

---

---

# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 24:10 October 2024  
ISSN 1930-2940

Editors:

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

T. Deivasigamani, Ph.D.

Pammi Pavan Kumar, Ph.D.

Soibam Rebika Devi, M.Sc., Ph.D.

Managing Editor & Publisher: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

---

---

*Language in India* [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) is an open access journal. *Language in India* [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) does not charge readers or their institutions for access.

We have agreements with several database organizations such as *EBSCOHost* database, *MLA International Bibliography* and the *Directory of Periodicals*, and *Gale Research* (Cengage Learning) for indexing articles and books published in *Language in India*. The journal is included in the *Cabell's Directory*, a leading directory in the USA.

Articles published in *Language in India* are peer-reviewed by one or more members of the Board of Editors or an outside scholar who is a specialist in the related field. Since the dissertations are already reviewed by the University-appointed examiners, dissertations accepted for publication in *Language in India* are not reviewed again.

The next issue (the issue of November 2024) will be uploaded by the fourth week of November 2024 or earlier.

---

---

## Contents

---

---

<b>Dr. G. Smitha, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed., Ph.D.</b> <i>The Lady of Shalott: Themes of Isolation, Artistry, and the Quest for Freedom</i>	1-9
<b>Suresh Kumar, Assistant Professor</b> A Thematic Study of Saadat Hasan Manto's Selected Short-Stories	10-17
<b>Snigdha S. Research Scholar and Dr. Gomathi S. Assistant Professor</b> Cultural Resistance and Gender Dynamics: A Vegetarian Ecofeminist Reading of <i>The Vegetarian</i> by Han Kang	18-24
<b>Dr. Sunanda M. Shinde, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., PGCTE</b> Leveraging AI for English Language Learning: A Comparative Analysis of Duolingo, Babbel, and ElsaSpeak	25-37
<b>Pavithra. M., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr. Rajkumar. K., Assistant Professor</b> Implementing Artificial Intelligence Tools as a Language learning Method for Second Language Learners	38-45
<b>Aarthi E., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr. Kaviyarasu K., Assistant Professor</b> Action Research in ELT: The Need of the Hour	46-51
<b>Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.</b> Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu's <i>The Paper Menagerie</i> : A Supposition of Recalling Memory	52-59
<b>Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.</b> Screams of Broken Souls in <i>Ruined</i> with the Context of Existential Feminism	60-66
<b>Md. Maruf Ul Alam, Ph.D.</b> Everyday Resistance to Racism in Maya Angelou's Testimonial Narrative <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	67-78
<b>Uma Goswami</b> Through the Kaleidoscope: Diverse Women's Voices in Githa Hariharan's <i>The Thousand Faces of Night</i> and <i>When Dreams Travel</i>	79-91
<b>Dr. Dipak P. Ganmote</b> An Exploration of Proverbial Wisdom in the <i>Parables of Kierkegaard</i>	92-106

## *The Lady of Shalott: Themes of Isolation, Artistry, and the Quest for Freedom*

**Dr. G. Smitha, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed., Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor

AJK College of Arts and Science

Palakkad Main Rd., Navakkarai

Coimbatore, Pichanur, Tamil Nadu 641105, India

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

---

---



The Lady of Shalott  
Alfred Tennyson



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

Alfred, Lord Tennyson's narrative poem *The Lady of Shalott* explores profound themes of isolation, artistry, and the quest for freedom against the backdrop of Victorian societal norms. Tennyson, renowned for his lyrical language and introspective style, crafts a haunting tale of a cursed woman confined to a tower on the island of Shalott. Forbidden to directly observe the outside world, the Lady weaves scenes reflected in a mirror, navigating between artistic expression and the stifling constraints of her existence. This article delves into Tennyson's portrayal of the Lady's isolation, emphasizing how her imprisonment symbolizes not only

physical confinement but also psychological and emotional barriers. Through meticulous analysis of Tennyson's imagery, narrative techniques, and thematic exploration, the article examines the Lady's tragic journey towards self-discovery and transcendence, ultimately revealing broader insights into Victorian notions of femininity, the power of art, and the perennial human desire for autonomy.

**Keywords:** Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*, Victorian poetry, Isolation, Artistry, Freedom, Femininity, Narrative Poetry, Thematic analysis, Literary symbolism.

### About the Poet

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was a prominent Victorian poet known for his lyrical and deeply reflective poetry. Born in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England, Tennyson displayed an early talent for writing poetry and published his first collection, "Poems by Two Brothers," with his brother Charles in 1827. Despite facing criticism early in his career, Tennyson's poetic prowess eventually earned him widespread acclaim and recognition as one of the greatest poets of his time. Tennyson's poetry is characterized by its exploration of themes such as nature, mortality, love, and the human condition. His works often incorporate vivid imagery, musicality, and a keen sense of introspection. Tennyson's ability to capture the complexities of human emotions and experiences resonated deeply with Victorian readers, who were drawn to his evocative storytelling and profound philosophical insights.

Some of Tennyson's most celebrated works include "In Memoriam" (1850), a poignant elegy written in response to the death of his close friend Arthur Hallam, and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), a stirring narrative poem that commemorates the heroic actions of British soldiers during the Crimean War. *The Lady of Shalott* (1832) remains one of his enduringly popular narrative poems, renowned for its haunting depiction of a cursed woman confined to a tower. In 1850, Tennyson succeeded William Wordsworth as the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom, a position he held until his death in 1892. Throughout his tenure as Poet Laureate, Tennyson continued to produce a prolific body of work that solidified his reputation as a literary giant. His influence extended beyond his lifetime, influencing subsequent generations of poets

and writers who admired his mastery of language, his exploration of timeless themes, and his ability to capture the spirit of his era with grace and eloquence.

### **The Poet's Style**

**Lyrical Language:** Tennyson's poetry is known for its lyrical quality, employing rhythmic patterns, alliteration, and rich vocabulary to create melodic verses that are pleasing to the ear. His use of language often evokes sensory experiences, allowing readers to visualize scenes and feel the emotions conveyed in his poetry.

**Imagery:** Tennyson excels in creating vivid and evocative imagery through his use of descriptive language and symbolic representation. His poems are filled with detailed depictions of nature, landscapes, and human emotions, which contribute to the atmospheric and immersive quality of his works.

**Exploration of Themes:** Tennyson's poetry explores a wide range of themes, including love, nature, mortality, heroism, and the human condition. He delves deeply into philosophical and existential questions, often grappling with the complexities of life and the passage of time.

**Narrative and Storytelling:** Many of Tennyson's poems are narrative in nature, telling stories or presenting dramatic scenarios. His narrative poems often feature compelling characters, intricate plots, and a sense of dramatic tension that captivates readers.

**Introspection and Emotion:** Tennyson's poetry is marked by a profound introspective quality, where he delves into the inner thoughts and emotions of his characters, as well as his own reflections on life and existence. His poems often explore the depths of human feelings, from joy and love to sorrow and despair.

### **About the Poem**

"The Lady of Shalott," a narrative poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, captures the tragic story of a mysterious woman who is cursed to live in isolation on the island of Shalott. Forbidden to look directly at the outside world, she weaves images of the world reflected in a mirror.

However, her curiosity compels her to gaze upon the knight Sir Lancelot, causing the curse to befall her. The poem explores themes of fate, artistry, and the conflict between the desire for freedom and the constraints of societal expectations. Tennyson's vivid imagery and melancholic tone evoke a sense of inevitable doom, highlighting the consequences of defying one's prescribed role in society.

### **Isolation and Imprisonment**

The theme of isolation and imprisonment is vividly portrayed through the character of the Lady herself. Confined to a tower on the island of Shalott, she lives a secluded existence, separated from the bustling world outside. This physical isolation mirrors her emotional and psychological state, emphasizing the profound effects of seclusion on an individual's psyche. The Lady's only view of the external world is through a mirror, which distorts and reflects reality rather than offering direct contact with it. This mirrors how isolation can skew one's perception of reality, leading to a distorted understanding of the world beyond one's immediate surroundings.

Moreover, the Lady's isolation is enforced by a mysterious curse that forbids her from looking directly out at the world. This curse symbolizes not only physical confinement but also the psychological barriers that isolation can erect. It suggests a sense of imprisonment not just in the tower but within oneself, as the Lady is trapped between the desire to experience life directly and the fear of the curse's consequences. This internal conflict highlights the psychological toll of isolation, as the Lady grapples with longing for connection and the fear of breaking the rules that govern her existence.

The consequences of the Lady's isolation are profound and tragic. Deprived of direct interaction with the world, she resorts to weaving images she sees in her mirror into a tapestry, a form of indirect engagement with reality. This creative act serves as both an outlet for her artistic expression and a poignant symbol of her longing for a life beyond her confines. Ultimately, the theme of isolation and imprisonment in *The Lady of Shalott* underscores the profound impact of loneliness and separation on an individual's sense of self, identity, and emotional well-being, resonating with readers as a timeless exploration of human experience.

## Art and Creativity

Art and creativity play a central role in the life of the titular character. Confined within the walls of her tower on the island of Shalott, the Lady weaves a tapestry, capturing the scenes she observes through a mirror that reflects the outside world. This act of weaving serves as her primary means of interacting with and interpreting the world beyond her physical confinement. Through her tapestry, the Lady transforms her observations into a form of art, creating a tangible expression of the beauty and wonder she witnesses but cannot directly experience. This process highlights art as a powerful medium through which the Lady seeks to connect with and understand the external world, despite her isolation.

Art in *The Lady of Shalott* also serves as a form of escape from the Lady's reality. While she is physically separated from the world outside, her tapestry allows her to mentally and emotionally engage with it. The act of weaving becomes a cathartic outlet for her creativity and imagination, offering solace and fulfillment amidst her solitary existence. Through her art, the Lady asserts her agency and autonomy, reclaiming a sense of control over her circumstances and asserting her identity as a skilled weaver and interpreter of life's beauty.

However, the Lady's artistic endeavors also highlight the limitations of her existence. Despite her ability to create intricate tapestries that capture the essence of the world she observes, she remains detached from direct experience. Her art becomes a poignant symbol of both her yearning for freedom and her resignation to her fate. Ultimately, the theme of art and creativity in *The Lady of Shalott* underscores the transformative power of artistic expression as a means of interpretation, communication, and emotional release, resonating with readers as a timeless exploration of the human spirit's quest for connection and meaning.

## The Conflict Between Duty and Desire

The conflict between duty and desire is poignantly illustrated through the Lady's plight. She is bound by a mysterious curse that prohibits her from directly viewing the outside world; instead, she can only observe it through the reflection in a mirror. This curse symbolizes the strict external rules imposed upon her, dictating her behavior and restricting her freedom to engage with the world as she desires. The conflict arises from her innate longing to experience life fully, contrasting sharply with the duty imposed upon her by the curse.

The Lady's adherence to duty is depicted through her meticulous weaving of a tapestry, where she translates her observations into art while remaining isolated in her tower. This creative act becomes both a form of obedience to the curse and a means of expression that allows her to indirectly interact with the world. However, her desire for freedom is palpable in her yearning gazes towards Camelot and the knights passing by, which signify her longing for human connection and a life unrestrained by the curse's limitations.

The tension between duty and desire intensifies as the poem unfolds, culminating in a pivotal moment where the Lady succumbs to her yearning and looks directly out at Camelot. This act of defiance against the curse ultimately seals her tragic fate. The conflict between duty and desire in *The Lady of Shalott* resonates with universal themes of personal autonomy and societal constraints, prompting readers to contemplate the consequences of choosing between fulfilling external obligations and pursuing one's innermost desires.

Death and Transcendence:

The Lady's journey down the river towards Camelot serves as a powerful metaphor for her journey towards death. The poem chronicles her decision to defy the curse that forbids her from looking directly at the world outside her tower. As she sets out in a boat, weaving her last tapestry, she embarks on a fateful journey downstream towards Camelot. This journey symbolizes her departure from the sheltered existence in her tower, her inevitable encounter with mortality, and her quest for a deeper understanding of life beyond the confines of her curse.

The river itself becomes a metaphor for the passage of time and the inevitability of mortality. As the Lady drifts downstream, she moves closer to Camelot and closer to her own demise. This journey underscores the theme of death as a transformative and inevitable part of life. Through her journey, the Lady confronts the reality of her mortality and seeks a form of transcendence beyond the physical realm. Her longing to experience the world directly, even at the cost of her life, reflects a deeper yearning for spiritual and existential fulfillment.

Furthermore, the Lady's journey towards Camelot can be interpreted as a quest for transcendence beyond the limitations imposed by her curse and her isolated existence. Camelot, often depicted as a symbol of grandeur and chivalry, represents an idealized realm of human achievement and aspiration. By journeying towards Camelot, the Lady seeks to transcend her



earthly constraints and achieve a sense of spiritual liberation. Ultimately, the theme of death and transcendence in "The Lady of Shalott" invites readers to contemplate the inevitability of mortality and the human quest for meaning, suggesting that true transcendence may be found in the pursuit of spiritual and existential truth.

### **Femininity and Gender Roles**

The character of the Lady embodies the societal expectations and constraints placed upon women during the Victorian era. Confined to her tower and bound by a mysterious curse, the Lady is isolated from the world outside and relegated to a passive observer of life through a mirror. This confinement reflects the limited roles available to women in Victorian society, where their autonomy and independence were often curtailed in favor of domesticity and societal norms. The Lady's weaving of her tapestry, a solitary and meticulous task, further symbolizes the prescribed roles of women as homemakers and caretakers, engaged in domestic arts rather than active participation in the public sphere.

The curse itself imposes strict rules on the Lady's behavior, forbidding her from direct engagement with the world outside her tower. This prohibition mirrors the societal expectations that confined women to the private sphere, denying them full participation in public life and intellectual pursuits. The Lady's yearning gaze towards Camelot and the knights passing by signifies her longing for freedom and human connection, which are often denied to her because of her gender and the societal norms of the time. Her eventual decision to defy the curse and venture towards Camelot can be seen as an act of rebellion against these constraints, albeit one that leads to tragic consequences.

Moreover, the portrayal of the Lady as a passive observer, rather than an active participant in her own destiny, reflects the Victorian ideal of femininity as delicate, pure, and subservient. Her fate is ultimately determined by external forces and societal expectations, highlighting the lack of agency and autonomy afforded to women during that era. The theme of femininity and gender roles in *The Lady of Shalott* invites readers to consider the limitations placed on women's lives and the societal pressures that shaped their identities and aspirations, resonating with ongoing discussions about gender equality and women's rights in modern times.

Nature and the Supernatural:

The interplay between the natural world and supernatural elements creates a rich tapestry of themes and symbolism. Central to the poem is the mysterious curse that confines the Lady of Shalott to her tower. This curse, a supernatural force, forbids her from looking directly at the outside world, shaping her existence and isolating her from natural experiences. The magical atmosphere surrounding the Lady's world enhances the sense of otherworldliness and mystery, blurring the lines between reality and enchantment. This theme explores how supernatural forces can dictate human lives and influence their interactions with the natural world, highlighting the delicate balance between human agency and external forces beyond their control.

Nature itself plays a dual role in *The Lady of Shalott*, serving both as a source of inspiration and a backdrop to the unfolding drama. The river that flows past the Lady's tower symbolizes the passage of time and the inevitability of her journey towards Camelot and her tragic fate. The vivid descriptions of the natural landscape, such as the fields of barley and the willow-weeds, evoke a sense of tranquility and beauty that contrasts with the Lady's confined existence. Nature becomes a mirror for the Lady's inner turmoil and desires, reflecting her yearning for freedom and connection with the world beyond her tower. The poem's portrayal of nature as both a tranquil haven and a realm fraught with symbolic meaning underscores its role in shaping the narrative and enhancing the themes of fate, isolation, and longing.

The supernatural elements in the poem, including the curse and the magical imagery surrounding the Lady's world, contribute to its mystical and timeless quality. The curse itself is a manifestation of supernatural power that dictates the Lady's fate, highlighting the theme of destiny and the inevitability of her tragic end. The magical atmosphere, characterized by references to "magic casements" and "moonlit mirroring avenues," creates an ethereal and dreamlike setting that enhances the poem's themes of enchantment and mystery. This interplay between the natural and supernatural realms in *The Lady of Shalott* invites readers to contemplate the blurred boundaries between reality and fantasy, destiny and free will, and the profound impact of supernatural forces on human lives and aspirations.

In conclusion, *The Lady of Shalott* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson remains a timeless exploration of themes that resonate deeply with readers across generations. Through vivid imagery, lyrical language, and a narrative steeped in mystery and tragedy, Tennyson crafts a poignant tale of isolation, artistic yearning, and the conflict between societal constraints and

individual desires. The poem's portrayal of the Lady's journey towards self-discovery and transcendence, despite the inevitability of her fate, invites reflection on themes of femininity, nature, and the supernatural. Tennyson's masterful storytelling and profound insights into the human condition continue to captivate and provoke thought, making *The Lady of Shalott* a classic work of literature that speaks to the complexities of existence and the enduring quest for autonomy and meaning.

---

### Works Cited

1. Day, Aidan, editor. Selected Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Penguin Classics, 1991.
  2. Greenblatt, Stephen, et al., editors. The Norton Anthology of English Literature. 10th ed., vol. B, W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.
  3. Ricks, Christopher, editor. The Complete Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.
  4. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. Idylls of the King. Penguin Books, 1988.
  5. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. In Memoriam A.H.H. Dover Publications, 1994.
  6. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. The Lady of Shalott. Illustrated by Geneviève Côté, Kids Can Press, 2015.
  7. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. "The Lady of Shalott." The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1918, edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch, Oxford University Press, 1919, pp. 847-851.
  8. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. "The Lady of Shalott." The Poetical Works of Alfred Tennyson. Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 55-61.
  9. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. The Princess: A Medley. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884.
  10. Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson. Wordsworth Editions, 1994.
-

## A Thematic Study of Saadat Hasan Manto's Selected Short-Stories

**Suresh Kumar**

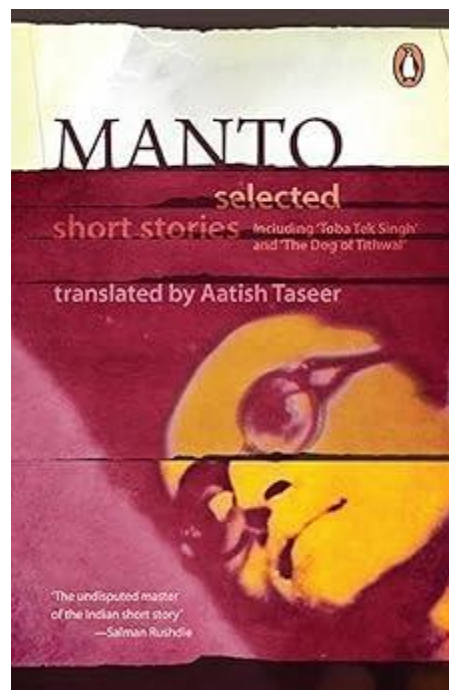
Assistant Professor, SLET, UGC-NET

Department of English

Govt. College Indora, 176401

Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India

[vijaysuresh8890@gmail.com](mailto:vijaysuresh8890@gmail.com)



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

This research paper explores Manto's selected short stories i.e. **Toba Tek Singh, The Dog of Tetwal, Ten Rupees, Blouse, Khol Do, Licence, For Freedom, and Smell** from thematic perspectives. Manto deftly presents the issues of his time through the sentiments and experiences of his characters. The psychological impact of the partition, people's attitude towards animals after partition whether they belong to which country, how the hunger of stomach compels females to sell their body for survival, adultery, extramarital affairs, morality

influencing human relationships, hormonal changes during adolescent period resulting in emotional turmoil, communal riots resulting in bloodshed and loss of families, lust, fear, female victims' conditioning to surrender their body for survival to the lusty inhabitants, atrocities of the British on native Indians, freedom as a desired dream and female body as a sight for respite are some of the major concerns, Manto addresses in these texts. Thus, the writer unfolds the aftermaths of chaos, and unrest to the world while presenting the picture of society he lived in.

**Keywords:** Saadat Hasan Manto, short stories, psychological impact, helplessness, survival, bloodshed, human relationships, lust, atrocities.

Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) is regarded as the greatest short-story writer of the Indian subcontinent. Born in 1912 Samrala in Punjab, British India, he became a radio and film scriptwriter, journalist, and short-story writer. Manto moved to Lahore in 1948 and died there in 1955. (Manto 159) Manto's inclination to minute observations and his lived experiences assist him in portraying a realistic picture of society with convincing narrative techniques.

Manto presents how the lunatics react to the government's decision to exchange the lunatics recently living in the mad houses of both the countries, i.e. India and Pakistan to their own countries after the partition of India, through the short-story **Toba Tek Singh**. Before this, all the citizens and prisoners were settled as per their wish of the country generally Hindus and Sikhs in India whereas Muslims were settled in the newly formed nation, Pakistan. Manto presents one case of a lunatic asylum in Lahore where the news of transfer becomes a hot topic of discussion. They attempt to understand the meaning of Pakistan and its location. All the lunatics are not mad actually, they were imprisoned for some other crimes, but presently all become mad due to overthinking and after living with lunatics for a long time. Manto writes about the protagonist, Bishan Singh who was in the asylum for fifteen years:

He slept neither during the day nor at night. It was rumoured among the wardens that in the fifteen long years, he had not slept, not even laid down, for a single moment. At most, he would occasionally rest against a wall.

His feet and legs were swollen up from standing up so long, but despite his discomfort, he refused to lie down. Whenever a discussion about India and Pakistan and the exchange of

lunatics began in the Asylum, he listened with keen interest. And, if ever, anybody asked his opinion, he gravely replied, '*opadh di gudh gudh di annexe di bedhayana di mung di daal* of the Pakistan government.' Later, however, in place 'of the Pakistan government', he had begun to say, 'of the Toba Tek Singh government' and would regularly ask the other inmates if they knew where Toba Tek Singh-his native land-was. (Manto 108)

Bishan Singh was a prosperous landlord before he turned mad. Although he never bathed in a month, when he knew instinctively about the arrival of some friend or relative, he used to inform the guard. On that particular day, he used to have a proper bath and would appear before the visitor afresh. From everyone, he would ask the same question about where Toba Tek Singh is and because of this, he is known popularly as Toba Tek Singh. Besides him, one lunatic troubled with the idea of India and Pakistan climbing onto a tree delivers a speech and says that he would love to live on that tree instead of these two countries. The other lunatic takes off his clothes and walks nude and one Muslim lunatic who has bath more than fifteen times declares him as Mohammad Ali.

