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Marginality and Resistance in Contemporary Culture

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Contemporary Culture**

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Marginality and Resistance in Contemporary Culture

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



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Editorial

The concepts of marginality and resistance have been the subject of much discourse in both scholarly and activist circles. The book "Marginality and Resistance" delves into the interconnectedness of these concepts and elucidates the ways in which marginalized individuals and communities utilize resistance as a means for empowerment and social change. By drawing on a variety of case studies and theoretical analyses, the articles present a compelling argument for the significance of comprehending the link between marginality and resistance in achieving a more just and equitable society.

In "Cultural Memory and Geographical Imaginations in the Poetry of Mamang Dai: A Study of Selected Poems," Unnikrishnan examines Dai's poetry, emphasizing the equality of all living beings and the significance of indigenous beliefs closely connected to the environment. Within the exploration of Afro-Brazilian Religion, Mridul investigates the shared elements among the diverse slave ethnicities, such as ritual sacrifice, spirit possession and medium consultations, serving as symbols of resistance and the preservation of African ethnic identity in Brazil.

While Hanna concludes that resistance is essential for building a fairer world in her article on Nujeen Mustafa's journey, Sahira argues that the very existence of marginalized individuals within the Beat Generation serves as a form of resistance. Both perspectives highlight the significance of resistance in the face of marginalization, with Hanna focusing on active resistance and Sahira emphasizing the inherent resistance in mere existence.

In "Caste and Its Perpetuation in India: Looking at the Caste Quandary from a Fresh Perspective," Ms. Renjitha delves into the power dynamics and marginalization faced by Dalits in modern India. Similarly, in his article titled "Analyzing Social Engineering in Contemporary Tamil Movies by Pa. Ranjith and Mari Selvaraj," Midhulaj explores the portrayal of caste politics and subtle exploitation within the context of Tamil cinema.

Aneeshya's investigation aims to analyze the portrayal of the last two types of men in contemporary Malayalam commercial movies and assess the extent to which the general public's ignorance is mirrored in popular art, while also examining the culture industry's intolerance towards marginalized and less accepted forms of masculinity. In a similar vein, Saritha examines the modes of resistance within Tamil Muslim women's writing against patriarchal norms, drawing on the works of select writers.

Pradeep highlights the lack of adequate focus on refugee issues in postcolonial discourse, despite the historical impact of colonialism in various regions worldwide. This analysis is presented within the framework of Postcolonialism and Refugee Poetics in Malayalam Fiction, specifically examining works such as "Yudhanantharam (After the War)" by Rihan Rashid and "Sarkar" by King Johns, while Rimshana conducts an analysis of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" within the context of homosexuality.

The articles on 'Marginality and Resistance' provide varied perceptions on power dynamics, inequality and resilience. They emphasize the urgent need for a more just world by examining the interplay between marginalization and resistance in literature and cinema. Together, they demonstrate the essential role of resistance in dismantling oppression and fostering inclusive societies. As we reflect on the insights shared in these articles, let us be inspired to take action, to engage in critical dialogue and to stand in solidarity with those who resist marginalization.

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Marginality and Resistance in Contemporary Culture

Cultural Memory and Geographical Imaginations in the Poetry of Mamang Dai: A Study of Selected Poems

Abstract

The study of the many cultural features present around the globe and how they interact with the spheres where they begin and then travel as people move across different areas are significant concerns in cultural geography. Geographical imaginations play an important role in the writings of Mamang Dai. She depicts nature in its primordial form in her poems. She appreciates both the supernatural and every day that nature exudes, delving into the mythologies that surround nature. In her poems, Dai deviates from traditional, human-centric subjects and makes non-human nature the primary concern of her poems. In her conviction that human beings are not superior to non-human lives, she joins the ranks of Deep ecologists. She is deeply concerned about the disintegrating relationship resulting from capitalism and commercialization, both of which present a risk to tribal life. She appears to place high importance on old indigenous beliefs that are in immediate contact to ecology and the ecosystem. Landforms appear frequently in her poetry to demonstrate her connection to the environment. She also believes that social beliefs and structures that cause ecological damage should be abolished and that the best use of both 'traditional' and 'scientific' understanding should be made to ensure the balance of nature.

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Keywords: Mamang Dai, Cultural Geography, Cultural memory, Geographical imagination, North-eastern Indian literature

One of the salient features of cultural memory studies is its multifaceted nature. Over the past two decades, the study of the relationship between culture and memory has grown into an extensive field of study covering a wide range of disciplines, including history, sociology, art, literature and media studies, philosophy, theology, and psychology (Astrid Erll). From this, it can be seen that Cultural memory is used as an umbrella term to study the relationship between memory and culture. Memories operate on a broader level beyond personal nostalgia and fantasy. One of the most important of these is the liberating value of memories. Karl Marx, at the beginning of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, refers to the accumulated memories of people which can work against the injustices and inequalities of the present:

The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living. At the very time when men appear engaged in revolutionizing things and themselves, in bringing about what never was before, at such very epochs of revolutionary crisis do they anxiously conjure up into their service the spirits of the past, assume their names, their battle cries, their costumes to enact a new historic scene in such time-honored disguise and with such borrowed language (7).

Cultural memories play a crucial role in literature as an aesthetic expression of human life's complexities and physical realities. Literary works and works of art thus mediate personal and cultural memories. Unraveling the web of cultural memories intertwined with history and reality reveals another dimension of social life and history. Birgit Neumann observes:

In their world-creation, literary works resort to culturally predominant ideas of memory, and, through their literary techniques, represent these ideas in an aesthetically condensed form. This cultural preformation of literature also implies that narrative techniques are not transhistorical constants, but rather historically variable strategies which offer interpretive patterns specific to particular epochs.(335)

In North-East Indian literature, Mamang Dai is a notable author of modern sensibility. She is a Poet, novelist, and journalist. She is one of best known tribal voices of north-east Indian literature. She belongs to the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. We can see geographical imaginations and cultural memories as a constant

presence in Mamang Dai's writings. Mamang Dai's poems have different levels of meaning, marking the cultural history of a society, such as history, tradition, myths and legends. In this way, Mamang Dai's poetry becomes an expression of the identity and cultural characteristics of the Northeastern lands. Mamang Dai's poems clearly show the increasing urbanization and violence and the protest against the abolition of the autonomous life of the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. The poet symbolizes this protest with subtle and indirect characters and geographical imaginations instead of obvious poetic images. It is in this way that the poet symbolizes the hardships and anxieties of life experienced by the people of the North East. Beyond personal concerns, Mamang Dai's poems are a release of the life struggles of the people of the North East. The poet depicts the world around her and the cultural diversity of that world in the flakes of her poetry. The poet recognizes the cultural imprints of folk songs, customs, myths, and vernacular expressions, and their defensive value in poetry.

“The History of our race begins with the place of stories
 We do not know if the language we speak
 Belongs to a written past
 Nothing is certain
 There are Mountains, oh! There are Mountains
 We climbed every slope, we slept by the river
 But do not speak of victory yet” (qtd.in Misra, 5-6)

The cultural landscape of Mamang Dai's poetry is determined by the local landscape and folklore. Her poems form a unique poetic experience with the diversity of the North Eastern landscape and the uniqueness of folklore. Poems depict trees, rivers, and mountains as carriers of cultural memories:

“The river has a soul.
 In the summer it cuts through the land
 like a torrent of grief. Sometimes,
 sometimes, I think it holds its breath
 seeking a land of fish and stars” (Dai 2003: 23)

Instead of turning into fetters of past, memories become symbols of dreams of liberation. Memories play a crucial role in the defense against new forms and methods of occupation. Memories become a creative activity that can address the crises and problems of everyday life. The history of culture is also the history of memories; It is a collection of memories of the past imprinted with symbols. Culture, which is also a collection of memories, devises unique ways to stop the flow of time.

The most important of these are the arts and literature. In this way communication between different stages of culture is possible. External memories of culture are a combination of the past experiences of the human race. Internal memories, however, are a combination of past human conditions. Neumann observes:

Fictions of memory may symbolically empower the culturally marginalized or forgotten and thus figure as an imaginative counter-discourse. By bringing together multiple, even incompatible versions of the past, they can keep alive conflict about what exactly the collective past stands for and how it should be remembered. Moreover, to the extent that many fictions of memory link the hegemonic discourse to the unrealized and inexpressible possibilities of the past, they can become a force of continual innovation and cultural self-renewal (341).

Another feature of Mamang Dai's poetry is that it subtly marks the social and cultural changes taking place in society. Geographical fantasies and characters such as mountains, rivers, and trees are narratives of socio-cultural change. It is noteworthy that the poems mark such changes in a subtle way that is not at all verbal or expressive. These poems are also an example of Mamang Dai's unique genius in composing poetry. These geographical imaginations do not appear in the poem as memories of a nostalgic past, but as organic indicators of an inseparable connection with nature and culture. There are many tribes in Arunachal Pradesh that keep their biological links with nature intact. This unique feature of their relationship with nature and culture is what Mamang Dai expresses in her poems.

The poem titled "An Obscure Place" is one of the most striking examples of geographical imagination and cultural memory in Mamang Dai's poetry. The poem begins by recalling the connection between the history and stories of the race. It is the view of the mountains that comforts the poet from the uncertainties of the present. In a world where conquests and oppression are raging, the poet expresses in strong language about the people who have not yet spoken of victory, who seek identity in nature and memories and the encroachments on nature and culture: "A smoke cloud chases the ants / See. They have slain the wild cat / and buried the hornbill in her maternal sleep" (Dai, lines 25-27)

The poet cannot help but raises her voice against the violence around her and the suffering of the people. The poet reveals the cruel truth that the daily violence and deaths in the news keep the North-East region active; "if there is no death the news is silent / if there is only silence, we should be disturbed." Even in a life full of uncertainty and misery, the poet finds solace in thinking of the mountains and the

rivers. But even then, the poet remembers the fact that they have not yet walked to victory. The words of strangers have plunged them into a haze of doubt and insecurity. Arundhathi Subramaniam observes:

There is no dishonest sense of anchor here, no blissful pastoral idyll. The poet describes her people as “foragers for a destiny” and her work is pervaded by a deep unease about erased histories and an uncertain future. And yet, implicit in Dai’s poetics is the refusal to divorce protest from love. This seems to translate into a commitment to a poetry of quiet surges and eddies rather than gritty textures and edges. It also translates into a voice that is never raised in rage or indignation; a tone that is hushed, wondering, thoughtful, and reflective. The strength of this poetry is its unforced clarity, its ability to steer clear of easy flamboyance. (Subramaniam 2021)

“The Voice of the Mountain” is another poem with a strong presence of geographical imagination and cultural memory. Mountains and rivers are also used as powerful symbols in this poem. It can be observed that not only the physical level but also the metaphorical and emotional meanings are shared through these geographical fantasies. The poet marks her people as living in ancient and new lands, speaking a constantly changing language. The poet marks the mountains and rivers as cultural symbols that help to identify one’s own identity in the midst of these rapid speeds of change.

“My voice is sea waves and mountain peaks,
In the transfer of symbols
I am the chance syllable that orders the world
Instructed with history and miracles.
I am the desert and the rain.” (Dai, lines 20-24)

The poet finds patterns of interaction and interrelationship in nature. She argues that nature is basically a collective identity of people, and that destroying nature leads to identity distortion. As a result, we must protect ecology and its environment for the welfare of mankind and its identity. She employs analogies such as the mystic mountain, rivers, and forests in her search for identity.

“I know, I know these things
as rocks know, burning in the sun's embrace,
about clouds, and sudden rain;
as I know a cloud is a cloud is a cloud,
A cloud is this uncertain pulse
that sits over my heart” (Dai, lines 29-34)

Mamang Dai sees the landscape as a new language of poetry and art, as expressive forms, as cultural symbols: She writes in “River Poems”:

“Without speech
we practiced a craft
Leaving imprints on sky walls
Linking the seasons
Coding the trailing mist,
In silent messages
Across the vast landscape” (Dai, 2004: 66)

The basis of the poet's affinity towards nature is the influence of the tribal culture in which Mamang Dai was born and raised. In an interview, Mamang Dai points out that tribal culture and the oral tradition are the factors that have decisively influenced her writing:

Knowing the stories gives me a sense of identity. It inspires my writing - after all it is a world of myth, memory, and imagination. Oral narratives are generally perceived as a simple recounting of tales for a young audience but I think their significance lies in the symbols embedded in the stories about the sanctity of life, about what makes us human. My response to myth/stories is akin to a quest. It is a worldview I am still exploring. (Sarangi 2)

Mamang Dai's poems are also a critique of the methods of capitalist - consumer culture, which sees nature as something to be exploited and used. The poet considers nature as a presence that moves life forward. This closeness to biological nature is another important feature of Mamang Dai's poetry.

“The river has a soul
In the summer it cuts through the land
like a torrent of grief. Sometimes,
sometimes, I think it holds its breath
seeking a land of fish and stars” (Dai 2003: 23)

Another feature of Mamang Dai's poems is the expression of a sense of brotherhood shared by nature and living things. The poet expresses an ecological consciousness that combines nature, mountains, forests and wildlife. Nature plays a crucial role in the traditional beliefs of the Adi tribe. One of the best examples of this relationship is the perspective on the relationship between man and the tiger; The traditional belief of the Adi tribe is that man and tiger are brothers. Therefore, killing

tigers is considered to be tantamount to killing one's wife. The concept is beautifully presented in the poem "Man and Brother", "The tiger runs swiftly from my father's house calling my name/ Brother! Man Brother!/ Have mercy for our destiny." (Dai, "Man and Brother," 2003: 22)

This is how Mamang Dai's poems become a sharp critique of the attitudes of capitalist society, driven only by profit and consumerism, and the approaches to development that wreak havoc on the environment. Not only memories of the past, but also crises of the present are collected through different media as flakes of memories. Astrid Erill & Ann Rigney observes:

It has become increasingly apparent that the memories that are shared within generations and across different generations are the product of public acts of remembrance using a variety of media. Stories, both oral and written, images, museums, and monuments: these all work together in creating and sustaining 'sites of memory' (112)

Narratives of past experiences, provided by the arts, including literature, play an important role in interpreting and reaching conclusions about the experiences of the times in which we live. In this way, perspectives on new models of identity and new interpretations of the past lead to new questions about the present and our own existence. Birgit Neumann writes:

In poems, speakers may figure as a representation of a particular memory culture and articulate both individual and collective memories. Memory poetry is characterized by a pronounced heteroreferentiality and thus spurs a fictitious collective audience to recall fateful events of the shared past (340)

A close analysis of the selected poems of Mamang Dai provides an opportunity to investigate the complex interaction between humans and nature, as well as the role of nature in the material universe. Because nature is an extension of one's identity and origins, any damage to it has an instant impact on one's identity. Nature would become a place where one can find one's own identity. As a result, they provide the impression that the spirits of woods, rivers, mountains, and other geographical elements are the road to preserving the cultural memory of the society. The landscape and the cultural memories formed through it can be seen as an active presence in North-East Indian literature. Mamang Dai's poems are shaped by a sensibility that combines myths, legends, and geographical fantasies. Beyond being an outward presence, the poet symbolizes and shares with his readers through her poems the landscape that becomes a symbol of active cultural exchange.

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Caste and its Perpetuation in India: Looking at the Caste Quandary from the Perspective of the Theory of Predictive Mind

Abstract

The socio-cultural milieu of ancient India was warped around the hierarchical order of casteism. The caste system was initially built based on the occupation taken up by generations in a family. Over time, the occupation came to be tagged as the family name and caste identity. The social order still has a great impact on the lives of the people of contemporary India. The changing times were expected to transform the caste system and give rise to an open system of social order wherein stratification will be based on personal achievement and excellence. In spite of the suggested achievements in the nation in terms of modernisation, the ascriptive identity of the Indians continue to be so and caste is still the determining factor. It is in this context that one must reassess the underlying positions of power in the caste-ridden modern India. The Dalits in the nation are subjected to marginalisation, stigmatisation and social exclusion. The apparent divide in the distribution of wealth and job opportunities among different caste groups continues in the new millennia. According to the theory of the Predictive Mind, the human brain is highly automated and that it predicts upcoming events, outcomes of actions or possible social scenarios. Another concept in the theory is 'Subliminal Stimuli' which refers to perceptions not recognised by the conscious mind.

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Experiments show that unconscious processing of information or subliminal stimuli determines the behavioural patterns in humans. This article argues that the stereotypes accumulated in the cultural memory of the Indians in connection with the caste system over the years shall not be considered as a sectarian bias but as the implicit prediction of the automatic functioning of the brain. Hence it can be concluded that the apparent reason for the perpetuation of casteism are the predictive mind and the cultural memory of the Indians.

Keywords: Ascriptive identity, Casteism, Cultural memory, Marginality, Predictive mind

Introduction

The socio-cultural milieu of ancient India was warped around the hierarchical order of casteism. The caste system was initially built based on the occupation taken up by generations in a family. Over time, the occupation came to be tagged as the family name and caste identity. The caste system thus formed has been prevalent in the country for three millennia. The social order still has a great impact on the lives of the people of contemporary India. In fact, caste determines the life and experiences of an Indian more than any other social factor. The stratification of caste into watertight compartments has been at the core of Hinduism since time immemorial. Manusmriti, the seminal work describing the rules of Hinduism, dates back to 1000 BCE. The book considers the caste system as the defining factor of social order. The varna system, as proposed by Manusmriti, stratified Hindus into mutually exclusive groups such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The four categories refer to ritual experts or priests, warriors, traders and cultivators or workers respectively. The fifth and lowest in the social order are the acchoots, the untouchables, restricted to scavenging and toilet cleaning occupations. Social life in the Subcontinent unfurled as per the yardsticks of caste-rules till the middle of the twentieth century.

