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## Chick Literature as a Feminist Genre: Analysing Patriarchy and Inequality in Bharti Kirchner's Narratives

**M.Vishnu Varathan**

Part-time Research Scholar,  
Department of English  
Jamal Mohamed College, Affiliated to Bharathidasan University  
Trichy-620020  
[vishnuvarathan87@gmail.com](mailto:vishnuvarathan87@gmail.com)

**Dr.Shajahan Sait**

Research Supervisor, Associate Professor of English  
Jamal Mohamed College, Affiliated to Bharathidasan University  
Trichy-620020  
[apmshajahan786@gmail.com](mailto:apmshajahan786@gmail.com)

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### Abstract:

Chick literature is a potent vehicle for feminist discourse because it often emphasises the emotional and professional lives of women. This essay examines Bharti Kirchner's *Sharmila's Book* and *Pastries: A Novel of Desserts and Discoveries* as examples of chick fiction from the perspective of feminist struggle. The Indo-American author Kirchner challenges gender inequity and patriarchal conventions ingrained in both contemporary Western society and traditional Indian culture via her female heroes. The research examines how Sharmila and Sunya establish their identities and individuality while navigating dowry customs, professional competitiveness, and cultural expectations. Kirchner highlights the tenacity of women in overcoming sociocultural hurdles and challenges posed by repressive institutions through their hardships and victories. These stories highlight self-discovery, independence, and empowerment—all important themes in chick literature—and show how women's roles are changing in global situations. This study argues that Kirchner's writings represent chick literature not only as a commercial genre but also as a form of literary activism that challenges and reshapes gender relations, drawing on feminist ideas by authors such as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. Ultimately, it demonstrates how chick lit can lend a voice to women's experiences and aspirations, thereby contributing to the broader feminist movement.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Gender Inequality, Feminist Resistance, Dowry System, Female Empowerment, Cultural Identity, Immigrant Experience, Social Transformation

### Introduction

Chick literature, often known as "chick lit," has evolved from its beginnings as humorous fiction that focuses on the lives of young women into a potent storytelling genre that challenges gender norms and critiques patriarchal systems. Chick lit, which was first made famous by books like Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City*, was

sometimes written down as escapist or shallow. However, in the last several decades, it has developed into a genre that can tackle important female topics, such as resistance, identity, and autonomy (Faludi, 1991). This change has created space for a variety of perspectives, particularly those of multicultural and diasporic authors, who utilise the genre to address structural injustices and cultural tensions in addition to providing entertainment.

One such author is Indo-American novelist Bharti Kirchner, whose writings significantly contribute to the evolving conversation in chick lit. Kirchner, who was born in Kolkata and grew up in India before moving to the United States, infuses her work with an international perspective. The intricacies of immigrant identity, gender norms, and the balancing act between tradition and modernity are often explored in her work. According to Dr. N. Sumathi (2021), Kirchner emphasises the difficulties South Asian women face in negotiating patriarchal structures in both their home countries and Western cultures through her female characters. Kirchner celebrates the strength and independence of women while criticising restrictive traditions, such as dowries, through figures like Sunya and Sharmila Sen.

*Pastries: A Novel of Desserts and Discoveries* (2003) and *Sharmila's Book* (1999) are two of Kirchner's best-known works in this regard. The main character in *Sharmila's book* is an Indian lady from Chicago, who must deal with the demands of an arranged marriage and the painful realities of her fiancé's past. This novel examines issues of cultural hybridity, personal autonomy, and the tension between family obligations and individual aspirations. Similarly, *Pastries* centres on Sunya, a bakery entrepreneur in Seattle, who must manage intricate personal connections while protecting her company from corporate intrusion. These books serve as excellent examples of how modern chick lit can transcend romantic clichés and delve into feminist issues in depth.

The main themes in Kirchner's stories are identity development, female resistance, gender injustice, and patriarchy. In addition to being essential to heroines' experiences, these themes also reflect the broader societal realities that women in all countries must confront. By opposing outdated traditions, such as dowries, or claiming their professional independence in environments where men dominate, Kirchner's female protagonists fight oppression in various ways. Their experiences tie closely to what Simone de Beauvoir called "the other", in which women find it difficult to claim their subjectivity in a society dominated by males (Beauvoir, 1949). However, Kirchner's heroes actively fight injustice, which sets them apart from the conventional literary depictions of women as helpless victims and makes them representative of feminist resistance.

This study seeks to show how chick literature serves as a vehicle for sociocultural criticism, in addition to being an entertainment medium, by analysing these works from a feminist perspective. By providing a voice to women torn between tradition and modernity, Kirchner's stories advance worldwide feminist conversation by providing a complex representation of empowerment based on individual agency and cultural negotiation.

### **Thematic Analysis**

#### **A. Patriarchy and Gender Inequality**

##### **Dowry System in *Sharmila's Book***

The dowry system, which still exists in both traditional Indian culture and its diasporic offshoots, is one of the most prevalent manifestations of patriarchy in Bharti Kirchner's book. When the heroine, Sharmila Sen, learns that her parents, who have been in the US for decades, plan to provide a dowry for her marriage to Raj, she challenges this long-standing tradition (Sumathi, 2021). This act demonstrates how patriarchal traditions, based on social expectations

and cultural memory, often endure beyond geographic borders.

Sharmila questions and fiercely opposes the validity of this practice.

“Why should a man demand money or goods to marry a woman? Why should a woman permit money to measure her worth, especially when the money goes entirely to her husband’s family without a paise for her?” (*Sharmila’s Book*, p. 36).

Her resistance represents a larger feminist criticism of patriarchal institutions' commodification of women. The conflict between generational norms and contemporary aspirations, particularly among immigrant families, is reflected in her parents' fight to maintain antiquated rituals. This disagreement highlights how even well-intentioned parents may unwittingly support gender inequality by adhering to customs that treat women as nothing more than commodities, as Sumathi (2021) points out.

### **Male Dominance in Marriage and Professional Life**

The obligations imposed on women in marriage and the workplace, in addition to dowry, are clear examples of male dominance. The story in *Sharmila’s Book* criticises the power disparity in arranged weddings, where women are supposed to be "flexible, understanding, and selfless", but males often set the conditions (Sumathi, 2021, p. 57). Sharmila is aware of these uneven processes, as seen in her reflections:

“The husband goes when and where he pleases and does whatever his heart desires. The wife is a support system first, a lover second or may be, a second lover” (*Sharmila’s Book*, p. 220).

This quotation emphasises how women in married relationships are denied agency. Similarly, Sunya in *Pastries* encounters male dominance in both her personal and professional life. She is not consulted when her boyfriend, Roger, makes choices that affect their shared house (Sumathi, 2021). These portrayals demonstrate how patriarchy restricts women's autonomy in various contexts, including at home, in romantic relationships, and in the workplace.

### **B. Female Resistance and Empowerment**

#### **Sharmila’s Bold Stance Against Arranged Marriage Norms**

Sharmila shows herself as a strong opponent of patriarchal conventions. She aggressively questions the roles assigned to her rather than passively accepting them. She is aware of Raj's shortcomings, including his past as a womaniser, despite their premarital relationship (Sumathi, 2021). Because of this insight, she was able to critically assess marriage as an institution rather than simply her spouse.

By asserting her individuality and challenging the fundamentals of arranged marriage, she defies the urge to fit into a romanticised vision of the submissive bride. Her audacity exemplifies the fundamental goal of feminism, as stated by Susan Faludi (1991): “to free women to define themselves instead of having their identity defined for them, time and again, by their culture and their men” (p. 116).

Beyond the personal, Sharmila's refusal becomes a symbolic act of resistance that encourages other women to re-evaluate their positions within patriarchal systems. According to Sumathi (2021), Kirchner makes Sharmila a change agent by using her as a spokesperson to reaffirm women's autonomy.

#### **Sunya’s Fight Against Cartdale in *Pastries***

Another instance of female resistance, this time in a professional setting, is shown in *Pastries* by Sunya's battle against Cakes Plus owner Cartdale. Sunya, who owns a small bakery in Seattle, must protect her company against unfair competition and corporate intrusion. She does not give up, even though she is a woman in a profession dominated by men. For example,

Sunya declined Cartdale's offer to purchase the bakery, saying: "Everything changes. All that I stand for vanishes... No, Dushan, I will not sell my bakery." (*Pastries*, p. 77)

Her will to maintain control over her identity and career is embodied at this moment. Her perseverance is demonstrated by her reluctance to give in to traditional male-dominated business methods, which also serves as a metaphor for the larger fight among women for economic emancipation.

### **Both Protagonists Challenge Societal Expectations**

Through their deeds, Sharmila and Sunya both subvert social norms. Sunya challenges biased preconceptions about women in the workplace, while Sharmila opposes patriarchal marital traditions. Simone de Beauvoir's claim in *The Second Sex* (1949) is reflected in their travels: "To decline to be the other, to refuse to be a party to the deal—this would be for women to renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste."

Both heroines represent female opposition by rejecting these connections and claiming their individuality.

### **C. Identity Formation in a Transnational Context**

#### **Struggle Between Indian Tradition and American Modernity**

Sharmila and Sunya, both Indo-American women, manage multifaceted identities influenced by two cultures. They continually negotiate between Indian culture and American modernity, living in their nexus. As she battles the beliefs her immigrant parents instilled in her and her own need for autonomy, Sharmila's internal conflict over dowry and arranged marriage is one way this struggle manifests for her (Sumathi, 2021).

Similarly, Sunya represents this composite identity. Despite coming from an immigrant family, she makes a point of being unique in both her career and personal decisions. Although this goes against South Asian women's conventional expectations, her choice to remain unmarried and operate her own company aligns with modern American values of freedom.

#### **Hybrid Identities of Sharmila and Sunya**

According to Homi Bhabha (1994), these characters are prime examples of "hybridity", which is the merging of cultural identities that create fresh, vibrant forms of selfhood. Being in a transitional position, Sharmila and Sunya took strength from both cultures while creating their own identities. They are neither completely Indian nor American. Their hybridity, an intentional attempt to reinterpret oneself beyond strict cultural dichotomies, is not only a result of location. According to Sumathi (2021), Kirchner presents her characters as strong, independent people who fight injustice by drawing on their international experience.

#### **Use of Food and Art as Symbolic Expressions of Autonomy**

Kirchner often compares female liberty to food and art. Sunya's invention of "Sunya cake" in *Pastries* is more than just a culinary breakthrough; it is a declaration of creativity and ownership. She is quite protective about the recipe, saying,

"Secrecy is still the most alluring spice" (*Pastries*, p. 9).

In stark contrast to the patriarchal inclination to deny such ownership, this concealment represents her authority over her economic and creative property. Mughal miniature paintings also serve as symbolic depictions of idealised femininity, as opposed to actual female action, in *Sharmila's Book*. Sharmila is reminded of the passive, ornamental position that women are often required to assume by a painting that depicts a veiled lady wearing a green sari (Sumathi, 2021). However, like the subject in the picture, Sharmila decides to dig deeper and find her voice again. These symbolic components support the notion that artistic or culinary expressions are potent means of resistance and self-definition.



## **D. Professional Competition and Economic Independence**

### **Sunya's Bakery War as a Metaphor for Female Entrepreneurship**

In *Pastries*, Sunya's conflict with Cartdale serves as a potent allegory for female entrepreneurship in a male-dominated capitalist environment. Sunya is portrayed in the novel as a resilient underdog against a bigger, more formidable foe. This reflects the challenges that many female entrepreneurs, particularly those from underrepresented groups, face in the real world. Her court cases and medical examinations serve as metaphors for the additional scrutiny that women often face in the workplace. Kirchner, however, presents Sunya as strong and resourceful, in contrast to numerous tales that show women as victims of institutionalised discrimination. To resist outside influences, she leverages her honesty, high standards of cleanliness, and devoted clientele (Sumathi 2021).

### **Female Success in Male-Dominated Industries**

Sunya's success in operating a bakery on her own and her refusal to sell out are representative of a larger story of women's accomplishments in traditionally male-dominated fields. Her persona challenges the notion that women are less competent or aspirational in their workplace. Rather, she exhibits leadership, tenacity, and strategic thinking. Sunya's path is quite similar to Betty Friedan's claim in *The Feminine Mystique* (2010) that "the only way for a woman to find herself is by creating a work of her own." Her bakery is more than simply a company; it is an expression of who she is and how independent she is. Furthermore, by turning down Cartdale's offer, Sunya reinforced her dedication to autonomy. She defies the assimilationist pressures that often come with assimilation into Western economic systems by opting to maintain ownership of her business.

### **Conclusion**

Bharti Kirchner examines the complex relationship between gender inequity and patriarchy in *Sharmila's Book* and *Pastries*, providing a nuanced depiction of female strength and resistance. By rejecting dowries, defying traditional gendered expectations in marriage, or claiming economic independence, both stories demonstrate how women negotiate restrictive social structures. Kirchner's heroes utilise art and cuisine as means of resistance and self-expression, embodying composite identities forged through international experiences. Kirchner's writings serve as excellent examples of how chick fiction has developed into a powerful feminist subgenre. She contributes to the global conversation on gender equality and cultural change by amplifying the voices and experiences of women.

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**The Indus Valley/Harappan Script**  
**சுந்துவெளி/ஹரப்பா வரிவடிவம்**  
**Translation**

**Rishabh B**

University of Adelaide Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences  
South Australia, Australia  
[A1794322@student.adelaide.edu.au](mailto:A1794322@student.adelaide.edu.au)

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**Abstract**

Symbols were taken from intact seals of the Indus Valley/Harappan civilisation and analysed for similarity to other known languages. Identical symbols were demonstrated. Text from eight Indus Script seals were analysed and appeared to be related to the Germanic languages. The symbols identical to the Germanic languages were present in multiple seals from the Indus Valley/Harappan period and, therefore, may help elucidate some of the meaning of the Indus Script.

**Keywords:** Indus Valley; Germanic languages; Harappan period; Indus Script

**Introduction**

The Indus Script translation task has been largely unsuccessful. The language is remarkable for resisting translation attempts and for its associated enigmatic illustrations. Observing multiple languages, the symbols of the Indus Script appear visually similar to the Germanic languages.

Despite decades of research, no one has successfully deciphered the script or identified any linguistic relatives. The true meaning of the script remains elusive (Bhargava, 2025). A novel comparative approach helps attempt translation.

**Method**

I have classified symbols from eight of the Indus Script seals according to the degree of similarity with the alphabets of three Germanic languages, regardless of other features, as either “identical”, “identical base letterform” and “near identical”. In certain cases, the symbols are identical.

The symbols of the Indus Script were focal on their specific seals and lacked significant gaps between them suggesting a possibly ritualistic language following the “criptio continua” structure of runic alphabets, where symbols placed close together gained holistic meaning rather than individual words or phrases.

Where there is no animal diagram, text is rare. Text is often found with an animal diagram underneath. The intricate animal drawings have several rare features such as animal decorations and the associated kiln.

The extraordinary features of the Germanic language symbols are that their relationship to the Indus Script is unknown to linguists and researchers alike, that they are identical to certain symbols, and that the languages are so distant geographically and historically yet share some linguistic similarity.

## Germanic Language Symbols

Language	Symbol	Translation
Younger Futhark	ƿ	kaun ("ulcer")
Younger Futhark	*	hagall ("hail")
Younger Futhark	ᛞ	nauðr ("need")
Younger Futhark	ᛚ	ísa/íss ("ice")
Younger Futhark	ᛞ	ár ("plenty")
Younger Futhark	ᛝ	sól ("Sun", personified as a deity—see Sól (Germanic mythology))
Younger Futhark	ᛞ	Týr ("Týr, a deity")
Younger Futhark	ᛞ	maðr ("man, human")
Anglo-Saxon runes	ᛝ	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god")
Elder Futhark	ᛝ	othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")
Elder Futhark	ᛝ	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity")
Elder Futhark	ᛞ	hagalaz ("hail")

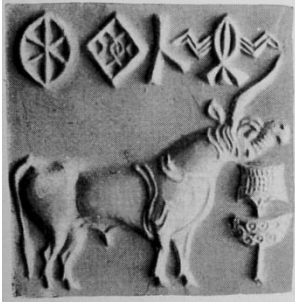
Out of the total 64 symbols – 16 Younger Futhark, 24 Anglo-Saxon, 24 Elder Futhark – 12 relevant symbols are included in the table above.

## Indus Script Seals

Seals 1–8 are presented in no specific order.



**Figure 1.** Seal 1, 6 symbols. (Business Standard, 2025)



**Figure 2.** Seal 2, 4 symbols. (Mackay 1935, 129)



**Figure 3.** Seal 3, 11 symbols. (J.M. Kenoyer / Harappa.com)



**Figure 4.** Seal 4, 9 symbols. (Vijayabhaarat)



**Figure 5.** Seal 5, 7 symbols. (British Museum)



**Figure 6.** Seal 6, 9 symbols. (Gleimius, 2022)





**Figure 7.** Seal 7, 11 symbols. (Hays)



**Figure 8.** Seal 8, 4 symbols. (Hirst, 2009)


# Identical Symbol

**Table 1.** Identical Symbols with Meaning

	Indus Script symbol	Corresponding Germanic language symbol	Meaning in Germanic language
 Seal 5	symbol 2		ár ("plenty") [Younger Futhark]

 Seal 5	symbol 3 and 4		ísa/iss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 3	symbol 5, 6, 11		ísa/iss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 6	symbol 6, 7, 8		ísa/iss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 7	symbol 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11		ísa/iss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 1	symbol 1, 2		ísa/iss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 6	symbol 2	ƿ	kaun ("ulcer") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 2	symbol 3	ᚢ	nauðr ("need") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 8	symbol 4	ᚦ	maðr ("man, human") [Younger Futhark]








 <p>Seal 3</p>	symbol 1	◊	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") [Anglo-Saxon runes]
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21 identical symbols.

## Identical Base Letterform

**Table 2.** Identical Base Letterforms with Meaning

Herein identified visually identical base letterforms between the Indus Script and Germanic symbols, with enclosing elements.

	Indus Script symbol	Corresponding Germanic language symbol	Meaning in Germanic language
 <p>Seal 6</p>	symbol 1	(*)	hagall ("hail") [Younger Futhark]
 <p>Seal 2</p>	symbol 1	(*)	hagall ("hail") [Younger Futhark]
 <p>Seal 5</p>	symbol 1	(◊)	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") [Anglo-Saxon runes]
 <p>Seal 4</p>	symbol 1	(◊)	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") [Anglo-Saxon runes]
 <p>Seal 2</p>	symbol 2	(⌘)	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]






 <p>Seal 4</p>	symbol 9	[𐌺]	nauðr ("need") [Younger Futhark]
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6 identical base letterforms.

















## Near Identical Symbol

**Table 3.** Near Identical Symbols with Meaning

Near identical symbols defined by the presence of either additional lines or altered curvature.

	Indus Script symbol	Corresponding Germanic language symbol	Meaning in Germanic language
 <p>Seal 5</p>	symbol 5 and 6	𐌺	sól ("Sun", personified as a deity—see Sól (Germanic mythology))
 <p>Seal 6</p>	symbol 9	↑	Týr ("Týr, a deity")
 <p>Seal 1</p>	symbol 6	↑	Týr ("Týr, a deity")
 <p>Seal 3</p>	symbol 10	𐌺	hagalaz ("hail") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 1</p>	symbol 4	𐌶	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]



 <p>Seal 3</p>	symbol 8		ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 3</p>	symbol 7		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 4</p>	symbol 8		maðr ("man, human") [Younger Futhark]
 <p>Seal 6</p>	symbol 3		ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 6</p>	symbol 4		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 7</p>	symbol 8, 10		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 1</p>	symbol 3, 5		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 <p>Seal 2</p>	symbol 4		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]

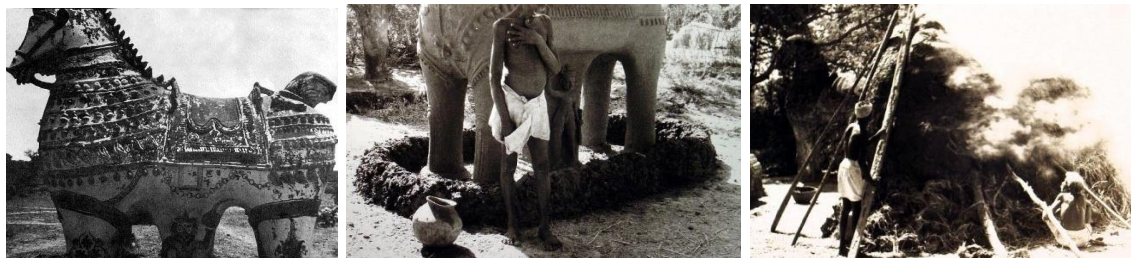
16 near-identical symbols.

## Animals



Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3

The presence of a prominent udder, large horns, and a robust build suggests that these animals in the Indus Script seals (Figures 1–3) are possibly a cattle relative, such as the aurochs, an extinct pastoral predecessor to cattle, hinting at agricultural or spiritual significance to the seals. They are accompanied by a kiln underneath.



**Figure 9.** Image 1 (left), Image 2 (centre), Image 3 (right). (du Bois)

In Puthur, Tamil Nadu, Velar potter-priests create terracotta horses (Fig. 9.1) near Aiyanar shrines, firing them in adjacent kilns (Fig. 9.3) as ritual offerings. There are visual similarities between the terracotta horses and the Indus aurochs, particularly in the saddle and neck decorations, inviting speculation, perhaps, that the Indus aurochs served a similar purpose and were, too, offerings to gods such as Aiyanar.



Figure 4 and Figure 7 depict elephants without accompanying kilns.



Figure 5 and Figure 8 depict zebus without accompanying kilns.



Figure 6 depicts the armoured body folds of a rhinoceros.

## Results

**Table 4.** Summary table.

	Number of Samples	Total Characters (n=)
Germanic Languages	3 alphabets	64 symbols
Indus Script Seals	8 seals	61 symbols

**Table 5.** Summary of results observed.

	Identical	Identical base letterform	Near Identical	Total Similarity to Germanic languages
Indus Script (n=67 Symbols)	21	6	16	43/61 (70.5%)


70.5% of symbols in the eight Indus Script seals analysed in this study shared some similarity with symbols of the Germanic languages – 21 fully identical symbols, 7 symbols with identical base letterforms, and 16 that were deemed near identical.

The symbol pairs were *selected for similarity*, and so this is not a random sample. However, a hypothetical probability baseline for how likely it would be to achieve such a degree of similarity is relevant to this study.

This does not prove linguistic relatedness but shows that the visual overlap between the Indus Script and the Germanic languages far exceeds statistical expectations. The high rate of correspondence, even under a deliberately matched set, suggests that the Indus Script and the Germanic languages share structural commonalities worth investigating further.

In this study, there are limitations. There is subjectivity and ambiguous thresholds in visual comparisons. The human visual system engages in pareidolia, explored in Sproat, 2007, wherein there is a tendency to perceive meaningful patterns where none exist. Visual similarity does not prove two languages share a common origin, as symbols can evolve separately in time and space and yet coincidentally be identical without explanation.

However, assuming the similarity is not random, 18 symbols remain undeciphered, which represents 29.5% of the total symbols in the 8 seals. Some meaning derives either from context or from prior studies such as Parpola/Kenoyer.





Symbol	Image	Explanation
Seal 3, symbol 2, 3 Seal 4, symbol 2, 3 Seal 7, symbol 4, 5		<p>The double stroke looks similar to the English apostrophe. In the Indus Script, it is either a grammatical marker with the genitive case meaning “of” (Parpola, 1994) or a titular or clan/title divider, marking social or administrative roles (Kenoyer, 1998).</p>

5 Symbols remain undeciphered, which X denotes here, and an attempt is made to translate.

Seal	Transcribed	Literal Translation	Translation
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5		(◊)𐌺𐌹𐌺𐌹X	(◊) = ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") 𐌺 = ár ("plenty") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = sól ("Sun", personified as a deity) 𐌹 = sól ("Sun", personified as a deity) X = (unknown), in this context, may represent a deity	<i>"Oh god, there is plenty of destruction by the sun (God)."</i>
6		(*)𐌿𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌺𐌹𐌹𐌹	𐌿 = kaun ("ulcer") (*) = hagall ("hail") 𐌶 = Týr ("Týr, a deity") 𐌶 = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") X = (unknown), the three pronged structure suggests a trident, which may represent Shiva in this context 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = Týr ("Týr, a deity"), related to a sacrifice	<i>"Oh hail the god of destruction, in the land, Oh hail (Shiva) the destroyer!"</i>
7		𐌺𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹	𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") X = (unknown), but, in this context, the leaf symbol may represent Krishna's peacock feather 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌶 = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice") 𐌶 = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") 𐌹 = ísa/íss ("ice")	<i>"The destruction oh (Krishna), the destruction of the land, the land is destroyed."</i>
8		𐌺𐌹𐌹𐌹	𐌺𐌹𐌹 = number 3 𐌹 = maðr ("man, human")	<i>"Three men."</i>

These translations suggest a frantic and desperate plea to deities to help the land which is being destroyed or in which destruction is threatened by other worldly forces. Requests are made to revitalise the land and prevent destruction. The logographic symbols (Kenoyer) are accompanied by Tamil Nadu Velar pot style sacrificial animal offerings (Asko Parpola) for ritualistic purposes in the context of the impending 1900 BCE destruction (Asko Parpola). The prayers are written using the Germanic languages, which are visually similar to the Indus Script (Bhargava, 2025). There are, of course, limitations. The two languages may be coincidentally similar, and the unknown symbols may not translate as described here, though the context lends itself to the trident of the Hindu God Shiva and the feather of the Hindu God Krishna.

## Discussion

The above results raise the following questions: why have they not been seen before; are they merely coincidentally similar languages that developed at different times; and are the languages related?

Investigation of the Indus Script has been hampered by the false assumption that the symbols were related either to Dravian languages or Sanskrit. The Indus Script seals are, however, visually similar to the Germanic languages.

## Conclusion

While the similarity of the Indus Script to other languages remains unproven, its visual correspondence with symbols in the Germanic language is unexplored. If these symbols are truly associated with Germanic runes, they may offer insight into other undeciphered writing systems and may warrant further investigation.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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## AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY IN NESHANI ANDREA'S *THE PURPLE VIOLET OF OSHAANTU*

**Dr. A. Ashmi**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Shri Krishnaswamy College for Women  
Chennai, India  
[ashmianandaraj@gmail.com](mailto:ashmianandaraj@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract:**

Women experience marital subjectivity such as domestic violence, which is a prominent issue in the African continent. Male writers often overlook the issues faced by women in their society, instead focusing on social and political issues. African men treat women as inferior beings, primarily focusing on socio-political matters. Men treat women as inferior beings, and they endure significant suffering at the hands of men. The article examines the experiences of women in the patriarchal context of Namibia. Furthermore, the study analyses various forms of gender oppression and the psychological and emotional impacts of abusive relationships on women. This kind of oppression is caused by the lack of communication between the partners, which results in domestic violence. The article advocates for women's empowerment by drawing on Radical Feminist theory. The paper analyzes the various forms of oppression faced by women in Namibia's patriarchal society. By using Radical Feminist theory, the study highlights the victims who fail to understand their full potential, and the societal differences that prevent them from voicing out their issues or seeking assistance.

**Keywords:** Gender, culture, oppression, violence, feminism, women, victims

### **Introduction:**

The novel *Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, published in 2001, explores the friendship between two women, Mee Ali and Kauna. Their friendship is unlike any other bond; their relationship is truly unique. They lived in the village of Oshaantu, situated in Namibia. Mee Ali is a young woman with children. Mee Ali and Kauna are non-natives, and they have a strong and enduring bond that has lasted for many years. The narrative of their journey unfolds in a post-apartheid Namibia affected by issues like the HIV and AIDS crisis and domestic violence, which are notably present in Oshaantu.

The novel begins with Mee Ali sharing her gratitude and appreciation, praising “mother,” symbolically representing nature, for providing ample food for the community in Oshaantu. One might suggest that the author’s choice to start the story by honoring nature emphasizes its significance for human survival and existence. In the Oshiwambo culture, the household's duties, including raising children, primarily fall to women, as most men seek work far from their homes.

Young Kauna is the wife of Shange, and she married him when the purple violets bloomed in Oshaantu; hence, due to this critical occasion and her beauty as a new wife, she was referred to as “the purple violet of Oshaantu”. The beauty is short-lived as Shange, the husband of Kauna, began to abuse and oppress her, and made things worse. Due to this, Kauna struggled to conceive a child immediately after they got married. This has also led her to become the target of mockery from her in-laws. Mee Ali, the first woman to marry in the village, is Kauna's sole friend and consistently tries to help her through the torment inflicted by her abusive husband, Shange, and his family. Additionally, she is the only woman who dares to confront Shange directly, scolding him, which puts an end to his physical abuse of Kauna. Nevertheless, the emotional torment persists. The whole village of Oshaantu is aware that Kauna lacks a loving and supportive husband. She finds herself trapped in a joyless marriage. Kauna has left Shange three times and returned to her parents, yet Shange always retrieves her with promises to her family that he will stop mistreating her. Shange goes out of his way to ensure that Kauna experiences no happiness.

To illustrate, Kauna has not had her own cooking space for an extended period. As a result, she is forced to share the cooking area with other women in Shange’s father’s compound. In contrast to Kauna’s marriage, Mee Ali enjoys a harmonious and loving relationship with her husband, Michael, who works away from home and returns occasionally, yet remains supportive

of her during his visits. Due to the affectionate and peaceful nature of Mee Ali's marriage, her in-laws are led to believe that she has enchanted their son. On the other hand, other men in the village are caring husbands and support their wives, including Victor, Peetu, Mukwankala's husband, Kauna's father, Tate Oiva, Tate Phillipusa, and others.

Kauna faces increasing turmoil when Shange dies in his residence following a visit to the 'White House.' She becomes the prime suspect in his poisoning, particularly due to his history of abusing her. As bell hooks notes, 'The moment women begin to see male violence against women as a mechanism of social control, they will recognize the depths of their political victimization' (hooks, 2004, p. 118). This realization can spark collective action and resistance against patriarchal norms, as seen in Kauna's determination to start anew despite her circumstances.

Moreover, she heightens the suspicions by not adhering to the expected traditional behavior of a widow, delivering an emotional speech regarding the circumstances of Shange's death, and crying over her deceased husband's body. The unfortunate Kauna is stripped of all she has built by her husband's family, who seize her homestead and its contents. Left impoverished with only her children, Kauna nonetheless possesses a renewed determination to start afresh.

### **Gender and Identity:**

*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu (2001)* raises issues about patriarchy and the burden on women. Andreas examines the issues faced by women and their interactions with men in post-independence Namibia. The discussion highlights how traditional cultural norms perceive women as the weaker gender in a male-dominated society. Women remain on the outskirts of society and are regarded as objects devoid of feelings or emotions. This is exemplified through Kauna's relationship with her husband, Shange, who physically abuses her for any reason or no reason at all to assert his masculinity. Shange makes every effort to demean and humiliate Kauna, even in front of their children and neighbors, because he paid lobola (Bride Price) for her. Mee Ali observes that Kauna's life is "controlled and virtually ruled by Shange" (50). Paying lobola in a patriarchal society becomes a means for men to own women, who are then regarded as objects that can be treated without care.

Despite the mistreatment, Kauna remains devoted and patiently awaits Shange's return from his lover, who resides in a house that Shange constructed for her; hence, she is known as

“the woman from the white house” (p. 26). Kauna continues to express her love for Shange, even though he does not reciprocate these feelings. Unfortunately, Shange fails to recognize this sincere affection and continues to mistreat Kauna. Even though she knows he is with another woman, Kauna still sets aside food for him whenever she prepares meals for the family, hoping he will have something to eat when he comes home. Sometimes, Kauna thinks she deserves the abuse, possibly due to the upbringing shaped by traditional societal norms. The prevailing belief in society dictates that women should manage the household and tolerate men’s flirtatious and unfaithful behavior without protest. If a marriage ends, society often labels the woman as unsuccessful. Furthermore, it is the woman who faces blame if she is harmed or abused in any way by her partner. Shockingly, even women themselves often think that if their husbands harm them, it is because they have somehow earned it. When Kauna’s mother sees the scar on Kauna’s face..., she asks her, “What did you do to get that scar?” thus emphasising that society places so much blame on women for wrong-doing yet turning a blind eye to the domestic abuse at the hands of their spouses ( p.77). The community does not make it easy for Kauna as it treats her as if the failure of her marriage is her fault.

Religion and cultural norms instruct women to be obedient in marriage and to endure whatever challenges arise. Rejecting a submission or leaving a partner can bring societal backlash. The fear of public judgment confines women to unfulfilling unions. Kauna's mother tells her to stay in her relationship as her father is a pastor, and leaving her husband would harm his reputation. Kauna remains in her situation because she feels there is no alternative to abandoning her spouse.

Many women hastily enter marriage without obtaining the skills or qualifications essential for their independence and that of their children. This is why, despite enduring significant abuse, women continue to stay with their harmful partners in the hope that things will improve. Although she is conscious of her pain, Kauna accepts it as part of her destiny. This resigned mindset she demonstrates is typical of many women in similar abusive relationships.

Mee Ali is a resilient woman. At times, she longs for her husband, Michael, to be with her. Mee Ali is resilient for her friend but feels inadequate regarding her situation. In a crisis, she longs for her husband, Michael, to be at home. At Shange's funeral, she imagines things might have been different for Kauna if Michael had been present. Mee Ali also reflects on what would

happen to her family if Michael were to pass away, realizing that, like Kauna, she will have no one else to care for her. Mee Ali's anxiety about losing her husband, stemming from her insecurities, seems to reinforce the patriarchal notion that women are incomplete without men.

With Michael frequently away, she manages the family's daily responsibilities, including tending to the crops in her field, which demonstrates her capability to succeed independently, although she fails to recognize it. The passage opens with Mee Ali taking pride in her crops, highlighting that the harvest time is a joyous occasion as the women recognize the results of their hard work. Despite the women's relentless labor and the men's absence from the fields, the harvests are still attributed to the men. Thus, it can be argued that her distorted fear of loneliness without a husband is deeply rooted in patriarchal beliefs.

### **The Life of Married Women:**

Marriage, as an institution, is always in the spotlight. The people in her village says: "who had died, who had married, who was still not pregnant after so many years of marriage, who is now too old to get married, who has moved, who has this new disease ... (76)" thus illustrating how every aspect of marriage is scrutinised by society. While every woman envisions a fairytale ending in marriage, the initial joy often diminishes over time for many who find themselves wed to unsuitable partners. Yet, they remain in the union to escape societal judgment. Kauna experienced no moments of happiness in her marriage, as Shange's ill-tempered personality consistently overshadowed her. Kauna endures Shange's mistreatment because she was raised to uphold her marriage at all costs.

After Shange passes away, Kauna faces the expectation of mourning him as if he were a good spouse, as per tradition, or else risk being accused of causing his death with the belief that not mourning is an indication of her relief. She is also obliged to speak at his funeral, praising him as a wonderful husband. Her dry eyes and refusal to deliver a eulogy serve as her silent rebellion, further fueling the claims of Shange's relatives that she was responsible for their son's demise. They fail to recognize that she has reached her limit, has shed enough tears during their marriage, and cannot cry anymore, particularly for him. Though divorce could be an option, it is considered taboo. Moreover, divorce could disrupt the stability of the children born from that marriage.

Although Kauna puts in a lot of effort, after she loses her husband, her in-laws take her off the land, seize everything she has worked for, and leave her with nothing to show for her labor. During Shange's funeral, traditional gender roles are emphasized as women handle cooking, serve food to mourners, and care for Shange's children. At the same time, men engage in discussions about funeral arrangements and other "significant issues." Due to the gender norms imposed by patriarchy, Shange feels ashamed to admit that he works as a cook, a role that patriarchy views as suitable only for women. It is disheartening to observe that some women in male-dominated societies collaborate with men to oppress their fellow women.

Kauna undergoes a similar ordeal when Shange's family accuses her of murdering Shange for his riches and seizes everything she has worked for, claiming that it all belongs to Shange, their son. Kauna says: 'People must know the truth. He did not eat my food. And I did not kill him! You hear me. You hear me. You evil people, I know what you are thinking. I know because you are evil. Evil people, all of you' (p.12). One of Shange's cousins even moved into the bedroom where the couple shared their lives. Furthermore, Shange's family failed to ask Kauna regarding funeral preparations. She is rendered invisible simply because she is a woman. In the face of the crowd, Mee Ali, the best friend of Kauna, tries to save the situation in vain. She tried to defend her friend by arguing that only a doctor can tell them precisely what happened to Shange.

Accusing a woman of being responsible for her husband's death is always common in African traditional societies. As mentioned above, violence takes various forms such as physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, etc. Apart from spousal physical abuse, women are also victims of their husbands' relatives' verbal and psychological abuse. Kauna does not leave her husband; she instead endures his beatings till his sudden death, which sets her free. Shange's premature death is synonymous with Kauna's survival, which makes this widow refrain from mourning her dead husband.

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## The Syllable Structure of Poula: A Descriptive Overview

**Vibeituonuo Mere, Ph.D.**

Nagaland University, Kohima Campus  
Meriema, Kohima 797001, Nagaland India  
[vibeituonuomerer@gmail.com](mailto:vibeituonuomerer@gmail.com)  
Contact- +91 9077261626

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### ABSTRACT

Poula is one of the three varieties of languages spoken by the Chakhesang tribe of Nagaland, with majority of the speakers residing in parts of Manipur. The other two languages spoken by the tribe are Chokri and Khezha. This study will lay emphasis on the variety of Poula spoken in Phek district of Nagaland. It is descriptive in nature and the data were collected from native speakers in and around Phek district. The syllable structure of Poula is moderately complex. It is basically monosyllabic with V, CV, CCV structures. Interestingly, polysyllabic words are mostly compound words. All languages require syllable nuclei and, in most languages, onsets are preferred yet optional. As in the case of Poula, it permits both opened syllable and closed syllable, however, closed syllables are not very productive. Minimally, syllables in Poula consist of a vowel as in /i/ ‘we’ and maximally it consists of a complex onset of two consonants and a vowel nucleus C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>V.

**Keywords:** Syllable Structure, Closed Syllable, Open Syllable, Poula, Nagaland

### 1. Introduction

This paper attempts to discuss the different types of syllables and syllable structure in Poula. The syllable structure of Poula is moderately complex. It is basically monosyllabic with V, CV, CCV structures. Interestingly, polysyllabic words are found to be mostly compound word forms. All languages require syllable nuclei and, in most languages, onsets are preferred yet optional. As in the case of Poula, it permits both opened syllable and closed syllable, however,



closed syllables are not very productive. Minimally, syllables in Poula consist of a vowel as in /i/ ‘we’ and maximally it consists of a complex onset of two consonants and a vowel nucleus C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>V.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected during field visits to Zhavame village and from Poula speakers residing in Kohima district. The researcher employed both structured and unstructured interviews conducted in natural settings, complemented by participant observation. Secondary data were sourced from books, journals, articles, websites, souvenirs, and dissertations, offering a broad range of perspectives relevant to the topic.

## **3. Linguistic Ethnography of Poula**

The Chakhesangs are a Naga tribe who primarily inhabit the Phek district of Nagaland along with Pochury tribe who consider the district their tribal headquarters. The name Chakhesang itself reflects three abbreviations; ‘*Cha*’ which stands for Chokri, ‘*Khe*’ for Khezha and ‘*Sang*’ for Sangtam. This present study focusses on Razebe range as a point of departure for studying the Poula language. The range is a small one consisting of only three villages and a town who identify ethnically as Poumai. They are Zhavame, Zelome, Tsüpfüme, and the town of Razebe with approximately only 6,000-10,000<sup>1</sup> Poula speakers in Nagaland itself. The Poumais are classified as a sub-group of Chakhesang who in turn are further classified as a sub-group of the larger Tenyimia community. Poula language behaves differently from the slightly bigger languages of Chakesangs - Khezha and Chokri, both morphologically and syntactically.

The roots of Poumai language and culture can be traced to the oral tradition that holds the belief that the migratory roots of the tribe originated when one of their forefathers thrust his walking stick on the ground at the meeting place<sup>2</sup>. The etymology of the term ‘*pou*’ refers to the name of the ‘*great-great-grandfather*’ from whom all Poumais were believed to have descended, and the term ‘*mai*’ means ‘*a person*’. In due course of time, this stick took root and sprouted into a large tree (wild pear) called ‘*Khyataobi*’. The people of *Khyako*, called *Tenyimia* by the people of Nagaland, hold this tree as a sacred entity till today and in if any branches break, they observe

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 General Census report of India

<sup>2</sup> A place in Makhel

*genna*<sup>3</sup> with utmost solemnness. As such, we can see how ancestral legacy plays an important role in the creation of language and how oral tradition, in the absence of any chronicled history, mixes itself with the culture and language of the tribe.

Considered a part of the Tenyimia group, Poumai also adheres to the oral tradition that stipulates the origin and migration of their community from Makhel. The Makhel<sup>4</sup> community, which comprises of those tribes who migrated from Makhel to other places, exhibit similarities in language structure and cultural practices. Some of these tribes have settled in different parts of Manipur while others have settled in Nagaland.

