# Proceeding of
# One Day National Conference
# on
# English Language, Literature, Cultural Studies and Media Studies
## Held on 22 June 2025

## Volume 2, Special Issue 1

**Chief Editor**

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**Centre for Learning, Research and Development, Savda, Maharashtra**
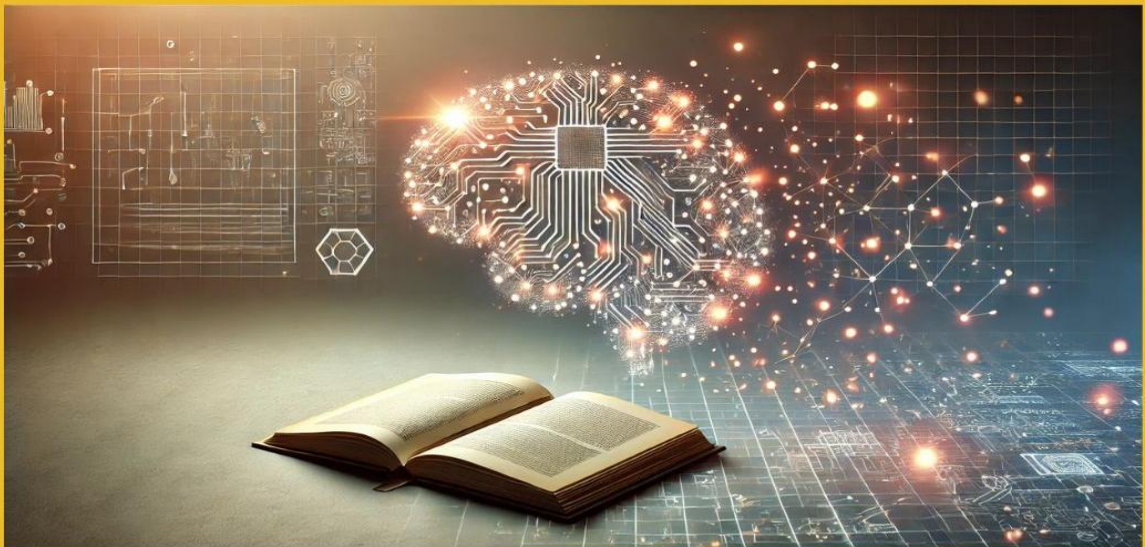
# *Literary Enigma*

### **The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture**
**(Peer-reviewed and indexed)**
**ISSN (Online): 3049-2033**

## **Proceeding of**
## **One Day National Conference**
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**doi DOI Number**
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16921807

**July 2025**
**Volume 2, Special Issue 1**

| **Guest Editor** | **Chief Editor** |
|---|---|
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The articles published in the Proceedings of the One Day National Conference on English Language, Literature, Cultural Studies and Media Studies, organized by Centre for Learning, Research and Development, Savda, Maharashtra, held on 22 June 2025, and published in Literary Enigma: The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture (Peer-reviewed and Indexed), Vol. 2, Issue 1, July 2025, are the sole responsibility of their respective authors.

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# Digital Childhood: Representation of Marginalized Children in Indian Social Media Narratives

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***Abstract:*** *In the epoch of digital media, the childhood phase is predominantly dictated and mirrored through online platforms. For marginalized children in India, social media as a medium represents a community of the same name is both a window to their visibility and a space of misrepresentation. Those children who are from Dalit, tribal, rural, or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, social media illustrates that it is a window to their visibility, and simultaneously a space that is filled with distortion of the image of such children and the issues they face. These representations have the potential to sway public opinion, policy-makers, and even the course of interventions for child rights. This paper dwells on the figures of marginalized children in Indian social media narratives, first and foremost, institutional posts (by NGOs, government bodies), then the user-generated content. It sets out to determine to what extent these representations are the ones that either enable children or perpetuate the stereotypes. A qualitative content analysis was embarked upon by purposive sampling of 50 Instagram and Twitter posts from verified NGO/government handles and 50 user-generated posts using hashtags like #ChildRights, #StreetChildren, and #SaveTheChild. Visual and textual elements were coded to ascertain the theme of dignity, victimization, resilience, and agency. The institutional posts predominantly show marginalized children as "objects of rescue" or "hopeful futures," while user-generated content vacillates between sympathy and sensationalism. The children's voices were scarce. The aspects of poverty and helplessness were overemphasized in a way that potentially could have led to a problem of one-dimensionality, thus, the characters of the children, their cultural identity, or the community resilience were even left out of the focus. Indian social media narratives concerning marginalized kids generally show them in a way that is off their realities, with their emotional appeal being given priority over the accurate representation. Participatory digital storytelling, which places children's voices and identities at the center, is needed. Ethical storytelling principles and digital literacy can aid in reconfiguring these empowerment-oriented narratives.*
**Keywords:** Digital Childhood, Marginalized Children, Social Media Narratives

## I. Introduction

Digital technologies have radically changed how childhood is produced and mediated on international arenas. From Instagram posts to NGO-led campaigns, children's faces travel immeasurably across digital landscapes, often devoid of context but subject to a complex, conflicting symbolic weight. These transformations are especially visible in countries and regions marked by deep structural inequities, where children from marginalized communities—defined by factors such as caste, class, ethnicity, or regional disadvantage—are frequently framed through adult-centric narratives of suffering, vulnerability, or redemption (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Consequently, the digital portrait of childhood—particularly that of marginalized youth—is not actually created by these children at all, but through institutional logics and cultural assumptions that are built into larger media ecosystems. Social media

especially has been a key battleground for narrative warfare, humanitarian activism, and political mobilization. Though these platforms provide really impactful and powerful tools to raise awareness, there are some really big questions around ethics, agency, and representation. Organizations often forget that the subjects are kids! As a result, the intersection of activism, media, and digital technology has increased both the scale and the danger of misrepresentation that vulnerable populations face. As for the children, their incidental presence in these digital spaces is frequently without their knowledge, consent or ability to regulate. It certainly affects public opinion and eventually, policy. Additionally, as the production of content has migrated to social media platforms, new modes of digital content creation that prioritize visceral, emotionally striking, and easily digestible materials have exacerbated these critiques. This jarring dynamic produces a marketplace of ideas that favors affect over information, feeling over fact. When it comes to the lives of marginalized childhoods, this often results in stories of children being overdetermined by tropes of victimhood, innocence, or resilience and never with these complex, multidimensional narratives interwoven. Children are presented either as helpless recipients of aid or as heroic survivors of systemic adversity, with little acknowledgment of the socioeconomic structures that shape these lived realities (Orgad & Vella, 2012). These tropes flatten the complexities of children's experiences and can perilously hide the very systems—economic, cultural, political—that create their marginalization. Crucially, even when participatory digital storytelling tools are employed, children's voices are filtered through adult mediators, such as humanitarian aid workers, educators, or content creators, further embedded them into existing asymmetries of power (James, 2007). Technologies like smartphones and apps hold great promise to create the potential for participatory engagement. Their implementation is almost never neutral. What is curated, shared, and amplified online is largely in the hands of adults that possess greater digital literacy, social capital, and control over narrative framing. This is where the conversation turns to the ethics. These concerns around the ethics of digital representation of especially children have become a battleground of critical media scholarship. Third et al. (2017) further observe that even though digital platforms have the potential to democratize participation, they risk exacerbating exclusions in turn, particularly when considerations of informed consent, data privacy, and visual commodification are neglected. Indeed, images of children featured in fundraising or advocacy campaigns can evoke empathy and raise funds by focusing on the suffering rather than dignity. These images can then be shared without the child's or caregiver's consent, effectively turning children into aestheticized objects in new digital economies of visibility and emotion. One of the most immediate critiques for current representational practices is that they are often not child-focused. In this backlash, many scholars and practitioners are calling for more rights-based, inclusive approaches to storytelling. Storytelling that understands children not as passive subjects, but rather as rights-holders and potential narrators of their own stories. Uprichard (2008) calls for a paradigm shift in our understanding of childhood, away from the notion of a period of being human still in the process of becoming, to that of a childhood experience in its own right. The implication is that children must not only be talked about or depicted through the lenses created by adults, but rather they must be

involved as co-writers in the creation of stories surrounding their lives. Further, the politics of visibility in the digital age makes participation much more complicated. It's like I always say — visibility is not inherently empowering if you don't have agency and structural critique to back it up, and sometimes it can be exploitative. The perverse logic of digital platforms further incentivizes the production of media that provoke such radical emotions—shock, sadness, outrage—resulting in what Couldry and Hepp (2017) call the "datafication of human experience," as lives are reduced to algorithmic metrics, engagement rates, and shareable infographics. For instance, in the representation of children in crisis—street children, those from conflict zones, or victims of trafficking—the visual takes over as a stand-in for veracity, even when without context. This research addresses these issues by critically examining representations of marginalized children in India, through a lens of power, privilege and difference, within digital stories. India provides a uniquely critical setting for such a exploration, owing to its size and heterogeneity, deep-based social stratification, and fast-pace digital development. As UNICEF and other child rights organizations across the globe will tell you, millions of Indian children still grow up in environments of dire poverty, exclusion, and systemic discrimination. Their narratives too often get penned by other people, mostly for purposes of advocacy or fundraising. Although mobile phones and digital platforms have created unprecedented opportunities to amplify diverse, participatory voices, the kids of these communities are still too often absent as storytellers of their own experiences. To further explore this representational gap, the study conducts a qualitative content analysis of 100 social media posts, 50 institutional posts from verified NGO or government handles operating in Canada and 50 user-generated posts using #childhood hashtags on Twitter. The posts were coded for four main themes-based literature and emergent coding—themes of victimization, dignity, resilience, and agency. These thematic categories provide insight not only into what is being represented, but how—what linguistic, visual, and symbolic tools are being employed to convey meaning. By looking at both institutional and user-generated content, this research is able to document the breadth of digital storytelling practices featured in this study from highly organized, agenda-driven campaigns to citizenry grassroots, visual expressions. It focuses especially on the frequency and framing of these four themes, posing critical questions about what is there, what is missing, and what these absences mean for social perception and child rights. Through our content analysis we examine how children's identities are formed at the crossroads of digital culture and social hierarchy, illustrating how digital storytelling can both perpetuate and oppose the ideologies to which it often submits. Ultimately, this study addresses a larger goal of decolonizing visual culture to better realize the ethical and political stakes in terms of representing children in digital realms. It advocates for inclusive, child-centered approaches that foreground children's voices, protect their dignity, and challenge the flattening effects of reductive digital narratives. As governments, NGOs, and content creators increasingly use social media to reach audiences and advocate for causes, the need to go beyond simply appealing to emotion and toward ethical storytelling is more important than ever. Meaningful representation. Representation is not just about becoming visible—it's about

power, who gets to speak on their behalf, and what kinds of childhoods come to be legible in the digital public sphere.

## II. Rationale of Study

This digital turn has profoundly transformed the aesthetic, political, and cultural practice of narrative storytelling and humanitarian advocacy alike, alongside complex social representation, particularly so when it comes to the portrayals of childhood. Youth social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become powerful platforms where discussions of the realities of these marginalized children are created, spread, and shared. While these platforms do offer opportunities for greater inclusivity and participatory storytelling, they too can just as easily slip into the all-too-common trap of reproducing reductive, adult-centric representations steeped in themes of victimhood, pity and dependency. This is of critical importance in contexts like India, where overlaid structural inequalities—caste, class, gender, geography—not only deepen the marginalization of children, but paradoxically make them easier to identify and see within digital humanitarians' digital humanitarian campaigns. There was a huge gap of knowledge on how children—especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds—are depicted in India's social media environment. Yet a good deal of this digital content creation, both from institutional sources like NGOs and government agencies, local users, still really perpetuates these damaging visual tropes—children as victims, passive recipients of aid or future hopefuls. These representations are a violent erasure of children's agency, resilience and dignity, obliterating their lived experiences and realities, narratives and histories. This research was guided by the principle that representation is always a charged act. It's an ideological and cultural decision that shapes public perception, frames policy discourse and debate, and most importantly directly undermines the fundamental rights of children. Through a qualitative content analysis of 100 social media posts, 50 institutional and 50 user-generated, the study explores how four overarching themes—victimization, dignity, resilience, and agency—are represented and appropriated. Our hope, as with all of these posts, is to go beyond just understanding what's being visualized, how it's being visualized and to what goal. By attending to textuality and visuality, this project examines the symbolic processes through which childhoods are produced on the internet. Additionally, at a moment when access and participation in that burgeoning digital realm is increasingly unequal, and monopolized by logics of algorithmic engagement, we have to wonder, who gets to tell children's stories, and how are they permitted to circulate. These findings aim to contribute to ongoing academic and policy discussion on ethical digital storytelling, visual politics, and child rights by highlighting the representational gap and advocating for more inclusive, participatory, and rights-based narratives that acknowledge children's dignity and complexity. In so doing, this study seeks to disrupt exploitative tropes and advance a methodology for creating more ethical and transformative representations of marginalized children in digital spaces.

## III. Literature Review

Critical engagement with the ways in which childhood is mediated by digital technologies has become a dynamic space for scholarship, creative expression, and activist work, particularly in contexts around the globe where marginalization is exacerbated by structural inequities. As

Hall (1997) explains, media not only mirrors the world, but creates it, thus influencing how society understands the social reality that is, particularly for marginalized social groups like children. Representations of any marginalized Indian child—all Dalit, tribal, rural, or economically deprived children—on digital platforms are almost never devoid of prejudices. Instead, they are all too often swayed by policymakers' priorities or gut feelings that do not begin to represent the real-world effects and circumstances of these children's lives. Banaji and Bhat (2020) further challenge South Asian media that digital platforms increasingly silence children's voices and centre adult interpretations and interventions. NGO-fueled social media rush campaigns are often based on sometimes misleading or even fake imagery that appeals to emotion or shock to provoke public outrage and empathy, generating support and funding. While these types of strategies may be interesting or even awareness-raising, they usually reduce children to passive recipients of adult benevolence that ultimately upholds the power hierarchies and fails to recognize the unique nature of each child or their cultural backgrounds. Digital media can both democratize participation while simultaneously deepening exclusion, cautioned Buckingham (2011), especially in terms of short-changing the young, where access and digital literacy are uneven. Livingstone & Third (2017) promote participatory digital practices that help children tell their stories, but warn against uncritical adoption of digital tools without engaging with broader ethical issues regarding consent, representation, and data protection. As Sen and Bhan (2019) recently show, hashtags like #SaveTheChild or #StreetChildren—even if meant positively—reproduce and further circulate hyper-sensationalized narratives that ignore and undermine the resilience of the vulnerable. Measuring digital poverty by UNICEF (2020) gives a broad global picture that children's online presence is still divided along class and caste lines, therefore influencing how disadvantaged children are represented or catered to. The colonial baggage that comes with any visual representation of Indian children in philanthropic appeals shows how these tropes have persisted into present-day digital storytelling. More than just ensuring we have consent; these methods enable us to foreground children as co-producers and active narrators of their own lived experiences. To our knowledge, the existing literature goes no further than calling for a transition from adult-centered, emotive, and sensationalistic storytelling toward more inclusive, participatory, and ethical storytelling. This initial research is advanced by this study, exploring the representation of marginalized children in Indian social media through the lens of dignity and agency, with particular focus on victimization and resilience in both formal and informal content.

## IV. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative content analysis framework to construct an understanding of how underrepresented children are portrayed in Indian social media discourse. Qualitative content analysis is suitable for exploring the meanings embedded in text and visuals, especially in digital media contexts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012), and the research was grounded in an interpretivist paradigm that emphasizes the subjective and socio-cultural meanings of representation (Creswell, 2013). With qualitative convenience sampling, we purposely oversampled a total of 100 posts with 50 institutional-acct posts from

**Literary Enigma**

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

NGOs, gov't agencies, and child rights bodies. 50 user-generated posts from TWT & IG, pulled from relevant hashtags (e.g #ChildRights #StreetChildren #SaveTheChild). These posts primarily seeded from Jan 2023 – Mar 2024 ranked mostly on engagement, reach, topical relevance, inclusion of marginalized childhoods (Silverman, 2016). Thematic content analysis was performed with NVivo 14 assistance, employing text and photo-based data coding. Visual elements such as expressions, settings and angles were analyzed through the visual semiotics (Rose, 2016), while captions and hashtags were scrutinized for thematic categories such as dignity, victimization, resilience and agency (Banaji & Bhat, 2020). Codes were inductively generated and peer-reviewed to ensure the inter-coder reliability (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to by anonymizing user identities, avoiding exploitative content, and referencing consent considerations for posts with children's images (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). UNICEF's (2020) digital storytelling framework and best practice recommendations were used. Triangulation occurred through comparative analysis of CMC institutional vs. user-generated content and validation of findings with literature published thus far on the subject. Among these are bias introduced by platform algorithms, the inability to control for private/non-public content and the cultural subjectivity introduced by the researchers' interpretation. Though these challenges made the methodology and analysis complex, exhaustive, and painstakingly caveated, this resulted in an ekphrastic analysis imbued with ethical consciousness, producing grave, powerful findings about how social media continues to insidiously create, curate, and pre-determine the digital identities of India's neo-liberal, post-colonial, vulnerable youth.