The changing times were expected to transform the caste system and give rise to an open system of social order wherein stratification will be based on personal achievement and excellence. Experts in Social Studies, Marxists and structural-functionalists contemplated the possibility of the inevitable decline of casteism in the country and predicted that it would be discarded as an ancient order of things. The process of modernisation, industrialisation and democratisation of the country started in the previous century, and the progress in urbanising the mindset and lifestyle of the populace were expected to do the job. The global perspectives brought in by the neoliberal policies were meant to make the task easier.

Evidently, the nation has moved on from the old rural-agrarian-village matrices and almost all the places in the country are connected to the local, national or global market. Progressive changes are apparent in the political system as well as the social structure in terms of improved political awareness and better lifestyle. The most reformist change is, of course, the obliteration of caste-based occupation of individuals. Most people have come out of the binding directives of the caste system and began to take up careers offered by the new economic/democratic systems. In spite of the suggested achievements in the nation in terms of modernisation, the ascriptive identity of the Indians continue to be so and caste is still the determining factor. It is in this context that one must reassess the underlying positions of power in the caste-ridden modern India.

The fundamental changes in the socio-political life of the Indians has not altered the caste consciousness of the masses to any great extent. Arguably, the existence of caste in the present is more pronounced in the democratic system than the antecedent feudal institution. The politicisation of caste by keeping an eye on the vote-bank to get an entry into the electoral assemblies is not uncommon in the post independent India. A popular notion about the perseverance of caste is the prevalent 'reservation' for certain groups in the name of social justice. Those who oppose reservation in the country take this up to assert that caste consciousness may never leave us so long as people take advantage of the supposedly affirmative law, ensured by the constitution.

However, the ground reality of the caste conundrum is bigger than the above mentioned state of affairs. The social and economic inequality, unequal distribution of opportunities, resources and capital, and the difference in status and cultural values among groups, can be attributed to enduring casteism. This article attempts to bring to light the power dynamics behind the prevalence of caste and the subtle and overt expressions of casteist underpinnings in social interactions. It is also the purpose of the article to put into perspective the 'Predictive Mind Theory' in the context of caste quandary in India.

Marginality and the Divide in Economic Status

According to P. N. Mukherji, "Marginality is an adverse state or condition of existence of individuals/groups in a relation of subordination or inferiority to individuals/groups that are at the 'centre' or 'mainstream'" (Mukherji, 14).

The Dalits in the nation are subjected to marginalisation, stigmatisation and social exclusion. One of the prominent instances for the same can be seen in the way they are ghettoised even in urbanised places in the nation. Another case of social exclusion can

be seen in how they are under-represented in media and contemporary popular culture. “Examining the trajectory of a marginalised community, from its possible or an impossible move away from a stigmatised subjectivity, epitomised in the figure of the ‘untouchable’ to becoming active citizens can point to the enabling conditions and constitutive anomalies within our socio-political order” (Rao, 1).

In the case of the lower castes in India, an upward social mobility is not easy as they are imbued with the stereotypical ‘Dalit Identity’, not only at the bodily dimension, but also at the intellectual level. Things become increasingly difficult when individuals imbibe and emulate lifestyles common to caste groups unquestioningly, wherein the usual practices are repetitions of age old habits of generations, futile as much in the past as in the present. This is where modernity was supposed to do its magic by bringing about sweeping changes in the lifestyle of the multitudes through education and technology. Nonetheless, statistics speak of no remarkable improvement in the lives of the Dalits in terms of quality education, financial prosperity or desirable job titles. The silent majority are riddled with troubled identity constructs and challenging life situations.

The groups who fall into the middle levels in the caste Hindu are also subjected to identity constructs based on casteism. In fact, the higher the caste in the social matrix, the better the chances one has in living a fulfilling life as per the modern standards. Maryam Aslani finds in her study that:

...among the SCs and STs in urban India the majority of households belong to the labouring households (36.36 per cent of SCs and 31.84 per cent of STs throughout urban India), which is much higher than the average percentage of the total population in the labouring classes in urban India. Furthermore, almost 56.5 per cent of Brahmins and 40.17 percent of Forward Castes belong to the top two categories of the middle class, while only 19 per cent of the SCs and 28.9 percent of ST households in urban India belong to the top two categories of the middle class. This is indicative of the caste disparities in class membership in urban India, with the middle and the upper classes being consisting primarily of upper castes. Therefore, the upper caste character is one of the defining characteristics of the urban middle classes. However, comparing the result of caste compositions of middle classes in urban India with the result from rural India shows greater caste disparities among rural classes (Aslani, 231).

This apparent divide in the distribution of wealth and job opportunities continues in the new millennia.

The difference between the economic classes is reflected easily in the cuisine, dressing style and the use of language in addition to the difference in customs as dictated by respective castes. This in turn creates the in-group/out-group constructs. This naturally gives rise to prejudice and discrimination against the 'other'. This difference is expressed through subtle cues of body language, passive comments and generalisations about caste groups, both from upper and lower levels. Those who are in the upper strata unconsciously hold an upper hand over the lower ones. Any caste group holds this supremacist leverage over their immediate 'subservient' group. The complex matrix of supremacy of the upper levels and suppression of the lower levels seem to be unalterable in the Indian context. It is in this context that one must probe into the intricacies of the binary construct of in-group and out-groups in the psyche of the Indians.

The Race against the 'Predictive Mind'

According to the theory of the Predictive Mind, the human brain is highly automated and that it predicts upcoming events, outcomes of actions or possible social scenarios. It is this mechanism of the brain which allows one to anticipate events quickly and accurately as they occur. The process is termed as 'Implicit Prediction'. New experience or acquired information constantly upgrades implicit prediction. The conscious mind comes into play only when the predictions go wrong. The theory postulates that the automation of the brain helps in the smooth functioning of the individual in social situations and the conscious mind chips in to overcome situations arising out of failed predictions. Another concept in the theory is 'Subliminal Stimuli' which refers to perceptions not recognised by the conscious mind. Experiments show that unconscious processing of information or subliminal stimuli determines the behavioural patterns in humans.

In a social experiment done by Greenwald et al., (1978) it was found that social judgements are implicitly predicted by stereotypical associations. Stereotyping is a method adopted by the brain for categorising members in a community. This is contrary to the notion that social bias is a result of cognitive failure in individuals. Perry Hinton opines that the concept of the Predictive Mind offers a better explanation of stereotyping and bias. He argues that

“...rather than viewing implicit stereotypes as a problem of the cognitive bias of the individual, they should be viewed as “culture in mind” influencing the cognition of cultural group members. It is also proposed that combining the research on implicit cognition with an understanding of the complex dynamics of culture and communication, will lead to greater insight into the nature of implicit stereotypes” (2).

Clearly, the stereotypes accumulated in the cultural memory of the Indians in connection with the caste system over the years shall not be considered as a sectarian bias but as the implicit prediction of the automatic functioning of the brain.

The above mentioned postulations prove that any revisionist attempt at overcoming the casteist (or any other form of) bias is a race in the opposite direction of the biological hardwearing mechanism of the human brain. An understanding of the caste puzzle from this perspective nullifies the definition of relations between the groups to be aggressive/ competitive. According to Axt et. al., “Social hierarchies are known but often disavowed as anachronisms or unjust. Nonetheless, hierarchies may persist in social memory” (1084). In a survey conducted by Axt et. al., it was found that individuals implicitly evaluate people of their own race/ religion/ age to be positive. They posit that groups at the top of the social ladder enjoy privileges like access to better education, mental and physical health, and greater opportunities in careers (1084). In a nutshell, social stratification is widespread and it is a result of cultural memory. Though Axt et. al. are referring to the American society in their research, it is applicable to the Indian scenario as well. Hence, it can be argued that any attempt at resistance or reformation in this context is also an effort to erase the cultural memory of the Indians.

Conclusion

The traditional narrative of ‘the lower castes being marginalised by the upper castes’ can be redefined in the light of the theory of the Predictive Brain.

...it is argued here that implicit stereotypes, as attributes associated with social groups, do not indicate an unconscious cognitive “bias” (a “cognitive monster”) within the fair-minded person but are learnt associations arising from the normal working of the predictive brain in everyday life. These associations are based on information circulating within the person’s culture, and the associations are probabilistically detected by the predictive brain: as such they can be characterised as “culture in mind” rather than an individual bias. According to the predictive brain model, when the culture changes then the implicit stereotypes of its members will change (albeit slowly for some associations). Therefore, to properly understand the nature of implicit stereotypes, the cognitive research needs to be combined with the study of the dynamics of culture, to understand the specific associations prevalent in the communication within a culture and their implicit influence on the members of that culture (Hinton, 8).

Even though the theory of the Predictive Mind proves that individuals act on their instinct, it is not the attempt of this paper to justify the state of certain caste groups being subjected to exploitation. However, an understanding of the issue in its many dimensions can render more effective discussions and thereby find out ways to solve the same. It can be asserted that drawing on 'education' as a common solution to social evil would be effective provided it encompasses knowledge of the working of the predictive brain in everyday life. In the Indian context, there is much scope for cognitive research in connection with the cultural values dearly upheld by the Indians.

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Faith as a Symbol of Survival in Slave Ethnicity: A Discourse on Afro-Brazilian Religions

Abstract

Culture encompasses various elements including faith. The social evolution of humans had developed elements such as faith and rituals. Migrations are a common phenomenon in recorded human history. The Atlantic slave trade brought more than 12 million Africans as slaves to the Americas. The Portuguese brought African slaves to Brazil to work in plantations. The culture of the enslaved Africans was preserved through religious syncretism with Catholic beliefs. The scattered African traditions have evolved into various Afro-Brazilian religions. These religions are unique in rituals, traditions, and beliefs. Some religions like Candomble incorporated African beliefs with Catholic and Spiritism movements while others like Quimbanda rejected Catholic elements and sought re-Africanization. Religions like Candomble, Umbanda, Quimbanda, Tambor de mina, and Batuque has their own beliefs and practices. The common elements in the Afro-Brazilian include ritual sacrifice, spirit possession, medium consultations, etc. The rituals symbolize the resistance and preservation of the African ethnic identity in Brazil. However, the Afro-Brazilian religions are facing various challenges like the demonizing of these faiths by neo-Pentecostal movements, misconceptions of black magic and satanic cults, and poor economic situations of the Afro-Brazilians, etc.

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However, these religions are attracting practitioners and tourists alike worldwide and act as a symbol of syncretism, harmony, and Brazilian culture.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Slave trade, Afro-Brazilian religions, Syncretism, Resistance

Faith plays an important role in the social evolution of human beings. The source of faith is deeply rooted in the human psyche. The hunter-gathering communities seldom thought of a high power during their nomadic life. However, the concept of an omnipotent and omniscient god started to appear among the nomadic pastoral tribes later. The concept of a sky father among the tribes of the central Asian steppes is a fine example. This sky father is the epitome of power, valour, and other masculine qualities. Certain modern religions like Hinduism and Zoroastrianism have a deep connection with this concept. The cult of Jehovah has appeared in the Middle East. This has influenced the development of later religions like Christianity and Islam. Throughout human history, various civilizations have developed their mythology and pantheon. This was a direct result of the permanent inhabitation and beginning of agriculture by the hunter-gathering tribes. The nomadic tribes started to establish permanent settlements and begin to practice agriculture at a particular period of history. In most cases, these settlements will be near any water resource such as rivers or lakes. The major civilizations of the ancient world were all scattered around the banks of the major rivers. River Nile was the source of the ancient Egyptian civilization; meanwhile, it was Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamian civilization followed by Indus and Huang Ho in the Indus Valley and Chinese civilizations respectively. The production of culture can be witnessed during the early stages of agriculture.

The human psyche was influenced by the various aspects of nature. Certain meta-human characteristics of nature have resulted in creating fear in the minds of early humans. Fear has paved the way to reverence. Appeasements and reverence of the powers in nature have been developed into rituals. A community shared a common belief, tongue, cuisine, custom, and costumes. Social evolution has introduced various elements into faith over time. The nature of these elements varied from moderate to extreme. War, invasion, riots, etc. were violent and extreme elements whereas migration, famine, and epidemics were moderate elements. Due to these elements, faith and its concepts were syncretized with that of the other community. This religious syncretism has resulted in the development of new cults and denominations. Religious syncretism operated in various ways. There has always been a dominant factor as well as a recessive factor, where the dominant factor will always protrude in the ritual and concept of the religion whereas the influences of the

recessive factor can be witnessed only with a keen observation. The establishment of the Roman Catholic Church was often observed as a continuation of ancient Roman paganism. Various observations can be made in this process of continuation from rituals to architecture. The statues of Jupiter and Venus have made the way for Jesus and Mary. The Pagan temples were converted to churches. Latin became the liturgical language of the Church. Similar influence can also be seen in the Coptic Orthodox Church where the symbols of the ancient Pharaonic culture can be witnessed with its rituals, music, and the Coptic language. In the modern era, political developments also had an important influence on the role of faith and its various aspects.

Migration is an important aspect of human history. The early human societies were hunter-gatherers with a nomadic lifestyle. They never had any destinations, however; they migrated in search of new green pastures. Migration was termed as a movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence, etc. to settle in another. It is considered a normal human activity. Since the prehistoric times, human races were assumed to have migrated from various places according to anthropologists. Human history is full of migrations, starting from the biblical literature, in which the Israelites migrated to Egypt due to famine and the other exodus followed. During the social evolution of humans, social relations grew more complex. There has always been a dominant and repressive element. Certain communities dominated and ruled over the others. These were common in the course of human history. Historical materialism, categorizes the human history of class struggle into six stages. Primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and communism. Slavery encompasses a variety of aspects including, human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, child slavery, domestic servitude, etc. Slavery was part of human history since time immemorial. It even continues to this day implicitly in many parts of the world. Although slavery has been practiced and recorded in many parts of the world, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was one of the most well-documented and discussed slave movements in human history. It comprised the movement of enslaved Africans from the western and central parts of the continent to the Americas. Starting from the late 15th century to the mid-19th century and spanning three continents, it forcibly brought around 12 million Africans to the Americas. The impact that it had left not only affected the slaves and their descendants but also the economies and histories of a large part of the world. Despite having a long time of relations between Europe and Africa, the slave trade started in the Portuguese settlements of West Africa and the Spanish settlements shortly after.

The crops of the new world required labour demands. There were not enough indentured labourers or settlers to work in these fields. To meet this mass demand for

labour, the European settlers brought slaves from the African continent. A large portion of the native populations of the Americas was already wiped out by the old-world diseases and not met the demands of labour requirements. The enslaved Africans were sold in the Americas to work on coffee, tobacco, cocoa, sugar and cotton plantations, gold and silver mines, rice fields, the construction industry, as skilled labour, and as domestic servants. Slavery existed in Africa for a long time. Tribal wars and raids resulted in the massive enslavement of populations. The slave trade was common on the western African coast and with the arrival of the Europeans, the demand boomed. Captured slaves were gathered and imprisoned in the coastal European forts, ready to be bound to the Americas. It continued until the early decades of the 19th century. It was outlawed in various countries with Britain abolishing slavery in 1843. Racial theories were conjured during this period considered that black Africans were biologically inferior to white men and are destined to be enslaved. Many enslaved Africans, as nearly as 2 million died during the hazardous journey in slave ships to the Americas.

Portuguese were the first to engage in the slave trade off the coast of Africa. After Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India, the Portuguese explorers established settlements in South America and Africa. The slaves were captured by the Portuguese and stationed at the coastal ports to be transported to Brazil. The Portuguese arrived in Brazil in 1500 under the expedition of Pedro Alvarez Cabral. The first Portuguese settlement was established in 1516. The indigenous communities often practiced slavery within themselves because of inter-tribal wars just like in the slave coast of Africa. After the establishment of sugar plantations, the demand for labor increased. Many of the indigenous were enslaved however; their number has dwindled due to harsh circumstances.

The slave expeditions known as *Bandeiras* were conducted further west where the *Bandeirantes* targeted the Jesuits' missions. Jesuits had founded establishments known as *Aldeidias* in the hinterlands to control and convert the native populations. *Bandeirantes* targeted the Jesuit settlements and captured native populations. This led to a conflict between the *Bandeirantes* and Jesuits followed by the latter being expelled as they sought to protect the natives. It became clear that indigenous slavery would not meet the labor needs due to several reasons such as the short life expectancy of the native population. This prompted the Portuguese colonists to bring enslaved Africans instead of indigenous slaves. It is estimated that the African slave trade begin in Brazil around the 1530s. The imported as well as the indigenous slaves were mainly employed in the sugarcane plantations. However, the discovery of gold in the Minas Gerais Mountains brought a completely different pattern in slavery.