**The Dog of Tetwal** brings out the cruelty of the National Armies of India and Pakistan on animals under the pretext of so-called patriotism. Manto satirizes the soldiers' attitude towards both countries i.e. playing with the emotions of a dog, first Indian army's efforts of befriending a stray dog, offering him biscuits to eat and hanging a board by writing 'Chapad Jhunjhun: this is an Indian dog' (Manto 175) on his neck with a rope and repeating the same pattern or behavior by replacing the words written on the boards with 'Sapad Sunsun: this is a Pakistani dog' (Manto 176) and thereafter, shooting the dog from their opposite camps. As the dog dies on the spot, Pakistani captain, Himmat Khan says in sadness, "Another martyr." Whereas Indian Corporal Harnam Singh while holding his gun says, 'He died that death that is a dog's alone' (Manto 179). With the cruel treatment of the dog in the hands of the soldiers of both countries who play with his emotions by giving him something to eat and pass their time with fun and then shoot him showing their patriotism, the writer satirizes the dual attitude of the soldiers. If the soldiers had to shoot him, they must not have entertained him by offering eatables. Moreover, the writer advocates the need to observe humanitarian values with special reference to the National Armies of enemy countries.

The short story, **Ten Rupees** showcases a mother's helplessness in permitting her daughter to sell her body as a prostitute due to utter poverty, women's managing extra-marital affairs to meet the basic needs of their family, and a silent agreement between women not to reveal each other's affairs before society and impact of such environment on the daughters of the family. The story opens with the arrival of Kishori, a pimp in the chawl looking for Sarita, a fifteen years old girl. As Sarita is not there, her mother moves out to search Sarita after letting Kishori sit in her room and asks the neighbours about Sarita. Tukaram's cross-eyed wife informs her about where Sarita is playing with the children. Both these ladies know the secrets of one another and do not reveal them to anyone. After seeing Sarita, her mother grabs her arm roughly and says:

'Come on, come into the house, come in and die. Do you have nothing better to do than play these rowdy games?' On the way in, in a softer voice, she said, 'Kishori is here. He has been waiting a long time. He has brought men with motor cars. Go on run upstairs and get dressed. And wear that blue georgette sari of yours. Oh, and listen, your hair is a terrible mess, get dressed quickly and I'll come up and comb it. (Manto 27)

Sarita's mother permits her daughter due to economic constraints for ten rupees. Kishori also earns two rupees for acting as a mediator and Sarita enjoys her rides to the hotels, she considers such trips as short entertaining outings without realizing the loss of her virginity in the environment her mother has provided to her.

Further, **Blouse** highlights the relevance of gender roles during the mid-twentieth century and the idea that opposite sexes attract especially during the adolescent period due to hormonal changes. Momim, a fifteen-year-old boy works as a servant at Deputy Sahab's home. He is directly engaged in work by Shakeela and Razia the daughters of the home. Razia has more inclination for songs, music, and films but Shakeela wishes to learn to stitch a blouse. They send Momim to the neighbourhood to bring a tape measure. "While trying the blouse Momim saw a tuft of black hair in her [Shakeela's] pale armpits... A quiver ran through his entire body" (Manto 45). When the blouse is ready and Shakeela tries it, Momim appreciates 'Bibi, you have even outdone the tailors!' at this Shakeela gets pleased. (Manto 49) Thereafter, when Momim comes to that room to leave a jug of water, he sees the blouse hanging from a wooden hanger. As there

is no one in the room, he takes a few steps up to the blouse and runs his hand over it while having a feeling that someone is also running their soft hands over the downy hairs of his body and he has restless dreams that night (Manto 50).

**Khol Do** presents a very poignant tale of rape victims through the character of Skina and the pitiable condition of her father Sirajuddin. When the old Sirajuddin opens his eyes on the cold floor of the camp, he becomes confused after seeing the dead bodies of men, women, and children. He feels stunned. Manto writes:

His eyes struck the sun, and he awoke with a start as its sharp blaze entered him. Images are assailed from all sides. Loot. Fire. Stampede. Station. Bullets. Night. And Skina. Sirajuddin stood up immediately, and like a madman, began surveying the sea of people all around him.

For three full hours, he scoured the camp, crying, 'Skina, Skina' But he learned nothing about the whereabouts of his only daughter. All around him, there was mayhem. Someone looked for his son, another for his mother; someone for his wife, another for his daughter. Sirajuddin, tired and defeated, sat down on one side of the camp... But as he racked his brains, his mind fixed on Skina's mother's body, her intestines spilled out he could think no further. (Manto 51)

Before taking the last breath, Skina's mother tells Sirajuddin to leave her, take Skina, and run for a safer place. Thereafter, Sirajuddin tries hard to remember where he has separated from Skina but cannot. Almost it takes him to get normalized when he meets eight young men who have a truck and guns and promise to help him unite with his daughter. Sirajuddin describes the features of his seventeen-year-old daughter. A few days later, the young men managed to sit Sakina in the truck after assuring her safety by mentioning her father. But when her father, Sirajuddin sees them in the camp and asks about Sakina, they say that they will find her soon. As some disturbance is reported in the evening, Sirajuddin comes to know that people have found a girl unconscious on the railway track and they have handed over to the hospital and left. Sirajuddin reaches the hospital to confirm. Manto writes, "The doctor looked at the body on the stretcher. He checked its pulse and said to Sirajuddin, 'The window, open it!' At the sound of the



words, Skina's corpse moved. Her dead hands undid her salwar and lowered it. Old Sirajuddin cried with happiness, 'She is alive, my daughter is alive!'" (Manto 54). Skina's unconsciously taking off her lower results from her experiences after the communal riots where every man she encountered abused her physically repeatedly. Till now she has become habitual to offer her body as per demand just for survival. Moreover, amidst such an atmosphere of communal tension, a father takes his daughter's response for happiness because it was bliss for him to find her alive.

Through **Licence**, the writer exposes the attitude of a patriarchal society towards widows especially towards women emphasizing the gender roles generally. After Abu's death with TB, his wife Nesti falls alone and the responsibility of managing Abu's horse coach befalls on her. First, she gives this responsibility to Dino who used to call her Bhabhi, his brother's wife, but within a few days, he proposes for her to marry him. When she refuses him, he does not hand over the exact earnings of the day to her. In this way, she takes back the horse and the coach from him and hires Maja, one of Abu's friends, but he too expresses his wish to marry her. Nesti takes the horse and the coach back from him too and gives them to an unknown coachman who crosses all the limits reach a drunkard at her home and attempts to rape her. (Manto 107) Thereafter, the coach and the horse remain in the stable for about two weeks without work. It becomes tough to manage the horse and the home as well, so she decides to work as a coachman as she knows the route and the work too. Once the municipal committee men called her and revoked her license as women cannot drive coaches. Nesti argues for equality but the officer suggests to her in a derogatory manner to sell her body in the bazaar where she would be earning more. The writer here criticizes the men's outlook that considers women a commodity.

**For Freedom** narrates the story of passionate young man Ghulam Ali who emerges as the most vibrant leader while leading the youth in Amritsar to kindle the spark of freedom from British Rule in India around the year 1930. The writer also reveals the patriotic fervor of Jallianwala Bagh where people used to gather to express their protest against the British to promote the boycott the foreign goods, civil disobedience movement, and a normal trend of imprisoning and releasing the revolutionaries as a common phenomenon. (Manto 123-125) Besides, the writer promotes the idea of inter-religious love marriages through the character of

Ghulam Ali and Nigar. When Manto meets Ghulam Ali after eight years, finds him as a settled businessman. In simple words, economic independence is a prerequisite to fight for the national interests.

**Smell** offers glorification to the female body through the character of Randhir who makes physical relationships with numerous Christian girls but he remains unable to forget the smell of a Marathi girl and rather misses her smell repeatedly. After having uncountable experiences of sex with numerous partners, he is left with no desire to have physical relationships with his newly married life partner. Now, perhaps it becomes merely a need for the sake of planning offspring without any excitement or pleasure.

The above short stories of Manto either present a realistic picture of the socio-cultural milieu where he lived or suggest corrections to the evils prevalent in society. Human beings can think about the welfare of their nation and society only if they do not have any worries about their stomach. A person with an empty stomach can never think about the welfare of others. Therefore, economic independence is the base for all types of independence. Further, Manto emphasizes the value of limited freedom that can enable a person to enjoy real freedom while observing fidelity in relationships. Besides, the aftermaths of partition, communal riots, rapes, insecurity, fear, terror, suspense, inequality, and the hunger of stomachs compelling the poor women to sell their bodies are some of the chief concerns Manto reveals to the readers. Moreover, Manto dreams of a society where there is no fear, and no starvation rather it is infused with love, peace, harmony, and economic prosperity.

---

### Works Cited

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "The Dog of Tetwal." *The Individual and Society*, edited by Vinay Sood et.al., Department of English, University of Delhi, Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd., 2016, pp. 168-179.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Toba Tek Singh." *Modern Indian Literature*, edited by Department of English, University of Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 105-112.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Ten Rupees." *Manto: Selected Short Stories*. Translated by Aatish Taseer, Penguin Random House India, 2020, pp. 23-38.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Blouse." *Manto: Selected Short Stories*. Translated by Aatish Taseer, Penguin Random House India, 2020, pp. 39-50.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Khol Do." *Manto: Selected Short Stories*. Translated by Aatish Taseer, Penguin Random House India, 2020, pp. 51-54.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Licence." *Manto: Selected Short Stories*. Translated by Aatish Taseer, Penguin Random House India, 2020, pp. 101-110.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "For Freedom." *Manto: Selected Short Stories*. Translated by Aatish Taseer, Penguin Random House India, 2020, pp. 118-150.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Smell." *Manto: Selected Short Stories*. Translated by Aatish Taseer, Penguin Random House India, 2020, pp. 151-158.

=====

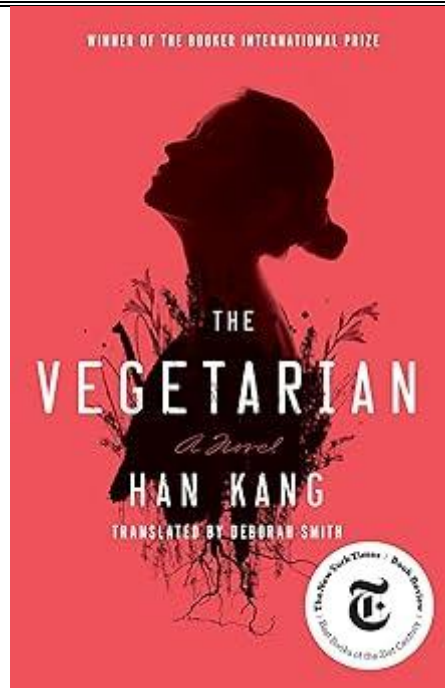
## Cultural Resistance and Gender Dynamics: A Vegetarian Ecofeminist Reading of *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang

**Snigdha S.**

Research Scholar, Department of English  
PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore 641004  
[snigdha.sunith@gmail.com](mailto:snigdha.sunith@gmail.com)

**Dr. Gomathi S.**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore 641004  
[gomathis@psgrkcw.ac.in](mailto:gomathis@psgrkcw.ac.in)



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

Meat is considered an integral part of Korean culture, and anyone who diverges from this dietary regimen is often labelled as abnormal or insane. The novel, *The Vegetarian*, by Han Kang, delves into how the predominant meat-centric culture of South Korea marginalises vegetarians, particularly women who choose a vegetarian lifestyle. The

protagonist of the novel, Yeong Hye, during her transformation into a vegetarian, resists the patriarchal pressures that seek to establish the practice of meat consumption as a dominant cultural norm. This paper analyses the novel, *The Vegetarian*, through the critical lens of the Vegetarian Ecofeminism theory formulated by Carol J. Adams. Adams establishes a connection between vegetarianism and the life of women in her theory relating to her social environment, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. She argues that there is association of meat consumption with masculinity, and how women in patriarchal western societies are often expected to cook meat in accordance with the dietary demands of their husbands.

**Keywords:** *The Vegetarian*, Han Kang, Food and Culture, Male dominance, Meat dominance, Vegetarian Ecofeminism

The food that a person consumes significantly influences their identity, and society often attempts to characterise individuals by projecting its ideas of food symbolism onto their character. Food items are also endowed with rich symbolisms that bring a cultural association to the food that a person consumes. Michael Fox, in his theoretical book, *Deep Vegetarianism*, argues that an individual's diet defines their identity in a dual sense, "because our corporeal selves would not exist without it, and because what we are is due to the meaning we superimpose on our food" (24). He concludes that the symbolic meaning associated with food is indeed a social construct of self-identity. From primitive times, men were considered natural hunters while women were engaged in feminine chores such as gathering food.

Vegetarian Ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary theory of study that makes use of concepts from food studies, feminist studies, environmental studies, and cultural studies. The theory mainly studies the interconnection between vegetarianism and ecofeminism in literature. It focuses on the domination of human beings over non-human animals and a parallel domination of men over women in a typical patriarchal society. The major argument of the theory is that these two forms of dominance are invariably interconnected. A few notable thinkers of the movement of vegetarianism include Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Carol J. Adams, Greta Gaard, Laura Wright, and Nick Fiddes.

Greta Gaard, in *Vegetarian Ecofeminism: A Review Essay*, defines the theory of vegetarian ecofeminism as the third generation of feminist studies and as the "logical

outgrowth of both feminism and ecofeminism” (117). She emphasises the feminist dictum of the personal being political and further explains how the vegetarian ecofeminist theory helps in understanding the political context of dietary choices and the ways in which a person’s diet is taken by the society as a means to assess their femininity and masculinity. While practices such as meat eating, hunting, and poaching are perceived as attributes denoting masculinity, vegetarianism is frequently viewed as a feminine trait in many civilizations. We need to note here that in South India, assumed caste hierarchy is linked to vegetarianism/nonvegetarianism.

One of the seminal texts on the theory of Vegetarian Ecofeminism is *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* by Carol J. Adams. The book addresses the issue of the interconnected oppression of animals as well as women in a conventional western patriarchal society. Adams’ theory focuses on the interconnectedness of women’s and animals’ oppression by incorporating several theoretical concepts such as the Absent Referent, the cycle of Objectification, Fragmentation, Consumption, Vegetarian interruption, etc.

Han Kang is a South Korean writer who mostly delves into the complexities of the human psyche and deals with themes such as human nature and individuality, suffering and trauma, nature and civilization, gender and sexuality, isolation and alienation, etc., in her narratives. Her novel, *The Vegetarian*, originally published in 2007 and later translated into English in 2015 received international acclaim after winning the Man Booker International Prize in 2016. The narrative is based on a novella written by the author herself titled “The Fruit of My Woman”, the plot of which centres on a woman literally as well as symbolically transforming into a tree.

The novel, *The Vegetarian*, is set in the meat-dominated society of South Korea and the protagonist, Yeong Hye chooses her vegetarianism as a means of resistance against South Korea’s prevailing norm of meat consumption. South Korea is a predominantly meat-eating country and meat forms the staple and inevitable part of the diet of the majority of its population. Throughout the novel, Yeong Hye tries to reaffirm her vegetarian identity by resisting the physical, sexual, as well as ecological violence perpetuated by the Korean patriarchal society.

Yeong Hye's deviation from the conventional food habits of South Korea is viewed as a form of insanity by the society and several male and female members of her own family could be seen pressurising her into consuming meat. The societal intolerance of her vegetarianism inflicts severe mental trauma upon Yeong Hye. The objective of the paper is to explore how food forms an integral part of a person's identity and how it can impact their emotions, feelings, perceptions of the world and its people, sexuality, and identity. The study has been carried out with the help of the theory, Vegetarian Ecofeminism as advocated by the theorist, Carol J. Adams in her book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

Han Kang's emotionally intense novel, *The Vegetarian* translated into English by Deborah Smith traces the protagonist Yeong Hye's gradual descent into madness as a result of the ill-treatment from both her family members and the society. The novel is divided into three parts, each narrated from a distinct perspective and revealing the complexity of the characters in it. The first part of the novel titled "The Vegetarian" is narrated from the point of view of Yeong Hye's husband who along with her father is depicted in the novel as a representation of the traditional male-dominated South Korean society.

The novel begins by highlighting Yeong Hye's decision to embrace vegetarianism prompted by a horrific nightmare involving animal abuse and the mistreatment of animals on a factory farm. In South Korean society it was a prevalent belief that the poison of a dog bite could be cured only by consuming the meat of the same dog. Consequently, Yeong Hye's father served her the meat of the dog that had bitten Yeong Hye. This particular incident from her childhood triggered an aversion to violence against animals. She kept seeing nightmares connected to this particular childhood incident and the recurrence of this dream eventually caused Yeong Hye to renounce meat consumption.

Yeong Hye's seemingly inconsequential choice to abstain from consuming meat has profound repercussions on her personal as well as familial life. Both male and female members of her family attempt to forcibly feed her meat, and out of the stress of being coerced into eating meat, Yeong Hye makes an attempt at suicide. Inflicting harm to her own self seems more welcoming to her than the need to inflict violence on other creatures for survival. Yeong Hye's family eventually takes her to a mental asylum where she starts to identify herself as a plant rather than as a human being.

The issue of associating compassion towards animals with maladies is addressed by many theorists in literature. The word “Animaladies” was coined by two such theorists, Lori Gruen, and Fiona Probyn Rapsey in their critical compilation titled *Animaladies: Gender, Animals, and Madness* to refer to the triangular association between animals, women, and madness in the form of maladies. Yeong Hye’s compassion towards animals and restraint from consuming the meat of animals is similarly seen by society as one form of such malady. This perception of Yeong Hye’s vegetarianism as an abnormality and a malady further aggravates her depressive condition.

In her vegetarian ecofeminist theory, Carol J. Adams argues that the absence of meat is most often interpreted by the male members of the patriarchal society as a justification for violence. The wives are expected to prepare meals in accordance with the dietary demands of their husbands and a failure to do so is taken as a pretext for violence against them. Mr. Cheong Ho finds Yeong Hye’s decision to become a vegetarian as a defiant act and he calls her family to seek their assistance in persuading her to resume her meat consumption. A wife is expected to not make any decision that contradicts the wishes of her husband, and here, Yeong Hye’s decision to stop cooking meat aggravates into a major problem as it does not align with her husband’s expectations.

Instead of seeking to understand the motivations behind Yeong Hye’s vegetarianism, both her mother and father accuse her of defying her husband’s desires. This is an instance of how, in a typical patriarchal society, women are even denied the freedom to eat the food of their choice. The family organises a gathering, and when Yeong Hye refuses to consume meat, her father tries to forcefully feed her, leading her to cut down her vein. She is admitted to a hospital, and it is subsequently revealed in the narrative that Mr. Cheong even divorces Yeong Hye because of her refusal to cook or eat meat.

The prevailing discourse of the meat-eating culture in the novel discussed here also makes it difficult for vegetarians to communicate their meanings. They are questioned about their reason for becoming a vegetarian and any other excuse for vegetarianism, apart from health and medical reasons is considered to be strange. Since vegetarianism is pictured to be a strange practice that deviates from society’s standard norm in Korean culture vegetarians are frequently questioned about their decision. In the narrative as well, Yeong Hye is questioned by the members of her family and her friends about her choice of diet.



At a dinner party arranged by Mr. Cheong's boss, Yeong Hye is asked by the members of the party about the reason for her vegetarianism. As she starts to tell them the truth about her dream, Mr. Cheong interrupts and lies that it is for health reasons that she has become a vegetarian. The director's wife also claims that people who cut off meat arbitrarily from their diet are narrow-minded.

Yeong Hye's aversion towards meat is labeled by the society as a kind of abnormal and irrational meat phobia. She is even admitted to a mental asylum following her resolute decision to stop consuming meat, which the society considers as a deviation from the conventional norms of the society.

Adams' theory of the Vegetarian Quest is identified in the novel, *The Vegetarian*. Adams identifies the Vegetarian Quest as a four-step process where the first step is to experience "the revelation of the nothingness of meat as an item of food" (227). Yeong Hye realizes that meat is not an inevitable and irreplaceable component of the diet and that it is tasteless if not for the sauces, gravies, and marinades added to it. The second step is "naming the relationships" (229) which includes identifying similarities between the meat on the table and the living animal, and also between ourselves and the animal butchered for meat. Yeong Hye refuses to indulge in any physical relationship with her husband as she finds similarities between the animal odour and the odour of Mr. Cheong.

The third and final stage in the process of the vegetarian quest is "rebuking a meat-eating world" (230). At the asylum, Yeong Hye starts to rebuke the whole meat-eating world as she sees the world as a place of violence and cruelty towards animals. For this reason alone, she prefers to associate herself with the plants and trees, rather than with the human species involved in violence. She agrees when her brother-in-law expresses a wish to paint leaves and flowers on her body and shoot the whole process, as Yeong Hye is impressed with the idea of being painted with flowers and leaves and the painting also seems to stop her from seeing nightmares. In the climax of the narrative, Yeong Hye stands upside down in the hospital yard and claims that roots are sprouting from her head while the branches sprout from her legs.

It is through her ecofeminist vegetarian identity that Yeong Hye tries to resist the dominant cultural norms dictated by the society in the form of confirming to the dominant

choice of food, culture, sexuality, etc. Throughout the novel, Yeong Hye chooses to lead a non-conformist life by not succumbing to the demands of the patriarchal society. It also becomes apparent to the readers that if society had been more empathetic towards the feelings and emotions of Yeong Hye, she would not have faced such a great extent of trauma and would not have ended up in the asylum.