## V. Findings

The results from the qualitative content analysis of 100 social media posts—50 institutional and 50 user-generated—show that Indian digital narratives about marginalized children are mostly bent toward passive as well as deficit-based portrayals. Institutional content from NGOs and government bodies generally presented children as beneficiaries of charity or as "hopeful futures," reinforcing narratives of dependency and victimhood (Balagopalan, 2014; Twum-Danso Imoh & Ame, 2012). Posts frequently used sanitized or emotionally charged imagery— children in uniform receiving gifts or looking solemn—with text emphasizing rescue or transformation, but the children's voices, opinions, and agency were conspicuously absent (Montgomery, 2009; Banaji & Bhat, 2021). This mirrors prior critiques that institutions utilize "development porn" or "poverty porn" to elicit empathy and bypass structural issues. There was a huge range when it came to user-generated content. Posts shared using the hashtags such as #SaveTheChild and #StreetChildren frequently showed images of children sleeping on streets or begging, with a tone that ranged from pity to horror to moral outrage (Noble, 2018, Sen, 2019). While many such posts did amplify horrible suffering while escaping any sort of accountability, it raised the alarm sounded by Livingstone and Third (2017), calling attention to the ethical vacuum of public digital participation on topics involving children. The prevailing narratives in both categories were those of victimization and helplessness, with little to no inclusion of stories of resilience or agency present. Cultural identity, caste-specific marginalization and community support systems were barely represented, reducing children's

lived experiences to monolithic images of the poverty (Doron & Raja, 2015; Bourdillon et al., 2010). Intersectionality was sorely lacking, with posts rarely tackling how caste, gender, and region combine to filter childhood experiences in distinctly different ways (Crenshaw, 1991). This focus on shorthand, simplified visuals can skew public perceptions, further simplifying complicated socio-political topics into easily consumable yet misleading photo-ops (Chouliaraki, 2010, Orgad, 2015). Few posts offered reflections on systemic failings such as child labor, school dropouts, or discrimination.The orientation was towards individual suffering or individual rescue, thus re-stabilizing the binary of savior and saved. Through a visual analysis, we found a desktop aesthetic characterized by an over-reliance on black-and-white filters, emotionally manipulative close-ups and overtly commodifying text overlays like "Save Me," that aestheticizes trauma and commodifies suffering. Especially when created in viral, snackable formats, such narratives risk reinforcing harmful, one-dimensional stereotypes and distorting public perceptions and thus public policy in reductive and damaging ways. The absence of participatory storytelling, where children speak for themselves or are shown as active participants, was striking (Lundy & McEvoy, 2011; UNICEF, 2018). These conclusions require an intentional reversal of the current practices that child representation on digital platforms, in favor of ethical, inclusive, rights-based communication that prioritizes dignity and diversity over pity and spectacle (Banaji, 2017). Qualitative content analysis was conducted using hybrid coding framework developed and applied with the assistance of NVivo software. This approach combined both deductive coding, informed by the pre-existing categories developed from literature namely: Victimization, Dignity, Resilience, and Agency, and inductive coding, allowing for what might be different and emerge through additional data. This was crucial in order to uncover both theoretically informed and context specific trends within social media portrayals. The complete data set included 100 total social media postings—50 institutional posts from verified NGO/government accounts and 50 user generated posts from accounts including hashtags such as #ChildRights, #StreetChildren. Each post was imported into the NVivo and coded systemically for the textual content (e.g., captions, hashtags) as well as visual elements (e.g., photos, filters, text overlays). These codes were then applied to the posts individually and in the clusters to determine overarching themes based on repeated language employed, affect, symbolic representation, framing strategies, etc. In order to enhance the inter-rater reliability of coding, two researchers independently coded a sample of 20 posts. Coding reliability was calculated, and differences were debated and settled by agreement. This iterative process was repeated multiple times until a finalized codebook was created and used consistently across the entire data set. NVivo's query functions and matrix coding features were employed to identify code frequency, overlaps and variations in codes across institutional and user-generated posts. The qualitative content analysis showed a patterned and systematic use of narratives. Specifically, under the theme Victimization, one participant's post stated: "He should not have to see a school. Save him before it's too late. Tweet us using #StreetChildren #SaveTheChild"—an obvious, emotional manipulation via vulnerability. A more uncommon tweet that expressed the spirit of Dignity was: "These children from a tribal school painted their dreams today—#ArtForChange", capturing

**Literary Enigma**

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

creativity and the sense of agency within a vibrant cultural context. These examples are indicative of the ways in which non-normative childhoods were largely represented through reductive, essentializing, oppositional binaries largely devoid of children's agency or structural critique. Overall, the utilization of NVivo aided in the process of establishing systematic coding, pattern recognition, and analytic transparency throughout the content analysis process, ultimately supporting the prioritization of dominant and underrepresented narratives across various categories of social media communication.

**Thematic Coding of Social Media Posts**
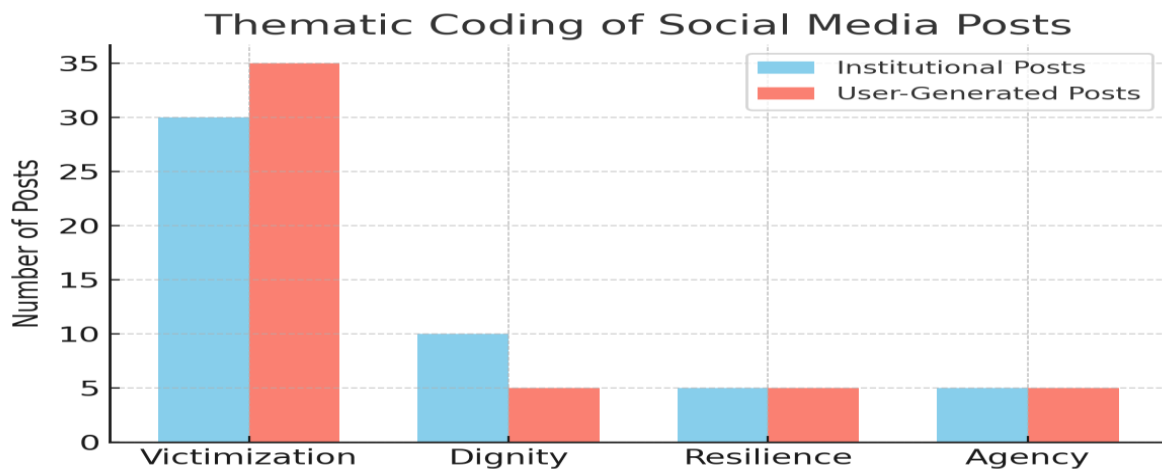


**Figure 1: Thematic Distribution of Social Media Representations of Marginalized Children**

The figure above shows the thematic coding results from the content analysis of 100 social media posts (50 institutional and 50 user-generated). All posts were coded under four overarching themes of Victimization, Dignity, Resilience, and Agency. Institutional posts mostly featured victimization, with dignity as a secondary theme. While these themes dominated the initial landscape of the crisis, they were not represented heavily on the social media. User-generated content instead accentuated victimization even more while predominantly excluding the messages around dignity, resilience or agency. The figure underscores the representational imbalance and the urgent need for more diverse, participatory portrayals of marginalized children in digital narratives. Technically, it signals a dangerous, single-narrative approach to victimization in user-generated content. Ic3s with their systems, while costly, make visible the underrepresentation of these agency and resiliency signals, revealing the limitations of digital narratives silencing many of India's marginalized children today.

***Theme 1. Victimization:*** Though occurring on different scales, the theme of victimization was consistently the most prevalent theme across both institutional and user-generated social media content. Marginalized children, especially Dalit, tribal, rural and economically disadvantaged children, were often painted as helpless victim in need of rescuing. Institutional pictures would usually feature children with forlorn faces, ragged garments, or being helped in schools or

refugee settlements. These posts may have had the goal of raising awareness or mobilizing support. They often only fueled a savior–victim binary by repeatedly showcasing suffering and lack. User-generated content magnified this narrative by way of emotionally charged imagery, think kids laid out on the street, weeping, or asking for money, paired with compelling captions like "save this soul" or "heartbreak." This mode of representation threatened to condense nuanced lived experiences of childhood to truncated tales of woe, robbing the children of both their context and their complexity. Victimization took hold of the visual and textual narrative, rendering it as the primary perspective digital audiences construed marginalized childhoods through.

***Theme 2. Dignity:*** Dignity, as a concept, came up repeatedly but tangentially. In institutional photo essays, glimpses of dignity appeared when children were depicted engaging with their education, or sharing a laugh or activity with classmates, though these scenes were typically presented under the umbrella of charity or children's potential. What made me uncomfortable in my research, and still now, is that these posts mostly elaborated on the actions done to or for the children, not much on how or why the children existed as children. In fact, user-generated posts featured even less examples of dignified representation. Those posts that showed off the children's creativity in more traditional attire or familial bonds were the rarity among the media streams and even they were the exceptions, not the rule. The outpouring lack of focus on dignity resulted in representations that boiled kids down to mere representations of poverty or injury instead of treating them like fully realized human beings with cultural wealth, uniqueness, or inherent worth. This thematic omission further highlights the shortcomings of social media discourses to portray youth of colour and poor communities as full-fledged actors, rather than image tokens of societal collapse.

***Theme 3. Resilience:*** Resilience was actually the least represented theme across both institutional and user-generated posts. Just a few dozen posts depicted kids adjusting, managing, or flourishing in adversity. Several institutional posts showed schooling children moving forward and learning even with very few resources, but always presented as the exception to the rule – not the case. User-generated content was even less likely to show any resilience, instead doubling down on a focus on inaction or trauma. While the posts tended not to focus on the community, family, and cultural networks that allow children to move through adversity, As such, the portrayal of marginalized childhoods was flattened out, centered only on what they're deprived of, as opposed to how they persist or resist. This thematic disregard furthers a tragic narrative of hopelessness, failing to recognize the agency and quotidian power most children wield in lived experiences.

***Theme 4. Agency:*** Agency—children's portrayal as active agents in their own lives—was the least frequent theme found. Wavelength artists were pointed in the direction of institutional posts that rarely included children's voices, choices, or decision-making. The kids were largely depicted as hapless victims waiting to be rescued by the next aid worker or teacher. Posts that tried to illustrate children truly taking part—in guiding a group, in sharing a viewpoint, in joining a movement for social justice—were few and far between. User-generated posts provided little reprieve. Children largely served as visual subjects devoid of agency or context.

This thematic absence is all the more salient because it strips children of their status as rights-holders and furthers adult-centric narratives. If not grounded in agency, digital representations have the potential to obscure the voices of the people whose experiences they purport to showcase. This absence of participatory storytelling is a symptom of a greater problem in how we represent children — the inability to recognize that children must be viewed not only as objects of concern, but as participants who can shape their future agenda themselves.

## VI. Discussion

These results from the qualitative content analysis reveal the ongoing perpetuation of deficit-oriented, depersonalized portrayals of marginalized children within Indian digital media narratives. These representations, overwhelmingly focused on the themes of victimization and helplessness, reflect past criticisms of child-centric communication strategies that focus more on emotional manipulation than on complex or uplifting depictions. The institutional posts especially mirror Montgomery's (2009) conception of a "benevolent authoritarianism," in which children are portrayed solely as objects of intervention, lacking voice or nuance. The aestheticization of the suffering that poverty porn and rescue narratives bring is one tactic that has been widely critiqued within institutional and user-generated spaces within media and development (Boltanski, 1999; Banaji, 2017). Yet while such content might succeed at achieving the fundraising aims of NGOs or the affective pleasures of online users, it fails to account for the rich and complex lived realities of the children and often causes harm by perpetuating certain dangerous stereotypes. This is in line with Chouliaraki's (2010) argument that the digital humanitarianism prioritizes emotional immediacy at the expense of structural critique, rendering complex global issues into easily digestible moral dramas. Tied for equally important is the lack of children's agency and cultural specificity in the majority of posts. The absence of any intersectional framing indicates that the social media depictions are yet to awaken to how these categories intersect to carve out children's realities (Crenshaw, 1991). Despite the participatory potential of digital media, very few posts featured child-led or rights-based storytelling, mirroring criticisms by Lundy and McEvoy (2011) on the translation of child rights frameworks into practice. Beyond the real-world, practical implications of these findings, their ethical implications cannot be understated. As Livingstone and Third (2017) caution, visibility in digital space must be accompanied by dignity, especially in the public forums where consent, misrepresentation, and audience intent are all murky at best. How children's trauma is being commodified through this hashtag event and photographic filter without appropriate context falls on the laps of civil society actors and digital platforms alike. Hence, this small study highlights the importance of developing more inclusive, participatory, and ethically grounded content creation that transcends victimhood and spectacle. Moving instead to see children as active social agents—not merely objects of intervention—can help subvert these narrow narratives and cultivate a more rights-affirming digital culture (UNICEF, 2018).

## VII. Conclusion

This study thus aimed to study the representation of marginalized children in Indian social media narratives through a qualitative content analysis of 100 posts. These findings shed light

on how the typical institutional and user-created content does overwhelmingly depict children through the lenses of victimhood, dependency and suffering. It almost scandalously underrepresents dignity, resilience and agency. These patterns only serve to entrench reductive stereotypes, even as they gloss over the structural and intersectional realities of childhood in milieu of poverty, caste and regional disparity. Even with the participatory possibilities these digital platforms provided, children's voices were still very much missing, and children's realities were articulated through adult lenses instead of through their own lived experiences. These findings echo larger anxieties echoed in the media and child rights literature regarding the ethical and political implications of "poverty porn," visual commodification and non-consensual storytelling. As we look ahead, it is critical that digital actors—from NGOs to government agencies to content creators to the public—take a rights-based, inclusive approach to content production. These representations must be informed by ethical practices that honor children's agency, identity, and human dignity rather than commodifying them into spectacles of pity. A healthier, more inclusive digital discourse is imperative to help catalyse the kind of informed public engagement and in turn, the policy interventions that will best protect and promote child welfare in our rapidly evolving digital age.

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**2**

# The Rebirth of Denmark's Soul as Kashmir's *Rooh:* A Comparative Reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet and* Bhardwaj's *Haider*

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Page No. 14- 18

**Abstract:** *Haider, directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, is a powerful and thoughtful reimagining of Shakespeare's classic tragedy Hamlet. The story takes place in Kashmir during the 1990s, a time when the region was undergoing a political turmoil, and emotional struggle for the local people. This paper is an attempt to explore the psychological unrest experienced by conflict zones like Kashmir and how Haider's tragic flaw (much like Hamlet's) is his overwhelming desire for vengeance, which causes him to lose his judgment and results in his destruction. The paper discusses how cinema acts as a stage to showcase the mental health of Kashmiris, which is often ignored by the social and political environment.*

*Keywords: - Haider, Hamlet, Shakespeare, Kashmir, Bhardwaj*

*Haider* is an Indian film directed by Vishal Bhardwaj who is known especially for his critically acclaimed adaptations of William Shakespeare's tragedies. He is celebrated for adapting Shakespearean plays into contemporary Indian socio-political context, making them more impactful and relatable for Indian audiences. *Haider* is an adaptation of Shakespeare's one of the most proclaimed plays, *Hamlet. It* is a classical English tragedy focused on personal and royal revenge by William Shakespeare. Both *Hamlet* and *Haider* share similar themes of betrayal, identity and grief, though they both are completely different in terms of political and historical context. Bhardwaj also made two more magnificent adaptations of William Shakespeare's tragedies; *Maqbool (Macbeth)* set in the Bombay underworld and *Omkara (Othello)* whose leading character is a half-caste criminal in the dirty heartland.

 *Haider* unfolds in present-day India, with its backdrop set in the tense and heavily militarized region of Kashmir. The film reflects real-life political struggles, shedding light on human rights violations, such as disappearances and military crackdowns, while portraying the deep emotional and psychological impact these conflicts have on ordinary lives. On the other hand, *Hamlet* is set in Denmark which was written during Elizabethan era in England around 1600. The play reflects the era's concerns with power, religion, and the nature of human existence.

We can observe that both *Haider* and *Hamlet* shares deep and similar psychological and philosophical ideas of existentialism, feminism and post colonialism. Both stories show how personal pain and problems in society can affect how people think and act.

**Comparative Study of Source and Setting**

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* endures as a masterful portrayal of grief, revenge, and moral ambiguity, written in the early 17th century. The play takes inspiration from older tales, such as the

medieval Danish story of Amleth, along with aspects of Renaissance revenge dramas, establishing it as a foundational work in Western literature.

In contrast, Bringing Shakespeare to the snow-cloaked valleys of Kashmir, Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* (2014) offers a hauntingly modern take on *Hamlet.* This adaptation places the story within the contemporary socio-political landscape of India, particularly Kashmir, while maintaining the essential themes found in the original play.

*Hamlet* is set in the Elsinore Castle of Denmark during a time that looks like the Middle Ages. Every castle holds the secrets, memories and mysteries which remain in the walls of the palace. It demonstrates the cold and dark atmosphere in the play which symbolises the castle's decay and captivity. On the other hand, *Haider* is set in Kashmir during the 1990s, when the region was full of violence and military conflict. The story shows how this troubled environment affects people's lives and mental health. In *Haider*, the setting plays a big role in showing the pain and fear caused by war and political issues. Bhardwaj used Kashmir not just as a backdrop, but as a character in itself, where the autumn season in the beginning of the film, signifies the end of the innocence and every snow-covered path echoes the silence, fear, numbness and violence central to both the plot and the setting. While *Hamlet* takes place in a fictional royal world that explores personal and emotional struggles, *Haider* is based in a real place with real problems, where personal pain is connected to the political situation around it.