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**

To date, no linguistics work has been found in this variety of Poula. It was only in 2021 that a small booklet titled ‘Poula Primer Dictionary’ was published by the Poula literature committee which is the first written literature in the language. Besides this, a few linguistics works are available in the variety spoken in Manipur, with the exception of Veikho (2014) (2021), Veikho & Khyriem (2015) and Veikho & Sarmah (2018); except Veikho (2021), which provides a more detailed analysis of the grammar of Poula, the other works provide a preliminary phonological description of Poula, Consonants and Vowels.

#### **5. Syllable and Syllable Structure**

According to Peter Roach (2009), a syllable can be defined both phonetically and phonologically, that is, the way it is pronounced and the way it functions in a language. For David Abercrombie (1965) “a syllable is a movement, mostly an audible movement”. A syllable is a unit of organization for a sequence of speech sounds typically made up of a syllable nucleus (most often a vowel) with optional initial and final margins (typically, consonants). Syllables can be Monosyllabic, Disyllabic, Trisyllabic and Polysyllabic. Those syllables whose rhyme is made up of a nucleus followed by a consonant and which ends in consonants are called closed syllables and those syllables whose rhyme is made up of a nucleus and which ends in vowels are called open syllables.

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<sup>3</sup> *Genna is a term used technically by anthropologists to describe a class of social and religious ordinances based on sanctions which derive their validity from a vague sense of mysterious danger which results from disobedience to them.*

<sup>4</sup> *Believed to be the birthplace of the Tenyimia*

According to Yule (2006), a syllable must contain a vowel or vowel-like sound, including diphthongs. Vowels are almost always the nucleus of a syllable (Denham et. al 2019). The basic elements of the syllable are the onset (one or more consonant) followed by the rhyme. The rhyme consists of a vowel, which is treated as the nucleus, plus any following consonant(s), described as the coda. Given below are the possible monosyllables in Poula:

$\sigma$	Word	Gloss
V	<i>e</i>	‘yes’
CV	<i>tə</i>	‘necklace’
CCV	<i>pɪ</i>	‘needle’

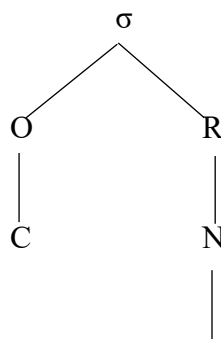
In Poula, the syllable structure does not follow the pattern proposed by Clements and Keyser (1983). While they suggest that the basic syllable types in all languages include CV, V, CVC, and VC, Poula deviates from this framework. Poula lacks the VC syllable type but does possess CV and CVC syllable types.

This deviation is significant because according to Clements and Keyser, any language that has the VC syllable type must also have CV and CVC syllable types. However, this is not the case for Poula, as it lacks the VC structure. This highlights the unique nature of Poula’s syllable structure compared to the generalizations proposed by Clements and Keyser. Given below are the different types of syllable structure in Poula.

## 5.1 CV Syllable Structure

Poula exhibits a significant occurrence of the CV (consonant-vowel) structure compared to other syllable structures within the language.

Eg: /dʒə/ ‘water’



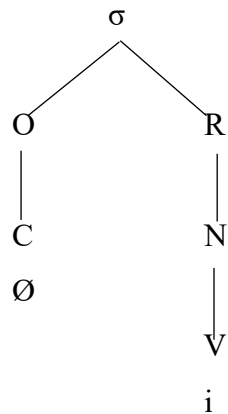


**Figure 1. CV Syllable Structure**

## 5.2 V Syllable Structure

In Poula, the V (vowel) syllable structure is notably present in personal pronouns and responsive words.

Eg: /i/ 'I'

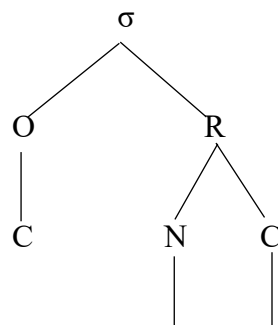


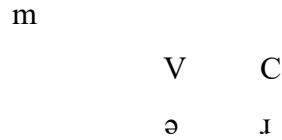
**Figure 2. V Syllable Structure**

## 5.3 CVC Syllable Structure

The CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) pattern in Poula is identified as relatively non-productive. This study has observed that closed syllabic structures, represented by a consonant-vowel-consonant sequence, occur primarily with the voiced alveolar approximant.

Eg: /məɪ/ 'mouth'

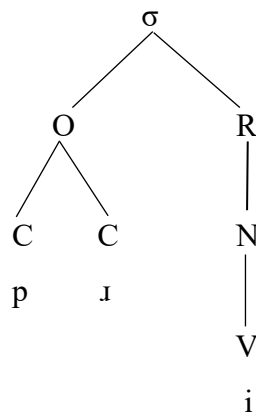




**Figure 3. CVC Syllable Structure**

#### 5.4 CCV Syllable Structure

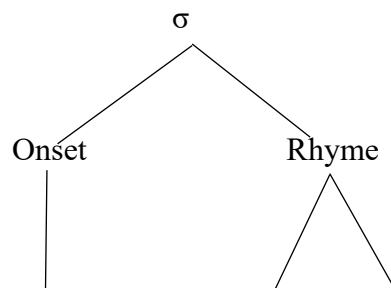
The CCV syllable structure refers to a syllable that contains two consonants followed by a vowel. This structure is common in Poula, particularly with stops and the alveolar approximant.

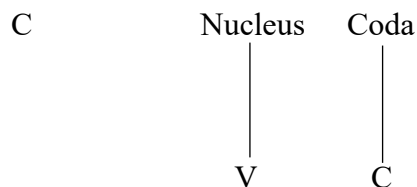


**Figure 4. CCV Syllable Structure**

In Poula, syllables exhibit a range from minimal to maximal complexity. Minimally, syllables can consist of only a vowel, as seen in the V structure of the word /i/ meaning ‘I’. At the other end of the spectrum, syllables can reach maximal complexity, consisting of a complex onset of two consonants and a vowel nucleus, as exemplified by the CCV structure found in /pɹe/ meaning ‘cup’. Diphthong nuclei in Poula occur in open syllable types of monosyllabic words when preceded by one or more consonants, as in the CVV structure of /k<sup>h</sup>ao/ meaning ‘tiger’.

The syllable structure of Poula can also be represented by the hierarchical structure given in **Figure 5**.





**Figure 5. Canonical Syllable Structure**

The diagram above illustrates the syllable structure in Poula, ranging from minimal to maximal complexity. A Poula syllable can minimally consist of a monophthong vowel nucleus and can maximally consist of a pair of consonantal onsets (C) & (C) and a diphthong nucleus (V1, V2). A disyllabic word in Poula having CVCV would invariably be split up as CV~CV for eg., /du.si/ ‘fig’ and not CVC~V \*/dus.i/ or C~VCV \*/d.usi/. Similarly, a trisyllabic word /mə.hə.hə/ will have a syllable structure CV.CV.CV and not CVC.VCV or CV.CVC.V.

The possible syllable structures in Poula such as monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and polysyllabic are illustrated in **Table 1**.

**Table 1. Permissible Syllable Structure**

Syllable Type	Syllable Pattern	Poula	Gloss
Monosyllable	CV V	vo i	‘pig’ ‘I’
Disyllable	CVV.CCV CV.CVC	kie.tɹə pi.kʰəɪ	‘parrot’ ‘pillow’
Trisyllable	CV.CV.CV V.CCV.CV	ŋa.la.və a.tɹo.me	‘plantain’ ‘player’
Polysyllable	CV.CV.CV.CV V.CV.CV.CV	da.ru.so.ha a.du.me.na	‘doctor’ ‘prince’

## 5.5 Types of Syllables

Thurgood and La Polla (2007), mentions that the Proto-Tibeto-Burman languages was monosyllabic in nature. Likewise, syllable structure in Poula is mostly monosyllabic and disyllabic which is considered as a generic feature of the Tibeto-Burman languages. Poula permits both open and closed syllable, though the production of closed syllable is limited to certain words and its

occurrence is rare. The canonical syllable structure in Poula consists of four types viz., monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and polysyllabic words.

### 5.5.1 Monosyllabic

Poula, like many Tibeto-Burman languages, is primarily monosyllabic in nature. This means that words are typically composed of a single syllable. In this context, an open and closed syllable structure is observed, where a syllable consists of a vowel or a vowel with one or more consonants before or after it. Open monosyllabic words in Poula can function as the peak of a syllable. **Table 2** illustrates some examples of monosyllabic words Poula.

**Table 2. Monosyllables**

Monosyllable	Gloss	CV Pattern
i	‘I/me’	V
pe	‘grandmother’	CV
sa	‘shawl’	CV
məɪ	‘mouth’	CVC
tɪa	‘to cry’	CCV

### 5.5.2 Disyllabic

Disyllabic words in Poula, characterized by having two syllables, play a fundamental role in the language’s lexicon. **Table 3**, provides a compilation of disyllabic words in Poula.

**Table 3. Disyllables**

Disyllable	Gloss	CV Pattern
u.ɕo	‘yesterday’	V.CV
li.k <sup>h</sup> o	‘kitchen’	CV.CV
mə.təu	‘necklace’	CV.CVV
ɬə.məɪ	‘gate’	CV.CVC
va.k <sup>h</sup> əɪ	‘scratch’	CV.CVC

### 5.5.3 Trisyllabic

Trisyllabic words in Poula are highly productive and the segment typically consists of either one consonant and one vowel, two consonants and one vowel, or one consonant and two vowels, as shown in **Table 4**.

**Table 4. Trisyllables**

Trisyllabic	Gloss	CV Pattern
i.t <sup>h</sup> .u.me	‘we’	V.CCV.CV
mə.i.su.ʃi	‘chilly’	CVC.CV.CV
k <sup>h</sup> ao.p.i.tao	‘terror’	CVV.CCV.CVV
ba.mo.tu	‘finger’	CV.CV.CV
li.mu.via	‘sorrow’	CV.CV.CVV

### 5.5.4 Polysyllabic

Polysyllabic words in Poula, consisting of three or more syllables, are typically categorized into root words and derived words. Open polysyllabic words are prevalent in the language. **Table 5** illustrates some examples of polysyllabic words in Poula.

**Table 5. Polysyllables**

Polysyllabic	Gloss	CV Pattern
bu.kru.pa.a.fə	‘owl’	CV.CCV.CV.V.CV
mə..iə.sə.k <sup>h</sup> ao	‘scorpion’	CV.CV.CV.CVV
a.lə.sa.ʒə	‘piles’	V.CV.CV.CV
la..iə.p <sup>h</sup> iə.me	‘student’	CV.CV.CCV.CV
ki.p.i.sə.tsu.me	‘gardener’	CV.CCV.CV.CCV.CV

As indicated in the data above, the syllable structure in Poula exhibits distinct characteristics depending on its position within a word. At the word-initial position, the syllable structure tends to be more closed, meaning that it often begins with a consonant or consonant



cluster before the vowel nucleus. In contrast, at the word-final position, the syllable structure is more open.

**Table 6** provides examples of open-classed syllable structures in Poula, highlighting the prevalence of open syllables in the language.

**Table 6. Opened Classed Syllables**

<b>Open Classed Syllables</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Syllable Pattern</b>
a.t <sup>h</sup> ɪau	‘strength’	V.CCVV
a.tʃə.na	‘third’	V.CV.CV
a.tɪəu.na	‘thruth’	V.CVV.CV
a.ɪəu	‘sixteen’	V.CVV
a.du.me.na.nao.təu	‘princess’	V.CV.CV.CV.CVV.CVV

In Poula, closed-classed syllable structures are characterized by the presence of one or more consonants following the vowel nucleus. This pattern contrasts with open-classed syllables, where the syllable ends with a vowel nucleus without any following consonant. Examples of closed-classed syllable structures in Poula are provided in **Table 7**.

**Table 7. Closed Classed Syllables**

<b>Closed Classed Syllable</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Syllable Pattern</b>
k <sup>h</sup> əɪ	‘starve’	CVC
məɪ	‘mouth’	CVC
va.k <sup>h</sup> əɪ	‘scratch’	CV.CVC
ɪə.məɪ	‘gate’	CV.CVC

## 5.6 Syllable Weight

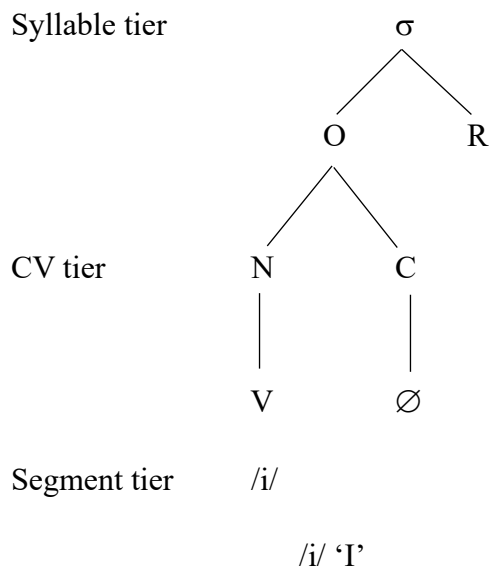
According to Katamba, F. (1989), the consensus today is that more important than the traditional classification of phonological systems in terms of open and closed syllable is their classification in terms of Syllable Weight. In many languages, a factor that determines the applicability of certain phonological rules is the weight of the rhyme. Syllable weight comprises

of two kinds: light or weak syllable and heavy or strong syllable. Poula exhibits both light and heavy syllable. The illustration of light and heavy syllables in Poula is based on Katamba, F. (1989) which is explained below with examples:

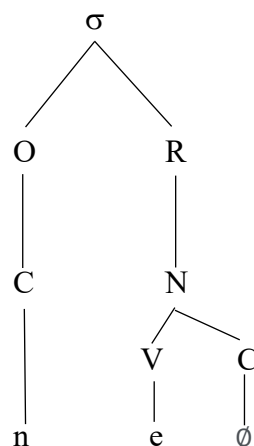
### 5.6.1 Light Syllable

Katamba, F. (1998), defines that, a syllable is light is it contains a non-branching rhyme in which the rhyme contains a short vowel. In other words, a Light syllable is one whose rhyme is made up of nucleus consisting of a vowel or a vowel followed or preceded by a maximum of one consonant. Examples are given below:

i) A Light Syllable with a single vowel nucleus



ii) A Light Syllable with an onset and a nucleus.



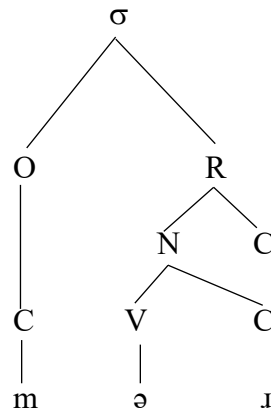
/ne/ 'you'

**Figure 6. Light Syllable**

### 5.6.2 Heavy Syllable

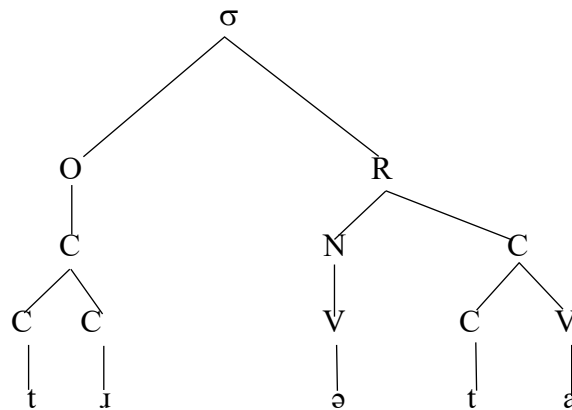
According to Katamba, F. (1998), a syllable is heavy if it contains a branching rhyme in which the rhyme contains either: i) a long vowel or a diphthong optionally followed by one or more consonant(s), or ii) a short vowel followed by at least one consonant. Thus, a heavy syllable is a syllable whose weight is more than a mora. In a heavy syllable, the rhyme consists of more than one segment of a nucleus. Consider the following examples:

i)



/məɪ/ 'mouth'

ii)



/tɪə.ta/ 'leader'

## Figure 7. Heavy Syllable Structures

In Poula, the syllable structure is primarily monosyllabic, with words typically consisting of a single syllable. Syllables can be open, ending in a vowel, or closed, with consonants following the vowel nucleus. Disyllabic words, which have two syllables, are mostly root forms of words, similar to monosyllables. Polysyllabic words consist of root words and derived words, and closed polysyllabic words are not found in Poula.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

With thorough and systematic investigation, the paper begins with a brief introduction about the language and a conceptual literature review of previous works. With very limited work available on this variety of Poula, this paper is a serious attempt to examine the different syllable structures and types in the language. The above discussion demonstrates that the vowel is the obligatory element necessary for having a well-structured syllable in Poula. CV, CCV, CVCV are found to be the most frequent syllable types whereas, the CVC syllable types are the least frequent syllable structure. Minimally, syllables in Poula can consist of a single nucleus as in /i/ 'I' and the maximal syllable can consist of a complex onset of two consonants and a vowel nucleus as C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>V. The C<sub>1</sub> slot of the onset cluster can be filled by any consonant whereas, the C<sub>2</sub> slot can be filled only by the voiced alveolar approximant. This study has also noted that the closed syllabic structure occurs only with voiced alveolar approximant.

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## MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF GOALPARIYA: A STUDY OF ITS WORD STRUCTURE, CLASSES AND FORMATION IN DHUBRI AND GOALPARA DISTRICTS OF ASSAM

**Fahmida Akhtar, M.A. Linguistics**

Research Scholar  
Department of English  
The Assam Royal Global University  
[fahmidaakhtar6360@gmail.com](mailto:fahmidaakhtar6360@gmail.com)

**Dr. Baishalee Rajkhowa**

Associate Professor  
Department of English  
The Assam Royal Global University  
[Baishalee.rajkhowa@rgi.edu.in](mailto:Baishalee.rajkhowa@rgi.edu.in)

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### Abstract:

Goalpariya belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of dialects which is commonly referred to as *Deshi Bhasha* or *Deshi Kota*, meaning "local language." It has been found that Goalpariya exhibits agglutinative and partly inflectional features as the dialect adheres to a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order and employs postpositions. By analysing the word structure, classes and formation, the research aims to contribute to a deeper and more systematic understanding of the language's morphological features. It has also been found that in Goalpariya, the vocabulary is enriched through the nativization of words from Hindi, Arabic, Urdu, Persian and English. To support the analysis, illustrative examples have been provided for each category and process discussed. This paper presents a morphological analysis of the Goalpariya language in the Dhubri and Goalpara districts of Assam, India, with a specific focus on word structure, word classes and word formation processes.

**Keywords:** Morphological features, Goalpariya, word structure, word classes, word formation processes

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### Introduction

Goalpariya (ISO 639-3!) is an Indo-Aryan language primarily spoken in the Dhubri and Goalpara districts in Assam. The linguistic classification of Goalpariya remains a subject of scholarly debate.

While Datta (1973) recognized it as a distinct language, Chowdhury (1992) categorized it as a dialect of Assamese. Earlier, Grierson (1963) and Kakati (1935) classified it under Rajbanshi. Among native speakers, however, it is commonly referred to as *Deshi Bhasha* or *Deshi Kota*, meaning "local language." According to the 2001 Census of India, the number of Goalpariya speakers is estimated to be around 10 million.

The morphological typology of the language is agglutinative and partly inflecting. It follows subject-object-verb (SOV) word order and it is postpositional. This study focuses on the morphological aspects of Goalpariya, specifically examining its word structure, the classification of word classes, and the processes of word formation. By analysing these core elements, the research aims to provide a detailed account of the language's morphological system and its typological features within the Eastern Indo-Aryan linguistic landscape.

## **Literature Review**

Datta (1973), in his doctoral thesis, explores the historical and linguistic landscape of the undivided Goalpara district. He categorizes the region's languages based on geographical distribution, distinguishing between Eastern Goalpariya and Western Goalpariya, each with its own linguistic features. Eastern Goalpariya, found on both banks of the Brahmaputra, closely resembles Western Kamrupi in terms of phonology and morphology. Western Goalpariya, meanwhile, is identified as essentially Rajbangshi. Datta also notes an intermediary variety spoken in the central region between the two, containing lexical elements from both dialects. Das (1990) makes a valuable contribution to comparative linguistics through a detailed analysis of the dialects of Goalpara and Kamrup. His work focuses on phonological and morphological aspects, offering insights into both their similarities and distinguishing characteristics. Chowdhury (1992) examines three major Goalpariya dialects—Ghulliya, Caruwa, and Jharuwa—found in the undivided Goalpara district. This study offers a detailed analysis of their phonological and morphological structures, highlighting key distinctions among them. In a more recent study, Das (2014) conducted the first instrumental phonetic analysis of Goalpariya, focusing on the acoustic properties of its vowels. He identified five vowels in Goalpariya [i, e, a, o, u] in contrast to the eight vowels found in Standard Assamese [i, e, ε, u, ʊ, o, ɔ, a]. Gaffur (2017) contributes to the cultural understanding of the Goalpariya community through an in-depth exploration of their unique rituals and traditional

practices. Akhter et al. (2025) offers a comparative analysis of the morphosyntactic features of genitive case markers in three Eastern Indo-Aryan languages—Goalpariya, Assamese, and Bangla. The study investigates the similarities and differences among these genetically related languages that share several prominent linguistic features.

A comprehensive review of the existing literature reveals that a limited number of research works on descriptive morphosyntax have been produced in Goalpariya. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the language’s morphology, with a specific focus on word structure, word classes, and word formation processes.

## Methodology

To develop a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research topic, a descriptive survey method was employed to explore its multiple dimensions and sources of information. In order to achieve the research objectives, a robust and multi-faceted qualitative research methodology was adopted, incorporating a range of methods and strategies to obtain meaningful results. The study utilized a simple random sampling technique to gather data from a diverse sample of 349 informants, representing various age groups, professions, and genders. Data collection involved a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through observation schedules, interview schedules, and questionnaires conducted in the Dhubri and Goalpara districts of Assam. Secondary data was obtained from books, theses, magazines, newspapers, and online resources.

## Word Structure, Classes and Formation of Goalpariya

The formation of words in Goalpariya is characterised by the systematic combination of free and bound morphemes, which collectively contribute to the conveyance of meaning within the language.

A morpheme represents the most minimal unit of meaning. In Goalpariya, morphemes can be divided into two types-free and bound morphemes. Free morphemes are morphemes that can independently convey meaning. Consider the following examples:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ga:s]	‘tree’

[tʃɛŋri]	‘girl’
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**Table 1: Free morphemes in Goalpariya**

Bound morphemes are morphemes that lack the ability to function independently. Such morphemes need affixation to acquire meaning and form complete words. Hence, bound morphemes can also be called affixes. Two types of affixes are found in Goalpariya: prefix and suffix.

Prefixes are bound morphemes, added to the beginning of free morphemes to modify meaning or create new words. Consider the following examples: Here, *ɔ-* and *be-* are prefixes.

<b>Goalpariya</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
[ɔ-manuʃ]	‘inhuman’
[be-rozgar]	‘unemployed’

**Table 2: Prefixes in Goalpariya**

These bound morphemes are added to the end of free morphemes. Here are some examples of suffixes:

<b>Goalpariya</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
[ga:s-gule]	‘trees’
[ɖʱon-i]	‘wealthy’

**Table 3: Suffixes in Goalpariya**

## Word Classes

In Goalpariya, the fundamental word classes can be categorized into eight main types-nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, postpositions, conjunctions and interjections.

### 1. Nouns

Noun is a word that represents a person, animal, place, thing or idea. It helps to identify and name objects in a language. There are three subclasses of nouns: Simple nouns, derived nouns and compound nouns.

#### Simple nouns

The essence of simple nouns lies in their ability to encompass various forms for human, animate (non-human) and in-animate entities. Here are some examples of simple nouns:

<b>Human nouns</b>	<b>Animate (non-human) nouns</b>	<b>In-animate nouns</b>
[bʰai] ‘brother’	[bilei] ‘cat’	[bari] ‘home’



[tʃɛjri] ‘girl’	[pakʰi/pahi] ‘bird’	[lati/nati] ‘stick’
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**Table 4: Simple nouns in Goalpariya**

### Derived nouns

There are three distinct classes for derived nouns, namely verbal nouns, abstract nouns and gerund nouns. A verbal noun is a type of a noun that is derived from a verb. In Goalpariya, the verbal nouns are derived by suffixing the markers *-ni*, *-ri*, *-ok* to the verb. An abstract noun refers to an idea, quality, or state as opposed to a physical entity. Abstract nouns in Goalpariya are created by adding the suffix *-powa*, *-kʰowa*, *-kora* to the respective word. In English, gerund is a form of a verb that ends in *-ing* that is used as a noun. But, in Goalpariya, the formation of gerund nouns involves the addition of the suffix *-a* to the corresponding verb. Here are some examples of derived nouns:

Verbal nouns	Abstract nouns	Gerund nouns
[randʱoni] ‘cook’	[bʰal powa] ‘love’	[shatr-a] ‘swimming’
[kʰelari] ‘player’	[bʰoi kʰowa] ‘fear’	[nas-a] ‘dancing’
[najok] ‘actor’	[gʰin kora] ‘hate’	[por-a] ‘reading’

**Table 5: Derived nouns in Goalpariya**

### Compound nouns

Compound nouns are created through the fusion of two or more words belonging to the same lexical category or different lexical categories. Consider the following examples:

#### [Noun+Noun= Noun]

Noun	+	Noun	→	Noun
[sagol] ‘goat’	+	[goʃ]/[gos] ‘meat’	→	[sagol-er goʃ/gos] ‘mutton’
[tʃouk] ‘eye’	+	[pa:ni] ‘water’	→	[tʃouk-er pa:ni] ‘tear’

#### [Noun+Verb=Noun]

<b>Noun</b>	+	<b>Verb</b>	→	<b>Noun</b>
[tʃʊl] ‘hair’	+	[kata] ‘cut’	→	[tʃʊl kata] ‘haircut’
[ma:s] ‘fish’	+	[dʰora] ‘catch’	→	[ma:s dʰora] ‘fishing’

#### [Noun+Diminutive=Noun]

<b>Noun</b>	+	<b>Diminutive</b>	→	<b>Noun</b>
[goru] ‘cow’	+	[batʃʃa]	→	[basur] ‘calf’
[kutʃʃe] ‘dog’	+	[batʃʃa]	→	[kutʃʃe-r batʃʃa] ‘puppy’

#### [Adjective+Noun=Noun]

<b>Adjective</b>	+	<b>Noun</b>	→	<b>Noun</b>
[soto] ‘small/younger’	+	[bʰai] ‘brother’	→	[soto bʰai] ‘younger brother’
[bʰal] ‘good’	+	[manuʃ] ‘man’	→	[bʰal manuʃ] ‘good man’

#### [Augmentive+Noun=Noun]

<b>Augmentive</b>	+	<b>Noun</b>	→	<b>Noun</b>
[boro] ‘big/elder’	+	[beti] ‘daughter’	→	[boro beti] ‘elder daughter’
[boro] ‘big/elder’	+	[gari] ‘vehicle/car’	→	[boro gari] ‘big vehicle’

## 2. Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun to avoid repetition and make sentences less repetitive and more concise. Goalpariya boasts the presence of six distinct types of pronouns: Personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, interrogative pronouns, reflexive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and indefinite pronouns.

### Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns encompass the categories of first person, second person and third person pronouns. In Goalpariya, there exists a distinct system of personal pronouns that effectively differentiates between three persons and three numbers. The three persons denote to the person speaking- ‘speaker’, the person listening- ‘listener’ and the person or thing being referred to- ‘third person’. The numbers include singular, dual and plural. It is found that personal pronouns in Goalpariya are gender-neutral. This means that the same pronouns can be used to refer to individuals-male and female regardless of their gender identity. It is also interesting to note that the suffix *-duizon* is appended to pronouns to indicate dual numbers.

Person	Singular	Dual	Plural
First	[mui] ‘I’	[amra-duizon] ‘we two’	[amra] ‘we’
Second	[tui] ‘you’	[tomra-duizon] ‘you two’	[tomra] ‘you’
Third	[ui] ‘he/she’	[omra-duizon] ‘they two’	[omra] ‘they’

**Table 6: Personal pronouns in Goalpariya**

### Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronoun indicates that something belongs to someone or something. In Goalpariya, possessive pronouns end with *-r/-er*, which helps to indicate ownership or possession.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[mor]	‘my’
[amar]	‘our’ (plural)
[tor]	‘your’
[tomar]	‘your’ (plural)
[uier]	‘his/her’
[omar]	‘their’ (plural)

### Interrogative pronouns

Questions are formed using interrogative pronouns. Here are a few examples in Goalpariya:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ki]	‘what’
[kai]	‘who’
[kuti]	‘where’

[kon-ta]	‘which’
[kon-bela]	‘when’
[kemon]	‘how’
[ke]	‘why’
[kar]	‘whose’

**Table 7: Interrogative pronouns**

### Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are used when the subject and object of a verb are same. They refer back to a person or thing. In Goalpariya, reflexive pronouns are expressed through the addition of the suffix *-nize* to the end of personal pronouns.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[mui-nize]	‘myself’
[amra-nize]	‘ourselves’
[tui-nize]	‘yourself’
[tomra-nize]	‘yourselves’
[ui-nize]	‘himself/herself’
[omra-nize]	‘themselves’

**Table 8: Reflexive pronouns**

### Demonstrative pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun is a type of pronoun that points out or indicates a specific person, thing or idea. Here are a few examples in Goalpariya:

	Singular	Plural
Proximate	[eite] ‘this’	[eile] ‘these’
Distal	[oite] ‘that’	[oile] ‘those’

**Table 9: Demonstrative pronouns**

### Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns do not specifically identify what it is referring to. It is used when we want to talk about people or things in a general or non-specific way. It is noteworthy that indefinite pronouns in Goalpariya can occasionally take the form of word combinations. A few examples are given below:

Goalpariya	Gloss
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[fogai]	‘everyone/ everybody’
[kaiba]	‘someone/ somebody’
[kaio na]	‘no one/ nobody’
[ʃob kiʈʃʈʃu/kisu]	‘everything’
[olpo kiʈʃʈʃu/kisu]	‘something’
[zi kono]	‘anything’
[kiʈʃʈʃu/kisu na]	‘nothing’
[ʃoɖai]	‘everyday’
[konodino na]	‘never’

**Table 10: Indefinite pronouns**

### 3. Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes or modifies a noun or pronoun by providing additional information about its quality, state or characteristics.

Various types of adjectives in Goalpariya are:

<b>Adjective types</b>	<b>Goalpariya</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Color	[ʃaɖa/ ɖʰola]	‘white’
Size	[soto]	‘small’
Speed	[aʃte]	‘slow’
Human prosperity	[kʰata]	‘short’
Taste	[ʈiʈe]	‘bitter’
State	[paka/ paha]	‘ripe’
Quality	[bʰal]	‘good’
Status	[ɖʰoni]	‘rich’
Age	[ʃijen]	‘young’
Dimension	[ʃoza]	‘straight’
Quantity	[mella]	‘many’
Position	[uʈʃe]	‘low’
Cardinal number	[ek]	‘one’
Ordinal number	[ek ba:r]	‘once’

**Table 11: Adjectives in Goalpariya**

## Degree of adjectives

An adjective is divided into three types-positive, comparative and superlative degree. The positive degree represents the adjective in its simplest form, without any markers indicating its intensity. When describing a noun using an adjective, we can also state that something is smaller and bigger than that of another thing and also that one is the smallest or the biggest among all the objects or entities. To compare between two nouns, a comparative and superlative form of adjective is used. These comparative and superlative distinctions are marked by the prefix's *b<sup>h</sup>ale-* and *fogare t<sup>h</sup>aki* - respectively, which are added at the beginning of the adjectives.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
[beja] 'bad'	[b <sup>h</sup> ale beja] 'worse'	[fogare t <sup>h</sup> aki beja] 'worst'
[mota] 'fat'	[b <sup>h</sup> ale mota] 'fatter'	[fogare t <sup>h</sup> aki mota] 'fattest'
[funḍor] 'beautiful'	[b <sup>h</sup> ale funḍor] 'more beautiful'	[fogare t <sup>h</sup> aki funḍor] 'most beautiful'

Table 12: Degree of adjectives

## 4. Verbs

A verb is a word that expresses what the subject of a sentence is doing. It can be divided into three types-action verb, process verb and stative verb.

### Action verb

An action verb is a type of verb that describes an action or movement performed by a subject. Some examples are given below:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[hata]	'walk'
[z <sup>h</sup> appa]	'jump'
[kanḍa]	'cry'

Table 13: Action verbs

### Process verb

Process verbs signify a transformative transition from one state or form to another. A few examples are given below:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[uʃe]	‘boil’
[bana]	‘make’
[raṇḍa]	‘cook’

Table 14: Process verbs

### Stative verb

Stative verbs pertain to the realm of thoughts and opinions. Here are some examples:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[biʃʃe]	‘believe’
[mana]	‘agree’
[buza]	‘understand’

Table 15: Stative verbs

## 5. Adverbs

An adverb is a word that modifies or describes a verb, adjective or another adverb. The various types of adverbs found in Goalpariya are:

### Adverb of manner

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ʃaraʃari]	‘quickly’
[zore]	‘loudly’

Table 16: Manner adverbs in Goalpariya

### Adverb of place

Goalpariya	Gloss
[boglot]	‘near’
[durot]	‘far’

Table 17: Adverb of place

### Adverb of time

Goalpariya	Gloss
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[kailke]	‘tomorrow’
[ʃodai]	‘always’

**Table 18: Adverb of time**

### **Adverb of direction**

<b>Goalpariya</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
[a:g-paʃe]	‘forward’
[upre]	‘above’

**Table 19: Adverb of direction**

### **Adverb of frequency**

<b>Goalpariya</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
[ek ba:r]	‘once’
[prai]	‘often’

**Table 20: Adverb of frequency**

## **6. Postpositions**

Postpositions are used to establish the relationship between nouns or pronouns and other words in a sentence. Unlike prepositions, which come before the nouns, postpositions in Goalpariya are positioned after the nouns, hence earning their name as post positions. A few examples are given below:

<b>Goalpariya</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
[t̪]	‘to/in/at’
[upre]	‘on/above’
[t̪ol]	‘below’
[bʰit̪re]	‘inside’
[baire]	‘outside’
[zoinne]	‘for’

**Table 21: Postpositions in Goalpariya**

## **7. Conjunctions**



A conjunction serves the purpose of linking together words, phrases and clauses. Some examples of conjunctions in Goalpariya are:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[kiŋtu]	‘but’
[a:r]	‘and’
[zuɖi/zoɖi]	‘if’

Table 22: Conjunctions in Goalpariya

## 8. Interjections

An interjection is a word, phrase, or sentence through which one’s emotions, meanings or feelings find vibrant expression. Here are a few examples in Goalpariya:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[bah]	‘wow’
[hei]	‘alas’

Table 23: Interjections in Goalpariya

## Word Formation Processes

In Goalpariya, the word formation processes can be categorized into inflection, derivation, nominalization, compounding, reduplication, borrowing, negation, clipping, acronym and eponym.

### 1. Inflection

Inflection refers to the process used to create different forms of the same word. Consider the following examples:

[ga:s] ‘tree’ + [gule] ‘plural marker (s)’ → [ga:s gule] ‘trees’  
 [mota] ‘fat’ + [ʃogare tʰaki] ‘est’ → [ʃogare tʰaki mota] ‘fattest’

### 2. Derivation

Derivation is the process used to create entirely new words from existing ones. The newly created word can align with its existing word class or deviate from it. Accordingly, depending on the word class, this process is divided into two types-class-maintaining and class-changing derivation. Consider the following examples:

#### Class-maintaining derivation

[ɖokan] ‘shop’ (N) + [-ɖar] ‘NMLZ’ → ɖokanɖar ‘shopkeeper’ (N)

[tʃouk] ‘eye’ (N) + [pa:ni] ‘water’ (N) → [tʃouk-er pa:ni] ‘tear’ (N)

### **Class-changing derivation**

[lekʰ] ‘write’ (V) + [-ok] ‘NMLZ’ → lekʰok ‘writer’ (N)

[ʃona] ‘gold’ (N) + [-li] → [ʃonali] ‘golden’ (ADJ)

### **3. Nominalization**

Nominalization is the process of transforming a verb, adjective or another part of speech into a noun. Consider the following examples:

[kʰela] ‘play’ (V) + [-ri] ‘NMLZ’ → [kʰelari] ‘player’ (N)

[bʰal] ‘good’ (ADJ) + [powa] ‘NMLZ’ → [bʰal powa] ‘love’ (N)

### **4. Compounding**

Compounding is a process of incorporating two or more words to form a new word. In Goalpariya, three types of compounding are found-endocentric, exocentric and coordinative compound.

#### **Endocentric compounding**

In an endocentric compound, one element serves as the head, while the other functions as its modifier. Both left and right-headed compounding are found in Goalpariya. Consider the following examples:

##### **Left headed compounding**

[tʃul] ‘hair’ + [kata] ‘cut’ → [tʃul kata] ‘haircut’

[kopāl] ‘luck’ + [pʰota] ‘bad’ → [kopāl pʰota] ‘bad luck’

##### **Right headed compounding**

[noʃun] ‘new’ + [bosor] ‘year’ → [noʃun bosor] ‘new year’

[bʰal] ‘good’ + [manuʃ] ‘man’ → [bʰal manuʃ] ‘good man’

##### **Exocentric compounding**

In an exocentric compound, no element within the compound acts as head. That means this type of compounding lacks a head word. Consider the following examples:

[ʃiel] ‘fox’ + [kʰa/kʰoa] ‘eat’ → [ʃiel kʰowa] ‘gipsy’

[ut] ‘camel’ + [pakʰi/pahi] ‘bird’ → [ut pakʰi/pahi] ‘ostrich’

##### **Co-ordinate compounding**

In this type of compounding, the elements share the same status. Here are some examples:

[uʈʈor] ‘north’ + [pub] ‘east’ → [uʈʈor pub] ‘north-east’

[bʱat] ‘rice’ + [tʰorkari] ‘curry’ → [bʱat tʰorkari] ‘rice and curry’

## 5. Reduplication

It is a linguistic process where meaning is conveyed by repeating the entire word or a portion of it. Goalpariya encompasses various reduplication processes. Consider the following examples:

**Complete reduplication:** When the entire word is reduplicated, it is called complete reduplication.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[tʰup tʰup]	‘silently’
[boro boro]	‘big’

Table 24: Complete reduplication

**Partial reduplication:** When the word is reduplicated partially, i.e., only a part of the word undergoes reduplication, it is called partial reduplication.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ka:m ta:m]	‘work’
[a:ʃe pa:ʃe]	‘near’

Table 25: Partial reduplication

**Semantic reduplication:** When two words are reduplicated with some modification and convey the same meaning, it is called semantic reduplication.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[pʰol mul]	‘fruits’
[ga:s ga:sani]	‘trees’

Table 26: Semantic reduplication

**Syntactic reduplication:** When emphasizing syntax, words undergo syntactic reduplication, achieved through spacing and hyphenation.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[eti oti]	‘here and there’
[len-ɖen]	‘transaction’

Table 27: Syntactic reduplication

**Onomatopoeic reduplication:** When two reduplicated words describe sound, it is called onomatopoeic reduplication.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[gur gur]	‘thundering sound’
[tupuʃ tupuʃ]	‘slow rain sound’

Table 28: Onomatopoeic reduplication

**Numeral reduplication:** When two reduplicated words have numerals, it is called numeral reduplication.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ek ek]	‘one one’
[ṭin ṭin]	‘three three’

**Table 29: Numeral reduplication**

**Noun reduplication:** When the reduplicated words are nouns, it is called noun reduplication. It often signifies plurality.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[g <sup>h</sup> or g <sup>h</sup> or]	‘houses’
[raṣṭa raṣṭa]	‘streets’

**Table 30: Noun reduplication**

**Adjective reduplication:** When the reduplicated words are adjectives, it is called adjective reduplication.

Goalpariya	Gloss
[noṭun noṭun]	‘new’
[b <sup>h</sup> al b <sup>h</sup> al]	‘good’

**Table 31: Adjective reduplication**

**Adverb reduplication:** When the reduplicated words are adverbs, it is called adverb reduplication

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ṣodai ṣodai]	‘daily’
[eti oti]	‘here and there’

**Table 32: Adverb reduplication**

Intrinsically, some interrogative pronouns in Goalpariya reduplicate to show plurality. Consider the following examples:

[kai] ‘who’ + [kai] ‘who’ → [kai kai] ‘who (plural)’  
[kuti] ‘where’ + [kuti] ‘where’ → [kuti kuti] ‘where (plural)’

(1) *kai kai*                      *aif-pe*                      *aiske*  
who~RED (PL)              come-NF              today  
‘Who all are coming today?’

(2) *kuti kuti*                      *za-bu*  
where~RED (PL)              go-FUT.2  
‘Where will you go?’