As Yeong Hye progresses through the different stages of the vegetarian quest, which include understanding the nothingness of meat, finding similarities between herself and animals, and rebuking a meat-eating world, her transformation becomes a powerful representation of resistance against societal norms and a patriarchal culture represented in the novel. By embracing a vegetarian identity, Yeong Hye also symbolises a wider protest against violence committed towards animals and herself in her society.

---

### Works Cited

Adams, C J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, 2015.

Michael Allen Fox. *Deep Vegetarianism*. Temple University Press, 1999.

Gaard, Greta. "Vegetarian Ecofeminism: A Review Essay." *Frontiers*, vol. 23, no. 3, University of Nebraska Press, Jan. 2002, pp.117–46. doi.org/10.1353/fro.2003.0006.

Kang, Han. *The Vegetarian*. Granta Publications, 2018.

---

## Leveraging AI for English Language Learning: A Comparative Analysis of Duolingo, Babbel, and ElsaSpeak

**Dr. Sunanda M. Shinde, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., PGCTE**

Assistant Professor, D. Y. Patil College of Engineering and Technology, (Autonomous)

Kolhapur

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

---

---

### Abstract

This paper explores the effectiveness of AI-driven language learning tools such as Duolingo, Babbel, and ELSA Speak in teaching English as a second language. These platforms employ artificial intelligence to offer personalized learning experiences, catering to various aspects of language acquisition. Duolingo, with its gamified approach, focuses on building vocabulary and basic grammar, making it suitable for beginners. Babbel provides a more structured curriculum emphasizing practical conversations and real-world application of English, targeting learners at beginner and intermediate levels. ELSA Speak, meanwhile, specializes in pronunciation training, using AI to deliver real-time feedback on spoken English. While each tool demonstrates the potential of AI to enhance English language learning, they also present limitations, such as insufficient depth in conversational skills (Duolingo), limited advanced content (Babbel), and narrow focus on pronunciation (ELSA Speak). This paper concludes that a combined use of these AI tools can provide a more comprehensive learning experience, addressing diverse learner needs and supporting proficiency across multiple language skills.

**Keywords:** ElsaSpeak, Duolingo, Babbel, Second Language Learning, AI Tools.

### Introduction

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionized numerous industries, including education, where AI-powered tools are increasingly being used to facilitate language learning. In the realm of English as a second language (ESL), AI-based platforms like Duolingo, Babbel, and

ELSA Speak have gained significant popularity for their ability to offer personalized, accessible, and interactive learning experiences. These tools utilize AI algorithms to adapt to learners' individual needs, providing tailored exercises, instant feedback, and real-time progress tracking. With English being the global lingua franca for business, academia, and international communication, the demand for effective and flexible language learning methods is higher than ever.

AI-driven applications are designed to meet this demand by offering self-paced learning solutions that learners can access anytime and anywhere, making them particularly appealing for non-native speakers with varying levels of proficiency and diverse learning goals. Duolingo, for instance, emphasizes vocabulary and grammar through a gamified interface that motivates learners to practice regularly. Babbel offers structured lessons that teach practical, conversational English, while ELSA Speak focuses on improving pronunciation and speaking fluency using advanced speech recognition technology. Together, these tools represent a shift towards more individualized and technology-enhanced language learning, but they also raise important questions about the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of AI in mastering a complex language like English.

This paper aims to explore the potential and limitations of using AI tools such as Duolingo, Babbel, and ELSA Speak to teach English as a second language. By examining the unique features of each platform and how they address different language skills, this study assesses their overall impact on ESL learners and identifies areas where AI can further enhance language education.

## **Literature Review**

The advent of mobile applications for language learning has revolutionized the way English is taught and learned globally. Duolingo, Babbel, and ELSA Speak are three widely used language learning apps that have gained popularity for their engaging, user-friendly interfaces and tailored approaches to language acquisition. This review explores the efficacy of these apps in teaching English, focusing on their pedagogical approaches, strengths, weaknesses, and potential for enhancing language skills.

Duolingo's teaching method is based on spaced repetition and interactive exercises. Learners engage with bite-sized lessons that include multiple-choice questions, translation tasks, and matching activities. It emphasizes frequent practice and rewards, keeping learners motivated through streaks and points (Munday, 2016). Duolingo is especially effective for beginners, offering an accessible and engaging way to build foundational English skills. It allows for consistent practice through daily reminders and immediate feedback (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012). Despite its strengths, Duolingo's focus on translation-based exercises may limit its efficacy in developing conversational fluency or understanding contextual language use. It also lacks depth in more advanced grammar and syntax necessary for higher-level language learning (Loewen et al., 2019).

Babbel's lessons are carefully designed around real-life dialogues and scenarios, helping learners practice language in context. It employs a mix of interactive exercises, role-playing dialogues, and grammar instruction, making it more comprehensive than Duolingo in its scope (Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015).

Babbel excels in teaching everyday conversational skills and grammar in context. It helps learners understand how English is used in specific, practical situations, making it particularly beneficial for learners focused on improving communicative competence. Lessons in it are customizable to the learner's proficiency level, ensuring a tailored experience (Richards, 2016). Babbel may not offer the same level of engagement as Duolingo, as it lacks gamification elements. Additionally, while Babbel provides solid intermediate-level instruction, it may not fully address the needs of learners aiming for advanced proficiency (Thorne et al., 2015).

ELSA Speak stands out from Duolingo and Babbel by focusing specifically on improving pronunciation. Using artificial intelligence, the app provides real-time feedback on pronunciation errors, helping learners to perfect their spoken English. ELSA Speak leverages AI to analyze learners' speech and provide immediate, detailed feedback on pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. It allows learners to practice speaking on various topics and tracks their progress over time (Molina, 2019).

ELSA Speak is particularly effective for learners looking to improve their speaking and pronunciation skills, which are often underdeveloped in traditional classroom settings. Its personalized feedback helps users focus on specific pronunciation issues, making it highly targeted and practical for oral proficiency (Wu & Nadeem, 2020). While ELSA Speak excels in pronunciation training, it does not offer comprehensive lessons in vocabulary, grammar, or writing, making it less suitable as a standalone language learning tool (Hirata, 2021). It is most effective when used in conjunction with other resources for a more holistic approach to language acquisition.

## **AI Tools in English for Specific Purposes**

### **1. Duolingo**

Duolingo is a popular language-learning platform known for its user-friendly interface and gamified approach to language acquisition. Launched in 2011 by Luis von Ahn and Severin Hacker, Duolingo offers courses in numerous languages, including English. Its approach incorporates interactive exercises, quizzes, and a system of rewards and progress tracking to engage learners. The platform uses a combination of text, audio, and visual elements to teach vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

### **Features of Duolingo**

Duolingo employs a gamified approach to make learning engaging. Users earn points, level up, and receive virtual rewards for completing lessons, which helps maintain motivation and encourages regular practice. The platform adapts to users' proficiency levels, offering personalized lessons based on their performance. It adjusts the difficulty of exercises and revisits areas where learners need more practice.

Duolingo offers a range of exercise types, including translation tasks, sentence creation, listening exercises, and speaking practice. This variety helps reinforce learning through multiple modalities. Learners receive immediate feedback on their answers, allowing them to understand

and correct mistakes in real-time. Progress is tracked through a visual interface that shows improvement over time.

### **Use of Duolingo in Learning English**

Its user-friendly interface and engaging structure have made it accessible to millions of learners around the world. The platform employs a variety of interactive exercises, including translation tasks, multiple-choice questions, and sentence-building activities, to teach vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure. One of Duolingo's key features is its ability to keep learners motivated through gamification, offering rewards such as experience points, streaks, and achievement badges for consistent practice. This makes Duolingo particularly appealing for beginners who are looking for a fun, low-pressure way to start learning English.

Duolingo's methodology is based on short, structured lessons that incorporate spaced repetition, which helps learners retain new vocabulary and grammar over time. Each lesson is designed to take just a few minutes, encouraging frequent use and enabling learners to fit language study into their daily routines. Immediate feedback is provided after each exercise, allowing users to quickly identify and correct their mistakes. This feedback mechanism supports self-paced learning, empowering users to track their progress and improve in areas where they struggle. As a result, Duolingo helps beginners build a strong foundation in English, especially in reading and writing.

Despite its advantages, Duolingo has limitations when it comes to developing conversational fluency. The app primarily focuses on translation exercises, which may not adequately prepare learners for real-world communication. While users can practice forming sentences and learning vocabulary, there is little emphasis on contextual language use or conversational skills, which are crucial for achieving proficiency. Additionally, Duolingo's content tends to focus on everyday language rather than advanced grammar or specialized vocabulary, making it less suitable for learners who need more in-depth instruction. As a result,

while Duolingo is an effective tool for beginners, it may not fully address the needs of intermediate or advanced learners who require more complex language training.

In terms of accessibility, Duolingo is free to use, making it an attractive option for learners with limited resources. The platform is available on both mobile devices and web browsers, offering flexibility and convenience for users. However, some advanced features, such as removing ads and accessing offline lessons, require a subscription to Duolingo Plus. Even with these paid options, Duolingo remains one of the most cost-effective tools for English language learners, especially for those seeking to improve their skills independently.

Overall, Duolingo has proven to be an innovative tool in the realm of language learning. Its gamified structure, engaging lessons, and accessibility make it a valuable resource for beginners learning English. However, for learners aiming to achieve conversational fluency or tackle more complex language challenges, Duolingo may need to be supplemented with other resources that provide a deeper focus on communication skills and real-world language use.

## **2. Babbel**

Babbel is a language-learning platform designed to provide practical, real-world language skills through structured, interactive lessons. Founded in 2007 by Markus Witte, Thomas Holl, and Lorenz Heine, Babbel offers courses in multiple languages, including English. The platform emphasizes conversational practice and contextual learning, aiming to equip users with the skills necessary for effective communication in various situations.

### **Features of Babbel**

Babbel's courses are designed to build language skills progressively, starting from basic to advanced levels. Each course is organized into thematic units, covering essential topics such as travel, business, and everyday life. It focuses on teaching language that is directly applicable to real-life situations. Lessons often include dialogues and scenarios that reflect everyday interactions, helping learners develop practical speaking and listening skills. The platform



incorporates speech recognition to help users practice pronunciation. This feature provides immediate feedback on spoken exercises, enabling learners to improve their speaking skills.

Babbel integrates grammar explanations and vocabulary-building exercises into its lessons. This approach helps learners understand the structure of the language while expanding their lexis. The platform includes cultural insights to help learners understand the nuances of the language and its usage in different contexts. This feature can be particularly useful for understanding the subtleties of language in professional settings. Babbel tracks learners' progress through its courses, offering visual indicators of achievements and areas for improvement. This feature helps users stay motivated and focused on their learning goals.

### **Use of Babbel in Learning English**

Babbel is a subscription-based language-learning platform known for its structured approach to teaching English, offering courses designed by language experts. Unlike the gamified approach of other language apps, Babbel focuses on real-life communication, emphasizing conversational skills that are relevant to everyday situations. Each lesson is built around practical scenarios, helping learners understand and use English in context. This approach is particularly beneficial for learners who want to quickly apply what they have learned in real-world interactions, making Babbel an effective tool for improving spoken English and general communication skills.

One of Babbel's key strengths is its focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary in context. Instead of relying on translation-based exercises, Babbel integrates grammar rules into natural conversations. This helps learners understand not just the structure of the language but how to use it effectively in different situations. The lessons are interactive, offering listening, speaking, reading, and writing exercises that reinforce the material. Additionally, Babbel tailors lessons to the learner's proficiency level, providing personalized learning paths that adapt to individual progress. This flexibility allows learners to start at their current skill level and gradually advance.

Babbel's structured approach, however, is less playful compared to other platforms like Duolingo, which might reduce its appeal for users who enjoy a more game-like experience. The

=====

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) **ISSN 1930-2940** Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Dr. Sunanda M. Shinde, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., PGCTE

Leveraging AI for English Language Learning: A Comparative Analysis of Duolingo, Babbel, and ElsaSpeak

platform's design is focused on efficiency and depth rather than entertainment. While this may make Babel a better fit for serious learners who are focused on practical language acquisition, it might be seen as less engaging by those who prefer a lighter, more casual learning experience. Additionally, its lessons are designed primarily for beginner and intermediate learners, and although they cover a wide range of conversational topics, they may not offer the depth needed for advanced proficiency in English.

One of the notable benefits of Babel is its emphasis on pronunciation and speaking practice. Many of the lessons include voice recognition technology, allowing users to practice speaking English and receive immediate feedback on their pronunciation. This is particularly useful for learners looking to improve their spoken English and sound more natural in conversations. The practical nature of the exercises ensures that learners are not just memorizing words and grammar but are actively developing their ability to communicate in real-life situations.

To summarize, Babel is a powerful tool for learners who want to improve their English skills, particularly in conversation and real-life communication. Its structured, practical approach to language learning makes it ideal for those who are focused on quickly applying their knowledge in daily situations. While it may not have the same level of entertainment as other language apps, its emphasis on context and real-world usage sets it apart as a practical and effective resource for learning English. However, for those seeking advanced language proficiency or more specialized vocabulary, Babel might need to be supplemented with additional resources.

### **3. ELSA Speak**

ELSA Speak is an AI-powered language learning app specifically designed to improve pronunciation and speaking skills. Unlike most language apps that focus on vocabulary and grammar, ELSA Speak targets the development of spoken fluency and pronunciation accuracy. The app uses artificial intelligence to analyze the learner's speech and provide personalized feedback on specific areas of pronunciation that need improvement. This makes ELSA Speak a

powerful tool for language learners who struggle with spoken English or who want to refine their accent and sound more natural in conversations.

The core strength of ELSA Speak lies in its advanced speech recognition technology, which identifies and corrects pronunciation errors at a granular level. The app gives detailed feedback on individual sounds, intonation, and stress patterns, helping learners fine-tune their speech. Users can practice with a variety of topics, such as common phrases, conversation skills, or specialized vocabulary, and receive real-time feedback on their accuracy. This immediate, targeted correction allows learners to make rapid progress, especially in areas where traditional language learning methods might not provide such detailed spoken feedback.

ELSA Speak's design is particularly beneficial for learners who need to use English in professional or academic contexts, where clear and accurate pronunciation is essential. It is ideal for people preparing for presentations, interviews, or exams like IELTS or TOEFL, which assess oral proficiency. By offering tailored pronunciation training, ELSA Speak helps learners overcome specific phonetic challenges based on their native language. This personalized approach sets it apart from other language learning apps, which may offer general pronunciation exercises but lack the precision and feedback that ELSA provides.

However, ELSA Speak focuses almost exclusively on pronunciation and speaking, which means it does not cover other aspects of language learning, such as grammar, writing, or listening comprehension. It is best used as a supplement to other language learning tools that provide a more comprehensive approach to acquiring language skills. For learners aiming to improve their overall proficiency, ELSA Speak can be an invaluable resource when used alongside apps like Duolingo or Babbel, which cover grammar and vocabulary more extensively.

In summary, ELSA Speak is a specialized tool for improving pronunciation and spoken English. Its AI-driven feedback system offers learners a unique and effective way to enhance their fluency, making it ideal for individuals who need to sound confident and natural in spoken communication. While it lacks the comprehensive language instruction provided by other apps, its

focus on speaking skills makes it a perfect complement to more general language learning resources.

### **Limitations of Duolingo, Babbel and ELSA Speak**

While Duolingo is an engaging, beginner-friendly tool that offers a fun way to start learning English, it has several limitations. One of the primary drawbacks is its focus on translation-based exercises. These exercises may help learners build vocabulary and basic sentence structures but do little to prepare them for real-world conversations. Duolingo's emphasis on repetitive, mechanical drills limits the development of deeper communicative skills, especially in speaking and listening comprehension.

Furthermore, Duolingo lacks in-depth grammar instruction, meaning learners might struggle to understand complex grammatical structures beyond a basic level. Another shortcoming is the minimal focus on speaking practice, which is critical for achieving fluency in English. Learners can only practice pronunciation through text-to-speech features, with no real interaction or feedback on spoken English. As a result, while Duolingo is an excellent starting point for beginners, it is less effective for learners seeking comprehensive language mastery.

Babbel, though more structured and content-rich than Duolingo, has its own limitations. One significant drawback is that Babbel is a paid app, requiring a subscription for access to its full suite of lessons, which may be a barrier for some learners. Additionally, while Babbel excels in teaching practical conversation skills for real-world situations, it falls short in offering advanced-level lessons. Its content is well-suited for beginner to intermediate learners, but those aiming to achieve advanced proficiency or tackle more specialized aspects of English (such as academic writing or technical jargon) may find Babbel lacking. Another limitation is the absence of immersive speaking practice with real-time feedback. While Babbel does include voice recognition for pronunciation, it does not provide the same detailed, AI-driven feedback on pronunciation accuracy that apps like ELSA Speak offer.

ELSA Speak is highly effective for pronunciation training, but its narrow focus presents a significant limitation for learners who need more comprehensive language learning. The app

primarily targets pronunciation and speaking fluency, offering minimal support for grammar, vocabulary, reading, or writing skills. While it excels in helping users fine-tune their pronunciation and achieve natural intonation, ELSA Speak is not designed to provide the broader language instruction necessary for overall language proficiency.

It is best used as a supplementary tool alongside other language learning resources. Additionally, the app requires a paid subscription for full access to its features, which may limit its accessibility for some learners. Another limitation is that it may not be as effective for absolute beginners, as it assumes a certain level of English proficiency to engage with the exercises. Thus, while ELSA Speak is a valuable resource for improving pronunciation, it cannot serve as a standalone tool for comprehensive English language learning.

## **Conclusion**

The integration of AI-powered tools like Duolingo, Babbel, and ELSA Speak into English language learning has significantly transformed the way learners approach language acquisition. Each of these platforms leverages artificial intelligence to deliver personalized learning experiences, yet they cater to different aspects of language development. Duolingo offers an engaging and gamified approach, ideal for beginners building foundational skills in vocabulary and grammar, though it lacks depth in speaking and conversational practice. Babbel, with its more structured and practical focus on real-life communication, provides a more comprehensive learning experience but may not fully meet the needs of advanced learners. ELSA Speak, with its AI-driven feedback on pronunciation, stands out as an essential tool for improving spoken fluency, though its narrow focus limits its role to pronunciation training.

The collective use of these tools demonstrates the potential of AI to make language learning more accessible, interactive, and personalized. However, each tool has its limitations, indicating that no single platform can provide a complete language learning experience. Therefore, combining these AI-driven resources can offer a more holistic approach to mastering English, addressing the needs of learners at different stages of their language journey. As AI technology

continues to evolve, the potential for these tools to enhance language learning will likely expand, offering even more sophisticated solutions to language learners around the world. Further research into integrating these platforms effectively could yield insights into maximizing their educational impact and addressing their current limitations.

---

---

## References

- Chen, Y., & Wang, X. (2020). AI and Language Learning: Opportunities and Challenges. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3), 45-59.
- Dunlap, D., & Grabowski, B. (2017). Bridging the Gap: Teaching English to Engineering Students. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 26(4), 321-336.
- González, R. (2020). Intelligent Tutoring Systems in Language Education: A Review. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, 33(1), 24-40.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2017). Mobile apps for language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 21(2), 70-89.
- Hirata, Y. (2021). ELSA Speak: Artificial Intelligence and English Pronunciation. *International Journal of Language Learning Technology*, 12(4), 225-238.
- Li, X., & Zhang, H. (2021). The Impact of AI on Language Learning: An Empirical Study. *Language Learning & Technology*, 25(2), 55-72.
- Loewen, S., Isbell, D. R., & Sporn, Z. (2019). Mobile-assisted language learning: A Duolingo case study. *ReCALL*, 31(3), 293-311.
- Molina, T. (2019). Exploring Pronunciation Software for English Learners: A Case Study with ELSA Speak. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. *RIED*, 19(1), 83-101.
- Munday, P. (2016). The case for using Duolingo as part of the language classroom experience.
- Murray, T., & Zheng, L. (2019). Virtual Reality and AI in Language Learning: A New Paradigm. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 54(1), 23-34.

Richards, J. C. (2016). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge University Press.

Sundqvist, P., & Wikström, P. (2015). Out-of-school digital gameplay and in-school L2 English vocabulary outcomes. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 1-19.

Swales, J., & Feak, C. (2012). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills*. University of Michigan Press.

Thorne, S. L., Sauro, S., & Smith, B. (2015). Mobile apps for language learning: Practices and implications. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 14(4), 291-309.

Vesselinov, R., & Grego, J. (2012). Duolingo effectiveness study.

Wang, Y., & Lee, J. (2022). Enhancing Technical Communication Skills with AI-Based Tools. *Engineering Education Research Journal*, 10(2), 101-118.

Zhang, Q., Liu, X., & Huang, J. (2021). AI-Based Language Tutoring for Technical English: A Case Study. *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 14(1), 85-99.

=====

## Implementing Artificial Intelligence Tools as a Language Learning Method for Second Language Learners

**Pavithra. M., Ph.D. Research Scholar**

Department of English, Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous)  
Coimbatore- 641105

[arunapavithra7@gmail.com](mailto:arunapavithra7@gmail.com)

**Dr. Rajkumar. K., Assistant Professor**

Department of English, Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous)  
Coimbatore- 641105

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

### Abstract

This paper delves into the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) tool as innovative methods for language learning. With the rapid advancement of AI technologies, there is a growing interest in leveraging these tools to enhance language acquisition processes. This paper explores various AI-driven approaches, including language learning apps, virtual tutors, chatbots, and translation services, and examines their effectiveness in facilitating language learning across different proficiency levels and learning styles. Furthermore, it is about benefits and challenges associated with the integration of AI Tools into language education, highlighting the potential for personalised learning experiences, real-time feedback, and enhanced engagement. Through a review of existing research and case studies, this paper provides insights into the practical implementation and implications of deploying AI tools as language learning methods.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence Tools, language learning method, second language learners

### Introduction

Language Learning is broadly defined as developing the ability to communicate in second (or) foreign language. Language is a medium of understanding expression and communication. It is used towards the target language. The Objective of the study is described as explicit knowledge of language. Learning a new language involves Listening,



Speaking, Reading and Writing. The Four Language skills are interconnected. Each skill focuses exclusively on just one activity. Reading habit make vocabulary enriched it enhance the speaking skill, so all these four skills are interconnected. To evaluate these skills there are main three key principles. Input, Output and Feedback. The biggest challenge in language learning is overcoming own fears. By practising these four skills effectively, learning a new language will be easier.