## Psychological and Philosophical Thoughts (Existentialism)

The theme of existentialism is deeply woven into the narratives of both *Hamlet* and *Haider*, as each protagonist is caught in a struggle to understand life, identity, and the meaning of their actions in a world that seems chaotic and unjust. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the central character reflects on life's worth and the fear of the unknown after death, especially in his famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy. He is torn between the duty to avenge his father and his growing doubts about morality, justice, and the consequences of his choices. In a similar vein, *Haider* portrays a young man returning to conflict-torn Kashmir, where the disappearance of his father and the silence of his family push him into emotional and psychological turmoil. His need for revenge becomes tangled with questions about right and wrong, as he realizes that violence may not bring clarity or closure. This can be seen when he says, "*Hai ki hai nhi, bas yahi sawaal hai, aur sawaal ka jawaab bhi, sawaal hai*". It clearly signifies that Haider is confused whether to trust Roohdaar or Khurram's tale. He is torn between morality and justice. Both characters experience deep inner conflict, not just because of their personal losses, but also due to the larger, broken systems they are part of—royal politics in *Hamlet*, and militarized oppression in *Haider*. Ultimately, both stories reflect the existential idea that individuals are responsible for making choices in a world where meaning is not given, and that freedom often comes with isolation, confusion, and painful consequences.

## Female Characters as Victims and Catalysts in *Hamlet* and *Haider*

In both *Hamlet* and *Haider*, the female characters play significant roles, but their voices are often silenced or overshadowed by the actions and emotions of the male protagonists. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia is caught between her loyalty to her father and her love for Hamlet. She is manipulated by the men around her and is not given the freedom to express her own desires, which eventually leads to her mental breakdown and death. Her fate reflects how women were expected to obey without question, lacking agency over their own lives. Similarly, in *Haider*, Arshia, who mirrors Ophelia, is caught between her love for Haider and her role as the daughter of a police officer, Parvez Lone. She is torn by emotional conflict and, like Ophelia, faces tragedy without much control over her fate and shot herself. Arshia's act of unravelling the scarf before her death reflects her desire to undo the chain of events set into motion by Haider's

actions. This is because Arshia has knitted the scarf lovingly and later it was used by Haider to strangle Pervez. This shows how much oppressed women feel around men that they decide to accept death rather than facing the consequences of the decisions made by men which are more painful than death.

Ghazala, Haider's mother and the counterpart to Queen Gertrude, is portrayed with more complexity. Unlike Gertrude, Ghazala is more actively involved in the story's progression and makes significant choices, though her actions are still framed by her relationships with the men in her life. We can see this in the initial scenes of *Haider* where Ghazala showed hesitation in keeping the militants in the house, but Dr. Hilaal Meer decided to treat them. This decision highlights Hilal's deep commitment to his cause and his willingness to pursue revenge and resistance regardless of the personal risks or the emotional turmoil it causes to those around him. Both works highlight how women are often reduced to symbols or emotional triggers within male-driven narratives, reflecting broader feminist concerns about the lack of female agency, voice, and independence in both literature and society.

## Resistance and Trauma in militarized Settings

Both *Hamlet* and *Haider* can be read through a postcolonial lens, where colonial history and its aftereffects shape the characters' identities and actions. In *Hamlet*, Denmark's royal court, though not a direct representation of a colonized society, can be seen as a microcosm of colonial power struggles, where the throne becomes a symbol of dominion and control. Hamlet's indecision and internal conflict reflect the effects of a ruling power's corruption and the challenges faced by individuals in oppressive systems. On the other hand, *Haider* explicitly deals with the post conflict trauma of Kashmir, which has been caught between India and Pakistan's territorial tension. Haider struggles with his identity and the loss of his father are compounded by the socio-political violence of the region. The militarization, the forced disappearances, and resulting psychological damage represent the traumatic condition of Kashmir, where the state violence legacies have created long-lasting scars.

The film shows few instances where military excesses have been exercised in the valley due to which the common public also bore the brunt of it. In the film, Pervez shot the militants and exhibits it as an encounter. He confides in Khurram that, nowadays, a dead militant is worth one lakh rupees. The application of [Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act (AFSPA)](#) 1989 in the valley provides the armed forces special powers to ensure peace in the region. But, sometimes the provisions of law have been misused by the  few armed officials for various administrative, political and economic reasons. Cases like fake encounter have been reported in the valley. However, whenever such cases are reported, the armed forces have taken quick action against the accused by ensuring conviction of the same through their respective military tribunals and court martials.Therefore, Indian Armed Forces have always been our shield and protected us from every external enemy. They are the reason that there is a sense of peace in the valley and country as a whole.

Both works highlight the psychological turmoil and fractured identities that arise from conflicted societies, showing how both characters are shaped by the oppressive forces of their environments. While Hamlet hints at these ideas, Haider clearly shows the pain and problems faced by people living under political and military control. This can be seen by the ghost (Roohdaar) carrying the colonial memory of torture and loss. Roohdar's first appearance in the film was at the Cemetry which symbolises death, loss and trauma.

Roohdaar is the one who was with Haider's father in detention centre known as MAMA-II where one can feel death and suffering in every breathe. MAMA-II symbolises oppressive machinery of the state and the dark side of the law enforcement. It represents torture, loss and

death while being alive. There is this striking scene in the film where people of Kashmir got used to scrutinising so much that their mental state shuts the consciousness and works according to the power ruling in the territory. Roohdar is not just carrying his own grief but the collective anguish of the people around him.

## Flawed Path to Revenge in *Haider* and *Hamlet*

Every tragedy is a success when there is a tragic flaw in the protagonist which makes the tragedy more appealing by making an emotional connection with the audience. This is used as an essential element in classical and modern tragedies and is known as Hamartia. The protagonist is always of the high status or nobility due to which there is a wilful suspension of disbelief, and it makes the audience feel pity or fear which helps to deliver the message that even high nobility individuals can fall due to one wrong decision.

In *Haider,* the tragic flaw of the hero is his obsession with revenge. He is so dedicated in taking the revenge from his uncle Khurram that he doesn't even give a thought that there will be consequences of his actions which will swallow every loving being around him. In the film, Haider is shown as an educated and thoughtful young man, studying in Aligarh Muslim University before returning to Kashmir. He is knowledgeable, insightful and questions everything which has initially become his strength but eventually it has turned out to be his burden. Much like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Haider's educated mind leads him into deep philosophical struggles, making him think himself as a "rebel" caught between personal pain and political chaos. There is this famous line in *Haider,* "*Inteqaam se sirf inteqaam paida hota hai*". This means that revenge only breeds more revenge. It clearly demonstrates the endless cycle of violence in Kashmir and in Haider's personal life.

In *Hamlet* too, we can observe similar kind of tragic flaw in the protagonist where the hero is of the high nobility as he is the prince of Denmark. His status helps to give his decisions and choices a sense of credibility which are considered significant not only to himself but to his entire kingdom. This noble position fits the idea of a tragic hero—someone with a high rank whose downfall creates a strong emotional response of pity and fear in the audience. Hamlet was determined to seek the revenge from Claudius which resulted in losing his loved ones. He questions about life, death, mortality and existence. This shows that his downfall was not only due to the external enemies but there was an inner conflict going on within his mind.

## Conclusion

Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* offers more than a retelling of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—it reframes the tragedy within the complex realities of Kashmir. While both protagonists face emotional turmoil and a thirst for revenge, Haider's pain is shaped by real political violence and collective trauma. The film reveals how personal grief becomes inseparable from social conflict. By placing Shakespeare's timeless themes in a modern context, *Haider* gives new meaning to Hamlet's struggle, turning a royal dilemma into a story of human survival in a fractured land.

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# 3
## Digital practices in Cambodian EFL classrooms: Teacher Narratives from Remote Learning

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the transformation of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching practices in Cambodia during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on teacher narratives from both urban and rural contexts. Through a narrative-based review of peer-reviewed literature, government and non-governmental organization reports, and firsthand teacher testimonies produced between 2020 and 2024, the research explores how Cambodian educators adapted to digital instruction amid significant infrastructural limitations and socio-economic disparities. The study is guided by three interrelated theoretical frameworks: Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, narrative inquiry, and critical pedagogy. Findings reveal that digital competence among Cambodian teachers was not merely a matter of technological proficiency but rather a dynamic and context-sensitive process shaped by necessity, improvisation, and community collaboration. Urban teachers often blend online platforms such as Google Meet, YouTube, and social media, while rural educators employed low-tech approaches including radio instruction, mobile phone communication, and home-delivered worksheets. Teacher narratives illustrate innovation under constraint, emotional and professional resilience, and evolving pedagogical identities. These insights challenge deficit-based assumptions about teachers in developing countries and underscore the importance of participatory professional development, localized digital resources, and equitable policy frameworks. The study concludes that the future of English language education in Cambodia depends on sustained investment in teacher agency, culturally responsive pedagogy, and inclusive digital infrastructure that reflects the lived realities of classrooms across the country.*

**Keywords:** *Cambodian education; digital pedagogy; EFL teaching; teacher narratives; remote learning; COVID-19 education response*

## 1. Introduction
### 1.1 Background and Rationale

In recent decades, Cambodia's education system has undergone significant reform aimed at expanding access, improving quality, and aligning with regional and global development goals. English language education has emerged as a strategic priority in this process, seen as a key competency for regional integration within ASEAN, participation in global markets, and access to higher education and digital content (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2019; MoEYS, 2021). Within the Cambodian school system, English is taught from Grade 4 onward, with increasing emphasis placed on communicative skills and multimedia use. However, structural inequalities between urban and rural schools, a shortage of trained English teachers, and limited infrastructure have long posed challenges to equitable and effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction (Bredenberg, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic radically disrupted educational delivery across Cambodia. When schools closed nationwide in March 2020, educators were forced to transition abruptly to

remote learning with little to no preparation. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), in collaboration with NGOs and private partners, initiated various digital learning interventions, ranging from televised lessons and radio broadcasts to online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Telegram, and Facebook Live (Huot & Em, 2025; MoEYS, 2021). These interventions brought Cambodia's EFL educators into uncharted territory, where they had to integrate technology into their pedagogy, often without prior training or adequate digital infrastructure. For many Cambodian teachers, especially those in rural or resource-constrained settings, this shift was both a logistical and pedagogical challenge. It exposed long-standing disparities in access to devices, electricity, internet connectivity, and digital literacy. At the same time, the crisis catalysed innovation. Teachers improvised digital solutions, reconfigured lesson plans, and engaged with students and communities in new ways (Huot & Em, 2024; Ngel, 2022). The pandemic thus acted as both a stressor and a stimulus, revealing vulnerabilities while also igniting new forms of teacher agency and resilience.

Understanding how Cambodian EFL teachers navigated this transformation is vital for several reasons. First, it provides empirical insight into digital adaptation in the Global South, where most edtech research remains underrepresented (Selwyn, 2020). Second, it foregrounds teacher voices, a dimension often neglected in policy and research that prioritize top-down technological interventions. Third, it offers an opportunity to rethink post-pandemic pedagogical models that are not only technologically enabled but also contextually grounded and equity oriented.

## 1.2 Aims and Scope of the Review

This review aims to critically examine the digital practices adopted in Cambodian EFL classrooms during the remote learning period (2020–2023), with particular emphasis on teacher narratives as a lens for understanding pedagogical transformation. It synthesizes qualitative data from academic studies, NGO reports, and firsthand teacher testimonies, employing a narrative synthesis approach to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and innovations. Specifically, the review seeks to: (1) map the range of digital tools and pedagogical strategies employed by Cambodian EFL teachers during school closures, (2) capture and analyse teacher experiences, including emotional responses, creative adaptations, and professional learning, in transitioning to online and blended learning environments, and (3) assess how these experiences have influenced teacher beliefs, classroom practices, and pedagogical identities in the evolving educational landscape of post-COVID Cambodia. In doing so, this study positions Cambodian teachers not merely as users of educational technology, but as active agents of pedagogical change, whose lived experiences provide critical insights into sustainable, context-sensitive digital education models.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant relevance in the intersecting fields of digital education, teacher development, and language pedagogy, especially in the context of Southeast Asia. By foregrounding the narratives of Cambodian EFL teachers, the research contributes to a growing body of literature on localized digital pedagogies and educational equity in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Graham, 2021). It challenges dominant narratives of digital

**Literary Enigma**

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

transformation that often prioritize high-tech solutions over culturally grounded and human-centred practices. Moreover, the study aligns with global calls, such as UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, to centre teacher agency and community engagement in educational technology discourse. It provides actionable insights for policymakers, teacher educators, NGOs, and school leaders interested in building resilient, inclusive, and contextually appropriate digital learning ecosystems.

By documenting how Cambodian EFL teachers adapted under pressure, the study not only preserves valuable educational memory from a critical historical moment but also helps inform future training, policy, and research agendas that prioritize narrative inquiry, critical pedagogy, and localized innovation.

## 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The conceptual foundation of this study is informed by three interrelated frameworks: the TPACK model, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, narrative inquiry and teacher agency, and critical pedagogy with an emphasis on digital equity. Together, these frameworks offer a multi-dimensional lens for understanding how Cambodian EFL teachers navigated the sudden shift to digital instruction, adapted pedagogical strategies, and reflected on their evolving roles amid a crisis.

### 2.1 TPACK Framework (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge)

The TPACK model, originally developed by (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), provides a valuable framework for analysing how teachers integrate technology, pedagogy, and subject content in their instructional practice. In the context of remote English language teaching in Cambodia, the TPACK framework helps explain how teachers negotiated the dynamic interplay between digital tools (e.g., Zoom, Facebook Live), EFL pedagogy (e.g., communicative approaches), and content knowledge (e.g., grammar, vocabulary). During the pandemic, many Cambodian EFL teachers were introduced to technology under conditions of urgency and constraint, requiring them to experiment with and balance new platforms, traditional pedagogies, and curriculum requirements often without formal training (Bredenberg, 2022). TPACK supports the understanding that successful digital instruction is not solely about mastering tools but about aligning them with pedagogical goals and language learning objectives. This triadic knowledge system is particularly important in EFL contexts, where instructional efficacy depends on interactive engagement, visual/auditory learning modalities, and scaffolded language exposure, all of which must be adapted for online environments (Koehler et al., 2014). The TPACK model also foregrounds contextual adaptability, making it suitable for analysing how teachers in rural vs. urban Cambodia employed different digital strategies depending on access to infrastructure, student needs, and community resources.

### 2.2 Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Agency

The second theoretical strand draws from narrative inquiry, which values teacher stories as legitimate and insightful forms of educational knowledge. Narrative inquiry, as articulated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is rooted in the belief that teachers make sense of their professional lives through the telling and retelling of their experiences. These stories offer

access to teacher identity, emotional labour, pedagogical innovation, and the broader socio-political structures that frame classroom practice.

In the Cambodian EFL context, teacher narratives serve not only as accounts of instructional adaptation but also as acts of agency and resilience during a time of global uncertainty. Amid infrastructure deficits, pedagogical uncertainty, and professional isolation, many teachers demonstrated remarkable creativity and moral commitment, designing low-tech solutions, reaching out to families, and experimenting with new forms of student engagement (Huot & Em, 2024; Ngel, 2022). These stories provide qualitative data that illuminate how teachers positioned themselves as facilitators, content curators, and emotional anchors in digital classrooms. Furthermore, narrative inquiry recognizes that teachers in postcolonial and developing contexts often operate under systemic constraints, yet they exercise agency through improvisation, reflection, and community-oriented thinking, dimensions that are not always captured in traditional education research (Barkhuizen, 2011; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007).

## 2.3 Critical Pedagogy and Digital Equity

The third framework draws on principles from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2025) particularly as they relate to digital equity, access, and inclusion. Critical pedagogy emphasizes that education is inherently political, and that learners and educators must be empowered to question and transform unequal structures. In the digital realm, this involves asking who has access to technology, what content is available, and whose voices are being amplified or silenced.

Cambodia's rapid shift to online learning during COVID-19 revealed stark digital divides, between urban and rural schools, private and public institutions, and teachers with varying levels of digital literacy (Chea et al., 2022; Huot et al., 2025). Critical pedagogy enables this study to go beyond descriptive accounts of technological usage and interrogate the power dynamics, systemic inequities, and cultural assumptions embedded in digital education. It also offers a lens through which to evaluate the relevance of digital tools to learners lived realities, particularly in rural areas where electricity, stable internet, and digital devices remain scarce. Teachers in these settings often responded by developing low-tech or hybrid pedagogies, such as delivering worksheets via motorbike, teaching via phone calls, or using radio broadcasts. These practices, though often overlooked in edtech discourse, represent radical forms of context-responsive pedagogy rooted in empathy, community engagement, and cultural knowledge.

By applying critical pedagogy, this study highlights the need for digital education policies that are not only technically efficient but also socially just, linguistically inclusive, and culturally grounded as depicted in table 1.