## 6. Borrowing

Loanwords are words adopted by the speakers of one language from a different language (the source language). A loanword can also be called borrowing. It is generally agreed that the entry of loanwords in a language from other languages correlates with articulation and cultural diffusion (Lehmann 1962:216). In Goalpariya, the vocabulary is enriched through the nativization of words from Hindi, Arabic, Urdu, Persian and English. Consider the following examples:

### Words borrowed from Hindi

Goalpariya	Gloss
[zoŋgol]	‘jungle/forest’
[raza]	‘king’

Table 33: Words borrowed from Hindi

### Words borrowed from Arabic

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ɖuniʃe]	‘world’
[hiʃeb]	‘calculation’

Table 34: Words borrowed from Arabic

### Words borrowed from Urdu

Goalpariya	Gloss
[muʃkil]	‘difficult’
[ɖur]	‘far’

Table 35: Words borrowed from Urdu

### Words borrowed from Persian

Goalpariya	Gloss
[ba:za:r]	‘market’
[tʃehra]	‘face’

Table 36: Words borrowed from Persian

### Words borrowed from English

Goalpariya	Gloss
[pulɪʃ]	‘police’
[ɔnlain]	‘online’

Table 37: Words borrowed from English

## 7. Contraction

Contraction is a prevalent linguistic phenomenon in Goalpariya, representing the shorter form of words. Consider the following examples:

Goalpariya	Gloss
[betisawa]-[bessawa]	‘woman’
[bag <sup>h</sup> ]-[bag]	‘tiger’

Table 38: Contraction in Goalpariya

## 8. Negation

It is the process to deny something. Three negative markers *na*, *nai* and *nowai* are found in Goalpariya. Consider the following examples:

*na* serves multiple functions in Goalpariya:

Here, it functions as a negative response to single-word questions.

- (3)     *tui*     *b<sup>h</sup>aṭ*     *k<sup>h</sup>a-sif*     *neki*  
          2SG   rice   eat-NF         Q  
          ‘Did you eat rice?’

- (3a)   *na*  
          NEG.BE  
          ‘No’

It also functions as a prohibitive marker (suffix to the verb).

- (3b)   *koif-na*  
          tell-NEG  
          ‘Don’t tell’.

And expresses negation in declarative sentences (prefixed to verb).

- (3c)   *mui*     *aiske*     *kamoṭ*     *na-za-im*  
          1SG   today   work   NEG-go-FUT  
          ‘I will not go to work today’.

*/-nai/* serves to express definiteness when employed in negation.

- (4)     *ui*         *oti*         *nai*  
          3SG   there   NEG.BE.3  
          ‘She is not there.’

- (4a)   *mui*     *kam-ta*         *koron*         *nai*  
          1SG   work-CLF   do-NF         NEG.BE.PST  
          ‘I did not do the work’

*-nowai* is mainly used with nouns and adverbs in negation. It is mostly used in the present tense.

## 9. Clipping

Clipping involves shortening a word while retaining its original meaning. Consider the following examples:

[bubu] ‘elder sister’ → [bu] ‘elder sister’

[b<sup>h</sup>aijaan] ‘elder brother’ → [b<sup>h</sup>ai] ‘elder brother’

### **10. Acronym**

An acronym is a term formed by combining initial letters or syllables of each word in a phrase to create a new, single word.

[ɔgɔpɔ] → Asom Gana Parishad

[akrafu] → The All Assam Koch Rajbongshi Students’ Union

### **11. Eponym**

Eponyms are terms that originate from the names of individuals, whether historical figures, mythological characters or fictional personalities and are used to designate specific words, locations or concepts.

[tɕilarai] → a college in Golakganj, Dhubri named after Bir Chilarai of the Koch Dynasty.

### **Conclusion**

This study focuses on the morphological aspects of Goalpariya, specifically examining its word structure, the classification of word classes, and the processes of word formation. The study has explored both free and bound morphemes in Goalpariya and has provided a classification of word classes-including nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, postpositions, conjunctions and interjections, and their respective subcategories. Furthermore, it has analysed a range of word formation processes such as inflection, derivation, nominalization, compounding, reduplication, borrowing, negation, clipping, acronym and eponym. It has also been found that in Goalpariya, the vocabulary is enriched through the nativization of words from Hindi, Arabic, Urdu, Persian and English. To support the analysis, illustrative examples have been provided for each category and process discussed. By analysing these core elements, the research aims to contribute to a deeper and more systematic understanding of the language’s morphological features.

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**A Study on Cultural Estrangement and Amalgamation in Amitav Ghosh's  
*The Glass Palace* and *Sea of Poppies***

**Dr.K.Sathiya Priya, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor in English  
Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women  
Tirupur Dt, Tamilnadu  
[priyaksp86@gmail.com](mailto:priyaksp86@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

Literature presents the life and culture of diverse people and acts as a mirror, revealing the dynamic interaction of identities, cultures, and society. Writers put in great efforts in portraying the culture, tradition and practice of the society they deal with. By reflecting and forming cultural identities, literature promotes cross-cultural understanding and provides insights into a range of experiences. Amitav Ghosh is a renowned writer who skilfully illustrates the intricacies of cultural representation in his works. In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh represents culture through themes of hybridity, displacement, and the effects of colonialism on identity. Cultural crossings are also experienced by the main character, Rajkumar, a Bengali living in Burma, through his interactions and connections with Burmese people. Through his examination of the intricacies of national identity creation in the backdrop of colonialism and migration, Ghosh demonstrates how characters struggle with their sense of belonging and their origins. The limitations that society places on women, especially widows, and the impacts of customs such as sati are examined in *Sea of Poppies*. To depict the linguistic diversity of the time period and the relationships between characters, *Sea of Poppies* uses a variety of languages and dialects, such as Hindi, French, English, Pidgin, and Lascari. This language environment is a reflection of the intricate relationships between cultures as well as the effects of colonialism on intercultural dialogue.

**Keywords:** Hybridity, Displacement, Estrangement, Amalgamation

## Introduction

Amitav Ghosh, an acclaimed writer, proves himself remarkable in his skill in describing the society alive in his works. This study focuses on the differences among communities and how the circumstances provide opportunities to adopt themselves and evolve as citizens of the world. Novels by Amitav Ghosh like *The Glass Palace* and *Sea of Poppies*, delve deeply into the issues of cultural differences and assimilation. Complex cultural interchange and transformation processes and the resulting feelings of alienation are explored in these novels. The novels have significantly contributed to the study of cultural fusion and alienation. These stories are a timeless reminder that, in the complex dance of cultures, the lines between acculturation and estrangement are ever-evolving and changeable.

### Importance of Characters in *The Glass Palace*

*The Glass Palace* is a novel about places, spaces, separations, and times. It tells the story of several families, their relationships, and their lives. The protagonist, Rajkumar, is an Indian orphan who accidentally travels to Burma. Rajkumar stands out among his peers for his curiosity, acute awareness, and capacity for measured risk-taking. Rajkumar works in the tea shop owned by Ma Cho, a matronly woman. He enjoys lying about his age so that he may act older. Rajkumar is a worldly orphan who has travelled extensively. He starts his lifelong hunt for locations and people when he gets to Mandalay. The city takes him in, “Long straight roads radiated outwards from the walls, forming a neat geometrical grid. So intriguing was the ordered pattern of these streets that Rajkumar wandered far afield exploring” (Tiwari 89). He quickly feels at home in his new surroundings. Although he intuitively understands that orphans like him cannot enter the crystal-clear glass paradise that is the Mandalay Fort, “No matter what Ma Cho said, he decided, he would cross the moat-before he left Mandalay, he would find a way in” (Tiwari 90). This flame distinguishes Rajkumar for a life of achievement, excitement, and riches. His orphan status lends him a distinct sensibility. He can see each scenario objectively. Protecting oneself and caring for oneself is his only priority. He is an unrestrained growing youngster. His life experiences have made him pragmatic.

Rajkumar, who has already established himself as a prosperous and well-respected businessman, is ready to hunt for Dolly in India after his installation. He believes tracking her won't be too difficult because Dolly was with the overthrown King and Queen of Burma. Here,

Ghosh emphasizes the dismal state of orphans who rely on their luck, family, and society via the persona of Rajkumar. Some instances of orphans are Rajkumar-Dolly from *The Glass Palace* and Paulette from *Sea of Poppies*. Rajkumar has made a home for himself in *The Glass Palace*, but Dolly is a doll made by Queen Supayalat. She is utterly dependent on the King's family. A girl who is an orphan in our culture is likewise a severe issue since she is vulnerable to the society's harsh treatment. Through the novel, Ghosh makes the case that providing these kids with a solid education and upbringing is also a significant responsibility of our society.

Uma is living a robotic, lonely existence while assuming the role of a classy hostess at all of the Collector's social events. Dolly, a friend, frees Uma from this cycle of monotony and dreary routine. She and Dolly get along well. Her hubby does not take up any of her mental space. Things will eventually come undone. The Collector notices Uma approaching him after Dolly has left and says to her. "You have come to tell me you want to go home" (TGP 99). Uma decides to quit the Collector after this occurrence. She has decided that she cannot continue in that way. The conversation that ensues is both heartbreaking and heartwarming. Nothing in this world is more depressing than hearing about unmet expectations. He tells Uma that the Collector acts in the same way.

I used to dream about the kind of marriage I wanted...Living with a woman as an equal, in spirit and intellect, seemed to me the most wonderful thing life could offer. To discover the world of literature and art together: what could be more affluent, more fulfilling? But what I dreamt is not yet possible here, in India, not for us. (TGP 99)

The Collector and Uma depart, rowing out into the distance and never returning. He believes returning home would be unnecessary since no one would be waiting for him, and he would have trouble falling asleep. And thus, a valuable life, a gifted, delicate human existence, ends. The Collector ends his life. He turns out to be much more flimsy than Uma. It is incomprehensible that Uma doesn't grieve for her husband after the tragedy of his passing.

In the past, males dominated power structures and understood the workings of the economy. Men establish moral standards and make judgments on property. They have divided women into good and evil categories and brainwashed both men and women to the point that, for the most part, they have learned to accept these divisions. Thus, the twin tactic of control and exclusion has developed in men. (Chakravarty 134)

The idea that marriage is the ultimate objective of an Indian woman's life and that her husband's house is her sole residence has long been instilled in her psyche. The contemporary, educated Indian lady discovers that marriage merely permits a superficial appearance of independence. Despite many inconsistencies, husband and wife attempt to maintain an outward appearance of balance and harmony in the Indian culture, which is still quite traditional in its attitude to marriage. In a man and woman's (a husband and wife's) career graph, the wife must always suppress her uniqueness to preserve her husband's opportunity for a swift ascent.

### **Importance of Language in *The Glass Palace***

Languages are used in a variety of ways. The main characters are bilingual or multilingual and have strong cultural links to other nations, even Burmese princesses living in exile study Indian languages. Indians born in Burma have Indian and Burmese names and use vocabulary from both languages. Maintaining the old vernacular is a method of keeping old links, especially for Rajkumar, despite the formal dominance of the English King, Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, Saya John, Rajkumar, Dolly, Uma, Alison, Dinu, Neel, Arjun, Hardayal, Kishan Singh, Jaya, and Ilongo are just a few of the displaced individuals Ghosh discusses in his novel.

### **Tradition and Colonization in *The Glass Palace***

Through the novel, Amitav Ghosh demonstrates the traditional practices of Bengali women. Dolly informed Uma: "Oh, you Indians, you're all the same, all obsessed with your castes and your arranged marriages. In Burma, when a woman likes a man, she is free to do what she wants" (TGP117-118). The story makes evident the effects of Western civilization and education. In Arjun's comment to his buddy, the ideas of Indian people mingled with Western culture are amply visible: "Just look at us, Hardy – just look at us. What are we? We've learnt to dance the tango and how to eat roast beef with a knife and fork. The truth is that except for the colour of our skin, most people in India wouldn't even recognize us as Indians" (TGP 439). The following is another instance of Arjun's pride:

Europeans were comments on Indians that looked at Punjabis, Marathas, Bengalis, Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims. Where else in India would you come across a group such as ours – where region and religion don't matter – where we can all drink together, eat beef and pork, and think nothing of it? Arjun said every meal at an officers' mess was an adventure, a glorious infringement of taboos. They ate foods none had ever touched at home: bacon, ham and sausages for breakfast; roast beef

and pork chops for dinner. They drank whisky, beer and wine, smoked cigars, cigarettes and cigarillos...After taking some whisky, Arjun said that we're the first modern Indians, the first Indians to be genuinely free. We eat and drink what we like, and we're the first Indians who're not weighed down by the past. (TGP 278-279)

Like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh is an insider rather than an outsider who discusses cultural dislocation via distorted optics. In the age of globalization, he gets us to consider how culture interacts with governmental and economic processes. Ghosh seeks to document the rich history and significance of the Indian diaspora as a writer. Thus, Ghosh has focused on the universal problem of racial and cultural hybridity through the characters in his novel. The novel addresses gender relations, man-woman relationships, the impact of the English language and culture on the Indians, the caste system as it is understood in India, and arranged marriages.

### ***Sea of Poppies***

The British colonial rulers who groomed people to be migrants and hybrids for their colonial desires are shown by Amitav Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies*. Ibis represents the uncertainty of their lives and the regularity of their homes, and Ghosh depicts the dark web of the empire's past as a varied cast of individuals. The novel has a variety of characters from other cultures, castes, faiths, nationalities, etc., which serves as a metaphor for hybridity. The novel's main hybrid character is named Deeti. Deeti, a low-caste Hindu widow in poverty, is saved from her husband's funeral pyre by Kalua, an untouchable man from a lower social level. They defy all social conventions to elope and get married since society will not let them live happily ever after. To avoid being recognized, they alter their names to Aditi and Madhu and their caste to blend in with bonded labourers and embrace the Chamar caste. Ibis is a diverse source of cultural backgrounds, a new race created due to specific cultural interactions. A sign of hybridity may be seen in the blend of characters from many civilizations, castes, faiths, nationalities, etc. In his paper "Deconstruction Human Society: An Appreciation of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*", Dr. B. K. Nagarjun says,

*Sea of Poppies* tells how, on the ship Ibis, headed to Caribbean sugar plantations, small new worlds are forged, bringing together north Indian women, Bengali Zamindars, black men, rural labourers and Chinese seamen. It is a story of people whose fate is written by poppy flower, the British who forced opium cultivation on farmers, the

ruined lives of farmers, the people who were addicted and poor factory workers, the deceit of the British, the ship that transported the opium and which carried Indians to life of slavery. (103)

Poppies indicate cross-cultural interactions because they grow in areas where individuals have acquired a substantial position in the global economy. The novel focuses on characters who speak pidgin, Bhojpuri, and even the hilariously mixed English of a Bengali Babu and a young Frenchman. Jodu's father's boat was where Miss Paulette was born, and the baby girl's mother passed soon after. Because she becomes Jodu's father's daughter, she serves as an illustration of a hybrid society. She eats rice and dal khichri prepared by Jodu's mother and learns Bengali. She embraces a hybrid culture as time passes and attempts to co-exist with Jodu. She shares a home with her foster brother Jodu and is born a French lady. She is a French botanist's daughter. She is raised by an Indian nanny and is given up for adoption by Mr. Benjamin Burnham, a wealthy, despicable, and corrupt Calcutta merchant. On the merchant ship Ibis, she becomes interested in the culture of the refugees. Her character combines elements of French and Indian culture. She is a beautiful example of someone who is open-minded and treats other cultures with respect. Her French, English, and Bengali usage convey different traces of specific cultural settings; thus, the instant she is heard, she is categorized into particular social groupings. (Chaudhary 171). To go to Mauritius, she poses as the niece of Baboo Nob Kissin and becomes a *girmityas* on Ibis.

Zachary is a mulatto freedman from Baltimore; Mr. Benjamin Burnham, a dishonest British businessman; Baboo Nob Kissim is a superstitious person; and Serang Ali. They claimed to be ship brothers and sisters to form the Ibis family and state they descended the Wooghly River into the sea. They speak distinct dialects due to their language, caste, and faith differences. Migrant workers form a bond to go to Mauritius in Ghosh's colonial India. Cross-cultural encounters have been experienced. Migrants interact with individuals from all over the world, regardless of caste, creed, or religion, and they share their experiences and issues in various languages. The novel tells the stories of several hybrid personalities from different social classes, creeds, religions, races, cultures, and nationalities. Ghosh has shown the essence of immigrant hybrid culture in how they interact, coexist, and create a new hybrid identity known as “*girmityas*.”

**Language in *Sea of Poppies***

Language is also present in *Sea of Poppies*. The novel focuses on characters who speak pidgin, Bhojpuri, and even the hilariously mixed English of a Bengali babu and a young Frenchwoman. In addition to political history, the author also explains culture, religion, variety, the opium trade, legacy, and much more. The work has a very Indian feel with the use of vocabulary like “thug,” “pukka,” “sahib,” “serrang,” “mali,” “lathi,” “dekko,” and “punkah-wallah,” as well as “dhoti,” “kurta,” “jooties,” “nayansukh,” “dasturi,” “sirdar,” “maharir” and “serishtas”.

Zachary Reid, a charming twenty-year-old from Maryland with curly black hair, is the second mate aboard the Ibis. His father, who enslaved people, liberated his mother so that Zachary might be born a free man. By the time the Ibis arrives in India, Zachary has been given the position of a second mate and becomes the ship's carpenter. The lascars have their unique tongues. He talks about his maiden voyage as a member of the sailing species. They must be from a different tribe and country, he reasons:

They came in groups of ten or fifteen, each with a leader who spoke on their behalf.

To break up these groups was impossible; they had to be taken together or not at all, and although they came cheap, they had their ideas of how many men would share each job-which seemed to mean that three or four lascars had to be hired for jobs that a single able seaman could well do. (SOP 13)

The Ibis' commander, Arakanese Serang Ali, delivers a straightforward, cunning speech in colloquial Yankee Chinese. He is an Arakan-Rohingya from the Blongi tribe. Serang Ali takes up the responsibility of navigating while Zachary struggles: “What for Malum Zikri make big dam bobberies so muchee buk-buk and big hookuming? Malum Zikri still learns- pigging. No sabbi ship-pijjin. No, can you see Serang Ali too much smart-bugger inside? Take ship Por'Lwee-side Three days, look-see” (SOP 12).

Ghosh suggests “a collection of exiles from the four corners of the globe, men swept together by the nineteenth century's version of globalization. Zachary hears another vernacular in the Hooghly River: “Damn my eyes if I ever saw such a coffle of barn shooting badmashes! A chowder of your chutes is what you budzats need. What are you doing, toying with your tatters and luffing your laurels while I stand in the sun?” (SOP 17). Because various characters talk in their native tongues Ghosh employs a variety of languages. Multiple people use these many tongues and cultures to unite them and establish new languages for communication. The national

language of India during the colonial times, Hindi, was impacted by English and became Hinglish.

### **Hybridity in *Sea of Poppies***

Ghosh also discusses how hybridity occurs aboard the warships, where caste is irrelevant. Men of many backgrounds, including Brahmans, Ahirs, Chamars, and Telis, are keen to join. He explains how immigrants become hybrid in the current period and are forced to adopt Christianity. He also explains how the character's name comes to stand for hybridity. According to Paulette, he uses Zachary Reid to show how his name has changed through time.

Not at all, the girl replied in a tone of unalloyed certainty. No one can lose caste on a boat of pilgrims, and everyone is the same: it's like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannath in Puri. From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship-siblings --- jahajbhais and jahajbaahens to each other. There'll be no differences between us. (SOP 156)

The migrants share an apartment complex. Women are touching one another and using gestures to express themselves and share their stories. They say that they do not have any differences. The “children of the ship,” also known as jahaj-bhai and jahaj-bahen, were their collective names. They were immigrants from various countries, including Malay, Black-Hat Arabs, Javanese, and Malaysia. These people seemed to be living onboard ships like the Fanqui while dressing differently since it was advantageous for their business. For example, Ghosh writes:

But of these many kinds of creature, the most easily recognizable, without a doubt, was the small but flourishing tribe of White - hatted Aliens-Parsis from Bombay...the White-hats' garments were in no whit the same as those of the Fanquis: they wore robes and turbans not unlike those of Black-hatted Arabs. (SOP 177)

Migrants communicate with one another and attempt to interact with everyone. All of them are cut off from their homes, and nothing can stop them from secretly getting together as monsters, demons, or mischances. These migrants are all fellow travelers on the same ship:

With no parents or elders to decide on these matters, who knew what the right way to make a marriage was? And wasn't it she who had said, at the start, that they



were all kin now, that their rebirth in the ship's womb had made them into a single family? (SOP 432)

In the novel, Ghosh depicts a hybrid connection between Kalua, Deeti, and other characters. We discover some problems with the caste system, gender dynamics, man-woman relationships, the impact of the English language and culture on Indians, and arranged marriages. Many people develop new languages to communicate in their language and unite with one another. Ghosh describes how immigrants today become hybrids. The multicultural communion in the narrative is created by the language drawn from many cultural sources. Thus, the work focuses on the worldwide problem of racial and cultural hybridity.

### **Conclusion**

In the intricate tapestry of Amitav Ghosh's literary creations, the themes of cultural alienation and amalgamation emerge as deeply resonant threads that bind together the diverse narratives of *The Glass Palace* and *Sea of Poppies*. Through these works, Ghosh skilfully navigates the complex terrain of human experiences, unveiling the tension between identity and displacement, tradition and change, and the insatiable human desire for connection.

As the characters in these novels traverse physical landscapes and historical epochs, they constantly negotiate between the known and the unknown. However, Ghosh's narratives also celebrate the resilience of human connections that transcend borders. *The Glass Palace* exemplifies the dynamics of cultural amalgamation as it follows the intersecting fates of characters from India, Burma, and beyond. Their lives intermingle, reflecting the intricate ways in which cultures intertwine, merge, and evolve. The diverse cast of the characters in *Sea of Poppies* further amplify this theme as they navigate the complexities of their mixed heritage and encounter individuals from varied backgrounds.

In essence, Amitav Ghosh's literary tapestry serves as a vivid portrait of the intricate interplay between cultural alienation and amalgamation. Through the lives of his characters, he showcases the complexities of human existence as it unfolds against the backdrop of shifting political landscapes, historical upheavals, and the ever-expanding horizons of an interconnected world. The ultimate revelation lies in recognising that, despite the challenges of cultural alienation, the yearning for amalgamation and unity among diversity remains an enduring and powerful force.

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**Ethnographic Significance of Indigenous Fiction: An  
Anthropological Reading of Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya  
Woman***

**Kavimani N.**

Research Scholar  
Department of English  
SRMV College of Arts and Science  
Coimbatore – 20.  
[kavilit56@gmail.com](mailto:kavilit56@gmail.com)

**Dr. R. Chandrasekar**

Associate Professor and Head  
Department of English  
SRMV College of Arts and Science  
Coimbatore – 20.  
[rvidyache@gmail.com](mailto:rvidyache@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

Ever since the Literary Turn of the 1980s, anthropology has been associated with various disciplines that document human experiences. Among them, fiction arguably has prominence as many influential anthropologists have also been fictional writers themselves. Works based on fieldwork experiences offer authentic insights into the societies they depict since the authors witness the realities firsthand. Rooted in real-life observations, such works often function as fictionalised ethnographies, incorporating details that may not appear in formal anthropological records. In this case, fictional works by Indigenous writers can also lay claim to be ethnographic due to their emic approach to societal depiction. These works provide rich, detailed descriptions that allow readers to grasp the social significance of cultural acts, a concept Clifford Geertz referred to as ‘thick description.’ Geertz’s idea emphasises the interpretation of the multiple

layers of meaning within a cultural practice. Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* portrays the Malayarayar community that inhabits the Western Ghats of Kerala. This paper seeks to analyse the novel as a work of Indigenous fiction, highlighting its anthropological qualities and demonstrating how it serves as a form of 'thick description.'

**Keywords:** Ethnography, Indigenous Fiction, Clifford Geertz, Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman*, thick description.

## Introduction

In the introduction to the much-acclaimed work *Writing Culture*, James Clifford presented a transformative argument that "ethnographic writing can be properly called fictions in the sense of something made or fashioned" (6). This argument, which challenged the traditional understanding of ethnography, was the crucial starting point for exploring the connection between Anthropology and Literature. It inspired academia to question the differentiation between objective ethnographic material and a subjective literary piece if ethnographies have fictional characteristics. Clifford's statement is an invitation to investigate the boundaries between the two disciplines by looking at their nature. Clifford also mapped the scientific rigour of ethnography within linguistic levels as adherence to particular stylistic formats. Contemporary approaches to ethnography consider Anthropologists as writers of fiction who manipulate the art of rhetoric to persuade readers to take a specific position (Watson 249). Perceptive from these views is that the modalities of presentation in ethnography and fiction mainly cause their differentiation. Eriksen says that novels "which are simultaneously the production of society and the contribution to the self-definition and reification of that society, has the additional virtue of presenting some ethnographic evidence. (172). However, he warns about the status of ethnographic material in fictional works. Mention must be made of the intended meaning of the word 'fiction' used in this

paper. It need not be confused with the imagination or fictitious character of the genre in general. Instead, fiction here is a type of realist semi-fictional work rooted in verifiably ethnographic data of a community it represents. Written by indigenous writers, they are dense in their portrayal of the community. Taking its cue from fiction's ability to record the ethnographic data of the society under the description, this paper attempts to read *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* through an Anthropological lens. Using Geertz's 'thick description' as its analysis theory, this paper construes fictional space as an authentic ethnographic record that offers an emic perspective.

### **Literary Turn, Ethnography and Fiction**

The Literary Turn of the 1980s reassessed Anthropology's shared ties with other disciplines while evaluating its development. As a result, two different perspectives within the field have become prominent. One perspective turned the anthropologists toward different genres of literature, intending to unearth anthropological data and encouraging them to take literary endeavours. At the same time, the other looked for the literary characteristic of anthropology itself. Arguably, this was spearheaded by James Clifford and his party in the famous book *Writing Culture*, which analysed anthropology to unearth its literary qualities. Looking at the process behind gathering ethnographic data and its publication, Clifford contended the scientific status of Anthropology. He points out that the ethnographer's personal experiences are removed by the compulsion to maintain impersonal standards in ethnography:

The subjectivity of the author is separated from the objective referent of the text. At best, the author's personal voice is seen as a style in the weak sense: a tone or embellishment of the facts. Moreover, the ethnographer's actual field experience is presented only in very stylised ways. States of serious confusion, violent feelings or acts, censorship,

important failures, changes, of course, and excessive pleasures are excluded from the published account. (13)

According to Clifford, removing the ethnographer's personae from the written manuscript and other strenuous stylistic strategies only confirms the objective standards. It restricts the scientific rigour of the discipline within the suggested formation of the manuscript. In that case, it necessitates questions of inadequate representation to maintain standards and disassociation of authors' personae from their inherent knowledge before publishing. Keeping a diary alongside the ethnographic record is shared among all the researchers employed in fieldwork. (Malinowski's diary, published after he died in 1967, is the best example). While the ethnographic records reach the publication stage, the researcher's personal experiences are left untouched, as diaries are considered less factual and, therefore, insignificant. In an interview, Amitav Ghosh says that after submitting his dissertation, he was left with a “nagging sense of dissatisfaction” because everything he considered important about his experience in Egypt was left unsaid. He further states that this dissatisfaction is common to every ethnographer and that they are “haunted by experiences” (536-537). It must be noted that the above is a response to the question regarding the publication of Ghosh's novel *In An Antique Land*, which he wrote based on his fieldwork experiences in Egypt.

Restrictions laid by conventional ethnographic genres limit the freedom of the authors to express themselves. Such restriction causes Anthropologists to take literary endeavours by writing fiction to express their impressions on the realities of fieldwork freely. (Nigel 218; Voorst 15). Centred around the realities of the fieldwork, these texts truthfully represent the societies they describe. From customs to rituals to beliefs to practices, the author-ethnographer strives to provide a culturally rich portrayal of the community with informed knowledge. The end product

is an account that is reflexive, personal, and full of the author's presence rather than objective and dry. Therefore, fictional works rooted in reality can claim authenticity based on their comprehensive portrayal of the society they picture. Eventually, authenticity based on adherence to a specific writing style is questioned and undermined here. As Geertz argued, the ethnographer's effort to persuade the readers of actually "been there" has less to do with a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance and relies mostly on their way of writing. (1988, 4). Anand Pandian concurs that ethnography, which is deeply empirical and highly speculative, shares boundaries between literary genres like fiction, memoir, and travelogue. Thus, he marks ethnography as not only paying close attention to what is but also including a sweeping imagination of what else might also be. (6). By removing anthropology from its confined role of being factual and objective, Pandian extends the contours of ethnography to other disciplines. From this understanding, positing fiction as a source of ethnography can be an extension of the discipline rather than damage.

### **Fiction as Ethnography and Thick Description**

This brings attention to the subsequent discussion of considering fiction as a valid ethnographic source. The tendency to look at fiction as a form of entertainment arises owing to its imaginative nature. However, the same imaginative characteristics are central to ethnography since the data presented are the ethnographer's "own construction of other people's constructions. (Geertz 9)". Here, it must be clarified that these imaginary characteristics are imaginary only at the level of interpretation. They are not pure speculation of the ethnographer without any factual foundations. Clifford's claims of ethnographic writings are called fiction in the "sense of something made or fashioned"(6) and are to be understood similarly. Breaking the established boundaries without defining the mutual characteristics of each discipline would

confuse many levels. In this sense, fiction is not entirely an imaginary account of alien societies but is an account rooted in realities in the fictional format. So, the study focuses not on fiction in its literal sense but on the semi-fictional characteristics of the narration, which informs readers of the realities of distant societies. Such narrations offer a comprehensive account of societies, and the author's interpretation is given enough space to enhance the reader's understanding. In this way, the author's presence is preserved and maintained throughout the narration. In contrast to the general fictional narration, they are distinct due to their panoramic portrayal of actual societies.

Clifford Geertz's conceptualisation of "thin description" and "thick description" better explains the differences in the wholistic portrayal. In his article *Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, Geertz nuances the differences between 'twitch' and 'wink' by referring to the meaning-making process behind each. In this case, a twitch is an involuntary activity, whereas a wink is a conspiratorial signal to a friend. (6). Geertz warns readers of the dangers of mistaking one for another. At the centre of this analogy is an attempt to interpret the symbolic meanings that individuals assign to their actions within a specific cultural context. (Vecchione and Sean Seger 4). Therefore, the thin description stops at the level of describing a cultural act, whereas the thick description interprets the layers of meaning behind the act. Following Max Weber's notion of culture as entangled webs of meanings, Geertz argues that "the analysis of it therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning." (5). To him, culture can be read as codes entailing different meanings, which is a fact central to his argument for making interpretive anthropology. In this essay, Geertz offers a thick description as a narrative tool to achieve interpretive anthropology that unearths hidden, symbolic meanings behind cultural enactments. An example of this is Geertz's *Deep*



*Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight*, a detailed account of cockfights in a Balinese Village in 1958. By elaborating the meanings ascribed to the activity by the natives, Geertz penetrates the layers of meaning to offer an experience of being an actual participant in the event.

## **Review of Literature**

Anthropology and Literature are primarily connected due to their attempt to record the everyday lives of the societies they discuss. If both phenomena are incorporated into the everyday life of communities, they are only distinguished by their presentation modalities. Markowski opines, "If anthropology studies literature, and literature tells us what it means to be human, then anthropology of literature is destined to hit the nail on the head." (87). According to him, anthropology of literature is a scientific discipline that has chosen literature for its investigation. To C.S. Watson, literature, especially fiction, offers empirically verifiable data that deserves an anthropological gaze since it aims to provide a close representation of society, the same as ethnography. Criticism about the success and failure of such narratives based on the validation of facts applies equally to any ethnography due to their similar aim to represent. (256). The validation of fiction and ethnography does not necessarily eradicate boundaries between the disciplines, as hardcore anthropologists fear. Proponents of literary turn created a cosmopolitan platform to associate each discipline, beneficial to both. A researcher aims to collect ethnographic data without being discriminatory towards the form in that sense. According to Nigel Rapport, the process of "zigzagging" between ethnography and fiction allows researchers to gain deeper insights into comparative truths of distinct phenomena. It also preserves the individuality and integrity of each perspective during the process. (218). As Rapport notes, this approach enables an immersive experience with different phenomena, facilitating a nuanced understanding of each within its phenomenology. However, complete fictional narratives

without realist elements are ill-suited for this criss-crossing between genres. The primary aim of the investigation is the ethnographic content about a particular society; the ‘anthropology of literature’, as Watson called it, is not interested in fictional elements of the genre. To mark the narratives which are in rich possession of ethnographic contents, ‘thick description’ becomes a useful analytical tool. The significance of thick description rests on its ability to interpret symbolic meanings intertwined with culture. According to Schwandt, the ‘thickness’ is its interpretive characteristic of description rather than details. (296). Similarly, Holiday expresses his view: "What makes the thick description of social phenomenon possible is not its exhaustiveness of coverage, but how it scans the different facets of the social matrix or culture within which it is found and comes up with good analysis." (75). Vecchione and Seeger opine that the weakness of the thick description is its insufficient sensitivity to perspectival differences within a given culture and its inability to locate the culture in its macro-historical context. (7). However, proponents of thick description, including Clifford Geertz, argue that its strength is its ability to delve into the intricate layers of meaning within a culture, capturing the nuances of individual perspectives and situating them within their broader symbolic frameworks. This micro-level depth offers a nuanced understanding that often complements, rather than neglects, the macro-historical context. Priyanka Shivdas compares *Kocharethi* with the Australian nonfiction work *Dark Emu* to picture the confrontations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Accordingly, she establishes the similarity between Indigenous communities across the world. She describes *Kocharethi* as realistically styled fiction that attempts to describe the realities of Malayarayers' lives (6). Dharavath and Rani look at the novel as a significant feat in the literary field for Adivasis due to its ethnographic portrayal of the field occupied by elites. Without undermining the significance of the novel, they analyse the issues of adivasi women and

the patriarchal structure using a feminist perspective. On the other hand, Soutima Adhikary considers the novel as a “voice of a defiant subalternity committed to writing its own history”, and Narayan has a “charge of promoting and presenting the authentic picture of this section of the society.” (344). Previous studies focused on the text's anthropological nature as a reservoir of Malayarayar cultural activities and its importance in the literary field. However, there is a possible lack of knowledge on what characterises the novel anthropological and how it is done. This paper addresses that gap by examining the text as an interpretive anthropology reflective in nature.

## **Analysis**

Geertz's main argument for his ‘thick description’ is based on his view that culture is a semiotic entity capable of being read and interpreted. Extending the use of thick descriptions to account for the interpretive side of anthropology, he destabilised the centrality of the authorial voice. The author, in thick description, aids in the process of understanding a particular social action along with its meaning in a given society. Because what authenticates a finished ethnographic manuscript is the promise of the fieldwork, ‘actually been there’ as James Clifford called it, novels embedded with ethnography also provide similar authenticity due to the author's relationship with the society. In the case of *Kocharethi*, Narayan hails from the same Malayarayar community that the text centres around. Focusing mainly on three characters, Kunjipennu, Kochuraman and Parvathy, the novel records the various aspects of Malayarayar, who inhabits the Western Ghats of Kerala. From its publication, the novel was celebrated as the first-ever novel written by an Adivasi. Another aspect that promises rich ethnographic content is the motive behind the book's production. Having been provoked by the misrepresentation of his community, Narayan opted to write the novel. In his words: “We wanted to tell the world that we

have our own distinctive way of life, our own value system. We are not demons lacking inhumanity but a strong, hardworking and self-reliant community”. (209). Commitment to depict his society’s culture ensures a holistic portrayal of the community, validating the details. Subsequently, the author says he wrote the novel based on childhood memories, his grandfather’s stories and the rituals that his grandfather performed. (Jeyashree xvii). The novel's first part contains nuanced ethnographic details of the community, aptly described in the introduction as an ‘ethnohistorian's delight’. (Jeyashree xvii). *Kocharethi* offers insights regarding rituals, religious beliefs, marriage customs, naturally embedded lifestyles, and medicinal practices of the community. With the main focus on characters such as Kunjipennu, Kochuraman and Parvathy, the text touches upon the impacts of the modernist changes on the Malayarayar community.

Central to the lifestyle of Malayarayar are their social practices and religious beliefs, with which they are shown to be deeply connected. Most of these practices are associated with their natural surroundings and partly shaped by their worship of spirits. The most dominant form of belief in spirits can be seen in the community's medicinal practices. Incantation, going into a trance, and consecrating threads and ashes are practices associated with religion and are shown to be losing ground. Replacing medical practice linked with the supernatural, Kochuraman comes to prominence, showcasing the ways of herbal treatment. His character also informs the readers about the method of preserving knowledge related to medicine. He learns medicine by listening to verses and their explanation and memorising them. (Narayan 4). The change from belief in spirits to natural herbs highlights the community's mentality and adaptation. Narayan also interprets the oral transmission of stories and knowledge within Indigenous communities. Similar to Geertz's work on Balinese cockfights, Naryan's novel is a record of a society really in

existence. One sharp contrast between both is Narayan's account, which uses an emic approach that gives insider views.

Readers are provided with enormous details regarding the rites of the Malayarayar and their significance within the community. To help readers understand unfamiliar society's customs, Narayan provides a thick description that suggests the cultural accounts of Malayarayar. Assigned meanings to birds such as *Chavilliyan* and *theendari* are given in a way that represents real-life scenarios. Thus, the cry of *Chavilliyan* brings death to the community, and the sound of *theendari* alerts women about their menstruation cycle. Every important occasion is followed by observing customs sincerely practised by the community. Thus, the child's birth is followed by observing valayama (birth pollution), which lasts seven days. Family members and relatives are prohibited from doing certain activities during that period. Narayan provides the list of such things in the novel, "oil bath, toddy and meat, appearing before the deities and performing rites were taboo for all of them (family members)" (38). Similarly, a death in a family also brings such restrictions to prevent oneself from breaking the customs. Known as *pula*, the funeral rite observed for 16 days of isolation ends with a family meal. Women are moved into the part of the house called *eettappera* (period house) upon giving birth and while on their periods. Contact with the people and things is prohibited to avoid pollution within the community. Such measures show the patriarchal current, which restricts women's freedom in the name of adherence to customs most of the time. In the text, the cultural practices of Malayarayar are highly patriarchal, which shows the highly vulnerable position of women in a male-dominated society. (93 Ramesh and Teena). Positioning himself as the ethnographer, Narayan records the practices as they are observed in reality rather than being sceptical about them. Leaving readers to understand the matter for themselves, he stops his authorial voice at the level of interpretation while

demonstrating the significance of the customs in daily life. In this way, he directly makes the readers converse with the text as they understand an unfamiliar culture through it. Involving the readers in the text by giving them a realistic experience constitutes the main idea of thick description. His use of thick descriptions offers a complete picture of Malayarayar's norms and practises with their significance in the community.

Narayan records that the community is divided into five illams (clans), named after nearby trees and stones. The community has five illams: Vallayillam, Poothaniyillam, Madalakkattillam, Nellippullillam and Chokkayillam. Marriage between clans is possible only if they fall under specific regulations. Narayan details the clans and their relations through the character Ittyadi, who says, “Chokkayillam. Vala and Nellipulli are related, as are Poothanl and Modalakkattu. Someone belonging to Modalakkattu can marry either Valayillam or Nellipulli illam... Poothani and Nellipulli can marry from Vala” (Narayan 15). The above passage refers to the rule concerning marriages practised by the community. However, these customs are undermined as the next generation takes up mainstream culture's ways. Narayan describes Parvathy's transformation in the following way:

“She seemed to have become fairer. Her thick glossy black hair was gathered up into a thick knot held firmly in place with a pin. Silver anklets, slippers that had a gold-coloured line on them, a gold-plated watch with a black strap on her left wrist, a ring... (Narayan, 188).

Her transformation is much more crucial as she can adapt to the new environment, motivating the young girls to follow her path. On the other hand, her slow distancing from the traditional customs, culminating in her decision to marry against such customs, is also to be paid attention. While addressing such acculturation, Narayan leaves the platform open to questions and

discussions. To Malayarayar, land is never a property, as it is equated with the role of the mother. No details hint at the existence of currency among the individuals within the community; only at the later stage, where the non-indigenous contact the community, are descriptions of transactions and currency exist. Since Malayarayar could not count the money and understand the ways of the transactions, they often deceived the merchants.

“Mothallali had not mentioned the amount. Kunjumundan tried to add it up mentally.

How much did forty-three panam and seventy there half-chakram add up to?

Father and son argued over it for a while. Kunjumundan realised that his son was no better than himself- he did not know how to count. It was easier to assume that the promised amount had been given. ...” (Narayan 104).