More African slaves were brought to work in the mines by the middle of the 17th century. Several slave revolts have witnessed in Brazil following the Haitian revolution spreading the ideas of fraternity and equality. Bahia was the center of the slave trade in Brazil. The culture of the city is shaped by the slave trade and revolts. The Male Revolt of 1835 was one of the important slave uprisings in Brazilian history. It was planned by the African-born Muslim slaves of Salvador. It was intended to free all slaves from Bahia. However, the Brazilian-born black slaves never cooperated with the African-born revolt leaders and it was brutally crushed by the colonial regime. The lack of unity between the African-born rioters and Afro-Brazilians lead to the absence of a common slave identity. Certain slaves escaped from the plantations and established settlements known as *Quilombos*. They were mainly found outside the colonial settlements. Brazil become independent from Portugal in 1822. Slavery was legally ended in 1877, making Brazil the last country in the western hemisphere to abolish slavery. Manumission rates were high in Brazil by the second half of the 18th century. Almost three-quarters of the blacks were free at the time of the abolition of slavery. Slavery was in decline by then, mainly due to the cheap European immigrant labour available.

In Brazil, the person's race is determined primarily by physical appearance. Siblings from multiracial parents can be considered as two different races. Two siblings of a white father and black mother might be considered black if the African features are more visible or white if the European features are more visible. Afro-Brazilians were called Preto and accounts for 7% of the Brazilian population. The multiracial Brazilians, also called Pardos have a significant African ancestry. A large concentration of the Preto people can be seen in the Bahia state compared to the other regions of Brazil. Afro-Brazilians mainly practice Catholicism followed by Protestantism and Afro-Brazilian religions. These Afro-Brazilian religions include Batuque, Condomble, Umbanda, Xango, Tambor de mina, and Quimbanda, etc. They are syncretized faiths with African and Catholic elements. As practicing faiths, they are open to all races. Most of the Afro-Brazilian cults were concentrated in urban centers such as Salvador, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Algere, Brasilia, and Sao Luis. These traditions were often suppressed and considered black magic or satanic cults by the colonial authorities. They were mainly practiced in secrecy and often syncretized with Catholic elements. The slaves were mainly brought to Brazil from the west and Central Africa. Most of the slaves were converted to Catholicism after their arrival. However, they continued to practice their native religious traditions in secrecy. Yoruba, Congolese, and Dahomian elements were syncretized with traditional Catholic elements. The Yoruba *Orishas* were identified with Catholic saints. Due to this religious syncretism, many practitioners of the Afro-Brazilian

religions are thriving in Brazil owing to the newfound interest in spirituality among young Brazilians. These traditions are also the symbols of the resistance by the Afro-Brazilians against oppression and colonialism.

Candomble is a prominent Afro-Brazilian religion that was developed during the 19th century. It comprises the elements of Western African religious traditions such as Yoruba, Bantu, Gbe, and Catholicism. Candomble teaches about the supreme creator deity *Oludmare*. *Orishas* are the subservient deities to *Oludmare*. *Orishas* are considered the mediators to *Oludmare*. Individuals are believed to have an individual *Orisha*, which symbolised their character. *Orishas* are often associated with Catholic saints. For example, the *Orisha Obatala* is identified with Saint Mercedes, *Shango* with Saint Barbara, *Yemanja* with the Virgin Mary, *Orula* with Saint Francis of Assisi, *Orgun* with Saint Peter, etc. The centres of worship in Candomble are known as *Terreiros*. Priests were addressed as *Babalorixas* and priestesses as *Iaorixas*. Candomble is a ritual-centric religion with possession, drumming, singing, and dancing. *Orishas* possess mediums for consultations. *Orishas* are the centre of worship in Candomble. They are provided a variety of offerings ranging from food and cigarettes to animal sacrifice. The Candomble ritual includes divination, preparation of amulets, healing, herbal remedies, etc. The concepts of *Orishas* are adapted from Yoruba mythology. However, Candomble adapted various other entities as *Orishas*. For example, the former slaves used to work in plantations. Candomble also incorporated native Brazilian elements. *Cabaclos* are the spirits of the native Brazilians. There also exist other spirits such as *Eres* and *Exus*. Etc. Here the African slaves were able to carry out their native rituals and beliefs in America during a turbulent history of slavery. The syncretic elements can be witnessed in the association of the *Orishas* with the Catholic saints. The bellicose version of Catholicism practiced by the Portuguese suppressed other heathen beliefs. The slaves were able to hide their *Orishas* within the Catholic saints. Here syncretism is a mode of survival and adaptation. The *Orishas* are incorporated into the Catholic mold under the identity of the saint. The rituals and traditions were fused with the catholic rites. Certain rituals like animal sacrifice and possessions were practiced in secrecy at night. This indicates the survival and continuation of the African rituals across the Atlantic. The local elements were also incorporated, which includes the native spirits, which gives a natural Brazilian feature to Candomble.

The Afro-Brazilian religions were described under the pejorative term of Macumba. However, decoding Macumba, various traditions can be observed within it consisting of a variety of rituals and beliefs. Umbanda blends Spiritism with other elements that are common with the Afro-Brazilian religion. Umbanda originated

mainly due to the works of Zelio Fernandino de Moraes. Moraes was a psychic and worked with poor black neighborhoods. Umbanda also shares the Yourba mythology. The concept of the creator deity *Oludmare* and the lesser deities such as *Orishas*. Like the Candomble, The *Orishas* are syncretized with the Catholic saints. Consultation of the *Orishas* through mediums, rituals, reincarnations, and spiritual evolution. The pantheon in Umbanda is much more complex with spirits. The main *Orishas* are revered include *Oxala* (Syncretised as Jesus), *Yemanja* (Our Lady of Navigators), *Oxum* (John the Baptist), *Ogum* (Saint George), *Oxossi* (Saint Sebastian), *Ibeji* (Saints Cosmos and Damian), *Omulu* (Lazarus of Bethany), *Lansa* (Saint Barbara), *Nana* (Saint Anne), *Oxumare* (Bartholomew the Apostle and *Exu* (Saint Antony of Padua). The realm of the spirits consists of various entities including pure spirits, good spirits, Bad spirits or *Kiumbas*, etc. Pure spirits account for angels, archangels, cherubim, etc. Good spirits consist of a variety of entities like *Cabaclos* or spirits of the deceased indigenous Brazilians as in Candomble, *Preto Velho*, or the old blacks who are the spirits of the old slaves. *Baianos* or the Bahians are the spirits of the practitioners of Umbanda. *Boladeiros* are the spirits of the deceased gauchos and *Marujos* are the spirits of the deceased sailors and fishermen. *Kiumbas* are evil spirits thought to be impure and cause disturbances. Apart from Spiritism, Reincarnation and spiritual evolution is another important concept in Umbanda. The spirits will pass through various stages of evolution on many planets. It is believed that the bad spirits will not evolve at all. The good spirits will reach the supreme stage of spiritual evolution in which if they did not succeed will be reincarnated until the final wisdom is acquired. The influence of Kerdec Spiritism can be witnessed within Umbanda. It was a spiritualist, religious, and philosophical doctrine established in France by Allan Kerdec in 1950. It believes that all living beings are immortal spirits that possess physical bodies for some necessary incarnation to attain moral and intellectual development. Kerdec's works analyses the role of mediums, through which the spirits reveal the answers into a body of knowledge known as codification. Elements of Spiritism are evident with Umbanda with the role of medium and spirit possession.

Quimbanda differs from Umbanda as they rejected the Catholic influence on spiritual hierarchy and incorporated a more African-based system. Quimbanda earned popularity during the twentieth century with its Re-Africanization process. The deities in Quimbanda consist of spirits known as *Exus*, *Pomba Giras*, and *Ogun*. Influences of native Brazilian culture, Yoruba mythology, Kongo spirituality, and European witchcraft can be witnessed in Quimbanda. It mainly deals with spiritual as well as material aspects. *Exus* are the male spirits who are invoked to intervene in material matters. *Exus* can be called upon by the practitioner for issues related to love, power, justice, and vengeance. The female counterpart of *Exus* is known as

Pomba Giras. They represent sexuality and feminine power. It has various manifestations like *Maria Molambo*, the woman of the trash that invoked to bring bad luck upon the enemy, *Rainha does Cemiterio*, or the Queen of Cemeteries and the dead, *Dama da Noite*, or the lady of the Night which is associated with darkness, etc. Ogun also plays an important role in Quimbanda, which considers the spirit of the crossroads and warfare. In Quimbanda, the rituals are known as *Trabalho*, which is performed for a variety of purposes. It includes justice in a court case, seeking vengeance, causing harm to an enemy, opening new roads, etc. Offerings are made to the spirits including alcohol, food, cigars, candles, and red carnations. Quimbanda represents a more Africanised form of the Macumba.

Tambor de Mina is a minor religion found in the northern states like Maranhão, Piauí, Pará, and the Amazons. *Tambor* in Portuguese refers to a drum. The drum plays an important role in this Afro-Brazilian religion. Maranhão was a destination for African labour in the late 18th century. The sugar and cotton plantations in Maranhão used African labour power. Unlike the other Afro-Brazilian religions, it maintains a secret society with only veteran initiates will be allowed to perform certain rituals. Tambor de Mina includes Dahomian, Yoruba, and other Western African elements. The Jeje culture of western Africa has a large influence on Tambor de Mina. The divinities worshipped include *Voduns*, some *Orishas*, *Encantados*, and *Caboclos*. *Voduns* are the gods of the Jeje people found in present-day Benin. They are classified into five families, namely *Davice*, *Quevioco*, *Dambira*, *Aladanu*, and *Savaluno*. Each family of *Vodun* has their rituals and traditions. *Voduns* are also considered lesser deities or intermediary deities between the supreme creator god and the practitioner. Avievodum is the supreme creator deity in Tambor de Mina. Legba is considered the trickster deity. The *Encantados* are the entities of people who are mysteriously disappeared. It is a ritualistic religion that includes possession and mediums.

Batque is the Afro-Brazilian tradition followed in the southern state, Rio Grande do Sul. Its influence can also be seen in neighbouring Argentina and Paraguay. Developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it shares common features with other Afro-Brazilian religions like possession, ritual dancing, psychic mediums, and consultation. Priests in Batque are known as *Mai de Santo* or *Pai de Santo*. Rituals are organized in groups around the priest who would act as the supreme authority and can initiate new members along with training future priests. By the 18th century, Afro-Brazilian religions started to appear in Rio Grande do Sul due to the ongoing process of slavery. Some accounts explain the existence of Batque as early as the nineteenth century. Reports of constant police raids and arrests of the practitioners were common in the latter decades of the century. The slaves who have brought from

different nations across Brazil have some common features in their religions like belief in certain common types of deities, rituals, and spirit possession.

The common aspect of Afro-Brazilian religion is syncretism. Despite the various origins, Catholicism overshadowed African traditions. As the official religion of the empire, non-Catholic practices were strictly prohibited. Afro-Brazilian traditions were regarded as pagan and satanic by the Catholic hegemony. Police raids were common. Some traditions were considered the source of narcotic drug dealings and cartels in the later 20th century. The survival of the African traditions owed to the syncretism of the African and Catholic identities. Jorge Amado, the veteran Brazilian novelist has tried to incorporate this duality in his novels such as *the war of the Saints*. The worship of the Catholic saints is incorporated with the African deities, primarily the Yoruban *Orishas*. Here the oppressed are forced to hide their tradition under the faith and tradition of the coloniser. In certain situations, the missionaries used to incorporate certain elements of paganism for easy proselytization. Missionaries in Benin used to incorporate the native Dahomian Vodun deities within the Abrahamic framework. Here similar incorporation can be witnessed, however; the relationship between the Abrahamic framework and the traditions of the oppressed varies. The Afro-Brazilians are still one of the undernourished and deprived groups in Brazil. Their standard of living is yet to improve, and so does their cultural framework. The neo-Pentecostal movements have begun to influence the black slums in recent years. These neo-Pentecostal movements have been demonising the Afro-Brazilian religion through mass media. They have assumed militant nature and are involved in activities such as violently destroying the elements of Afro-Brazilian religions. The abolition of slavery adversely affected the slave masters' status and privilege. The ruling class has fashioned and put into practice a strategy based on the assumption that the inbreeding of the Brazilian population will reduce blackness and increase whitening. Unlike the neighboring Paraguay, which once even banned the marital union of the same races, this inbreeding never intended to build a unique and inclusive nationalistic community but to remove the African traits and elements including the faith from Brazilian society. In Paraguay, the indigenous language, the Guarani has thrived along with Spanish whereas in Brazil the African traits are oppressed. In Brazil, the Afro-Brazilian culture and traditions are getting more attraction as a part of the country's diverse culture. The liberal values and individual freedom of choice had provided the Afro-Brazilian religions to thrive after centuries of oppression. The Afro-Brazilian religion has extended its borders beyond its Preto practitioners initiating from all races. However, these religions stand as a symbol of survival and resistance of the Afro-Brazilians despite the continuing challenges.

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Social Engineering of Pa Renjith and Maari Selvaraj in Contemporary Tamil Movies

Abstract

Tamil cinema today is leaping forward in terms of conceptualization. We can see that even when the problems of caste politics, gender politics, and marginalization were on the rise in the Tamil social sphere, the art world, including Tamil cinema, was stuck in the world of mass masala cinema. In these times, the indirect exploitation of caste politics was also visible in cinema. Behind the growth of many known superstars today, it is possible to see the clear exploitation of caste politics. But scenes of caste politics, gender politics, and the resistance against marginalization remained far from the ideals of Tamil cinema. But in recent times, Tamil cinema has become the sum total of marginality and resistance to it. This research examines the impact of Pa Ranjith and Mari Selvaraj, two Tamil film directors, on social engineering through their cinematic works.

Keywords: Marginality, Resistance, Tamil cinema, Caste, Gender politics

Introduction

Marginality and resistance are two significant aspects of human life. Individuals who are marginalized by dominant social groups often resist injustice and inequality. Cinema is an art form that can represent these aspects of human life through

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Various means. This research article analyzes how marginality and resistance are portrayed in the films *Kaala* and *Natchathiram Nagargirathu* by Pa Ranjith, and *Pariyerum Perumal* and *Karnan* by Maari Selvaraj. The article explores how these movies provide a voice for oppressed and marginalized sections of society and depict their resistance against dominant social structures.

Films of Pa Ranjith

Kaala is a 2018 Tamil language action-drama film directed by Pa Ranjith. The movie tells the story of a slum-dweller and gangster, Kaala, who fights against the corrupt and powerful politician Hari Dhadha. The movie portrays the marginalization of the slum-dwellers, who are considered the underprivileged section of society. The movie shows how the marginalized section of society is constantly oppressed and exploited by the dominant social groups, who want to control and dominate them.

The movie also depicts the resistance of the marginalized section of society against the dominant social structures. Kaala, the protagonist of the movie, is a symbol of resistance. He fights against the corrupt politician Hari Dhadha, who is trying to evict the slum-dwellers from their homes. Kaala uses his power and influence to protect the slum-dwellers and to resist the oppression that they face. The movie also shows how the slum-dwellers unite to fight against the dominant social structures, and how they use their collective power to resist the oppression that they face.

Kaala also portrays the struggle of women against the dominant social structures. Zareena, the wife of Kaala, is a strong and independent woman who fights against the patriarchal norms that oppress her. The movie shows how Zareena uses her strength and courage to resist patriarchal norms and fight for her rights. The movie also portrays the role of women in the struggle for social justice and equality.

In this way, Pa Ranjith's *Kaala* started with social engineering, which completely dismantled the caste and political equations in Tamil cinema. The film's huge reception inspired many other films that came out as a resistance against the marginalization associated with caste. Some of them are Pa Ranjith's own *Natchathiram Nagargirathu*, Maari Selvaraj's *Pariyerum Perumal*, and *Karnan*. It can be judged that these films are defending against caste, class, and gender politics from within the field prepared by time.

When it comes to *Natchathiram Nagargirathu* from *Kaala*, director and writer

Pa Ranjith is a bit more independent. This freedom comes as a result of the social engineering done in *Kaala* Tamil cinema. The film deals with various ideologies, including gender and caste politics. The film sharply criticizes Tamil society based on caste and gender politics. The director also shows us in this skillfully crafted film how the upper-caste brahmanical system brutally oppresses those who speak out against caste and gender exclusions. The romance subplots in Tamil movies that feature Ranjith stand out as superior to the others. He writes these wonderfully, with intelligent prose and fully realized, convincing characters. Ranjith seems to be letting the audience into his own thought process in *Natchathiram Nagargirathu*, totally deconstructing his viewpoints on issues like love, art, politics, gender, sexuality, tradition, etc. He discovers the ideal platform for it in a progressive, shamelessly artistic theatre company that spontaneously produces a musical. We listen as Pa Ranjith outlines his creative process, from the first conception of an idea from a single sentence through the iterative development of themes, motifs, and plots to the use of real-world examples to investigate his work. In the modest hope that life will imitate art, Ranjith's movies always have bittersweet endings, which are also discussed as the creative process develops.

The director portrays a poignant scene that illustrates how deeply caste politics is ingrained in our society. In the scene, there is a quarrel between the lovers, Inian and Rene. During the argument, Inian, who belongs to the upper caste, makes racially abusive statements to Rene. Rene responds by pointing out that Inian did not show any caste hatred when they were intimate, but it has now surfaced during their fight. Through the film, Pa Ranjith raises the question of how deeply rooted caste is in society, given that it even affects people deeply in love with each other. Similarly, Pa Ranjith critiques the marginalization associated with gender politics.