**Table 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Guiding the Study**

| No. | Framework | Core Focus | Application to the Study |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | TPACK (Technological Pedagogical | Integration of technology, pedagogy, and | Used to understand how Cambodian EFL teachers balanced digital tools (e.g., Zoom), |

| No. | Framework | Core Focus | Application to the Study |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|
|  | Content Knowledge) | content knowledge in teaching. | pedagogical methods, and English content during remote instruction. |
| 2. | Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Agency | Emphasizes teacher identity, reflection, and agency through storytelling. | Captures teacher experiences during the pandemic, highlighting improvisation, emotional resilience, and professional growth. |
| 3. | Critical Pedagogy and Digital Equity | Focuses on power, access, and inclusion in education. | Used to analyze digital divides, urban-rural, infrastructure gaps, and culturally relevant responses to tech challenges in Cambodia. |

## 3. Methodology of the Review

This study adopts a narrative review methodology to examine how Cambodian EFL teachers adapted to digital instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Rather than conducting a systematic review or meta-analysis with quantitative metrics, this approach emphasizes qualitative synthesis, contextual richness, and attention to teacher narratives as lived experiences. The goal is to understand not only what digital tools and practices were used, but also how teachers experienced, interpreted, and transformed their pedagogical identities through technology.

### 3.1 Scope and Inclusion Criteria

This review focuses exclusively on literature and testimonies that capture EFL, teaching and digital learning practices in Cambodia between 2020 and 2024, a period that includes the onset of COVID-19 school closures, the transition to remote instruction, and the early phases of post-pandemic educational recovery. The inclusion criteria were defined across four dimensions. First, the geographic scope is limited to sources that specifically address the Cambodian educational context, ensuring cultural and systemic relevance. Second, the temporal frame requires that all materials be published, collected, or disseminated between March 2020 and February 2024, to ensure that findings reflect the dynamics of pandemic-era and immediate post-pandemic instructional realities. Third, the topical relevance of the sources includes focus areas such as EFL pedagogy, digital technology integration, teacher experiences, instructional equity, and pedagogical adaptations related to the COVID-19 crisis.

Finally, the type of source considered eligible includes peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, government and NGO reports, and firsthand teacher narratives, whether published through formal academic platforms or featured in practitioner networks and local educational media. Sources were excluded from the review if they lacked methodological clarity, did not specifically address EFL instruction, or treated digital transformation in Cambodia solely at a policy level without direct attention to classroom-level experiences or pedagogical implications. This ensures that the review remains grounded in both empirical rigor and the lived realities of Cambodian teachers.

### 3.2 Sources and Databases

The data corpus for this review was developed through a comprehensive, multi-source strategy that integrated both academic literature and grey literature to ensure breadth and contextual relevance. Searches were conducted across a range of platforms and institutional repositories to capture diverse perspectives and documentation on digital EFL teaching in Cambodia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Peer-reviewed academic studies and open-access articles were retrieved through Google Scholar, focusing on topics related to Cambodian education, EFL pedagogy, and technology integration. The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) was also used to identify research specific to digital learning, English language instruction, and teacher development in Southeast Asia. In addition, ASEAN regional research databases were consulted to access comparative education studies and policy analyses relevant to digital transformation across the region. To obtain government and institutional perspectives, the review incorporated documents from the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), including policy briefs, national COVID-19 response plans, and evaluation studies of remote teaching initiatives (MoEYS, 2020). A significant portion of the literature also came from NGO publications, particularly from organizations such as World Education Cambodia, The Asia Foundation, and Room to Read, which have played active roles in supporting EFL and digital capacity-building efforts at the grassroots level.

Finally, media sources and teacher networks were included to access narrative accounts, interviews, and blog reflections published by or about Cambodian EFL teachers. These sources provided authentic, first-person insights into the practical challenges and innovations experienced during the rapid shift to online learning. This blended approach enabled the inclusion of both formal empirical research and context-rich, grassroots narratives, resulting in a more holistic and grounded understanding of the Cambodian EFL teaching landscape during and after the pandemic.

## 3.3 Narrative Synthesis Approach

To analyse the gathered materials, the study employs a narrative synthesis methodology as outlined by Popay et al. (2006) and expanded by Greenhalgh et al. (2018). This approach is well-suited to education research that seeks to synthesize findings from diverse qualitative sources without reducing complexity. The analysis followed three key steps:

1. **Thematic Coding:** All textual data were read and manually coded using inductive thematic analysis. Codes were generated around common experiences, tools used, pedagogical shifts, emotional responses, equity challenges, and expressions of agency. Coding was iterative and interpretive, allowing themes to emerge and evolve through immersion in the data.

2. **Cross-source Synthesis:** The coded narratives and studies were compared across types of institutions (e.g., public vs. private schools), geographies (e.g., urban vs. rural), and teaching conditions (e.g., synchronous vs. asynchronous instruction). This enabled the identification of both recurring themes and contextual contrasts.

3. **Interpretive Integration:** Emergent themes were organized into overarching categories, such as innovation under constraint, emotional resilience, evolving digital pedagogy, and concerns around equity and assessment. These categories were then

**Literary Enigma**
*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

interpreted in dialogue with the study's theoretical frameworks, particularly narrative inquiry and critical pedagogy.

The narrative synthesis approach enabled the research to preserve the voice, complexity, and emotion embedded in teacher testimonies, while drawing out patterns and insights that speak to broader educational questions in Cambodia and similar contexts.

## 4. Digital Practices in Cambodian EFL Classrooms: A Review of Literature

### 4.1 Pre-Pandemic Digital Infrastructure and Pedagogy

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia's digital education infrastructure was characterized by limited technological access, minimal training opportunities for teachers, and a heavily textbook-oriented instructional model. English language teaching followed a traditional, grammar-translation approach in most public schools, with a strong reliance on printed materials and blackboard instruction (Bredenberg, 2022; MoEYS, 2020). Digital integration in classrooms was sporadic, largely confined to elite urban institutions and donor-supported pilot projects. Surveys conducted by UNESCO and the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) prior to 2020 reported that only 35% of public-school teachers had received any form of ICT training, and fewer still had regular access to computers or internet connectivity within their schools (UNESCO, 2020). This created a substantial digital preparedness gap that would soon be exposed during the emergency shift to online learning.

### 4.2 Transition to Remote Learning During COVID-19

The closure of schools in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a nationwide transition to remote learning, facilitated by rapid policy responses and cross-sector collaboration. MoEYS, in partnership with international donors and NGOs, launched emergency digital learning programs that utilized a wide range of tools, including Zoom, Google Meet, Telegram, Facebook Live, and radio or television broadcasts (Chea et al., 2022; MoEYS, 2021).

Teaching models ranged from synchronous online classes using video conferencing, mostly in urban and private schools, to asynchronous modes in rural areas, where lessons were delivered through pre-recorded videos or mobile messaging platforms due to bandwidth limitations. NGOs such as World Education Cambodia, The Asia Foundation, and Room to Read were instrumental in training teachers, distributing tablets, and developing Khmer-language digital resources. However, this transition was not uniform. While some schools and teachers quickly adapted, others, especially in rural provinces, struggled due to lack of infrastructure, training, and support. The transition revealed deep structural inequalities, even as it fostered experimentation with new forms of digital pedagogy (Huot & Em, 2024; Ngel, 2022).

### 4.3 Common Tools and Platforms Used in EFL Instruction

The literature reveals a diverse range of digital tools and platforms used in Cambodian EFL classrooms during remote learning. Mobile learning emerged as the most accessible form of digital education, especially given the widespread use of smartphones among both teachers and students. Messaging apps like Telegram and Facebook Messenger were used to distribute assignments, share audio files, and facilitate teacher-student interaction in informal but effective ways (Huot & Em, 2024). For schools with stronger digital access, platforms such as Zoom,

Google Classroom, YouTube, and Kahoot! were utilized to conduct interactive lessons, distribute content, and assess student understanding. YouTube was particularly valuable for delivering pronunciation and listening exercises, while Facebook Live enabled teachers to livestream lessons for larger groups of learners, often reaching beyond their enrolled classrooms. These tools were often combined in blended or hybrid models, tailored to local conditions. For example, some teachers used Zoom for real-time lessons, followed by Telegram for homework submission and Facebook for feedback or motivational messages, a creative merging of high-tech and low-tech tools to meet varied learner needs.

### 4.4 Pedagogical Shifts in Teaching and Learning English

The shift to digital platforms necessitated significant pedagogical reorientation, prompting teachers to adopt new practices and competencies. One key change was the focus on developing digital literacies, both for students, who had to learn to navigate virtual learning environments, and for teachers, who had to transition from content deliverers to facilitators, content curators, and digital communicators (Bredenberg, 2022). English instruction during remote learning increasingly emphasized listening, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition using multimedia formats. Teachers used videos, audio clips, and online games to engage students and compensate for the lack of face-to-face interaction. These strategies were especially critical for beginner learners, who relied heavily on auditory and visual input to build foundational skills. Importantly, remote learning also encouraged more student-centred practices, such as project-based learning and peer feedback through group chats or recorded presentations. While these approaches were unevenly adopted, they marked a departure from traditional rote-based instruction and introduced opportunities for more interactive, communicative, and autonomous learning.

### 4.5 Technological Challenges

Despite these innovations, Cambodian EFL teachers faced persistent and well-documented technological challenges. A major barrier was the lack of consistent access to electricity, internet connectivity, and digital devices, particularly in rural provinces. According to (MoEYS, 2021), nearly 30% of students in public schools lacked access to a smartphone or tablet, and many teachers reported having to borrow equipment or share devices with family members. Digital skill disparities further compounded these challenges. Teachers with limited ICT training often struggled with basic troubleshooting, online classroom management, and digital content creation, leading to increased stress and decreased instructional confidence (Chea et al., 2022). Urban teachers generally had greater exposure to technology, more support networks, and better infrastructure, resulting in a significant urban-rural divide in digital readiness and student outcomes. Additionally, the lack of clear assessment strategies and limited ability to monitor student progress online led to concerns about learning loss and educational inequality(Huot & Em, 2024). Teachers reported difficulties in maintaining engagement, ensuring attendance, and differentiating instruction in digital spaces, issues that remain unresolved in many schools entering the post-pandemic period.

### 5. Teacher Narratives: Insights from the Field

The heart of this review lies in the lived experiences of Cambodian EFL teachers who were thrust into unfamiliar digital teaching environments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on teacher testimonies from both urban and rural areas, this section presents case narratives and thematic reflections that illuminate the complexity, creativity, and resilience that characterized their responses. The accounts provide rich qualitative data that go beyond policy documentation, revealing how educators navigated uncertainty, adapted to new tools, and reshaped their pedagogical identities in the process.

### 5.1 Case Narratives from Urban Classrooms

In urban settings, many EFL teachers were able to adapt relatively quickly to remote learning, supported by better access to internet infrastructure, institutional guidance, and peer collaboration. Teachers working in public schools and private language centres in Phnom Penh and other cities described initial difficulties with digital unfamiliarity, but noted that school-based support structures, including ICT staff and in-house training sessions, facilitated their transition. A recurring theme was the use of blended digital tools, teachers combined formal platforms like Google Meet or Zoom for synchronous sessions with more accessible tools such as Facebook groups, Messenger, and Telegram for asynchronous engagement.

One urban secondary school teacher reported, "*My students would not log into Zoom consistently, but they were active on Facebook. So, I recorded my grammar explanations and posted them there.*" Such hybrid strategies reflect a pragmatic and student-centred approach, optimizing engagement within the limits of students' digital habits and technological capacity. Teachers also described informal peer-learning networks, where colleagues shared video tutorials, lesson templates, and emotional support. These narratives point to the role of collegial solidarity and bottom-up innovation in shaping successful adaptation, especially in the early stages of remote teaching.

### 5.2 Case Narratives from Rural Classrooms

In contrast, rural educators faced substantial challenges in transitioning to digital instruction. Teachers in provinces such as Kampong Thom, Prey Veng, and Ratanakiri frequently cited poor internet connectivity, lack of devices among students, and absence of formal ICT training. Yet, their responses highlight profound creativity and local resilience. Many teachers turned to low-tech or no-tech solutions, such as delivering worksheets via motorbike, conducting lessons through phone calls, or recording short audio lessons broadcast through local radio stations. These methods were often community-supported, with parents and village leaders assisting in the coordination and distribution of learning materials.

One rural primary teacher described, "*I couldn't rely on Zoom, but I used my mobile phone to call groups of students. Sometimes, I had to go to their homes and explain the homework in person.*" These strategies underscore the communitarian ethos of rural Cambodian education, where the boundary between school and village dissolves, and teaching becomes a shared responsibility. Teacher narratives from these contexts illustrate how pedagogical adaptation was deeply rooted in local knowledge, resourcefulness, and care-driven practice, even in the absence of formal technology.

### 5.3 Themes Emerging from Teacher Voices

Across both urban and rural contexts, several core themes consistently emerged from teacher narratives. The first is innovation under constraint. Teachers demonstrated remarkable digital improvisation, repurposing platforms such as Facebook Messenger for instruction, using mobile data to conduct lessons, and finding ways to sustain learning continuity despite severe limitations. Secondly, the narratives reveal emotional and professional resilience. Many teachers spoke candidly about anxiety, burnout, and self-doubt during the early transition to online teaching. Yet, they also expressed growth in confidence, new digital skills, and a sense of achievement in overcoming adversity. This duality of stress and empowerment reflects the emotional labour involved in sustaining student engagement under unprecedented conditions. A third theme is the evolution of teacher identity. The shift to remote learning prompted many educators to reconceptualize their roles, not merely as instructors, but as facilitators, content creators, and technological mediators. Teachers described themselves producing videos, managing chat groups, and moderating online discussions, functions that extended their traditional duties and introduced new forms of pedagogical agency.

Finally, the narratives expressed persistent concerns about learning loss and assessment. Teachers reported difficulties in monitoring student progress, assessing oral skills online, and ensuring attendance, especially among disadvantaged students. The lack of standardized tools and digital assessment literacy further complicated efforts to measure learning outcomes during remote instruction. These stories collectively suggest that while digital transition in Cambodia was uneven and fraught with systemic challenges, it also became a transformative moment for many teachers. Their narratives reflect not only adaptive survival, but also a redefinition of pedagogy, technology, and professional purpose in the evolving landscape of Cambodian EFL education.

## 6. Discussion and Recommendations

The teacher narratives and reviewed literature in this study underscore not only the constraints of remote learning in Cambodia but also the creativity, resilience, and pedagogical innovation that emerged during a period of crisis. These insights call for a reframing of digital competence, a reimagining of teacher training, greater attention to digital equity, and long-term strategies for sustaining innovation. The following discussion highlights key findings and offers actionable recommendations for educational stakeholders:

1. Digital competence in Cambodia should not be measured solely by access to advanced tools or formal certification. Instead, it must be recognized as a context-sensitive and adaptive process, evolving through necessity, peer support, and local ingenuity. Cambodian EFL teachers demonstrated the ability to leverage familiar platforms, such as Facebook, Telegram, and YouTube, to deliver instruction in ways that were accessible to their students. This challenges deficit-based views and emphasizes pedagogical improvisation and relational knowledge as key components of digital literacy in resource-constrained environments. Policymaker should invest in scalable infrastructure, including affordable data plans, solar-powered devices, and rural internet access, while also supporting the creation of localized digital curricula that integrate Khmer language and culturally relevant examples.

**Literary Enigma**

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

2. The digital divide between Cambodia's urban and rural schools remains stark. Unequal access to electricity, mobile devices, and the internet continues to impede inclusive learning. Equity must extend beyond access to include linguistic inclusion and pedagogical relevance. The schools and NGOs should foster teacher communities of practice to exchange context-appropriate digital strategies and co-create materials. NGOs can act as bridging institutions, localizing edtech tools and supporting Khmer-language content development.

3. The shift to remote learning catalysed a transformation in teacher identity, from instructor to facilitator, content creator, and tech mediator. Many teachers have continued to apply blended strategies, such as using Telegram for feedback or YouTube for homework, even after returning to physical classrooms. These hybrid practices present opportunities for long-term reform grounded in blended learning and community-based knowledge systems. Researchers should conduct qualitative and participatory studies that examine teacher experiences, emotional labour, and innovation across diverse Cambodian contexts. Research should explore gender dynamics, linguistic diversity, and the sustainability of grassroots approaches to digital pedagogy.

This study underscores the limitations of top-down, one-off digital training initiatives and emphasizes the value of peer-led, narrative-driven professional development as a more effective and sustainable model. Cambodian EFL teachers adapted to remote instruction not solely through formal workshops, but through storytelling, informal peer exchanges, and collaborative problem-solving rooted in their own teaching communities. These experiences point to the need for a fundamental shift in teacher education, toward participatory training models that center teacher agency, foster reflective storytelling, and provide ongoing mentorship. Such training should also incorporate critical digital pedagogy, enabling educators to evaluate the ethical, cultural, and equity-related implications of their technology use.

In sum, Cambodia's adaptive and locally grounded response to remote EFL instruction during the pandemic presents a compelling blueprint for equitable, culturally responsive, and teacher-driven digital transformation. By recognizing educators as innovators and anchoring reform efforts in the lived realities of classrooms, Cambodia is well-positioned to build a resilient and inclusive English language education system for the digital age.