Readers belonging to non-indigenous societies mainly possess accounts such as adivasis, which are primitive and ignorant. However, in the novel, they are provided with lived experiences that contradict their preconceived notions about indigenous societies. Narayan’s effective use of thick descriptions leaves them with an understanding of the Indigenous perception of the world. Being deceived and facing violence, their views of non-indigenous people were reduced to distrust and doubt. References given in the text mark the background of the text in the initial stage of India’s freedom from the British. Mention of the Temple Entry Proclamation Act of 1936 given by Maharaja Chithirai Thirunal Balarama Varma, allowing entry into the temple for everyone, Gandhi and Congress, Youths taking part in the protest are made in the text. Malayarayar, except those who received a formal education, failed to understand the changes around them, as they did not trust the non-indigenous. Narayan pictures the distrust towards the mainstream societies as incidents are described from the Malayarayar’s view. The Temple Entry Act is described as a “ploy to kill” (Narayan 120), and the confusion between

Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi as to who was king and who was prime minister shows the extent of the distance. Here, Narayan helps readers comprehend the differences between the Malayarayar and non-indigenous communities regarding world views, culture, and social structure. Narayan's thick description offers a holistic portrayal of the community by describing the meaning behind its social structure, rites, and customs. James Clifford states, "Insiders, studying their own cultures, offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways." (9). Similarly, Narayan, in the novel, details the culture, religion, and lifestyle of his community while also describing the challenges they face in their daily life. Thus, the insider in him makes the readers experience the social practices along with the characters, which leads to a better understanding of the challenges of Indigenous lives.

## **Conclusion**

Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* offers valid evidence of the ethnographic capabilities of Indigenous fiction. The novel's detailed portrayal of the Malayarayar community offers readers a holistic understanding of a society often misrepresented or overlooked in mainstream narratives. Using an emic approach, Narayan bridges the gap between fiction and anthropology, delivering what Clifford Geertz termed 'thick description.' By recording cultural practices, oral traditions, and the community's worldview, the novel positions itself as an authentic account of a lived experience. The text illuminates the intricate connections between the Malayarayar's social practices, religious beliefs, and natural surroundings while also addressing the gradual encroachment of modernity and its impact on the community. Narayan's depiction of cultural rituals, hierarchical clan structures, and Indigenous medicine preserves the traditional knowledge and identity of the community that might otherwise have faded away. Moreover, his insider perspective challenges the preconceived notions of non-Indigenous



readers, leading to an understanding of Indigenous societies and their complex relationships with the mainstream world.

By recording the cultural, historical, and social life of the Malayarayar with such depth and precision, *Kocharethi* asserts itself as both a literary endeavour and an anthropological document. The novel not only preserves the cultural identity of the Malayarayar but also serves as an important tool for cross-cultural dialogue, making a significant contribution to both literature and anthropology.

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## Adapting the Bard: Shakespeare in Indian Cinema

**Ms. Renu Jain**

Ph.D. Scholar

Department of English and Foreign Languages

SRMIST, NCR Modinagar

[jain.renu.renu@gmail.com](mailto:jain.renu.renu@gmail.com)

**Dr. Shalini Sharma**

Associate Professor

Department of English and Foreign Languages

SRMIST, NCR Modinagar

[shalinip@srmist.edu.in](mailto:shalinip@srmist.edu.in)

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### Abstract

This paper offers an analysis of the adaption of Bard's work in Indian cinema. The adaptation of Shakespeare's plays in Indian cinema is a multifaceted phenomenon, showcasing the diversity and ingenuity of Indian filmmakers. The qualitative approach is employed to assess the Bard's work in Indian cinema, investigating how Indian filmmakers have reinterpreted and reimagined the Bard's work for local audiences. This study will illustrate how adaptations of Shakespeare's plays significantly influence Indian society. In India, not all natives possess the ability to read or comprehend literature; but, through media, everyone can access the Bard's work and glean life's lessons applicable to the contemporary world. Shakespeare, the most extensively read, translated, and performed individual author in history, is now also the most frequently adapted into film. Shakespeare and the media appear to increasingly influence one another. Shakespeare's film has been increasingly overlooked in academic discourse. This study aims to rectify this imbalance by concentrating on Hindi film and incorporating the specific historical and literary and theatrical interactions with Shakespeare into a broader, more dynamic context.

Key words: Shakespeare, adaptation, Indian films, Omkara, Maqbool, 10ml Love, Haider

### Introduction

Adaptation refers to the capacity to modify one's actions in response to a changed environmental context. A work that takes the storyline, characters, themes, or other elements of one artistic medium and applies them to another while preserving the integrity of the original is known as an adapted work. Any piece of literature can undergo this process when it is adapted for the big screen. Additionally, since the 1950s, the Indian film industry has drawn inspiration from Shakespearean plays. There was widespread acclaim for the Indian adaptations of three well-

known tragedies by Shakespeare: *Maqbool* (2003) from *Macbeth*, *Omkara* (2006) from *Hamlet*, and *Haidar* (2014) from *Othello*, all of which were directed and written by the renowned and celebrated Vishal Bhardwaj. *10ml Love*, directed by Sharat Katariya, is another contemporary Indian take on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

There are many merits and shortcomings to both books and movies as artistic mediums. Culture, society, and, of course, the desire to make the audience laugh or cry by incorporating elements. They can identify with into the adapted work (such as music, dance, comedy, or humor) dictate the elimination of some elements from the original source and the addition of others. Viewers should approach films adapted from Shakespeare's works with an open mind.

This is the director's cut of the 1963 Uttam Kumar production, directed by Manu Sen and starring Uttam Kumar and Bhanu Bondon Paddy. The Bengali comedy film *Bhranti Bilas* is based on Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's 1869 play of the same name, which was in turn influenced by William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. The producer is Uttam Kumar. In this film, Bhanu Bandyopadhyay plays a merchant, while Uttam Kumar plays his servant. They go somewhere new, but they don't know their twin brothers are there, so there's a lot of confusion and a lot of laughter. Although the original drama took place in an unspecified but distant past, the film shifts the story to modern-day India. Shakespeare arrived in India with colonialism in order to amuse the foreigners living there. Despite being used in the empire's educational system, he gained popularity through performances, amateur productions in schools and colleges, and translations on public stages.

In the movie, a Bengali merchant from Kolkata and his servant travel to a tiny village for a business meeting, but they are misidentified as two locals, which causes a lot of confusion. In India, however, Shakespeare has been truly "homed," not just translated and altered but also accepted and absorbed as one of our own, thanks to the western import of cinema.

As previously said, this is clearly seen in the films *8x10 Tasveer* and *10ml Love*, which explore Nagesh Kuku Noor's 2009 retelling of *Hamlet* as a murder investigation. Affordable films made in "Hinglish," a Hindi and English dialect spoken by a significant number of young, educated Indians living in cities, represent a new type of independent, non-Bollywood, and non-parallel art. In a globalized metropolitan India, Shakespearean stories in this genre enable the expression of a new middle class, transnational, cosmopolitan identity. Concerned with self-reflection, she speculates that the director's selection of these two Shakespeare plays speaks to these edgy, low-budget movies full of sardonic asides and reflects both their personal concerns and the meta-theatrical allusions to the material conditions of acting. Concerning the difficulties of filmmaking with little resources. She argues that the new markets and audiences of English-speaking, neo literate India are reflected in these films.

Another example of the adaptation of Shakespeare's famous plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, into *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak*, an underappreciated Shakespeare movie, supports the uniqueness of Mansoor Khan's well-liked Bollywood adaptation, which maintains Shakespeare's depressing conclusion against common logic. Sharat Khan chose to reshoot the film's closing sequences because he thought the story needed to be told and the film had already been written with a depressing finish. Using words, images, and concepts from the original drama—and particularly

its well-liked reincarnations—the 1961 American an underappreciated Shakespeare movie supports the uniqueness of Mansoor Khan's well-liked Bollywood adaptation, which maintains Shakespeare's depressing conclusion against common logic.

In 1961, Khan developed a sad template for *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations in Bollywood which has affected other contemporary versions such *Ishqade* (2012), *Ishq* (2013) and *Ramleela* (2013), based on a Telugu original *Ek Duje Ke Liye*.

When bringing Shakespeare's plays to Indian viewers, Indian directors have used a variety of adaptation techniques. Shakespeare's plays have been transposed to Indian settings and contexts using local languages, customs, and cultural references to make them more accessible and relevant to Indian viewers. Gulazar's *Angeer* (1982), for instance, flips Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors* to a tiny village in India utilizing local languages and customs, therefore producing a distinctly Indian interpretation of the drama.

Filmmakers all around have found great inspiration in Shakespeare's plays; Indian film is no exception. From 1950s to the present, Indian directors have creatively reinterpreted Shakespeare's works in a range of ways, from literal translation to inventive reworking. Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003), set in the Mumbai under glow, is a contemporary rendition of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Irfan Khan plays Maqbool, a strong criminal who grows to be influential after killing his boss. The best illustration of Shakespeare's drama *Macbeth* is *Maqbool*, in which the Macbeth was provoked by his wife Lady Macbeth. Macbeth commits regicide and in the film *Tabbu*, Irfan's love leads Irfan Khan to murder his boss.



Figure 1. Maqbool adapted from Macbeth

*Omkaara* (2006) set in an Indian tiny village; Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara* is a rendition of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Ajay Devgan plays charismatic and forceful Omkara, a leader who falls victim to a dishonest scheme. The film brilliantly captures the distinctions between black and white as well as class divide; original play also show these differences, and the director very faithfully kept the movie original.

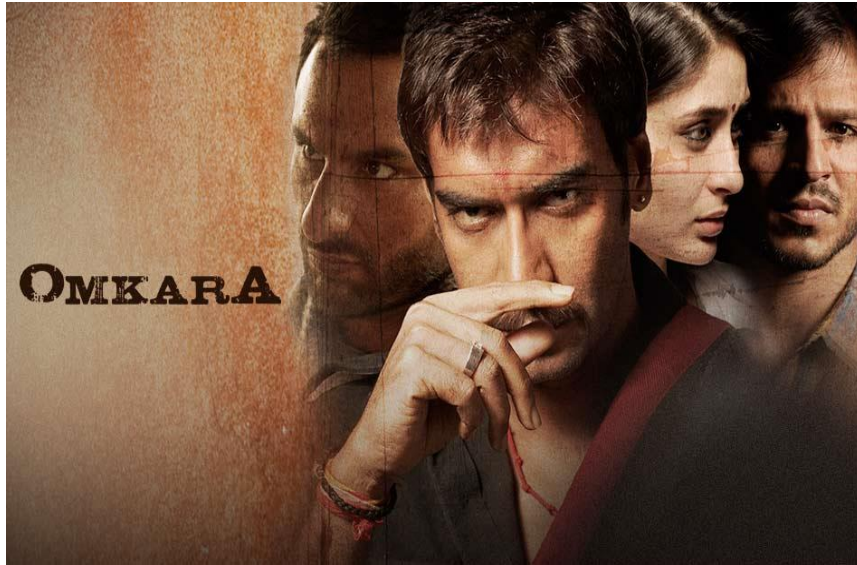


Figure 2. *Omkaara* adapted from *Othello*

Set in a little town in India, Sharat Katariya's *10ml Love* (2012) is a contemporary re-edition of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Rajat Kapoor and Tisca Chorpura appears in the movie as two loves caught in a convoluted love triangle. Though some more humor has been used by the director Sharat Katariya, he has kept the originality of the play. In the original play of Shakespeare, we have also seen the quadrangle of love which is remarkably shown in the movie. A few songs have been used to make audience happy and to please them.





Figure 3. An adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

*Haider* (2014) is a film directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, adapted from William Shakespeare's tragedy drama *Hamlet*. This film takes place in Kashmir during the 1990s unrest. Haider, portrayed by Shahid Kapoor, returns to his hometown of Srinagar following his father's disappearance. He quickly learns that his father was apprehended by the Indian Army, and his mother, Ghazala, portrayed by Tabu, is now involved with his uncle, Khurram, played by Key Menon. *Haider* garnered extensive critical acclaim for its compelling performances, exquisite cinematography, and profound ideas. The film achieved commercial success, earning over Rs. 70 crores at the box office.

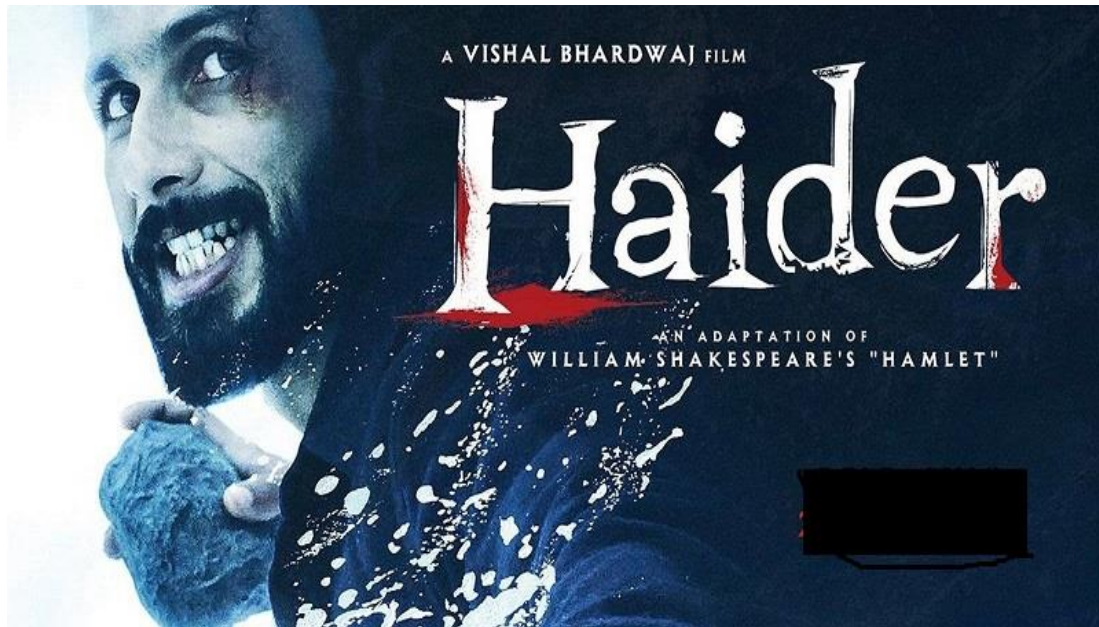


Figure 4. *Haider* an adaptation of *Hamlet*

#### Conclusion:

Shakespeare's characters are not merely wearing Indian attire but they also delve deeper into the Socioeconomic and political complexities of their own nation in search of today's world similarities with his universal themes. Shakespeare's plots of ambition, jealousy, and revenge within the context of the Mumbai mafia, and conflict in Kashmir. Filmmakers have created a powerful and resonant body of work which is unique in both Indian and Elizabethan world. These adaptations demonstrate how the Bard's work can be reinterpreted to hold a mirror up to the specific Socio and economic realities of any culture, at any point of time.

It is a phenomenon that is rich and varied, showing the diversity and inventiveness of Indian filmmakers, that the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays in Indian cinema has become extremely popular. The ongoing relevance and attraction of Shakespeare's works has been shown by Indian filmmakers through their adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. These filmmakers have reinterpreted and reimagined the Bard's works for local audiences in ways that are both original and thrilling.



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## Journey, Love, and Self-Discovery in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*

**T. Iswarya**

Ph.D. Research Scholar,  
Department of English  
Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women  
Udumalpet-642126.  
[iswaryaraj96@gmail.com](mailto:iswaryaraj96@gmail.com)

**Dr.D. Sujatha**

Associate Professor  
Department of English  
Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women  
Udumalpet-642126

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### Abstract

Virginia Woolf's debut novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), marks a seminal moment in the development of modernist literature and introduces key themes that permeate her later works. More than just a travel narrative, the novel is a deeply introspective exploration of selfhood, gender, and society. Through the character of Rachel Vinrace, Woolf engages with the complexities of emotional awakening, the constraints of societal norms, and the painful yet profound journey of self-discovery. The motif of **journey** is both literal and symbolic, representing an inner voyage toward self-awareness and the gradual peeling away of inherited values. **Love**, as explored in the novel, is not idealized but questioned, revealing its emotional depth, uncertainties, and role in shaping personal growth. As Rachel navigates new relationships and shifting environments, her perception of self transforms, embodying Woolf's vision of **self-discovery** as both liberating and unsettling. The narrative critiques traditional roles assigned to women and frames identity as an evolving process rather than a fixed condition. This article examines the interplay of **journey**, **love**, and **self-discovery** in *The Voyage Out*, highlighting how Woolf uses literary form, narrative voice, and character development to critique conventional norms and illuminate the path of feminine consciousness.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Modernism, Journey, Self-discovery, Love, Psychological realism,

## Introduction

Virginia Woolf, a pioneering voice in twentieth-century British literature, emerged as a central figure in the modernist movement through her experimental narrative techniques and psychological depth. Her debut novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), introduces many of the stylistic and thematic innovations that would come to define her literary legacy. This work departs from the conventional linear narrative by embracing interior monologue, fragmented structure, and subtle symbolism to convey the complexities of human consciousness. Uniquely, the novel combines elements of journey, love, and self-discovery to portray a young woman's evolving awareness in a society bound by rigid gender expectations. Woolf's sensitivity to the inner lives of her characters, coupled with her critique of Edwardian norms, creates a text that is introspective, socially resonant, and stylistically daring. This paper examines *The Voyage Out* not merely as a coming-of-age narrative but as a critical exploration of personal identity and emotional awakening. By doing so, it highlights Woolf's early commitment to redefining literary form and deepening the portrayal of female subjectivity, establishing this novel as a cornerstone of feminist modernist fiction.

## The Journey as Metaphor and Transformation

At its surface, *The Voyage Out* is about a literal journey: Rachel Vinrace sets sail from London to an unnamed destination in South America aboard her father's ship, the Euphrosyne. Yet Woolf carefully layers the physical voyage with symbolic significance. The journey becomes a metaphor for Rachel's gradual transformation from sheltered naivety to emotional and intellectual awareness. Removed from the protective cocoon of English society and her father's influence, Rachel enters a liminal space where conventional rules are suspended, allowing for new perspectives and experiences. The South American setting, far from a detailed or realistic portrayal, functions more as a backdrop for psychological discovery. The geographical displacement of the characters from familiar norms enables a kind of experimentation with identity. As Rachel interacts with other travelers, most notably Helen Ambrose, Terence Hewet, and other guests at the hotel, she is exposed to varying worldviews and philosophies. These interactions act as catalysts for her growth, prompting Rachel to question assumptions she had previously accepted uncritically.

In *The Voyage Out*, the motif of journey evolves beyond a physical expedition to become a metaphor for psychological and emotional transformation. The narrative charts a gradual detachment from societal norms and inherited expectations, allowing space for

introspection and self-awareness. As the protagonist wrestles with the pressures of tradition and the allure of intellectual freedom, Woolf frames the voyage as an inward search for meaning and identity. This tension is poignantly captured in the line, “I want to do something, to think, to live” (*Rachel Vinrace, The Voyage Out*), which encapsulates a yearning for autonomy and purposeful existence. The quote reflects the inner turbulence of a character striving to move beyond passivity and toward self-actualization. Woolf’s portrayal of such desire foregrounds the emotional intensity of awakening and growth, especially for women constrained by societal roles. Through fragmented narrative and introspective depth, the novel reveals transformation not as a singular revelation but as a series of nuanced, uncertain steps. The metaphor of the journey becomes inseparable from the act of becoming.

Woolf divides the novel structurally to reflect the different stages of this journey: departure, transition, and arrival not just in terms of physical space, but in emotional and psychological terms. The shift in location mirrors a shift in consciousness, a movement toward self-interrogation and eventual, albeit tragic, self-awareness.

### **Love as a Vehicle for Emotional Awakening**

In *The Voyage Out*, love is presented not as a final destination or reward, but as a process fraught with complexity, ambiguity, and vulnerability. Rachel’s emotional journey with Terence Hewet defies conventional romantic narratives. Their relationship, far from being idealized, serves as a site for Rachel’s inner struggles mirror in which she confronts her fears, limitations, and emerging desires. Rachel’s experiences with love are not purely romantic; rather, they are reflective of a broader emotional awakening. For the first time, she begins to examine her feelings, test her boundaries, and question societal expectations surrounding female identity and intimacy. Her connection with Terence triggers an introspective process that leads her to grapple with the dissonance between the romantic ideals she has absorbed and the reality of vulnerability and self-exposure.

Woolf disrupts the conventional arc of romantic fulfillment. The narrative does not culminate in marriage or happiness but instead takes a tragic turn with Rachel’s sudden illness and death. This narrative decision is radical in its refusal to offer resolution or closure. Rachel’s untimely end underscores the unfinished nature of self-discovery and critiques the limitations imposed on women’s lives by societal scripts. Love, in this context, is less a destination and more a disruptive, illuminating force that brings hidden aspects of self into view.

## Self-Discovery and Feminine Consciousness

Rachel Vinrace's development over the course of the novel can be read as a feminist bildungsroman centered on a woman's intellectual and emotional emancipation. Woolf charts Rachel's transformation with nuance, portraying a consciousness in flux, shaped by both internal desires and external pressures. At the beginning of the novel, Rachel is characterized by her innocence and detachment from the world around her. Her emotional and intellectual landscape is largely unformed, and her interactions are marked by confusion and reserve. As the narrative progresses, however, Rachel begins to articulate her thoughts, question her assumptions, and assert her individuality. This process is aided by characters such as Helen Ambrose, who acts as a mentor figure and provides Rachel with an alternative model of womanhood. Helen's independence and intellect challenge Rachel to reconsider her own potential and agency. Rachel's engagement with books, music, and conversation becomes central to her self-exploration.

Woolf's focus on Rachel's inner life is part of a broader modernist project to prioritize consciousness over plot. The novel is less concerned with external events than with the shifts in Rachel's perceptions, doubts, and realizations. By granting Rachel psychological depth, Woolf subverts traditional representations of female characters as passive or one-dimensional. Rachel's self-discovery is depicted not as a linear or triumphant process but as a struggle filled with uncertainty, contradiction, and ultimately, an unresolved end. Woolf's narrative style in *The Voyage Out* blends conventional third-person narration with elements of stream-of-consciousness, foreshadowing the more experimental techniques of her later novels. The perspective shifts fluidly between characters, offering multiple viewpoints and thereby disrupting the illusion of a single authoritative narrative voice. This polyphonic structure allows readers to experience the psychological depths of various characters, emphasizing the subjectivity of reality.

Rachel's internal experiences are presented not in neatly packaged epiphanies but in fragments, hesitations, and contradictions. This reflects Woolf's commitment to psychological realism, the idea that thought and emotion are non-linear, associative, and often incoherent. By depicting Rachel's consciousness in this way, Woolf invites readers to empathize with her uncertainties and to value the complexity of inner life. The novel also incorporates irony and satire, particularly in its portrayal of the English expatriate community. Woolf critiques the superficiality, pretension, and moral blindness of upper-class society, exposing the ways in which social conventions stifle genuine human connection.

These critiques are often rendered through free indirect discourse, allowing Woolf to move between character interiority and authorial commentary seamlessly.

### **Society, Gender, and the Limits of Freedom**

One of Woolf's central concerns in *The Voyage Out* is the tension between individual freedom and social constraint. Rachel's struggle is not merely internal; it is shaped by the gendered expectations of Edwardian society. From the outset, Rachel is positioned as someone who has been protected from the world and, as a result, lacks the tools to navigate it independently. Her voyage is as much about escaping these constraints as it is about confronting them. Woolf critiques the limited roles available to women, particularly in relation to marriage and intellectual fulfillment. Rachel's discomfort with the idea of marriage reflects a broader unease with the ways in which women are socialized to find identity and purpose in domestic roles. Even as she falls in love with Terence, Rachel resists the idea that her future must be defined by partnership. Her reluctance to commit to a traditional romantic path reveals a deeper desire for autonomy and self-definition.

The novel's ending, with Rachel's death, can be read in multiple ways. On one level, it signifies the fragility of the individual's quest for selfhood in the face of societal pressures and existential uncertainty. On another, it acts as a radical refusal of closure, forcing readers to confront the limitations of conventional narratives. By denying Rachel a happy ending, Woolf underscores the seriousness of her critique and the unresolved nature of female identity in a patriarchal society. Although *The Voyage Out* is more traditional in structure than Woolf's later novels, it anticipates many of the themes and techniques that would define her oeuvre. Rachel's psychological depth, the fragmented narrative structure, and the critique of social norms all reappear in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *The Waves* (1931). In each of these works, Woolf continues to explore the inner lives of women, the fluidity of time, and the tension between self and society.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, Clarissa Dalloway's internal monologue and reflections on love, death, and identity echo Rachel's existential inquiries. *To the Lighthouse* expands Woolf's interest in family dynamics and gender roles, while *The Waves* experiments even more boldly with narrative form to capture the multiplicity of consciousness. Seen in this context, *The Voyage Out* is a foundational text that introduces Woolf's lifelong preoccupations and her commitment to redefining the novel as a form.

## Conclusion

*The Voyage Out* is a novel of beginnings, both for its protagonist and for its author. Through the evolving narrative, Virginia Woolf skilfully weaves the elements of **journey**, **love**, and **self-discovery**, shaping a complex portrait of inner and outer transformation. The novel examines the intricate interplay between personal desire, identity formation, and social constraint, challenging readers to rethink familiar narratives about emotional growth, romantic expectation, and feminine destiny. The protagonist's tragic yet illuminating path underscores the difficulties of attaining self-knowledge within a society that enforces rigid gender roles and expectations. By blending the physical voyage with psychological exploration and adopting a narrative style that privileges inner consciousness over outward action, Woolf constructs a rich literary space that honours the emotional and intellectual depth of human experience. *The Voyage Out* ultimately reveals that becoming oneself is not a straightforward path, but a gradual, often painful emergence shaped by internal awakening and external resistance.



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## The Realisation of Strong Forms and Weak Forms in Nepali English: A Phonetic Study

**Nisha Upadhyaya**

Research Scholar

Department of Linguistics and Phonetics

The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

[nishakniit29@gmail.com](mailto:nishakniit29@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigates how Nepali speakers of English use strong forms and weak forms in their speech. The research delves into the nature of functional words, which have both strong and weak forms, while identifying issues concerning the use of these forms by Nepali English speakers. It examines the pattern of weak forms in Nepali English, analysing speech samples from 10 Nepali-speaking graduate students of Assam. The test materials have been enriched by the utilisation of sentences that include various functional words by speakers. The sound recording software ‘Praat’ recorded all the speech samples. The data is analysed phonetically on different parameters, with the researcher providing the phonetic description based on auditory impressions of the recorded data. The study suggests that insufficient exposure to native speech and the prominent influence of the mother tongue account for the inappropriate use of the weak forms because speakers’ relative success in approaching the target language is their ability to disassociate L2 speech from the repertoire of L1 phonemes and allophones.

**Keywords:** strong forms, weak forms, Nepali English, functional words, L1 influence

### 1. Introduction

Strong forms and weak forms are possible pronunciations of a word in the context of connected speech (Crystal, 2008). For example, in English, the word *at* has a pronunciation /ət/ (weak form) and /æt/ (strong form). The sentence ‘I’ll see you at lunch’ is pronounced as /aɪl si: ju ət lʌnʃ/ (weak form) and ‘What are you looking at?’ /wɒt a: ju lʊkɪŋ æt/ (strong form). In response to the rhythmic pressures occurring in the sentences, vast numbers of

words in English may vary their form by losing weak syllables entirely or by reducing their articulation.

It is important to know that English, like many other languages, distinguishes between content (or lexical) words and function (or grammatical) words. Content words receive strong form pronunciation as they carry new information and tend to be stressed. They are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Functional words, on the other hand, carry little information and are generally not stressed in connected speech. These functional words have strong and weak forms. When they are not stressed, weak-form pronunciation is used. The present research delves into the nature of functional words. They are articles, determiners, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions and auxiliary verbs.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

Shockey (2003) reports that the change in pronunciation affects words in connected speech. This includes the reduction of a vowel to /ə/, as in ‘at’, ‘on’, ‘from’, ‘than’ or the elision of initial /h/ in ‘have’, ‘his’, ‘her’; final /d/ in ‘and’; initial /w/ in ‘would’, and initial /ð/ in ‘them etc. The appropriate use of weak forms is essential to smooth and rhythmical speaking, to the clarity of prominent and non-prominent syllables, and the clarity of meaning (Underhill, 2005)

The difference between the strong (stressed) and the weak form (unstressed) of a word is not apparent in writing, but in speech, these two variations in pronunciation can be drastically different. The difference between the two forms can affect meaning. For example, the strong and weak forms of the word “that” can change the entire meaning of a sentence. In the example, “John thinks that man is evil”, the application of a weak form of “that” /ðət/ will make an interpretation that says ‘John thinks that all humans are evil’ while the use of the strong form “that” /ðæt/ will interpret as ‘John thinks a specific male is evil’. This hints at the fact that misuse of forms can cause misunderstanding among speakers. The use of weak forms is by far more frequent in English than the use of strong forms. However, if the word is stressed because it is especially important or because we want to show a contrast, we use the strong form. The use of either form depends upon three factors: action, position and phonetic environment.

The strong forms occur in natural speech but only in a specific context. Weak forms are not used for 'function words' only in exceptional circumstances. The words in *italics* are pronounced in their strong forms “I said Hary *and* John rather than Hary *or* John” (when the

function word is stressed); “What are you looking *at*”, “I know I *can*” (when a function word is at the end of a sentence or phrase); “I was looking *for* you” (if there are two or more function words at the end of a sentence especially a preposition followed by a pronoun, usually the first one will be in its strong form in many cases); “I usually *have* lunch at 1 pm vs. I have eaten already”, “I was *there* vs. There is a book on the table” (When the word is used as full meaning 'full' meaningful, 'lexical' form)

Many experts emphasise the significance of weak forms in effective communication in English. Using weak and contracted forms is crucial for achieving fluency in English, as Beverly & Mees (2003) stated. Ladefoged (1993) points out that non-native speakers who neglect the use of weak forms may sound awkward and unnatural. Roach (1983) further explains that an absence of weak forms can make one's English sound foreign. (Sobkowiak, 2006) highlights the potential communication difficulties that can arise from not using weak forms enough. Wells (2000) strongly advocates for the regular use of weak forms in all styles of English speech by non-native speakers.

Gimson (1970) reports that supra-segmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation can extend beyond the phoneme level and encompass larger units of speech. In English, reduced vowels are often found in unstressed syllables to maintain the stress-timed rhythm. This means that in unstressed syllables, the vowel sound is typically replaced by another sound, most commonly the schwa /ə/, or sometimes by /ɪ/ or /ʊ/, or even a syllabic consonant. This process is called vowel reduction and is a prominent feature of the English language's sound system.

English is considered a stress-timed language, meaning that stressed syllables are pronounced at a regular pace, and non-stressed syllables are shortened to fit into this rhythm. Walker (2001) notes that English leans more towards stress-timing on the continuum between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages, due to the prevalence of weak-form words and reduced unstressed vowels. While some varieties of British and American English may occasionally use syllable-timing in certain situations, such as baby talk or sarcasm, they still generally adhere to a stress-timed rhythm. This distinctive rhythm, created by the interplay between stressed and unstressed syllables, is a hallmark of spoken English. In contrast, some languages are syllable-timed, where syllables are produced at a constant rate, unaffected by differences in stress (Crystal, 1998).

In a stress-timed language, the stressed syllables occur at regular intervals, and the time between the stressed syllables can vary. This means that unstressed syllables can be pronounced more quickly to maintain the rhythm. English is an example of a stress-timed language. In contrast, in a syllable-timed language, each syllable is pronounced for roughly the same amount of time, regardless of whether it is stressed or unstressed. This means that the rhythm is more evenly distributed across the syllables.

### **3. Nepali Learners of English**

When a second language learner tries to produce a sound in their non-native language, their success in approximating the target sound depends on their ability to separate their use of phonemes and allophones from their first language. This separation is necessary because two languages may have sounds that appear to be identical but are produced using different articulatory movements. As a result, these sounds may have distinct acoustic qualities that could be perceived by the listener as different from the target sound.

Odlin (1990) states that a person's native language's phonetics and phonology are significant factors in acquiring the phonetics and phonology of a second language. By analysing and contrasting the phonemic inventories and phonological rules of both the native and target languages, it is possible to predict certain difficulties that may arise during second language acquisition. The non-native speakers tend to categorise foreign language sounds based on the phonemic inventory of their native language. Another factor that contributes to difficulties in both the production and perception of sounds for language learners is the difference in supra-segmental features such as stress and rhythm.

Importantly, Nepali lacks a mid-central vowel, equivalent to the English /ə/. The prosodic features of Nepali are considered to have syllable-timing rhythm. Moreover, the English feature of the reduction of function words to weak forms is absent in Nepali.

Learners are likely to find unreduced syllables easier to interpret when speaking amongst each other. Therefore, they are reluctant to attempt a reduction in their utterances. However, using suprasegmental features of English [especially intonation, stress in sentences, word-linking and weak forms] accurately in spoken utterances is a vital aspect of English pronunciation.

Nepali-English has a syllable-timed rhythm, which is very different from the stress-timed rhythm of English. A characteristic of Nepali English is the absence of vowel reduction in unstressed syllables. Mostly, Nepali learners of English will not possess the elaborate systems

of weak and contracted forms that characterise native-speaker English. However, this scenario holds for the vast majority of non-native speakers learning English.

Roach (2004) states that individuals who lack a good understanding of weak forms are more likely to have difficulties comprehending speakers who use them. Additionally, possessing a practical grasp of the weak forms of English is crucial for achieving good pronunciation and listening comprehension. Given the general difficulties non-native speakers face in comprehending weak forms and the specific challenges Nepali learners encounter due to interference from their L1, it can be argued that Nepali learners of English may struggle to produce utterances containing weak forms. This is because they may be accustomed to giving equal stress to every syllable in their native language. However, with increased proficiency and exposure to casual English speech, these differences are expected to diminish over time.

#### **4. Research Objectives**

- i. To investigate how far Nepali English speakers use appropriate weak and strong forms.
- ii. To highlight the weak form pronunciation of function words, if any, in Nepali English.
- iii. To find the amount of deviation, if any, of Nepali English from that of the standard variety of RP
- iv. To observe the influence on L2 (English) utterance from their repertoire of L1 (Nepali) phonemes and allophones

#### **5. Research Methodology**

The speakers for the present study were Nepali-speaking graduate students from Assam. Out of the total 10 speakers, 5 were females, and the remaining 5 were males. The criteria for selection of speakers were that the mother tongue of all the speakers should be Nepali, and they had been speaking English for at least 10 years. In order to extract speech samples, a list of sentences was devised which includes several functional words and contractions with weakened pronunciations. The speakers were asked to read the sentences aloud while being recorded using a sound recording software called Praat. Before being recorded, they were allowed a few minutes to rehearse the text. The recordings were made in reasonably quiet surroundings to ensure high-quality data. To maintain the naturalness of the speech, the speakers did not reveal which aspects of their speech would be analysed.

#### **6. Data Analysis and Findings**

The information obtained from analysing the recorded data was organised in several tables. Each speaker's speech sample was listened to carefully, and a phonetic transcription was made based on the researcher's auditory perception.

Functional Words RP Pronunciation as per the rhythm of English speech

### 6.1 Sentence 1: She'll be there from five to ten.

RP Pronunciation: ʃi:l bi ðeə frəm faɪv tə ten

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. she'll: /ʃi:l/
- b. be: WF /bi/  
SF /bi:/
- c. there: WF /ðə/ or /ðər/  
SF /ðeə/
- d. from: WF /frəm/  
SF /frɒm/
- e. to WF /tə/ or /tʊ/  
SF /tu:/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
she'll	/ʃi:l /	2	--	[ʃiwl] [siwl]
be	/bi/	10	--	[bi]
there	/ðeə/	1	--	[de:r] [dier]
from	/frəm /	0	--	[frɒm] [pʰrɒm]
to	/tə/	0	--	[tʊ]

Table I: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 1*

### 6.2 Sentence 2: I'll look at them for some time

RP Pronunciation: aɪl lʊk ət ðəm fə səm taɪm

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. I'll:     /aɪl/
- b. At:     WF     /ət/
- SF     /æt/
- c. Them WF     /ðəm/ or /ðm/
- SF     /ðem/
- d. For     WF     /fə/ or /fər/
- SF     /fɔ:/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
I'll	/aɪl/	3	1	[aɪwɪl] [aɪwl]
At	/ət/	0	--	[et]
Them	/ðəm/	0	--	[dem] [ðem]
for	/fə/	0	--	[fər] [pʰər]
some	/səm/	0	--	[sʌm]

Table II: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 2*

### 6.3 Sentence 3: He doesn't care that there's a meeting

RP Pronunciation: hi dæznt keə ðæt ðəz ə mi:tɪŋ

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. He:     WF     /hi/
- SF     /hi:/
- b. doesn't:     /dæznt/
- c. that:     WF     /ðæt/
- SF     /ðæt /
- d. there's: SF     /ðeə/
- WF     /ðəz/
- e. a:     WF     /ə/



SF /eɪ/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
he	/hi/	10	--	[hi]
doesn't	/dəznt/	0	--	[dʌznt] [dʌdʒnt]
that	/ðæt/	1	--	[deɪ]
there's	/ðəz/	0	--	[de:ri:z] [dɪeri:z] [dʒeri:z]
a	/ə/	0	--	[ʌ] [e]

Table III: Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 3

### 6.4 Sentence 4: We're investing in it for our benefit

RP Pronunciation: wɪə ɪnvestɪŋ ɪn ɪt fər əʊə benɪfɪt

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. we're: /wɪə/
- b. for: WF /fə/ or /fər/  
SF /fɔ:/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
we're	/wɪə/	3	--	[wɪa:r]
for	/fər/	0	--	[fɔr] [pʰɔr]

Table IV: Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 4

### 6.5 Sentence 5: She's got tired of me

RP Pronunciation: ʃi:z gɒt taɪrəd əv mi

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. she's: /ʃi:z/

- b. Of      WF    /əv/  
              SF    /ɒv/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
She's	/ʃi:z/	3	6	[ʃi:ɪz] [si: ɪz]
of	/əv/	0	--	[ɒf]

Table V: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 5*

### 6.6 Sentence 6: I'm happy to hear that you've won the match with your efforts.

RP Pronunciation: aɪm hæpi tə hiə ðæt ju:v wʌn ðə mætʃ wɪð jər efət

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. I'm      /aɪm/  
 b. to        WF    /tə/ or /tʊ/  
              SF    /tu:/
- c. that      WF    /ðæt/  
              SF    /ðæt /
- d. you've   /ju:v/  
 e. the        WF    /ðə/ or /ði/  
              SF    /ði:/
- f. your      WF    /jə/ or /jər/  
              SF    /jo:/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
I'm	aɪm	9	--	[aɪm] [aɪem]
to	tə	0	--	[tʊ]
that	ðæt	0	--	[det] [ðæt]

you've	ju:v	0	--	[ju:hev] [ju:hef] [ju:ev]
the	ðə	0	--	[da] [dʌ]
your	jər	0	--	[jʌr]

Table VI: Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 6

## 6.7 Sentence 7: Of all the suggestions, the one that you gave is the best

RP Pronunciation: əv ɔ:l ðə sədʒestʃən ðə wʌn ðet ju: gerv ɪz ðə best

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. Of      WF    /əv/  
             SF    /ɒv/
- b. The     WF    /ðə/ or /ði/  
             SF    /ði:/
- c. That    WF    /ðæt/  
             SF    /ðæt /
- d. You     WF    /jʊ/ or /jə/  
             SF    /ju:/
- e. Is        WF    /z/ or /s/  
             SF    /ɪz/

## Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
of	/əv/	2	---	[ɔf]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [di:] [da]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[da] [dʌ]
that	/ðæt/	1	---	[det]
you	/ju:/	9	---	[jʊ] [tʃʊ]
is	/ɪz/	10	---	[ɪz]

the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [di:] [da]
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Table VII: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 7*

### 6.8 Sentence 8: It's good but expensive than the one we'd gifted her on her birthday

RP Pronunciation: its gud bət ɪkspensɪv ðən ðə wʌn wɪd ɡɪftɪd ər ɒn ə bɜːθdeɪ

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. It's     /ɪts/
- b. But     WF     /bət/  
              SF     /bʌt/
- c. Than    WF     /ðən/  
              SF     /ðæn/
- d. The     WF     /ðə/ or /ði/  
              SF     /ði:/
- e. we'd    /wɪd/
- f. Her     WF     /hə/ or /ə/ or /ər/  
              SF     /hɜː/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
It's	its	9	---	[ɪts] [ɪtɪz]
but	bət	0	---	[bʌt]
than	ðən	0	---	[den]
the	ðə	1	---	[da]
we'd	wɪd	2	1	[wehed] [wɒd]
her	ər	0	---	[hər] [har]
her	ə	0	---	[hər] [har]

Table VIII: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 8*

## 6.9 Sentence 9: To come to the point, what shall we do for the rest of the week

RP Pronunciation: tə kʌm tə ðə pɔɪnt wɒt ʃl wi də fər ðə rest əv ðə wi:k

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. to      WF    /tə/ or /tʊ/  
             SF    /tu:/
- b. the     WF    /ðə/ or /ði/  
             SF    /ði:/
- c. shall   WF    /ʃəl/ or /ʃl/  
             SF    /ʃæl/
- d. do      WF    /də/ or /du/  
             SF    /du:/
- e. For     WF    /fə/ or /fər/  
             SF    /fɔ:/
- f. Of      WF    /əv/  
             SF    /ɒv/

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
to	tə	0	---	[tʊ]
to	/tə/	0	---	[tʊ]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [di:] [da]
shall	/ʃl/	8	---	[ʃl] [sel]
do	/də/	0	---	[du]
for	/fər/	0	---	[fɔr]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [da]
of	/əv/	2	---	[ɒf]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [da]

Table IX: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence*

## 6.10 Sentence 10: You must exercise and must never eat unhealthy food to stay fit and fine

RP Pronunciation: jʊ məst eksəsaɪz ən məs nevə i:t ʌnhelθi fu:d tə steɪ fɪt n faɪn

### Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
you	jʊ	10	---	[jʊ]
must	/məst/	0	---	[mʌst]
and	/ən/	0	---	[en
must	/məs/	0	---	[mʌst]
to	/tə/	0	---	[tʊ]
and	/n/	0	---	[en]

Table X: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence*

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## 7. Data Findings

After studying the phonetic features of Nepali English spoken by the graduated students of Assam, it is evident that almost all speakers were influenced by Nepali's (which is their mother-tongue) sound pattern and rhythm. It is clear that the speakers have shown significantly lower scores of correct patterns of weak forms in their speech. Nepali speakers' difficulty when dealing with vowel reduction in function words is probably due to the absence of this process in their mother tongue.