Ranjith's previous film heroes were from the Scheduled Caste (SC). However, in *Natchathiram Nagargirathu*, he casts a Scheduled Caste girl as his heroine, which is unusual in Kollywood. As a result, the film has become a trailblazer in unexplored territory. The Tamil cinema industry has portrayed heroines as dark-skinned girls who are thus despised by the locals; poor people; differently-abled; and even sex workers. However, it never had the audacity to portray the protagonist as a Scheduled Caste girl. Or, at the very least, it did not explicitly identify her as a Dalit.

In one of *Natchathiram Nagargirathu's* scenes, a character named Arjun (Kalaiyaran Harikrishnan), who has developed a love for the heroine Rene (Dushara Vijayan), asks if she is a communist. "I am an Ambedkarite," she responds quietly. This is favorably accepted by the crowd and may open the way for additional

films portraying SC women as heroines in the future (Last name of the director, Year of release). The subject matter of *Natchathiram Nagargirathu* is the love of all kinds: It looks at love affairs between heterosexuals as well as gay, lesbian, and transgender people. Ranjith digs into the rank legislative issues behind affection by addressing contemporary disdain killings in the Ilavarasan-Divya, Shankar-Kowsalya, and Gokulraj cases (Last name of the director, Year of release).

Although the film touches on political issues and features a lot of dialogue, it does not come across as preachy. According to film critic Suresh Kannan from The Federal, "it engages the audience with nuanced humor and an interesting treatment of the screenplay." Ranjith has brought a refreshing new perspective to the story and the filmmaking process. In one scene, Rene's flashback is told through an animation sequence, which gives the character more weight.

According to photographer Karthick, who writes under the pseudonym Yathri, the character Arjun represents a variety of audience segments, such as anti-queer, casteist, and male chauvinist. Rene is subjected to Arjun's sexual harassment in one scene, but she excuses him, saying that not everyone is socially sensitive all the time and that being woke is a deeply-rooted process. In contrast, she is unable to forgive her lover Iniyana, played by Kalidas Jayaram, for insulting her in a casteist manner. This demonstrates that sexual assault is viewed as less severe than caste-based harassment, he stated.

Natchathiram Nagargirathu also portrays the struggle of women against dominant social structures. The movie shows how women are oppressed and exploited by the patriarchal norms that dominate society. Additionally, the movie portrays the role of women in the struggle for social justice and equality.

Films of Maari Selvaraj

Pariyerum Perumal is a film that addresses the issue of caste-based discrimination in Tamil Nadu. The film revolves around the character of Pariyerum Perumal, a Dalit student who enrolls in a law college. The film highlights the discrimination faced by Dalits in educational institutions and society at large.

One of the most striking scenes in the film is when Pariyerum Perumal's friend, Jo, a Dalit girl, is humiliated by her upper-caste classmates. Jo is forced to remove her slippers outside the classroom as her upper-caste classmates do not want to be contaminated by her presence. This scene highlights the deep-rooted caste-based discrimination that exists in Indian society.

Pariyerum Perumal's love interest, Jothi, also faces discrimination due to her caste. Her father, who is a farmer, is not allowed to enter the temple as he belongs to a lower caste. The film also highlights the fact that inter-caste marriages are still a taboo in many parts of Tamil Nadu.

Pariyerum Perumal portrays resistance through the character of Pariyerum Perumal himself. Despite facing discrimination, Pariyerum Perumal does not succumb to it. He fights back against discrimination and stands up for his rights. He forms a friendship with Jothi, who belongs to an upper-caste community. This friendship breaks the barriers of caste-based discrimination and challenges the social hierarchy.

The film also portrays the importance of education in bringing about social change. Pariyerum Perumal, despite facing discrimination, does not give up on his education. He continues to study and fight for his rights. The film highlights the fact that education is a tool for social mobility and change.

Karnan is another film by Maari Selvaraj that addresses the issues faced by marginalized communities in Tamil Nadu. The film revolves around the character of Karnan, who belongs to a tribal community. The film highlights the discrimination faced by the tribal community and their struggles for land rights.

One of the most striking scenes in the film is when Karnan's sister is humiliated by a police officer. She is accused of stealing a police officer's chain and is beaten up by the police officer. This scene highlights the police brutality faced by the marginalized communities in Tamil Nadu.

The film also highlights the fact that the tribal community is often displaced from their land due to industrialization and development. The film shows how the government acquires tribal land without compensating them. The film highlights the struggles faced by the tribal community in asserting their land rights.

Karnan portrays resistance through the character of Karnan himself. Karnan is a fearless fighter who stands up against the oppression faced by his community. He fights against police brutality and land acquisition by the government. He organizes his community and fights for their rights.

The film also portrays the importance of unity in fighting against oppression. Karnan brings together his community and fights against the discrimination and oppression faced by them.

Overall, both *Pariyerum Perumal* and *Karnan* are powerful movies that highlight the issues of marginalization and resistance faced by the Dalit community in Tamil Nadu. These movies are important in creating awareness about the social injustices faced by marginalized communities and in promoting social equality and justice.

Conclusion

Pa Ranjith and Maari Selvaraj, through their movies, have managed to do significant social engineering and provide a voice for the marginalized sections of society. The films *Kaala*, *Pariyerum Perumal*, *Karnan*, and *Natchathiram Nagargirathu* depict the struggles of marginalized people against the dominant social structures of caste and gender politics. The movies show the oppression faced by slum-dwellers, women, and people from lower castes and how they resist exploitation by using their collective power. These films also criticize the patriarchal norms that suppress women and the upper-caste brahmanical system that oppresses those who speak out against caste and gender exclusions. Through his movies, Pa Ranjith has completely dismantled the caste and political equations in Tamil cinema, inspiring many other films that came out as resistance against caste. These films stand out as superior, with intelligent prose and fully realized, convincing characters. Overall, these movies have brought a new era of Tamil cinema, which provides a voice for the oppressed and marginalized sections of society and encourages resistance against dominant social structures.

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Beyond a Refugee Life Story: A Study of Resistance and Marginalization in Nujeen Mustafa's *The Girl from Aleppo: Nujeen's Escape from War to Freedom*

Abstract

Nujeen Mustafa is a Kurdish woman who was born with cerebral palsy and has spent much of her life in a wheelchair. She co-authored "The Girl from Aleppo: Nujeen's Escape from War to Freedom" with Christina Lamb despite her physical challenges and inaccess to conventional education. Now Nujeen is an accomplished activist and an advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. Nujeen was born in the Syrian city of Manbij in 1999, and she spent much of her early life confined to her family's apartment. As she had no access to school, due to her disability, but she managed to learn English through TV programmes. She relied on her older sister to help her with daily tasks. However, Nujeen was determined to learn and make a difference in this world which marginalises women, refugees and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, she belonged to all the strata of oppression but was determined to resist all of them and leave her mark here in the world. This paper attempts to study Nujeen's life as a disabled child, who was denied proper education, her identity as a Kurd and being a woman in war-toned Syria. The study uses bell hooks's theory of "Marginality as a Site of Resistance" to compare and understand the elements of marginality and define the resistance in Nujeen's journey. The paper tries to travel along with her narration and decipher the social, political and cultural means of marginalization.

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Keywords: Cerebral Palsy, Marginality, Refugee Narration, Resistance, Syrian Civil war

Introduction

Arab Spring turned out to be one of the major events of the last decade, which are some loosely related groups of protests that resulted from regime change. This series of pro-democracy uprisings that covered the Arab countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen happened because the people realized that they are actually the power, not the authoritarian rulers. The onset of the protest was in Tunisia in the spring of 2011, and later it spread to nearby nations like Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen etc... Unlike other countries, the Arab Awakening made a reverse impact in Syria, peaceful protests mutated into a violent blood-shedding civil war which continued for a decade. The people were forced to leave their homeland, as the war between those in power and those who want to have power started launching bombshells over their heads.

As the civil war worsened more than half the population found refuge in the countries of Lebanon, Turkey and the nearby European Countries. As per the statistics of UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency, more than 5.5 million people are refugees and 80 per cent of the Syrian Population is now in utter poverty. So many writers have recorded Syrian people's turmoil in the times of civil war through their works, both real-life accounts and fictional tales based on original experiences. Rania Abozeid's *No Turning Back*, Wendy Pearlman's *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled*, Alia Malek's *The Home That Was Our Country*, Yassin Al-Haj Saleh's *The Impossible Revolution*, Mustafa Khalifa's *The Shell*, Samar Yazbek's *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*, *The Crossing* and *19 women: Tales of Resilience from Syria*, *The Girl From Aleppo: Nujeen's Escape From War to Freedom* by Nujeen Mustafa and Christina Lamb are some of those works which portray the raw lives of war-torn Syria.

The Girl from Aleppo: Nujeen's Escape from War to Freedom by Nujeen Mustafa is about the 3500-mile-long journey of a young girl with cerebral palsy from very birth to find a safe abode in Germany with no help other than her sister Nasrine. Christina Lamb helped her to describe these poignant experiences of the longest travel of her life in the book.

The book vividly describes how the people who hoped for a civil state got nightmares of an extremist state to replace the authoritarian regime and in between the civil war and flee, how the people of Syria suffered and survived the hardships of

civil war and lives in refugee camps. The life story is divided into three parts.

The initial chapters of the book describe Nujeen's early years in Manbij and then in Aleppo, where she spent her days with cerebral palsy in their apartment, a condition that rendered her wheelchair-bound and reliant on her family for care. Nujeen's family moved from Manbij, a dusty neglected desert sort of town in Syria to Aleppo in hope of providing better living conditions for her. Unfortunately, even in Aleppo, life disappointed her as the education system at that time was not inclusive enough to accommodate a differently-abled student. Thus she was forced to live inside the four walls of her apartment. Despite her physical constraints, Nujeen was determined to educate herself and live a complete life. She watched American TV shows to learn English, and she kept her aspirations to travel the world one day. She never let life hold her back with any excuse.

When conflict erupted in Syria in 2011, Nujeen's hopes were dashed, though. Aleppo, which was once a thriving metropolis, was turned into a battleground, forcing Nujeen and her family to leave their home. They travelled from one temporary shelter to another, in quest about food, water, and safety. All these affected Nujeen in multitudes as her disability and being in a wheelchair were an obstacle to the easy exodus.

The first destination was their former abode, but soon that place too came to a place of conflict. The next on their list was neighbouring Turkey, a refuge place for most of the civil war refugees from Syria. Nujeen's brother persuaded her family to leave Syria and move to Europe in 2014. It was a dangerous voyage that involved a scary boat ride across the Mediterranean Sea and a protracted walk-through Europe. The trip was made more difficult by Nujeen's wheelchair, and she frequently needed strangers to carry her through difficult terrain.

The second chapter of the memoir talked about the long journey through different nations of Europe. As refugees, Nujeen and her family travelled through various nations before arriving in Germany. They originally evacuated their home in Aleppo, Syria, and spent a few months in Turkey. They then journeyed to Greece, where they boarded a perilous ferry, and travelled from there to Italy. Then, as they travelled to Serbia and Hungary, they encountered a variety of difficulties, including being stranded at a border crossing for several days. They eventually arrived in Austria and finally, Germany, where they were given shelter. Nujeen and her family travelled through several nations, encountering several difficulties and impediments in the process.

The third chapter discusses their life in France as refugees, not a luxury life but one free from the chaos of civil war. That is the place where Nujeen started living her life other than spending them between four walls. Life in France enabled her to pursue the education she aspired to. It was the life she yearned to live and that was the cost of all the hardships she has undergone.

Nujeen on being a Kurd

What sets this memoir apart is the voice of Nujeen, who speaks with remarkable clarity and wisdom despite her youth and physical limitations. Her determination and resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity are truly remarkable, and her story serves as a reminder of the strength and resilience of the human spirit. Nujeen's story is a powerful testimony to the courage and determination of those who have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety and a better life.

Apart from a memoir of a disabled refugee, Nujeen's voice is also the voice of the Kurdish people and their long history as the largest stateless tribe in the world. She in the first chapter of her story defines what it is to be a Kurd and who these Kurdish tribes are.

People don't know much about Kurds – sometimes it seems to me we are completely unknown in the rest of the world. We are a proud people with our own language, food and culture and a long history going back 2,000 years when we were first recorded as Kurti. We are maybe 30 million people, but we have never had our own country. In fact we are the world's biggest stateless tribe. We hoped we would get our own homeland when the British and French divided up the defeated Ottoman Empire after the First World War, just as the Arabs thought they would get their own independence as promised after the Arab Revolt. The Allied powers even signed an agreement called the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 which recognized an autonomous Kurdistan. (Mustafa 11)

She explains the story of deceit and the Kurdish individuals yearning for their homeland. Nujeen's father, whom she calls Yaba, poignantly expresses this longing for an imaginary homeland promised by the world long before. "Yaba believes that one day there will be a Kurdistan, maybe in my lifetime. 'He who has a history has a future,' he always says." (Mustafa 11).

Her narrative vividly explains the hardships of being a Kurd in Syria, ruled by Alawites and how their tribe were oppressed in the country. The country doesn't

encourage the Kurdish language in their educational system, resulting in the estrangement of Kurdish culture from the younger ones. The country doesn't approve of the tradition and heritage of Kurds instead, marginalizes them by calling *ajanib* or foreigners and denying their common human rights. Many of them are forbidden from having Syrian Identity cards, which is inevitable to access education, government jobs and to vote in the election as well as to own property in Syria. According to Nujeen's narration, Turkey is the toughest place to survive for a Kurd adhering to the values.

I guess Turkey is the hardest place to be a Kurd. Atatürk launched a campaign called Turkification, and Turkey doesn't even recognize Kurds as a people but calls them mountain Turks. Our family live both sides of the border, and one of my aunts who lived in Turkey told us she couldn't even give her son a Kurdish name but had to call him Orhan, which is Turkish. Nasrine went to stay with her once and told us they don't speak Kurdish and turned off the radio when she played Kurdish music.

Here is another fact about Kurds. We have our own alphabet which Turkey does not recognize, and until not long ago you could be arrested there if you used the letters Q, W and X, which don't exist in the Turkish language. Imagine going to jail for a consonant! (Mustafa 14)

"Marginality as a site of resistance" is a concept explained by the feminist scholar bell hooks in her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. bell hooks' concept of "marginality as a site of resistance" refers to the idea that marginalized communities can use their physical and cultural spaces as a means of resisting oppressive systems and asserting their agency. According to hooks, those who are marginalized have a unique perspective on the world, one that is often overlooked or dismissed by those in power. By embracing their marginality, these individuals can challenge dominant cultural narratives and create alternative ways of being. Nujeen's family was particular about practising the Kurdish language of Kurmanji. Nujeen tells the readers that she calls her father and mother Yaba and Ayea respectively, which are not Arabic words. The family never failed to celebrate Kurdish festivals even though they were living in an Arab majoritarian area and even when the government of Syria is not happy celebrating them. They always hold their culture and tradition of being a Kurd, by speaking their language at their home, educating their children.

The outbreak of the Civil War created more chaos for the people in Syria. In the first part of her memoir, she provides a detailed description of the events that happened

during the uprising of the revolution. She observes that the Jasmine revolution of Syria wasn't the same as that of Tunisia and Egypt. The president was not ready to give up power. "Instead he again took a hard line, denouncing what he called a conspiracy against Syria and blaming 'saboteurs' backed by foreign powers and 'religious extremists' whom he claimed had taken advantage of the unrest. He said no reform was possible while the chaos continued." (Mustafa 44)

The revolutionists started to get organized under many names, and the FSA or the Free Syrian Army is one main rebel group, which included many rebel groups fighting the autocrats. The Kurd groups didn't join FSA, as they had their own militias, the YPG or the People's Protection Units. The Government mercilessly tried to suppress the rebels and thus the cities of Syria soon turn out to be sites of bloodshed. The people were forced to flee from these battlegrounds to save their lives. When ISIS took power over the cities it turned out to be the most horrible form of wretchedness to remain in Syria. The book describes the stark reality of conflict in times of civil war. She portrays the detailed and lived experience of their family. The narrative develops through the dynamics of the situation that made them leave their home rather than pointing out their vulnerability. She portrays herself as a warrior in the narrative instead of taking the same route telling a tale of victimhood.

Nujeen on being a Disabled Girl

Nujeen Mustafa is not only a girl who survived the Syrian Civil War and successfully found refuge in one European country. She was fighting her inborn disability of cerebral palsy during her tedious journey of 3500 miles crossing more than seven countries before reaching Germany. Nujeen's family take their first asylum in Gaziantep, Turkey and later realizes sending Nujeen to France will be better for her dreams. She completes her journey to Germany in her manual wheelchair. They make a perilous sea-crossing to Lesbos and then travel alone through several countries like Greece, Italy, Serbia, Hungary, and Austria to reach Germany, where they are granted asylum. Throughout the journey, Nujeen faces physical and psychological challenges due to her disability, including the lack of accessible amenities in refugee centres. However, she persists with the help of her sister and her self-taught English language skills.

At her time disability-inclusive education was not something that common Kurds can accommodate back in Syria and as a result, she was confined to her home owning nothing but her Television. She was herself learning English and everything that interests her. She studied world history, current affairs and daily happenings around the globe from all the sources she had access to. "I watched everything, starting with

cartoons and Disney DVDs. My family loved football, so we all watched that together. Then when I was eight and we got a satellite dish, I watched documentaries about history and science. And much later when we got a computer, I discovered Google and began collecting every bit of information I could get.” (Mustafa 72) This was her strategy of resistance she never tried to play victimhood but vehemently fought all the obstacles and work hard to fulfil her dreams.