## 7. Conclusion

The unprecedented shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a profound transformation in Cambodia's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy. What began as a crisis response quickly evolved into a period of experimentation, adaptation, and pedagogical reinvention. Teachers across both urban and rural Cambodia demonstrated remarkable agility in navigating technological limitations, rethinking classroom roles, and reshaping instructional delivery in ways that were grounded in local realities and student needs. This study has shown that remote learning was not merely a temporary disruption but a

transformative force that reshaped how Cambodian educators understand teaching, technology, and their own professional identities. From using low-tech methods like phone calls and radio broadcasts in rural areas to integrating hybrid models with tools like Google Meet, Facebook, and Telegram in urban schools, teachers embraced a diverse range of strategies. These practices reflected not only technological adaptation but also deep care, ingenuity, and a commitment to inclusive education.

Central to this transformation were the narratives of teachers themselves. Their voices provided essential insight into the lived complexities of digital pedagogy, revealing not only logistical challenges, but also emotional labour, pedagogical creativity, and professional growth. These stories offer more than anecdotal evidence; they are critical sources of knowledge that illuminate how innovation and resilience emerge under constraint. They also expose persistent gaps in infrastructure, digital equity, and training support, underscoring the need for sustained context-sensitive interventions.

As Cambodia moves beyond emergency education measures and toward long-term reform, it is imperative that policy, training, and research initiatives remain grounded in the realities of those who teach on the front lines. Sustainable digital transformation in education cannot be built on imported models or high-tech solutions alone, it must be rooted in community engagement, local knowledge, and teacher agency.

In conclusion, the future of EFL education in Cambodia depends not only on infrastructure and tools but on recognizing and empowering the teachers who are already innovating from within their classrooms and communities. Their stories are both testimony and roadmap, pointing the way toward a more equitable, responsive, and resilient digital education landscape.

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**4**

## Exploring the Intersection of Beauty, Oppression, and Retaliation in Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*

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*Abstract: Discrimination on the basis of skin complexion, domestic violence, and emotional and physical abuse are deeply rooted and affect women in several ways all around the globe. This paper explores various forms of oppression, their impact on the author Tehmina Durrani, and the coping mechanisms used by her for resistance and regaining the sense of self-worth in her autobiographical account My Feudal Lord. It examines Durrani's book My Feudal Lord using qualitative content analysis and feminist theory highlighting the themes of discrimination, objectification, abuse, patriarchy, and retaliation. This research paper investigates how Tehmina Durrani, a well-known Pakistani author, had a neglected and unpleasant childhood due to her skin colour caused by her mother. In addition, recurrent incidences of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her husband Mustafa Khar resulted in depression, disappointment and suicidal thoughts in Tehmina Durrani. Hence, the book not only portrays how men mistreat women, but also demonstrates how a woman contributes to the misery of another, and in this case, it is a mother who does so to her own daughter. This paper examines Durrani's journey, which highlights the various forms of oppression women experience in rigid patriarchal and feudal societies. Her decision to write an autobiography is an effort to break the silence, resist oppression, establish her own identity, and empower others.*

*Keywords: Abuse, discrimination, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, retaliation*

## Introduction

Tehmina Durrani's influential autobiographical account *My Feudal Lord* is an exploration of her multifaceted experiences such as discrimination on the basis of skin colour, domestic violence, and abuse. This paper aims at examining the societal norms of beauty, oppression, and resistance experienced by the author. It explores how social norms of beauty contributed to the well-known Pakistani author Tehmina Durrani's neglected and unpleasant childhood caused by her mother Samina Durrani. It also tells us about how she was the victim of domestic violence, oppression, and abuse after her marriage with a prominent politician Ghulam Mustafa Khar, and her subsequent efforts for resistance. This paper analyses the various forms of oppression experienced by Tehmina Durrani and the various coping mechanisms that she used to resist the same, such as initially silence as a survival strategy to avoid provoking further abuse, thereafter, raising voice against oppression, efforts to seek the support of parents, several attempts to file for legal separation, and ultimately her decision to write the autobiography for breaking the silence and for creating awareness about such issues in the society.

## Literature Review

Great deal of research has been done on Tehmina Durrani's book *My Feudal Lord*. Numerous research papers have been published on the book. Zakia Naeem's paper titled "Land, Woman

and Lord: An Ecofeminist Study of Tehmina Durrani's Novels *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy*" in Kashf Journal of Multidisciplinary Research is the latest one as it was published this year. Humaira Riaz's paper "Caught in a Feudal Hang-Up: *My Feudal Lord* Mirroring a Villain and the Rebellion of a Pakistani Woman" was published in the book titled "Performativity of Villainy and Evil in Anglophone Literature and Media" in 2021. But there are gaps in research on the selected book with regard to societal standards of beauty, especially discrimination on the basis of skin complexion and also silence as a survival strategy. The researcher will try to address the gaps by examining the social norms of beauty in Pakistan and how they contributed to the author's miserable plight during her childhood especially due to her mother's obsession with those norms. This research will also discuss how the author employed silence as a coping mechanism for a long time to prohibit abuse and finally broke the silence by writing an autobiography.

**Research Methodology**

This research uses qualitative content analysis focusing on close textual analysis, thematic analysis, contextual analysis, and feminist theory to examine Tehmina Durrani's autobiographical account *My Feudal Lord*.

**Objectives of the Research**

1. To examine the concept of beauty portrayed in the book *My Feudal Lord* and how it contributes to the author's miserable plight
2. To analyse the various forms of oppression experienced by the author Tehmina Durrani
3. To explore the various coping mechanisms used by the author for resistance, self-empowerment, and social empowerment

**Research questions**

1. What are the various forms of oppression in Tehmina Durrani's book *My Feudal Lord*?
2. What is the impact of oppression on the author Tehmina Durrani?
3. What are the various coping strategies used by the author for resistance, self-healing, for establishing her identity, and regaining the sense of self-worth?

**Discussion:**

**Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*: An Account of Discrimination, Oppression, Retaliation, and Empowerment**

Tehmina Durrani depicts the various types of oppression she endured in her autobiographical account *My Feudal Lord* (1991). She was subjected to colour discrimination caused by her own mother throughout her childhood, which had a significant impact on her self-esteem. It is clearly evident when the author tells readers about her mother, "Almost every word and action indicated her preference for her white-skinned children, (…) Rubina, Zarmina and I – the darker daughters – never seemed able to please her."[1] It is also relevant to state the example of Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* here as it portrays the similar predicament of an African-American girl Pecola Breedlove and describes how she was neglected and hated by her own parents and was an easy target of public humiliation due to her dark skin complexion.[2] With regard to identity crisis, Durrani says, "Looking back, I realize that we were being raised to be schizophrenic; an appearance of perfection was more important than genuine feelings. There

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[1] Durrani, Tehmina, Hoffer, William & Marilyn. *My Feudal Lord*. Corgi Books, RHUK, 1995, pp. 25.
[2] Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. Vintage, 1999.

was no question of discovering oneself. Identity and individuality were crushed."[3] Her unpleasant and oppressive childhood caused by her mother resulted into her impulsive decision to marry Anees Khan at a very early age. This was not a suitable match as per her mother's expectations. She was expected to marry a prosperous Muslim from a respectable family, bear him many children and lead a sheltered life of leisure.[4]

When the author decided to marry Mustafa Khar, her friend warned her that his love was superficial and also said, "He just loves you because you look good." (…) You dress well. You're good for his image. Once he sees you with curlers or with night cream slapped on your face he won't love you. He likes the package – not the reality."[5] Khar's wife Sherry had also warned her about his violent and abusive nature. But Tehmina Durrani felt that he met all the wrong women previously, therefore he abandoned them; she is his perfect wife who will never be abandoned or abused by him. The author's parents took her to the psychiatrist for counselling and to get convinced why she should not marry Mustafa Khar as they were against this marriage. But those efforts were also futile as the psychiatrist told them that "Mustafa is a professional seducer. Your daughter is a victim."[6] Finally, Tehmina Durrani married Khar in 1976. After marriage, he promised her sincerely as, "Tehmina, you must never fear me. You must talk to me about everything, whenever you want to. I'll always love you and be kind to you."[7]

The author exposes various facets of the character of her husband Mustafa Khar, a feudal lord and a prominent politician from Pakistan. She describes him as, "There is a fantasy of a feudal lord as an exotic, tall, dark and handsome man, with flashing eyes and traces of quick-tempered gypsy blood. He is seen as a passionate ladies' man and something of a rough diamond, the archetypal male chauvinist who forces a woman to love him despite his treatment of her."[8] After getting married with Khar, Durrani dreamt of a fairytale life which soon turned into a nightmare. She says, "There was not a day that Mustafa did not hit me for some reason (…) I just tried my best not to provoke him. (…) This was a feudal hang-up: his class believed that a woman was an instrument of a man's carnal pleasure."[9] She recounts, "Women were his obvious victims. He was out to destroy us."[10] "I had fallen into the classic trap of the Pakistani woman. The goal is marriage and, once achieved, the future is a life of total subordination. I had no power, no rights, no will of my own."[11]

She endured severe physical and emotional abuse all through her marriage to Mustafa Khar, which worsened it and drew attention to the harsh reality of domestic violence. After marrying Mustafa Khar, intense physical abuse and exploitation resulted into depression, disappointment, and suicidal thoughts. Due to Mustafa Khar's prominent political position, it was extremely difficult for her to seek justice or support. She could not go back to her parents because she had married against their wish and in fact they were against separation or divorce for that matter. She expresses her parents' opinion on marriage as, "If a husband turned out to be a brute, it was the wife's duty to persevere until she changed his character. A broken

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[3] Durrani, Tehmina, Hoffer, William & Marilyn. *My Feudal Lord*. Corgi Books, RHUK, 1995, pp. 29-30.

[4] Ibid

[5] Ibid, pp. 79-80.

[6] Ibid, pp. 6.

[7] Ibid, pp. 80.

[8] Ibid, Author's Note, pp.5.

[9] Durrani, Tehmina, Hoffer, William & Marilyn. *My Feudal Lord*. Corgi Books, RHUK, 1995, pp. 106.

[10] Ibid, pp. 95.

[11] Ibid, pp. 100.

marriage was a reflection of a woman's failure."[12] Furthermore, social oppression contributed to her miserable plight. This is evident when society ostracised her when she got legally separated from him. The tragic account of Durrani exposes the numerous forms of oppression that women endure in societies that are rigidly patriarchal.

When it comes to discussing Durrani's resistance or retaliation, it is relevant to quote the author here, "When I decided to write this book, I was aware of the perils of exposing the details of my private life to a male-dominated Muslim society. But I had to cast aside my personal considerations in favour of the greater good."[13] She wanted to create awareness among women that they need to raise voice against oppression. She gives an important message to the readers through her autobiographical account when she says, "Silence condones injustice, breeds subservience and fosters a malignant hypocrisy. Mustafa Khar and other feudal lords thrive and multiply on silence. Muslim women must learn to raise their voice against injustice."[14] Tehmina Durrani's turbulent relationship with Mustafa Khar reached its limit when she started resisting and with unflinching determination, she confronted him and said, "Mustafa, I've taken enough. There's no reason for me to take any more. (…) I'm not your sister or mother. I am your wife. I am not bound to you by ties of blood. We have a contract to live together. I can tear that up whenever I feel like it. Get that into your head. Learn to respect me and appreciate my living with you. (…) You correct your ways and make our lives worth living – or I am leaving."[15] She made strong statements about her self-respect.

However, Khar reacted harshly, dismissively and without regret to her after divorce, "Tehmina, you are nothing any more. Once you were Begum Tehmina Mustafa Khar. Now you are just Tehmina Durrani."[16] This rejection did not weaken the author; on the contrary, it strengthened her conviction. She revealed the reality of her suffering and raised her voice through her book. After writing the autobiography, she said to him, "Well, Mustafa, now the world will soon know you only as Tehmina Durrani's ex-husband."[17] This paper applies feminist theory to examine the intersection of female oppression and resistance within a patriarchal and feudal setting in the book *My Feudal Lord.* If Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* is applied to *My Feudal Lord*, it becomes evident how Tehmina Durrani's book subverts patriarchal discourse in both form and content. Simone de Beauvoir's proclamation "One is not born, but becomes, a woman" and her expression regarding a woman as the "Other" are highly relevant while examining Durrani's predicament in patriarchal society. The concept of 'subaltern' from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) is also relevant here. Though Tehmina Durrani is from an affluent family, she is silenced in a patriarchal and feudal society. It is said that subalterns cannot speak, as they are always silenced. Durrani did not raise her voice for a long time, but finally, after suffering for several years, she raises her voice against oppression.

Kate Millett has discussed the notion of 'sexual politics' comprehensively in her book "Sexual Politics" (1970). This notion helps us to understand personal as political in Durrani's book *My Feudal Lord*. Durrani's marriage to Ghulam Mustafa Khar serves as an example of how political power contributes to gender oppression, as she endures intense emotional and physical

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[12] Ibid, pp. 29.

[13] Ibid, pp. 5.

[14] Ibid, pp. 375.

[15] Ibid, pp. 188-189.

[16] Ibid, pp. 373-374.

[17] Durrani, Tehmina, Hoffer, William & Marilyn. *My Feudal Lord*. Corgi Books, RHUK, 1995, pp. 382.

abuse. Her husband Mustafa Khar's abusive and violent behaviour is not simply personal anguish for her, but it is an example of systemic oppression against women. A critical examination of Durrani's book from the point of view of feminist theory reveals how patriarchy was deeply ingrained in Pakistani society at that time. Through in-depth textual analysis, the methodology reveals how Durrani raises her voice against objectification of women and also against their subjugation while regaining her sense of self-worth and creating her unique identity. Durrani's book is a harsh critique of patriarchy, domestic violence, colourism, and feudal power, which makes it more than just an autobiography. Her autobiographical writing is a form of retaliation reflecting Simone de Beauvoir's belief that women can achieve existential freedom by defining themselves and rejecting repressive social norms.

**Findings**

Based on methodology, objectives and the analysis of the book *My Feudal Lord*, significant findings can be stated as below:

An important but often neglected aspect in the book is discrimination based on skin tone, also known as colourism which was the early experience of oppression for Tehmina Durrani. Fair skin complexion as the notion of beauty is ingrained in the author's mother, therefore, she favoured her fair-complexioned children more than the darker ones causing Tehmina Durrani to suffer throughout her childhood due to discrimination.

Lack of parental love is another important aspect in the book which has not been highlighted much. The absence of mother's care, concern, and love resulted into the loss of self-esteem in Tehmina Durrani and was also responsible for why she tolerated abuse in the later part of her life. Her father loved her but could not shower love upon her due to his wife's dominating nature.

Her mother had internalised social norms of beauty so much that she neglected her own daughter Tehmina who had dark skin complexion. Thus, the book not only depicts the oppression of women by men, but it also shows how a woman exploits another woman, and in fact, here it is a mother who inflicts it upon her own daughter. Hence, we may say that her unpleasant childhood forms the basis for her future subjugation to Mustafa Khar. It is noteworthy to see that in order to put a full stop to her suffering, raise voice against oppression, and to establish her identity, the author wrote an autobiography.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, it can be said that Tehmina Durrani skilfully explores the subtle relationship between beauty, oppression, and resistance within a patriarchal and feudal setting in her autobiographical account *My Feudal Lord*. She achieves the sense of self-worth and transforms her identity beyond predefined roles by uncovering the abusive circumstances surrounding her marriage to Mustafa Khar. The study uses Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* as an essential framework to show how Durrani's identity is formed by the patriarchal system that labels women as the "Other" and forces them into subservience. Tehmina Durrani's journey from oppression to regaining the sense of self-worth, discovering her identity, and ultimately empowerment proved to be an inspirational example for the generations to come. She voiced a sense of hope that comes from enduring hardship and surviving when she says, "May my sons never oppress the weak; may my daughters learn to fight oppression."[18]

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## Feedback and Learner Motivation: Analysing Error Correction Techniques in Language Classroom

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***Abstract***: *The use of Artificial Intelligence (Al) within the educational arena has transformed the aspect of learning a language and offered innovative ways for interactive, personalized learning. AI-powered chatbots, with their ability to carry out human-like conversations, have emerged as favoured choices to hone communication skills for the learners of the second language. Chatbots enabled with NLP and speech recognition capabilities provide feedback to learners the moment they enter their responses and enable them to practice pronunciation, enhance fluency, and master conversational proficiency. Although the first generations of chatbots were predominantly text-based, developments in voice recognition and text to speech synthesis have enabled more interactive learning with learners being exposed to salient features of language such as stress, intonation, and other suprasegmental aspects. The present study examines the efficacy of Al chatbots in language learning, especially speaking proficiency. It provides a comparative analysis of some of the Al-powered tools like Gemini, Sivi, and ChatGPT with respect to their approaches, methods, and techniques in facilitating spoken language learning and providing feedback. Of particular interest is the way the chatbots conduct conversations in English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In addition, the research addresses user experience, adaptability, and interaction, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of Al-based language learning such as accuracy, cultural awareness, and ethics. By evaluating the benefits and drawbacks of such AI tools, this study aims to offer pedagogical recommendations to users on how to effectively utilize AI chatbots in language learning.*

***Keywords***: *Error correction, Language teaching and learning, Techniques, Second language, Corrective feedback*

## Introduction

While error correction is an essential component of foreign language education, there are also a lot of questions it brings up. Concerns of error correction include knowing when to correct students and when to avoid it, selecting the most effective kind of corrective feedback, and determining how much error correction is appropriate in a given circumstance. Concerns around timeliness, types of feedback, and the extent of correction required in a specific situation are commonly brought up by error correction in foreign language classrooms. In order to enhance learning, foreign language instruction now incorporates both form-focused and communicative-based methods, placing more emphasis on meaning and expression than just linguistic structure. In order to increase efficiency, teachers use a variety of corrective feedback

strategies, such as explicit correction and recasts, that are customized to the unique needs of each student. Understanding the value of error correction for aspiring teachers is largely influenced by teacher training experiences.