The use of strong forms rather than weak forms has been observed to impede the rhythmic flow of English exhibited by all the speakers. This substitution of strong forms for weak forms directly impacts the stress-timed rhythm employed by English speakers. A considerable number of weak forms were produced as strong forms. This occurrence could be attributed to either a tendency to pronounce words based on their spelling or a lack of familiarity with weak forms as Nepali, unlike English, does not employ these forms.

### 7.1 Contractions

Out of a total of ten sentences, 7 sentences (1-6 & 8) had contracted words which included words like *she'll*, *I'll*, *doesn't*, *there's*, *we're*, *she's*, *I'm*, *you've*, and *it's*. Throughout

the study, all the speakers were inconsistent in using the contractions, occasionally omitting them and at other times using them appropriately. Some of the findings among Nepali English speakers related to contracted forms are as follows:

- a. Many speakers displayed uncertainty regarding the correct pronunciation of contractions.
- b. Most participants expanded many of the contractions, such as *she'll*, *I'll*, *there's*, *doesn't*, *we're* *you've*, *she's*, and *we'd*.
- c. Contractions such as *I'm* and *it's* were produced correctly by the majority of the speakers. It seemed that the orthography did not make any difference in the case of contractions.
- d. One of the speakers expanded the contractions like, *it's* and *I'm* even though they were written with apostrophes.
- e. In contracted form like '*there's*' /ðəz/, which is mostly realised as [de:ri:z], the schwa sound /ə/ has been lengthened to [e:], while the voiced dental fricative /ð/ is realised as a voiced alveolar plosive [d] which can also be seen in words like *the*, *them*, *than*, *that* etc, and the postvocalic /r/ has been fully realised which is similar to other words like '*for*', '*your*', and '*her*'.

## 7.2 Functional Words

- a. In words like '*there*' /ðeə/ and '*there's*' /ðəz/, which is mostly realised as [de:r] and [de:ri:z], the diphthong /eə/ and schwa /ə/ have been lengthened as a vowel [e:]
- b. The voiced dental fricative /ð/ is realised as a voiced alveolar plosive [d] which can also be seen in words like *the*, *them*, *than*, *that* etc, and the postvocalic /r/ has been fully realised which is similar to other words like '*for*', '*your*', and '*her*'.
- c. It was found that the speakers were unaware of the English schwa sound /ə/, even though the sound is very common in natural English.
- d. The /ə/ sound is realised differently as [ɔ], [ʊ], [e], [ʌ] and [a] in Nepali-English. For example-
  - /ə/ in words like '*from*' /frəm/, '*for*' /fər/, '*of*', /əv/ become [frəm], [fər], [ɔf] respectively
  - /ə/ in words like '*to*', /tə/ becomes [tʊ]
  - /ə/ in words like '*a*' /ə/, '*at*' /ət/, '*them*' /ðəm/, '*than*' /ðən/, '*and*' /ən/, '*shall*' /ʃəl/, '*that*' /ðət/ become [e], [eɪ], [dem], [en], [ʃel] and [deɪ] respectively
  - /ə/ in words like '*some*' /səm/ '*but*' /bət/, '*must*' /məs/, '*the*' /ðə/, and '*a*' /ə/ become [səm], [bʌt], [mʌst], [dʌ] and [ʌ] respectively

- Finally, /ə/ in words like *'the'* /ðə/ and *'her'* /ə/ is realised by some speakers as [da] and [har] respectively.
- e. In words like *'to'* /tə/, *'at'* /ət/, *'that'* /ðət/, *'but'* /bət/, and *'must'* /məst/, the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ is articulated with tongue raised as [t̪ə], [ət̪], [ðət̪], [bət̪] and [məst̪] respectively.
- f. The voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ is realised as a voiceless labio-dental fricative [f] in words like *'of'* wherein /əv/ becomes [ɔf]
- g. The substitution of /ð/→[d] or /ʃ/→[s] indicates strong deviation from RP. Insertion of glide [w] between syllables or rhoticity [r] is observed. Phoneme replacement /f/→[p<sup>h</sup>] points towards L1 influence.
- h. The voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ is produced in the alveolar region as voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ among many speakers in words like *'she's'* and *'she'll'* i.e /ʃi:z/ and /ʃi:l/ becomes [si:z] and [si:l] respectively.

## 8. Conclusion

By viewing English as a tool for international intelligibility, we need to establish a new perspective on pronunciation goals, with a priority on spoken English. Features of connected speech such as the use of weak grammatical word forms in English are said to have an important role. English spoken with only strong forms sound unnatural and does not help the listener distinguish emphasis or meaning.

It is the widespread use of English which makes it an international language. English is used as a lingua franca in many international contexts. It is being used as an international language in diplomacy, international trade, and tourism. English is spoken differently in different parts of the world, as well as in different regions of India. The label "English" can be applied to many forms of the language which are identifiably different from each other: 'British English', 'American English', 'Australian English', 'Indian English'. 'West African English' and so on.

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## **Appendix**

The test material used in the study includes the following sentences:

1. She'll be there from five to ten.
2. I'll look at them for some time
3. He doesn't care that there's a meeting
4. We're investing in it for our benefit
5. She's got tired of me
6. I'm happy to hear that you've won the match with your efforts.
7. Of all the suggestions, the one that you gave is the best.
8. It's good but expensive than the one we'd gifted her on her birthday.
9. To come to the point, what shall we do for the rest of the week?
10. You must exercise and must never eat unhealthy food to stay fit and fine.

## GENDER TROUBLES IN MAHESH DATTANI'S WRITINGS

**Lt. S. Nithya**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English and Foreign Languages  
Karpagam Academy of Higher Education, Coimbatore – 22 and  
Research Scholar  
PG Research Department of English  
Government Arts College, Coimbatore – 18.

**Dr. A. R. Chitra**

Associate Professor & Research Guide  
Department of English  
Government College of Arts and Science for Women, Coimbatore – 45.

**Mr. Sibi Chakaravarty**

Assistant Professor of English  
K.S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science, Tiruchengode and  
Research Scholar  
PG Research Department of English  
Government Arts College, Coimbatore – 18.

**Dr. P. Shanmugam**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English (S&H)  
Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Engineering, Coimbatore – 05.

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### Abstract

Gender has been a problem since humans came into existence. Mahesh Dattani is one of the key writers who has influenced by such sort of ideology. Everything in the universe exists for a purpose. There is nothing taboo in the creation of nature. Dattani makes these vivid concepts as the primary theme of his writing. This paper is a study of gender troubles not only in India but globally.

**Key words:** Queer, Gender, Bias, Dattani.

## Introduction

Famous Indian playwright, actor, and director Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore, India, in 1958. *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Tara*, and other notable works are among his best-known compositions. The majority of his works address topics such as sexuality, feminism, identity crises, patriarchy, and the oppression of women, among many other social stigmas. The Sahitya Akademi Award for *Final Solutions and Other Plays* was given to Dattani in 1998. He is a well-known actor in Indian theater. Using Indian families as his medium, he conveys the contradictory nature of contemporary Indian society.

In India, feminism refers to a collection of movements that work toward giving Indian women equal opportunities and rights in the political, economic, and social spheres. It is the fight for women's rights in Indian society. There have been three distinct phases to the history of feminism in India: the first started in the middle of the 1800s when male European colonists started speaking out against the social evils of Sati; the second began in 1915 and continued until Indian independence, when Gandhi included women's movements into the Quit India movement and autonomous women's organizations started to form; and the third, post-independence, has concentrated on equal treatment of women at home after marriage, in the workforce, and in their right to political parity.

## Gendered Themes in the Writings of Dattani

Mahesh Dattani selects topics pertaining to gender and sexuality. His characters stand in for members of modern society that writers and dramatists typically dismiss as deviant. He questions the heterosexual norm, which is regarded as fundamental to our society. This center is a cultural construct built upon the erasure from popular theater and literature of homoerotic relationships. In the radio play *Seven Steps Arowd Fire*, which aired on BBC Radio on

January 9, 1999, the so-called perverse 'hijras' are highlighted, and the cultural tools that have subverted their identity are examined. In his debut radio play, *Do the Needful* (which aired on BBC Radio 4 on August 14, 1997), a homosexual man is compelled to wed a woman who refuses to follow the customs of traditional marriage.

The drama *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani paints a vivid picture of the difficulties in reversing gender roles. The play is set in a large house in the middle of a city. The play primarily focuses on the lives of two Bharatanatyam dancers, Jairaj and his wife Ratna. Jairaj's father Amritlal initially supported his teenage passion for dancing because he thought it was just a passing fad that would eventually fade. However, Jairaj views dancing as a serious career and keeps up his practice despite being aware of his father's displeasure.

Amritlal feels that dancing is a feminine activity and that Jairaj's Guruji, who even walks like a woman and has long hair, is inappropriate for a man. "Normal men don't keep their hair so long," he claims (Dattani 417). Amritlal is a self-described liberal who, while fighting for freedom and even approving his son's marriage to a woman from a different community, cannot see his son as a Bharatanatyam dancer. He stands for a patriarchal culture that harbors the worst notions of discrimination against women. Amritlal says that "A woman in man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in woman's world is pathetic," which is a pseudo-progressive view of gender roles. Male characteristics such as "Strength, authoritativeness, emotionlessness, practicality and opposite to all these are considered as feminine" (qutd. in Ajmi) are used to define masculinity in a patriarchal society.

In the annals of Indian drama in English, *Tara* is a significant work. It is the tragic story of a strong-willed girl who becomes a victim of the gender inequality that exists in Indian society and then has to prove herself in a world where men rule. The Siamese twins

Tara and Chandan, their parents Bharati and Patel, and Tara's neighborhood friend Roopa are the main characters in the play. Mrs. Bharati gives birth to twins, a girl and a son who are surgically separated after being joined at the hip and having three legs each.

According to a scan, the girl supplied a significant portion of the third leg's blood supply, increasing the leg's likelihood of survival on the girl. However, the boy was given two legs by surgeon Dr. Thakkar due to a decision made by Mrs. Patel and her powerful father in politics. This was an unethical act, and the conspiracy was masterminded by Bharati's father, who, in addition to being wealthy and powerful in society, desperately needed an heir. Since he was without a son, his grandson was the next in line, so he made every effort to see his heir standing on two natural legs. However, the leg failed to draw blood from his body, so Chandan was left with two days of life, after which it was amputated, leaving the twins dependent on one artificial leg each.

Chandan then relocates to London and modifies his name. He flees there primarily in order to put his past behind him. Far from home, in this strange new environment, he tries to suppress the guilt. Home is still there even though he left it. He is unable to move on from Tara on an emotional, psychological, or even physical level. She seems to be dormant in the recesses of Chandan's mind, where she will never awaken. This brings to mind Tara's claim from the play: "And me, maybe we still are. Like we've always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we..." (325)

The play reveals trauma, anguish and frustration caused to Dan by past events. He tries to write a play *Twinkle Tara* on the life of his twin sister but fails to write anything as he is not properly charged to recall the past incidents and removes the sheet from the type writer. Dan accepts that Tara deserves something better in life. Tara is one of Mahesh Dattani's ideal characters, and both readers and the audience have praised her greatly. In a world dominated

by men, Dattani has attempted to portray the feminine side that must constantly reconcile with a society that only values male viewpoints. Identity crises are a result of the gender crisis, especially for women. Tara, despite her physical deformity, possesses a strong sense of moral strength and requires the support of her parents and brother. She becomes disinterested in life when she believes that she is not receiving moral support.

The play makes enough of the male chauvinism that permeates the male-dominated society, which presents itself as progressive and liberal in both thought and deed. The Patel household's actual nature is exposed. An image typical of India, where women stay at home and men go to work. It emerges when one follows traditions and takes care of the home. Dattani fully utilizes this scene to draw attention to the discrimination against women in Indian society. As the husband and wife argue, he angrily claims that Bharati has always been stronger than him because of her father's wealth. As Patel gets ready for work, he suggests that Chandan accompany him to the office so that both of them can experience it. Tara appears a little offended, and Chandan advises him to take Tara with him, but Patel rarely heeds his son's counsel. Roopa walks in the middle of the conversation, seen listening at the door. Tara remarks that the men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while women looked after the cave.

Throughout the play, Dattani illustrates to his audience the distinction between gender and sex, implying that women lack social standing and identity. The play successfully refutes all forms of propaganda that promote gender equality. The play closes with Dan having a vision in which Tara and Chandan's spirits embrace each other firmly and appear without limping, implying that as long as they were both allowed to live in society, they had to be paralyzed. The dramatist wishes to convey the idea that gender discrimination is unnatural and that, as long as it persists, our lives are meaningless, leading to nothing but feelings of

restlessness and uselessness. The play attempts to shake Indian society out of its habitual ways of thinking by holding up a mirror to reveal its true nature.

## **Conclusion**

Men who either treat their wives harshly or view female sex in general, or who accuse their wives of being both 'gay' and 'bisexual,' are exposed by Dattani for their hypocrisy. Dattani has the guts to accurately and impartially point out the innate flaws in human nature. Since the plays portray actual events, his characters are realistic rather than exaggerated. The best way to characterize his plays is as middle-class dramas set in kitchen sinks. His plays blatantly depict discrimination against women and female children. He is not biased by gender or community. In *Tara*, the mother of the girl child discriminates against her. *Dance Like a Man* and *Tara* argue throughout these plays, but the audience never seems to find the answers (Sharma and Sharma). Dattani looks over the issues and finds them challenging, but he doesn't avoid them. Dattani has both virtues and vices and is described as 'warm' and 'human.' They relate to us in our own circumstances and make us feel sympathetic.



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**Perception and Self-Study Habits of First-Year Students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment Before and After Using the English Learning Application "Easy Class"**

**Ho Thi Lai, M.TESOL**

English Department, Faculty of Applied Sciences  
Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment  
236B, Le Van Sy Street, Tan Son Hoa Ward,  
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
[htlai@hcmunre.edu.vn](mailto:htlai@hcmunre.edu.vn)

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**Abstract**

In the context of globalization and international integration, the development of self-study capacity in general, and foreign language self-study in particular, has received widespread attention from both domestic and international educational researchers. Self-study is considered one of the core competencies for learners in the digital age, helping to foster critical thinking, lifelong learning abilities, and proactive adaptation to future career demands. For foreign language subjects, additional practice outside of classroom hours is a crucial factor that helps learners achieve better outcomes. 'Self-study' is a term frequently used to refer to learning and training that takes place outside of school hours. In today's era of widespread internet access, technology is seen as one of the essential tools that support learners in self-study. Recognizing the importance of self-study activities for learners' academic performance and the overall quality of training, Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment (HCMUNRE) has piloted the implementation of a software application designed to support English self-study. This pilot program has been applied to first-year students at the university, involving 310 students. My research focuses

on evaluating students' perceptions and practices related to self-study before and after using this application. This article presents the results of the initial research phase, documenting students' awareness and habits related to self-study prior to being introduced to the software, followed by an assessment of their actual self-study practices after a few weeks of familiarization and use. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a basis for the university's leadership to consider whether to expand the implementation of this software to all students in the near future.

**Keywords:** self-study, the perception of students on self-studying

## **Introduction**

Self-study skills are among the essential competencies for 21st-century citizens. Students not only need to acquire and absorb the knowledge taught in school but also must develop self-study and continuous learning skills to stay updated with new knowledge and technologies.

The questions arise: Have students at HCMUNRE, particularly first-year students, been effectively utilizing their self-study time? How is the English self-study application currently being implemented by the university influencing the students' perceptions and self-study habits? To answer these questions, the research team investigated the awareness and actual self-study practices of first-year students before and after using the Easy Class teaching and learning support software, as a case study. This aims to provide the university with a more comprehensive understanding of the self-study situation among first-year students in particular and students across the university in general. At the same time, the research results are expected to serve as a foundation for the university to make informed investment decisions that help foster students' self-study abilities and enhance the overall quality of education.

## **Definition of Self-Study and Its Role**

Self-study is a learning method in which learners spend time studying outside of the classroom without the guidance or supervision of a teacher. Numerous studies have demonstrated the correlation between self-study ability and academic success, as well as the

opportunities for learners to improve their proficiency, professional knowledge, and learning skills [1], [2], [3], [4]. Classroom sessions only provide learners with new knowledge and skills; to gain deep understanding and mastery, learners must independently explore and spend significant time practicing in order to achieve good results. In learning English, as well as other foreign languages, practicing and developing skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation or interpretation is truly essential.

### **Factors Influencing Self-Study**

White [5] identified several factors influencing learners' self-study skills and progress, including: learners' beliefs, the level of practice [6], the support provided to learners [7], how learners use learning resources [5], and the content of those materials [8]. Other factors such as computer literacy [1], study planning, clearly defined goals [9], [10], time management, and self-assessment [9] also determine whether self-study becomes more effective or gradually declines in quality.

In reality, most students often create self-study plans that are inaccurate or inappropriate, which results in their self-study skills being less effective [11]. In a recent study by Đỗ Thị Phi Nga [12], she also shared that learners often struggle to allocate their self-study time effectively, largely because they do not truly understand the role of self-study. Most learners consider self-study to simply mean completing all assigned homework before class. However, many learners who do recognize the importance of self-study still fail to manage their time effectively due to a lack of long-term planning skills. Additionally, a study by Nguyễn Thị Bích Thuận [10] revealed that the absence of someone to consult or guide learners during their self-study process significantly affects their ability to study independently, even though they are fully aware of how important this activity is. Most students today find it very difficult to take initiative in self-study outside the classroom because they are too accustomed to traditional learning environments, where teachers play the central role in the teaching and learning process [3].

### **The Role of Information Technology in Self-Study Activities**

Nowadays, technology has become an important factor in the process of foreign language learning [14], contributing to the enhancement of self-study motivation, self-

regulation, and the development of proactive learning skills [15]. Numerous other studies have also demonstrated that the use of technology as an educational tool helps increase learner engagement and improve their self-study capacity [4], [15], [16]. This can be explained by the fact that technology provides learners with a wide range of learning support tools, including extensive and high-quality resources that allow learners to choose and adapt according to their individual needs [14], as well as discussion forums, software, and applications [4] that give learners opportunities to practice, consult, and deepen their acquired knowledge.

Lalasz, Doane, Springer, and Dahir [18] summarized the benefits of using English learning applications on smartphones as follows:

- Flexible access anytime and anywhere;
- Compatibility between phone configurations and apps;
- Reduced need for books, pens, and paper;
- A wide variety of test formats covering multiple skills;
- Practice of multiple skills on a single device;
- Gamified learning experiences;
- No cost;
- Unlimited access.

Previous studies have demonstrated the vital role of self-study activities in improving teaching and learning quality, and information technology plays a significant role in transforming learners' perceptions and self-study habits.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Subjects**

As previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to explore the perceptions and actual self-study practices of first-year students at the university, and to assess how their self-study habits change after being introduced to the Easy Class self-study support application.

The participants in this study were 350 first-year students from Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment. A total of 310 survey responses were collected and used for analysis in this research. Each participant took approximately ten minutes to complete the survey via a link sent through email.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Since this study is a small part of a larger research project, the author used a quantitative method (questionnaire) as the primary tool for data collection. Lalasz, Doane, Springer, and Dahir [18] emphasized that using questionnaires as a data collection tool offers many advantages in terms of cost and efficiency, especially for large sample sizes. However, this method also has some disadvantages when conducted online, such as participants lacking motivation to complete the survey or not fully understanding the questions presented. Therefore, the questionnaire was piloted before being widely distributed in order to minimize any negative impact on research participants.

The survey was designed in the form of multiple-choice and short-answer questions in Vietnamese using the Google Forms interface, as this platform is familiar and convenient for participants. The survey was distributed and collected automatically through this application.

### **Data Processing and Analysis Methods**

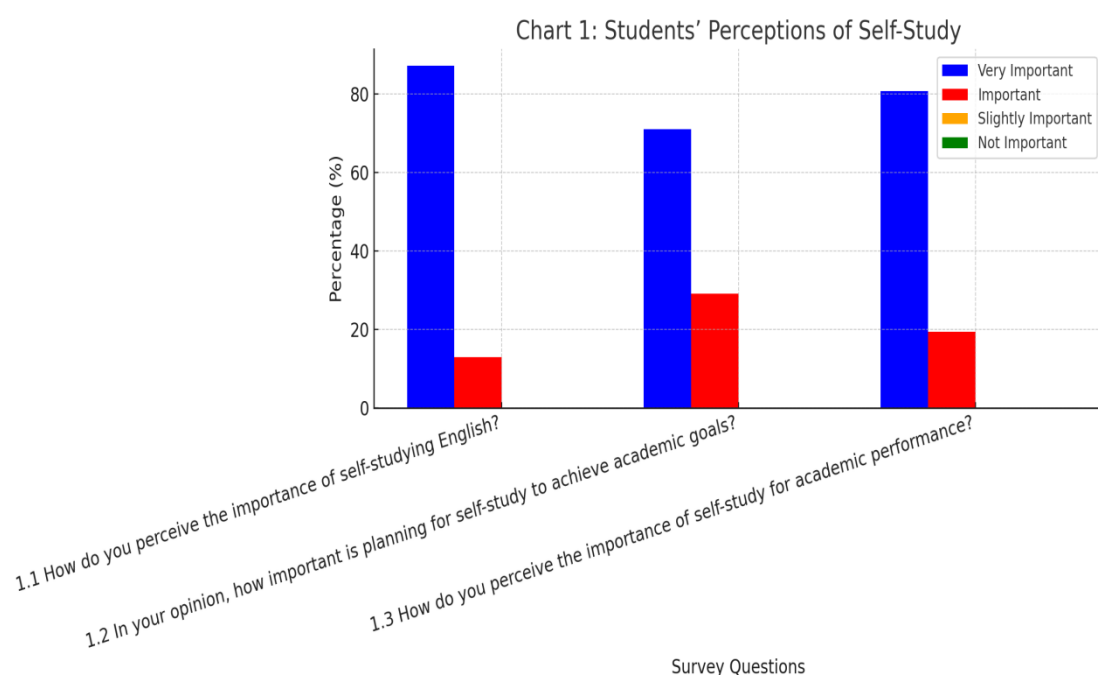
The data from the initial survey responses were processed using basic statistical tools such as Excel or SPSS 20.0 for coding, data entry, and analysis. All personal information of the research participants was anonymized to ensure confidentiality and research ethics. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency analysis through Microsoft Excel to present the current state of self-study. All data are presented in the form of tables, pie charts, and bar graphs.

### **Research Results and Discussion**

This section presents and discusses the research findings in relation to the theoretical framework and relevant studies. Specifically, the data collected from the questionnaire are analyzed and synthesized to illustrate students' perceptions of self-study before and after becoming familiar with the Easy Class English self-study support application.

### Students' Perceptions of Self-Study Before Becoming Familiar with the Easy Class English Self-Study Support Application

The survey results regarding students' perceptions of the importance of self-study are summarized in Chart 1 below.



The data from Chart 1 show that the majority of students recognize the importance of self-study: 87.1% considered it to be very important, while the remaining responses rated it as important. There were no answers indicating “slightly important” or “not important.” Similarly, in statements regarding the relationship between self-study and academic performance, 80.6% rated it as very important and 19.4% as important. As for the necessity of planning for self-study to achieve learning goals, 71% responded very important, and 29% important. This indicates that students place a high value on these two factors. Once students

are aware of the importance of self-study, institutional and instructional strategies, such as learner-centered teaching methods, encouragement of exploration and deeper learning, and the use of support applications/software for self-study beyond classroom hours, can further enhance students' self-study capabilities and personal development.

### **Have students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment made good use of their self-study time?**

According to the credit-based training program structure, self-study hours account for two-thirds of the total time required for one credit—twice the number of hours spent in lectures and classroom practice. However, the question remains whether students are utilizing their self-study time in a meaningful way, and whether it meets the learning outcomes required for each course.

When asked about the frequency of their self-study, the responses were relatively evenly distributed: 51.6% reported studying regularly, 41.9% occasionally, and only 6.5% said they rarely dedicated time to self-study. These findings indicate that students are spending time on self-study, but the number of students who engage in it seriously remains limited.

Regarding the tools commonly used during self-study, the survey results show that most students rely on online materials (71%) and both free and paid English learning applications (77.4%) for extra practice outside of class. Multimedia platforms (64.5%) such as BBC, podcasts, and YouTube were also frequently used, while printed reference materials (41.9%) were less commonly utilized. This suggests that technology has a significant impact on self-study practices and has greatly influenced learners' habits in using learning resources. The survey results regarding the tools used by first-year students for self-study are encouraging, as many have taken the initiative to explore, access, and apply these resources to improve their English skills.

### **Challenges That Hinder First-Year Students at HCMUNRE from Effectively Engaging in Self-Study**



Self-study is essential and important for the learner's academic process. However, in practice, learners often face many challenges [10]. Based on the theoretical framework of previous studies [9], [10], [11] regarding common difficulties encountered by learners, the research team identified six key factors to investigate. The survey results are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Common Difficulties Faced by First-Year Students During the Self-Study Process

Difficulty	Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
Poor English proficiency hinders self-study	120	38.7	150	48.4	20	6.5	20	6.5
Many learning resources are unreliable or not curated/organized	100	32.3	140	45.2	70	22.6	0	0
Lack of support and guidance during self-study	100	32.3	150	48.4	60	19.4	0	0
Distractions affecting self-study (social media, games, etc.)	110	35.5	150	48.4	50	16.1	0	0
Lack of tools to evaluate self-study progress	80	25.8	160	51.6	50	16.1	20	6.5
Lack of motivation to self-study	140	45.2	120	38.7	20	6.5	30	9.7

The data from Table 1 show that poor English proficiency is the most significant barrier to students' self-study, with 48.4% (150 students) agreeing and 38.7% (120 students)

strongly agreeing—totaling 270 out of 310 responses. This indicates that most students do not have a strong command of English, which creates considerable difficulties in their self-study process.

Similarly, two of the six listed difficulties received a high level of agreement, with 260 out of 310 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing: lack of motivation for self-study, and distractions during the self-study process. Student motivation can be understood as both an internal sense of responsibility and the result of positive influences from teachers, curricula, and the institution. Regarding external factors, learners admitted to being distracted by various appealing online elements such as social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) or games—all of which significantly affect their ability to self-study. These findings are consistent with previous research by Nguyễn Thị Bích Thuận [10], Đinh Thị Huệ, Dương Thị Nhật Lệ, and Huang Meily One [11].

The remaining three difficulties also showed high agreement levels, with 250 and 240 out of 310 respondents respectively agreeing or strongly agreeing: lack of guidance or support during self-study, lack of tools to assess progress, and unreliable or unfiltered learning resources. Although the self-study process is designed to be flexible and autonomous, students still need guidance and tools to evaluate whether their efforts are on the right track. This may be because many students are still accustomed to traditional, teacher-centered learning, where they passively receive knowledge and are not used to independently exploring new ideas or developing their creativity. Furthermore, the overwhelming volume of unvetted and unreliable learning materials can leave students feeling confused and unsure of what sources to use.

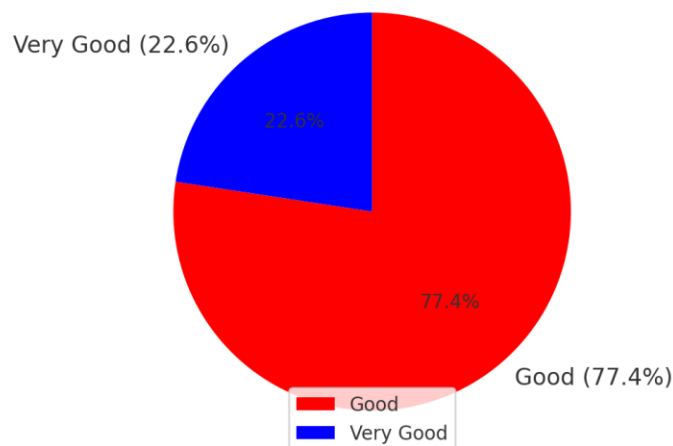
To help minimize these challenges and support students in their self-study efforts, the Easy Class English self-study application was piloted, with the hope that it could help students overcome these obstacles.

### **How Did the Students' Perceptions and Self-Study Habits Change after Being Introduced to the Easy Class Self-Study Application?**

With the aim of promoting students' self-study skills and improving the management of their self-study hours, the Easy Class application, an online English learning support tool,

was piloted for first-year students at the university. This paper, as part of a broader research project, presents the evaluation results on changes in students' perceptions and self-study habits after several initial weeks of using the application.

Chart 2. How Does the Easy Class Application Support Your Self-Study?



Data from Chart 2 show that a large number of students (77.4%) reported a positive change, while 22.6% experienced a very positive change after being introduced to the Easy Class application. From the instructor's perspective, this improvement can be attributed to positive interventions by the lecturers. Teachers increased the number of assignments given through the Easy Class app, encouraged students to complete them via the platform, and monitored and graded them as part of the practice component for each course. This activity aligns with the concept of teacher-guided self-directed learning, where instructors assign tasks, and students take ownership of their learning, motivate themselves, and actively complete additional exercises [19], [20].

In line with the above explanation, students' learning attitudes and self-study time also showed positive changes. The survey results regarding changes in students' perceptions and self-study habits are illustrated in Charts 3 and 4.

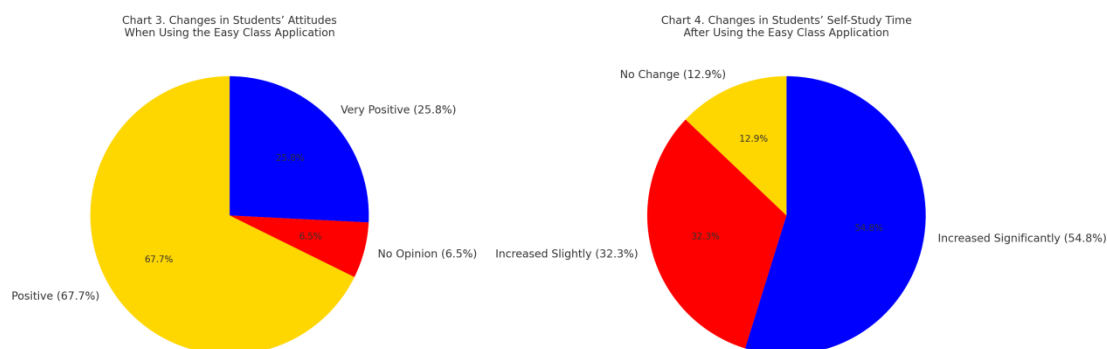


Chart 3 shows that students experienced a significant change in their learning attitudes: 67.7% reported a positive change, and 25.8% noticed a very positive shift in their attitude toward learning. Data from Chart 4 reveals an increase in self-study time among most students, with 32.3% reporting a slight increase and 54.8% a significant increase. Only a small number of students did not observe noticeable changes in their learning attitudes (6.5%) or in the amount of time spent on self-study (12.9%), and some had no opinion on these statements. The survey results indicate that, with intervention from instructors and institutional support through the Easy Class application, students spent more time on self-study and gradually developed better self-study habits.

Foreign language proficiency is one of the essential skills for students upon graduation. Encouraging students to enhance their self-study and improve their language skills is a crucial step in helping them become more confident in job searching and in improving the overall quality of the university's education. Therefore, if this application is implemented on a larger scale and applied to English skill development for students across various majors, it could significantly transform the student abilities and elevate the institution's training quality.

### **Is the Easy Class application an effective solution to help students enhance their self-study abilities and overcome the challenges of learning English independently?**

The research results above have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Easy Class application. Students' awareness and attitudes toward their self-study ability showed significant improvement after just a few weeks of becoming familiar with the app.

Specifically, their learning attitudes became more positive, and the amount of time they dedicated to self-study increased notably compared to before.

In addition, Easy Class helps learners address the common challenges of self-studying English, as identified by Nguyễn Thị Bích Thuận [10] in her research. These difficulties were adapted and applied by the present study to align with its evaluation goals. Survey results show that 77.4% of students acknowledged the app as effective and flexible, allowing them to study and complete assignments anytime, anywhere. Moreover, 71% rated the learning materials and exercises on Easy Class as appropriate for learners at various levels, while 61.3% believed the resources were reliable and suited to their proficiency. Notably, 35.5% appreciated the app's mentorship-like feature, where tasks are designed with guidance embedded. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Easy Class application helps students overcome many of the challenges they face in the self-study process.

Additionally, the Easy Class application helps motivate students by incorporating features such as class- and school-wide performance leaderboards, a user interface that records scores for each assignment, and point accumulation systems that can be redeemed for rewards through learning tasks. Two features of Easy Class that were highly rated by the majority of students include the unlimited number of attempts, which allows students to improve their scores with each try (74.2%), and the visually engaging score-tracking interface (67.7%). These figures demonstrate that Easy Class has an effective impact on students' self-study, helping them develop greater self-discipline and overcome challenges in their English learning and practice outside of classroom hours.

## **Conclusion**

Self-study is one of the essential skills that helps learners master knowledge and achieve high academic performance, especially under the current credit-based training system. For language students, consistent practice plays a critical role in academic success. However, classroom time is typically only sufficient for students to grasp theoretical content and basic skills related to each subject, while most practice needs to be done outside of school hours.

In reality, first-year students at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment are highly aware of the importance of self-study and do invest time in it. However, the number of students who dedicate serious effort to self-study remains limited due to several barriers such as poor English proficiency, lack of motivation, unreliable study resources, and distractions from external factors like movies, games, and social media. The Easy Class application can help learners partially overcome these difficulties.

Moreover, students' awareness and self-study habits have shown positive changes after just a few weeks of using the application. In language learning, practice is one of the key determinants of success. It is hoped that with this application, students will become more proactive in their self-study and personal development. Nonetheless, beyond technological support, active involvement from both instructors and the institution is necessary to help students further develop their capacity for independent learning and self-discipline.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Teachers as Nation Builder: Indigenous Lessons from Yorùbá Pedagogy for Societal Transformation

**Emoruwa, Oluwatoyin Titilayo, Ph.D.**

Adeyemi Federal University of Education,  
Ondo, Ondo State.

[tititoyin@gmail.com](mailto:tititoyin@gmail.com) +2348067392364

**Awolaoye, Sunday Olayinka, Ph.D.**

Adeyemi Federal University of Education,  
Ondo, Ondo State.

[awolaoyesop@gmail.com](mailto:awolaoyesop@gmail.com) +2348030501542

**Saka, Idayat Oyenike, Ph.D.**

Adeyemi Federal University of Education,  
Ondo, Ondo State.

[ridahtullahi@gmail.com](mailto:ridahtullahi@gmail.com) +2348030705692

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### Abstract

Education is defined as the process of teaching someone especially in a school, college or university. Transformation on the other hand involves a shift in our orientation in such a way that new actions and results become possible. This paper is an examination of the transformative roles of teachers as the center stage in education in the societal transformation of our society, Nigeria, through the lens of Yorùbá philosophical traditions. Drawing on rich Yorùbá literary texts, the study explores how the Yorùbá worldview positions teachers (*olùkò*) as custodians of knowledge, moral exemplars, and community builders. It portrayed teachers as professionally trained personnel charged with the responsibility of disseminating positive knowledge, attitudes and skills to learners in the school. The analysis of the transformative roles of the teachers is established on two Yoruba literatures, a poem (*Ògá ni Tísà*) and a prose (novel): *Erin Lákátabú*. Findings establish that the Yorùbá model of teaching emphasizes that teachers serve as role models, counsellors and disciplinarian to their learners. Through this, the character and personality of the learners are moulded in the right direction which leads them to their final destinations. The paper concludes by advocating for the appropriate recognition of teachers for the value of the services that they render and teachers should also develop passion for their job and see it as a calling. This work contributes to the decolonization of education discourse by establishing the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping future-ready educators.

**Keywords:** Yorùbá pedagogy, societal transformation, indigenous education, transformative role, moral education

## Introduction

When a society becomes more complex, it gets more socially and technologically advanced and it is faced with more challenges. To provide solution to some of these challenges, education can be appropriately used as an effective instrument in the transformation of the nation and its overall development. Therefore education should be given adequate attention so as to meet the growing needs and aspirations of the Nigerians. While education may not be expected to change the society in a drastic manner because it is a part and parcel of the society it desires to change, everybody must work together to reposition it to produce upright human beings who can have positive impact on their society. Again, for National transformation to be achieved, the society must be abundantly rich in knowledge which is usually acquired through the teachers. Education, for the purpose of this paper, will simply be defined as the process of teaching someone especially in a school, college or university. This paper, therefore, examines the roles of teachers as the center stage in education in the societal transformation of Nigeria. It portrayed teachers as professionally trained personnel charged with the responsibility of disseminating positive knowledge, attitudes and skills to learners in the school. Transformation on the other hand involves a shift in our orientation in such a way that new actions and results become possible. The analysis of the transformative roles of the teachers is established on two Yoruba literatures, a poem (*Ògá ni Tísà*) and a prose (novel): *Erin Lákátabú*. The analysis established that teachers serve as role models, counsellors and disciplinarian to their learners. Through this, the character and personality of the learners are moulded in the right direction which leads them to their final destinations.

Transformation conjures the notion of change whose achievement can be achieved through a conscious and deliberate effort of the individual and the society. Education is necessary in transforming the society because it is an effective catalyst that brings hope to humanity and changes societies positively. Education is seen to be a crucial sector in any nation. As a result, it has always been the preoccupation of educational stakeholders to set goals for education in order to use education to create the kind of human beings required to change the society. It should be noted that teachers are at the centre stage in the transformation of the nation through the effective implementation of the curriculum in the schools. The needs and goals of the people are merged into the curriculum which the teachers translate into realities for the benefits of mankind and the role of the teachers at this level of education cannot be overemphasized as they are the transformation agents. It is an established fact that Nigeria as a country, in spite of her abundant human and material resources, is under developed in

almost all aspects of her national life. This under development is realised in poverty, insecurity, corruption, unemployment, lack of productivity and all forms of negative attributes. The country is not achieving much and it is not where it is supposed to be in the committee of nations. There is, therefore, the need for national transformation. In the process of acquiring education, the role of teachers is significant. They are intermediates between educational content and the learners. The worth of a country get examined and graded in the work of teachers. Thus, the people of a country are the enlarged copy of their teachers because the teachers are considered as the real nation builders. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009) confirms this by stating that “no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers”. Based on this, it can be safely assumed that no effective transformation can be achieved in Nigeria without the teachers playing their required roles. The task of teachers in transforming the society is to first of all transform the learners through effecting an attitudinal change in them.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

In this paper, certain concepts like education, teacher and transformation will be defined for proper understanding.

**What is Education:** Education is mainly used for the development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho productive domains. It has to do with a desirable approach in human behaviour through the process of teaching and learning. Education is considered as what each generation gives to its younger ones which makes them develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behaviours which are the positive values to the society in which they live<sup>1</sup>. Also, education is the total development of the individual child through acceptable methods and techniques according to his abilities and interests to meet up the needs of the society and for the individual to take his rightful place and contribute equally to the enhancement of the society<sup>2</sup>. Abdullahi<sup>3</sup> sees education is also seen as the bedrock of economic development and transformation of any nation; he observes further that the growth of such a nation depends largely on the quality of the teacher.

**What is transformation?** Transformation is defined as a shift in the orientation of the individual, organization or society in such a way that new actions and results become feasible. To transform something is to change or alter its form or appearance usually for the better. Transformation can be physical when we talk of changes that can easily be seen and

felt. Transformation is often seen in the light of positive changes but however, it can be negative especially when what is needed to yield the desired result is not provided in the right quality or quantity. It is worthy of note that the most significant way to transform human beings is through education. Education equips its recipients with knowledge, understanding and a way of seeing the world which transform them to a state that is better than what they would be without it. It is individuals who have been positively transformed who can transform the society at large. It is from this perspective that it can conveniently be argued that education can transform a society. When the fact that all the stakeholders in the education sector are also parts and parcel of the larger society is considered, one can only be cautiously optimistic of using education as a tool of transforming the larger society.