The perseverance helped her learn without normal schooling and with little help from her family. She narrates her learning process.

In my country there are almost no facilities for disabled people, and the asthma attacks happened so often that I couldn't go to school. My third sister Nahra had not got good enough grades to go to university, so until she got married she was at home too. She was much more interested in beauty and make-up than my other sisters and we always had to wait while she dressed up, but she didn't think my disability should be an excuse not to learn. Not only did she teach me the rules of football, but when I was six she taught me to read and write in Arabic, making me write the same sentence over and over again until it filled a sheet and I was driven crazy.

I learnt quickly. Nasrine went to the local school to beg textbooks for me and I would finish them in a couple of weeks. Once I could read, my world was books, TV and sitting on the balcony. (Mustafa 80)

Nujeen fought everything that tried to pull her down, everything that tried to limit her growth. She doesn't want people to feel pity for her, for her disease. “I hated the way the wheelchair was being used to try and make Hungarian soldiers feel sorry for me. I hated seeing that the police were wearing white medical masks as if we had infectious diseases.” (Mustafa 178) Throughout the journey, they faced different difficulties. Strangers show them kindness, and aid workers offer them support, but they discover that none of the refugee centres they visit has facilities that are accessible for Nujeen. Aid workers never properly assess or address her special needs, causing her additional physical and psychological stress. She becomes dehydrated after limiting her fluid intake to avoid using the restrooms frequently.

I think the local people felt bad for us. Volunteers were passing out all sorts of food. I watched one little girl devour a can of sweetcorn. I didn't take anything because I was desperate to pee. It wasn't easy finding a place I could use, so I was very careful about how much I drank to make sure I wouldn't cause a problem. Fortunately, I'm a good bladder keeper. (Mustafa 212)

She also suffered from exhaustion due to the estranged from her mother. All these never challenged her unwavering hope for a better life. She tried to believe that she is on a European trip every time they encounter problems. She tried to relate her life during flee to some soap operas or to the video games she used to play at her home in Syria, “Nasrine pushed me through fields of dead sunflowers, and we got a taxi back the way we had come the night before, then west towards Croatia. It felt like we were in one of those computer games where they keep cutting off routes and you have to find another one.” (Mustafa 225) Sometimes life turned to be too cruel and forced them to feel their mundane life of being a refugee.

For me it was the hardest day of the trip. We’d lost everything — our country, our home, my aunt and uncle — and been separated from our family, and now we were prisoners. It’s actually illegal to lock up refugees, but what could we do? I was scared we would be kept there for three or four months.

There, surrounded by police and not able to get out, I realized how precious freedom is and how valuable it is to be free. That was the day I understood why we had started this whole revolution, even though Assad had responded by leading the country to its destruction. No longer could I pretend I was on some sort of holiday trip across Europe — now I knew I was truly a refugee. (Mustafa 230)

Even after reaching Germany she went through all marginalization on being refugee, on being a disabled women. They faced racial prejudices of neighbouring German citizens but throughout the narration she doesn’t portray the cliché way of being pitiable and pathetic, instead it depicts her as the women who conquered all things she feared and lives up to the definition of bell hooks theory of marginality, which says “Marginality can be seen not simply as the site of deprivation and powerlessness but also as the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.” (hooks 10)

Nujeen talks about different asylums she came across her journey as a refugee. According to this narration no country she crossed had zero consideration to disabled refugee. Their needs are not addressed effectively in those refugee camps. In Germany, she underwent two medical tests that focused on screening her for contagious infections and her immunisation status, but not on her disability status as part of their application formality to grant asylum there. Additionally, she was given a list of medical illnesses and asked to mark those that applied to her. Cerebral palsy was not on the list of conditions, though. She put a note to the list that said, "I cannot

run" (Mustafa 301) in an effort to explain her situation. She and her sister were initially put in inaccessible accommodation even after all these.

Conclusion

Nujeen's life story brings light into the discussion of disabled community's voice from the background of Syrian civil war. In the initial chapters she points to lack of health services to the disabled people in Syria over pre-war period. As she claims her family moved to Aleppo in the hope providing better medical amenities for Nujeen. Her access to health services were barely sufficient. This drew her back from attending social activities. Nujeen also received no formal schooling and only occasionally left the family flat since she lacked access to independent movement.

She was optimistic and determined to live the life where was treated to be like any other child of her age. She promised herself that to live her life to the lees. It is this determination that bought her to be the advocate and activist for the people with disabilities. All her actions suggest how someone can raise resistance and not gave up in the face of marginalities. "Resistance is not easy, but it is necessary if we are to create a more just and equitable world." (hooks 19).

The narration doesn't try to make Nujeen a super kid instead her life story tried to treat her same as that of others. Although she actively participates in her journey, particularly in the capacity of translator, she still needs and benefits from Nasrine's assistance due to the numerous physical and political challenges they face. There are also instances where Nujeen is depicted as a typical adolescent, such as when she makes Nasrine, who is fatigued and frightened, go find biscuits for her because she is a self-described "fussy eater" or when she criticises the frivolousness of the footwear worn by other refugees.

Nujeen's journey in her wheelchair is her resistance, her determination to achieve better health and education makes her a good example of bell hooks' theory. She tried not to be a victim but instead stood up for herself and to many others like her and bought the world her voice. As we analyse the text, she never tried to get rid of her Kurdish identity. She embraced the marginalities and grow from its power makes the narration something beyond an adolescent Syrian refugee's life story.

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Beyond Victimhood: Tamil Muslim Women's Writing as a Site of Resistance

Abstract

This paper examines the works of Tamil Muslim women writers and their use of literature as a site of resistance against the dominant discourses of marginalization and victimization. Under-stratified communities might use storytelling to share their experiences and struggles, as well as to highlight the ways in which societal norms have disadvantaged them. This can help to raise awareness and build empathy among the wider community, encouraging people to take action to support those who are marginalized. Another technique that under-stratified communities use is to create counter-narratives. These narratives offer an alternative view of reality that challenges the dominant discourse and offers a new way of looking at the world. Drawing on the works of select Tamil Muslim Women writers, this paper attempts to scrutinize the modes of resistance in Tamil Muslim women's writing. These writers not only assert their agency and voice but also offer a new and important perspective on the experiences of Tamil Muslim women.

Keywords: Dominant, Exclusion, Islamophobia, Mainstream Society, Marginality, Narratives, Patriarchy, Resistance, Voice

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Introduction

Tamil Nadu has a rich literary tradition, and women's participation in it dates back to the Sangam period, around 3rd century BCE to 4th century CE. Women poets such as Avvaiyar and Andal are celebrated for their contributions to Tamil literature. However, their works were mostly religious in nature and did not address social or political issues. It was in the early 20th century that Tamil women writers started exploring diverse themes and genres. The Self-Respect Movement, which aimed to challenge patriarchal and caste-based norms, provided a platform for women to express their ideas and opinions. Women writers such as R. Padmapriya, R. Saraswathi, and B. Krishnaveni emerged during this period.

Muslim women have played a crucial role in resistance movements worldwide, actively challenging oppressive systems and advocating for their rights. Through their involvement in political and social movements, they have sought to attain political and social equality, as well as to express solidarity with other marginalized communities. In Iran, for instance, Muslim women have engaged in public protests against strict dress code laws by removing their hijabs, despite the risks of violence and imprisonment. In India, Muslim women have led protests against the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens. Similarly, in the United States, Muslim women have organized marches and rallies against the Muslim Ban and other policies that target their community. Despite the discrimination and backlash they face, these women have demonstrated remarkable courage and resilience in their activism, inspiring others to join the struggle for justice and equality.

Tamil Muslim women have historically faced marginalization and discrimination due to their minority status and their gender. The intersection of these two identities has often resulted in double oppression, as they are marginalized within both the Tamil and Muslim communities. In the past, Tamil Muslim women were confined to traditional gender roles and were often denied access to education and other opportunities.

"Tamil Muslim women writers, who have been marginalized within their community due to their gender, face a double oppression of marginalization within their community and discrimination in the larger society" (Fahima 2018)

The emergence of Tamil Muslim women writers can be traced back to the mid-20th century. The partition of India in 1947 and the subsequent migration of Muslims

to Pakistan and India led to a sense of alienation and displacement among the Tamil Muslim community. However, with the rise of social movements and feminist discourse, Tamil Muslim women began to challenge these gendered restrictions and push for greater representation and empowerment. This led to the emergence of Tamil Muslim women writers who used their writing as a means of expressing their unique experiences and perspectives, and to challenge the dominant narratives about Tamil and Muslim communities.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the works of Tamil Muslim women writers and their use of literature as a site of resistance against marginalization and oppression. Despite facing multiple forms of discrimination based on their gender, religion, and language, these writers have used their works to challenge patriarchal and Islamophobic norms, and offer a powerful critique of the dominant narratives that have historically silenced their voices and excluded them from mainstream society. Through a critical analysis of their writings, this paper seeks to explore the complex issues of marginality and resistance in Tamil Muslim women's writing, and their potential to offer a new and important perspective on the experiences of Tamil Muslim women. By examining the works of select Tamil Muslim Women writers, this paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which these writers have navigated issues of identity, gender, and religion, and asserted their agency and voice in the face of marginalization. Ultimately, this paper argues that Tamil Muslim women's writing offers a powerful and nuanced critique of dominant narratives, and a new vision for the future that embraces the complexity and diversity of Tamil Muslim women's experiences.

Critics like V. Sivathamby, have historically belittled the works of Tamil women writers by dismissing them as merely domestic, personal and sentimental. They have viewed women's writing as lacking in intellectual and aesthetic depth, and have often relegated their works to a secondary status. Women's writings are criticised as "household literature" (Fahima 2018) and not deserving of being considered as "real" (Fahima 2018) literature. While the critics like Ki. Rajanarayanan, A. A. Manavalan and M. Tamilvanan have evaluated the works of Tamil Muslim women writers in terms of their literary value, language use, and social relevance. Ki. Rajanarayanan has praised the works of Tamil Muslim women writers for their portrayal of Muslim culture and traditions. He has highlighted the use of the Tamil language and its unique features in their writings. A. A. Manavalan has also been critical of some of their works for being too focused on the issues of the Muslim community and not addressing broader social issues. While they have praised the writers for their unique perspectives and contributions to Tamil literature, they have also provided constructive criticism on aspects that could be improved upon.

Voices of Tamil Muslim Women in Literature

Rajathi Salma is a prominent literary figure whose works effectively highlight the struggles and experiences of marginalized communities. In her famous work "Meendum Meendum Piranthom," Salma presents a powerful portrayal of the oppression and exploitation faced by Tamil Muslim women. Through her vivid use of imagery, Salma effectively conveys the harsh realities of life for women who are confined and constrained by societal norms and expectations. Salma's literary contribution is invaluable as it brings attention to the plight of marginalized communities, particularly women, and provides a platform for their voices to be heard.

Rajathi Salma's literary works are a powerful representation of the struggles and hardships faced by Tamil Muslim women due to the oppressive societal norms and expectations imposed on them. In her poem "Kaattu Vazhi," Salma vividly depicts the suffocating reality of Tamil Muslim women who are confined to their homes and never allowed to experience the world beyond. By showcasing the oppressive nature of societal norms, Salma challenges the patriarchal system and advocates for the freedom and agency of Tamil Muslim women.

In her novel, *The Hour Past Midnight*, Salma continues to challenge the conservative and patriarchal norms of her community. Through her use of narrative techniques and cultural depictions, Salma provides a powerful critique of the rigid religious and political ideologies that suppress the voices of women. By showcasing the struggles of women to resist and navigate these norms, Salma's novel serves as an important tool for empowering women and promoting gender equality. Therefore, Salma's literary works stand as a testimony to her bravery and determination to challenge the oppressive systems of her society and empower Tamil Muslim women. "The novel is a powerful representation of resistance by a woman against patriarchal norms" (Fathima 29)

In the poem, "We Sing of a Free Land" by Salma, she writes:

"We sing of a free land,
Where women's voices ring out clear
Where they can walk down the street
Unafraid, head held high
We sing of a land where women
Can speak their minds, free and unbound" (10- 15)

The excerpt from Salma's poem portrays the unwavering spirit of Tamil Muslim women writers who defy societal norms by expressing themselves through writing. Their works serve as a tool for resistance and self-assertion, challenging the oppressive forces that seek to silence their voices.

Salma's rise to prominence as a Tamil Muslim woman writer attest to her ability to skilfully and vividly capture the struggles and experiences of her community. Her writing offers a unique perspective on the challenges faced by Tamil Muslim women, with her language and imagery serving as a powerful means of resistance and empowerment. Salma's literary contributions have earned her a prominent place in the literary world, serving as an inspiration to generations of women to speak up and share their stories with the world.

Rafeeqa Sultana's writing serves as a powerful tool for resistance against the patriarchal and religious constraints imposed on Tamil Muslim women. She uses her writing to challenge traditional gender roles and to empower women in her community. In her short story "Pudhu Paadal" (New Song), Sultana portrays a young woman named Rukmini who defies her father's wishes and pursues her passion for singing. By doing so, Sultana challenges the restrictive societal norms that limit women's agency and self-expression. Her poem "Kanavu" (Dream) expresses her yearning for a world where gender barriers do not exist and where women can enjoy the same freedoms and opportunities as men.

In "Exploring Tamil Muslim Women's Writing: A Feminist Perspective," K. Praba delves into the representation of Tamil Muslim women in literature and the experiences that shape their lives. The article highlights the importance of Tamil Muslim women's writing as a means of amplifying their voices and experiences. Praba argues that a feminist perspective is necessary to fully understand the intersectionality of gender, religion, and ethnicity in the lives of Tamil Muslim women. By providing a platform for these voices to be heard, Tamil Muslim women's writing becomes a powerful tool for resistance against the systemic oppression they face. "The narratives of Tamil Muslim women writers challenge the dominant notions of femininity and masculinity, religion and culture, and nation and community" (Praba 2015, 91).

The story, "The Night When All the Men Laughed," by Salma tells the tale of a group of women who band together to resist the sexual advances of a group of men. The women ultimately succeed in foiling the men's attempts, but not before they have to endure harassment and abuse. She portrays the struggles of women in patriarchal societies and the ways in which they resist and challenge oppressive systems.

The resistance movements by Tamil Muslim women in India have primarily focused on issues related to their domestic lives and communities. They have also been advocating for the rights of Muslim women within their families, including the right to education, employment, and freedom from violence and harassment. Additionally, Tamil Muslim women have been working to address the economic hardships faced by their communities, including poverty and lack of access to basic amenities. Through their activism, these women have been challenging the patriarchal norms that restrict their mobility and limit their ability to participate in public life. Despite facing numerous obstacles, including intimidation and violence, these women have been working tirelessly to create a more just and equitable society for themselves and their families.

Her works emphasize the importance of solidarity and collective action in the fight for gender equality. One quote from Rajathi Salma's book "The Curse," which contains the stories mentioned above, illustrates the themes of resistance and solidarity:

"The only way to overcome oppression is to come together and fight against it. It is only then that we can break free from the chains of patriarchy and create a world that is truly equal and just for all." (57)

Mohanty argues that women's resistance takes many forms, including everyday acts of survival and the creation of alternative discourses and cultural practices. She emphasizes the importance of recognizing these forms of resistance as legitimate and effective strategies for social and political change.

"Feminist scholarship has challenged this assumption of women's passivity and given us a rich and complex understanding of women's experiences and struggles. By emphasizing women's agency and resistance, this scholarship has shown that women have not only been active participants in the making of their own lives but also agents of change in society as a whole. Women have resisted patriarchal, racist, and imperialist power relations in diverse ways, ranging from everyday acts of survival to collective action, armed struggle, and feminist consciousness-raising" (Mohanty 1991, ix).

Tamil women writers continue to resist patriarchal norms through their writing in various ways. They use their narratives to bring attention to issues such as gender inequality, oppression, and violence against women. They also employ techniques such as subversion and irony to challenge societal norms and expectations. Additionally, they question and challenge traditional religious and cultural practices

that perpetuate gender discrimination. In terms of language, Tamil women writers use their mother tongue to express themselves in a manner that is authentic and relatable to their readers. By writing in Tamil, they also break away from the dominance of English and the marginalization of regional languages. This creates a space for their voices to be heard and for their experiences to be validated.

Tamil women writers continue to push boundaries and challenge societal norms through their writing. They use various modes of resistance to bring attention to issues of gender inequality and oppression and to assert their agency and autonomy as women.

Conclusion

Muslim women have been at the forefront of social, political, and economic movements around the world, advocating for their rights and challenging oppressive structures. While many of these efforts have focused on domestic issues such as education, employment, and freedom from violence, some Muslim women have fought for broader freedoms and a wider scope of rights. Women like Malala Yousafzai, Shirin Ebadi, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Svetlana Alexievich have engaged in activism that extends beyond their domestic lives, advocating for democracy, human rights, gender equality, and religious freedom. Through their work, they have highlighted the experiences of women in war and conflict zones, challenged oppressive practices such as female genital mutilation, and become symbols of resistance to gender-based oppression. These examples demonstrate that Muslim women's activism has a global reach and that it encompasses a wide range of issues that extend beyond their own communities.