Before discussing error correction in English language teaching, it is important to discuss errors. According to Corder's (1967) theory, errors show how a learner is using their language acquisition strategies rather than being inhibited or interfering with ingrained habits. Trial and error are inevitable since learning occurs in the learner's mind as a result of the cognitive process. Since learning a foreign language is a progressive process that takes time, errors will inevitably arise at every stage of the process. According to interlanguage theory, a learner's mistakes are a common occurrence during the linguistic acquisition process. As a result, making errors when learning a language should be accepted as a normal part of the process. According to Khansir (2010), it's critical that educators understand that mistakes are a normal and necessary component of learning and shouldn't be overly rectified or tolerated. An instructor can choose to correct a language learner's spoken error in the target language (TL) or to overlook it and move on. Students who get their mistakes corrected immediately recognize that they have made a mistake and may even want to have it fixed (Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Chenoweth, Day, Chun, & Luppescu, 1983). There is, however, no assurance that the students have absorbed the significance of the mistake or its meaning. Additionally, language learners may experience discouragement, frustration, and even a loss of passion for speaking the target language if they are continuously provided with corrective feedback (Chastain, 1975; Vigil & Oller, 1976).

Errors give teachers feedback. They reveal to them what areas of the curriculum they have been following are not well acquired or taught and require additional attention. They also inform them how effective their teaching methods and materials are. In other words, teachers can use the mistakes made by their students to create a plan of action that will help them avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future. While some argue that error correction is counterproductive and even harmful to language learners, there is compelling evidence to support the notion that error correction plays a critical role in enhancing students' language ability. Teachers can use explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition as corrective feedback strategies in the classroom (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). However, the instructor must bear in mind that these strategies should be selected not only based on the specific learning environment, but also on the individual variations among the students with respect to intelligence, aptitude, learning style, personality, motivation, attitudes, etc. (Lightbown and Spada, 2001). This is because students will respond differently to various forms of error correction based on these individual differences. Corrective feedback techniques appear to be made even more difficult by this, since the instructor typically has to deal with a large number of students in a class, each of whom has a unique learning style, set of skills, motivation, personality, etc.

This paper aims to explore the reasons for common errors, investigate different error correction techniques, and offer practical insights for educators, helping them create a positive and supportive learning environment.

**Origins and Types of Learner Errors:**

The origin and types of errors in SLA are crucial as they provide insights into the cognitive processes the learners employ while acquiring a new language. Errors may seem random, but this is far from true - they reflect systematic patterns that indicate how learners construct and

**Literary Enigma**

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

internalize rules of the target language. As emphasized by Corder (1974), the study of errors is part of investigating the process of language learning, that gives a glimpse of a learner's linguistic development and strategies. The analysis of errors benefits language teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers. Teachers can use the results of the error analysis to plan remedial action on problem areas of learners, as Sharma (1980) suggested. Curriculum designers can apply research done through error studies into the preparation of learning materials so that complex structures are gradually introduced after simpler ones to reduce the learners' cognitive load. By contrast, researchers may exploit error analysis to open up the broader contexts of second language acquisition and throw some light upon the development of theories and models of SLA. Understanding errors is useful for the learners themselves. It provides them with an opportunity to look at errors from a neutral perspective, considering them to be a normal part of language learning processes that yields productive fruit. Only through this approach can they be aware of their mistakes and self-refine in their approach to learn the target language.

Factors Contributing to Learner Errors:

There are different types of language errors which can be attributed to different causes. These errors are important for an effective language education, particularly in multilingual situations. There are two major sources of errors in second language learning. The first source is interference from the native language while the second source can be attributed to intralingual and developmental factors. Intralingual and developmental factors include the following:

1. Overgeneralization (Richards, 1971): Learners apply a learned rule too broadly, even to cases where it doesn't apply. Example: Forming the past tense of go as goed instead of went.

2. False concepts hypothesized (Richards, 1971): Learners form incorrect assumptions about language rules due to ambiguity or misleading instruction. Example: Assuming that "-ing" always signifies a present action, leading to "I am knowing him" instead of "I know him."

3. Fossilization (Selinker, 1972): Errors become ingrained and resistant to correction over time, often because they are repeated without feedback or due to lack of motivation to change. Example: A long-term learner consistently says, "He go to school every day" instead of "He goes to school every day," despite corrections.

4. Avoidance (Selinker, 1972): Learners deliberately avoid using structures or words they find difficult or unfamiliar, which may lead to errors in expressing ideas. Example: A learner avoids using passive voice and instead rephrases incorrectly: "Somebody stole my wallet" instead of "My wallet was stolen."

5. Faulty teaching (Corder, 1973): Errors result from incorrect or incomplete explanations by teachers or teaching materials. Example: A teacher inaccurately teaches that all plural nouns in English end in "-s," leading a student to say, "Childs" instead of "Children."

6. Simplification (Richards, 1974): Learners simplify language by omitting complex or unnecessary elements to reduce cognitive load. Example: Saying, "He good man" instead of "He is a good man" by omitting the verb "is."

Errors can be classified on the basis of:

- Linguistic Categories: Morphological Errors, Phonological Errors, Lexical Errors, Spelling and Punctuation Errors

**Literary Enigma**

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

- Surface Structure Taxonomy: Errors can be categorized as omission, addition, misformation, or misordering. (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982)

- Communicative Effect: Global errors affect the overall meaning and communication, while local errors affect only parts of the sentence. (Burt and Kiparsky, 1974)

**The Role of Corrective Feedback in Language Learning:**

The discussion on Corrective Feedback touches upon a number of issues that involve: whether CF aids L2 acquisition; when CF should be offered, immediate vs. delayed; which errors have to be corrected; who should do the correcting, the instructor or the student; and what type of CF yields the best results.

As a general approach, research stresses the value of feedback, as it repairs inaccuracies, clarifies confusions, and enhances acquisition. That is to say, that it might sometimes vary between types and frequencies based on different learner stages, activity type, or context. Feedback has been seen as a barrier by some, while others see it as a way to improve the learning process. The diverse nature of corrective feedback has been recognized by Chaudron (1977). Feedback, according to Chaudron, is "any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner's utterance". Both behaviorist and cognitive theories on second language acquisition consider feedback as part of the process in language learning. Feedback is known within both communicative approaches and structural methodologies in the teaching of languages to ensure linguistic accuracy and to encourage student motivation. As Ellis (2013) points out, while remedial criticism is essential, it can hinder the learning ability of students. Hammer (2007) also argues that inappropriate correction—both in terms of the methods used and the focus placed—increases the stress levels of students and derails their learning process. Similarly, Krashen described error correction as a serious error as it leads to the learner trying to avoid using complicated structures in order to reduce mistakes. A view similar to Krashen's was represented by VanPatten (1992), who maintained that "correcting errors in learner output has little to no impact on the developing cognitive structure of most language learners." According to Brown (2007), students who receive negative cognitive feedback are less likely to make verbal responses; conversely, students who receive overly positive feedback are unable to comprehend their mistakes. To reduce the negative impacts associated with correction, teachers should carefully select the best practices, although previous studies have indicated this requirement. In addition, teachers should not overcorrect children because it impacts their psychological problems, such as inferiority, humiliation, inhibition, and anger (Truscott, 1996).

According to behaviorist theories, feedback needs to be reinforced immediately (Skinner, 1954). It is widely accepted that corrections should be made right away in activities that are focused on accuracy. Teachers should not interrupt during communicative activities to correct students' grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation (Harmer, 2007). Delayed feedback is preferred for more creative and complicated assignments, as it fosters independence and students can reflect on their learning. Delayed feedback is less disruptive when it comes to communication. The nature of feedback—whether direct or indirect—plays a very significant role in determining its effectiveness. Direct feedback gives explicit corrections or the proper wording of an error, which is very helpful to a novice learner or even when learners are not cognizant of the right usage. Indirect feedback challenges learners to identify and correct their

errors independently, and hence it encourages a much deeper engagement with the learning process. Direct feedback provides a clear understanding and minimizes uncertainty, whereas indirect feedback encourages analytical thinking and enhances the long-term memorization of language principles.

Equally important is the source of feedback, which can come from teachers, peers, or the learners themselves. Teacher feedback is often considered the most valid and reliable source, providing structured guidance based on their experience. However, overreliance on teacher feedback might limit channels for developing learner autonomy. Peer feedback promotes the culture of learning through collaboration with different perspectives and helps students achieve that; however, the credibility of the peer review is undermined when the peers are ignorant. Self-review, when augmented by the use of instruments such as rubrics or reflective guidance, enables learners to reflect on their own performances thoughtfully and promotes independence and self-control.

Research tends to generally support the significance of feedback in language learning as it corrects errors, clears up misunderstandings, and reinforces learning. The amount and type of feedback required, however, are different for different levels of learners, types of tasks, and classroom contexts. The timing, type, and source should be very carefully balanced to meet the specific needs and goals of the learners.

**Error Correction Techniques and Uptake:**

Error correction is one of the most important components of language teaching since different techniques could be used to effectively address learners' mistakes. Upon understanding these techniques and their impact on learner involvement, instructors can strengthen their teaching practices, appropriately tailor their feedback to particular students' needs, and ensure the production of accurate language use.

1.  Explicit Correction

Explicit correction involves the teacher directly pointing out the error and providing the correct form. This approach is very direct and may be used quite successfully in drawing attention to specific errors.

For example:

> Student: "I goed to the store yesterday."
>
> Teacher: "No, you said 'goed.' We say 'went.'"

2.  Recast

Recasting involves the teacher reformulating the student's utterance, implicitly correcting the error. This technique is less direct than explicit correction but can be less disruptive to the flow of conversation.

For instance:

> Student: "I like eat pizza."
>
> Teacher: "Oh, you like to eat pizza. That's good."

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*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

3. Clarification Request

A clarification request tells the student that his statement was unclear or inaccurate. Such may prompt the student to self-correct or provide more information.

For example:

> Student: "I no understand."
>
> Teacher: "I'm sorry, I don't understand. Can you say that again?"

4. Metalinguistic Feedback

Metalinguistic feedback involves providing information about the language, such as grammar rules or vocabulary definitions, to help the students understand and correct their errors. For example:

> Student: "I have many homeworks."
>
> Teacher: "Remember, 'homework' is an uncountable noun. We don't say 'many homeworks.'"

5. Elicitation

Elicitation encompasses the teacher posing questions to direct the student toward the accurate form. This method has the potential to foster active engagement and analytical thinking.

For example:

> Student: "I go to school yesterday."
>
> Teacher: "Did you go to school yesterday? What's the past tense of 'go'?"

6. Repetition

The process of repetition entails the instructor articulating the student's mistake, frequently employing heightened intonation to emphasize the error. This strategy can prove beneficial in accentuating particular phonetic elements or lexical structures

For example:

> Student: "I goed to the store."
>
> Teacher: "Goed? Goed?"

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997) referred to the correction as "repair," but the students' change was referred to as "uptake." Uptake is the learner's response to feedback given by the teacher. It forms a vital aspect of the outcome measure used in determining the effectiveness of error correction. When learners successfully uptake the feedback, they begin to display that they understand corrections and can enact them in their own use of language.

To maximize uptake, educators can employ the following strategies:

- Timing: Provide feedback as soon as possible, when the mistake is fresh in a learner's mind.

- Clarity: Clearly and concisely elucidate the mistake as well as the correct form.

- Positive Reinforcement: Positive reinforcement is a technique that will elicit greater learner involvement and motivation.

- Learner-Centered Approach: Encourage students to participate in correcting errors, to engage them in discussions and decision-making.

- Variety of Techniques: Use a range of error correction methodologies that would cater to different learner needs and preferences.

By understanding the intricacies involved with error correction strategies and uptake, teachers can create learning environments that support language learning and development.

**Case studies:**

I. Lyster & Ranta, 1997: The research study by Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta focuses on the use of corrective feedback in learning language. It relies on the context of French immersion classrooms and investigates various types and patterns of corrective feedback in the initiations of teachers, along with the responses, or uptakes, by students, in relation to how those interactions facilitate the learning of the language.

Research Methodology

Participants: Six French immersion classrooms from the Montreal area, four of them at the Grade 4 level and two French immersion Grade 6 classrooms.

Data Collection: From many lessons, 14 subject-matter lessons and 13 French language arts lessons, 18.3 hours of classroom interaction occur in a total of 100 hours of audio recordings.

Analysis Framework: The same analysis framework was applied by the researchers to identify target-like and error correction techniques of the teachers in classroom interaction.

Corrective Feedback Types

The corrective feedback made by the teacher is of the following six types along with the frequency.

| | |
|---|---|
| Recasts | 55% |
| Elicitation | 14% |
| Clarification Requests | 11% |

| Metalinguistic Feedback | 8% |
|---|---|
| Explicit Correction | 7% |
| Repetition of Error | 5%, |

Learner Uptake

The effectiveness of different types of feedback in eliciting learner uptake, or the students' responses to the feedback:

| Recasts | 31% uptake |
|---|---|
| Elicitation | 100% uptake |
| Clarification Requests | 88% uptake |
| Metalinguistic Feedback | 86% uptake |
| Explicit Correction | 50% uptake |
| Repetition of Error | 78% uptake |

Student-Generated Repairs

The study looked at the nature of repairs following the feedback:

Elicitations: 43% of the repairs were student-generated.

Overall, repairs were mostly done through recasts, which were 36%, and then the elicitation method was at 23%.

Analysis of Data

Elicitation and metalinguistic feedback were particularly effective in promoting student-generated repairs, suggesting that these methods encourage deeper cognitive engagement with the language. In contrast, recasts and explicit corrections, though frequently used, did not foster the same level of learner engagement. The results show that the type of corrective feedback significantly influences learner uptake and the nature of repairs.

Pedagogical Implications

This brings to the surface the role of the types of feedback that lead to the negotiation of form in language acquisition within meaningful learning experiences. Teachers are urged to undertake feedback practices that elicit self-correction and participation on the

part of the students, in addition to prompting the communicative functions of language that aid in language acquisition.

Conclusion

Indeed, research shows that teachers, time and time again, take into account the process of corrective feedback, which identifies techniques that go beyond the identification of errors, being able to interact with students who eventually become fluent in the language.

II.  Ahlem Ammar, 2008: Ahlem Ammar's research focuses on the process of corrective feedback through prompts and recasts to examine its effects in acquiring English possessive determiners among francophone learners. Three primary schools from the Montreal area participated in a quasi-experimental design, with 64 students divided into three groups: one receiving recasts, the other receiving prompts, and the last with no feedback.

Summary of Research and Results:

1. Participants and Methodology: The sample consisted of 64 ESL students instructed by three different teachers. Several tasks were used to test the effects of feedback, including a computer-based fill-in-the-blank test, an oral picture-description task, and a passage correction task.

2. Types of Feedback:

Recasts: Implicit feedback where the teacher reformulates a student's incorrect utterance.

Prompts: Explicit feedback which elicits pupils' own correction.

3. Findings: Quantitative analysis showed that the effectiveness of different forms of feedback differed significantly. It was found that the students who received a prompt improved considerably in their use of possessive determiners compared with the subjects who received recasts or no feedback at all. According to the research, prompts and other self-fixing strategies type of language learning aids may prove more useful as compared to latent correction strategies such as recasts.

4. Data Analysis: Student performance was analyzed developmentally, which was further divided into a scale introduced by Zobl, 1984, 1985, and further adapted by J. White, 1996, 1998. The result showed a significant improvement in the usage of language among students of the prompt group when compared to the recast and control groups in the delayed oral post-test.

Analysis of the Research:

Strengths: The fact it was a quasi-experiment design provided some control over different methods of feedback within a natural classroom setting. The multiplicity of assessment tasks made the research quite comprehensive in terms of the effect that feedback had on language acquisition.

Limitations: While the sample size was sufficient, it may still limit the extent to which generalizations can be made to larger populations.

The set tasks couldn't really represent language use in a real situation.

<u>Pedagogical Implications</u>: The research strongly indicated that teachers should focus on using promotive strategies in their feedback to give the student more potential and ability for self-correction and language learning. More research is needed into the effects of different feedback types over a longer term and examination of how various learner characteristics influence corrective feedback efficacy.

In other words, Ammar's study contributed some meaningful notions about the role of feedback in second language acquisition and indicated possible benefits that prompts might have over recasts in the development of a learner's language.

III. Kamilla Bargiel-Matusiewicz: This study aims at examining students' attitudes and preferences towards error correction in terms of language learning, with emphasis on secondary school students in Poland. A teacher should be aware of the facts that how the learners get help from correction techniques or get stuck. It seeks feedback on students' responses to alternative correction techniques, their most loved/less liked sources of feedback and the emotional consequences of correction on their experience of learning.