Transformation is a constant process; everything is constantly changing either for good or for bad. As such, a society cannot be static. The fact that as Nigerians we always talk about the good old days in terms of the economy and education is an indication that there has been a transformation in the negative perspective in the Nigerian society. There is a compelling need to stop this moral degeneration before any other effort towards national transformation can be carried out. In relation to the Nigerian society, it is a necessity for a radical, structural and fundamental re-arrangement and re-ordering of the building blocks of the Nation. The expectations of most Nigerians are for a development blueprint that will transform the economy, re-invent the politics of our nation, secure the polity, care for the underprivileged and provide responsible, responsive and transformative leadership. Transformation, simply put, involves a shift in our orientation in such a way that new actions and results become possible.

**Who is a Teacher?** There are claims that everybody is a teacher because at one time or the other, we teach ourselves one thing or the other. This means that throughout our lives, we are involved in teaching. Teaching is a process of informing, instructing or inculcating into individual learners certain attitudes, skills, knowledge and virtues of appreciation<sup>4</sup>. Teacher plays roles of facilitating learning activities, guides learners at work and behaviour model who has to apply teaching to real life situations<sup>5</sup>. Apart from the above definitions, a teacher could be defined as professionally trained a personnel who is charged with the responsibility of disseminating positive knowledge, attitudes and skills to learners in the school.

Professional teachers are distinguished from quacks by qualities like punctuality at all school functions, cleanliness, honesty, patience, resourcefulness, discipline, good sense of humour,

firmness and fairness in decision making, establish good relationship with learners, colleagues and parents, motivate learners, a continuous learner by attending workshops, seminars, conferences, refresher and in-service courses, hard-work – teaching and keeping of school records, knowledge of subject matter and appropriate methodology, and obedience to school authority, employers and other constituted authorities.

## **VIEWS OF TEACHING**

There are three common views of what constitutes teaching: teaching as transmission, teaching as transaction, and teaching as transformation<sup>6</sup>.

**Teaching as Transmission.** From this angle, teaching seen as is the act of transmitting knowledge from Point A (teacher's head) to Point B (students' heads). This is a teacher-centered approach in which the teacher is the dispenser of knowledge and the final evaluator of learning. A teacher's preoccupation from this perspective is to supply students with knowledge in a predetermined order. Academic achievement is seen as students' ability to demonstrate, replicate, or retransmit this supplied knowledge back to the teacher or to some other measuring agency or entity.

**Teaching as Transaction:** teaching as a transaction is the process of creating situations whereby students are able to interact with the material to be learned in order to construct knowledge. Here, knowledge is not passively received; rather, it is actively built up or constructed by students as they connect their past knowledge and experiences with new information<sup>7</sup>. And just as each student's past knowledge and experiences are different, so too is the interpretation, understanding, and meaning of the new information that each ultimately constructs.

**Teaching as Transformation:** From this perspective, teaching is creating conditions that have the potential to transform the learner on many different levels (cognitive, emotional, social, intuitive, creative, spiritual, and other).<sup>6</sup> Transformational teaching invites both students and teachers to discover their full potential as learners, as members of society, and as human beings. The ultimate transformational goal is to help develop more nurturing human beings who are better able to perceive the interconnectedness of all human, plant, and animal life<sup>8</sup>. Holistic education is an educational philosophy consistent with the transformative view (ibid)<sup>6</sup>. Learning is said to have occurred when these experiences elicit a transformation of consciousness that leads to a greater understanding of and care for self, others, and the

environment. Academic achievement from this perspective is similar to self-actualization. That is, it is perceived as discovering and developing each individual's unique talents and capabilities to the fullest extent possible.

In teaching for transformation, teachers do not simply add new information on the pre-existing knowledge of their learners because this practice does not promote critical thinking in the learners. Perspective transformation teaching has been recommended and described as the process of becoming critically aware of how and why the learners' assumptions have constrained the way in which they perceive, understand and feel about their world, changing these structures of habitation expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating and intergrading perspective and finally making choices<sup>9</sup>. In using transformative learning, teachers employ the service of activity based teaching methods like enquiry, discussion, drama and field trip. When learners acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes through activity based pedagogical strategies and under conducive learning environment, they are prepared to go into the society and transform it in their areas of specialization. On the other hand, when teachers do not possess the required academic sophistication to discharge their duties in adequately equipped learning institutions, positive transformation will not be feasible. Rather, the institutions will produce graduates who are corrupt. For money or other attractions, such teachers could leak examination questions, falsify students' scores or engage in other forms of professional misconducts. Politicians produced from these institutions will be greedy, deceitful, dishonest and unpatriotic and architects will design buildings that will collapse on their occupants.<sup>6</sup>

### **Transformative Roles of Teachers in Nigeria**

Services of teachers are indispensable to any nation around the world because of the numerous roles play by the teachers to effect national transformation and development of the nation. Some of the roles highlighted in this paper are taken from two Yoruba literary works namely *Erin Lákátabú* (a prose) and *Òga ni Tísà* (a poem). Both literary pieces have the teacher as their main theme which makes them relevant for this paper. Also, they selected because of their literary nature as it is believed that literature is a reflection of the happenings in our society. Some of the identified roles are:

**Role Model:** Teachers function as role models in our society because they inspire and encourage their learners to strive for greatness, live to their fullest potential and see to the best of themselves. Teachers as their learners' models are admired to the extent that their

learners aspire to be like them, though not all the students wish to become a teacher like them but always strive to emulate some of their characters and virtues. For instance in *Erin Lákátabú*, one of the characters, a secondary school student is seen taking a decision to be hardworking like one of his teachers.

Láti ìgbà tí ògá àgbà ti sọrò iwúrí yíi ni Àniké ti pinnu  
láti mú iṣẹ̀ rẹ̀ ní bàádà bí i ti ògá àgbà. Pg 44

(since the principal gave that encouraging speech, anike  
decided to be more hardworking just like the principal)

In this connection, the learner imitates the teacher's commitment to excellence and hardwork. Students also look up to their teachers for advice and guidance. In *Òga ni Tísà*, the author wrote these about Teachers:

‘iwọ̀ ni ò ń fún irúgbìn ìmọ̀	you are the one sowing the seed of knowledge
Tí o tún ń sèsò ìmọ̀	and bringing forth seed of knowledge
ọpọ̀lọ̀ tírẹ̀ laráyé ti ń rẹ̀so ọgbọ̀n ká jẹ	it is from your brain that people got the
	seed of wisdom to eat (lines 16-18)

Teachers are placed in this position as models and mentors to their students because after the parents, the teachers are greatly involved in the socialization process of the children. Teachers as role models therefore do not only watch their students grow but they also help them to grow in the right direction. This is evident in lines 63 and 64 of *Òga ni Tísà* as shown below

Gbogbo akẹ̀kọ̀ọ̀ ayé ló ń gbọ̀wọ̀ rẹ̀ dàgbà	(all students pass through you)
Kí wọ̀n tó débì gíga	(before they get to the top)

In this respect, the teachers do not only teach the students the content of the syllabus but also important life lessons like the virtues of *Ọmọlúàbí* which includes respect. The school therefore is not only a place of academic learning but also a place of social and moral learning. As role models, teachers are fountains of experience. They have already been to where their children are going, undergone what they will go through thus they are in position to pass along lessons, not only regarding subject matter, but lessons of life. This is evident on page 55 of *Erin Lákátabú* as shown in excerpt below:

Àwá tí a jẹ̀ olùkọ̀ yin ti gòkè odò, èyin ló kù tí ẹ̀ ó múra. Odó tàwa

tí ríbi yí bìrì lọ, ilèkùn tiyí ni ò tí ì kúrò lójú kan.

(we that are your teachers have gone ahead of you, you should work harder)

As good role models, teachers respect the children that they teach and other people in the educational community, which is the reason for the Parents/Teachers Association (PTA). They do not step on the toes of others to get ahead or look down on their colleagues. They show gratitude when others assist them. It is often these little things that teachers do that make the big difference in how they are perceived in the society. By this, peaceful co-existence is entrenched in the society. It is only when there is peace that any form of transformation can thrive. The pride of teachers in their profession is imbibed by the children who will in turn show pride in their future professions. This attitude will encourage hard work which will lead to an increased productivity for national transformation.

As role models, teachers admit their mistakes when they are wrong and always apologize. This is because as human beings, we are not perfect. By this, they have taken responsibility of their mistake. This is exemplified on page 85 of *Erin Lákatabú*.

Àlùkò dúpẹ lówọ Láyí, ó bèẹ pé kí ó mǎà bínú.

(Aluko thanked Layi and pleaded with him not to be angry)

When this is done, the children will understand that everyone makes mistakes but it does not mark the end of the world as things can be put right again. By so doing, the children will be able to apply that reasoning whenever they are in a similar situation. From the discussion so far, it could be clearly seen that the role of teachers as role models in transforming the society is very critical because it has far reaching influence on the society. As a good model worthy of emulation, the students try to follow their teachers in their manners, dressing, etiquette and style of conversation. They are their mentors and can lead them anywhere therefore; good teachers play a prominent role in making the future of their students and the society. It is for this reason that teachers make frantic efforts to abstain from what in their thinking will mislead the children.

### **Guidance Counsellors**

Although the teachers' primary function is teaching, his role in the dissemination of guidance functions cannot be ignored. This is because the children that they teach come from diverse family backgrounds where some of them may have problems like financial difficulties, lack of parental care and broken homes arising from separation of parents. The school



environment can also constitute behavioural problems to the children as they interact with their peers. For these reasons, teachers are also counsellors who are concerned with the health, education, social and vocational needs of the children. As students come to the school, they may have academic challenges that require the assistance of the teacher. Students with academic problems such as reading without understanding, poor study habit, among choice of subject combinations etc are assisted by the teachers. Teachers assist these students to have good study habit in order to succeed and have good academic performance. Teachers help students to plan their study. Teachers also guide them to develop reading habits. Reading always leads to good academic performance. Teachers as counsellors assist the students on choice of career and subjects required according to the students' academic ability and personal attitudes. If teachers play these roles as expected with deep sense of commitment to duty, the education sector will be transformed leading to a positive change in the nation for its development.

Through observation or interview, teachers identify students with academic problems and resolve them amicably. This enables the students to perform maximally in their academic pursuit. Teachers as counsellors and societal transformers help the students to understand themselves and get along with others without many problems. With this, most social problems of the students within and outside the school are resolved. Thus, the students will grow up to be socially, morally and educationally sound because they have acquired a wholesome personality. With this crop of students, the schools will be peaceful and on completion, they will go into the society to be round pegs in round holes thereby changing the society for better. This guidance role is seen in Aluko's thoughts on page 34 of *Erin lákátabú* as seen in the excerpt below:

Bélèyí kúkúró ò bá gbón, èyí gogoro nkó? Bí akèkòò ò bá mò ọ̀n  
sí àìdàà, olùkò wọn nkó? Àwọn tó yẹ kí ó tó àwọn akèkòò yìí sọ̀nà  
bóyá wọn ò sì mò pé ojúṣe wọn kojá kí á kọ ọ̀mọ ní ìwé lásán?

If the short one is not wise, what about the tall one? If the students does not know that it is bad, what about the teachers? They are one that should guide the students on the right path, maybe they are not aware that their role goes beyond just the classroom?

### **The Academic Role of Teachers in Transforming Nigeria**

The responsibility of producing competent manpower for the management of all sectors of societal life lies wholly in the hands of teachers. This implies that, without teachers, the future generation cannot consolidate and sustain the gains of present day transformation. In developing manpower for the society, teachers influence the abilities of the learners in such a way that societal transformation is made feasible. It is for this reason that transformation traverses all facets of national life like in politics, power, economy, health, agriculture, industry and education. From the above, be you a politician, medical doctor, banker, engineer, lawyer and scientist, you were at one time or the other students learning under the teacher. This is implied in lines 19-29 of the poem *Ọgá ni Tísà*:

Gbogbo oníṣẹ́ ayé yíi pátá ló mò ọ̀n	all workers in this world knows you
Wọ̀n mò pa tí o kó	they know your impact
Kí wọ̀n ó tó mọ̀ṣẹ́ẹ́ wọ̀n	before they are perfect in their field
Wọ̀n mò ọ̀n nílẹ́ ẹ̀jọ́	you are known in the court
Wọ̀n mò ọ̀n nílẹ́ ìwòsàn	you are known in the hospital
Wọ̀n mò ọ̀n lórí pápá	you are known in the field
Wọ̀n mò ọ̀n nínú òwò	you are known in the business world
Nínú sáyẹ̀nsì, nínú ọ̀rọ̀ ọ̀ṣẹ̀lú, nínú ìmọ̀ ẹ̀rọ	in science, in politics, in technology
Sèbí kíkọ́ nì gbogbo wọ̀n kó ohun tí wọ̀n n ẹ́	they all learnt what they are practicing
Ìwọ́ tísà yíi sì nì ọ̀ba àwọ̀n a-fimọ̀-hàn-nìyàn	you, the teacher, is the king in the art of sharing knowledge
Ọ̀gá nì ọ́ láti ayé yíi títi dọ̀run	you are the master from this earth to the heaven.

In other words, everybody that is somebody today was taught by the teacher. It therefore becomes unarguably the claim that teaching is the mother of all professions, thus the world of tomorrow will be born only from the teachers of today. It is the teachers who are at the forefront of winning the battle against illiteracy, ignorance, under development and poverty. These are attacked through the teachers' academic role which includes teaching, evaluating, motivating students to learn, maintaining discipline in the classroom and creating conducive environment for learning to take place. In teaching, teachers transmit knowledge, attitudes and skills into the learners. Knowledge is one of the most important ingredients in the transformation process (ibid<sup>9</sup>). For this consideration, the curriculum that is used in teaching is referred to as a systematically intended packaging of competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are underpinned by values. Learners are expected to acquire these values

through organized learning experiences both in formal and informal setting. Good curriculum plays an important role in forging life-long learning competencies, social attitudes, and skills such tolerance, respect. The importance of curriculum in the school cannot be overemphasized because it contributes to thinking skills, creativity and the acquisition of relevant knowledge that is applicable to their daily life and careers and in preparation for their role as agents of societal change. Disclosing the significance of the teachers in curriculum implementation, Nyirenda<sup>10</sup> explains that: “The curriculum taught at school bears the objective of transmitting knowledge and skills to students, who at the end could support change within their households and later at the societal level. Teachers become very important in ensuring that students obtain the adequate skills and knowledge which will support their personal and social change.” From the above, it becomes clear that teachers receive children from diverse home backgrounds who differ in knowledge, skills and behaviour and mould them into educated people that contribute immensely in the development of the society.

### **Disciplinary Roles of Teachers**

In the recent past, there has been an increase in public attention to the problems of indiscipline in the country in general and in the school system in particular. Schools rules and regulations are no longer obeyed. Students no longer obey their teachers and the school management; consequently, they take law into their hands. There are always some media reports of examination malpractices, students’ unrest, cases of cultism, drug abuse. Discipline is a valuable asset to the school. Discipline involves self-control, respect for self and respect for others. The disciplined person is guided in his behaviour, moral and social principles and does what is right and good. He does what is right and good because he believes that such behaviour is better than actions that can harm other people. He does not need to be told or punished before he does the right thing. Teachers are faced with numerous disciplinary problems in the day to day teaching and learning as exemplified on pages 52- 53 of the novel *Erin Lákátabú* thus:

Lètà ifẹ sí ara wọn, kí ọkùnrin àti obìnrin máa fọwọ gbá ara wọn nídií nínú kílààsì láibíkítà pé wọn wà níwájú olùkọ. Wọ á pàṣẹ oníkùmò fáwọn akẹkọọ wẹwẹ èyín wọn, wọn á sì lù wọn bí i bàrà. Ọpọ̀ ìgbà ní wọn n hùwà àibíkítà sí olùkọ wọn.

Love letters to themselves, male and female students playfully slapping

their buttocks in the class without minding the presence of the teachers. They bully the younger students and beat them mercilessly. Most times, they behave non-chalantly towards their teachers.

These problems inhibit effective teaching and learning. But when teachers play their roles in the school effectively, a decision made by Aluko, a teacher on the same page 53 of *Erin Lákátabú*, they will control and maintain discipline. His decision in *Erin Lákátabú* to instil discipline in the students is stated below:

Tí àwọn olùkó tó kù kò bá mò ọ̀n gégé bí ojúṣe, òun yóò rí i pé àkókò  
Tòun gégé bí olùkó ní àpẹrẹ lára àwọn akẹ̀kọ̀ọ̀ náà.

If the other teachers do not know it (discipline) as their responsibility, he will make sure that his own time as a teacher will be felt by the students.

When there is sanity in the school system, issues like examination malpractice, cultism, stealing, fighting etc that characterize our schools in Nigeria will be a thing of the past. Teachers are very important in the maintenance of school discipline for national development and transformation.

### **Challenges Militating against Transformative Roles of Teachers in Nigeria**

As important as teachers are in transforming the society, they are constrained in certain aspects of executing their functions to the extent that the society remains untransformed. Some of the challenges are discussed below using an excerpt from the poem, *Ógá ni Tísà* lines 66-78:

ṣùgbọ̀n kinní kan ló kù tó ń dùn mí  
bí gbogbo ayé ti mò iwọ olùkó tó

wọ̀n mò ọ̀n lásán ní  
wọ̀n kò tò ọ̀ sáà yè gidi  
iyi àti àpọ̀nlé tó yẹrú ipò tí o wà

òbí ọ̀mọ kò yìn ọ̀  
ọ̀mọ tẹ̀ẹ̀ ń du orí rẹ̀ gan-an kò yìn ọ̀

but there is one painful thing  
as much as you are well known,  
teacher  
you are just known  
but you are not properly placed  
in the honoured and referenced  
position you deserve  
the parents does not praise you  
the child you are trying to mould  
does not even appreciate you

Àwọn tò tún gbà a síṣé ñkọ?

Kò tún sí oriyin látòdò wọn

Igbákígá ni wọn fí ñ wònwó iṣé fún ọ

Wọn á sanwó tí kò kájú iṣé

Wọn kì í tún sanwó òhún lásìkò.

What about your employers?

no appreciation from them

you are being paid peanuts

they pay you below your services

They will not even pay on time

The challenges observed from the excerpt above are stated below:

- Poor conditions of service, no incentives to attract and retain the best brains in Nigerian schools leading to low self-esteem for those that choose to remain in the system
- Salary not buoyant enough to cater for the needs of the teachers and their family
- Non-payment of salary on time
- Parents are not appreciative of teachers' efforts over their wards and children
- The students too does not appreciate the efforts of their teachers

Another observed challenge facing the transformative roles of teachers is lack of passion for the profession; this is found on page 17 of the novel, *Erin Lákátabú*.

Àírí rárá ni iṣé tísà (lack of other jobs leads one to teaching)

The roles of teachers in transforming the society are so important that demands only the best, most intelligent and competent members of the society to be allowed to qualify for this noble profession<sup>9</sup>. He states further that it is however unfortunate to find that generally, the worst and most incapable members of the society find their way into teaching profession, anyone who fails to get their desired job, gets into this profession and recklessly plays with the destiny of the nation.

Lack of basic knowledge in ICT is another challenge identified by Nwiyi and Okorie<sup>11</sup>. This poses a lot of challenges to the teaching profession as the practitioners are intimidated by their students who have better understanding of the new technology and are ahead of the teachers on its application<sup>11</sup>. In situations like this, how can the society achieve the highly cherished transformation? This explains why societal problems are rebranded over the ages like old wine in a new skin.

## **CONCLUSION**

From our analysis so far, it is obvious that the process of transforming Nigeria and the world in general, lies significantly in the hands of the teachers. The reason is not farfetched. It is the teachers who transmit knowledge, attitudes and skills to their students. When teachers play their roles effectively and are committed to duties as discussed in this paper, Nigeria will be transformed for national growth and development, because the students are impacted with values firmly etched in their hearts to move the society forward. The teachers remain the corner stone upon which societal transformation can build on. Teaching therefore cannot be seen in any way as a lost art; it is the regard for it that can be considered as a lost tradition.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made if teachers are to assume their rightful place in the transformation agenda of Nigeria:

1. Teachers should be given appropriate recognition for the value of the services that they render.
2. The government should take a second and sincere look at the remunerations of teachers.
3. The government should ensure adequate funding of education so that teaching and learning will be carried out in a teacher and learner friendly environment.
4. Government should provide ICT materials in schools to enable the teachers carry out their prescribed duties effectively
5. Parents should assist teachers at home in the disciplining their children to compliment the efforts of the teachers in maintaining school discipline.
6. Teachers should develop passion for their job and see it as a calling.

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## YouTube Subtitles and Captioned Media: Enhancing Reading Fluency among ESL Students

**Dr. Brindha. K**

Assistant Professor and Head,  
Research and PG Department of English  
Chikkanna Government Arts College, Tiruppur

**Girishwar. T**

Ph.D. Research Scholar (FT)  
Research and PG Department of English  
Chikkanna Government Arts College, Tiruppur  
[girishwarmoorthy@gmail.com](mailto:girishwarmoorthy@gmail.com)

**Sureka G**

Ph.D. Research Scholar  
Research and PG Department of English  
Chikkanna Government Arts College, Tiruppur

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### Abstract

The digital media revolutionized English Language Teaching (ELT) significantly, particularly in enhancing reading fluency among English as Second Language (ESL) learners. Subtitles and captions in videos are more effective in this digital era, provides support to the learners in active participation in audio visual content. This study explores how videos with captions enhance reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension skills, and pronunciation awareness among learners. Learners can enhance their word recognition skills, improve reading speed, and develop their understanding of spoken English through authentic videos by offering a synchronized combination of text and speech. This paper discusses how the benefits of reading, listening, and visual elements work together to support their language learning and how interactive captions improve their learning experience. Furthermore, the study addresses some existing challenges such as over-reliance on subtitles, lack of accuracy, and differences in learners' proficiency levels. The results indicate that strategic incorporation of captioned media can make significant outcomes: improving reading fluency and comprehension. As digital platforms continue to evolve, the study emphasizes the need for educators to foster creative pedagogical approaches for effective and engaging English learning experiences.

**Keywords:** Captioned Media, ESL Learning, Multimodal Language Acquisition, Reading Fluency, YouTube Subtitles.

### Introduction

The evolution of digital media has significantly influenced English Language Teaching (ELT), specifically in developing reading fluency among English as Second Language (ESL)

learners. YouTube subtitles and captioned media have emerged as powerful tools for improving learners' reading and comprehension skills among the various technologies. Captions give real-time textual support, help learners learn through spoken language, allow them to connect between written and oral communication. By integrating multimodal content combines text, visuals, and audio—improves their cognitive skill, make language learning more engaging and effective (Vanderplank 22). Studies recommend captions help ESL learners develop word recognition, fasten their reading ability, and improve pronunciation. Additionally, digital platforms such as YouTube, TED Talks and other OTT platforms provides AI-powered captions, and adjustable playback speeds, enable personalized learning experiences. Pervasive thinking states that over-reliance on captions may obstruct listening development; however through strategic use of captions improves language acquisition rather than impeding it. Some challenges such as inaccurate captions, varying proficiency levels, and learners' dependence on reading rather than listening must be addressed for better language learning results.

This study explores how YouTube subtitles and captioned media contribute to ESL learners' reading fluency, examining both advantages and its limitations of integrating such tools into language instruction. Instructors can make learners participate actively and bring positive outcomes in reading comprehension among ESL learners by understanding pedagogical implications of captioning method.

### **Role of Subtitled Media**

Reading fluency carries three main components: accuracy, speed, and comprehension. Subtitles help learners to improve their fluency, recognize words quickly and understand sentences through authentic language use and by providing real-time text support. Moreover, captioned media allows learners to understand the nature of spoken language, pronunciation, and colloquial expressions, which are missing in traditional reading materials. As digital learning evolves, caption method and interactive transcripts provides new possibilities for personalized reading instruction, making it an essential tool in modern ELT practices (Pujolà 187). Incorporating captioned media into reading instruction, educators can create immersive and engaging learning experiences and improve ESL learners' pronunciation and reading fluency. However, it has to be strategically incorporated, subtitles alongside traditional reading methods, to ensure a balanced approach to literacy development.

### **AI-Powered Captioning and Its Role in ESL Learning**

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in captioning technology has significantly impacted English as Second Language (ESL) learning, particularly in developing reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and listening comprehension. AI-powered captions offer real-time, adaptive, and interactive subtitles, allowing ESL learners to engage with personalized and contextually relevant language input. These tools support learners by providing instant text representations of spoken language, making them valuable for enhancing reading comprehension and fluency development (Vanderplank 35).

### **AI-Generated Captions vs. Traditional Subtitles**

Unlike traditional human-generated captions, AI-powered captioning systems use speech recognition and Natural Language Processing (NLP) to generate real-time subtitles. These AI-generated captions are widely used on platforms like YouTube, Netflix, and educational language apps, where learners benefit from interactive subtitles that adjust to their reading proficiency levels. Furthermore, AI-powered captioning tools can highlight key vocabulary, break down complex sentences, and provide instant translations, making them particularly useful for beginner and intermediate ESL learners (Paivio 89).

## **The Cognitive and Linguistic Benefits of AI-Powered Captions**

From a cognitive perspective, AI-generated captions enhance learning through dual coding theory, which suggests that learners process language more effectively when combining visual and auditory inputs (Paivio 56). AI-powered subtitles allow ESL learners to match spoken words with written text, reinforcing word recognition and reading fluency development. Research suggests that students who regularly use captioned media show greater improvements in reading speed, vocabulary retention, and comprehension compared to those relying solely on traditional text-based learning.

## **AI and Personalized Language Learning**

One of the most significant advantages of AI-powered captioning is its ability to adapt to individual learners' needs. AI-driven platforms such as Duolingo, LingQ, and Google's Live Transcribe offer customized reading exercises, automatic word glossaries, and progress tracking, which help learners strengthen reading comprehension and linguistic awareness. These features create a dynamic, learner-centered environment, where students can pause, rewind, and re-read captions at their own pace, promoting self-directed learning and engagement.

## **Challenges and Limitations**

Despite its advantages, AI-powered captioning still presents challenges. Studies indicate that speech recognition errors and inaccurate AI-generated subtitles can sometimes hinder learning rather than facilitate it (Mayer 58). Additionally, some ESL learners may become overly dependent on captions, reducing their ability to develop listening skills without visual support. Educators must therefore ensure that AI-powered captioning is used as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for traditional reading strategies.

## **Pedagogical Implications and Best Practices**

The integration of AI-powered captioning and subtitled media in ESL learning has significant pedagogical implications, particularly in reading instruction, vocabulary acquisition, and listening comprehension. Educators must adopt strategic methodologies to ensure that captioned media enhances language proficiency rather than fosters passive learning habits (Mayer 72). Best practices include adaptive scaffolding, interactive engagement, and a blended learning approach that incorporates both digital and traditional reading methods.

## **Scaffolding Reading Skills with AI-Powered Captions**

Scaffolding is a critical instructional strategy that helps ESL learners gradually develop reading fluency and comprehension. AI-generated captions can function as a form of scaffolding, providing learners with instant vocabulary support, phonetic guidance, and contextual explanations. By progressively reducing caption dependence—moving from full captions to keyword-based cues—instructors can encourage active reading and listening rather than rote reliance on subtitles.

## **Interactive and Engaging Learning Approaches**

To maximize the effectiveness of AI-powered captioning, educators should integrate interactive learning strategies, such as pause-and-reflect activities, prediction tasks, and shadow reading exercises. Research suggests that ESL students who actively engage with captioned media—by reading along, predicting words, and summarizing content—develop stronger literacy skills compared to passive viewers. Furthermore, platforms like YouTube's

interactive transcripts and AI-enhanced digital flashcards provide personalized learning pathways, allowing learners to track progress and reinforce linguistic patterns.

### **Blended Learning: Combining AI-Powered Captioning with Traditional Reading**

While captioned media enhances digital literacy, it should complement rather than replace traditional reading practices. Educators can implement a blended learning approach by alternating between AI-assisted reading tools and print-based materials, ensuring learners develop both digital and offline comprehension skills. Dual coding theory supports this approach, highlighting that multimodal learning—combining text, audio, and visual elements—reinforces retention and cognitive processing.

### **Addressing Challenges and Limitations**

Despite its pedagogical benefits, AI-powered captioning presents challenges, such as inaccurate subtitles, over-reliance on textual support, and cognitive overload. Instructors must guide learners in critically assessing AI-generated captions and recognizing contextual errors, thereby fostering autonomous learning and critical thinking skills (Mayer 79). Additionally, structured caption-reduction exercises—where learners gradually transition from full captions to minimal text cues—can mitigate dependence on subtitles while strengthening aural and decoding skills.

### **Conclusion**

The integration of AI-powered captioning and subtitled media in ESL reading instruction presents a transformative opportunity to enhance reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language comprehension. By providing visual, textual, and auditory reinforcement, AI-driven tools offer adaptive learning experiences that cater to diverse learner needs. However, while these technologies facilitate engagement and comprehension, they must be implemented with pedagogical precision to prevent over-reliance on subtitles and promote active language processing. Educators must strategically integrate captioned media into their curriculum using scaffolded reading techniques, interactive learning activities, and blended learning models. AI-generated subtitles, when combined with traditional reading practices, create multimodal learning environments that strengthen cognitive processing and literacy skills. However, challenges such as inaccurate AI-generated captions, cognitive overload, and passive learning habits necessitate careful instructional planning. Encouraging critical engagement, independent reading strategies, and gradual reduction of caption dependence will help learners develop autonomous reading skills and linguistic proficiency. Moving forward, further research and technological advancements in AI-powered CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) and CALT (Computer-Assisted Language Testing) will continue to reshape ESL instruction. As digital media and AI-driven learning tools evolve, educators must adapt their methodologies to harness these innovations while maintaining a balanced, learner-centered approach. Ultimately, the effective use of captioned media in ESL education requires a harmonious blend of technology, pedagogy, and human interaction to ensure sustainable language development.

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## Journey of Our Genes: Exploring the Migration Pattern and Language Evolution Through Archaeogenetics

**Chris Bastian Tom**

Research Scholar

M.A. Sociology, M.A. History

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,

Indian Institute of Technology Patna.

Bihta, Patna, pin-801106 (Bihar)

[chrisbastiantom1992@gmail.com](mailto:chrisbastiantom1992@gmail.com)

9400942029

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### Abstract

Migration has played a very important role in the trajectory of human history. The formation and development of civilizations, cultures and languages are all being shaped by distinct migration patterns of various population groups. However, in the contemporary world migration has become an extremely polarizing topic in the face of rising ultra-nationalism and border control regimes. This article tries to position the book *A Short History of Humanity: How Migration Made Us Who We Are*, written by Johannes Krause and Thomas Trappe, in the present socio-cultural and geopolitical context of anti-migrant rhetoric and xenophobia. Through the insights gained from the newly emerging field of archaeogenetics, this work unravels the complex migration patterns behind the formation of European cultures and languages. It deals with a long duration of time beginning with the out of Africa migration to Europe, the arrival of neolithic farmers from Anatolia and the migration of steppe farmers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. it tries to develop a new theory for the formation of Indo-European languages challenging the long-established Kurgan hypothesis. The work highlights the crucial role of migration in shaping human advancement, dismantling misconceptions surrounding genetic purity and revealing profound ancestral links transcending geographical, linguistic and genetic boundaries.

**Keywords:** Migration Patterns, Archaeogenetics, Language Evolution, European Society, Neolithic Revolution

## Introduction

We are living in a world where migration has become a very politicised and polarising topic, especially in Europe and North America. The United States Government under President Donald J. Trump is taking staunchly anti-migrant steps carrying out deportation of students and workers from several countries. The Trump administration implemented increasingly stringent policies, notably imposing a comprehensive ban on migration from twelve countries to the United States while further tightening travel restrictions for people from seven additional countries (Reuters 2025). Migrants and refugees escaping dire economic circumstances and political persecution in various Asian and African countries face increasing barriers to legal entry into Europe. This compels many to resort to illegal and dangerous means, such as attempting to cross the Mediterranean by boat, resulting in frequent boat capsizing incidents with significant humanitarian consequences (Kirby 2023, Tondo 2023). European countries are increasingly tightening their control over migration (Bello 2020, Sáenz 2023). Far-right-wing political parties with anti-immigration positions are garnering popularity and political surge in many European countries. Many studies have pointed out to the rising trends of anti-migrant rhetoric and migrant phobia globally (Vallejo-Martín 2021, Vickstrom and Portes 2018, Dražanova et al. 2023, Eberl 2018). In this socio-political context, the book *A Short History of Humanity: How Migration Made Us Who We Are*, written by Johannes Krause and Thomas Trappe, came into relevance.

## Exploring the Migration Patterns

This work unravels the historic migration patterns of Europe through the emerging and revolutionary discipline of archaeogenetics. Archaeogenetics refers to the application of molecular population genetics to the study of the human past. It combines archaeology and genetics to study the genetic material extracted from ancient human remains (Marciniak and Perry 2017, Orlando et al. 2021). Our understanding of human history and ancient migration patterns has greatly benefited from this interdisciplinary approach, which also gave rise to some significant works by noteworthy authors like Stephen Oppenheimer<sup>i</sup>, Bryan Sykes<sup>ii</sup>, and David W. Anthony<sup>iii</sup>. This work is a significant addition to the growing number of works

which employs archaeogenetics to unearth the hitherto hidden patterns of human history and migration (Haak et al. 2015, Lipson et al. 2020, Prendergast and Sawchuk 2018). This book presents the findings and analysis of the first author, Johannes Krause, who is the director of the prestigious Archaeogenetics Department at the Max Plank Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. The second author, Thomas Trappe, is one of Germany's leading health journalists and has helped Krause condense his knowledge and position in the light of contemporary socio-political contexts. The book has been arranged as 10 chapters which unveil the three major pillars of the European population by using the new findings emerged from archaeogenetics. Our species, 'Homo Sapiens,' emerged in Africa, and they came into Europe 40000 years ago, where they met and interbred with Neanderthals, who were already established in Europe tens of thousands of years before. Gradually, Neanderthals were displaced or merged with our species, contributing to our genetic makeup. These out-of-Africa migrants to Europe remained hunter-gatherers, and they left their most significant mark in the Aurignacian culture in modern day France, which excelled in art and sculpture. However, the dramatic changes in climate, including the beginning and end of the last glacial maxim, hugely impacted their lives. However, they survived the vicissitudes of climate and remained the sole inhabitants of Europe for tens of thousands of years until the arrival of farmers from Anatolia in the western part of the Fertile Crescent around 8000 years ago, thus significantly altering the genetic map of Europe. The Neolithic<sup>iv</sup> revolution in Europe began with the arrival of these migrants from Anatolia. They displaced the hunter-gatherer population and expanded their settlements throughout Europe, thus forming the second pillar of the genetic makeup of the European population. However, the hunter-gatherer population did not go into oblivion; they survived with their forager lifestyle in parallel with the sedentary settlements of migrant farmers. They were not completely divergent from each other; they interacted and interbred. An amazing countermovement occurred 6200 years ago when the hunter-gatherer population in Scandinavia adopted the lifestyle of the farmers and significantly improved it through technological innovations, and they began expanding from northern to southern Europe, merging with the farmer populations thus forming the Funnel Beaker culture. This shows how complex and intertwined the interactions between different communities are. Europe's genetic component became complete with the arrival of migrants from the Pontic-Caspian steppes 4,800 years ago. This migration was so huge that the steppe component still dominates the European genetic makeup. However, it varies in different regions across Europe. These migrants from the steppe brought Indo-European languages with them. These languages replaced the



languages of the Anatolian migrant farmers. The most ambitious aspect of this work is the authors' attempt to put forward a new theory for the emergence and evolution of Indo-European languages by refuting the established Kurgan<sup>v</sup> hypothesis, which places the Pontic-Caspian steppes as the birthplace of Indo-European languages. According to them, the proto-Indo-European language was born in the east of the Fertile Crescent in and around present-day northern Iran. This people were genetically distinct from the people in the west of the Fertile Crescent in Anatolia who migrated to Europe 8,000 years ago. The farmers in northern Iran first migrated to the Russian steppes and mingled with another people called the 'Ancient North Eurasians', thus developing the Yamnaya culture.<sup>vi</sup> Then they migrated to Europe, bringing the Indo-European languages to the continent. Even though this argument is interesting, they fail to provide any significant evidence to support it. The arrival of the migrants from the steppe did not create any rapid changes in the lifestyle of Europe since both the migrants and the established population were farmers. But gradually, two cultures developed: Corded<sup>vii</sup> Ware culture in central Europe and Bell Beaker culture in western Europe. A vibrant network exchange system for metals and minerals connected Europe. Around 2200 B.C., these two cultures fused together, thus forming the Unetice<sup>viii</sup> culture concentrated in central Germany, which also saw the development of complex social systems like hierarchy, division of labour, and patriarchy. This work also reveals how the journey of diseases followed the journey of humans. Authors trace the pathways from the Stone Age plague to the medieval black death. This book also covers the huge migrant crisis that happened during the Bronze Age collapse<sup>ix</sup> (1200-1150 B.C.) when people from southern Europe arrived in the Near East. The current situation, in which refugees from the Near East are seeking refuge in Europe, stands in stark contrast to the scenario of the Bronze Age collapse, highlighting the helplessness of migrants beyond time, geography, and culture.

This work proves that European society is formed out of the complex patterns of multiple migration streams. The innovations and technologies brought by the migrants were very crucial in the progress of European society. The authors point out that at least 70% of the European genetic makeup is derived from migrants from Anatolia and the steppes. This work denounces the concepts of 'genetic purity' and 'genetic superiority' held by Nazis and still prevalent in extreme white ethnocentric groups in Europe and the U.S.A. Archaeogenetical evidence points out that Europeans and indigenous populations in the Americas, hitherto considered completely distinct populations from each other, are very closely related because of their common ancestry from 'Ancient North Eurasians'. The historic streams of migration

that happened over millennia have connected people around the globe and thus shattered the myth of genetic purity.

This work makes an important contribution to the fields of migration studies and history through archaeogenetic studies. The findings from the new field of archaeogenetics help us unravel the hitherto unknown but complex patterns of migration that shaped our modern world. This work underscores that mobility is an intrinsic part of human history and progress. As the last sentence of the book states "through the journey of our genes, we know that humans are born travellers; we are made to wander". However, this work is not without significant fault lines and pitfalls. Eurocentrism is manifestly evident in this work. Even though the title of the book states that it presents a short history of the whole world, it confines itself to the history of Europe. Many historians including Robert Bartlett<sup>x</sup> and Patrick J. Geary<sup>xi</sup> point out that even the geographical, cultural and historical notion of Europe was formed only during the early medieval period. However, this study projects the idea of a European identity back into the Stone Age and Bronze Age periods. The authors' attempt to propose a new theory for the origin of Indo-European languages fails to convince the readers because of the lack of clarity and evidential support. They did not point out the circumstances in which the Indo-European languages developed in northern Iran. There are also some contradicting and confusing statements in the book. Even within a single paragraph, it states that Indo-European languages spread into the Indian subcontinent directly from Iran and from the steppes. Nonetheless, this work is a significant contribution to analysing the ancient history and migration patterns of Europe through archaeogenetics. However, it is also to be noted that most of the work in archaeogenetics focuses on Europe at the expense of other continents and populations. David Reich<sup>xii</sup> and Tony Joseph<sup>xiii</sup> have provided notable works on unveiling the historical and migration patterns of the Indian subcontinent by employing archaeogenetics. We need more studies beyond Europe that will provide a clearer and comprehensive history and migration pattern of humanity. In any way, human mobility cannot be confined to a continent.

## **Conclusion**

The movement of people across all boundaries is the fundamental law of human civilisation. The rigid conceptualization of civilization, which frames human culture through a narrow lens of genetic purism and cultural nationalism, has positioned migration as a perceived threat to societal stability. This work challenges this static understanding of culture by dismantling

the notions of genetic superiority and linguistic supremacy. It highlights the intricate, multidimensional interplay of populations, cultures, traditions and languages that have collectively shaped the foundation of modern Europe. Through the groundbreaking field of archaeogenetics, the authors offer a sophisticated and empirically driven analysis of how successive waves of movements—originating from Africa, Anatolia, the Pontic-Caspian steppes, and other regions—have intricately shaped the multifaceted composition and complex tapestry of contemporary European languages and cultures. The work emphasizes the pivotal role of mobility in facilitating technological and cultural exchanges, which have historically driven societal advancement, thus breaking the root of anti-immigration rhetoric. However, this work has certain limitations, especially its Eurocentric nature. The revised hypothesis concerning the origins of Indo-European languages is weakened by insufficient empirical evidence, with occasional inconsistencies further diminishing the persuasiveness and strength of its argumentation. However, this work provides an immense contribution to the fields of archaeogenetics, migration studies and historical linguistics. It clearly points out the interconnectedness of humanity across all continents, asserting the universality of migration and its fundamental role in shaping societal development.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Stephen Oppenheimer is a prominent British geneticist, who wrote the book ‘The Origins of the British’ (2019) which addresses the genetic evolution of the British Isles through the study of ancient DNA evidence. It examines the genetic roots of the British population and how historical migrations and interactions have shaped it.