While Muslim women like Malala Yousafzai, Shirin Ebadi, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Svetlana Alexievich have fought for broader freedoms and a wider scope of rights, the resistance movements by Tamil Muslim women in India have predominantly centred on issues related to their domestic lives and communities. Tamil Muslim women have primarily focused on advocating for the rights of Muslim women within their families, including access to education, employment, and freedom from violence and harassment. While they have also been working to address the economic challenges facing their communities, such as poverty and lack of access to basic amenities, their activism has largely centred on confronting patriarchal norms that inhibit their mobility and constrain their participation in public life. Nevertheless, these women have shown immense courage and resilience in their efforts to create a more just and equitable society for themselves and their families, and it is possible that they may also contribute to broader social and political movements in the future.

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The Mere Existence is a Resistance: The Beat Generation as Rhizomes and Nomadic War Machines

“Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: American books are different from European books, even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees. The conception of the book is different. *Leaves of Grass*... Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run the lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line! . . . As they say about old man river: *He don't plant 'tastos/ Don't plant cotton/ Them that plants them is soon forgotten/ But old man river vhe just keeps rollin' along.*” (A Thousand Plateaus, 19, 24-5).

Abstract

A world which we totally detest will make us opening new ways to enter into a better world view. Living in a completely disappointing conformist society will let out the most convenient, yet difficult, pathways to wander on. The post war America witnessed such an outbreak of a new wave of thought called the Beat Generation. Beat Generation was a literary movement initiated by a number of young, educated, middle-class people including Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Philosophers, Giles Deleuze and Felix Gauttari developed the concept of rhizome and nomadology in their famous work, A Thousand Plateaus

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which could be amply attached to the Beat Generation literature. In this paper, I try to evaluate the philosophy of Beat Generation with the Deleuzian concepts of rhizome, nomadology, deterritorialization, re-territorialization and lines of flight. The paper would examine how the mere existence as a marginal group will pose as a resistance against the issues of marginalization.

Key words: Beat Generation, Deleuze, De-territorialization, Marginalization, Resistance, Re-territorialization, Rhizome

America is a different terrain for Deleuze. The country, with its rhizomatic movements render a curiously engaging realm for the French philosopher's concepts of rhizome, nomadology, war machine and lines of flights. The landscape of America with its topographical placement; with its dreams of American frontier, Americana, transcendentalism; with its world renowned subculture, seems like a better place for Deleuze to implement his philosophy of becoming. Among them, what had a greater amount of interest on Deleuze was the *minor* American literature. These minor writers knew, according to Deleuze and his co-author Guattari, how to move "between" things with the "logic of the AND." (Deleuze and Guattari) These "minor" writers are "rhizomatic" with their "deterritorializing" and "reterritorializing" potential who function as a nomadic war machines against the stagnant authoritative society. In this paper, I try to read the philosophy of Beat Generation writers in the light of Deleuzian concepts of rhizome, nomadology and war machines and find how they posed themselves as a resist against the issues of marginalization.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari developed their concept of rhizome as opposed to the traditional philosophical canon which is formed on the basis of an *arborascent*/ tree system maintaining a hierarchical structure centered on a fixed root. "Rhizome" is a botanical term which describes a horizontal stem system that moves through soil chaotically effacing any kinds of a clear path or route. Rhizomes are capable of moving upward as well providing itself a chance to create its own life system. For Deleuze, rhizome is a metaphor with which anything can be connected. It can be applied to a pack of wolves or rats, or even to a group of people if they generate a heterogeneous life connecting to different other groups. According to this theory, a group having got rhizomatic movements will not resolve themselves into easily traceable trajectories. Deleuze and Guattari elaborate on six fundamental characteristics of rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

1. & 2. Any point of the rhizome can be connected to any other. It is non-hierarchical.

3. Rhizomes have the principle of multiplicity.
4. They have the principle of asignifying rupture.
5. The principle of cartography
6. The principle of decalcomania.

With their “continuous flow of undisciplined thought” as said by Neal Cassady, Beat Generation writers collaborated with multiple literary and cultural groups and communities around them and rightly can be considered a rhizomatic group in its strictest sense. Beat generation was a literary movement derived as an after effect of World War II which was ahead of its time at least a decade. Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg are the three main figures of the Beat generation. A small group of university students and dropouts in and around Columbia University, the beatniks questioned the established status quo in unusual ways hitherto unknown to America’s literary and cultural circles.

The term “beat” has originated as a result of a conversation between Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes where they, most precisely Kerouac, reject the literal sense of “tired and beaten down,” but take the sense of beatific or blissful. Holmes later wrote Kerouac’s concerns on beats as “...More than mere weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and ultimately of soul: a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself.” (Holmes, 1952). In “The Philosophy of the Beat Generation” (1958), he established his definition of the Beats as, “(t)o be beat is to be at the bottom of your personality, looking up: to be existential in Kierkegaard, rather than the Jean-Paul Sartre sense” (229). He further develops the ideas by posing the question of Beat Generation is not “Why are we live?” or “What is the meaning of life?” but rather “How are we to Live?” As with this “dark night of the individual soul,” beatniks experimented with everything that they had around.

Emerged in the final years of World War II and flourished through 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Beat Generation is a great influence on many especially the disillusioned youth who detested the conformist America of the time. The World war has induced a fear of a possibility of a Third World War through communist upheaval was a constant fear among authorities, thereby, any kinds of deviant behavior from the youth were viewed suspiciously. This fear of a communist conspiracy to take over the American Government reached to its peak with ‘McCarthy’s anti-communist paranoia’. This fear of authorities unleashed a great number of restrictions on the free spirits of the country which resulted as a spur for great minds to act against the

wishes of conformism. Beat Generation emerged to prominence as a ‘heterogeneous group of disillusioned youngsters and hipsters, experimenting with drugs, criminality and spiritualism, roaming the country in search of a new faith.’ They had ‘enough of homelessness, valuelessness, faithlessness’ which prompted them to reach to a conclusion that ‘the problem of modern life is essentially a spiritual problem’ (Holmes, 1952). Though a number of writers are incorporated to the beats, such as Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, Peter Orlovsky, Carl Solomon, Joan Vollmer, John Clellon Holmes, Herbert Huncke, Lucien Carr and Lawrence Ferlinghetti; the names of novelists, William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac; and poet Allen Ginsberg will come out more prominently.

The period witnessed their ‘rhizomatic’ journeying throughout America, experimenting and connecting with drugs, sexual diversity and Jazz music. The trinity; Burroughs, Kerouac and Ginsberg had ‘seen inside of mental institutions and prisons by the age of thirty,’ (Campbell, 2000) which, thereby, induced the normal world to consider it as an immoral movement. They incorporated, assimilated and appropriated with different minorities groups. A. Robert Lee, by quoting both Kerouac and Ginsberg, estimated that “[l]ines like ‘Negro streets at dawn’ and ‘Wishing I were a Negro...a Denver Mexican... a poor overworked Jap,’ however contentiously, give Beat particularization to this changing awareness of American demography and its cultures.” (2017: 195) Their writings genuinely identified with the ethnic minorities and, thus, showed the diversity of America.

Apart from their indulgences with multiplicities, heterogeneous communities, both maintaining signifying and *asignifying* ruptures, the Beats themselves would have been seen to be turning down as nomadic war machines, in a strictly Deleuzian sense of the words. While presenting a paper entitled as ‘Nomadic Thought’ delivered to a Nietzsche conference in 1972, Gilles Deleuze proposed the problem of the revolution as follows:

As we know, the revolutionary problem today is to find some unity in our various struggles without falling back on the despotic and the bureaucratic organization of the party or State apparatus: we want a war machine that would not recreate a State apparatus, a nomadic unity in relation with the Outside, that would not recreate the despotic internal unity. (Deleuze, 2004: 259)

Deleuze’s distinction between State philosophy and nomadic thought first came in his essay on Nietzsche, “Nomad Thought,” which was later developed more in his

collaborative work with Felix Gauttari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. “However, Deleuze had already made the distinction as early as 1968, in *Difference and Repetition*, in which he distinguishes between a “nomadic distribution” of the various components of Being in Spinoza, opposing it to the Cartesian theory of substances that, like the agricultural or the statist model, distributes elements of Being by dividing them into fixed categories, demarcating territories and fencing them off from one another” (Robert T. Tally Jr. 2010). So the ‘logical structure of a territory’ upon which the Cartesian theory is made consists of ‘stable borders by fixed confines’ or signs “which ... form an inclusion-exclusion device and work according to a dialectic of recognition” (Simone Aurora, 2014 1-26). Subjectivity is an important embodiment of these territories where the inclusive subject automatically comes under the administrative, power structures of State.

This is where Deleuze’s nomadic thinkers and writers start to deviate from the domains of territory and produce new form of a non-territorial or, rather, a deterritorialized subjectivity which corresponds with Deleuzian term, “singularity.” The Beats, with their “swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences” (Deleuze 1994, 50/71) rejected the social, political, religious, and artistic values of their time. They rejected the imagist poetry of their predecessors such as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot and rejected the neo-romanticism of Robert Frost. They even considered the radical non-conformity of the Lost Generation is not adequate enough to dismantle the disillusionment of the youth.

In common with the Dadaists and surrealists, the Beats regarded society as a suffering from a collective psychosis, a madness whose symptoms manifested themselves in the form of the cold war; the threat of atomic annihilation; the consumerism, conformity, and passivity of the mass of people (with their unacknowledged secret anxieties and desires); the blandness, the aridity, and the insipidity of contemporary life; the lack of spiritual values; the erosion of human ideals and goals by self-satisfaction, indifference, compliance, and complacency; the unchallenged excesses of the bureaucracy, the military, the police, and the intelligence communities; the technology mania; and the insidious hypnotic powers of television and other mass media (Gregory Stephenson, 6-7)

They started deterritorialization, by cultivating novel and ‘extreme ways of artistic expression, employed radically experimental techniques, and the fretters of established taste, literary decorum, and legal censorship’ (Stephenson, 7). This deterritorializing “line of flights” enabled them to create a ‘limitless plane of

composition' (Echo, Spring 2001) by out winning the identity- making territorial codes. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write that "whenever we can identify a well-defined segmented line, we notice that it continues in another form, as a *quantum flow*. This *quantum flow* "de-individualizes" those who eludes the subjectivity of the state apparatus. Jack Kerouac, with his 'spontaneous prose,' tries to encompass a vision which could be considered more as an Eastern philosophy of nurturing 'a spontaneous experience of enlightenment' (found in *Beat Sound, Beat Vision*). Thus the Beat vision of a naked soul prone both the chances of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of traditional ideals. In the stress based prosaic lines in "Howl," Ginsberg maintains the traditional rhythmic structure of poetry as well.

This is the same ethos which a nomadic war machine contains according to Deleuze and Guattari that brings in "a completely other distribution, which must be called nomadic, a nomad nomos, without property, enclosure or measure," that does not involve "a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute among themselves in an open space- a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits." (Deleuze, *Difference b and Repetition*, p. 36.)(Found in Robert T. Tally Jr.). Within this 'precise limit' or the territories, the beats enjoys an 'unlimited' space of creative writing. They align both sacred and profane languages together in their literature; thereby, performing the nomadic war machines. In *On the Move* Kerouac writes:

But then they danced down the streets like dingedodies, and I shambled after as I've been doing all my life after people who interest me, because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'(Kerouac p. 8.).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, revolutionaries are not those who rebuff statist, territorial ideas, but those who find faults with the existing system, criticizing and belittling them by thwarting the rules conspicuously; "de-territorializing" and "re-territorializing" them for the good. This is how the beat generation writers 'revolutionized' American culture in general and the American literary scene in particular. This is how Jack Kerouac resisted his French ethnic identity, Ginsberg his gay identity and Burroughs his self-proclaimed existence as a drug addict. I conclude this paper by stating that the mere existence as marginalized has become the resistance itself among Beat Generation writers.

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Mapping Marginal Masculinities in Modern-Day Malayalam Movies

Abstract

Gender Studies until recently focused its attention on inter-gender justice, feminist calls for equality and also the issues of transgenders and homosexuals. Not many studies were done on the construction of the ideal masculinity concept and what is being presented as accepted masculinity. With R.W. Connell and her book Masculinities, a new angle to gender studies has been thrown into the light. The four types of masculinities she emphasizes are hegemonic, complicit, marginalized and subordinate masculinities. The last two in this hierarchy, Marginalized and Subordinate masculinities, are often placed outside the centre stage. Even in cultural productions like cinema, their voices are left unheard. This paper attempts to explore how 21st-century Malayalam commercial movies treat the last two types of men and to what extent the ignorance of the mass is reflected in the mass art, and how intolerant the culture industry remains to be towards the marginalized, unpopular version of masculinity. The paper uses popular Malayalam movies like Chappa Kurishu, Chanthupottu, Rithu, Action Hero Biju, Two Countries, Aami, Mumbai Police etc. to analyze this issue.

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Keywords: Gender studies, Marginalised, Masculinities, Subordinate.

Introduction

The term Masculinity was considered to be singular until the publishing of Raewyn Connell's critical study *Masculinities*. She stresses Judith Butler's view that gender is performed, but concentrates on how masculinity can be plural in a plural male mass. She used the term Hegemonic Masculinity to refer to what is generally accepted as ideal masculinity but Connell points out that there are divergent masculinities apart from hegemonic. Not all men can be hegemonic. Connell puts down the hierarchy of masculinities. This hierarchy included four categories of masculinity: hegemonic, complicit, marginalized and subordinate.

Movies are so influential among children and youth these days and the movies from the marvel, dc, Disney universe are worldwide grossers. The impact these movies bear on the development of a child and a teenager has been a matter of recent academic discussions. They have been criticised for the portrayal of dominant masculinity as the normal and acceptable. When it comes to Malayalam movie industry, we haven't brought forth any fantasy brands as such. But we have many movies that picturize the male hero as part, and representative of the dominant hegemonic masculinity traits. This paper is an attempt to bring out such masculinity politics at play in some of the recent mainstream Malayalam movies with reasonable commercial success. The paper attempts to evaluate the treatment of both the hegemonic and subordinate masculinity in these movies and tries to figure out whether any stereotypical patterns are being followed in it.

Treatment of Marginal Masculinities in Select Malayalam Movies.

The paper uses the R.W Conner's concepts of masculinities and the different traits of masculinity performances. To begin with, the dominant mode of expression is often called Hegemonic Masculinity. And it is deemed acceptable in the society. Even though it is not the most common, it is the most glorified and cherished form of masculinity performance. Rigid Heteronormativity, Fairness, Physical Strength, and Suppression of tender emotions are the major qualities of the hegemonic trait.

"Normative definitions recognize these differences and offer a standard: masculinity is what men ought to be" (Connell, 70). R.W Connell talks about how society attempts to highlight how the society try to stabilize the notion of hegemonic as the standard and spread a sense of incompleteness among those who fall into categories beneath it in its classification.

Other forms of masculinity expressions also need to be discussed before moving on to the central argument of the paper. Complicit masculinity is more common among

the masses but is lower than hegemonic in the hierarchy. Even though men belonging to Complicit masculinity do not have the same qualities as the Hegemonic, it doesn't oppose the authority or superiority of the Hegemonic. Instead, men belonging to the Complicit trait of masculinity show reverence and desire towards Hegemonic projections and performances. Since they conform to the system of the male gender order, they do receive consideration in the social sphere.

Marginalized masculinity is the expression where man doesn't have access to the Hegemonic because of social factors. But even men belonging to the Marginalized do exhibit traits like aggression, suppression of emotion, display of physical strength etc. Men of colour, and men with disabilities are examples of men belonging to the Marginalized form.

The last category of masculinity, according to R.W Connell is Subordinate masculinity. Men who are deemed as having subordinate masculinity perform in ways that are opposite to those that are valued with hegemonic masculinity, such as physical weakness and the exhibition of emotions like sadness. Effeminate and gay men are examples of men who exhibit a subordinate masculinity identity.

Cinema has gained the place of popular art and is a key contributor or player in what neo-Marxists call Cultural Industry. Movies, being commercial often relegate art to second upholding entertainment aspect and thus may attune itself to the popular perspective which may be ignorant and intolerant. This is well noticed in the case of world cinema when it comes to the portrayal of men having marginalized or subordinate masculinity. There are a lot of Peter Parkers around who need some injections to turn what has been accepted as ideal or normal. This is not limited to the west; this ignorance or negative portrayal is rather dominant in our very own Malayalam Commercial movies.

The Sameer Thahir debut movie Chappa Kurishu had all the ingredients of a commercial film and presents two opposite male lead characters – Arjun and Ansari. Arjun belongs to the accepted masculinity class, enjoys an expressive relationship with girls, runs a busy business, is dominant over his circle and is self-ruling. On the other hand, we have a naïve shop attendant Ansari, incapable to react to scorns thrown at him, never expressing his love, silent and almost living within himself and always ruled by others around. The story takes a twist when Arjun's misplaced phone containing an intimate clip reaches Ansari by chance. Ansari is not at all aware of any financial dealings that he could make out of the situation or about posing a blackmail offer to Arjun if he returned the mobile. All that Ansari cares about is the voice of a

human being who is ready to do as he says. This happiness makes the chase for Arjun all the more difficult as Ansari begins to enjoy the attention that he is getting and keeps running away from Arjun. The shift in Ansari's character is portrayed as good and needed. The climax scene, where Ansari responds to the ridiculing mass and starts to assert his dominance over things around him, is indicative of his shift from Marginalized Masculinity to Hegemonic or Complicit at the least. That shift from divergent masculinity to the accepted is glorified and celebrated in the movie.