Participants: 316 secondary school students participated in the research: age range of 13 and 16 years old individuals from Poland, this included only 161 girls and 155 boys. Varied levels of English proficiency were represented by them with most of them under upper elementary to pre-intermediate, having been studying English for 5 years on an average.

Methodology: Data was collected through an anonymous questionnaire designed in Polish language with open-ended and closed-ended questions concerning the opinions of students towards error correction.

Key Findings: This study indicates that the majority of students preferred corrections done by teachers rather than those done by their peers or oneself. Teachers are considered to be important authorities in the learning process of the students. Most think they learn from their mistakes, whereas peer correction commonly gives rise to embarrassment when a student makes a mistake or avoids making any more mistakes. There are mixed feelings among learners in regard to the frequency of corrections: a section of them wants to have more corrections while others are anxious about the public pronunciation. The teacher is prominent in building an environment of great support, a far better approach is one that balances the two methods-the self-correction and the peer-correction to meet the diverse needs of learning in the classroom. Use of various techniques, like pair and group work, can encourage participation from all students, especially shy ones. Also, teachers should be careful about the emotional nature of students regarding correction and provide an adequate explanation of their errors to deepen understanding and enhance their chances of efficient learning.

IV. Toju Eyengho and Oyebisi Fawole, 2017: The research paper "Students' Attitude towards Oral Error Correction Techniques Employed by Secondary School Language Teachers in South Western Nigeria" by Toju Eyengho and Oyebisi Fawole aimed to examine the attitudes and preferences of senior secondary school students in South Western Nigeria towards oral error correction techniques employed by their language teachers. It has been born out of concerns of poor performance by the students in

English language, precisely in oral communication, which can be linked to the types of correction techniques used in teaching.

Research Methodology:

Research Design: A descriptive survey research design used.

Population: The target population for this study was as follows; senior secondary school students in South Western Nigeria public schools.

Sample Size:  The sample size for the study was taken from ten public secondary schools randomly and consisted of two hundred students

Instrument: A questionnaire with the title questionnaire on "Students' Preferences on Effective Error Correction Techniques". The questionnaire was divided into two sections; that is, students' attitude towards oral error correction and their preferences towards some error correction methods.

Major Findings:

1. Attitudes Towards Correcting Errors: A remarkable percentage of the students (about 70%) exhibited a positive attitude when inquired whether certain error corrections should be made by the English teachers. The mean value regarding the statement "My oral errors should be corrected by the English teacher" is 3.11, a result pointing toward a positive attitude on this assumption.

2. Preferences Regarding Types of Error Correction: Students liked the pragmatic error correction most (mean score 4.00), followed by phonological error correction (3.96), and grammatical error correction (3.25). The least preferred was the vocabulary error correction (mean score 2.9). Results indicated that students clearly favored active and constructive methods for correcting errors. The techniques to which the highest percentage of responses were given are the ones in which the teacher models the correct pronunciation or structure. Perhaps the result may suggest that the students like to have the opportunity to truly understand and learn from their mistakes. A very large proportion also favored explanation from teachers why their utterances were wrong; this further emphasizes the fact that there should be a rationale embedded in the process of correction. On the other hand, most students rated ignoring oral errors as the least preferred method since they had a strong feeling to have their mistakes corrected and not ignored. This brought out very strongly the need for feedback in the learning process since students had a desire to correct oral skills through direct correction. Overall, the results showed a tendency toward interactive and useful methods, which may improve language learning outcomes and make students much more confident in speaking.

3. Problems and Deficiencies Identified: This study has identified the class size is big; there is a lack of properly trained teachers, and the availability of sufficient teaching aids is another significant problem for proper error correction.

Conclusion: The authors concluded that the error correction methods embraced by the teachers have very little correlation with what the students prefer. They recommended that the mismatch between teachers and students' information of error correction should

be accurately identified in their choice of error correction to increase their efficiency in language teachings. Similarly, it was recommended that the educational administrators exercise some control when enrolling students in a particular institution to foster the teaching and learning atmosphere.

The overall picture that the research draws is that teaching practices need to be changed as per the needs of the students themselves to enhance their communicative skills in English.

V.  Bambang W. Pratolo, 2019: The paper "How Would Our Students Like to Be Corrected?: A Study on Learners' Beliefs about language learning strategy" by Bambang W. Pratolo researches learners' belief about corrective feedback in language learning. This paper examines various aspects of the issue, including how students with varying levels of knowledge interpret CF in English language instruction and what kinds of corrections they can accept. The methodology used in this study was of a qualitative nature.

Objective: The study aimed to understand learners' preferences about CF and to discover whether students with different levels of proficiency would respond differently to CF.

Methods: The research instruments used in this study were semi-structured interview and learning journals. Through these approaches, the researcher is able to elicit comprehensive feelings and experiences from participants about CF. The qualitative approach was used to give an elaborate description of the social context where second language learning takes place.

Participants: The participants were students with varied English proficiency backgrounds in order to have a divergent understanding of CF.

Analysis and Findings:

Identified Themes: Four key themes emanated from the analysis, which include:

- Need/Importance of CF: All participants affirmed that CF was instrumental in enhancing their English language competence.

- Timing of CF: Most of the students want immediate feedback. They said that this will help them in their process of learning. However, they said that as teachers, they would want to provide feedback when students have finished their thoughts

- Methods of CF: CF should be given in a way that the students feel comfortable and appreciated hence, motivated.

- Level of Mistakes: The seriousness of the mistakes should guide the type of feedback given; there is an agreement that feedback is to be tailored in relation to individual learners' needs.

Comfort and Motivation: There is massive emphasis on feedback to be constructive and encouraging in a way that helps reduce anxiety and improves motivation.

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*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

ISSN (Online): 3049-2033

Impact of Proficiency Level: There was no significant difference in the students' responses to CF with regard to their English proficiency levels, which suggests that all students believe equally in the value of feedback.

Conclusion: The findings of this research suggest that students may or may not appreciate CF for their learning but prefer it to be delivered thoughtfully. It encourages teachers to consider the emotional impact of feedback on a student and adjust their strategies for offering feedback to help foster a supportive learning environment. The results imply that understanding students' beliefs about CF can contribute much to enhancing teaching practices and improving language learning outcomes.

VI.  Morshada Islam, 2007: The research by Morshada Islam looks into the oral error correction strategies employed by the teachers in elementary-level classes at schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The present research tries to find an answer to whether these correction strategies have any effect on students' learning of a second language. More specifically, the task tries to figure out whether the approaches used by the teachers contribute much toward student confidence and language acquisition.

Overview of the Applied Method

The sample size was 145 students and teachers from four schools, so it was quite a diverse sample from different learning contexts. Several tools or instruments utilized in collecting data included classroom observations, student questionnaires, and limited tape recordings. However, due to the problems encountered with tape recordings, the heavy reliance on observational notes might have limited the richness of the data.

Outcomes: Types of Errors and Corrective Measures

Major error types distinguished in the research include grammatical, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse errors at all linguistic levels. This kind of classification is very important for showing where exactly the students face difficulties and where more attention and practice, with relevant feedback, are needed. A wide variety of correction methods were used by teachers, but most of them were not aware of the types of feedback they used. Such unawareness might result in inconsistency in the application of correction procedures, which might confuse the learner and cause problems in learning. For example, grammatical errors were very dominant, indicating that teachers should perhaps pay more attention to teaching grammar and give more specific feedback in that line. Moreover, correction strategies used by the teachers included explicit correction, recasts, and peer correction. A wide range of correction strategies is desirable since different students may respond well to different methods. However, if most of these corrections occur unconsciously or with little consideration for efficient methods, then there is considerable room for improvement. The student questionnaires summarized responses to questions about how students perceive error correction and how it affected their learning. Most of the learners said that frequent corrections made them feel uncomfortable or anxious about making mistakes, therefore teachers should learn more supportive ways of correction.

Impact on Student Learning

The student questionnaires revealed that many learners were cooperative and had much to say concerning error correction. However, the presence of teacher intervention in the

course of feedback sessions indicated that this could restrict free communication. The analysis also revealed that ineffective ways of correction may give students negative confidence and freedom to contribute towards language learning. This finding agrees with previous studies which claim the creation of a favorable environment for learning.

Recommendations for Improvement

The study pointed out the professional development activities required in effective error correction strategies. Training teachers to know how to recognize and change the approach of making corrections for all individual student needs can indeed improve the experience in learning. Another point is to allow for a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe to make mistakes and from those mistakes learn. It is important that teachers are trained to give constructive feedback that will encourage the growth of the student and not discourage them.

Limitations and Future Research

Notably, several limitations faced this study: time constraint and reluctance of the school authorities to have classrooms observed and recorded. These might have constrained the depth and scope of data collected and generalizability of findings. In the future, error correction practices could be assessed in a greater number of schools and educational contexts. Longitudinal studies could also provide depth into how different modes of correction affect language acquisition in the long term.

Conclusion

A valuable insight is derived from the research done by Morshada Islam on error correction practices of schools in Dhaka, highlighting their implications for student learning. It shows that effective feedback mechanisms are very important, while further maximizing language learning outcomes relies on teacher training. These strategies, by addressing the identified gaps, would enable educators to create a much more conducive environment for language acquisition, ultimately for the benefit of students in their educational journeys.

**Conclusion:**

Error is a natural and integral part of learning a second language. This paper focuses on the function of feedback alone in constructing the motivation and perceived confidence of learners. The study focuses on the cause and categories of errors The paper explored effective SLP strategies on error correction through an analysis of six case studies focusing on different techniques of error correction in English language classrooms and the learner uptake. The case studies reviewed collectively indicate the importance of corrective feedback in second language acquisition. The findings show that although implicit feedback, such as recasts, are one of the most frequent tools used by the teachers, explicit strategies like elicitation and prompts are better at stimulating student participation and self-correction. This approach is further illustrated in the works of Lyster and Ranta (1997), who claimed that no matter which dichotomy is adopted, feedback stimulates greater cognitive involvement, though Ammar (2008) finds significant developmental progression with prompts over recasts. Bargiel-Matusiewicz underscores the significance of teacher-led correction as students prefer the power and control it affords in learning. It calls for immediate and constructive feedback, striking

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*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

a balance between correction and motivation. The teachers must, therefore, adopt multiple approaches to minimize anxiety and establish an encouraging learning environment, with an active role from students for successful learning.

From the works of Eyengho and Fawole (2017), and Pratolo (2019), student perceptions of corrective feedback indicated specific emphasis on timely, constructive, and contextualized feedback, ideally balancing correcting and motivating. Therefore, it is recommended that tailor-made feedback based on learning needs and preferences should be used because one-size-fits-all error correction can in fact do more harm than good.

Finally, work by Islam (2007), among many others, emphasizes the building of that role through involving teacher professional development in finding and attempting effective techniques for feedback that ensure a safe learning environment for pupils learning from mistakes. Together, these findings provide a sound basis for developing feedback for language classes as it meaningfully contributes to students' linguistic ability and confidence. Specifically, strategies that encourage student self-correction and cognitive engagement, such as elicitation and prompts, appear effective for both accuracy and learner autonomy. Punitive and over-corrective feedback once again breaks the engagement of learners, and being constructively supportive in correction does encourage the confidence of learners and their active participation.

It was indicated that feedback must cater to individual learners, as well as classroom environments-from a pedagogical point of view. By recognizing how error correction goes beyond correcting linguistic errors and involves building learners' confidence and motivation teachers should seek to balance accuracy with empathy. When narrowed feedback is presented thoughtfully, it feels supportive by creating a gentler learning atmosphere that encourages student engagement as well as risk-taking in participating in language use.

But this study is not without limitation. For example, only six case studies were included in the scope and might not allow the sufficient representation of the different classroom environments and learner profiles, although they provide important insights. The sample size can be increased in more studies to include a wider variety of circumstances, including adult education settings, virtual learning environments, and bilingual classrooms. Moreover, longitudinal study could consider the impact of different types of error correction strategies on language development and learner's confidence at a distance.

Practically speaking, this paper highlights the need for preparation programs of teachers to stress efficient ways of error correction, thereby enabling teachers to use the strategy of giving feedback appropriately and flexibly. It can also be considered to supplement the traditional method by looking into ways to introduce technology in the language classroom, including automated tools for feedback. Further research may focus comparative studies on error correction strategies of the practice across linguistic and cultural contexts. The relation of peer to teacher feedback may also yield important new information concerning cooperative learning procedures. Such research would improve theoretical knowledge, but it would also offer practical methods to enhance language instruction.

A supportive learning environment may, therefore, be achieved when the causes and trends of errors have been identified and thoughtfully utilized methods of compassionate feedback are exercised. The correction of errors in linguistic usage will result in enthusiastic students while it will ensure holistic growth through setting pupils up for increased success in language acquisition.

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# 6

## Children as Visual Appeals: A Study of Innocence, Emotion, and Persuasion in Indian Advertisements

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Page No. 56-66

*Abstract: This paper examines how Indian advertisements strategically use children's imagery to build emotional appeal, reinforce cultural narratives, and influence consumer behaviour. Using a qualitative visual rhetoric analysis of five market-leading brands—Flipkart, Surf Excel, Dettol, Horlicks, and Maggi Noodles—the study explores how visuals of children evoke empathy, symbolize morality, and build brand credibility. The paper draws on Barthes' semiotics, Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's visual grammar, and Aristotle's rhetorical appeals to interpret these representations. Though effective in persuasion, these portrayals raise ethical concerns about stereotyping, emotional manipulation, and the absence of children's agency. Despite being visually cantered, children in these campaigns rarely exhibit agency— they do not make autonomous choices or influence the outcomes of the narratives. Their role is largely symbolic, framed to evoke emotion rather than depict authentic individuality or empowerment. The paper integrates relevant consumer data to justify brand selection and examines formal complaints filed with the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), calling for greater ethical accountability in child-focused advertising.*

*Keywords: Advertising Ethics, ASCI, Childhood Imagery, Cultural Narratives, Indian Advertising, Visual Rhetoric*

## Introduction

Advertising in India has evolved significantly over the years. As brands seek to connect with a diverse and emotionally rich audience, the use of children in advertisements has become a powerful strategy. Children symbolize innocence, purity, and vulnerability—qualities that naturally evoke deep emotional responses and build trust. Indian advertisements often use these qualities to reflect cultural values and persuade consumers.

This trend is not new. As Joeanna Rebello Fernandes notes in her *Times of India* article, **"Ads by Kids, but Not for Kids,"** some of India's most iconic campaigns from the 1980s and 1990s—such as the "Vick's Girl," "Britannia Boy," and "Rasna Girl"—featured children as central characters. However, these ads were mostly aimed at adults, using children to

emotionally appeal and influence adult purchasing decisions.[19] This highlights the longstanding role of children's images as emotional tools in Indian advertising.

The rise of "kidfluencers" has reshaped Indian advertising. This trend raises ethical and legal concerns, especially given the gaps in current child labour and advertising regulations in the digital space. While there is ample research on advertising and digital media, few studies focus specifically on how children are portrayed in Indian television commercials—a crucial gap, as TV remains a dominant medium across diverse Indian audiences.

This study examines how children are visually represented in Indian TV ads and how these portrayals use visual rhetoric—images, symbols, and narratives—to build emotional and cultural appeal. By analysing campaigns from Flipkart, Surf Excel, Dettol, Horlicks, and Maggi, the research seeks to uncover how advertisers craft persuasive, culturally resonant messages through the imagery of childhood.

**Research Problem Statement**

Indian advertisements frequently use children as visual appeals, leveraging their perceived innocence and emotional resonance to persuade audiences. While this strategy is widespread, there is limited academic understanding of the specific visual and emotional mechanisms at play, and how these elements influence consumer behaviour. Addressing this gap is crucial to understand media effects and child persuasion.

**Research Aim:** To analyse the role of children as visual appeals in Indian advertisements, focusing on the interplay of innocence, emotion, and persuasion.
**Research Objectives:**
- To examine how Indian advertisements visually depict children in terms of innocence, emotion, and success.
- To study how these portrayals reflect Indian cultural values related to family and childhood.
- To assess the ethical concerns surrounding the use of children in advertising, including stereotyping, emotional appeal, and lack of agency.

Visual Rhetoric in Advertising

Visual rhetoric refers to the use of images and visual elements to communicate messages and persuade audiences (Foss, 2005)[20]. In advertising, visuals often work alongside text to create emotional and cognitive effects that influence consumer behaviour (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003)[21]. Scholars emphasize that visual elements such as colour, composition, facial expressions, and symbolism contribute to meaning-making in ads (Kress & van Leeuwen,

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2006)[22]. In advertising, the meaning of images depends on how visual elements—such as gaze direction, size, colour, proximity, and perspective—are composed. These choices are never neutral; they encode cultural assumptions, emotional cues, and power dynamics. When children are central figures in advertising, the visual composition often amplifies innocence, vulnerability, or joy to maximize engagement.