The process of learning language is about having extended period of time to engage speakers, listeners, readers, writers and viewers. AI powered language learning tools can significantly speed up the learning process by providing instant feedback identifying area for improvement and adjusting the learning materials accordingly. It can enhance language assessment with automated grading and feedback facilitates effective language practice through chat bots and language processing tools. Artificial Intelligence plays a pivotal role in transforming language learning through enhanced learning experience.

The powerful combination of analytical AI and Machine learning enables language in an effective way. Language Learning has always been an essential skill for personal growth, career advancement and cultural understanding. However, traditional methods of language learning can be time-consuming and not very effective, with the rapid change in technology, artificial intelligence and is revolutionising ways for language learning process more accessible, efficient, and enjoyable. In this paper it is discussed about the impact of AI on language learning and discussed about popular tools, techniques and future trends.

### **Traditional Methods of language learning**

Earlier learning a new language typically involved attending classes, working through textbooks and practicing with native speakers. While these methods can be effective, they often a require a significant amount of time effort and financial resources. After the rise of digital technology internet has provided new opportunity for language learners. Online courses, language exchanging platforms and mobile apps has made learning more accessible and convenient. However, AI in language learning is the next level by providing invaluable information. There are various language teaching methods each with its own approach and focus. Some common methods include.

### **Grammar Translation-Method**

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Pavithra. M., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr. Rajkumar. K., Assistant Professor  
Implementing Artificial Intelligence Tools as a Language learning Method for Second  
Language Learners

This method is older way of method it's originally focused on Traditional based methods it's emphasize learning grammar rules and translating between languages. It embraces a wide range of approaches. Still, foreign language study is seen as mental discipline the goal of which may be to read literature in its original form or to be a form of intellectual development.

### **Direct Method**

It focuses on teaching through immersion using the target language exclusively without translation. This method became popular in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Audio-Lingual Method**

This method teaches through Listening Audio and concentrates on repetition and mimicry and drills to develop speaking and listening skills.

### **Communicating Language Teaching Method**

It emphasizes real-life communication focusing on practical language use and interaction. It encourages learners to communicate meaningfully in the target language through activities such as role-plays discussing and problem solving tasks.

### **Task Based Language Teaching Method**

In this method where the language is being taught it is used as primary means of instruction and communication .it aims to create an environment which learners are consistently exposed and encouraged to the target language. It encourages learners to become proficient and comfortable in using the language for communication fluency and confidence in real-world situation.

### **Total Physical Response**

The Total Physical Response method is an instructional approach that emphasizes the uses of physical movement to facilitate language learning. This method was developed by Dr. James Asher in 1960s naturally acquire first language through physical action and response. It is practically effective for beginners and young learners and provides a memorable engaging way to interactive vocabulary and language structures. It aims to create a

foundation of comprehensive and familiarisation with the language before focusing on speaker and production.

### **The Silent Way Method**

The silent way method of language teaching was formally developed by Caleb Gattegno. (Gattegno, Caleb (1972). *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way* (2nd ed.). New York: Educational Solutions.) It is based on the premise teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom, but the learners should be encouraged to produce as much as language possible. It is a student centric method. They are supposed to make their own discussions gain their own insights into functions of the language.

### **Eclectic Approach**

It is a method of language learning that combines various approaches and methodologies to teach language depending on the aims of the lesson and the abilities of learners. In this approach teacher has more flexibility and adaptability to choose the best elements to help language learning of the students.

### **Transforming Language Learning through Artificial Intelligence**

AI powered language learning apps are becoming increasingly popular due to their ability to adapt to individual learners' needs and preferences. These apps use machine learning algorithm to analyse users' progress and provide personalised feedback and suggestion making the learning process more efficient and engaging. One of the key benefits of AI in language learning is the ability to create personalised learning experiences. AI can analyse a learner's strength and weakness allowing the app to improve the context and difficulty level to suit the individual needs. This targeted approach helps learners progress more quickly and effectively.

### **Artificial Intelligence Tools in English Language Learning**

The rapid expansion of technology and digital application that characterizes 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution is changing the way we live, work and learn. It is a revolution driven by the fusion and amplification of emerging breakthrough in artificial intelligence automation, robotics and is multiplied by the far-reaching connectivity between billions of people with

mobile devices that offer unpredicted access to data and knowledge (Manns 2017). The development of intelligible pronunciation is an ongoing challenge to both ELT and EFL students and teachers across all language levels. There are technologies available free of charge that can assist both teachers and students in this regard. Speech can be transcribed, pronunciation checked and voice commands answered.

The following tools are used for language learning.

### **AI Tools in Language Learning**

#### **Talk-Pal**

Talk Pal is a popular best-known tool as a language learning app that uses AI to personalise learning experience. It is highly rated by customers and helps students to learn a language effectively.

#### **Duo-lingo**

This popular language learning app uses AI to personalise learning experiences. The app provides a variety of engaging activities, quizzes and games that adapt the users' skill level and learning preferences.

#### **Rosetta Stone**

It is a well-known language learning platform that incorporates speech recognition technology and AI algorithm to provide personalised feedback and recommendations. The platforms offer a wide range of language learning materials to suit learners' needs.

#### **Mondly**

It is a language learning app that uses AI-Powered and voice recognition technology to create immersive and interactive learning experiences. The app offers lessons in over 30 languages and provides real time feedback on pronunciation and grammar.

#### **Benefits of AI Tools**

The main aspect of AI is improving the learning process. These learning tools can significantly speed up the learning process by providing instant feedback, identify areas for

improvement, and adjusting the learners' materials accordingly. This allows learners to focus on their weakness and make rapid progress. One of the most challenging aspects of language learning is mastering pronunciation and accent. AI-powered tools can provide real time feedback on pronunciation, enabling learners to correct their mistakes and develop a more authentic accent. AI has made language learning more accessible to people who may not have access to traditional learning resources. With AI-Powered apps and platforms everyone with a smart phone or internet connection can learn a new language from anywhere in the world. The gamification elements incorporated in these apps motivate the learners and enable them to maintain long term commitment to language learning.

### **Challenges in AI learning**

As with any technology that collects and analyses user data, privacy concerns are an important consideration in AI powered language learning tools. Users must be aware of how their data is being used and stored. They should be comfortable with the level of data collection involved.

While AI has made significant advancement in language learning there are still limitation to the technology. For example, AI may struggle to understand complex language nuances, idiomatic expressions and cultural contexts which can affect the quality of learning experience. Despite the numerous benefits of AI-powered language learning, it is essential not to overlook the importance of human interaction in the learning process connecting with native speakers, engaging in conversations, and immersing in language culture which will provide invaluable learning experience that AI cannot fully replicate.

### **Conclusion**

The current study of the paper aims to identify AI's application in language learning and teaching. The discussion supports the notion that, due to its many advantages, AI is useful in language teaching and learning. Since AI is a continuously developing science, it will always produce new tools for teaching and learning languages. Future language learning is anticipated to be significantly influenced by AI as it develops. It is imperative to emphasize that AI is a potent tool that may be employed to enhance language acquisition for students of all ages and proficiency levels. Artificial intelligence (AI) can assist students in learning a new language more quickly and successfully by offering individualised learning, real-time

feedback, adaptability, access to resources, and cost-effectiveness. It is unlikely that technology will ever fully replace instructors, though. Teachers have a special combination of abilities and traits that AI cannot duplicate in the classroom, including emotional intelligence, the capacity to adapt to different requirements, creativity, relationship-building, and judgement.

---

---

### References

1. Asher, J. J. (1969). *The Total Physical Response Approach to Second Language Learning*. *The Modern Language Journal*, 53(1), 3-17.
2. Brooks, N. (1964). *Language and Language Learning: Theory and Practice*. Harcourt, Brace & World.
3. Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.
4. Brown, D. (2014) "Language, Culture and Identity" in *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, (6<sup>th</sup> Ed). Pearson.
5. Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
7. Gattegno, Caleb (1972). *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way* (2nd ed.). New York: Educational Solutions.
8. Jundiai, Budian to Hamuddin, Kenny Julita, Fathu Rahman Tatum, Retrieved from <http://sersc.org/journals/index.php/IJAST/article/view/17726> Derin. (2020). Artificial Intelligence in EFL Context .Rising students Speaking performance with Lyra virtual Assistance International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology,29(o5),67356741.
9. Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
10. Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

11. Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
  12. Mehisto, P., Marsh, D., & Frigols, M. J. (2008). *Uncovering CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning in Bilingual and Multilingual Education* Macmillan.
  13. Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
  14. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
  15. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
  16. Rivers, W. M. (1968). *Teaching Foreign-Language Skills*. University of Chicago Press.
  17. Savignon, S. J. (2002). *Interpreting Communicative Language Teaching Contexts and Concerns in Teacher Education*. Yale University Press.
- =====

## Action Research in ELT: The Need of the Hour

**Aarthi E., Ph.D. Research Scholar**

Department of English, Kongunadu Arts and Science College

Coimbatore – 641029, Tamil Nadu, India

[aarthielangovan097@gmail.com](mailto:aarthielangovan097@gmail.com)

**Dr. Kaviyarasu K., Assistant Professor**

Department of English, Kongunadu Arts and Science College

Coimbatore – 641029, Tamil Nadu, India

[kaviyarasu.k@kongunaducollege.ac.in](mailto:kaviyarasu.k@kongunaducollege.ac.in)

---

---

### Abstract

English is used as a first language, foreign language and second language. In India teaching English as a Second Language has always been a challenging and interesting area of research. Today, learning English as a Second Language is rather chaotic because of the disorder in the LSRW learning sequence. Listening is the primary tool in language acquisition. When listening is enhanced, all the other three skills can be acquired naturally. Also, Creativity is an important aspect in an ESL classroom. So, in connection with this, a good language teacher should also act as a researcher. Action Research is a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring one's own teaching context. The main aim of conducting action research is to identify a significant problem among the language learners. The steps involved in Action Research are - Planning, Action, Observation and Reflection. There are three categories in teacher-research orientation, and they are Descriptive, Interactive and Ideological. Action Research is used to create knowledge and implement change, which will thereby improve practice and performance. Thus, Action Research is conducted by teachers and for teachers.

**Keywords:** Action Research, ELT, ESL, EFL.

### Introduction

English Language teaching in India has always been a challenging and interesting area of research. There are various methods and strategies adopted to make the communication of the non-native speakers effective. It is a natural tendency for all human beings to acquire their



mother tongue without external effort, whereas when it comes to learning a second language, acquisition does not happen naturally.

Many ELT practitioners all around the globe focus on enhancing the language skills of the learners. Though they share their success stories on how they improve the communication skills of the non-native speakers through their innovative methods, there has always been a trouble in implementing the same successful methods to different groups of non-native speakers. The fact hidden behind a successful method becoming a failure is that all groups do not share the same commonalities, learning difficulties, and problems. A good ELT practitioner's duty is to identify exactly the problem of the learners and design an appropriate method to solve the problem of the learners.

### **Why LSRW and not WRSL?**

There is always an answer among the ELT practitioners to the question “Why LSRW and not WRSL?” There is a sequence for a language to be learned. When there is chaos in the sequence, disorder becomes natural. To elucidate, English practitioners strongly believe that a child easily learns his/her mother tongue because of non-digression from the laid sequence. The flow of learning the mother tongue has always been Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. This is a natural process to learn a language without much effort. Moreover, the child is corrected by adults and correct language samples are provided.

Today, learning English as a second language is rather chaotic because of the rearrangement in the learning sequence provided. Widely practised order of ESL teaching in India starts with writing, reading, speaking and then listening. However, listening is the primary tool in language acquisition. When listening is enhanced, all the other three skills can be acquired more easily. LSRW is the right way of learning a language.

### **Creativity: An Essential Aspect**

Creativity is an important aspect in an ESL classroom. The teacher should design practical activities which will nurture, develop, and motivate the students. All these activities will help the teachers to explore the role of creativity in the classroom. All learners tend to have

unique creative abilities, and the duty of the teacher is to identify them and make them use the language in a creative way. In order to learn a language effectively, creativity is necessary.

### **The Major Hypotheses of Second Language Acquisition**

There are many theories involved in Second Language Acquisition. Here below are a few hypotheses framed by prominent theorists like Krashen, Dulay, Burt, Terrell that focus on the acquisition of a language. The major hypotheses are:

- The Acquisition-learning Hypothesis
- The Natural Order Hypothesis
- The Monitor Hypothesis
- The Input Hypothesis
- The Affective-filter Hypothesis

In **Acquisition-learning Hypothesis**, there is a meaningful interaction, the attention is on the message, and there is no error correction that paves way for explicit teaching of grammar. In **Natural Order Hypothesis**, the acquisition of grammatical structures is in natural order. This helps in learning the syllabus and textbook design. The **Monitor Hypothesis** focuses on the shift from adult monitoring to self-monitoring. The **Input Hypothesis** is comprehensible and challenging. The **Affective-filter Hypothesis** focuses on the role of a teacher and the willingness on the part of the learner to acquire the language by warding off any anxiety, stress, tension, fear of failure, etc.

### **Scope for Research in ELT**

Research in connection with ELT can be done on:

- Use of Technology in Teaching
- Social Media and its Impact in Language Teaching
- Psychological Approaches to Language Teaching
- Sociocultural Approaches
- Cognitive Approaches to Language Teaching
- Linguistic Approaches to Language Teaching

- Role of Assessment and Evaluation in Language Teaching
- Teaching English to Differently abled Students
- Blended Learning and Learner Autonomy

### **A Language Teacher is also a Researcher**

A good language teacher should also act as a researcher. There must always be a quest for coming to the classroom. Action research is the best way, where a teacher can act as a researcher in the classroom. Classroom Action research is a method of finding what works best in the classroom, so that a teacher can improve his/her students' learning. There are many ways and methods suggested to find the problems related to language learning. Action research is one of the best ways available to identify the problems of the learners and provide a variety of solutions.

The term “**Action Research**” was coined by Kurt Levin in his article titled, “Action Research and Minority Problems.” Teacher research involves, “rigorous examination of one’s own practice as a basis for professional development.” According to Burns, Action Research is “a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching context.” For that matter, “Research” is a systematic approach to carrying out investigations and collecting information, thereby focussing on an issue or a problem and trying to improve the classroom practice; and “Action” is all about taking practical action to resolve the classroom problems.

### **Action Research Classroom: A Way to Identify Problems among Students**

All teachers have their own way of teaching. They all aim at improvising their knowledge about teaching. There are many teachers who practice personal reflection on teaching, whereas a few others conduct empirical studies for teaching and learning. A teacher in an Action Research Classroom is more systematic than a teacher using personal reflection, which is more personal and informal. The main aim of conducting action research is to identify a significant problem among the language learners. The steps involved in Action Research are - Planning, Action, Observation and Reflection.

Mills in his book titled, *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher* provides the following definition for Action Research:

Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes. (4)

### **Teacher-Research Orientation**

In Action Research, there are three main reasons for doing research and for not doing research. For doing research, it is necessary to look for better instructional methods as it is necessary to solve pedagogical problems, and the teacher-researcher should have the capacity of developing them professionally. The three main reasons for not doing research are lack of time, lack of motivation, and lack of sufficient knowledge about the research methods.

There are three categories in teacher-research orientation. They are Descriptive, Interactive and Ideological. Descriptive Orientation involves scrutiny of a learner's language, examination of the verbal reports on learning strategies, and analysis of the text. Interactive Orientation involves classroom interaction analysis and ethnography. Ideological Orientation involves critical pedagogical approaches and participatory action research.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding the learners is very much essential. Learners of the twenty-first century are digital learners. Since they are so much addictive towards technology, there is always an impatience that prevails among them. There are chances for them to be less focused. It is easy for them to easily detach themselves from a traditional classroom set-up. The positives of digital learners are that they are good multi-taskers and kinaesthetic learners, very much updated with the current trend. Before implementing any activity in the classroom, a groundwork on understanding the learners is very much necessary and important. Action Research is used in various fields like Linguistics, Psychology, Education and Sociology. In short, there are many contemporary trends related to English Language Teaching. According to Stringer (1996), Action Research is used to create knowledge and implement change, which will thereby improve practice and performance. Action Research is conducted by teachers and for teachers.

=====

## References

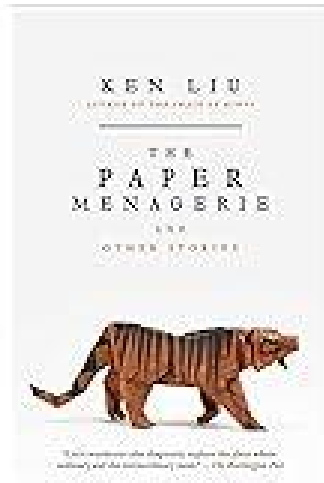
- Burns, A. *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*. New York : Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.
- Krashen, Stephen D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Elsevier, 1982. Print.
- . *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use: The Taipei Lectures*. US: Heinemann Educational Books, 2003. Print.
- Mills, G.E. *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2003. Print.
- Stringer, E. *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners*. CA: Sage, 1996. Print.
- =====

## Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu's *The Paper Menagerie: A Supposition of Recalling Memory*

Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar  
[sowmya.e1@buc.edu.in](mailto:sowmya.e1@buc.edu.in)

Dr V. David Arputha Raj M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English and Foreign Languages  
Bharathiar University, Coimbatore - 641046  
[davidarputharaj@buc.edu.in](mailto:davidarputharaj@buc.edu.in)

---



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

Memory is the picturisation of past events and the process of storing events and incidents with priority in the long-term memory (LTM) or the short-term memory (STM). It is accordingly a microscopic chemical change in the brain between the neurons at the connecting point. Bringing memory into literature serves as a compendium of different cultures, cultural and collective memories, identities and social disputes besides the fact that it also serves for imaginaries, aesthetics and philosophy. This paper aims to explore the retrieval of memory through the secondary cues as represented in the postmodern short story “The Paper Menagerie”

by Ken Liu, an American science fiction and fantasy writer who follows an unconventional and non-sequential narration. The secondary cues are identified by the application of the Level of Processing theory by Fergus I. M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart to specify the processing of how memory is treated with stimuli which are the auditory and visual cues.

**Keywords:** Ken Liu, *The Paper Menagerie*, Level of Processing, auditory memory, visual memory, memory cues, stimuli.

In his work "Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals," William James defines memory as the recollection of past events, distinguished by its ability to store these events in long-term or short-term memory through microscopic chemical changes in the brain. (James, 117) Memories do not possess physical properties; rather, they are abstract generalisations in the process of recollection. The faculty of memory is constructed through actions stemming from various circumstances.

Auditory and visual memory are specific types of memory processing, crucial to learning, re-learning, and memory retrieval, with sensory cues playing a key role in the processes of encoding, remembering, forgetting, and retrieval. According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, auditory memory is "the memory for information obtained through hearing," and can be retained in linguistic or non-linguistic forms, such as words and music. Similarly, visual memory is defined as "the capacity to remember previously seen visual images." (James 117)

From classic literature till now, the understanding of memory and the accumulation of its knowledge has taken various trends in literature. Glenn W. Most in his "Memory and Forgetting in the Aeneid" deliberately writes how memory has been a component of thought from the classical age until now. He writes, "But no other Roman poet seems to have been so obsessed with memory as Virgil was, no other one seems to have located the phenomenon of memory so conspicuously at the very center of his poetry". (Most 155)

Literature serves as a compendium of different cultures, cultural and collective memories, identities, and societal disputes. Readers of literature associate, connect and indulge themselves with past events that have relatively happened, identifying personalities, imagination etc.

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu's *The Paper Menagerie*: A Supposition of Recalling Memory

Memory being incorporated with the literature files a diverse knowledge of history, sociology, psychology, theology, literature, media and neuroscience inculcating ideas and interpretations. Narration concerns and influences the delivery of meanings and interpretations. This paper aims to explore the retrieval of memory through the sensory cues as represented in the postmodern short story which follows an unconventional and non-sequential narration.



Portrait of Ken Liu by Lisa Tang Liu.

Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken\\_Liu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Liu)

Ken Liu, an American science fiction and fantasy writer, who descants on various subjects such as cryptocurrency, futurism, implications of new technologies, science fiction, virtual reality and sustainable storytelling, is the author of the selected short story. “The Paper Menagerie” by Ken Liu is a fantasy and magical realism short story that was first published in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. His other short stories also explore the ideas of tradition and progress, the susceptibility of memory and the aspect of what it means to be a human.

According to Fergus I. M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart, well-known psychologists who excel in the field of perception, cognition and cognitive neuroscience with a focus on the basic process of memory and embodied cognition, cognitive psychology, transfer-appropriate processing, cued recall respectively, professes that the memory is tied to levels of perceptual processing. They include, “. . .levels may be grouped into stages (sensory analyses, pattern recognition, and stimulus elaboration, for example) processing levels may be more usefully

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024  
Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj  
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu’s *The Paper Menagerie*: A Supposition of  
Recalling Memory



envisaged as a continuum of analysis.” ( Craik and Lockhart 676) They describe that memory does not have a fixed space store, rather, the beholder has several different ways to encode and retain it. The Levels-of-Processing theory answers the questions of, how a person receives the information, what the beholder of the memory does with the received information, and how that it affects the retention, that is, the continued possession of that information as memory. Craik and Lockhart call the retention as a “continuum of analysis.” (Craik and Lockhart 676) So, the individual needs to understand the significance of the information processing in the basic memory system in which certain aspects of the stimuli can be recirculated for retentions to keep the segments conscious by holding them in a continuous rehearsal buffer for the memory to get stored in the designed locus.

This processing theory goes with Structural, Semantic and Phonetic levels to transfer the information to LTM or STM in consensus associated with the familiarity of the information. Specificity of processing is another aspect of memory that gives increased value to recall when inputted through any stimuli. Stimuli can be auditory or visual.