<sup>ii</sup> Bryan Clifford Sykes was a British geneticist who gave tremendous contribution to archeogenetics through his works like ‘The Seven Daughters of Eve’ and ‘Blood of the Isles’.

<sup>iii</sup> David W. Anthony is an American geneticist and anthropologist known for his work on the archaeology and genetics of the Eurasian steppes, particularly the Yamnaya culture and its role in the spread of Indo-European languages. His major work is ‘The Horse, the Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World’.

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<sup>iv</sup> The Neolithic Revolution, also referred to as the Agricultural Revolution, marks a fundamental transformation in human history when hunter-gatherer societies gradually adopted a more sedentary lifestyle based on agriculture and animal domestication, leading to permanent settlements and the rise of complex civilizations. This shift, which began around 12,000 years ago in the west Asian region and later emerged independently in other regions, fundamentally altered human social structures, cultural institutions, economies, and environmental interactions, marking the beginning of the Neolithic period.

<sup>v</sup> The Kurgan hypothesis is one of the most widely accepted theories regarding the origins and dispersal of the Indo-European languages. It was first put forward by the archaeologist and historian Marija Gimbutas in the 1950s and 1960s. she argues that the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) language originated with the Kurgan culture, a quasi-nomadic group of pastoralists who lived in the Pontic-Caspian steppe (modern-day Ukraine and southern Russia) around 4500–2500 BCE. The word “kurgan” means “burial mound” in and refers to the distinctive burial mounds these people built. According to this theory the people from Kurgan culture expanded to westwards and eastwards thus fundamentally reshaping the culture and linguistic landscapes of Europe and Asian continents.

<sup>vi</sup> Around 3300–2600 BCE, the Pontic-Steppe region had a Late Copper Age to Early Bronze Age society known as the Yamnaya, often referred to as the Pit Grave culture. The title ‘Yamnaya’ is derived from the Russian word ‘yama’, which meaning pit, and alludes to the distinctive burial trenches that may be discovered at their locations.

<sup>vii</sup> The Corded Ware culture also known as the Battle Axe culture or Single Grave culture was a widespread archaeological complex spanning much of Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe, from the Rhine in the west to the Volga in the east during 2900–2350 BCE. Characterized by its unique cord-impressed pottery, this culture is linked to profound demographic, economic, and social changes, including the dissemination of Indo-European languages and the evolution towards more mobile pastoralist economies.

<sup>viii</sup> The Únetice culture, also known as Aunjetitz, was an important early Bronze Age archaeological cultural complex centered in Central Europe, mainly across modern-day Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Austria, ranging from 2300–1600 BCE. It is named after the site of Únetice near Prague in the Czech Republic. This cultural complex is

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well known for its advanced metallurgy, trade networks, and unique burial practices, marking a key phase in Europe's shift from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. The people in this culture engaged in long-distance trade and exchanged goods with other cultures.

<sup>ix</sup> The Bronze Age collapse refers to a complex series of events occurred in the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. Several significant civilizations abruptly and widely collapsed during this time, and established trade networks were disrupted.

<sup>x</sup> Robert Bartlett is a British historian and medievalist who specializes in the study of medieval Europe, in his book 'The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350' he examines the transformative period between the 10th and 14th centuries in Europe.

<sup>xi</sup> American mediaeval historian Patrick J. Geary is renowned for his work on the creation of historical memory and the early Middle Ages. In the work 'The Myth of Nations: The Mediaeval Origins of Europe', he challenges the idea of fixed, national identities in mediaeval Europe.

<sup>xii</sup> American geneticist David Reich is renowned for his work in population genetics and ancient DNA. 'Reconstructing Indian Population History' by Reich, published in 2009, was an important contribution to the study of India's gene pool, population origins, and ancient patterns of migration.

<sup>xiii</sup> Indian journalist and author Tony Joseph is well-known for his book *Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From*. In this book, Joseph looks at the genetic, archaeological, and linguistic data to determine where the earliest occupants of the Indian subcontinent came from and how they migrated around.

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## Exploring the Female Psyche: A Feminist Reading of Shashi Deshpande's Fiction

**Dr H Akther Banu,**

Associate Professor of English,  
Silver Jubilee Government College,  
Dean Administration, Cluster University,  
Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh.  
[draktherbanu17@gmail.com](mailto:draktherbanu17@gmail.com)

**Prof VVN Rajendra Prasad,**

Distinguished Visiting Faculty,  
Department of English,  
Central University of Andhra Pradesh  
Ananthapuramu. Andhra Pradesh.  
[vvnprasad@gmail.com](mailto:vvnprasad@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Shashi Deshpande, recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award, is celebrated for her sincerity and skill in voicing the concerns of urban, educated, middle-class women. Deshpande has emerged as a writer with profound insight into the female psyche, seeking to understand the mysteries of life and her protagonist's place within it. Deshpande's fiction reflects the advancements of feminism alongside the harsh realities existing in a patriarchal society. This paper undertakes a feminist reading of Deshpande's novels to explore the quest for identity and the need for physical and emotional space that define her protagonists, as well as their awareness of the impossibility of a unified, monolithic identity and a fixed narrative position. Most importantly, there is a movement towards self-knowledge, which involves a long and painful process of introspection and analysis.

**Key Words:** Female psyche, feminine consciousness, patriarchal norms, feminism.

### Introduction

Feminist critique has predominantly focused on the feminine mind as explored in literature. Particularly post-independence, Indian English literature has seen a surge of women writers whose stories challenge patriarchal institutions and redefine female subjectivity. Among them,



Shashi Deshpande distinguishes herself with her psychological depth and realistic portrayal of women grappling with personal desires and social expectations. Her protagonists are highly educated urban middle-class women who strive hard to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. They are not heroic ideals or ordinary victims; rather, they are ordinary women who face the challenges of everyday life as well as difficult emotional and existential dilemmas.

### **Shashi Deshpande's Feminist Vision**

Shashi Deshpande's genuine concern for women's issues is evident in her novels, which are firmly rooted in the realm of socio-moral sexual fiction. Each of her novels, in the words of A.K. Awasthi, "catches on the subtle psychological complexity of the individual mind." They critique the individualistic outlook of women. The point upheld in her novels is the perspective that "a woman, even when she is talented and highly educated, has to realise social responsibilities and think also of those who are around her, rather than lead an insular existence." Deshpande presents the world of mothers, daughters, and wives, while also indirectly portraying fathers, sons, and husbands, examining the relationships between men and women, as well as those among women themselves.

### **Literature Review**

This study employs a multi-dimensional feminist framework, primarily utilising liberal, existential, and psychoanalytic feminist theories to analyse the intricate representation of the female mind in the works of Shashi Deshpande. The existential feminist perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, whose influential work, *The Second Sex* (1949), emphasises that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." This highlights the centrality of identity development as influenced by social and cultural structures in this research. This paper examines Deshpande's protagonists who endeavour to reconcile tradition and modernity, undergoing analogous processes of becoming, through which their voices manifest via introspection and silent resistance.

Elaine Showalter's gynocritical approach (1979) posits the examination of women's writing as a unique literary tradition, which also guides this study by prompting an introspective analysis of Deshpande's female characters and their tales. Toril Moi's feminist literary theory advances this discourse by differentiating between female, feminist, and feminine writing, thereby contextualising Deshpande's narratives within both Western and Indian feminist frameworks.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors: Trauma and Identity*

Shashi Deshpande's first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is a compelling story about a well-educated, financially independent woman battling various obstacles. It narrates the tale of Saru, her relationships with her husband and parents, and her agonising journey of self-discovery. The novel explores Saru's frustrations, her understanding of her issues, her recognition of the crisis in her life, and her efforts to find resolution. Saru enjoys a respectable financial and social status than her husband, for which she becomes a victim of his sexual sadism. His sexual sadism stems from his wounded male ego, which cannot handle Saru's higher social and financial standing. This illustrates how fragile masculinity is in a patriarchal society. The work critically examines the gendered power dynamics within marriage, where love and violence coexist, revealing the contradictions of a culture that symbolically venerates women while suppressing them in practice.

### *Roots and Shadows: A Feminist Exploration of Female Identity and Autonomy*

Shashi Deshpande's second novel, *Roots and Shadows*, was awarded the Thirumathi Rangammal prize. The book criticises the institution of marriage and the false idea of women's freedom, especially through Indu's disappointment with her husband Jayant, who seems liberal but holds her to traditional standards. Deshpande discreetly shows how women like Indu go through psychological anguish when they want to express their power but are held back by invisible emotional and cultural expectations. The novel also shows how women pass down silence and sacrifice from one generation to the next, and how both revolt and conformity can exist in the minds of women. Indu attempts to regain her voice by writing and reflecting about herself, and Deshpande offers a strong critique of patriarchal involvement, presenting a complex portrayal of feminine awareness that is neither entirely free nor completely oppressed. So, *Roots and Shadows* is a significant feminist novel that looks at how gender, identity, tradition, and resistance come together in the lives of modern Indian women.

The novel also explores the unfulfilled wishes and unhappy marriages among women living in a large Maharashtrian Brahmin household. Through Akka, the young sister of Indu's grandfather, who returns to her parental house as a wealthy widow after the death of her husband, it depicts a common feature of deprived womanhood. Deshpande boldly addresses the so-called arranged marriages through Akka's marriage. Stories by Deshpande have the genuineness of women's voices. The novel tells the tale not of a person but of the institution of marriage, threatened by shifting forces and the potential for dissolution.

It also highlights the agony and suffocation experienced by Indu, who feels trapped by the rigid rules imposed by a male-dominated and tradition-bound society. Indu chooses an inter-caste marriage with Jayanth, a man of her choice. Escaping the familial constraints of tradition and religiosity, she finds herself in another realm—one characterised by the extreme middle-class pressures to achieve upward mobility in a materialistic society. Although she married a man of her choice, she encounters difficulties as her so-called progressive husband is not different from an ordinary Indian male. The novel takes a feminist stance as Indu strives to establish her identity. Deshpande, in her essay, 'The Writing of a Novel', writes about Indu, "Indu sprang out of the claustrophobic world with a courage I admired. She was free. But often to be free is to be lonely. I shared this bleak thought with Indu: 'Even Indu realizes, we flatter ourselves that we've escaped the compulsions of the past, but we are still pinned to it by little things.'"

### *That Long Silence: Voice, Silence, and the Struggle for Selfhood*

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, is an important feminist novel. The publication of *That Long Silence* by the Virago Publishing House, London, brought fame to Shashi Deshpande. The story is about Jaya, a middle-class woman who wants to be a writer and is educated, and strives hard to hide her feelings after her marriage to Mohan starts an arduous path of self-discovery. After seventeen long years, Jaya feels the need to break the silence, to revolt, and to re-establish her identity. Deshpande uses Jaya's concepts to show how the gendered demands of silence, obedience, and sacrifice can harm people's mental health. 'Long silence' is a strong feminist theme that highlights how the main character's voice is silent and how women in patriarchal societies don't have a voice. Jaya's understanding that "I had learnt it at last, no questions, no retorts, only silence" exemplifies how silence functions as both an acquired behaviour and a survival mechanism ingrained in her psyche. Drawing from Elaine Showalter's theory of feminist writing, which underlines the need to reclaim female narratives from inside, Jaya's eventual return to writing symbolises a timid step towards empowerment and self-reclamation. Feminist psychoanalysis posits that Jaya's fragmented self represents the internal struggle between societal roles and personal identity, a notion that aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism. Deshpande does not depict Jaya's waking as a triumph but says that it is a small but essential transition from just putting up with things to thinking about them. *That Long Silence* offers a nuanced look into the mind of a woman who is striving to fit in, be creative, and figure out who she is.

### *The Binding Vine: Giving Voice to Silenced Trauma and Female Solidarity*

*Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine* presents a profound feminist exploration of the female psyche, focusing on the trials and tribulations, suppressed creativity and emotional complexities of womanhood. The main character, Urmila (Urmi), who is raped by her husband, exposes to us the most intimate portions of a woman's heart. The main character tries hard to put together Mira's sad story, which she made up on her own. There is also a story of Kalpana, a young girl from a poor family who was raped. This expands the feminist perspective to include the interaction between class and gender. As Urmi emotionally connects with these women, her journey transforms into one of giving witness, thereby reinstating dignity to the voiceless and interrogating her role in social silence. The novel highlights the desire of one woman to help another less fortunate woman and draws the attention of society to the plight of rape victims, both inside and outside marriage.

### ***Matter of Time: Intergenerational Womanhood and the Quiet Strength of Endurance***

Shashi Deshpande's fifth novel, *A Matter of Time*, published in 1996, offers a fascinating exploration of the feminine psyche via the experiences of three generations of women from the same family—Manorama, Kalyani, and Sumi, each grappling with their identities under the constraints of traditional familial expectations. The women have their values and mindset, and a well-defined individualized unconventional relationship with the others with whom they interact in a meaningful way. The novel begins with Gopal walking away from home, deserting his wife, Sumi, and three teenage daughters. Through him, Deshpande tries to present the special status and prerogative enjoyed by men. The whole novel portrays the silent, brooding woman, unhappy yet satisfied, adhering to tradition, though living in the present. Though men do not play an active role, they are the root cause of most of the suffering of women.

### ***Small Remedies: Reclaiming Voice, Creativity, and Feminine Agency***

In *Small Remedies*, Shashi Deshpande examines how loss, memory, and creative identity influence women. She depicts a complex portrait of a woman reclaiming her power through narrative reconstruction. The novel offers an engaging read as the author seeks to free women from the bonds of tradition and enable them to exercise their rights for personal growth. Deshpande emphasises the transformative potential of art and storytelling as a means of healing, self-discovery, and feminist resistance through the interconnected lives of Madhu and Savitribai. The novel explores the gendered constraints imposed on women's creative

expression and autonomy, aligning with Elaine Showalter's gynocritical approach, which advocates analysing women's writing as a way to understand female experience and identity. It follows Madhu Saptarishi, who loses her son in the devastating bomb blast that rocked Bombay after the Babri Masjid episode. Madhu writes the biography of Savitribai Indorekar, the last doyenne of the Gwalior Gharana. The novel seeks to reconcile the different facets of this woman's life, who is on her deathbed, as narrated by Madhu, through the character of Savitribai. Deshpande highlights the courage of a woman who defies the established norms of a patriarchal society.

### ***Moving On: Memory, Emotional Inheritance, and the Inner Life of Women***

Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*, published in 2004, is in many ways a departure from Deshpande's earlier novels. In this novel, she explores the inner workings of the mind as familial relationships become fractured. The two distinctive voices belong to *Jiji*, the protagonist, and *Baba*, her father. This intriguing tale reveals the past through *Baba's* diary, which Jiji discovers following his death. As *Jiji* grapples with a challenging present, she reflects on past events through the retrospective lens of *Baba's* self-discourse. Jiji's eventual declaration of selfhood, quiet yet resolute, mirrors Deshpande's persistent theme of female empowerment via self-understanding rather than rebellion. *Moving On* is a powerful look at the psychological landscape of Indian femininity. It shows how remembering and reinterpreting the past helps to heal and affirm one's outlook. While Deshpande acknowledges that she has taken the utmost care to give *Baba* and *Jiji* their voices, she also highlights the futility of separating the past from the present.

### ***In the Country of Deceit: Illicit Desire, Moral Ambiguity, and Feminine Subjectivity***

*In the Country of Deceit*, published in 2008, Deshpande has used the technique of revisionist mythmaking to explore the man-woman relationship from a fresh perspective—an illicit love affair between a married man and an unmarried woman. Revisionist mythmaking is a technique of rewriting a myth, often from a feminist perspective, radically subverting the old story in such a way as to render the woman's experience, which has been ignored in the original, patriarchal version. The revisionist rewriting of myths aims to correct the incorrect gender imagery inherent in them. It narrates the doomed love affair between an unmarried woman, Devayani and a married police officer, Ashok Chinappa.

Deshpande explores the concept of deception and discusses adult love, trickery, and guilt throughout the novel. Through the illicit affair of Devyani and Ashok Chinappa, Deshpande highlights the betrayals of loved ones. Devyani deceives her loved ones—Keshav, Shree, Sindhu, and Savi by concealing her affair. She challenges the moral boundaries by having a relationship with a married man. Deshpande takes this narrative in a deconstructive manner and modernises the *Yayati-Devayani-Sharmishtha* tale by shifting the focus to the bold woman. Additionally, by quietly referencing the *Devayani-Yayati* tale, Deshpande reclaims and reinterprets traditional myths from a feminist perspective, allowing for female sovereignty even in unconventional choices. The novel ultimately illustrates that women's self-discovery often emerges not from conformity or rebellion, but from introspection and the courage to accept emotional ambiguity. The examination of Devayani's unconventional behaviour presents ambiguous possibilities for women's liberation by revising the Mahabharata's theme of forbidden love.

#### *Shadow Play*: Fragmented Identities and the Emotional Architecture of Womanhood

Shashi Deshpande's novel, *Shadow Play*, begins with the wedding of Aru, short for Arundati, to Rohit. Aru (Arundhati), the eldest daughter of a shattered family, is at the centre, navigating the weight of responsibility while contending with the unresolved anguish of her mother Sumi's accidental death and her father Gopal's prior abandonment. The novel employs a polyphonic framework, interlacing the lives of Aru, her sisters, their aunts, and other ancillary women to emphasise the shared legacy of silence, pain, and perseverance transmitted between generations. However, tragedy strikes the family again through a devastating act of terrorism, forcing Aru to confront some of her life's most challenging moments. *Shadow Play* is a masterful meditation on kinship, marriage, ambition and the evolving dynamics of urban India. Filled with a memorable cast of characters, it also tells the story of Kasturi, who seeks understanding and peace after enduring extreme cruelty and heartbreak; Kalyani, who atones for the wrongs society inflicts its women through an act of generosity in her death; and Gracy, Tressa and Ramu, a family shattered by a senseless act of violence. The novel's non-linear narrative and introspective tone highlight the interiority of women's lives, illustrating the convergence of personal and political history in the formation of feminine consciousness. Through Aru's subtle yet relentless introspection, Deshpande creates a contemplative environment for examining the complexities of identity, love, duty, and psychological

resilience, rendering *Shadow Play* an essential feminist work that enriches the discussion on the emotional framework of Indian women.

### *Ships That Pass: Marital Disillusionment and the Mystery of the Female Psyche*

Shashi Deshpande's novel, *Ships That Pass*, published in 2012, discusses the psychic disturbance of a married woman caused due to the infidelity of her husband. Shashi Deshpande is a virtuoso in exploring the great mystery of the human psyche. *Ships That Pass* is a suspense thriller which revolves around a marriage where a couple hides itself in silence. Usha KR rightly opines, "Shashi Deshpande uses the tool kit of the crime novel to take us into literary heartland-the complexity, the impossibility even, of human communication."

The novel opens with the protagonist, Radhika, announcing her choice of what she wants to pursue following graduation. She simply wants to get married; no more education, no legislation, no post-graduation. She is not in love with anyone; rather, she prefers an arranged marriage. Her elder brother, who is also her good friend, advises her to give her choice a second thought. She will, he believes, reverse her choice just at the last minute. Radhika assures him that she has decided to marry and has no idea of changing her mind in the eleventh hour. Her family finds her a groom named Ghanashyam. She gets a call from her brother-in-law Shaan, at this moment. She should come right now, he advises her, as her sister Tara is sick. She goes straight to her sister's house. There, she finds Tara not just sick but also sad. She learns that Shaan is involved in an extramarital affair with his neighbour Rohini. She also runs into an affair with Ram Mohan, a widower doctor who is senior to her by seventeen years. Tara dies under unknown circumstances. Shaan is taken into custody for murder. In these challenging circumstances, Ram Mohan and Radhika come close. Radhika marries Ram Mohan and calls off her involvement with Ghanashyam. Though not a murder mystery, the narrative presents the suspicious death of Tara very discreetly. Not knowing if Tara was slain or whether she committed suicide, Deshpande keeps her readers in suspense till the end of the novel. Towards the end, Shashi Deshpande depicts the different aspects of the allusion to women's psyche. The characters are suppressed by their thought process rather than by society. *Ships That Pass* is the mystery of the human mind in the context of a modern isolated society.

### *Strangers to Ourselves: Love, Trauma, and the Quest for Feminine Wholeness*

Shashi Deshpande's *Strangers to Ourselves* (2022) presents an intricate exploration of the divided feminine psyche through the character of Aparna, a successful oncologist grappling with solitude, emotional alienation, and the lasting effects of a chaotic parental background. The novel examines themes of marriage, sexuality, and love.

Deshpande thoroughly investigates the effects of childhood trauma. Aparna is traumatised by her parents, Gavi and Sulu's failed marriage; after all, she viewed them as the perfect happily-ever-after couple. Once her parents ended their relationship, they no longer even wished to be a part of each other's lives, not even on the fringes. Aparna is captivated by the magic of Hari's music and, within a short time, becomes very close to him. Despite being immersed in her love for Shree Hari, she trembles at the thought of getting married to him and having to succumb to the gender roles expected of her. The novel also depicts Aparna's actual and profound bond with Jyothi, her cancer patient. Aparna's relationship with Jyothi, a terminally ill patient, reinforces the novel's feminist themes by illustrating how solidarity and empathy can heal those who have been hurt by tragedy and the contemporary world. *Strangers to Ourselves* is not merely a narrative of love ambivalence; it is a profound exploration of how women reconcile their internal landscapes—frequently strange and often muted—while progressively seeking emotional integrity and existential completeness. Aparna helps Jyothi in finding a translation project into English of a mystery novella penned in Marathi from among her father's collection of journals. This opportunity gives a new meaning to Jyothi, and she envisions her presence even after her death. Deshpande highlights the strife that hardworking artists from a middle-class, humble background face in Mumbai through the characters of Hari and Gavi, Aparna's father and an illustrious theatre artist.

The novel thoroughly explores the concepts of female subjectivity, emotional repression, and the fear of conforming to prescribed gender norms, all of which are key themes in feminist psychoanalysis. Deshpande's narrative, characterised by lyrical restraint, aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical feminism, particularly the idea that women must move beyond being "the other" to discover their true selves.

## **Conclusion**

Deshpande's novels depict women and feminine consciousness, offering insights into the depths and various shades of conflicts faced by her protagonists within the socio-cultural context of contemporary India. Shashi Deshpande uses this perspective to show how challenging life can be for women. She allows her female characters to feel the confusing and unsettling silence



within them, recognise their true selves, and prepare to face what lies ahead while trying to understand their existence. They gradually become aware of their power and identity within the private spaces of home, family, and memory. Her stories authentically portray women's realities, focusing on the harsh truths they confront. The psychological themes of silence, memory, guilt, trauma, and desire in her work reveal influences of psychoanalysis and existential feminism. Her critique of social systems aligns with liberal feminist thought.

Deshpande illustrates how different generations live and shares stories filled with emotion to challenge the opposites of tradition and modernity, responsibility and desire, obedience and rebellion. The peak of her literary vision lies in recognising subjectivity, where women not only respond to patriarchal limits but gradually regain voice, value, and importance in their lives. Ultimately, Deshpande's fiction reclaims the inner world of women as a valid and powerful space for feminist dialogue, offering a distinctly Indian yet globally relevant exploration of the feminine ego. What emerges from her stories is not a fixed way to achieve freedom but a complex process of introspection, resistance, and personal transformation.

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## Interweaving Aesthetics and Activism: Portrayal of Artistic Sensibility and Social Reform in Arundhati Roy's Fiction

**SHABNAM SHARIF**

Research Scholar  
Department of English  
B.R.A. Bihar University, Muzaffarpur

**DR. MD ABULLAIS**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
D.C. College, Hajupur, Vaishali, Bihar

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### Abstract

Indian English Literature (IEL) has had a major impact on the development of society. It has shaped civilizations, changed political systems and exposed injustice. It gives us a detailed preview of human experiences, allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotion. Indian writers in English were deeply influenced by the political, social and ideological ferment. The rise of Indian English fiction represents the cultural perspectives of people. Arundhati Roy, the developing spokesperson of the anti-globalization movement has been a great critic of the many social and political issues that are constantly loitering around our nation Indian. As a novelist she deals with social problems to bring in rapid social awareness. Roy's literary works deal with inequality, economic fairness, acceptance of cultural diversity and participatory democracy. She has also written a collection of essays in which she has presented both political and social issues and raised her voice on many of the controversial political issues to bring revolution. Through her artistic portrayal she becomes the voice of the marginalized in her fictions and non-fictions. "A novel is such a powerful thing because it comes to a radical understanding, only by seeing how these [issues] are folded into each other and connected to our lives" (Roy). Roy's writing isn't a reporter of human conditions; instead, it is a form of activism where she challenges the partiality with human and environment.

**Key Words:** political system, spokesperson, awareness, revolution, challenges, partiality, activism.

## Introduction

The present research paper, “Interweaving Aesthetics and Activism: Portrayal of Artistic Sensibility and Social Reform in Arundhati Roy’s Fiction,” attempts to find out Roy's activist interventions and creative writing through which she takes up the responsibility of social transformation of the oppressed including women and nature in contemporary India. Suzanne Arundhati Roy (born on 24 November 1961) is an Indian English writer and activist who focuses on issues related to human rights and environmental causes. Arundhati Roy is best known for her debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), the book is semi-autobiographical and a major part captures her childhood experiences in Ayemenem. The publication of *The God of Small Things* catapulted Roy to international fame. Roy’s fictions are political fable and challenge unjust power. She won the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997 for her debut novel. She has written not just to sell her product but speaks out for her beliefs and stand up for them even when extremely unpopular. India is a country made up of people from different cultural backgrounds and religious people who practices understanding and ways of life. Arundhati Roy's works examine how India's minorities become victims of marginalization and exclusion from the larger political and social structure because the contentious politics in India exacerbate minority problems. Roy also believes that women's rights need to be championed more in the developing world. Roy's works and statements show that she believes women are undervalued, exploited and mistreated— broadly speaking in the developing world and countries such as India.

Roy’s artistic sense is distinguished by its lyrical prose, intricate narratives, and powerful social commentary. Her prose is commemorated for its poetic density and evocative illustration, extorting sensory experiences. English with regional idioms and neologisms defines the linguistic diversity of India.

## Artistic Sensibility and social commentary in *The God of Small Things*

Roy uses a variety of English in *The God of Small Things*. She is successful in communicating to the world the culture she represents, creates a new space for Indian literature and culture within the arts, even as it courted controversy and divided critical opinion. Her narrative here is non-linear storytelling and bildungsroman technique. This novel is written with full of literary devices like; defamiliarization, repetition of words and phrases, synecdoche, pun, rhythm, alliteration, similes, metaphors etc. “The yellow church swelled like a throat with the sound of sad singing” (Roy, 4).

She transforms a prosaic scene into an instinctual by frequent use of metaphors and similes to convey complex ideas and emotions. Her poetic prose with redolent metaphors provides detailed description of Indian landscapes and cultures. The beginning of the novel explains the charm and brutality of Kerala amalgamating magic realism with social realism. The novel begins:

May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red

bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. (Roy, 1)

She created new words, phrases, intonation and connotations, new collocation to express various ideas and emotions in this novel like: “dustgreen”, “moss green” (Roy, 1), “child-sized”, “funerals-a funeral junkie”, “hymnbook-holding” (Roy, 3), “Furrywhirring”, “Sariflapping”, ““Whatisit” (Roy, 4), “re-Returned”, “tea-colored”, “wetgreen”, “greenmossing”, (Roy, 6), “crushed-strawberry-pink T-shirt”, “swampy arms”(Roy, 7), “ration-buyers”, “omeletteer” (Roy, 9), “Touchables” (Roy, 42), “Thimble-drinker”, “Coffin-cartwheeler”(Roy, 83).

“Viable – dia-able age” (Roy, 2), this hyphenated phrase juxtaposes life and mortality, emphasizing the fragility of existence. The use of repetition in Roy’s novel is significant, it adds both emphasis and rhythm to its prose, “Estha’s sandwiches, that Estha ate” (Roy, 2), “My dearest Papa, I am well and happy in the service of Our Lady...My dearest Papa, Today Koh-i-noor vomited after lunch...My dearest Papa, Convent food does not seem to suit Koh-i-noor...” (Roy, 16). Fiction writing undoubtedly gives her chance to establish a new form of writing technique through which she portrays mourning of the victims of our society. “The quality of Ms. Roy’s narration is so extraordinary...at once so morally strenuous and so imaginatively supple... that the readers remain enthralled all the way, through to its agonizing finish” (Truax). Roy considers fiction writing “Azadi” (Roy, 7). Her statement truly justifies her novels. Her writing isn’t only for art’s sake instead art for life’s sake. She writes:

A novel gives a writer the freedom to be as complicated as she wants – to move through words, languages, and time, through societies, communities, and politics. A novel can be endlessly complicated, layered, but that is not the same as being loose, baggy or random. A novel to me, is freedom with responsibility. Real, unfettered azadi – Freedom. (Roy, 7).

The God of Small Things is non-linear, moving back and forth between 1969-1993, concentrated around the childhood experiences of fraternal twins Rahel and Estha, and tragic love affair between Ammu - the twins’ mother - and Velutha - an untouchable ‘Paravan man’. Relationship of Ammu and Velutha defies the rigid social hierarchies and caste norms leading to devastating consequences and examines the life in the post- colonial India. The novel counterparts with *Untouchables* by Mulk Raj Anand and reminisces the words of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar written in *The Annihilation of Caste*. Velutha represents the economical, social, and political marginalization in post in post-independence India. “Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched” (Roy, 45).

Velutha portrays love, loss, casteism, oppression of the marginalized and deprived in post-colonial Indian society. The females of the novel Ammu, her mom, Baby Kochamma and the twins suffer in the overwhelming androcentric culture. Her female characters furnish miscellaneous double marginalization- 1<sup>st</sup> on the basis of family structure and 2<sup>nd</sup> on the basis of societal norms. As a female, Ammu is oppressed by her father, treated badly by her

husband and embarrassed and sidelined by the police and casted aside by her brother. “Through the character of Ammu, Arundhati Roy lashes out at the hypocritical moral code of society, which makes a great difference between men and women even to her death bed” (Goswami).

### **Artistic Sensibility and social commentary in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness***

In 2017, twenty years after her first novel’s publication, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, her second, most-awaited novel was published. Once again this novel characterizes agitated personas of the modern contemporary India. After her first novel, in the past two decades Roy was dedicated to political essays and activism. Her political philosophy, non-linear narrative, metaphors, wordplay, vivid imagery, sensory and poetic description, dark humor and irony, realism, magic realism etc. give privilege to produce bleak realities of contemporary India without becoming sententious. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy integrates Urdu, Hindi, and regional dialects into English prose which presents Indian’s multicultural identity. In a lecture she describes the novel as “A novel written in English but imagined in several languages” (Roy).

Throughout the novel Roy uses the words like ‘Hijra’, ‘khawabgah’, ‘Majnu’, ‘Khuda’, ‘Masjid’, ‘Dargah’, ‘Jannat’, ‘Duniya’ etc. This hybridity challenges the hegemony of English language and positioning English as a vessel for India’s pluralism. Her narrative style sets deep thematic and emotions impact. Opening of the novel is situated in a Delhi graveyard signaling Roy’s spontaneous magical – realist imagery, lyrical yet ironic.

She lived in graveyard like a tree. At down she saw the crowns off and welcomed the bats home. At dusk she did the opposite. Between shifts she conferred with the ghosts of vultures that loomed in her high branches... (Roy, 9)

Roy’s activism flows into every aspect of the novel. It is a political fable: It chronicles and critiques contemporary India through personal histories of marginalized individuals. The relationship between Tilo and Musa approximates Ammu and Velutha romance from the author’s first novel. “The novelist is not oblivious to the fact of various relationships which fade because of the political instability. Government policies seem to favor the elite masses and show disregard to the common masses. People in power most often get shielded at the cost of the blooded murder of innocent merely because of the fault of a handful of people or their faith.” (Mishra). Anjum, Tilo, Musa, Saddam, the slum children and others depict governments hypocrisy, land reform in Kashmir, operation Green Hunt, communal riots, caste violence, gender discrimination and other political and social horrors. The depiction of Kashmir, scenes of Hindu-Muslim riots, plights of hijra and a Dalit painter lay bare the endless cycle of violence and propaganda. An analysis notes Roy “builds on actual history and news headlines” (N. Roy) to ground her fiction in reality.

Anjum, a transgender woman faces mockery from others as a “clown without a circus, queen without a palace” (Roy, 9). Anjum’s identity excluded her from traditional norms and customs of the society, emphasizing her marginalized position. Anjum’s mother’s desire for a baby boy reveals gender discrimination in a male dominated society. Romance between Musa and Tilo disturbed by Musa’s urge for Kashmir’s freedom. The concept of Kashmir’s freedom reveals the conspiracies which make the valley a hot bed of politics.

## **Conclusion**

She draws attention through her fertile commentary on current society, their practices and ideologies. Roy believes that there is an intricate, rigor and responsibility that art, that writing itself, imposes on a writer. Almost all her literary works depict her concern for the social and cultural transformation of the downtrodden. The beauty of her novel lies in the use of Indian English and the varieties of techniques she uses. She uses that English, which is a distorted one from the standard conventional use of words and sentences from regional languages in India apart from the use of subjectless sentences, faulty spellings, capital letters, use of italics, single word sentences, change of parts of speech, clustering of adjectives, nouns and deviation from normal word order etc. That English is a kind of ‘Manglish’ (Malayalam-English) and ‘Hinglish’ (Hindi-English) as far as the Indians are concerned, but for the international readers she had the Oxford and Cambridge versions too.

She genuinely explores issues around gender inequality, militarism and prejudices in modern India. It reflects the fragmentation of the world around us. In both novels, Arundhati Roy’s artistic creativity is in full force. Roy presents the case of the subaltern class who have no access to power and their voices have never been heard in the political and social arena. Her writings show how the elite and patriarchs have been affecting minorities, Dalits, transgender and those who have no access to power. She innovates with forms and genre, uses a rich tapestry of language, and crafts unforgettable characters – all in service of a novel that is an emotionally powerful as it is politically charged.

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## Creating Cultural Awareness at Tertiary Level through Skit Based Activity: A Teacher Experience

**Dr. G. Kalpana Devi**

Assistant Professor of English  
RVR & JC College of Engineering (A)  
Chowdavaram, Guntur, A.P.

**Dr. V.V. Subba Rao**

Professor & HoD of BS&H  
Chalapathi Institute of Technology (A)  
Mothadaka, Gunter, A.P.

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**Abstract:** Engineers play a pivotal role in addressing societal challenges through innovation and sustainable solutions. In today's globalized world, engineers are expected to possess not only technical expertise but also strong interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills. As workplaces become increasingly diverse, the ability to navigate cultural differences is essential for effective collaboration and problem-solving. Initiating cultural awareness programs in the engineering classroom, particularly within English language instruction, can equip students with the necessary skills to work in international teams. This article explores how skit-based team activity in the English classroom can enhance students' understanding of diverse cultures while fostering teamwork, creativity and language skills. The results revealed that integrating cultural awareness into English Language Teaching Pedagogy promotes communication skills and soft skills necessary for navigating a multicultural working environment. However, challenges such as time constraints, communication barriers and resistance to change attitude among learners could be addressed by a teacher with effective planning, clear instructions, monitoring, mentoring and providing enough time at each level.

**Keywords:** Cultural Awareness, Skit-Based Activities, English Language Teaching, Collaborative Learning, Cross-Cultural Communication.

## Introduction

Engineering is a global profession, with projects and collaborations that span countries, cultures and continents. A strong understanding of different cultures prepares students to engage with international colleagues, clients and stake holders. In the interconnected world of modern engineering, being culturally competent and inclusive is vital for successful global collaboration which helps engineers make more equitable decisions, considering the needs of all members of society. It also develops a greater sense of social responsibility, which is vital to address unconscious bias that may affect their decision-making or interactions with others. Introducing diversity and inclusion concepts can raise awareness about different cultures helping students to ensure fair treatment and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity or background.

In the context of a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world, engineers must navigate fast-changing environments, requiring not just technical knowledge but also the ability to communicate across cultures. A well-rounded engineering student needs a combination of technical expertise, soft skills and a global perspective. Together, these qualities ensure that engineering students are prepared not only to succeed in their careers but to contribute positively to society and the global community.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, cultural awareness is no longer just a valuable asset but a necessity. In an educational context, developing cultural awareness involves understanding and appreciating cultural differences, which fosters tolerance, empathy and effective cross-cultural communication. The English classroom, as a space for language learning and personal development, presents an ideal environment for promoting cultural awareness through creative and participatory methods. One such method is the skit-based team activity, which combines the benefits of collaborative learning, creativity and cultural exploration. Skits offer a dynamic way to immerse students in various cultural scenarios, helping them to engage with new perspectives, language nuances and cultural norms while honing their Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing skills.

Previous research on incorporating cultural awareness through activity-based learning in the English classroom has shown significant positive results, particularly in enhancing students' global competencies, communication skills and cross-cultural understanding. Several studies highlight the effectiveness of interactive activities, role plays, case studies and collaborative

projects to engage students in learning about different cultures while simultaneously improving their language proficiency. For instance, research by Carter and Nunan (2001) found that when English language learners were exposed to cultural content through task-based activities, they developed a deeper understanding of intercultural dynamics which facilitated better communication in diverse settings. Activities such as Group Discussions on global issues, debates, and cultural exchange projects allow students to engage with real-world cultural perspectives, fostering empathy and adaptability. In the engineering context, studies like Kern & Searle (2017) demonstrate that incorporating culture-focused tasks in English classrooms helps future engineers develop the soft skills necessary for working in multi-cultural teams. For example, simulations of international project collaborations, where students must work together on solutions while considering cultural nuances, have been shown to improve teamwork and problem-solving abilities.

This qualitative research attempts to share an experience of a teacher implementing skit-based activity entitled “Rhythms of India” in a classroom. Skit-based a form of role-playing where students enact short scenes or dramatic dialogues. These scenes could be constructed around cultural themes such as traditional festivals, social customs or historical events and could be performed in front of the class. These activities in the English classroom encouraged active participation, creativity and effective communication. They enhanced language fluency, promoted teamwork and provide a fun, engaging way to practice vocabulary and cultural expressions. These activities also built confidence level of the students and helped them understand real-life contexts, improving both language skills and interpersonal dynamics.

**The detailed activity has been given below for further reference:**

**Title:** Rhythms of India (Creating Cultural Awareness through Skit-Based Activity)

**Class:** Undergraduate Engineering Students

**Class Size:** 70

Activity duration: 180 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

- Multimedia facility (Projector, Mic, Speakers)
- Power Point Presentations
- Costumes for skit performance (if available)
- Timer

## Pre- Activity

Class Discussion (10 minutes):

- Introduced the importance of cultural awareness in today's globalized world especially in the context of engineering and teamwork.
- Explained how understanding the culture of different regions could enhance communication, creativity and collaboration, especially in global teams and how cultural factors such as language, food, festivals, geography and famous places shape communication and social interaction.

Guidelines (10 minutes):

- Divided the class into 7 teams and each team consists of 10 members, as the class strength is 70.
- Assigned each team one state of India.  
(Suggested states are Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, etc.)
- Asked the students to do research on the assigned state based on specific cultural aspects as follows:
  - Language(s): Key languages spoken and important phrases (e.g., greetings).
  - Food: Traditional dishes, eating habits and famous regional specialties.
  - Culture: Social norms, traditions, daily life.
  - Festivals: Major cultural and religious festivals (e.g., Diwali, Onam, Baisakhi).
  - Geographical Indicators: Key geographical features (rivers, mountains, significant natural landmarks).
  - Famous Places: Historical sites, monuments, popular tourist destinations.
  - Famous People: Notable figures from the state in politics, arts, sports or history.
  - Dance Forms: Traditional dance forms, folk dances.
  - Other Aspects: Art, clothing, customs, festivals, music.

Sample Team Presentation includes the following:

Team 1 - Kerala

Culture: Kathakali dance, Ayurvedic practices

Language: Malayalam

Food: Sadya (traditional feast), appam, fish curry

Famous Places: Backwaters, Munnar, Alappuzha

Traditions and Festivals: Onam, Theyyam

Team 2 - Punjab

Culture: Bhangra, Gidra, folk music

Language: Punjabi

Food: Butter chicken, sarson da saag with makki di roti, lassi

Famous Places: Golden Temple, Amritsar

Traditions and Festivals: Lohri, Baisakhi, Gurpurabs

#### Instructions:

- Asked the teams to prepare a skit that portrays key aspects of the assigned state (e.g., a scenario where people from different cultures interact or a traditional family gathering or dance forms).
- Along with the skit, each team must prepare a Power Point presentation summarizing the cultural aspects of the state they have researched. Each slide should be simple and visually engaging.
- Instructed them to use costumes (if available) to bring the cultural context to life.
- Everyone should participate in the skit and present a portion of the Power Point.
- Should include at least one language-related interaction in the skit (e.g., using a local greeting or phrase in the regional language).

#### Research and Planning (35 minutes):

- Asked the students work in their teams to collect information and plan for their skit and Power Point.
- Encouraged them to divide the workload. For example: assign one member to research language, another for food, another for geography etc., to ensure all cultural aspects are covered.
- Provided teams with extra hours to rehearse their skit and finalize the PowerPoint slides.