The fourth category of masculinity in Connell's hierarchy is Subordinate masculinity. Effeminate men, gay, impotent people are said to be belonging to Subordinate masculinity. The best case of the negative portrayal of an effeminate male character can be seen in Lal Jose's "Chanthupottu". The central character Radhakrishnan, called Radha, is not transgender. He is an effeminate man, who was dressed up as a girl by his grandma who always yearned for a girl. He was taught to dress up and behave like a girl. He eventually grows up as a straight man with exaggerated effeminate mannerisms.

Radha or Radhakrishnan giggled, danced, and walked like a woman. He was "conditioned" to behave so. It's only when his lover gets pregnant that he is officially granted the title of a man. It is as if he has to prove his potency to the public to be considered a boy or man. During his stay away from his native land, he was taught to wear a dress like a man, and also build physical strength. That is shown in the movie as a process of gendering as if men are supposed to be physically built and wear certain styles and so on. The movie had a 'happy ending', as the character becomes more masculine and has a child. The character proves to everyone that he is 'normal'. There is a scene in the movie where the protagonist's mother asks him to fall in love with a girl and marry her so that society stops ostracizing him. In the climax of the movie when Radha meets his son, he notices that the child is also dressed up like a girl. He changes it and announces that his son should live like a boy. Though the film arouses sympathy with Radha, the character has done no good to the group of effeminate men around as the movie concludes with a message that effeminate is a condition far from normal for a man.

Another condition of Subordinate masculinity is being gay. There are not a handful of movies in the Malayalam commercials that deal with the complicated theme of gay life. One such bold attempt can be seen in the Bobby– Sanjay story, Mumbai Police. It is a nicely made film, but it also has its problems. The Gay identity of the lead character Antony Moses is seen as a sexual disorientation or handicap by his closest friend. Even Moses fears being exposed and plans the killing of his friend to

conceal his identity. The movie has its twists and turns, and in the most decisive of the twists, Moses meets with an accident; when he returns to life, he can speak his language and can understand he is a police officer upon being told what he was investigating. But with his memory, the only basic thing he seems to have lost or forgotten is his sexuality. He forgets that he is gay and is in tears upon the realization in the second coming post-accident. The movie gave the impression that Moses became straight or normal after the accident. Homosexuality is also shown as a cause of the rouge or violent nature of Moses, as the second Moses seems controlled and patient.

Syamaprasad is known for his rare treatment of themes in cinema. In his movie *Rithu*, one of the lead characters, Sunny, is gay. His gay partner Jamal uses his sexuality as a tool to rob some crucial industry-related data. Here also the goody-goody, the forward-looking hero finds it difficult to accept Sunny's sexual orientation. He appears baffled at that realization. This a typical gesture of the public, as gays are seen as abnormal or even criminal. The two gay characters Sunny and Jamal are also shown in a bad light as they break the ethics of friendship and profession. This can be seen as another insult to their sexuality.

A recent commercial success, *Action Hero Biju* is a racist, homophobic and misogynist movie. There is a scene where a gay man was questioned by the hero SI Biju Paulose and the gay immediately gropes him. He was shown to have exaggerated female strides in that cameo scene. Similar instances can be seen in the commercial movie "*Two Countries*", where the character of Riyas Khan gropes the hero as he gets an opportunity. All these movies are satisfying the general public and help cement the notion that being gay is a kind of abnormality and even cross that limit and show them as sexual perverts also.

Kamala Surayya in the 50s, 60s and 70s could write about homosexuality with clarity and sensitivity. She even coined the term "*swavarga premi*" giving a romantic beauty to it. But Kamal, in the biopic of Kamala Surayya, as in his earlier misogynist movies, leaves an insensitive portrayal in the movie "*Aami*". In the story, her husband's gay partner is sketched in high regard, but the movie tarnishes that image and the gay partner is shown in a denigrating manner, as someone belonging to a lower class.

Conclusion

These are all some examples drawn from some of the popular movies that have treated the case of either Marginalized or Subordinate masculinity. The ignorance and intolerance on part of our cultural productions becomes largely conspicuous. The movies set a stereotypical version of gender binaries. It is the same, when dealing with divergent masculinities. It is indeed easy labour to show what popular commercial movies expect from a male hero. Culture and gender are both evolving and constructed at the same time. Normalcy have been defined, dictated and passed on from generations to the next and the notion of normal is given priority in cultural productions, say movies or books for that matter. Such notions constructed through culture is standardized and given popularity through productions of culture. A mass of audience who have internalized the norms of normalcy, want improbable hegemonic masculine heroes like Pulimurugan and remain to be obsessed with the traditional notions of straight or accepted masculinity.

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Postcolonialism and Refugee Poetics in Malayalam Fiction: An Analysis of *Yudhanantharam (After the War)* by Rihan Rashid and *Sarkar* by King Johns

Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to study various modes of representation of Muslim refugee/migrant lives in literary, artistic and other discourses especially those from the Middle East and India in Malayalam novels. It seeks to investigate the functions and impact of these representations, exploring questions such as whether refugee poetics serve to increase awareness of the displaced condition, or whether has literature any potential to prevent future conflicts from arising. The method adopted is to analyse two recently published Malayalam novels representing the refugee crisis by using postcolonial theory. The books under study are *Yudhanantharam (After the War)* by Rihan Rashid and *Sarkar* by King Johns both winning critical appreciation ever since their publication in 2021 and 2022. The paper argues that “refugee issues have not received due attention in postcolonial discourse despite the historical influence of colonialism in many parts of the world.” (Gallien 721) It was only in 2017 an International Symposium decided to study the contribution of postcolonial theory towards “Refugee literature” specifically in the context of Arabic and/or Muslim literatures. The impact of refugee literature and arts extends beyond the immediate response to current crises. Their uprootedness and extraterritoriality challenge the default literary geographies*

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defined along national borders and the monolingual imaginary of national languages. It is doubtful whether; the refugee crisis has received theoretical attention in the larger context of Malayalam Literature. This paper attempts to fill this gap. This paper seeks to rectify this gap by studying two recently published fictional works from Malayalam literature.

Key Words: Minority Studies, Refugee poetics, Marginalisation Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Refugee Studies, Migration Studies, Marginality and Resistance Studies

“Not only wars and natural disasters are behind all the migrations but also political and heinous ethnic reasons.”

-Rihan Rashid

“Stories are just data with a soul.”

-Chris Coats

The global refugee crisis has emerged as a pressing concern in recent years, with millions of individuals forced to flee their homes due to conflict, persecution, and violence. As refugees navigate their new lives in host countries, they face a myriad of challenges that can impede their successful integration and well-being. Amnesty International defines a refugee as “a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there.” (*Amnesty International*) Due to the perilous threats posed to their personal safety and even their very lives, individuals may find themselves with no alternative but to depart their homeland and search for refuge in foreign lands. Such desperate situations may arise due to the inability or reluctance of their governing authorities to offer adequate protection against such perils. In such instances, refugees are entitled to the provision of international protection as a basic human right.

The modern refugee crisis started with the emergence of hard-core European Nationalism in the early twentieth century that made demands on the inhabitants of a nation as “a specific way of belonging and not belonging to the modern nationhood.” (Bakara, 289) Later certain polarisation in the political climate of certain countries worsened the refugee numbers. The earliest twentieth-century example of a fictional response to the refugee crisis can be found in B. Traven’s novel *The Death Ship* (1922) in which the author makes the protagonist say that “the passport... not the sun, is the centre of the universe.” (Traven 42) The idea of Refugee writers as an instrument of change than passive objects came loud and thunder in Bertolt Brecht’s *Refugee Conversations*. Here Brecht narrated the trauma of the refugees who have to learn the language and culture of the asylum-seeking nations. Although writers like

Simone Weil, W. H. Auden, Samuel Beckett and George Orwell wrote about refugee issues in their works were never treated as refugee literature. Moreover, refugee writing for the most part of the twentieth century was a European phenomenon as mentioned earlier.

Post-Second World War and the emergence of new nations made millions of people homeless and nationless, especially in the Indian subcontinent and Palestine. A lot of writing followed from their traumatic experiences but the larger chunks of this writing were broadly categorised under postcolonial literature and the refugee crisis never saw deserving attention. Although refugees received a lot of human sympathy for their condition, any theoretical resistance against political persecution as a reason for their plight never became relevant. At the same time a lot of “stereotypical refugee problems” were discussed by the so called well known ‘refugee writers’ like Viet Thanh Nguyen, Khalid Hosseini, Abu Bakr Khal and Ahmad Almalla. (Bakara 291)

Only during the last decade, the refugee writing started to emerge as a political reaction against xenophobic nationalism and neoliberal globalisation. Mass Migration due to environmental disasters has received much attention in the work of Yasmine Shamma’s *Heaven is Green*. According to Shamma refugees live in the pendulum-like life of a traumatised past and a nationalised future. More theoretical responses to the migrant and refugee crisis can be found in essays like “This is how we Refugee: Neoliberalism from Haiti to Palestine and the Economics of Refugee Form” by Ian Foster, “Ugly Effects: Miritude and Black Mediterranean Counter Narratives of Migrant Subjectivity” by Ashna Ali and “Encampment as Colonisation: Theorising the Refugee Spaces” by Nasia Adam. (Bakara 292) Some of the most important novels that depict the refugee crisis of the last decade are *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, *The Best We Could* by Thi Bui, *Cast Away: True Stories of Survival from Europe’s Refugee Crisis* by Charlotte McDonald- Gibson, *The Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio and *Sweetness in the Belly* by Camilla Gibb.

When it comes to the refugee experience India is not alien. The partition of India in 1947 forced 12 to 14 million people to flee from one country to the other making them refugees in one night. It is estimated that more than one million people were killed and thousands of women raped due to communalism which encouraged religious and ethnic divisions. (Shemak 2) The earliest English responses to these crises were represented in Khushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* (1959), Balachandra Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1958), Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975).

Relatively little attention has been paid to the concept of ‘refugees in one’s own nation’ except for Jhumpa Lahiri’s *A Real Durwan* (199) and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* (2005). However as far as we know little research has been done in this area of the ‘refugees in one’s own country’ concept in Malayalam fiction too.

In this paper, I aim to fill up the gap. The implication of this research is to give better awareness and to give a better understanding of this issue to academia which will benefit them to explore these issues more profoundly and deeply. The paper also aims to highlight the unique contribution of postcolonial theory in analyzing refugee literature and arts, specifically in the context of Muslim literatures in the context of recent Malayalam fiction. In doing so, the paper wishes to showcase and analyse alternative discourses, voices, and imaginaries that literature and the arts propose.

Giorgio Agamben in his *Homo Sacer: Bare Life and Sovereign Power* argues that the existence of a category of people in modern societies who are stripped of legal protections and deemed “bare life”. These people are excluded from all political life and a reduced to mere biological existence. He says this is due to the result of modern “biopolitics” which instead of providing individual rights to citizens focuses on the management and control of populations. According to Agamben the sovereignty that exercises this power to exclude a certain section must be questioned. (10)

Bonyan organisation, which works in the Middle East since 2014 with a mission to improve the quality of education in war-torn communities points out at least ten challenges faced by refugees. These include forced displacement, legal status, language barriers, cultural differences, access to education, healthcare, employment, housing, family separation, and mental health issues. Among these, are how they are made to flee from their own homes to avoid persecution or vigilantism. The desperate conditions and human right violation that happen in the refugee camps need no elaboration. It is a sad fact that a section of people has become refugees not because of their fault as Dworkin says it is the result of an “accident of history and geography.” (Odhiambo-Abuya 266) Moreover, these people have no agency to express themselves. Their imaginary problems are only broadcasted by the media houses. Hence, in order to understand the refugee crisis one has to look at many texts and contexts and look at “novels, poetry, memoirs, comics, films, photography, music, social media, data, graffiti, letters, reports, eco-design, video games, archival remnants, and ethnography written by, alongside, or in conversation with refugee cultural producers.” (Colburn 8)

The postcolonial theory emerged as a strong response to the historical, cultural

and political legacies of colonialism and asked once-colonised nations to seek indigenous directions and perspectives that failed to address the conflict between different communities in the newly created states. It was Graham Good who first openly criticised postcolonialism for the homogenous treatment of colonial experiences without considering the different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds in once colonised countries. He said postcolonialism reproduced the colonial pattern by grouping together all colonised countries together while they are culturally diverse. Moreover, African literature is studied not as a whole but as Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. It criticised *Orientalism* for lacking historical depth as it only focuses on European Imperialism and is silent on Russian, Chinese and Islamic imperialism. (Good 63-75) In many African countries, these cultural traditions broke into different political traditions and leading to never-ending civil wars. For example, the third largest country in Africa, Sudan has generated more Refugees in Africa ever since its civil war. The major reason for conflicts in most African countries is due to sharing of natural resources.

Postcolonial theory agreeably gives a much better perspective in understanding the refugee crisis by focusing on intersectionality and marginalisation. But how far the theory can provide resistance to the current refugee crisis is questionable. For example, Franz Fanon, in his *The Wretched of the Earth* argued colonised always treated the natives as the ‘other’. Similarly Spivak discussed the possibility of giving ‘voice’ to the subaltern. As far the refugees are concerned they are neither treated like ‘other’ nor ‘subaltern’ but as ‘unwanted’. So the postcolonial concepts of other, subaltern and hybridity seem not relevant to the present refugee discourses.

Postcolonial theory’s failure to offer valuable insights and perspectives on the recent refugee crisis to enhance our understanding and develop equitable solutions has only recently come under academic study. One of the major criticisms against postcolonial studies is that it is yet to include Middle East and Muslim literature in its study. The refugee crisis is high in countries like Iraq, Syria, Eritrea and Libya due to Western intervention. Claire Gallien in her influential essay “Refugee Literature: What postcolonial theory has to say” depicts how the refugees are represented in the documentaries. She says that these documentaries only focus on two aspects: “politics of pity” and “distant suffering”. She asks “Does the refugee poetics raise awareness about the conditions of life for those displaced? Can literature prevent future wars from happening? And when wars, ecological catastrophes, and economic pressure force people to leave their home places, shall we conclude that in spite of all efforts, literature has failed?”(722) The major problem she points out is that postcolonialism has yet to define ‘refugee poetics and aesthetics’ from a vantage point to offer resistance.

One of the central dilemmas of knowing about the refugee crisis is the dependency on the dominant media and state narratives about refugees. Most of them view refugees as “passive victims of decontextualised violence and demand first-person testimonies”. (Colburn 10)

Rihan Rashid is a journalist by profession and has much first-hand experience of the refugee crisis. His works are “Samilooni”, *Lakshadweep: A Soofi Land*, *Aghorikalkku Idayil*, *Modus Operandi*, *Dolls and Yudhanantharam (After the War)*. Published in 2021 *Yudhanantharam* is dedicated to “the refugee bodies that are not entitled to any rights”. Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) a renowned Palestinian poet and author, known for his ability to capture the collective emotions and memories of Palestinians once said, “Keeping oneself respect high is the most important factor. ” (Rashid 7)

Rihan Rashid’s novel *Yudhanantharam* is a female Centred novella that narrates the life of Soya Famia. Since Refugee writings are abrupt and broken with no linear narration, it is very hard to make sense of accurate understanding of them. At the same time, these narrations can hunt the reader. The concept of a central protagonist is alien to most of the refugee narratives. For an outsider, it is like staring through a window of a railway coach where one gets a glance of the outer life. Set in Istanbul, Turkey it tells the life story of Soya Famia an Algerian Refugee. Turkey has a reputation in the world as the most desirable Refugee destination. Turkey houses one-third of the Syrian refugees. Soya shares her Limited space with Faris Hadad and Bayathor two refugees from other countries.

Bayathor is a Myanmar citizen and Rohingya Muslim. He lost his citizenship due to the state policies of Myanmar and was forced to flee to avoid persecution from the government. At the same time, Rohingyas still need the Myanmar government's permission to leave the country. He flees to Bangladesh with many others like him in a barge that carries three times its capacity. In Bangladesh, he is taken as a refugee and settled in a camp. But the hope for a better and more secure life takes him to India. It is surprising that his young sister has been groomed like a boy since childhood to avoid sexual assaults. By paying money to a middle man they get a Bangladeshi identity and along with a few refugees and travel to India with the promise of a job. At Kolkotha the migrants realise that they were cheated as the middlemen started to sell the migrant women to Sona Gachi. Desperate to avoid this shame his sister commits suicide and the police take custody of others including Bayoathar as illegal migrants.

Being a migrant in one's own country is sometimes not only alien to Muslims. It could happen to low-caste Hindus as well. Anand Bakshi is an Indian low-caste-born farmer who helps Bayathar in Delhi. Bakhi became a refugee in his own country due to his caste. Born in Uttar Pradesh, his life underwent a disastrous change when a girl of his caste married an upper-caste Hindu. Despite killing the couple on the day of the marriage by the high caste Hindus, an unparalleled assault was unleashed on the whole community of Anand Bakshi. Young girls and many women were raped and killed by the attacks and people like Bakshi and his family were made to leave their village 'naked' as punishment. For Bakshi and his family, it took three days of continuous walking to the next village with his own caste people to get food and clothing. All the while people stared at their naked bodies. Pushed to the wall and scarred by the events of his past make Bakshi to take revolt only to end up in prison. Bakshi learns magic in the prison from a cellmate who happened to be there just because he resisted the atrocities of the son of top-order police. Bayathor was lucky enough to find world-travelling tourists who help him to reach Turkey.