Jack in this short story encounters these stimuli where it kindles the memory that he had somewhere lost consciously in his childhood. Here, the auditory and the visual stimuli take place through the ‘letter’ written by his mother in her native language- Chinese, which irritates Jack, for not being much American and the ‘Origamis’ that she created by folding papers for him when he was a child, breathing into the paperwork, so that it moves, though it was not a living being respectively.

Ken Liu starts “The Paper Menagerie” as a memory of Jack sobbing, as Jack is the narrator of the short story. Jack presents the unconventional breaks in the narration. Narrative incoherences are seen as there are fluctuations in Jack's memory whenever he ponders over to retrieve the particular memory which he wanted to share, about his ‘Mom’. Jack recollects the memories that he had lived with his mother who was associated with Chinese culture. Being a Chinese woman living in Connecticut, with her husband and her son, she has difficulty talking and being more like an American which makes Jack move away from her and her love. Jack starts hating her Chinese culture, food and features when he starts experiencing mocks from his

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj  
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu’s *The Paper Menagerie*: A Supposition of  
Recalling Memory

American friends. He stopped playing with the Origami toys which his mom gave him with all her love. The narration swings back and forth, stating reasons, how and why Jack's love was turning to hatred until the story of his mom's death is revealed.

The letter written by his mom serves as an auditory predictive model to retrieve the memories. The letter reading and the retrieval of memory is a structural and phonetic level of processing. But here, as the letter is in Chinese and it is read by a Chinese woman, the level of processing turns to a specificity of process and becomes an auditory memory. Jack says, "We sat down on a bench together, and she read the letter to me aloud. The language that I had tried to forget for years came back, and I felt the words sinking into me, through my skin, through my bones, until they squeezed tight around my heart." (Liu, 38) The auditory predictive model, the letter, gives stimuli to the beholder to retrieve and recollect the memories that have faded. The letter talks about the good and bad memories that she cherished every moment, and it shows the intensity of a mother's unshared love.

This auditory memory transpires when there is a direct correlated neutral action or stimuli by hearing or listening. Here, words are recalled effectively and are present for explicit memory rather than implicit memory. Characters and words in Chinese in the story which were used by his mother are *ai*, *Kan*, *Laohu*, *Rawrr-sa*, *Zhe jio zhezhi*, *Xuexiao hao ma*, *Sha jiao chunk*, *Bu haochi*, *Fashao la*, *Haizi*, and *mama ai ni*. The character *ai* increases the recall value in Jack and makes a lasting, more elaborate and stronger memory trace. The stimuli gave a stronger trace in which, ". . . The saliency of the given stimulus arises from the sensory event in combination with the frequency memory trace of recent stimulation in the frequency-specific channel." (Zimmermann, Jacqueline & Moscovitch, Morris & Alain, Claude, 7)

The phonetic and structural process of recalling the memory by writing the character *ai*, again and again, stimulates and traces the frequent channel of the memory in Jack and retrieves it.

The visual predictive models are the Origamis crafted by his mother. The visual input is the strongest input and stimuli in the process of specification of a memory. In his childhood, he liked and played with origami where they were holding the breath of his mom. Later, in

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu's *The Paper Menagerie*: A Supposition of Recalling Memory

adulthood, these origamis were not lively, since his mother died, and they were just pieces of folded paper.

Visual memory requires the observer to remember not only the features like colour, shape, size, and structure but also the space those items were displayed. So, the memory does not depend only on the objects or structures but also on the spatial orientations. The spatial-context dependence is applied to all visual working memory where the objects and the structures work as stimuli. The darkness of the attic shows the longevity of the paper menagerie staying there in the attic, also symbolises the memories of Jack, associated with the Origami toys that have faded in due course of time. Jack's mom's origami is so special because it carried her breath and moved. "This was her magic." (Liu, 27) After the death of his mom, the paper menagerie induced him to retrieve all the memories, once intentionally Jack hoarded them.

Firstly, the visual memory does not consist of independent or individual items. Instead, they are represented in more structural, objectified and abstract ways, both in spatial and feature dimensions. Secondly, the levels of the visual memory are also not independent since they are integrated with the symbolic, structural and representation of other objects. The origamis are not only the folded craft papers, but these also include her breath blown into the folded paper-like balloons that symbolise the longevity of his mom's life and the individuality of toy representation. Jack did not have any toys other than the paper menagerie; other boys had Star Wars plastic toys. (Liu, 30)

The visual representations and the differences between the toys bring a subjugation in the memory, from childhood to when Jack started the aversion towards the paper menagerie when Mark, the neighbour of Jack, mocks his paper menagerie. The recollection of the memory that he used to play with the origami toys marks a behavioural change in his adulthood and the memory systems get altered and refined by the content fed by the object. The objectification of the environment and the visual representations of the origamis retrieve and extend the durable trace of the memory.

The process of memory consists of auditory and visual memories working as stimuli in response to the objects and words that Jack encounters after his mom's death. The properties present in the story are the conscious requirements to induce these memories of the beholder.

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu's *The Paper Menagerie*: A Supposition of Recalling Memory

Having the non-sequential narration where his memories are scattered at first and then in the flow of an organisation, shows that the consciousness, the time and the memory of the beholder form the characteristics of memory cues.

---

---

### References

“APA Dictionary of Psychology.” Dictionary.apa.org, dictionary.apa.org/auditory-memory.

“APA Dictionary of Psychology.” Dictionary.apa.org, dictionary.apa.org/visual-memory.

Brady, T. F., T. Konkle, and G. A. Alvarez. “A Review of Visual Memory Capacity: Beyond Individual Items and toward Structured Representations.” *Journal of Vision* 11.5 (2011): 4–4. Web.

Craik, Fergus I.M., and Robert S. Lockhart. “Levels of Processing: A Framework for Memory Research.” *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 11.6 (1972): 671–684. Web.

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S002253717280001X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S002253717280001X), [10.1016/s0022-5371\(72\)80001-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022-5371(72)80001-x).

“How Are Memories Formed and Recalled?” *Science ABC*. 16 Apr. 2024. Web. 31 July 2024. [www.scienceabc.com/humans/how-are-memory-stored-retrieved-forget-encode-retrieve-hippocampus-long-term-memory-short-term-memory.html#:~:](http://www.scienceabc.com/humans/how-are-memory-stored-retrieved-forget-encode-retrieve-hippocampus-long-term-memory-short-term-memory.html#:~:) Accessed 21 Dec. 2022.

Liu, Ken. *The Paper Menagerie*. n.d. Web. 31 July 2024.

“Memory and Forgetting in the ‘Aeneid’ on JSTOR.” *www.jstor.org* n. pag. *JSTOR*. Web. [www.jstor.org/stable/41587257](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41587257). Accessed 21 Dec. 2022.

Zimmermann, Jacqueline F., Morris Moscovitch, and Claude Alain. “Attending to Auditory Memory.” *Brain Research* 1640 (2016): 208–221. Web.

---

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Ms Sowmya Shree S., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar and Dr V. David Arputha Raj M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Retrieving Memory through Sensory Cues in Ken Liu’s *The Paper Menagerie*: A Supposition of Recalling Memory



## Screams of Broken Souls in *Ruined* with the Context of Existential Feminism

**Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.**

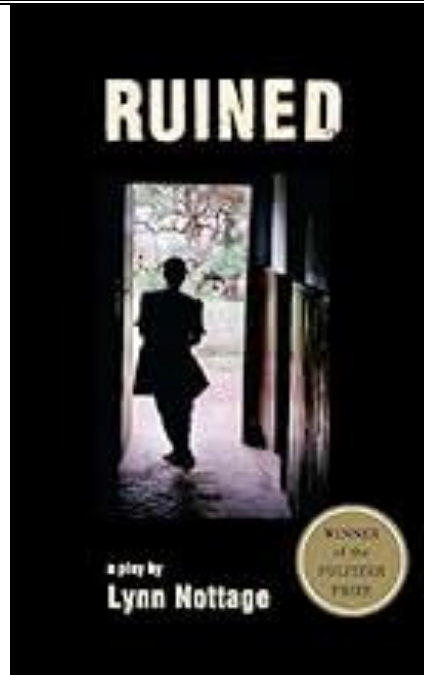
SMDRSD College

Pathankot 145001

Punjab

[drparvesh85@gmail.com](mailto:drparvesh85@gmail.com)

---



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

Existential feminism paved the way for other female writers who desired to explore literature with the lens of gender equality. After World War II, Jean Paul Sartre propounded the theory of Existentialism where he concluded that ‘existence precedes essence’ (26). In 1949 Simon de Beauvoir redefined the limits of gender and wrote a book called *The Second Sex* where she lamented upon the status of labeling a woman as other. She stressed upon the fact that even women, like men are not pre-destined. This theory proved to be revolutionary and was an amalgamation of her firsthand experiences and philosophical ideology.

The main purpose of existential feminism is to serve absolute liberty in making choices and acknowledgement to every sex and gender on the basis of individual spontaneity whether it is political, social, domestic or psychological, and not from external or authority. The basic trait of a woman in each corner of the world is similar as well their issues are.



**Lynn Nottage**

Courtesy: <https://signaturetheatre.org/playwright/lynn-nottage/>

In this present article I will be focusing on one of the darkest and harsh realities of a region called Democratic Republic of Congo while exploring a play by **Lynn Nottage** called *Ruined* with the context of existential feminism. Nottage is a very profound playwright who is the only playwright to win Pulitzer award twice in her life for plays, one for *Ruined* in 2009 and another in 2017 for the play, *Sweat*. Nottage has published more than ten plays and acclaimed worldwide popularity. Her plays are the replete of basic and relevant social issues based in Congolese culture and the people. Her play *Ruined* has multifaceted themes discussing darkest sides of female exploitation. The setting of the play is a bar in an anonymous small mining town with the backdrop of civil war in DRC. The bar's owner Mama Nadi is an authoritative lady in her early forties who runs a bar where she sells alcohol as well as ladies. The present paper will throw light on the circumstances where all these above-mentioned topics were brutally ignored. Beauvoir affirms that despite tireless endeavors a woman still experiences existential crisis in every sphere of life.

**Keywords:** Lynn Nottage, *Ruined*, Existential Feminism, Democratic Republic of Congo, genital mutilation, rape, violence.

## **Introduction**

=====

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) **ISSN 1930-2940** **Vol. 24:10 October 2024**

Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.

Screams of Broken Souls in *Ruined* with the Context of Existential Feminism

Lynn Nottage's writing style often investigates the human mind and soul from depth while also focusing on introspection of the characters. Her language mirrors the plain prose depicting true events and brutal atrocities perpetrated on Congolese women. She reflects the true picture of these women with a convincing and accessible narrative addressing the themes of existentialism, patriarchal society and raising feministic point of view. In an interview, **Lynn Nottage** mentioned the following: "I cannot bear to live in a world where such horrific things are happening to my African sisters without doing whatever I can to help them... Our silence on this issue sends a message to the Congolese government that it can continue to rape the land and its people with impunity" (Nottage, 2012).

War has always proved to be means to violate female rights. Women become victim of war and have been exploited the most. Civil wars too created much chaos and here women as assumed to be the weakest section of society, have been subjected to gender-based barbarism. Even after the fourth wave of Feminism the issues and debates seem much needed for raising voices in the favor of gender equality today. Beauvoir asserts,

why is woman the Other? The question is how, in her, nature has been taken on in the course of history; the question is what humanity has made of the human female. (71)

In the interview Nottage said that during her visit to Congolese refugee camps, she got disturbed on hearing heart aching life stories of African women who were the victims of child marriage, forcible pregnancy, genital mutilation and rapes. She says,

"The stories of these refugee women running away from rape and domestic abuse are so graphic, so heart-wrenching, that it will be difficult for people to spend two hours hearing them in a two-hour play. It was emotionally difficult for me to hear when I interviewed over 15 women in Kampala."

Lynn Nottage portrays the real and brutal picture of civil war took place between rebels and government where Congolese women are used as a tool who are sexually assaulted, and they continue to perpetrate atrocities on them as long as these can be consumed for their sexual gratification. These women are kept by soldiers and local men as their concubines for as long as they wish and then thrown to die. According to the UN, over 200,000 women and girls have been violently raped; in 2008, around 15,996 rape cases were reported, and two out of every three were children. The play begins on the note of Christian's arrival with three girls in the bar seeking refuge there. Salima, has been rescued from a violent act and now, is impregnated due to this horrifying episode. She hides her pregnancy from Mama as she really needs refuge. Christian introduces her to Mama as,

Salima is from a tiny village. No place really. She was captured by rebel soldiers, Mayi-mayi; the poor thing spent nearly five months in the bush as their concubine. ....her husband is a

=====

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) **ISSN 1930-2940** **Vol. 24:10 October 2024**

Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.

Screams of Broken Souls in Ruined with the Context of Existential Feminism



farmer, and from what I understand, her village won't have her back. Because ... But she's a simple girl, she doesn't have much learning, I wouldn't worry about her. (Nottage, 2009, p.12)

Every woman in the bar has a traumatic past, Josephine another girl in bar, daughter of a chief of a village, who was raped publicly by the soldiers and then disowned by her community. Men of the tribe decide to abandon her as she's no longer acceptable. She envies Sophie as she is beautiful and has become popular in the bar very soon. Even Mama talks to her politely. She tells Sophie,

My father was chief! The most important man in the villages, and when the soldiers raided us, who was kind to me? Huh? Not his second wife. 'There she is the chief's daughter!' Or the cowards who pretended not to know me, and did any of them bring a blanket to cover me, did anyone move to help me? NO! So you see, you ain't special! (Nottage, 2009, p.26).

Cathy Caruth has discussed in detail the psychological ailments in her book *Unexplained Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). She contends that the horrifying old memories can occur as a nightmare, flashback or intrusive memory. Sophie is unable to get rid of her intrusive memories of being tortured. Sophie sings in the bar and called a rare bird by Salima. Sophie is stealthily hoarding money from Mama's account. She hopes that her genitals could be fixed through a surgery. Nottage says,

"Hope is a strange and fragile thing. It can bloom in the darkest places".

This statement emphasizes a message of resilience and perseverance that a hope can provide, even in a depressing atmosphere. Sophie symbolizes ray of hope where she dreams to undergo an operation to fix her genitals. She aspires to lead a normal life afterwards. Each woman of the play deals with a disturbing and horrifying past, unable to forget. These women are the victim of misogynistic thought process prevailing in the society where men decide the fate of women. These women consider themselves, inferior to the male sex and act accordingly. Beauvoir writes that,

"Society has always been male; political power has always been in men's hands. "Political authority, or simply social authority, always belongs to men," (105).

These women are deeply affected by the heinous atrocities they had experienced and feel emotionally disoriented. But they still gather courage and emerge as survivors who wish to live as Sophie aspires to have an operation after which she might have a chance to lead a normal life. Salima, once a captive of rebels is ostracized by her own people for bringing slur and shame to their clan, yearns to meet her daughter Beatrice. Though Salima's husband Fortune comes to find her, she hides herself in the bar and refuses to go with him. She thinks that she has brought shame to the family. Salima finds herself a misfit for her society and asks Mama to make Fortune

leave the bar. Despite Fortune's yearning she denies meeting him as she's ashamed of being used as a toy to myriads of men. Beauvoir asserts,

"Now, woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even though her condition is changing, woman is heavily handicapped. In no country is her legal status identical to man's, and often it puts her at a considerable disadvantage. Even when her rights are recognized abstractly, long-standing habit keeps them from being concretely manifested in customs" (29).

Salima gets along with Sophie and shares their anguish and pathos with each other. Salima finds disgusting to be a sex worker and calls Sophie fortunate that she only sings in the bar and doesn't have to sleep with men. But Sophie tells her that the atmosphere of bar, lustful staring of men always makes her sick.

"SALIMA: You, you don't have to be with them. Sometimes their hands are so full of rage that it hurts to be touched. This night, I look over at you singing, and you seem almost happy like a sunbird that can fly away if you reach out to touch it.

SOPHIE: Is that what you think? While I'm singing, I'm praying the pain will be gone, but what those men did to me lives inside of my body. Every step I take I feel them in me. Punishing me. And it will be that way for the rest of my life. (45)"

Sophie tells her that she feels choked to be in the bar. She tells her plan of hoarding money and going along with Salima to Bunia for a better future. Josephine too desires to have a good time with one of her regular customers, MrHarari who promises her to take her to city where she would live with him.

"JOSEPHINE: Mr. Harari is going to take me. Watch out, chérie, he's promised to set me up in a high-rise apartment. Don't hate, all of this fineness belongs in the city. (48)"

She cherishes living a better life with some honour. She doesn't mind being called as his keep or mistress as there would be nobody, but Mr. Harari only to gratify his sexual urge. Mama Nadi in the play serves as their guardian who protects these victims of violence. The play doesn't reveal much about her past, but in the end, it's been revealed that she too was a victim of sexual assault and was mutilated. She shows herself as strong and audacious woman, an untamed spirit, but the concluding part of the play exhibits her fragile and compassionate aspect. She cries loudly and confesses about being a victim of rape. Initially she seems very calculative, shrewd and business minded who deals with alcohol and girls. But ironically these sex workers feel haven, and safer to be in the bar. As Mama Nadi says,

“My girls, ask them, Emilene, Mazima, Josephine, ask them, they’d rather be here, any day, than back out there in their villages where they are taken without regard. They’re safer with me, than in their own homes” (Nottage, 2009, p. 57).

Showing her generosity, Mama hands over a diamond to Mr. Harari, her lifetime saving and asks him to take Sophie with him to Bunia. She requests Harari to arrange an operation for Sophie.

“MAMA: No, listen . . . I’m talking about Sophie. This will raise enough money for an operation, and whatever she needs to get settled. (102)

In scene six of Act two, Salima dies and rescues all other girls at the bar from the trap of Osembenga, the commander. Dying Salima says:

SALIMA (To Osembenga, the Soldiers and Fortune): You will not fight your battles on my body anymore. (Salima collapses to the floor. Fortune cradles her in his arms. She dies. (106))”

## Conclusion

In the end of the play a revelation shocks the audience that Mama Nadi herself was a ruined, but Christian accepts her whole heartedly and proposes her for marriage. Thus, the play ends on a note of resilience and beacon of hope where these female victims emerge as fighters, the survivors who foresee to pursue a better tomorrow filled with positivity. Salima’s sacrifice brings the fruit of hope to others. Her death makes the whole chaos stop at the moment and brings a positive hope in all others life. Still all the odds, many among these women emerge as survivors, and not the victims of the social evil of prostitution, objectification and extensive barbarism in Congo. Lynn Nottage created this piece of art with a notion to show what exactly was happening in DRC, with a backdrop of war, but with an overview and perspective of women. She says,

“My play is not about victims, but survivors. *Ruined* is also the story of the Congo. A country blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and resources, which has been its blessing and its curse.”

---

## References

Beauvoir, Simone de. “The Second Sex.” New York: Vintage Books, 1949.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. The John Hopkins UP, 1996.

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.

Screams of Broken Souls in Ruined with the Context of Existential Feminism

Jardine, Alice A. "What Feminism?" *French Politics, Culture & Society*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2010, pp. 66–74. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42843656>. Accessed 2 Sept. 2024.

Joseph Mahon. *Existentialism, Feminism and Simone De Beauvoir*. Palgrave Macmillan. 1997.

Nottage, L. (2009). I. New York, NY: Theater Communications Group.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1962). *Existential Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Barnes, Hazel. Chicago: Regnery. pp. 19–152.

<https://www.critical-stages.org/3/on-lynn-nottages-ruined/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/08/11/congo.rape/index.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20United%20Nations,in%20military%20courts%20last%20year.>

[https://www.academia.edu/111791520/Unspeakable\\_Suffering\\_Women\\_s\\_Experience\\_of\\_Trauma\\_in\\_Lynn\\_Nottage\\_s\\_Ruined](https://www.academia.edu/111791520/Unspeakable_Suffering_Women_s_Experience_of_Trauma_in_Lynn_Nottage_s_Ruined)

---



**Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.**  
SMDRSD College  
Pathankot 145001  
Punjab  
[drparvesh85@gmail.com](mailto:drparvesh85@gmail.com)

=====

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) **ISSN 1930-2940** **Vol. 24:10 October 2024**

Dr. Parvesh, Ph.D.

Screams of Broken Souls in Ruined with the Context of Existential Feminism

66

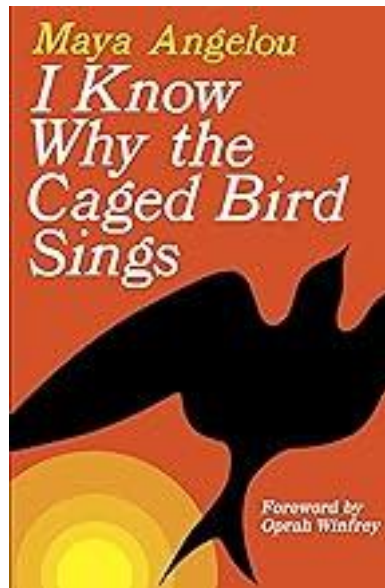
## Everyday Resistance to Racism in Maya Angelou's Testimonial Narrative *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

**Md. Maruf Ul Alam, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
University of Chittagong  
Chattogram-4331, Bangladesh  
[maruf@cu.ac.bd](mailto:maruf@cu.ac.bd)

---

---



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is the first volume of Maya Angelou's seven-volume autobiography which I argue, as a testimonial narrative—a victim testimony in the first-person narrative in this case—portrays everyday resistance to both everyday racism and institutionalized racial discrimination. Everyday resistance represented in the narrative can also be termed as 'resistance from below' which is not recognized easily by dominant power structures. This

testimony of trauma, resistance, and survival is both an individual and collective narrative, as it records poverty, rejection, discrimination, and violence experienced by Maya Angelou as an individual and by her people as a community.

**Keywords:** Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, autobiography, testimonial narrative, everyday racism, everyday resistance, survival.

The Spanish word *testimonio*, which roughly means testimonial narrative in English, refers to “a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a ‘life’ or a significant life experience” (Beverley 12-13).



Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

Courtesy: <https://nclhof.org/inductees/2012-2/maya-angelou/>

Maya Angelou’s narrative fits into this category because a testimonial narrative may include “autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, *novela-testimonio*, nonfiction novel, or ‘factographic literature’” (Beverley 13). To Oprah Winfrey, Maya’s narrative is a form of ‘revelation’

(“Foreword”). Since Maya Angelou wrote about her lived experiences her narrative “connected her to the greater human truths—of longing, abandonment, security, hope, wonder, prejudice, mystery, and, finally, self-discovery: the realization of who you really are and the liberation that love brings. And each of those timeless truths unfolds in this first autobiographical account of her life” (Winfrey). A testimonial narrative is implicitly or explicitly a component of ‘resistance literature’ (Beverley 13).

Maya Angelou’s narrative, a testimonial narrative, involves “an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself” (Beverley 14). The narrator, Maya Angelou, is the “representative of a social class or group” (Beverley 15) who relates her marginalization experienced “as a personal destiny” (Beverley 16). A testimonial narrative like this engages “the sense of ethics and justice” (Beverley 19) of the readers “with a popular cause normally distant, not to say alien, from their immediate experience” (Beverley 19). A testimonial narrative can seek ‘human rights through literature’ by “maintaining and developing the practice of international human rights and solidarity movements” (Beverley 19).

Everyday resistance, a theoretical concept introduced in 1985 by James C. Scott, explores how people undermine power in their everyday life and studies how people act in their everyday lives in ways that might undermine power and this form of resistance is different from organized collective confrontational resistance (Johansson and Vinthagen 18-19). Everyday resistance, silent, disguised, invisible to elites, and unrecognized by the state, is termed as ‘infrapolitics’ by James C. Scott (Johansson and Vinthagen 19). *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* showcases instances of resistance which can be termed as ‘everyday resistance’ as they are not part of organized resistance but still talk back to power. Being lonely and doubly marginalised, “twice removed from the dominant power group and handicapped by a burden of racial and gender stereotypes” (Henke 23).

Maya resorts to everyday resistance because organized resistance is too risky for her. Her grandmother Annie Henderson and her mother Vivian Baxter also resist power in their own ways which are also instances of everyday resistance. Maya’s everyday resistance results from her

perpetual struggle for recognition and acceptance while her grandmother “continually triumphs over white racism through wise-woman strategies of faith, patience, self-respect, dogged persistence, enduring courage, and a tenacious adherence to principles of social justice” (Henke 24).

Vivian’s everyday resistance, on the other hand, can take a violent turn, as it is made evident in Angelou’s narrative. Their everyday resistance can be termed as everyday anti-racism also which describes “how individuals respond to racism in their day-to-day lives” (Aquino 105). Kristine Aquino argues that conceptions of anti-racism “cannot only be about fighting the broad identifiable racisms at the structural and institutional level; it must take into account the small-scale and subtle racism occurring in people’s lived experiences” (Aquino 118). Everyday anti-racism “is an important arena that illuminates how mundane, routine racism is negotiated across different temporal and spatial contexts and through varying identity struggles” (Aquino 118).

Maya Angelou’s narrative represents ‘anti-racism from below’ and the instances of everyday resistance can be defined as an “oppositional act” (Johansson and Vinthagen 1). This form of resistance involves agency and is carried out in some kind of oppositional relation to power (Johansson and Vinthagen 1). It is “1) unorganized, unsystematic and individual; 2) opportunistic and self-indulgent; 3) have no revolutionary consequences and/or 4) imply in their intention or logic an accommodation with the structure of domination” (Scott 50-51).

Angelou talks about the severe racial segregation her people face in the southern part of the United States--Stamps, Arkansas where her grandmother Annie Henderson’s owning a store is an anomaly; the anomaly makes a judge issue a subpoena addressing her as Ms. The address creates laughter among the whites present in the court session while Annie’s own people consider it to be an acknowledgement of her elevated status; albeit mistakenly (Angelou 48).

To Maya Angelou, her uncle Willie is another anomaly, for while the able-bodied Black people can “eke out only the necessities of life, Uncle Willie, with his starched shirts, shined shoes and shelves full of food, was the whipping boy and butt of jokes of the underemployed and underpaid” (Angelou 11). According to Angelou, the segregation in Stamps is so pervading that the Black children do not even know how the white people look like but they know one thing



with considerable certainty that the white folks are to be dreaded (Angelou 25). White folks are unreal entities to Maya; to her, “People were those who lived on my side of town. I didn’t like them all, or, in fact, any of them very much, but they were people. These others, the strange pale creatures that lived in their alien unlife, weren’t considered folks. They were whitefolks” (Angelou 26).

Maya in her everyday resistance tends to negate the very existence of the white people as humans. Some white racist people consider the Black people rather exotic which is evident in the episode where “a strange man and woman” (Angelou 11), schoolteachers from Little Rock, “take a picture of a whole Mr. Johnson” (Angelou 13) which seems quite strange to young Maya. Maya’s love for white authors is disapproved by her grandmother and it can be seen as an instance of resistance. Her grandmother wants her to read solely African-American writers.

Angelou shows in her autobiography how Black existence is in constant danger of bodily harm in the southern states. A former sheriff comes to the store to warn Maya’s grandmother about something terrible that might happen. He tells Annie to tell Willie to lay low that night because “a crazy nigger messed with a white lady” (Angelou 17) that day and some boys would visit them (Angelou 17). This visit is definitely a terrible thing the Black people always dread. Maya Angelou writes: “Even after the slow drag of years, I remember the sense of fear which filled my mouth with hot, dry air, and made my body light” (Angelou 18). This incident represents some prevalent issues in the Black neighborhood—racist disrespect in the former sheriff’s addressing Annie by her first name and calling the Blacks ‘niggers’ and the Blacks’ constant fear of being lynched by the whites on petty pretexts.

Angelou writes about the humiliation her people faces and she voices her resistance also in her own ways: “If on Judgment Day I were summoned by St. Peter to give testimony to the used-to-be sheriff’s act of kindness, I would be unable to say anything in his behalf. His confidence that my uncle and every other Black man who heard of the Klan’s coming ride would scurry under their houses to hide in chicken droppings was too humiliating to hear” (Angelou 18). If her uncle did not hide, she is quite sure that they would lynch him (Angelou 18-19). What seems more terrible is to her is that her uncle “moaned [moans] the whole night through as if he

had [has], in fact, been guilty of some heinous crime” (Angelou 18-19). Thus, for a Black man’s alleged misdeed, the whites could crash an entire Black community.

Angelou talks about the source of her lifelong paranoia which results from an incident occurred at the store one day. “A troop of the powhitetrash kids” (Angelou 30) visits their store and starts misbehaving with her grandmother. Her grandmother, in her fear, starts singing aloud to remove her fear (Angelou 31). One of the girls apes her grandmother which shows the all-pervading nature of racism; even the poor white kids are not devoid of it. This convinces Maya about the source of her grandmother’s stoic attitude. Only to save their existence, she has to stand all the insults. Her grandmother wants to teach her and her brother Bailey the safe ways of life. She tells them that they cannot talk to the white people without risking their lives (Angelou 47).

White people in their town are so prejudiced against the Blacks that they do not allow them to buy vanilla ice-cream, except on July Fourth (Angelou 49). They have to buy the chocolate ones the other three hundred and sixty-four days. Angelou writes about the poverty of her people, and she does not understand where the whites have got “the right to spend money so lavishly” (Angelou 50).

Mr. McElroy is the only embodiment of resistance in their neighborhood being an independent Black man who wears matching pants and jackets which is, to young Angelou, “a near anachronism in Stamps” (Angelou 22). Another rebel, to Angelou, is her mother and she says, “to describe my mother would be to write about a hurricane in its perfect power: (Angelou 59). Mrs. Bertha Flowers, another anomaly, who is, Angelou writes, “our [their] side’s answer to the richest white woman in town” (Angelou 93).

Angelou writes that perpetual poverty makes the Black people very generous, for it is “indulged on pain of sacrifice” (Angelou 49). The Black people give other Black people something they need desperately which makes “the giving or receiving a rich exchange” (Angelou 50). Thus, they save one another from being perished and this refusal to perish is an act of everyday resistance.

Maya exhibits her side of resistance probably for the first time when she refuses to be called anything other than her name Margaret in Mrs. Cullinan's home. Mrs. Cullinan declares that Margaret be called Mary but she resists this change. The white racist people even try to take away their right to their names offensively which Maya resists and her resistance takes a little violent turn. While Maya resists, Hallelujah does not resent her name being changed to Miss Glory, rather she consents to the change (Angelou 108-109).

Maya wants to quit the job but she cannot discuss it with her grandmother. She seeks Bailey's advice. Accordingly, she gets tardy and clumsy in her job but Mrs. Cullinan ignores all these. Finally, upon Bailey's advice, she breaks Mrs. Cullinan's favorite "casserole shaped like a fish and the green glass coffee cups" (Angelou 110) dropping them on the tiled floor. Mrs. Cullinan in her desperation declares that 'the clumsy nigger' has broken her Momma's china from Virginia and the nigger's name is Margaret. Thus, through her act of resistance, Maya restores her right to her name.

Angelou relates how the Black women in the south who have sons, nephews, and grandsons have their "heartstrings tied to a hanging noose" (Angelou 113). They fear that any minute they can have unbearable news of their dear one's lynching or murder. "For this reason, Southern Blacks until the present generation could be counted among America's arch conservatives" (Angelou 113).

Angelou writes about how the media caricatures Black life. Bailey goes to watch a cinema only to see the white actress Kay Francis who looks like his mother Vivian Baxter. The film presents a Negro chauffeur as a complete idiot. The white spectators laugh every few minutes at the spectacle. Maya laughs too "but not at the hateful jokes made on my [her] people" (Angelou 118). She says that except that the actress is white, she looks like her own mother. To her, it seems funny that the white folks do not know that the woman they adore could be her mother's twin except that the actress is white but her mother is more beautiful (Angelou 118-119).

The southern Blacks are very religious people because their very existence is always at stake. Only God can save them. After the day's hard labour, they do not go home and lay their

“tortured bones in a feather bed” (Angelou 121), rather they go to the church. To Angelou it seems that her people “may be a race of masochists and that not only was it our [their] fate to live the poorest, roughest life but that we [they] liked it like that” (Angelou 121). Her people expect a blessed home hereafter. They say, “Let the whitefolks have their money and power and segregation and sarcasm and big houses and schools and lawns like carpets, and books, and mostly—mostly—let them have their whiteness. It was better to be meek and lowly, spat upon and abused for this little time than to spend eternity frying in the fires of hell” (Angelou 131).

It is quite evident here that Maya Angelou does not approve of the way her people endure everything with stoic temperament. “They were needy and hungry and despised and dispossessed, and sinners the world over were in the driver's seat” (Angelou 132). She asks the merciful Father how long they will have to suffer (Angelou 132). Angelou questions this disparity. She writes, “My race groaned. It was our people falling. It was another lynching, yet another Black man hanging on a tree. One more woman ambushed and raped. A Black boy whipped and maimed. It was hounds on the trail of a man running through slimy swamps. It was a white woman slapping her maid for being forgetful” (Angelou 135). Her young mind protests against the discrimination and stereotyping of her people.

Unlike the white high school, Lafayette County Training School, where Maya studies, does not have any lawn, tennis court, or climbing ivy. Only a small percentage of the students of the school are supposed to go to the South’s agricultural and mechanical schools to be trained as carpenters, farmers, masons, maids, cooks, etc. They are not given the chance to be scientists or painters. Edward Donleavy, a white politician from Texarkana, stereotypes Maya’s race in his speech delivered at her school premises. He tells them that the central school, where the white children study, will get a well-known artist to teach the students art and the newest microscopes and chemistry equipment for the laboratory while Maya’s school will get nothing of that sort (Angelou 178-179). He tries to console the children at the Central School, the school where the Black children study, saying that he has “pointed out to people at a very high level that one of the first-line football tacklers at Arkansas Agricultural and Mechanical College had graduated from good old Lafayette County Training School” (Angelou 179). He keeps praising the Blacks as basketball players and athletes but the Black people are not happy seeing his stereotyping.

Angelou writes, “The white kids were going to have a chance to become Galileos and Madame Curies and Edisons and Gauguins, and our boys (the girls weren’t even in on it) would try to be Jesse Owens and Joe Louises” (179).

A passive resistance is visible in the attitude of the audience: “The man’s dead words fell like bricks around the auditorium” (Angelou 179). “Some folded the tiny squares into love knots, some into triangles, but most were wadding them, then pressing them flat on their yellow laps” (Angelou 179-180). Angelou protests writing that they are seen as “maids and farmers, handymen and washerwomen, and anything higher that we [they] aspired to was farcical and presumptuous” (Angelou 180). She says, “Then I wished that Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner had killed all whitefolks in their beds and that Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that Harriet Tubman had been killed by that blow on her head and Christopher Columbus had drowned in the Santa María” (Angelou 180). She understands her people’s position. She thinks that it is awful to be a Negro and to have no control over her life. Since they cannot resist the charges (stereotyping) brought against their race, she thinks that they should all be dead. Donleavy promises new equipment for the home economics building and the workshop as he is running for election but the people assembled are not happy. Their silence is their passive everyday resistance.

We see Grandmother Anderson’s first share of everyday resistance when she is forced to take Maya to a white dentist as “the nearest Negro dentist was [is] in Texarkana, twenty-five miles away” (Angelou 185-186). Maya is certain that she’d be dead long before they reached half the distance (Angelou 186). Mrs. Anderson thinks that she can take her granddaughter to Dr. Lincoln and she also thinks that the doctor will take care of her granddaughter since he owes her a favor (Angelou 186). Dentist Lincoln tells her that he does not “treat nigra, colored people” (Angelou 188). Maya’s grandmother requests him a lot but he does not relent. Dr. Lincoln tells her that he has returned the money he borrowed from her to save his building. Mrs. Anderson’s reply is an example of everyday resistance here. All her life she has been silent but now she talks back. She says, “I wouldn’t press on you like this for myself but I can’t take No. Not for my grandbaby. When you come to borrow my money you didn’t have to beg. You asked me, and I lent it. Now, it wasn’t my policy. I ain’t no moneylender, but you stood to lose this building and I

tried to help you out” (Angelou 189). In reply what Dr. Lincoln says is something extremely racist. He says, “Annie, my policy is I’d rather stick my hand in a dog’s mouth than in a nigger’s” (Angelou 189).

Here, Maya imagines a very strong resistance by her grandmother. She imagines that her grandmother intimidates the dentist and forces him to leave the town. But that does not actually happen. Instead, her grandmother takes ten dollars as full payment from the dentist. Initially, she had no such plan but she does so as a display of her resistance. But Maya prefers her version of the resistance (Angelou 193). Maya’s uncle Willie thinks that the white people do not hate them. He thinks the whites are mostly afraid of the Blacks. A question obviously arises here. Why are they scared? Are they scared because of their brutalization of the Blacks under slavery and afterwards? Maya comments that her grandmother’s “African-bush secretiveness and suspiciousness had been compounded by slavery and confirmed by centuries of promises made and promises broken” (Angelou 194).

We see another instance of everyday resistance to racism in a “story went the rounds about a San Franciscan white matron who refused to sit beside a Negro civilian on the streetcar, even after he made room for her on the seat” (Angelou 214). She was not ready to “sit beside a draft dodger who was a Negro as well. She added that the least he could do was fight for his country the way her son was fighting on Iwo Jima. The story said that the man pulled his body away from the window to show an armless sleeve. He said quietly and with great dignity, ‘Then ask your son to look around for my arm, which I left over there’” (Angelou 214).

As a Black kid in school, Maya has to undergo undue pressure. The white kids, even when they are wrong in their response to their teachers’ questions, they are very aggressive. But Maya has to be certain about all her facts so that she does not call attention to herself (Angelou 216). She does not know why she is given a scholarship to the California Labor School. But she later finds out that the school, meant for the adults, for many years has been in the list of subversive organizations. Racial profiling is quite evident here. However, her mother’s courage inspires her. Her mother is always ready to resist any injustice. She even shoots one of her partners for calling her a bitch twice.

Maya wants to be a streetcar conductress, but the San Francisco streetcar officials try to prevent her from getting the job. For three weeks, she visits the office and finally manages the job. She shows enormous perseverance to achieve her goal and her mother provides her unconditional support. But the Negro organizations do not help her; she has to fight her battle on her own. She faces other hurdles in her job. Since she is a Black woman, her subordination is intersectional here. Her shifts are so haphazardly split that she believes that they have been chosen maliciously by her superiors. Later, she quits the job to resume her commitment to formal education. She continues her education despite all odds. When she gets pregnant, she hides her pregnancy from her parents so that she can continue her education. Thus, the first volume of Maya Angelou's autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, is filled with instances of everyday resistance to racism.

---

### Works Cited

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Bantam, 1984.

Aquino, Kristine. "Anti-racism 'from below': Exploring repertoires of everyday anti-racism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1, 23 Nov. 2015, pp. 105–122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1096408>. Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.

Beverley, John. "The Margin at the Center: On 'Testimonio' (Testimonial Narrative)." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1989, pp. 11–28. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26282979>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2024.

Henke, Suzette A. "Maya Angelou's *Caged Bird* as Trauma Narrative." *The Langston Hughes Review*, vol. 19, 2005, pp. 22–35. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26434635>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2024.

Johansson, Anna, and Stellan Vinthagen. "Dimensions of everyday resistance: An analytical framework." *Critical Sociology*, vol. 42, no. 3, 12 May 2014, pp. 417–435, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514524604>. Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.

Scott, James C. "Everyday forms of resistance." *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 4, 5 May 1989, pp. 33–62, <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v4i1.1765>. Accessed 28 Feb. 2024.

Winfrey, Oprah. Foreword. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. By Maya Angelou, Random House, 2015.

=====



## Through the Kaleidoscope: Diverse Women's Voices in Gittha Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*

**Uma Goswami**

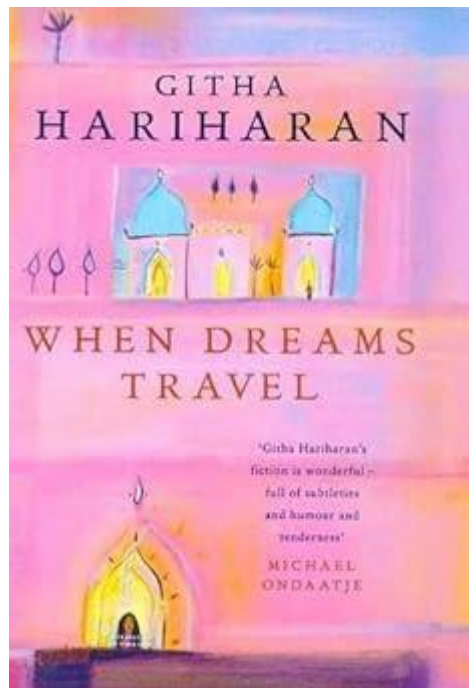
Department of English

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Agra

[umagoswami210@gmail.com](mailto:umagoswami210@gmail.com)

---

---



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Abstract

This research paper explores the nuanced portrayal of women's perspectives in Gittha Hariharan's novels *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*. Both works delve into the complexities of feminine identity, agency, and the societal constraints that shape women's experiences. In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, the narrative examines the lives of several women navigating patriarchal structures, emphasizing their struggles for autonomy and self-definition. Through characters like Mayamma and Devi, Hariharan illustrates the interplay

between tradition and modernity, highlighting the multifaceted nature of women's roles in society. Similarly, *When Dreams Travel* reimagines the story of Shahrazad from *One Thousand and One Nights*, focusing on the power of storytelling as a means of resistance and self-expression. Here, Shahrazad's ability to craft narratives allows her to challenge patriarchal oppression and reclaim her voice, while her sister Dunyazad represents the silent strength and support of sisterhood. This comparative analysis reveals how both novels utilize the theme of storytelling to explore women's desires, aspirations, and the quest for identity. Ultimately, the paper argues that Githa Hariharan's work offers a profound commentary on feminine consciousness, revealing the resilience and complexity of women's lives in contemporary society.

**Keywords:** Githa Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, *When Dreams Travel*, Women's perspectives, feminist narratives, autonomy, patriarchy, feminist discourse.

## Introduction

Githa Hariharan, a feminist author, has been regarded as one of the most influential Indian women writers of contemporary literature. Being a female author, the feminist perspective influences all aspect of her creative work. Githa Hariharan's novels are exploring the feminist phenomena in a beautiful and systematic manner which depicts vivid picture of patriarchy dominance in social life and revolting against such a system. 'Female consciousness' is the gist of her all the novels. Hence, the novelist has loudly presented these marginalized voices of Indian women.

Githa Hariharan was raised in Manila and Mumbai, respectively, after being born in 1954 in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. She graduated with a B.A. in English from Mumbai University and an MA in Communication from Fairfield University. She started her work as an editor at an Indian publishing business after working for the public radio system in New York. Later on, she gained experience as an editor in Mumbai, Chennai, and New Delhi, three major Indian cities. She had amazing experiences in a multicultural lifestyle growing up in Mumbai and Coimbatore, which enabled her to portray societal realities with a bird's eye view.

*The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), Githa Hariharan's debut book, was awarded the esteemed "Commonwealth Writers' Prize" in 1993. Githa Hariharan has also written a story collection *The Art of Dying* (1993), and the other debut novels *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003), *Fugitive Histories* (2009) and the latest novel *I Have Become the Tide* (2019). The greatest talent of Githa Hariharan's writing is her capacity to enchant readers with tales, poetry, and enchantment found in even the most straightforward of phrases. Her works are all about the underrepresented voices and spaces that are masterfully written and obviously highly individual.

Githa Hariharan's novels *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) and *When Dreams Travel* (1999) offer a compelling exploration of the complexities of womanhood in a world shaped by patriarchal structures, tradition, and myth. By drawing from diverse narrative traditions—ranging from Indian folklore to classical mythology—Hariharan weaves intricate tales that challenge conventional notions of gender roles and societal expectations. Her work stands at the intersection of myth and reality, reimagining women's stories in ways that highlight their struggles for agency, autonomy, and self-actualization.

