yet unreachable, protective yet bound by silence. Mohua Chinappa remembers him in fragments: the smell of butter cookies baked with vanilla essence, the feeling of his hand steadying hers as they walked through Shillong's rain-soaked streets. These are tender memories, but they sit beside moments of absence, his quiet withdrawal when her marriage broke, his inability to stand by her when she most needed him. That contradiction of warmth and distance coexisting is precisely what gives Mohua's narrative its power. Feminist scholar Uma Chakravarti once described patriarchy not simply as male domination, but as a system that entwines affection with control. Mohua seems to write from inside that knot. Her father is not a villain, nor a saint; he is both comfort and constraint. In choosing to portray him this way, she refuses the cultural impulse to idealize fathers or demonize them. Instead, she holds space for the uneasy truth that love can wound and nurture in the same breath.

Feminist Concerns

The ache of the absent parent hovers quietly through Mohua's letters. When her parents withdraw during her marital breakdown, their silence becomes a wound that never quite closes. For countless South Asian women, that moment feels painfully familiar with the realization that love in our families often comes with conditions, and that our grief must remain private so that family honour stays intact.There's something quietly radical about putting that silence into words. Each letter becomes an act of reclamation: of grief, of voice, of the right to speak even when no one is listening.

This tension is at the heart of the book's feminist inquiry. Mohua doesn't present her suffering as universal. She roots it in the middle-class world she knows, one where women are taught to keep up appearances, to protect the family's reputation even as their own hearts crumble. Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty has warned against flattening women's pain into a single story, and Mohua's writing embodies that awareness. Her experience is not

every woman's but it resonates with those who have lived the quiet discipline of endurance.

One of the book's most striking qualities is how it gives weight to memorynot as nostalgia, but as testimony. The smell of Shillong's rain, the glow of the government bungalow in Delhi, the lingering taste of cookies are not sentimental details. They are political. They insist that what women remember matters. As Gayatri Spivak reminds us, the voices of the marginalized are often silenced not by overt oppression but by being dismissed as trivial. Mohua turns those trivial moments into a feminist archive, showing how patriarchy seeps into the ordinary in the pauses, the unspoken, the everyday neglect.

In claiming the right to write for herself, not to comfort, not to explain, Mohua echoes Kamala Das, whose *My Story* dared to put female desire and disappointment on the page without apology. Mohua's voice trembles at times, but it never retreats. It reminds us that confession, for women, has always been a form of resistance.

Mohua Chinappa's Narrative

At the heart of Mohua Chinappa's letters lies guilt, old inheritance women are taught to carry like a second skin. It seeps into her words as she wonders whether she has spoken too much, or not enough; whether her voice itself is a betrayal. Feminist thinkers like Nivedita Menon have written about this conditioning: ***How women are trained to protect relationships even at the cost of their own truth***. Mohua's letters expose that inner struggle with startling honesty. She is both daughter and dissenter, writing through the impossible question: *How do you love your father and still speak against the silence he represents?* What makes her narrative powerful is not resolution, but refusal. She doesn't attempt to tidy her pain or offer easy forgiveness. The letters end without closure and that, too, feels radical. In a culture that prizes reconciliation and harmony, Mohua chooses complexity. She allows grief to remain jagged, love to stay imperfect, and memory to resist tidy endings. That artistic choice places *Thorns in My Quilt* squarely within the tradition of South Asian feminist writing that values process over purity, conversation over cure.

Conclusion

By the end of the book, what lingers is not just sorrow, but a quiet insistence that women's inner worlds deserve to be witnessed. Mohua invites her readers, especially women, to stop apologizing for their contradictions, to speak even when their voices tremble. Her letters remind us that liberation often begins in the smallest, most private acts: in writing, remembering, refusing to forget.

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