#### Teacher's Role:

- Monitoring team progress and assisting with any questions or challenges.
- Provided guidance on cultural accuracy and ensure that students are using appropriate resources for research.

*During Activity: (Skit Presentations, Reflections and Feedback 180 minutes)*

- Skit Performances and Team Presentations:
  - Each team took 15-20-minutes for their presentation.
  - After each performance, students are allowed to share their feedback.
  - Suggested them to provide constructive feedback to each team on their skit's cultural accuracy, creativity and teamwork.
  - Teacher's feedback to each other and discuss the strengths and areas for improvement.

#### **Assessment:**

Assessment took place based on the major factors like presentation skills (clarity and engagement level of the Power Point and skit presentation), cultural accuracy (accurately and creatively the cultural aspects of the state are portrayed in the skit), teamwork and collaboration (how effectively the students work together during the research and preparation phase), and Reflections (participation in the reflection and feedback session).

#### **Post- Activity:**

- As an extension activity, asked the students to write a 2-page report on the cultural aspects of the state they researched, expanding on what they presented in the skit using the below prompt questions:
  - What did you learn about the culture of the state you researched or the states your peers presented?
  - How did the skit help you understand cultural differences and communication styles?
  - How can this cultural knowledge help you in your future career as an engineer, especially when working in global teams or with clients from different regions?
- Encourage students to share personal insights or experiences related to the activity.

**Teacher's reflections:** While skit-based activities offer numerous benefits, there are potential challenges in implementing them effectively. Some of the common challenges include:

- **Time Constraints:** Preparing skits could be time-consuming. To mitigate this problem, a teacher took additional hours for research, discussion and rehearsal and assigning portions of the activity as homework.
- **Language Barriers:** Some students struggled with language proficiency, which could affect their performance. To address this, a teacher provided additional language support such as vocabulary and sentence structures related to the cultural theme to help students feel more confident in their roles.
- **Unwilling to participate:** To address this problem, a teacher provided additional attention towards the students who were less motivated. Continuous mentoring and special attention from the peers and teacher helped to participate well.

**Students' feedback in brief:** Students felt more energetic while performances. They told that they not only enhance their presentation and language skills but also develop a deeper appreciation for the richness of global cultures, team work, collaboration. Overall, it was an experiential and enjoyable learning.

**Future Scope:** In this paper researcher attempts within Indian context for this study to create cultural awareness among students. It is not limited to India alone. There is a scope for improvement by introducing different countries in a global range that provides a wider range of experience to the learners.

## Conclusion

In today's interconnected world, the importance of cultural awareness cannot be overstated, especially for engineering students who are preparing to work in diverse global teams. While engineering education often focuses on technical knowledge, it is equally important for students to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and cultural sensitivity. By combining research, collaboration, creativity, and skit and presentation performance helped students develop the communication, teamwork, and empathy needed to succeed in a globalized professional world. With proper guidance and support, these activities could enrich students' educational experiences, preparing them for the cultural complexities they will face in their professional careers. Ultimately, fostering cultural awareness through engaging experiences like skit-based activities could help shape well-rounded, globally-conscious engineers who are ready to tackle the challenges of an interconnected world.

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## A Review of the Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS)

**Mithilaj JS**

Research Scholar  
Department of Linguistics  
University of Kerala  
[mithilaj@keralauniversity.ac.in](mailto:mithilaj@keralauniversity.ac.in)

**Dr. S.A. Shanavas**

Professor (Rtd.)  
Department of Linguistics  
University of Kerala, Trivandrum

**Dr.D.Muhammad Noorul Mubarak**

Associate Professor  
Department of Computer Science  
University of Kerala, Trivandrum

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### *Abstract*

*The Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS) is a systematically designed and validated multimodal database for English language. It is focused to aid research in emotion recognition, neuroscience, psychology, affective computing and more. This includes 7,000 recordings from 24 professional actors, contains broad variety of emotional expressions captured through both speech and song modalities in audio-visual formats. This paper provides a detailed review of RAVDESS, discussing its design and development, unique features, validation, significance of its multimodal nature in research and highlighting its contributions to advancing emotion research. This paper analyses comparisons with other emotional databases to highlight RAVDESS advantages. The paper also explores its various applications in clinical research and machine learning. Finally, the review underscores potential future directions for enhancing RAVDESS, including expanding its cultural diversity and integrating advanced emotion detection algorithms.*

### **Introduction**

The study of emotion forms the foundation of both psychological and neuroscientific research, with important applications in fields such as human-computer interaction, artificial intelligence, and therapeutic practices. Emotions play a crucial role in shaping decision-making, behavior, and social communication, making the accurate detection and interpretation of emotional states

vital across disciplines. Rather than being hardwired, emotions are now understood to be dynamically constructed by the brain through real-time predictive processes and interoceptive cues [1]. To advance this area of research, there is a growing need for rich, authentic datasets that reflect the complexity of emotional expressions in real-world scenarios. Multimodal corpora—combining elements like speech, gesture, and text—are particularly valuable for developing AI systems capable of human-like interaction [2].

In response to this need, the Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS) was created as a comprehensive multimodal resource that offers naturalistic representations of emotion. Unlike conventional datasets, RAVDESS uniquely incorporates both spoken and sung expressions, acknowledging the expressive power of vocal modulation and melody in emotional communication. This review seeks to offer an in-depth analysis of the RAVDESS dataset, highlighting its design, key features, practical uses, and potential future contributions to emotion research.

## **Importance of Multimodal Communication in Emotion Research**

The human experience of emotion is inherently multimodal, involving a dynamic interplay between verbal and non-verbal signals. Elements such as facial expressions, vocal tone, and body language work together to shape how emotions are perceived and interpreted. However, traditional approaches to emotion research have often relied on unimodal stimuli—such as static facial images or isolated voice recordings—which fail to capture the fluid and integrated nature of emotional expression.

The Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS) overcomes this limitation by providing a **multimodal dataset** that includes synchronized audio and video recordings of emotional performances. This approach offers several important advantages:

### **1. Ecological Validity**

In everyday communication, emotions are rarely conveyed through a single channel. For instance, a smile is typically accompanied by a warm, gentle tone, while anger may manifest through both a sharp voice and intense facial expressions. RAVDESS's multimodal structure enhances the ecological validity of emotional stimuli, offering a more realistic representation of how emotions are naturally expressed and experienced in real-life interactions.

### **2. Multisensory Integration**

Empirical research has demonstrated that the brain processes emotional cues from multiple sensory inputs in a coordinated manner. The congruence between facial movements and vocal tone, for example, can strengthen emotional recognition, while incongruity may cause confusion or misjudgment. By including both audio and visual modalities, RAVDESS enables researchers to explore the neural and cognitive mechanisms underlying multisensory integration in emotional perception.

### **3. Broad Applicability**

Thanks to its comprehensive design, RAVDESS is applicable across a wide spectrum of disciplines. It supports studies ranging from the neuroscience of emotional processing to the development of sophisticated emotion recognition systems for human-computer interaction. This versatility is one of the dataset's most valuable attributes, positioning it as a key resource for advancing multimodal emotion research in both scientific and applied domains.

## **Development of the Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS)**

The development of the Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS) involved a systematic and thoughtful approach to ensure its value and reliability as a resource for emotion research. Key considerations included the careful selection of actors, the design of emotional stimuli, and a rigorous validation process.

### **Actors and Stimuli Design**

RAVDESS features performances by **24 professional actors**—equally split by gender (12 male and 12 female)—all of whom speak with a neutral **North American English accent**. The selection prioritized individuals with strong acting skills to ensure the consistent and expressive portrayal of emotions across modalities.

The dataset comprises **7,356 high-quality audio-visual recordings**, categorized into two primary types of stimuli:

- **Speech Stimuli:** Lexically matched sentences spoken in English, each performed to express one of **eight distinct emotions**: *neutral, calm, happy, sad, angry, fearful, surprised, and disgusted*.
- **Song Stimuli:** Musical phrases sung to represent **six emotions**: *neutral, calm, happy, sad, angry, and fearful*.

Each emotional expression is presented at **two intensity levels**—*normal* and *strong*—allowing researchers to investigate how variations in emotional intensity influence recognition accuracy and perception.

The inclusion of both speech and song reflects an understanding of the unique role of melodic expression in emotional communication. Song often evokes stronger and more nuanced emotional responses, making it a valuable complement to speech in studying affective processing.

To ensure emotional authenticity, all expressions in RAVDESS were induced rather than spontaneous. The actors employed established acting techniques, such as method acting and emotional memory recall, to convincingly portray each emotional state [3].

### **Emotional Stimulation and Intensity**

The emotional categories used in RAVDESS were grounded in Ekman's theory of basic emotions, which posits that certain emotional expressions—such as happiness, anger, sadness,

and fear—are universally recognized across cultures. Each selected emotion is presented at two intensity levels—*normal* and *strong*—enabling researchers to explore how emotional intensity influences perception and recognition. This is particularly significant in fields like clinical psychology, where the strength of an emotional response can offer critical insight into a person’s emotional well-being or mental health condition.

### Validation Process

To ensure the accuracy, consistency, and authenticity of the emotional expressions in RAVDESS, a rigorous validation process was undertaken. A total of 247 participants were involved in assessing each stimulus based on three criteria: emotional accuracy, intensity, and genuineness. These evaluations were collected using a standardized rating scale, and the feedback was employed to refine the dataset, ensuring that the expressions were clearly conveyed and uniformly interpreted across all recordings.

Furthermore, a subset of participants participated in a test-retest reliability assessment, which measured the consistency of emotional recognition over time. This step was essential to confirm that the stimuli elicited stable and reproducible interpretations across different observers. Such validation procedures reinforce RAVDESS's credibility and robustness as a tool for emotional research.

### Comparison with Other Emotional Databases

To evaluate the performance and unique contributions of RAVDESS, it is essential to compare it with other widely used emotional databases such as **GEMEP**, **CREMA-D**, **MSP-IMPROV**, and **eNTERFACE'05**.

- **GEMEP (Geneva Multimodal Emotion Portrayals)** is a multimodal dataset featuring French-speaking actors. While it shares RAVDESS's multimodal design, its focus on the French language limits its suitability for English-language research. Additionally, although GEMEP includes a broader emotional range, it lacks standardized intensity levels, reducing its consistency for intensity-based analysis.
- **CREMA-D (Crowd-sourced Emotional Multimodal Actors Dataset)** is an English-language dataset that, like RAVDESS, combines audio and visual modalities. However, its reliance on crowd-sourced ratings introduces variability in emotional labeling. In contrast, RAVDESS employs a more controlled and rigorously validated participant group, ensuring greater consistency and reliability.
- **MSP-IMPROV** offers both scripted and natural emotional interactions in a multimodal format. While it provides valuable insights into everyday emotional communication, it does not include **musical stimuli**, a distinctive feature of RAVDESS. This makes RAVDESS particularly suited for research on **musical emotion recognition**.
- **eNTERFACE'05** contains audiovisual recordings of actors portraying six basic emotions. However, its smaller size, limited emotional diversity, and lack of a formal validation process reduce its applicability compared to RAVDESS. The thorough

validation and inclusion of song in RAVDESS enhance its robustness as a comprehensive resource for emotion research.

## Applications of RAVDESS

One of the most significant strengths of RAVDESS lies in its wide applicability across various research domains. Its multimodal and emotionally diverse dataset makes it a valuable tool in fields such as **neuroscience**, **psychology**, **clinical research**, and **affective computing**.

### Neuroscience and Psychology

In neuroscience, RAVDESS can be used to study the neural correlates of emotional processing by examining how the brain responds to emotional stimuli across visual and auditory modalities. Its design supports investigations into how regions such as the **amygdala**, **prefrontal cortex**, and **superior temporal sulcus** respond to different emotional cues. For instance, **fMRI** studies can utilize RAVDESS stimuli to map brain activation patterns associated with specific emotions.

In psychology, RAVDESS serves as a powerful tool for examining **emotion recognition** and **empathy**. Behavioral studies can use RAVDESS to assess how individuals perceive and respond to emotional expressions, contributing to research on **emotional intelligence** and social cognition. Its controlled and validated emotional recordings help researchers explore subtle emotional cues and their interpretations across populations.

### Clinical Research

RAVDESS also holds strong potential in clinical research, especially in the study of **mood disorders**, **autism spectrum disorders (ASD)**, and **social anxiety**. The inclusion of a song corpus makes it particularly suitable for **music therapy** research. Researchers can explore how patients with conditions like depression respond to emotional stimuli in both speech and song, and measure changes in perception following interventions such as **cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** or medication.

For example, individuals with depression might exhibit different neural or behavioral responses to happy or sad expressions when compared to healthy controls. RAVDESS enables such comparative studies, offering insights into the emotional processing deficits linked to various disorders. Furthermore, the database can support the development and assessment of **intervention programs** aimed at enhancing **emotional recognition** and **social communication** skills.

### Affective Computing and Machine Learning

RAVDESS plays a crucial role in the field of **affective computing**, where the goal is to create systems that can detect, interpret, and respond to human emotions. Its large, balanced dataset is ideal for training **machine learning models** in tasks such as facial emotion recognition and vocal tone analysis.

Researchers can develop algorithms capable of classifying emotions from speech, facial expressions, or combined audiovisual inputs. These models have applications in **virtual**

**assistants, social robots, interactive games, and therapeutic technologies.** The inclusion of musical expressions makes RAVDESS especially valuable for exploring **creative, non-verbal emotional communication**, a domain that remains challenging for artificial systems to decode.

In **natural language processing (NLP)**, RAVDESS can enhance the emotional awareness of conversational agents. By training models to detect the emotional tone in spoken dialogue, developers can build AI systems that adapt their responses based on user sentiment, leading to more **empathetic and engaging interactions**.

## **In-Depth Analysis of Emotional Expression and Perception**

### **Speech Modality**

The speech modality in RAVDESS provides lexically matched statements expressed with a wide range of emotions. This design allows researchers to isolate emotional prosody (tone, pitch, intonation) from semantic content, making it ideal for studying how voice parameters convey emotion.

Key research applications include:

- Analyzing vocal cues such as pitch, tempo, and loudness to distinguish between emotions (e.g., anger vs. fear).
- Investigating how listeners interpret prosodic features in emotional speech.
- Exploring the neural and cognitive mechanisms involved in emotional processing of spoken language.

The database's controlled and validated speech samples enable precise and replicable analysis, making it a valuable tool in both behavioral and neuroimaging studies.

### **Song Modality**

The song modality in RAVDESS offers a rare and important resource for exploring the emotional power of music, an area often underrepresented in emotion research. Music, unlike speech, evokes deep emotional responses through melody, harmony, and rhythm, interacting with vocal tone to shape emotional interpretation.

Research opportunities include:

- Studying the emotional impact of music in music therapy and mood regulation.
- Investigating how melodic structure and vocal performance convey emotion beyond verbal content.
- Exploring the role of music in social bonding and emotional communication.

## **Result Analysis**

### **Validity Task**

To assess the accuracy of emotion identification in speech and song across modalities (audio-video, video-only, audio-only) and intensities (normal, strong). Key findings include:

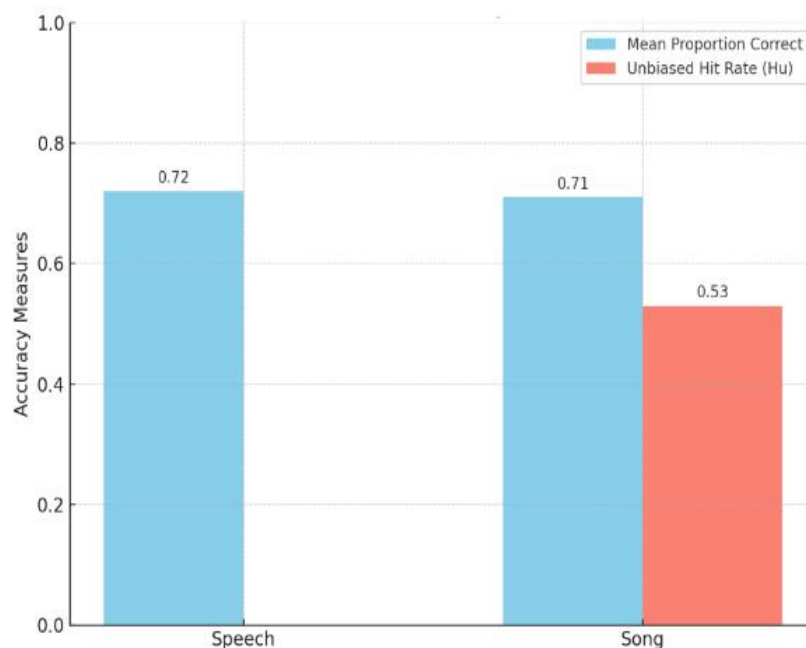
### Accuracy Measures:

Speech:

Mean proportion correct = 0.72

Song:

Mean proportion correct=0.71; Unbiased hit rate (Hu)=0.53 (moderate).



*Figure 1: Emotional Identification accuracy in speech and song*

The accuracy measures reveal that emotions were identified with comparable success in both speech and song modalities. The mean proportion correct was 0.72 for speech and 0.71 for song, indicating that participants could recognize emotions effectively in both forms of expression. However, the unbiased hit rate (Hu) for song was 0.53, reflecting moderate accuracy after accounting for potential guessing or response biases. This suggests that while emotional cues are present and generally understood in sung expressions, there may be greater variability or ambiguity in interpretation compared to speech. Overall, the findings highlight the robustness of emotional communication in both spoken and musical forms, with slightly higher clarity in speech.

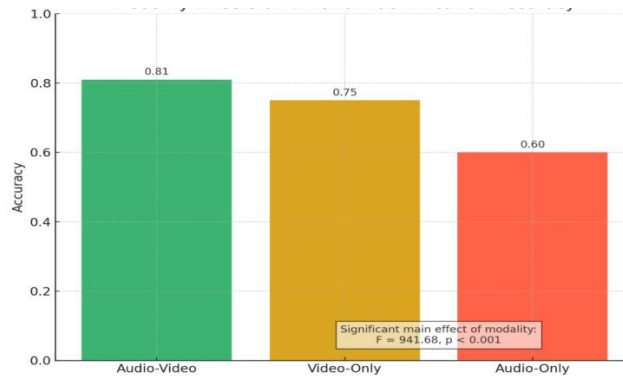
### Modality Effects:

Audio-video accuracy = 0.81;

Video-only accuracy = 0.75;

Audio-only accuracy = 0.60;

followed by a significant main effect of modality;  $F = 941.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$



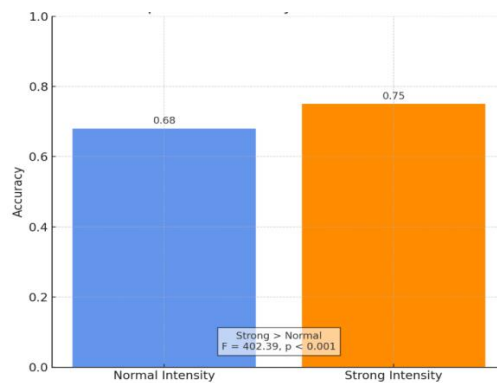
*Figure 2: Modality effects of emotional identification accuracy*

The analysis of modality effects revealed clear differences in emotion identification accuracy across sensory channels. Accuracy was highest when both audio and visual cues were available (audio-video: 0.81), followed by the video-only condition (0.75), with the lowest accuracy observed in the audio-only condition (0.60). This pattern indicates that the integration of both auditory and visual information significantly enhances emotional understanding. The differences were statistically significant, as confirmed by a main effect of modality,  $F = 941.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . These findings underscore the importance of multimodal cues in accurately perceiving emotions, with visual input playing a particularly supportive role when auditory information is limited or ambiguous.

### Intensity Effects:

Strong-intensity expressions were identified more accurately than normal-intensity.

$M = 0.75$  vs  $M = 0.68$ ;  $F = 402.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .



*Figure 3: Effects on expression intensity on emotion identification*

The analysis of intensity effects demonstrated that strong-intensity emotional expressions were identified significantly more accurately than those expressed with normal intensity. Specifically, the mean accuracy for strong-intensity expressions was 0.75, compared to 0.68



for normal-intensity expressions. This difference was statistically significant, as indicated by a main effect of intensity,  $F = 402.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . These results suggest that heightened emotional intensity enhances the clarity of expressive cues, making emotions easier to recognize and interpret across modalities.

### Emotion Specific Performance:

Speech: Neutral ( $M = 0.87$ ) and Angry ( $M = 0.81$ ) were most accurately identified, while Sadness ( $M = 0.61$ ) was least accurate.

Song: Angry ( $M = 0.84$ ) and Neutral ( $M = 0.78$ ) scored highest, while Fearful ( $M = 0.65$ ) and Calm ( $M = 0.63$ ) were lowest.

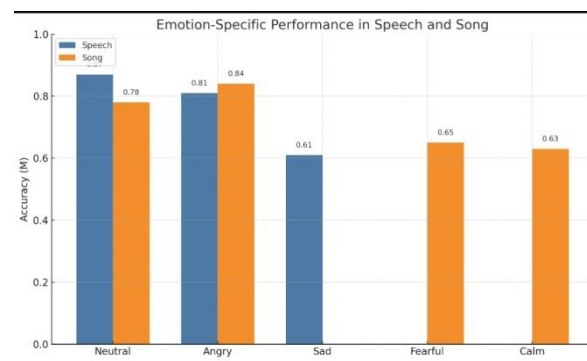


Figure 4: Emotion Specific Performance - Evaluation

Emotion-specific analysis revealed notable differences in identification accuracy across categories for both speech and song. In the speech modality, **Neutral** expressions were most accurately recognized ( $M = 0.87$ ), followed closely by **Angry** expressions ( $M = 0.81$ ), while **Sadness** was the least accurately identified ( $M = 0.61$ ). In contrast, within the song modality, **Angry** expressions had the highest accuracy ( $M = 0.84$ ), followed by **Neutral** ( $M = 0.78$ ). The lowest accuracy rates in song were observed for **Fearful** ( $M = 0.65$ ) and **Calm** ( $M = 0.63$ ) expressions. These findings suggest that some emotions—particularly anger and neutrality—are more universally or robustly conveyed across modalities, while others like sadness, fear, and calm may be more ambiguous or context-dependent in how they are expressed and interpreted.

### Interrater Agreement

#### Kappa values:

- Substantial agreement for strong-intensity expressions  
Speech:  $\kappa = 0.62$ ; Song:  $\kappa = 0.61$
- Moderate agreement for normal-intensity expressions  
Speech:  $\kappa = 0.53$ ; Song:  $\kappa = 0.52$

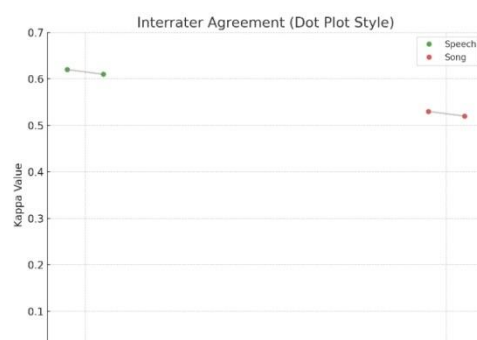


Figure 5: Kappa values

### Confusion Patterns:

Common misidentifications included:  
 Calm confused with Happy (19%),  
 Sad with Neutral/Calm (17%) and  
 Happy with Neutral/Calm (14%).

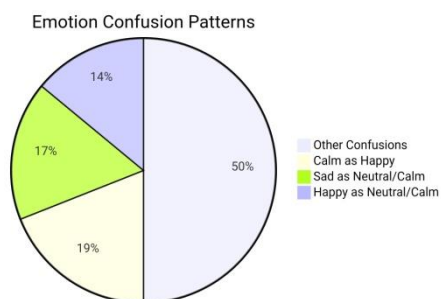


Figure 6: Confusion patterns

### Intensity and Genuineness Ratings

#### Interrater Reliability (ICC):

Single-rater ICCs for intensity and genuineness were poor (0.07–0.22)

Multiple-rater ICCs improved to fair-good (0.42–0.74)

#### Intensity Ratings:

ratings were higher for speech ( $M = 3.6$ ) than song ( $M = 3.55$ ).

Strong intensity stimuli ( $M = 3.83$ ) were rated as more intense than normal intensity stimuli ( $M = 3.31$ ).

### Test-Retest Reliability

#### Intrarater reliability (Cohen's $\kappa$ ):

Substantial for strong-intensity expressions Speech:  $\kappa=0.76$ ; Song:  $\kappa=0.77$ ; &

Moderate for normal-intensity Speech:  $\kappa = 0.70$ ; Song:  $\kappa = 0.68$ .

#### ICCs for test-retest reliability:

improved from fair to good

Single-rater: 0.42–0.46

Multiple-rater: 0.59–0.63

## **Broad Implications of RAVDESS in Contemporary Research**

RAVDESS holds substantial value in modern research across domains where emotion, cognition, and technology intersect. Its validated, multimodal emotional expressions make it a reliable benchmark for interdisciplinary studies.

### **Enhancing Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)**

In the field of Human-Computer Interaction, RAVDESS plays a pivotal role in improving the emotional intelligence of digital systems, including:

- Virtual assistants
- Gaming interfaces
- Social robots

These systems can be trained to detect and respond appropriately to users' emotional states. For instance, a virtual assistant utilizing RAVDESS could recognize signs of frustration or anger in a user's voice and respond with calming language or offer empathetic assistance.

The integration of RAVDESS into affective computing can support the development of systems that:

- Interpret emotional nuance in speech and facial expressions.
- Adapt their interaction strategies based on real-time emotional input.
- Improve user experience in areas like customer service, education, and mental health support.

As reinforcement learning continues to push the boundaries of machine intelligence (e.g., in complex environments like *StarCraft II*), databases like RAVDESS ensure that such systems also develop emotional awareness, making interactions more human-like and effective.

### **Contributions to Social and Behavioral Sciences**

In social and behavioral sciences, RAVDESS offers a valuable foundation for examining how emotions are expressed, perceived, and influence interpersonal interactions.

Key applications include:

- Studying emotional communication in in-group vs. out-group settings or hierarchical relationships.
- Exploring how emotion shapes interpersonal dynamics, such as trust, empathy, or dominance.
- Investigating the role of emotional cues in moral judgment, decision-making, and leadership behavior.

For example, researchers can analyze how a speaker's emotional tone affects the choices of listeners during negotiations or persuasive communication. The controlled stimuli in RAVDESS make it easier to isolate the causal effects of specific emotions, enhancing the precision of experimental designs.

### **Further directions**

While RAVDESS is already a valuable resource for emotion research, there are several promising directions for its future development. One key area is expanding its cultural representation, as the current dataset features only North American-accented English. Including voices from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds—especially Indian languages like Malayalam—would enhance its global applicability and support cross-cultural studies on emotional expression. This would help researchers understand how cultural norms shape emotional communication and influence recognition accuracy. Another important direction is the integration with advanced technologies such as deep learning and real-time emotion tracking systems. By incorporating richer annotations like facial landmark tracking, pitch contours, and arousal levels, RAVDESS could serve as a more robust training and testing tool for emotion recognition models. Furthermore, the database could support real-world applications in fields like healthcare, education, and entertainment. For example, it could help develop emotionally responsive systems for clinical settings, tools for teaching empathy and emotional intelligence, or emotionally rich digital characters in games and virtual reality. These enhancements would position RAVDESS at the forefront of affective computing and emotional AI research.

### **Conclusion**

The Ryerson Audio-Visual Database of Emotional Speech and Song (RAVDESS) represents a significant advancement in the field of emotion research. Its comprehensive and multimodal nature that combined with rigorous validation and broad applicability makes it a precious resource for researchers across various disciplines. RAVDESS not only provides a robust foundation for studying emotional expression and perception but also offers a wealth of opportunities for future research and technological innovation.

Current AI systems lack robustness because they fail to model causal relationships, limiting their ability to generalize beyond training data [9]. As the field of emotion research continues to evolve, RAVDESS will surely play a critical role in shaping our understanding of emotions and their impact on human behavior. By expanding its cultural representation, integrating with advanced technologies and by developing real-world applications, RAVDESS has the potential to become an even more powerful tool for advancing emotion research and improving emotional intelligence in the world.

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## The Rise of English Education in Odisha: Colonial Policy and Regional Response (1850–1900)

**Sourav Rout**

Ph.D. Research Scholar  
Ravenshaw University  
Odisha, India  
[souravrout007@gmail.com](mailto:souravrout007@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

The introduction and expansion of English education in Odisha during the second half of the nineteenth century were closely tied to British colonial educational policies and regional socio-political shifts. This article examines how policy instruments such as Macaulay's Minute and Wood's Despatch aimed to produce a class of English-educated intermediaries aligned with imperial interests, and how these efforts were received within Odisha. While segments of the Odia elite and emerging intelligentsia strategically embraced English education as a means of upward mobility and cultural reform, other sections of society—particularly traditionalists and vernacular advocates—expressed apprehension or resistance, fearing the erosion of indigenous learning and values. Through the founding of institutions such as Zilla Schools and Ravenshaw College, English education became a site of ideological negotiation: both a colonial imposition and a tool for self-assertion. The article argues that English education, though contested in its implementation and cultural impact, ultimately contributed to the formation of a modern Odia public sphere and played a transformative role in shaping the region's socio-political and intellectual landscape between 1850 and 1900.

**Keywords:** English education, Macaulay's Minute, Wood's Despatch, Ravenshaw College, Odia intelligentsia, colonial policy, public sphere, vernacular resistance

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## **Introduction**

The nineteenth century marked a turning point in the educational landscape of colonial India, as British policymakers sought to establish English as the medium of instruction to produce a class of intermediaries aligned with imperial governance. Odisha, a region characterized by linguistic richness and cultural conservatism, encountered this colonial project in a manner shaped by delayed infrastructural development and minimal literacy. Though English education was introduced through policy instruments such as Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854), its reception in Odisha was far from enthusiastic.

This article examines the trajectory of English education in Odisha between 1850 and 1900, arguing that it was accepted less as a progressive aspiration than as an imposed necessity. While segments of the Odia elite and emerging middle class strategically engaged with English education to secure employment and social mobility, this engagement was often marked by cultural ambivalence and ideological unease. For many, English education represented a break from indigenous traditions rather than a seamless evolution. Through a study of institutional developments such as the establishment of Zilla Schools and Ravenshaw College, and the critical responses articulated in vernacular texts, the article demonstrates that English education in Odisha was largely embraced with resignation—acknowledged as essential for advancement, yet viewed with suspicion, restraint, and at times, resistance.

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## **Colonial Educational Policy and Its Implementation in Odisha**



The ideological foundation of English education in India was laid by Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education (1835), which advocated the promotion of English over vernacular languages as the medium of instruction to cultivate a class which was "Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 57). This Anglicist agenda found institutional backing through Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854, which outlined a systematic approach to expand education with English as the medium of higher instruction (Sharp 89). These policies were intended to produce a class of English-educated Indians who could serve as intermediaries in colonial governance (Viswanathan 19; Zastoupil and Moir 106).

In Odisha, then part of the Bengal Presidency, the implementation of these policies was marked by delays and region-specific challenges (Mohanty 28). Compared to Bengal, Odisha's educational infrastructure was minimal, and literacy rates were low (Dash 44). The British administration, constrained by limited resources and local conditions, initially prioritized establishing elementary schools but soon moved towards setting up secondary and collegiate institutions to train a small, educated elite (Mohanty 30). This elite was expected to function as clerks, teachers, and civil servants serving colonial interests (Chatterjee 61; Mukherjee 21).

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### **Early Educational Institutions: Zilla Schools and Ravenshaw College**

Odisha's entry into the sphere of formal English education was marked by the establishment of Zilla Schools and District schools in key urban centers, such as Cuttack (1841), Balasore (1853), and Sambalpur (1864), which introduced English subjects alongside vernacular teaching (Pattnaik 45). These schools were initially funded and managed by the colonial government but gradually received support from local elites (Mohanty 37).

The watershed moment came with the creation of Cuttack College in 1868, which was renamed Ravenshaw College in 1878 in honor of Thomas Edward Ravenshaw, a key educational administrator (Sahoo 23). Ravenshaw College was affiliated with the University of Calcutta and became the premier institution for English collegiate education in Odisha (Dash 51). The College quickly became the most prominent center of English education in Odisha and played a central role in producing the region's first generation of English-educated professionals, administrators, and thinkers (Mohanty 39). While Ravenshaw College became a key site for English instruction, its emergence also marked the consolidation of an educational hierarchy that privileged English over local languages—an outcome not without cultural cost (Viswanathan 27; Mukherjee 19).

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### **Regional Response: Acceptance, Aspiration, and Anxiety**

The reception of English education in Odisha was marked by pragmatic acceptance and cultural hesitation. Urban elites and Brahmin families largely embraced English schooling out of necessity, not conviction, as a pathway to socioeconomic advancement. Figures like Madhusudan Das, the first Odia to obtain a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Calcutta, exemplified this emerging class, using English education as a platform for social reform and political activism (Mohanty 36).

English education also created platforms for leadership in public life, particularly in debates on linguistic identity, province formation, and educational reform (Dash 112). Conversely, some sections viewed English education with suspicion, fearing it threatened indigenous knowledge systems and Sanskritic traditions. Resistance was also rooted in practical concerns: access was limited by caste, gender, and geography, leaving rural and marginalized communities largely excluded (Viswanathan 23). From early to mid-nineteenth century, indigenous education in

Odisha was oblivious to the systematic concept of modern classroom teaching; instead, existing only through elementary schools known as a ‘chatasali’ or ‘pathasalas’ in villages (Mohanty 42). Such a mode of primary education, although widespread, was not sufficient to absolve people of their superstitious beliefs and suffered from the lack of a modern incentive as well. The solution to this problem was eventually resolved through the implementation of practices propagated in Macaulay's Minute of 1835, in which Macaulay had contended that English, as the language of Western knowledge and scientific advancement, would provide Indians with access to modern, rational thought and enable them to break away from what he perceived as the backwardness of traditional Indian practices (Macaulay; Said 134).

However, despite the advancements made by the propagation of western education in Odisha, several local intellectuals gradually began expressing doubts with regard to the authenticity of British claims of using English studies solely for the purpose of civilizing the Odia people (Chatterjee 59). They feared that the promotion of English and Western education would erode traditional Odia culture, values, and language and saw it as a means of undermining the indigenous education system and promoting colonial ideologies that privileged the English language and Western norms (Bhabha 87). Additionally, there was skepticism about the utility of English education in addressing the practical needs of the local population, many of whom were engaged in agrarian and artisanal work (Mukherjee 19). Native scholars also criticized the Western education system for being disconnected from the realities of Indian society, and for fostering a sense of alienation rather than empowering the local communities (Viswanathan 34; Patnaik 58).

Several Odia scholars opting for higher education, witnessed a shift from Odia customs and values to the *babu* or *saheb* demeanour. Such alarming attitudes have been critiqued in patriotic Odia texts such as *Fiuchar Saheb* (1892) and *Ghar Katha* (1908), both of which were published anonymously and served as critical expressions of discomfort with Anglicized identity. On one

hand, the writer of *Fiuchar Saheb* (Future Sahib) satirically admonishes the native mentality to assimilate oneself in the English culture and way of thinking, by dressing and behaving like a typical British ‘sahib.’<sup>1</sup> People dressing up in coats, trousers, ties, shoes and socks were generally addressed as *sahebs* (sahibs) throughout the country. The writer has phenomenally presented this “sahib” mentality in the text, while mentioning that it was not uncommon for the common man to dream of being a “sahib” in the afterlife, and this is referenced beautifully in the beginning as the writer says:

**"This time in death, I'll rise a sahib bold,  
With a crimson cap atop my head I'll hold."**<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the anonymous writer of *Ghara Katha* advises his fellow countrymen not to be influenced by English culture. He asks them to abstain from using foreign-made goods, emphasizing that it will only allow the foreign rulers to strengthen their hold over the nation.<sup>3</sup> He advises people to be industrious, and advocates the usage of country-made goods. Moreover, in sections 45 and 95, the writer is clearly seen advising people against going for higher education in foreign countries, apprehending that it might lead to their assimilation in English culture and their eventual desire of being identified as babus (masters). In fact, owing to the fact that the medium of higher education was predominantly English at the time, the author also indirectly discourages the native desire for English education within the state.

### **Curriculum and Pedagogy: Balancing English and Vernacular Traditions**

The curriculum at Ravenshaw College and other institutions was modelled after the University of Calcutta's standards, emphasizing English literature, grammar, and composition. Texts by

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<sup>1</sup> Ratha, 3

<sup>2</sup> Ethara male saheb hebi / *Lal mundare kep debi*.

<sup>3</sup> *Gharakatha*, 1-15.

Shakespeare, Milton, and other canonical British authors dominated syllabi, reflecting the colonial agenda of cultural inculcation (Mohanty 112).

The curriculum reflected the colonial emphasis on British literary and moral ideals, which many Odia students internalized reluctantly, often at the expense of their own linguistic traditions (Mohanty 114). However, the interaction between English and Odia intellectual traditions was not merely one-way. Many students and faculty engaged critically with English literature, blending colonial knowledge with regional cultural sensibilities (Mohanty 116). This dynamic gave rise to a bilingual literary culture where English proficiency became a tool for intellectual and political mobilization while Odia language and literature asserted their distinctiveness. Thus, the coexistence of English and Odia literary engagement points to a layered negotiation with colonial culture, rather than full assimilation (Mohanty 118).

A pivotal moment in colonial Odisha's embrace of English studies coincides with the establishment of Ravenshaw College and the inception of its esteemed publication, *The Ravenshavian*. This magazine stands as a testament to the flourishing of English literature in modern Odisha, its pages adorned with the creative endeavors of both students and faculty alike. From its inception in 1917 until India's independence in 1947, *The Ravenshavian* chronicled the intellectual and cultural pulse of the era across 26 digitized volumes. Post-independence, its legacy continued, further enriching Odisha's literary landscape. More than a mere publication, *The Ravenshavian* served as a vibrant platform for showcasing student talent, discussing educational matters, and documenting noteworthy events within and beyond the college. In its pages, one can find not only creative expressions but also insightful reviews and critical analyses of English literature, alongside reports on various club activities and academic achievements. The magazine's inclusive approach extended beyond the confines of formal education, fostering a sense of community and collective engagement with English language. Indeed, *The Ravenshavian* embodied more than just a literary publication; it

encapsulated a holistic ethos that transcended institutional boundaries, nurturing a deep and immersive relationship with English studies in Odisha. Its enduring influence resonates as a testament to the dynamic interplay between colonial presence and indigenous cultural aspirations, shaping the trajectory of education and language in the region.

The advancement of English studies at Ravenshaw college can be seen in the light of various developments, especially with the acceptance of T.S. Eliot into the English curriculum. In 1941, P. S. Sundaram, notable Indian professor of English and erstwhile head of the English department at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack, wrote an article in *The Ravenshavian*, called *Literature in a Machine Age*, where he quotes a few lines from *The Wasteland*:

‘When lovely woman stoops to folly and

Paces about her room again, alone,

She smooths her hair with automatic hand

And puts a record on the gramophone.’

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### **English Education and Odia Linguistic Identity**

A significant element of Odisha’s educational history in this period was the contestation over language. In the mid-nineteenth century, the imposition of Bengali as the administrative and educational language in Odisha sparked resistance among Odia intellectuals, who advocated for the primacy of the Odia language (Mohanty 78).

English education played a paradoxical role: it enabled the articulation of Odia identity in a modern political context while also contributing to the marginalization of vernacular languages. Odia writers such as Fakir Mohan Senapati, educated in English and familiar with Western

literary traditions, pioneered the modern Odia novel and used literature to challenge colonial and social hierarchies (Senapati 103).

Hence, English education, while facilitating entry into modern discourse, was also perceived as a threat to Odia linguistic pride—a tension that defined much of the region’s educational experience during the colonial period.

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### **Formation of the Odia Middle Class and Political Awakening**

English education catalyzed the rise of a distinct Odia middle class, which became instrumental in the socio-political transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Graduates of Ravenshaw and similar institutions entered professions as lawyers, teachers, and bureaucrats, gaining influence in public affairs (Sahoo 27).

While the English-educated middle class became instrumental in Odisha’s political evolution, its identity was shaped by a reluctant embrace of colonial language and norms—a calculated adaptation to historical inevitability. This educated class nurtured nationalist sentiments and regional consciousness, which eventually coalesced into movements demanding Odisha’s political recognition as a separate province—achieved in 1936. The foundations for this awakening were laid in the period under study, as English-educated elites negotiated their identities between colonial modernity and indigenous traditions.

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## **7. Conclusion**

Between 1850 and 1900, the spread of English education in Odisha reflected the broader colonial project of cultural domination, yet its reception was far from uniform. For many in the region, particularly the emerging intelligentsia, English education was a double-edged

experience—both a path to opportunity and a source of cultural dislocation. Rather than being enthusiastically embraced, it was largely accepted with resignation: as a necessary instrument for socio-economic mobility in a system that increasingly devalued indigenous knowledge. This ambivalent acceptance of English education reveals the deeper tensions at the heart of Odisha's colonial encounter and invites renewed attention to how educational policy shaped regional identity under imperial rule.

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