In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Hariharan presents the lives of three generations of women—Devi, her mother Sita, and their servant Mayamma—whose experiences are bound by the traditions and expectations of a patriarchal society. Through their interconnected narratives, Hariharan critiques the limited roles assigned to women, emphasizing their silent suffering, but also their resilience and capacity for resistance.

Similarly, *When Dreams Travel* takes inspiration from the *Arabian Nights* to craft a fantastical narrative that interrogates the power dynamics between men and women, with a focus on the act of storytelling as a tool for subverting patriarchal authority. In this novel, Hariharan deconstructs the familiar tales of Scheherazade, transforming them into a meditation on desire, silence, and the reclaiming of female voices.

This paper seeks to examine the nuanced portrayal of women's experiences in these two novels, focusing on how Hariharan reclaims feminine agency through her characters' journeys. Through a feminist lens, the analysis will explore the themes of autonomy, identity, and resistance that pervade these works. Hariharan's narrative techniques—particularly her use of myth, symbolism, and intertextuality—will be examined to understand how she uses

storytelling as a means of both reflection and resistance. Ultimately, this study aims to illuminate the ways in which Hariharan's fiction not only critiques patriarchal systems but also reimagines spaces of empowerment for women within those systems.

By analyzing *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*, this paper will contribute to the ongoing discourse on feminist literary criticism, with a specific focus on the intersection of mythology, gender, and narrative agency. Hariharan's work challenges readers to consider how women's stories can be reclaimed and reinterpreted, providing new perspectives on the roles women can play both in literature and in life.

## Review of Literature

**Butler, Judith, 1990.** Butler's concept of gender as a performative construct offers a foundational lens through which to analyze Hariharan's depiction of women, particularly their efforts to navigate and resist traditional gender roles.

**Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 1988.** Spivak's work on subaltern studies is relevant in examining how Hariharan gives voice to marginalized female characters, especially within the context of postcolonial feminist critique. Showalter,

**Elaine, 1977.** Showalter's feminist literary theory explores the notion of a female literary tradition, which can be applied to understanding Hariharan's contribution to feminist discourse in Indian literature.

**Rich, Adrienne, 1976.** Rich's work on motherhood provides insight into the roles and expectations of women, which is a central theme in *The Thousand Faces of Night*, where Hariharan explores maternal figures and their societal constraints.

**Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 2003.** Mohanty's critique of Western feminist discourse is crucial for understanding the intersection of gender, culture, and colonialism in Hariharan's novels, particularly in the portrayal of diverse Indian women.

**Nussbaum, Martha C, 2000.** Nussbaum's capabilities approach helps contextualize the struggles for autonomy and agency in Hariharan's female characters, highlighting their quests for freedom and self-expression.

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Uma Goswami

Through the Kaleidoscope: Diverse Women's Voices in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*

**Tandon, 2008.**Tandon’s comprehensive overview of feminist literary theories aids in analyzing Hariharan’s texts from a feminist perspective, focusing on the shift from traditional to modern representations of women.

**Chakravarty, Radha, 2008.** Chakravarty’s analysis of women writers in postcolonial India provides a direct context for Hariharan’s work, emphasizing themes of subjectivity and identity in her female characters.

**Desai, Neera, 1987.** Desai’s sociological study of Indian women’s roles and challenges in a patriarchal society offers a backdrop for the societal critique evident in Hariharan’s portrayal of female characters.

**Mazumdar, Vina. 1985.** This work gives historical context to the feminist movement in India, essential for understanding the feminist underpinnings of Hariharan’s novels.

**Mukherjee, Meenakshi, 1971.** Mukherjee’s study on the Indian English novel helps in situating Hariharan’s works within the broader scope of Indian literature in English, focusing on narrative strategies and themes.

**Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita, 1991.** This anthology is valuable for contextualizing Hariharan’s contribution to the tradition of Indian women writers, particularly in relation to themes of resistance and reclamation of voice.

**Narayan, Uma, 1997.** Narayan’s critique of cultural essentialism and third-world feminism provides a framework to examine how Hariharan’s female characters navigate cultural expectations while asserting their individual identities.

**Sangari, Kumkum, and Sudesh Vaid, 1989.** This collection of essays on gender and colonial history in India is relevant for understanding the historical contexts that inform Hariharan’s feminist narratives.

**Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder, 1993.** Rajan’s exploration of the intersection between postcolonial theory and gender issues helps in analyzing how Hariharan’s novels challenge both cultural and gender norms.

**Seshadri, Vijayalakshmi, 2017.** This work discusses the evolving feminist discourse in India, making it useful for understanding how Hariharan's works reflect shifting narratives of identity in Indian women's experiences.

**Patel, Sujata, 1995.** Patel's study of gender relations in Indian mythology can be linked to Hariharan's reworking of mythological narratives in *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*.

**Singh, Anita, 2009.** Singh's exploration of feminist literary theory provides tools for a critical analysis of Hariharan's narratives, particularly in relation to how women's voices are constructed and deconstructed.

**Ganguly, Keya, 2001.** Ganguly's discussion of postcolonial identity formation in everyday life is relevant to understanding how Hariharan's female characters navigate the intersection of personal and social identities.

**Gandhi, Leela, 1998.** Gandhi's work on postcolonial theory aids in situating Hariharan's novels within the broader discourse on postcolonial literature, particularly with respect to feminist interventions in narrative form.

### **Findings, Discussion and Analysis**

Novels by Githa Hariharan are essentially stories about women—their histories, myths, gender politics, dilemmas, news, and neuroses. In an attempt to break free from the precarious hold of patriarchal control, representative women's stories are being heard. Githa Hariharan recently commented of her creative works that "*All my writing works at making a small space spacious*". She claims a "space" of gender, power, memory, and narrative for herself in these novels, but it does not mean a small—the space of gender, power, memory, and narrative.

Githa Hariharan's first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* deals with the power of myth in Indian society, and the hold that myth has on women. Hariharan attempts to redefine the rituals in today's context. In the novel, she brings in a link between three generations of women – Mayamma the oldest woman, Sita, the mother of the protagonist of the novel, and Devi the youngest in the novel. Devi, the chief protagonist returns to Tamil Nadu after her US

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:10 October 2024

Uma Goswami

Through the Kaleidoscope: Diverse Women's Voices in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*

education, where she had tasted a degree of independence and self-expression. She is portrayed as a modern contemporary woman. Sita, the mother of Devi tries to cope with tradition as well as with modernity. In her childhood, Devi is deeply impressed by her grandmother's stories of mythical women from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata where She got a chance to hear the stories of these selfless, brave and courageous women. These legendary heroines were Damayanti, Gandhari, Sita, Amba and others.

Devi's mother Sita fixes Devi's match with Mahesh and Devi agrees to a negotiated marriage like a good Indian girl by giving respect to her mother's words. Devi is soon married off to Mahesh, an arrangement that symbolizes the societal norm where a woman's identity is largely tied to her husband. Githa Hariharan wants to bring into notice that women do not live happily after marriage, they become resentful as they face restriction. Devi, finds her marriage a mere imprisonment, feels a sense of hollowness, but finds solace in the company of the singer Gopal, she further realizes that his companionship is also just an attraction and leaves him behind to get rid of all things. Devi regrets,

*"I am no one, she thought, as she swept along in the rich current of Gopal's voice. I have no husband or lover, only this blissful company in the darkness, filled with a raga that reaches higher and higher, beyond the earth-bound demands of passion".*

Devi was obviously hoping for a marriage that would perfectly unite two people. However, Mahesh believed that marriage was a societal duty, much like the majority of Indian males do. Within a short while, Devi starts to experience "amazing loneliness" and a sense of "uselessness." When she encounters Gopal, she believes she may pursue her unsatisfied feminine urges with him while in this mental state. After a few months, she quickly loses hope with him.

*The Thousand Faces of Night* is holding a crystal mirror of Indian ways of life, dreams and visions. It is telling secret saga of many Indian women of different categories who have multiplicity of faces/identities and roles to play that are defined and conditioned by the cultural tradition, religion and myths. They are identified with multiple faces and roles as daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, sisters-in-law and mother/motherhood/womanhood.

This novel depicts the miserable situation of a childless mother, a barren woman, Mayamma who was inhumanly treated by her mothers-in-law and husband. She tried her best to do every possible way to bear a child. Finally, it was successfully unsuccessful because after ten-year long perseverance she got pregnant but the baby she gave birth was dead. It frustrated her husband's family. She was treated as an outcaste and finally she was driven away from her husband's house. She spent rest of her life as a servant and caretaker of Mahesh's house.

Hariharan quotes from Hindu scriptures to show how a childless woman is enjoined to do penance, "*Like Sati you must burn yourself to death. /Like Sati you must vindicate your husband's honour and manhood. /Like Parvati you must stand neck deep in cold turbulent waters, the hungry predatory fish devouring your feet.*"

Indian concept and vision of marriage are quite different as they are primarily arranged marriages. Love and friendship develop after marriage. Generally speaking, a childless wife or woman is not treated well, she does not have much respect and position in Indian society. There are thousands of Indian women like Mayamma who are ill-treated for their barrenness. They lead a miserable life.

Sita, Devi's mother was also neglected who could not continue with her music, playing veena which was her only thing of pleasure in life. when her father-in-law summons Sita and wants her to attend to his work, she cannot hear him as she is engrossed in playing on the veena. Her father-in-law reaches her room before and roars, "*Put that veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law?*" In that moment of despair, she wrenches out the strings the veena from their wooden base and asserts: *Yes, I am a wife, a daughter-in-law*". After that incident, Sita doesn't touch the veena but devotes her life only to serve the family. Sita has now one straight path to tread is wifery. She had to make this choice because of her wedlock.

In Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel*, the women's perspective is central to the narrative, deeply rooted in themes of agency, power, identity, and resistance within a patriarchal society. Hariharan revisits the classic *One Thousand and One Nights* tales through a feminist lens, subverting traditional gender roles and re-imagining the power dynamics between men and women. Through the lives of Shahrazad, Dunyazad, and other women in the novel, Hariharan critiques the ways in which women have been historically marginalized, silenced, and controlled, while also celebrating their resilience and capacity for transformation.



Shahrazad, the protagonist, is a symbol of female agency and power in *When Dreams Travel*. In the original *One Thousand and One Nights*, she is known for her wit and storytelling abilities, which she uses to survive the wrath of King Shahryar, who marries and kills a new bride every night after being betrayed by his first wife. In Hariharan's retelling, Shahrazad's storytelling takes on even greater significance as a form of resistance against the violence and oppression inflicted upon women.

Githa Hariharan's Shahrazad is not merely a survivor but a woman who understands the power of the female voice in subverting male control. Through her stories, she delays her death, but more importantly, she shifts the power dynamics between herself and Shahryar. Her ability to captivate the king through her tales turns the act of storytelling into a political weapon—one that allows her to escape violence while transforming the king's perspective. She reclaims agency by controlling the narrative, showing how women can manipulate the space that restricts them and reflects Shahrazad's awareness of how she can subvert the king's control over her life:

*"She told him stories that slipped through the bars of time,  
of the body, of death, and made the bloodthirsty King wait."*

The novel also challenges traditional representations of female sexuality and desire, which are often controlled and dictated by male authority. Shahrazad, in her storytelling, reclaims female desire from the gaze of men:

*"In her stories, the women desired fiercely. Their bodies  
pulsed with passion; they claimed their lovers."*

This line is a powerful reclamation of female sexual agency. Rather than being passive objects of male desire, the women in Shahrazad's stories actively claim their own pleasure and their lovers, challenging the cultural narrative that limits female desire to silence and submission.

Hariharan's novel also brings to the forefront the story of Dunyazad, Shahrazad's younger sister. In the traditional *Nights*, Dunyazad is a largely forgotten character, a passive witness to Shahrazad's storytelling. However, in *When Dreams Travel*, Dunyazad becomes a fully developed character whose perspective challenges the conventional portrayal of women. Dunyazad represents the voices of women who often live in the shadow of more dominant figures, highlighting the complexities of sisterhood, rivalry, and shared oppression. Her

perspective offers a more intimate view of Shahrazad's struggle, while also reflecting her own journey towards self-discovery. Dunyazad's narrative explores the emotional landscape of women who are forced into roles of subordination, but who still find ways to assert themselves. She embodies a more introspective form of feminist consciousness, revealing the internal struggles many women face in a patriarchal world:

*"We are women. Our bodies are used, our lives written for us.  
But I still wonder: what could we be if we could tell our own stories?"*

Throughout the novel, the female body is portrayed as a site of control and violence, but also as a place of resistance. Shahrazad's survival depends on navigating the threat of violence against her body, and she uses storytelling to reclaim some measure of control:

*"Every night, she told herself, her body would survive.  
But her stories—they would thrive."*

This line highlights the feminist awareness of the body's vulnerability under patriarchal control, but also the belief that a woman's intellect and creativity can transcend physical limitations. While Shahrazad's body is threatened, her stories become a form of resistance, showing how women can use their intellect to challenge oppressive systems. In *When Dreams Travel*, the female body is a site of control, violence, and rebellion. The king's act of killing each wife after a single night together reflects the brutal objectification and dehumanization of women. The body becomes a symbol of male power and domination, but Hariharan also uses the female body to explore themes of resistance and autonomy.

Githa Hariharan has explored the brutal nature of the Sultan, who is consistently seduces the beautiful virgin girls for his sexual lust in every night and brutally evacuates them in the dawn. Through her creative and imaginative power, the novelist touches social pragmatics also based on feminism. Her perspective towards the subject is sensational and realistic both that explicates the character of Shahryar.

Thus, Githa Hariharan's endeavour is to highlight the women's exploitation in the post-colonial time was the burning issue but deliberately ignored, now it is uplifted and given voice by writing such fiction in the modern time. The novelist unfolds several facts through her

effective narration of the story, as Shahrzad eventually succeeds in her convincing and persuading the Sultan not to murder brutally all the virgins and redeems the ruthlessness and cruelty of him. As Githa Hariharan has stated in her own words:

*“She must coax him to repent, and acknowledge that all women need  
not be killed. A Thousand and One Nights later it is all accomplished.  
When we part from them, the brothers are united with the sisters.  
The story ends on-stage. Off-stage it has just begun.”*

Both *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel* offer powerful critiques of patriarchy and portray the ways in which women resist oppression. However, their approaches to feminist resistance differ. *The Thousand Faces of Night* is grounded in the everyday realities of Indian women and explores subtle, internal forms of defiance against the weight of tradition. *When Dreams Travel*, with its mythical setting, emphasizes the power of storytelling as a direct and bold form of resistance, where women use their voices to challenge male authority and create their own narratives. In both novels, Hariharan’s feminist perspective shines through in her portrayal of women who navigate, resist, and ultimately seek to reclaim their agency in a world that seeks to silence them.

## Conclusion

Githa Hariharan's books serve as examples of her feminist viewpoints, which aim to shatter the taboo of marginalized women's voices in tales. Through her fiction work, she has tried to investigate women's status and dignity in an effort to combat the centuries-old male dominance over women. By taking into consideration the conventional images and roles of mythological women, the author has successfully drawn a distinction between the lives of contemporary and post-modern women. The vast majority of Githa Hariharan's female storylines genuinely struggle for their self-worth, sense of self, and general well-being in order to attain equality, freedom, and kinship in today's world.

Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel* offer profound insights into the complexities of women's experiences and their multifaceted struggles within patriarchal structures. Through her innovative narrative techniques, blending

myth, folklore, and realism, Hariharan crafts characters who resist, negotiate, and reimagine the boundaries imposed upon them.

These novels do more than critique societal norms; they reframe women's voices, giving agency to those often relegated to silence. The female protagonists in both novels grapple with autonomy, identity, and self-expression, reflecting broader struggles of women in contemporary and traditional Indian societies. By revisiting and rewriting familiar mythological and historical narratives, Hariharan challenges the ways in which women's roles have been constructed and seeks to reclaim space for their voices in both public and private spheres. Moreover, storytelling itself emerges as a powerful tool of resistance in Hariharan's works, not just as a means of personal expression but as a method of reshaping cultural memory and identity. Through her characters' journeys, Hariharan explores the tensions between tradition and modernity, freedom and constraint, silence and speech. Ultimately, her novels invite readers to see women's stories through a kaleidoscopic lens, where the diversity of experiences forms a rich tapestry of feminist consciousness.

This research has highlighted how Hariharan's contribution to feminist literary discourse extends beyond mere representation; her works actively participate in rewriting women's roles, questioning societal norms, and creating spaces of empowerment, reflection, and transformation for her female characters.

---

---

### References

1. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
2. Chakravarty, Radha. *Feminism and Contemporary Women Writers: Rethinking Subjectivity*. Routledge, 2008.
3. Desai, Neera. *Women and Society in India*. Ajanta Publications, 1987.
4. Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Columbia University Press, 1998.
5. Ganguly, Keya. *States of Exception: Everyday Life and Postcolonial Identity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
6. Mazumdar, Vina. *Emergence of the Women's Question in India and the Role of Women's Studies*. Centre for Women's Development Studies, 1985.

7. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press, 2003.
  8. Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English*. Heinemann, 1971.
  9. Narayan, Uma. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. Routledge, 1997.
  10. Nussbaum, Martha C. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
  11. Patel, Sujata. *The Making of Womanhood: Gender Relations in the Mahabharata*. Oxford University Press, 1995.
  12. Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 1993.
  13. Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1976.
  14. Sangari, Kumkum, and Sudesh Vaid. *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*. Zed Books, 1989.
  15. Seshadri, Vijayalakshmi. *Feminism and Indian Realities: Shifting Narratives of Identity and Self*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.
  16. Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton University Press, 1977.
  17. Singh, Anita. *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory*. Atlantic Publishers, 2009.
  18. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Columbia University Press, 1988.
  19. Tandon, Neeru. *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift*. Atlantic Publishers, 2008.
  20. Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita. *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. The Feminist Press, 1991.
- 
-

## An Exploration of Proverbial Wisdom in the *Parables of Kierkegaard*

**Dr. Dipak P. Ganmote**  
Assistant Professor  
SKN, Sinhgad College of Engineering  
Pandharpur, Solapur, Maharashtra, India  
[dganmote09@gmail.com](mailto:dganmote09@gmail.com)

---

---

### Abstract

In this article, I have tried to explore the proverbial wisdom stated in the parables of Kierkegaard. I have collected proverbs in the book *Parables of Kierkegaard* edited by Thomas C. Oden. Parables are unique from other types of short stories as they are told by the person practicing religious duties. Therefore, it is essential to study the proverbs to interpret the wisdom. It is crucial to describe the context in which the proverbs are used; hence, I have explored the contexts of the proverbs. The contextualization gives us an idea of whether the proverbs relate to mythological, cultural, traditional, environmental, or religious aspects. It is essential to look at these contexts to study wisdom derived from them. Thus, I have tried to explore the wisdom that proverbs convey through the parables. Kierkegaard starts the parables with questions and the parables include proverbs stating the moral advice to the people either by a learned person or a philosopher. The wisdom mentioned in the parables gives a universal moral message to the general public so that they become wise.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Kierkegaard, Parables, Proverbs Stories, Wisdom

---

---

### Introduction

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is known to be the first Christian existentialist philosopher, poet, critic, and theologian from Denmark. He has written many moral, ethical, and religious texts using metaphor and irony. His writing exhibited his liking for parables which earned him a prominent name in writing parables, stories, and metaphors. His parables are so impressive that they are remarkably memorable compared to any other genre he wrote. He has been exceptional

in parabolic communication in his exemplary parables. His technique of indirect communication through parables makes his parables so impressive. His style of storytelling is unique therefore, it becomes an encapsulating form. Oden states that interpreting Kierkegaard's parables takes the turn of parables interpreting us (ix). The parables he wrote make the readers self-aware, instilling ethical and philosophical perception so they can experience an authentic human existence.

The proverbs in the parables of Kierkegaard fulfill the aim with which he wrote them. They extend spiritual, moral, and philosophical wisdom to the readers. Kierkegaard has successfully used proverbs in his parables. It is, therefore, necessary to study the proverbs in these parables to explore the wisdom expressed through the proverbs. I have interpreted the proverbs in the light of parables and derived the intended message from both the parables and the proverbs.

### **Proverbial Wisdom in the *Parables of Kierkegaard***

The parables in the book of *Parables of Kierkegaard* talk differently. The parables begin with a question, and the answer to the question is the parable told by Kierkegaard. These parables include proverbs, which provide advice in various contexts.

**“I would rather be a swineherd, understood by the swine, than a poet misunderstood by men” (Oden 04).**

The proverb is used in the parable *The Victims of Phalaris*. The parable answers the question, what is a poet? While answering the question, Kierkegaard explained the work of a poet. What a poet felt inside and how words became poetic. Kierkegaard said that a poet has agony in mind, but his lips are designed so that when words come out, they sound sweet to others. A poet is compared to the victims of Phalaris who were imprisoned in brazen bulls tortured on the slow fire and whose cries sounded like sweet music to the tyrant Phalaris. Similarly, people gathered around a poet and requested him to sing just as they expected the poet to be tormented from within, and the agonies resulted in sweet music. In addition, there were critics to judge the poet. With all these experiences, Kierkegaard compared poets and critics. A critic is just like a poet, but he lacks the suffering in his heart and music on his lips. The proverb indicates Kierkegaard's resentment towards being a poet. Others always misunderstood the poet as they did not know the sufferings of a poet. The proverb is made of “a swineherd”, “understood by swine”, “than a poet”, and

“misunderstood by men”. Thus, the proverb suggests that it is better to be understood by fools than misunderstood by clever.

**“What is left for the philosopher to do when a society is preparing for war?”** (Oden 05).

The proverb is used as a rhetorical question to the parable *The Busy Philosopher*. The parable is the story of the philosopher Diogenes. The city of Corinth was threatened to be barricaded by Philip; everyone started preparing for the war. Some started polishing weapons, collecting stones, and others repairing walls. Seeing everyone busy preparing for battle, the philosopher Diogenes also tightened his clothes around himself and started moving his tub on the streets. When he was asked about it, he said that he wanted to be as busy as everyone else; otherwise, he was the only idle person in the town. The proverb and the parable indicate that the people in Corinth were busy preparing for war, and Diogenes had nothing to do, so he kept himself busy rolling the tub on the streets. The proverb is made of “What is left for the philosopher”, and “when a society is preparing for war”. Thus, the proverb suggests that nothing is left for a philosopher to do when society is preparing for war.