Soya Famia is a victim of the Algerian Civil War of 1991. As means of resistance against the government, she joins an extremist group called Islamic Salvation Front. She was a graduate at that time and lost her father in a police raid. Revenge makes her turn into a human bomb. A similar narrative can be found in the stories of Indija Khmar, Ummar Hamim and Hashim Duvani. All of them for personal loss take the extreme path of resistance which is to fight against a system that does not provide them security. They fail to understand the political motives behind those who send them for such action. Famia has to explode inside a busy train. She masquerades as a police officer and successfully gets into the train. But when she realises the futility of killing innocent passengers, she withdraws at the last moment thus becoming a traitor in the eye of her organisation. At the same the government has known her motive and started procedures to find her. To escape death from her organisation or cruel punishment from her government she flees to Turkey. "*After the War* shows how people become extremists. The pains and suffering of insults, and childhood wounds in the body and mind turn people into extreme revolutionaries." (Manorama Online)

The novel *Sarkar* focuses on the story of a Muslim family's journey to Kerala when they were sure to be removed from the Citizenship of India as per the 2003 Amendment of the Citizenship Act. It focuses on the experiences of this family primarily the protagonist Sarkar in futuristic India if the ACT imposed. Johns depicts the central character Sarkar as a humble school teacher who despite the feedback embodies the spirit of freedom despite all setbacks. King Johns is a relatively new writer in Malayalam but has won a lot of accolades like the Kerala Sahitya Kanaka

Sree Award, Poonthanam Award and Thoppil Bhasi Sahitya Award. *Sarkar* is published in 2022 and hailed as “A free imaginative journey into the future of hatred, alienation and refugeeism that may intensify in Indian society when the Citizenship Amendment Act is implemented.” (Bookstore) The novel tells the harrowing tale of Abubakar an Assamese teacher and his family who flees Assam due to the strict imposition of the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Assam started implementing the National Register of Citizens from 2013 (India today) and in 2019 declared “19 lakh people illegal and excluded” from the final list of NRC. To add this Government of India cited the future imposition of the New Citizen’s Amendment Bill which defines a sect of people as “who live in India without valid documents” except six religious minorities “Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian”, (*Citizenship Amendment Bill: India’s New “anti- Muslim” Law Explained - BBC News*) especially for the last 11 years. Although the government of India said it would ‘deport’ or ‘jail’ no such action has been massively conducted. Moreover, after Covid- 19 epidemic, the government has put the Citizen Amendment Bill (CAB) on the back burner. John's novel *Sarkar* is set in such a future India.

According to the author, the novel is inspired by two real lives. One is “a retired Indian Army officer from Assam who was held in a detention camp after a foreign tribunal in Kamrup district declared that he was not an Indian Citizen” (215). The character Sanaullah Abubakar is modelled after him. In the novel he becomes a victim when openly tells his harrowing tale of denial of citizenship to some private News channels, irking the ire of the authorities to punish him for publicly bringing shame to the government. The second one is a released prisoner from Kerala jail who is a Bengali migrant and told the author “The harrowing truth of many innocent migrant workers who spend months in prison without any legal assistant.” (215)

Abubakar Sanaullah a respected teacher had all the documents to prove he is an Indian. But as his father irked the government officials through the news channel for not including him in the NRC, despite being a retired Indian government employee, Abubakar and his family had to flee to Kerala under a fake Hindu identity of a Bengali farmer by bribing the officials. Soon he realises that a fake Aadhar will not protect him as his fingerprints, retina and circumcised organ will reveal his true identity. Soon he was charged with theft and thrown to jail as one Inspector had an eye on his wife. Though the court acquits Abubakar as the police fail to prove robbery, the life of his wife and children had drastically changed. As they were shifted to a better refugee camp for Hindus and always live under the pressure of somebody discovering the truth. At the camp, Ramla alias Kamili, the wife of Abubakar had to marry Amar Nath a Pakistani Hindu in order to move into a house sanctioned by the

government. She does this for the sake of her two grown daughters and Amar Nath promises that he will help to find her husband and moreover, he will be a husband on paper. True to his word Amar Nath keeps his distance from Kamili and tries to look for government schemes to get a loan to start a business and tries his best to find Abubakar. Eventually, he succeeds in starting a business of a computer centre and becomes a poster boy for the media and a propaganda tool for the government to show how they treat refugees. Only towards the end, he reveals his true identity to Kamili saying that he is a Pakistani Muslim and fled as he was charged with double murder in Pakistan. Moreover, his computer business is only a pretext to make illegal weapons. The author shows the loopholes in the new law through his character.

Abubakar in the meanwhile learns to survive in the open jail, “like an idiot, harmless and vegetable” (105). He does extra work and earns the trust of the guards and finally flees from there in search of his family. Soon he realises that he has been chased not by the government but by the vigilante groups who are given the power to question anyone and punish. As a final attempt to escape he himself chops his circumcised penis, blinds himself to defeat the retina reading machine and maims his both hand by putting them under a fast-running train. At the end of the novel, we see the winner Abubakar who by erasing all the bodily marks that prove his Muslim identity and recuperates in a hospital as Krishna Sarkar. The novel ends with a positive note that he will be moved to a lodge to a location where his wife and *Sarkar* ɛrs live nearby. Sarkar resembles Coetzee’s Michael K in the end,

“You are like a stick insect, Michaels [sic], whose sole defence against a universe of predators is its bizarre shape. You are like a stick insect that has landed, God knows how, in the middle of a great wide flat bare concrete plain. You raise your slow fragile stick-legs one at a time, you inch about looking for something to merge with, and there is nothing.”(Coetzee 95)

To conclude, it is crucial for postcolonial researchers to address what is described as refugee poetics and aesthetics by challenging widely accepted, yet politically, ethically, and ideologically contentious portrayals of forcibly displaced individuals. They should also highlight and examine the alternative narratives, perspectives, and visions offered by literature and the arts. In addition to this immediate response,

“I maintain that refugee literature and arts have a lasting influence, as their displacement and extraterritorial nature question the traditional literary geographies based on national boundaries and the default notion of monolingualism associated with national languages.” (Bakara 723)

Refugee lives tell us that for a refugee, they have only three options to save themselves: One to fight against the system violently using force or live a life of victimhood. Else they can save their dignity by cleverly deceiving the system in the same way as they treat them. Both these novels are stories of survival when a tyrannical government carries out forced migration and imprisonment for belonging to a particular religion. Soya Famia takes a revolutionary route lucky to reach Turkey but loses her life in her early forties due to the suffering and emotional strain she had to undergo. At the same time, Abubakar chooses a path of nonviolence. He escapes the system by changing his Muslim identity through the forced removal of his penis, eyesight and hands and living a vegetable life of under another identity. Both these novels urge us to ask questions on the framework of postcolonialism that has failed to offer any solutions to their resistance.

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Queer Marginality in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"

Abstract

The marginalized status of homosexuality has been the subject of critical debate in contemporary literary discourse. When analyzing the role of marginalized gender in different discourses, it can be argued that the very idea of marginality is reiterated in the constitution of the entire fabric of discourse. Marginality is a widely used concept in contemporary literary and cultural parlance, gaining momentum especially in the context of rising inequality in the post-liberalized and globalized world. William Faulkner, a renowned Southern American author, wrote the short tale "A Rose for Emily," dealing with issues such as class, race, family, and violence. In Faulkner's works, few characters have a normal sense while still being marginalized. The protagonist of this short tale, Miss Emily, is a typical person who reflects nearly all facets of William Faulkner's literary style. Faulkner paints a striking image of the American Southern hamlet of Jefferson in this tale. Homer's sexual orientation in "A Rose for Emily" has been a contentious issue for fifteen years. Although many believe Homer is homosexual, there is evidence that he is based on the phrase, "he liked men, and it was known that he drank with younger men at the Elk's Club and that he was not a marrying man" (quoted from "The Collected Stories of William Faulkner" (p. 187). This paper examines the

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marginalization of homosexuality in contemporary literary discourse through an analysis of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." Focusing on the character of Homer, whose sexual orientation has been debated, the paper discusses the link between his marginalization and homosexuality. The paper also highlights how Faulkner's portrayal of the American Southern hamlet reinforces marginalization. The story's depiction of the persecution and tragic fate of Homer at the hands of Emily illustrates the devastating consequences of marginalization.

Keywords: Homosexuality, Inequality, Marginality, Sexual orientation

During the time when "A Rose for Emily" was published in 1930, being attracted to the same sex was widely persecuted, forcing individuals to hide their sexual orientation. To maintain the illusion of being heterosexual, many resorted to extreme measures such as having a fake partner of the opposite sex. The story hints at the possibility of Emily Grierson serving as a façade for Homer's homosexuality, a common tactic used by gay individuals during that time. Despite this, it remains uncertain whether this is the case in this particular story. However, it is a fact that homosexuality was a taboo subject in the middle of the 1900s and the idea of a gay person having a fake partner to cover up their secret was prevalent. This is evident in the text where students assume that Barron's reluctance to marry Emily Grierson is due to his homosexuality.

The evidence suggests that Homer Barron is gay and has a romantic interest in men. Faulkner's statement that 'he liked drinking with younger boys at Elk's Club' further supports this assumption. Even if some believe that Barron's homosexuality is a myth, the social climate of the 1900s made it difficult for individuals to express their sexuality, leading many to keep it a secret. In the story, the three main characters - Emily, her father, and Homer - are all influenced by external factors. Emily's behavior is shaped by the actions of those around her, including the town residents, who contribute to her isolation and mental instability. Therefore, this narrative highlights the consequences of marginalization and oppression based on gender and sexual orientation, which can lead to desperate and tragic outcomes.

Emily Grierson, the protagonist of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," is a complex character whose strange behavior is shaped by various factors in her life. The most significant influence on Emily's behavior is her father, who controlled her and limited her interactions with the outside world. McBride (2009) suggests that Emily's "madness" is a result of her refusal to accept changing social norms and her isolation. As a result, Emily becomes a recluse who is the subject of the town's intense scrutiny.

Emily's eccentric behavior and her resistance to change are evident throughout the story. For example, when Emily refuses to pay her taxes or explain why she purchased poison, she upholds her own sense of morality and law. Emily's dismissal of the law takes on a more sinister consequence when she takes the life of Homer Barron, the man whom she refuses to allow to abandon her. West Jr. (1997) notes that the rose, the central image of the story, is symbolic of both love and death, which foreshadows the tragic ending of Emily's story.

The house in which Emily lives symbolizes her mind: shuttered, dusty, and dark. Emily's madness and bizarre behavior are a result of her isolation from the outside world. She becomes a mysterious and muted figure who changes from a vibrant young girl to a secretive and cloistered old woman. Emily's peculiar behavior is not a result of her character, but rather the impact of various individuals, including her father, Homer Barron, and the townspeople.

Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is a story that reflects the tension between tradition and change. Emily, the protagonist, represents the values of the Old South, while the town embodies progress and modernity. As Wittenberg notes, Emily's character is both a monument and a source of pity, illustrating the clash between the two opposing forces (p. 361). Despite being the subject of gossip and speculation, Emily challenges the town's expectations by pursuing Homer without any firm wedding plans. When she purchases the poison, the townspeople presume that she intends to take her own life. However, Emily's instability leads her down a darker path, and the story's final scene suggests that she is a necrophiliac.

Emily's desire for control and domination is evident throughout the story. After her father's death, she briefly assumes power by holding onto his corpse, rather than giving it over to the authorities. This desire for control ultimately leads her to kill Homer, as she cannot find a conventional way to express her desire to own him. Emily's behavior illustrates the dangers of refusing to adapt to changing social norms and highlights the consequences of living in isolation (McBride, p. 220). In conclusion, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is a powerful commentary on the conflict between tradition and progress, as seen through the character of Emily and her tragic demise.

In 'A Rose for Emily,' Faulkner effectively uses the setting to convey the atmosphere of decay, stagnation, and isolation that surrounds Emily, reflecting the decline of the Old South. Emily's sense of superiority and distance from her neighbors reinforces her isolation and lends credibility to the suggestion that Homer was able to

manipulate her. Emily's father, who refused to allow her to have suitors, viewed her as an aristocrat, reflecting the Southern belief in social hierarchies. However, this suppression of Emily's desires ultimately leads to her involvement in Homer's murder. Her inability to act on her natural desires for companionship and love causes her to resort to extreme measures. As Hayes (p. 63) notes, the setting of the story serves as a powerful reflection of Emily's tragic life and the wider societal changes in the South.

Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" portrays the theme of love and its complexities through the relationship between Emily and Homer. Emily perceives the rose given to her by Homer as a sign of his love and commitment to her. However, Emily's dependency on men, society's narrow-minded views on femininity, and Emily's inability to adapt to societal changes ultimately lead to tragedy. In contrast to Emily's well-known status and isolation in the town, Homer is an outsider who, despite his charm and humor, is viewed with suspicion by the townspeople due to his Northern background and working-class status. Homer's presence represents the changing values of the South, such as modernity, industrialization, and progress.

While Emily represents the traditional values of the Old South, Homer embodies the new and progressive South. This conflict is evident in the townspeople's negative perception of Homer as a potential mate for Emily due to his lack of social status and their inability to accept change. The story highlights how societal mentalities can hinder love and ultimately lead to tragedy. Homer's tragic end as the victim of Emily's scheme to keep him by her side forever reflects the consequences of trying to hold onto traditional values in a society undergoing change. Therefore, the story's overarching message is the need for adaptation to societal changes and the dangers of clinging to outdated values in the face of progress.

William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is a literary masterpiece that explores various themes such as gender roles, societal change, and the consequences of a twisted character. The story's reverse order plot reveals the life of Miss Emily, who ultimately poisons and sleeps with her only lover, Homer Barron. This tragedy stems from Emily's deeply ingrained character and stubbornness, which brings her downfall. While some scholars have interpreted Emily's behavior in terms of her sexuality, it is important to move beyond genital imagery and sexual proclivities to understand the complex gender roles in the story.

As Kevin J. Hayes notes, the physical setting of "A Rose for Emily" represents the larger social and cultural context of the story, where the old ways of the South are giving way to new realities. Emily, an outsider in her own community, struggles to fit

in and maintain her status. Homer, a Northerner and a day laborer, challenges the traditional values and norms of the Southern society. Thus, the story highlights the tension between the old and the new, and the changing gender roles that accompany societal transformation.

While some scholars assign male genitalia to Emily and interpret Homer as gay, it is crucial to recognize that such interpretations reduce the complexity of gender roles in the story. Rather than focusing on genital imagery and sexual proclivities, we should analyze how Faulkner portrays Emily's struggle to assert herself in a patriarchal society and how the changing social norms challenge traditional gender roles. The story is a nuanced exploration of gender roles, societal change, and the consequences of a twisted character. The story's reverse order plot, physical setting, and complex characterizations reveal the tension between the old and the new and the changing gender roles in the society.

In "A Rose for Emily," the male figures of authority are presented as weak and ineffective, portraying a societal construction of masculinity that is non-sexually impotent and inefficient in interacting with women. Colonel Sartoris, a significant figure of power in Yoknapatawpha, is depicted as a supporter of useless laws and reckless financial behavior. As Hayes notes, he "fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron and remitted Emily's taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity" (Hayes, Kevin J. "The Role of Setting in 'A Rose for Emily.'" p. 95). The use of the term "fathered" to describe Colonel Sartoris' actions conveys a mocking and disdainful attitude towards a position of authority that is unable to enact meaningful change. This portrayal of male authority figures reflects the societal norms of the time period in which the story takes place, when women did not have the right to vote and were expected to fulfill traditional gender roles as caretakers of husbands and children. The men in the story are presented as being out of touch with the realities of women's lives, unable to effectively communicate or interact with them on a meaningful level. As such, their power is limited and ultimately ineffective, contributing to the tragic downfall of the protagonist, Emily. This underscores the limitations of a patriarchal society that stifles women's agency and autonomy.

Homer Barron's sexuality has been a matter of debate for about fifteen years. In the article "What Does Homer's Sexuality in A Rose for Emily," the author Caesar agrees that Homer is likely not homosexual. Faulkner, the author of the story, probably did not intend for readers to view Homer as gay. However, some readers may have interpreted the character differently based on certain details in the story.

While these details may seem convincing, there is not enough factual evidence to support the idea that Homer is definitively homosexual. Therefore, it is premature to make conclusions about Homer's sexuality solely based on the line "he liked men, and it was known that he drank with younger men at the Elk's Club—that he was not a marrying man" (Faulkner 187).

Based on the analysis of "A Rose for Emily," it is evident that the story contains traces of resistance against traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Faulkner's portrayal of Emily challenges the norms of feminine behavior, while the portrayal of male authority figures undermines their power and exposes their ineffectiveness. These elements suggest that Faulkner is pushing back against societal expectations and traditional power structures. The setting of the story, which represents the clash between old and new values, further reinforces this resistance. Furthermore, the interpretation of the story is not limited to traditional gender roles and societal expectations. The use of narrative structure, symbolism, and imagery in the story can be read as a form of resistance against traditional literary conventions. The use of reverse chronology and fragmented narrative challenges the traditional linear structure of storytelling, while the symbolism and imagery push the boundaries of traditional literary representation.

In conclusion, "A Rose for Emily" is a powerful piece of literature that challenges traditional gender roles and power structures, as well as traditional literary conventions. The story presents a form of resistance against societal expectations and norms, and serves as a reminder that literature can be a powerful tool for subversion and change.

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