**“One who throws a stone has power over it until he has thrown it, but not afterwards”** (Oden 16).

The proverb is used in the parable *The Knight's Choice* that answers what we should compare the definiteness of an either/or decision with. Kierkegaard answered the question in the form of a parable telling the story of two armies who were brought together to fight and both armies invited a particular knight to fight on their side. The knight made his choice and was beaten and arrested as a war prisoner. The knight was brought before the victorious king, and he proposed that he would fight on their side just like they wanted him to fight before the war. However, the king said that he was given a choice before the war, but now it has no value. Thus, Kierkegaard quotes the above proverb. The proverb and the parable indicate that the knight had to decide before the war to choose from the armies. He made his decision, fought, and lost the war. Now, he was a prisoner, and it was of no use on his part to propose to the victorious king that he would fight on his side. The proverb is made of “one who throws a stone”, “has power over it”, “until he has



thrown it”, and “not afterwards”. Thus, the proverb suggests that we should think before making any decision. If we think after taking a decision, it is of no use as we took the decision and we cannot change it. Thus, it reminds us to think before we proceed.

**“To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself, is the formula for all despair”** (Oden 17).

The proverb finds its place in the parable *The Lost Lover*. Kierkegaard tried to answer the question of whether despair consumes itself. The answer to the question ran into a parable. The parable is the story of a young girl who was unhappy over love. She was unhappy with her lover as he died or because he was unfaithful to her. Her sadness was not open, and she was sad over herself. She would have been free from the sorrow if she had become her lover. Now, this sadness had become troublesome to her without him. Her loneliness had become despicable to her as he was dead, or she hated it because it reminded her that she had been betrayed. If we tell such a girl that she has been hurting herself, she would reply that the real trouble was that she could not get over it. The proverb indicates that the girl was sad about herself and could not get over it as it reminded her that she had been betrayed. Thus, she was unable to get to the formula of despair. The proverb is made of “despair over oneself”, “despair to will”, “to be rid of oneself”, and “the formula for despair”. Thus, the proverb suggests that if one wants to get over self-despair, one has to understand the formula of despair and that one should be able to get rid of despair.

**“By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken”** (Oden 28).

The proverb is used in the parable *The Lonely Horse*. The parable answered what we should compare the misunderstood suffering with. Kierkegaard asked us to assume if the animals could think and make one another understand, then what would have happened? He gave an example of a horse standing in the meadow, lifting its head and moving it. Indeed, no one understood what it meant. Still, when the two of them were there lifelong pulling a yoke, they came together at night and caressed one another by their heads, or when a horse neighed other in the woods or when they gathered in the meadows, they would understand each other. However, when a lonely horse heard a call and saw that many horses were gathering, he came there hoping that he would learn something about life. He listened carefully to what the elders told him. They said that no horse is

fortunate until he is dead, the horse is the creature subject to tragic fate, and the elders counted the sufferings they went through. Thus, the meeting ended, and the horse that came to listen to the elders became sad as he understood that zeal is reduced by the heart's sufferings. The parable and the proverb indicate that the horse came to the gathering hoping that he would get to hear something exciting. Still, he was frustrated to listen to the agonies that the elders underwent and thus became more frustrated. The proverb is made of "by sorrow", "of the heart", and "spirit is broken". Thus, the proverb suggests that the memories of suffering make someone frustrated. Therefore, such memories are not worth mentioning as someone spirited gets frustrated. To keep everyone excited, one needs to talk positively about experiences.

**"One cannot pass twice through the same stream"** (Oden 33).

The proverb is used in the parable *The Anonymous Disciple*. The parable answered the question of what the true disciple does. The parable tells the story of a philosopher Heraclitus the obscure. He put his thoughts into his writings. He once produced the above proverb. He had a disciple who went further and added that some people could not even do it once. This improvement in the statement to Heraclitus became an Eleatic statement. The disciple desired to be a disciple of Heraclitus and go further and not back to Heraclitus's position. The proverb indicates that the disciple wanted to be Heraclitus's disciple and not the position that Heraclitus left. His addition to the statement was acknowledged as an improved version of Heraclitus's statement; hence, he had already been in Heraclitus's position, and according to the proverb, one cannot go through the same position. The proverb is made of "one cannot pass twice", and "through the same stream". Thus, the proverb suggests that one cannot enjoy the same experience twice. A person is excited when he does something for the first time. When the same person goes through the same experience, it does not excite him anymore.

**"Seek and ye shall find"** (Oden 54).

The proverb finds its place in the parable *The Candidate Seeking*. The parable answered how civil religion stands for the absolute. The parable tells the story of a candidate in theology. When someone said about him that he was seeking, the candidate reached the period of his life. The answer to what he was seeking was the kingdom of God, but Kierkegaard said that the answer

was wrong. What he sought were a parish and a living. In his search, the candidate went everywhere, acclaimed himself before everyone, and when he received what he sought, at that time, the scriptural text that he read was confirmed. A candidate of theology wanted to ensure the proverbial statement mentioned above. Therefore, according to the scriptures, the candidate went after everything to prove what he believed to be true. The proverb is made of “seek”, and “ye shall find”. Thus, the proverb suggests that those who want something will get it. One has to pursue the thing no matter what, and he gets the thing.

**“It is very extraordinary that the Greeks could have reckoned among the wise men such a fool as Periander”** (Oden 60).

The proverb is used in the parable *Periander*. The parable answered whether wisdom could survive amid the hazards of power. The parable makes use of seven proverbs. The first proverb is about Periander, a son of Kypselus of the Heraclidian family. He was the heir of a tyrant king of Corinth. He was believed to talk like a wise person but behave like a fanatic. His madness was strange. Yet, it was the fact that the Greeks could have recognized such a fool, Periander, among the wise men. The proverb indicates that Periander was fanatic in behaviour but wise in speaking. If his fanatic behaviour had not been exposed, the Greeks could have listed him among the most intelligent of the people. The proverb is made of “it is extraordinary”, “the Greeks could have reckoned”, “among the wise men”, and “such a fool as Periander”. Thus, the proverb suggests that a person’s speech and behaviour give his impression. When a person speaks something and does something else, he is not believed. Thus, the proverb answers the question negatively. The following proverb is used in the same parable focussing on a different aspect.

**“Diligence accomplishes all things”** (Oden 61).

The proverb is used in the same parable. When Periander became a dictator, he differentiated himself by mercy, justice to the poor, and wisdom among learned people. He kept his word. He gave statues of God that he promised. It was just that they all were made by paying off the women’s jewels. This fits into the above proverb, which he quoted. The proverb indicates that Periander achieved everything with painstaking efforts, but the painstaking efforts were harrowing for women as he completed the statues of God with their jewellery. There is no doubt

that his actions were diligent but at the cost of others. The proverb is made of “diligence”, “accomplishes”, and “all things”. Thus, the proverb suggests that earnest efforts make everything possible. One should make painstaking efforts to achieve something. The following proverb highlights another aspect of Periander’s personality.

**“Do not that which you have to keep secret”** (Oden 61).

The character of Periander was twofold. There was a tyrant hidden behind a compassionate and wise person. Until his bold actions exhibited his real character, he was a wise and composed man. Periander was both a wise and a tyrant man. One could not understand how he was so much changed. He lived in a wrong relationship with his mother. It was before he heard his saying. The saying is the above proverb. The proverb indicates that Periander was living a life of a dual personality. He was a wise person on the one hand and a tyrant on the other hand. As a tyrant, he had an illicit relationship with his mother, but as a wise person, he advised that one should not attempt something that had to be kept secret from others. The proverb indicates that he was in a relationship with his mother, which he should not have done because he had to keep it secret. The proverb is made of “do not that”, and “which you have to keep secret”. The proverb suggests that one should not do what has to be kept secret because the truth cannot be hidden for a long time. The following proverb opened up another aspect of Periander’s personality.

**“It is better to be feared than to be lamented”** (Oden 61).

Periander followed this saying in his life. He acted according to this proverb as he was the first one who maintained bodyguards for himself and changed the government whenever he liked. He ruled the enslaved people like a dictator. The proverb indicates that Periander was a very frightened man, so he kept bodyguards for himself. He believed in the above proverb. He thought nothing was left but lament the loss when something bad happened. Thus, he took due care and stayed cautious. The proverb is made of “it is better”, “to be feared”, and “to be lamented”. Thus, the proverb suggests that one should be cautious about the possible threat. The following proverb highlights Periander’s tyrannical thoughts.

**“It is just as dangerous for a tyrant to lay down his command as to be deprived of it”**  
(Oden 61).

The proverb is used to show what Periander believed. According to him, his power as a tyrant cannot be separated from him. The proverb indicates that it is dangerous for a tyrant to surrender his authority as if to separate him from it. Thus, the proverb expresses a view in favour of power. Therefore, the question Kierkegaard was dealing with receives a positive answer as to how wisdom can survive not only among the hazards of power but also for power itself. The proverb favours power. The proverb is made of “it is dangerous”, “for a tyrant”, “to lay down”, “command”, and “to be deprived of it”. Thus, the proverb suggests that when a tyrant lays down his authority, it separates the authority from him.

**“The more lost, the less repentant” (Oden 62).**

The parable becomes true of Periander as he did not learn from the anger of God, but it was enough that the upcoming generations learned from his death. The story reiterates the occasion which led to the madness of Periander, which increased day by day and matched the saying that a man placed on his escutcheon many years later. The proverb indicates that Periander was less repentant about his losses. He lost most of the things but felt little regret about it. The proverb is made of “more lost”, and “less repentant”. Thus, the proverb suggests that a tyrant feels less repentant of his losses. The person who is not a tyrant feels more regret about the failures.

**“It is with the one who, rich in good intentions and quick to promise, retreats backwards farther and farther from the good” (Oden 71).**

The proverb is used in the parable *The Man Who Walked Backwards*. Kierkegaard tried to answer the question of why inconsistent behaviours so often accompany exorbitant professions of good intentions. The parable explained that when a man walks away from someone, it is easy to see that he turns his back and walks away, but when a person faces the person who walks away, he has to walk backward while talking to the person who walked away. When a person gets used to walking backward, assuring again and again that he is there, he fails to understand that he is distancing himself from being good. With the help of intention and promises, the person creates an impression that he is being good and needs more choices and promises to be good. The proverb

indicates that the person who has only good intentions and promises is away from good. The proverb is made of “the one who”, “rich in good intentions and quick to promise”, “retreats backwards, and “farther from the good”. Thus, the proverb advises that one should not believe a person with only good intentions and only promises. Such a person seldom follows his intentions and commitments.

**“When a debtor remains in debt so long that the debt is finally paid through having remained so long unpaid” (Oden 74).**

The proverb finds its place in the parable *The Postponed Answer*. The parable answered the question of what religion is. The parable tells the story of a Greek philosopher who was once asked about religion. The philosopher needed some time to prepare an answer, so he took some time. When the period was over, he requested some more time. Thus, he suggested allegorically that the question is unanswerable. If the philosopher had argued with himself that he took so much time, there would have been a misunderstanding that he had found the answer to the question by now. The proverb indicates that the philosopher is a debtor who has failed to answer the question. He remained a debtor as the question remained unanswered. The proverb is made of “a debtor remains in debt”, “so long”, “the debt is finally paid through”, and “having remained so long unpaid”. Thus, the proverb suggests that when a person is in debt and takes time to pay the debt again and again and is unable to repay the debt, remains a debtor lifelong. It also suggests that one should not postpone the promised things. The more we wait, the more it becomes difficult to fulfill the promise. It reminds us that tomorrow never comes.

**“He who entertains such a fear of doing too much is not really reading the letter from his beloved” (Oden 80-81).**

The proverb is used in the parable *The Letter*. The parable answered whether there are any limitations in viewing the scriptures as an object of literary-historical investigation. The parable exemplified the story of a lover who received a letter from his beloved. The letter to the lover was as important for the lover as the words of God. Thus, the letter had to be read just like the words of God ought to be read. If the letter was written in a language that the lover could not understand, then how he could read it? He did not have access to any translator, nor did he want anyone to get

to his love secrets. So, how could he read it? He had only one way of reading the letter. He had to sit with the dictionary and understand words. When he was reading the letter, his friend came and saw him reading the letter. He asked him if this was the way to read the letter from his lover. He told him that he was impatient to read the letter, so he sat down to translate it. He scorned his friend yet told him to stay till he finished the translation of the letter. The lover somehow read the letter and got to the meaning. Such letters contained the desires a lover expected him to do. The lover went with what she asked him to do, and when they met, his lover told him that was not what she told him to do. He misunderstood what she wrote in the letter. The lover would regret that he should have interpreted what she said precisely by referring to more dictionaries. The story asks us if we believed that he regretted his misinterpretation or was less in favour of his beloved. Another explanatory story of students who were asked to read a passage from the book illustrates the proverb. One student did not know how long would it take to read the lesson, but he read it twice. Another student started finding out how much he had to study. Thus, he went to other students and wasted his time. Therefore, if the lover does too much to understand the letter, he will be less pleased as he needs to make too much effort to read the letter. The lover is like the second student who found out first how much he had to read. The proverb indicates that the person who keeps the fear of doing too much does not do it. Just like the second student who feared how much he had to read, he failed to read at all. The proverb is made of “he who entertains”, “fear of doing too much”, “is not really reading”, and “the letter from his beloved”. Thus, the proverb suggests that a person afraid of doing too much fails to do it thoroughly. Therefore, one need not look for how much is required to do. One has to start doing it. The proverb advises us to do our duties without expecting results.

**“He who is not alone with God’s Word is not reading God’s Word”** (Oden 81).

The same parable uses the above proverb. In the parable, Kierkegaard continues with the story of a lover reading the letter. He was interrupted by a friend. He was impatient to read the letter, but he said he had been slow in his work; otherwise, it was not that important. When someone comes to meet when we are reading a letter, it is a disturbance. The proverb thus indicates that the person was disturbed by another when he was reading a letter from his lover. In such a condition, he is not reading the letter at all. The proverb is made of “he who is not alone “, “God’s

Word”, and “not reading God’s Word”. Thus, the proverb suggests that one cannot concentrate on the work at hand when there is a disturbance.

**“He who is merely destined to serve in a humble capacity goes to school only a short time. But the one who is destined for something higher, must go to school for a long time” (Oden 94).**

The proverb is used in the parable *The Lifelong Schooling*. The parable answered the question of how much time we may justifiably spend on the education of the human spirit. The parable tells us that the lowest animals are born in a moment and die at that exact moment. Humans are the ones who grow slowly. A knowledgeable person knows that man is the noblest of the creations. Humans also have a similar inclination towards education. The time spent on education significantly impacts the aim for which one aspires. If something lasts for a long time in human life, schools must educate something higher, just like suffering. If we consider that someone goes to school for a lifetime, then someone might ask when something good will be achieved from the education. The teacher explains to the students not to be impatient as they have an entire life ahead. In the same way, the sufferer is advised not to be impatient as there is plenty of time for learning. The proverb indicates that a person who serves humbly goes to school for a short period, and those who deserve something higher have to go to school for a longer time. The proverb is made of “he who is destined”, “to serve in a humble capacity”, “goes to school”, “short time”, “one who is destined”, “something higher”, “must go to school”, and “long time”. Thus, the proverb suggests that those who serve humbly go to school for a short period, and those who aim for something higher, go to school longer. In a way, it shows that someone with intellectual work goes to school for a longer time, and others with not much intellectual work involved go to school for a shorter time.

**“Happy the man who possesses no more than he is content to put in the next drawer” (Oden 99).**

The proverb finds its place in the parable *The Girl of Sixteen and the Man of Twenty-five*. The parable deals with the question of what the happiest existence is. The parable tells the story of a sixteen-year-old girl who is innocent, pure, and possesses nothing, not even a chest of drawers



but uses her mother's desk to keep her belongings. She knew how to dance but went to the ball only twice a year. She sat quietly at her work and found time to look at him. He had nothing, yet she was the whole world for him even though she had nothing. The parable also points out an unhappy rich man. The proverb indicates that even though the sixteen-year-old lady had nothing and the man who shared a wardrobe had nothing; they were happy with whatever they had. On the contrary, the rich man was unhappy even though having everything. The proverb is made of "happy the man", "who possesses no more", and "than he is content to put in the next drawer". Thus, the proverb suggests that the man who is satisfied to put something in the next drawer is the happiest. As explained by another proverb, happiness is a state of mind. Thus, whoever is satisfied with whatever they have is a happy person.

**"Money makes virtue, it is certain also that money makes vice" (Oden 110).**

The proverb is used in the parable *A Possibility*. The parable explained the power of possibility. The possibility could affect someone's entire life; even if it was the possibility of a distant, uncertain event. The parable tells the story of a strange man who was a bookkeeper. The man was normal to everyone, from the poor to the rich. He greeted everyone who greeted him, but one thing that was strange about him was that he never replied to a greeting between eleven and twelve. He was also a good painter, but his paintings never saw the light of the day. He was the son of a government employee who lived in modest conditions. The man started working for a merchant at an early age. He was quiet and shy but did his work honestly, and therefore he was promoted to the position of head of the house. While working with the merchant, he utilized his spare time reading and developing his passion for drawing. Later, he became an accountant and received an excellent salary. Thus, with the money he received, he enjoyed it for some time. Two clerks took him with them and spent some time at the party. At once, he was taken to the places where a woman was given money for her despicableness. Later, he became sick. The proverb indicates that the man earned some money and became a man with vice. He got into the company of evil men and went to the place where his type of men never went. The proverb is made of "money makes virtue", "it is certain also", and "money makes vice". Thus, the proverb advises that money can make a man virtuous and unrighteous. Therefore, one needs to be aware of the extremes of having money. The following proverb highlights another aspect of his life.

**“No man, not even the married man, can know definitely how many children he leaves behind him”** (Oden 116).

The man inherited the property his master left behind as he did not have any children. He only has a cousin who lives with the bookkeeper. The bookkeeper befriended a retired captain of the ship. They used to meet in a coffee shop. The captain used to come there regularly, but the bookkeeper went there only every fourteenth day. The cousin of his master was a wise person and always quoted the above proverb. He never understood the meaning. Finally, the bookkeeper also died after being ill for several days. His excellent work remained behind in the form of blessings to the poor and the children for whom he did so much. The proverb symbolically indicates that the bookkeeper did many things for children, and the cousin of the master could not hold himself from quoting the proverb. Even though the bookkeeper was not married, he did not know how many children he had left behind. The proverb is made of “no man”, “even the married man”, “can know definitely”, “how many children”, and “he leaves behind him”. Thus, the proverb suggests that the person with his good deeds never knows how many children he has left behind. When someone does something good for other children, they become his children, not in the biological sense but in the sense of humanity.

**“No sooner said than done”** (Oden 126).

The proverb finds its place in the parable *The Wife of the Orientalist*. The parable answered the question of the difference between marriage and courtship. The parable is the story of a learned man from Holland, an orientalist. One day when he was called for lunch, he did not come. His wife waited at the dinner table with food, but he did not come. Finally, she went to his room to call him for dinner. When she went into his room, she found him alone, engrossed in his oriental studies. She went to him and asked why he did not come for dinner. He told her that he was busy observing something unusual that he had never seen before. He tried to explain to her, but she saw it and blew it, and the dot disappeared. The dot was a grain of snuff. Thus, the man ran to the dinner table along with his wife happily. The proverb indicates that the wife blew the dot as soon as she said it. Thus, it disappeared. The man had been studying it closely, but it was not worth studying as it was a grain of snuff. The proverb is made of “no sooner said”, and “than done”. Thus, the proverb suggests that one must act as soon as something is said.

## Conclusion

To sum up, I have observed that the proverbs are directly infused in the parables of Kierkegaard. The context for the exemplified proverbs in the respective parables is explained to understand the background. The parable and the related proverb correlate with one another. While studying the parables and the proverbs, it is found that the words in some proverbs are different than the relative context of the parables, yet the proverbs correspond to the circumstances of the parables. In the case of some parables, the proverbs indicate the contrary message. It becomes clear from the above study that parables give life lessons through the proverbs. It is not the case with parables where reading a proverb enables us to reach the parable's message. The message in the proverbs and the parables depends on the specific contextual components. Hence, the context of the proverb has to be understood around the entire parable to explore the proverbial wisdom.

---

---

## References

- Bremer, Katharina, et al. *Achieving Understanding: Discourse in Intercultural Encounters*. Harlow: Longman, 1996.
- Ganmote, Dipak P. "Moral Implications of Proverbs in Select Parables." *Contemporary Research in India*, special issue, 15/16, May, 2021, pp. 104-108.
- Gotthardt, Hrisztalina Hrisztova, and Melita Aleksa Varga., editors. *Introduction to Paremiology: A Comprehensive Guide to Proverb Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter Open Ltd., 2014.
- Kierkegaard. *Parables of Kierkegaard*. Edited by Thomas C. Oden. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1978.
- Meider, Wolfgang, and Alan Dundes., editors. *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*. New York: Garland, 1995.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Proverbs Are Never Out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Proverbs Speak Louder than Words: Folk Wisdom in Art, Culture, Folklore, History, Literature, and Mass Media*, New York: Peter Lang, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Politics of Proverbs: From Traditional Wisdom to Proverbial Stereotypes*. London: The University of Wisconsin P, 1997.

Norrick, N. R. *How Proverbs Mean: Semantic Studies in English Proverbs*. Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1985.

Rokem, Galit Hasan “The Pragmatics of Proverbs: How the Proverb Gets its Meaning”. Edited by Lise Menn, Loraine K. Obler, *Exceptional Language and Linguistics*. 1982, pp.169.

Taylor, Archer. *The Proverb*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1931.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Proverb.” Edited by M. Leach, *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*. New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1950, pp. 902-905.

=====