Children as Emotional and Persuasive Appeals in Advertising

Children have long been deployed in advertising as emotional triggers. Goldberg and Gorn (1987) demonstrated that children in ads evoke trust, affection, and empathy, from adult viewers. These responses are rooted in biological and cultural instincts to protect and nurture the young. In Indian advertising, children are not just emotive devices—they are symbols of **hope, morality, and future potential**.[23]

Peñaloza (1994) argues that children help create what she calls the "emotional economy" of advertising—where products are sold not for their utility, but for their emotional associations. Brands use children to signal purity, competence, or parental care which translates into consumer trust.[24] In Indian culture, childhood is idealized as a stage of *sanskaar* (moral training) and *shuddhata* (purity). Advertisers align with these sentiments by showing children not as autonomous beings, but as vessels of values. As Jain and Bagdare (2021) note, children in Indian ads are often framed as **idealized extensions of adult aspirations**—emotionally engaging but narratively dependent.[25]

Child-centric advertising in India raises ethical concerns, including emotional manipulation, stereotyping, and lack of informed consent (Srinivasan and Raman 2018). Brands like Horlicks, Surf Excel, and Maggi often reinforce narrow ideals such as success, obedience, and caregiving. While the ASCI has set protective guidelines, enforcement is inconsistent, and emotional appeals remain widespread.[26]

Recent research shows that children have become increasingly important in Indian advertising, not just as cute faces but as key emotional connectors that influence both adults and kids (Choudhary and Roy, 2022).[27] Studies like Sharma and Tiwari's (2021)[28] reveal how advertising even seeps into children's everyday lives, shaping how they see the world— sometimes without them realizing it. Food ads often use kids and family feelings to appeal to

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audiences, but they rarely focus on health, which raises concerns (Soni and Vohra, 2014).[29] Other research points out how children are especially vulnerable to ads because they're still learning to think critically (Makhanlal Chaturvedi University).[30] With the rise of social media and kid influencers, current rules aren't enough to keep up, which makes this a hot topic for debate. Altogether, these studies highlight cultural and ethical issues in how children are used in ads in India but also show there's still room to explore how visual storytelling works - something this study aims to do.

Recent studies also point out some ethical concerns, like how ads might manipulate emotions or take advantage of kids' vulnerability. But there is still not enough research that looks closely at how the visuals work together with cultural meanings and ethics in Indian ads. Also, we do not know much about how kids themselves understand these ads or how social media and digital platforms are changing things. This study aims to fill this gap by applying qualitative visual rhetoric analysis to key Indian brand campaigns featuring children.

**Theoretical Framework and Application**

This study draws on three key frameworks to analyse how children are visually represented in Indian advertisements:

Barthes' Semiotics helps decode both literal (denotation) and symbolic (connotation) meanings. In most ads, children's facial expressions, posture, and attire connote purity, moral value, and idealised family roles—symbols that deeply resonate in Indian culture.

Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar focuses on how gaze, composition, framing, and modality influence meaning. Children are often framed centrally at eye level, using soft lighting and bright colours to engage viewers and create a sense of trust and emotional realism.

Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals clarify how ads persuade:

- Ethos (credibility): via trusted parent-child settings
- Pathos (emotion): dominant—through empathy, joy, and vulnerability
- Logos (logic): rarely used, with few factual claims visually presented

Children in these ads function not merely as characters but as emotional and symbolic appeals. Their presence often reflects cultural ideals such as *parivaar* (family), *sanskaar* (moral upbringing), and *shrama* (effort). For instance:

- Dettol portrays children as vulnerable and protected
- Horlicks presents success as product-driven
- Maggi shows warmth and care, but without active agency

**Methodology**

This study employs a **qualitative visual rhetoric analysis** to interpret how Indian advertisements use children as visual appeals. This method focuses on how elements like facial expressions, colour, framing, and gaze combine to convey meaning and influence emotion. The

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**Literary Enigma**

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

analysis centres on five prominent Indian brands—Flipkart, Surf Excel, Dettol, Horlicks, and Maggi—selected through **purposive sampling** for their cultural relevance and strong use of child-centric visual storytelling.

Each advertisement was examined across four key parameters:

- Visual Grammar (composition, gaze, colour, realism)
- Narrative Function (child's role in the storyline)
- Cultural Resonance (alignment with Indian values)
- Rhetorical Effectiveness (ethos, pathos, logos)

This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how children's imagery is constructed evoking trust, emotion, and persuasion in Indian advertising. It also provides a lens to evaluate ethical concerns such as stereotyping, lack of agency, and the commodification of childhood.

Five prominent Indian ad campaigns that centre on child imagery are given below:

| No. | Brand | Campaign | YouTube Link of Advertisement |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | Flipkart | "Kids as Adults" | https://youtu.be/wX9lEPW40j4 <br> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy8rdjjtITs |
| 2) | Surf Excel | "Daag Achhe Hain" | https://youtu.be/MocKmftqNI8 |
| 3) | Dettol | "Be 100% Sure" | https://youtu.be/BgGomfobqS8 <br> https://youtu.be/eKCA5cYx7EM |
| 4) | Horlicks | "Taller, Stronger, Sharper" | https://youtu.be/Mbz18RTcIi4 |
| 5) | Maggi | "New Maggi Happy Bowl" | https://youtu.be/cuXIES0e3gc |

**Discussion**

Children have always held a special place in advertising for their ability to evoke strong emotions. In Indian ads, they often serve as rhetorical symbols of innocence, joy, morality, and aspiration—traits that strongly appeal to adult viewers, especially parents. However, this emotional power raises ethical concerns. Children's innocence is used as a marketing tool. Such portrayals may reinforce stereotypes or unrealistic expectations, and often deny children agency or full awareness of their role in these narratives.

(Image Credit- Google Images)

➢ In **Flipkart ads,** children are showing **behavioural traits of adults-** blurs child-adult boundaries.

➢ In **Surf Excel ads**, children get dirty while voluntarily helping others – the parents are happy with the stains.

➢ In **Dettol ads**, children are shown as **vulnerable**—the parent acts, the child is protected.

➢ In **Horlicks ads**, the child performs well **after consuming the product**—not because of natural ability or choices.

➢ In **Maggi ads**, the child is simply a **receiver of food and love**, not an active participant in caregiving or decision-making.

| Brand | Child's Role | Key Appeal | Ethical Concern |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Flipkart** | Miniature adults | Humour, confidence | Blurred child-adult boundaries |
| **Surf Excel** | Moral agents | Empathy, social duty | Virtue signalling, moral pressure |
| **Dettol** | Vulnerable dependents | Protection, caregiving | Fear-based messaging |

**Literary Enigma**
*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

ISSN (Online): 3049-2033

| **Horlicks** | Overachievers | Aspiration, success | Pressure, narrow success definitions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Maggi** | Passive receivers | Comfort, nostalgia | Gender bias, commodified care |

These representations align with traditional Indian values such as *parivaar* (family), *sanskaar* (moral upbringing), and *shrama* (effort/work ethic). Across all campaigns, children are **not the decision-makers** but **tools to evoke adult emotion**, reinforce societal norms, or elevate the brand's moral image.

**Notable Complaints:**

➢ **Horlicks (2018, 2022):** ASCI ruled against exaggerated height/growth claims without scientific backing.
➢ **Dettol (2020–21):** Ads during the pandemic were flagged for promoting excessive germ paranoia in homes with children.
➢ **Maggi (2015, 2022):**
MSG content controversy led to a nationwide ban.
"2-minute" claim challenged as misleading and unrealistic under real cooking conditions.
➢ **Flipkart (2019):** Public concerns raised over children mimicking adult behaviours in business settings.
➢ **Surf Excel:** No direct ASCI ban, but scholarly critiques discuss how moral framing limits creative play.

These examples show how child-focused messaging in Indian ads often treads close to ethical and regulatory boundaries, sparking both public and institutional responses.

Flipkart: Kids Or Adults?

Flipkart's "Kids as Adults" campaign humorously shows children dressed and acting like adults—CEOs, shopkeepers, teachers even *Munnabhai* and *Circuit*. This playful role reversal delivers the message that Flipkart's platform is so easy to use that even children can navigate it.

The campaign uses costumes, confident body language, and mature expressions on kids to create a memorable contrast. This juxtaposition creates a humorous effect that grabs viewers' attention. The humour engages viewers emotionally (pathos), while portraying children as competent users builds trust (ethos). The visual rhetoric is highly effective in engaging the Indian audience, especially families.

However, a **critical perspective** invites deeper reflection. The depiction of children as adults may unintentionally blur boundaries between childhood and adulthood. While playful, these ads risk **normalizing adult responsibilities and consumerism in children's worlds**, reflecting societal trends where childhood is increasingly commercialized. The ads rarely engage with children's actual needs or experiences; instead, they use kids primarily as comedic props to sell products aimed at adults.

Surf Excel: Daag Acche Hain?

Surf Excel's iconic "Daag Achhe Hain" campaign reframes stains not as problems but as symbols of kindness, sacrifice, and real-world learning. Children are shown getting dirty while helping others, with bright colours and candid visuals reinforcing their innocence and good intentions. This emotional narrative taps into Indian parenting values, where moral growth is often prized over physical appearance.

Visually, the ads use close-ups of joyful, active children, paired with natural lighting and symbolic mess—mud, paint, or food—that reflects empathy and teamwork. The campaign challenges traditional cleanliness norms by presenting stains as evidence of holistic development, courage, and compassion.

However, a critical reading reveals limits. The "good" stains are framed only within socially approved contexts—helping others, standing up for friends—which means messiness is accepted only when it reflects adult-defined virtues. While the ads appear to celebrate freedom, they subtly reinforce adult authority and surveillance. This reflects Indian anxieties about cleanliness, behaviour, and family image.

Dettol: Protect What Matters Most

Dettol advertisements focus on children's vulnerability and parental protection. The green and white palette symbolizes health and safety. Close-ups of cheerful children and warm domestic settings visually reinforce the brand's promise of care and cleanliness.

Beyond hygiene, Dettol positions itself as a symbol of love, learning, and responsibility within Indian families. A standout ad shows a boy breaking his piggy bank to buy his mother a gift. When she's injured picking up the shards, he gently applies Dettol to her cut—a reversal of traditional caregiving that appeals strongly to pathos and highlights the brand as a facilitator of compassion.

From a positive perspective, children are portrayed as active participants rather than passive figures. These ads often empower children by presenting them as learners or even caregivers within the family. On the downside, some portrayals place children in emotionally charged or risky situations to evoke sympathy. The settings are often idealised, not reflecting every child's reality. The focus tends to be more on product use than on promoting broader hygiene awareness.

Horlicks: Aspirational Childhood

Horlicks advertisements often depict children striving for academic or athletic excellence, set against bright visuals in schools or sports environments. These ads appeal strongly to Indian parents' aspirations, combining emotional resonance (pathos) with brand trust (ethos), and positioning Horlicks as a nutritional ally in a child's journey toward success.

The imagery is aspirational children studying late, winning medals, or outpacing peers, typically supported by proud mothers. Phrases like "Taller, Stronger, Sharper" and comparisons with traditional foods (roti, spinach, milk, bananas) act as simplified metaphors, appealing to both emotional and logical parental concerns.

However, the messaging often promotes a narrow definition of success—high marks, height, and achievement—with little space for play, creativity, or failure. This can generate fear-based appeal, especially toward mothers, implying that without Horlicks, their child might fall

behind. Though, framed as empowerment, the ads risk reinforcing performance anxiety, reflecting societal pressures. The "before and after" visuals reduce complex growth into product-driven transformations, side-lining holistic health.

Additionally, On April 10, 2024, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry told online shopping platforms to remove Bournvita and similar drinks from the "health drinks" category. This happened after FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) said that calling these drinks "health" or "energy" drinks could mislead people. The warning came after complaints about high sugar levels in such products. According to food rules, only drinks with less than 5 grams of sugar per 100 grams can be called "low sugar" or "healthy." A member of the FSSAI scientific panel noted that four servings of such drinks could give a child 40 grams of sugar— far above the WHO's daily limit of 25 grams. In Indian households, additional teaspoons of sugar are often added to chocolate-powder drinks as well."[31]

## Maggi – Nostalgia and Nurture

Maggi advertisements often portray children returning from school or play—tired, hungry, and eager—mirroring real-life routines. Their joyful reactions upon receiving Maggi create a strong emotional connection. Children are shown symbols of innocence, happiness, and love—turning Maggi into more than food: a medium of affection.

Despite the variety of meals typically prepared in Indian homes, Maggi has dominated the instant noodle segment through emotional branding, nostalgia, and convenience. For many families,—it represents comfort, quick solutions, and childhood memories, helping the brand maintain a strong market presence among both children and young adults.

However, this emotional appeal masks nutritional concerns. Instant noodles are often high in sodium, preservatives, and refined carbs, raising questions about their suitability for children. The ad downplays these issues, instead promotes emotional warmth. Health experts warn that repeated exposure to such messaging may normalise unhealthy eating habits.[32] The long-standing "2-minute" claim has also faced scrutiny from ASCI for being misleading.

## Visual Strategies and Ethical Concerns

Indian ads often place children right at the centre—both visually and emotionally. They are shown at eye level, with soft lighting and warm colours that make them feel relatable and real. These choices help viewers connect emotionally. Each brand uses colours and settings to send subtle messages—Flipkart's cool blues feel modern and simple, Surf Excel's whites suggest cleanliness, Maggi's yellows feel warm and homely, Dettol's greens stand for health and Horlicks often uses school scenes to show ambition. These visuals build trust by using children's innocence to make the product feel safe and reliable.

But there are concerns too. These ads often repeat the same ideas and rarely show children from rural, disabled, or diverse backgrounds. Most of the time, kids do not make decisions; the story is told around them, not by them. From a bigger perspective, these ads show children as ideal citizens of the future—smart, healthy, and moral. But while the emotions are strong, clear

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[31] https://indianeconomyandmarket.com/2024/05/29/the-health-drinks-category-redefined/

[32] **World Health Organization (WHO) - Marketing of Foods High in Fat, Salt and Sugar to Children**
- https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241515543

information about the product is often missing. In the end, advertisers must strike a better balance between emotional appeal and honest, respectful representation of children.

**Conclusion**

Children in Indian advertising are powerful rhetorical devices—capable of evoking trust, sentiment, and shared values. The analysis of five top brands—Flipkart, Surf Excel, Dettol, Horlicks, and Maggi—reveals how children are embedded in visual storytelling not as autonomous individuals, but as carriers of emotional or cultural codes.

Children's images appeal to emotions, family values, and cultural ideals. This study demonstrates how brands use these images to build trust, evoke empathy, and create culturally resonant narratives. While these campaigns resonate with Indian audiences, they also reinforce rigid ideals: ideal behaviour, ideal childhood, and ideal family dynamics. The ASCI complaints and critical reception show growing awareness about the need for responsible advertising.

Yet, the practice demands a balanced view. On one hand, children's portrayals can foster positive messages about growth, care, and community that align with Indian cultural values. On the other hand, there is a potential for exploitation, stereotyping, and emotional manipulation that advertisers must be cautious to avoid. Ultimately, a responsible approach is essential—one that respects children's dignity and agency while harnessing the emotional power of childhood imagery ethically. Future research should further explore audience perceptions and advocate for ethical standards that balance commercial goals with social responsibility.

This paper urges advertisers to:

- Integrate product transparency and avoid misleading emotional cues
- Respect childhood diversity, agency, and creativity
- Move beyond stereotypes in gender and performance
- Acknowledge the cultural responsibility of visual storytelling

Future research should include audience interpretation studies, especially with children and regional consumers, to better understand reception and long-term effects. As Indian media continues to evolve, so must our approach to visual ethics—where creativity, cultural alignment, and social responsibility can coexist.

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**7**

## The Role of Environment in Shaping Sita's Identity in Chitra Banerjee's "Forest of Enchantment"

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*Abstract: Hindu mythology is a huge universe of paramount Gods, mesmerizing Goddesses, breath-taking actions, angelic and majestic stories, spectacular kings and queens, heavenly deities, Rakshasas, Sages, magical and melodious hymns and chants, holy rivers, shaded and fruitful trees, dense and lush forests and appealing Nymphs, tolerant Mountains, secure Sky and forgiving Earth, blissful Sun, soothing Moon, soulful atmosphere, mellifluous breeze, ascetic water, authentic rituals and paradigm customs, eminent cultures and, endless and prosperous Nature (Prakiti). The Valmiki Ramayana is one the greatest epic which is written and rewritten in various languages even today. To keep this epic alive, many writers and scholars either writer it in a fictional format or pick one character and write on that character. This paper aims to discuss the female protagonist of Ramayana which is Sita and the role of nature in shaping her identity. More than half of the epic is being performed around nature. This is the reason why mother earth plays a vital role in this epic.*

*This paper aims to discuss the role of an environment specially forests, nature, soil and elemental forces in shaping the real identity of Sita, the female protagonist of Valmiki's Ramayana. Sita's relationship with Mother Earth is very important in order to understand her character throughout the epic. From her birth, childhood, her 14 years of exile in a forest with her husband and brother in law, her stay in Ashok Vatika, Rama's abandonment, her stay in Valmiki's Ashram, birth of Luv and Kush and finally returning back to Mother Earth clearly proves that environment plays a very important role in shaping her identify and defines her moral strength. Also, there are numerous similarities between nature and Sita' Character. This paper aims to present the importance of environment as well as the similarities between Sita and Mother Earth. With the help of theoretical concept Ecocritical and Ecofeminism, this paper also proves that nature not only helped in shaping the Sita's real character of the epic but also empowers her voice within the patriarchal narrative. Mother Earth becomes the witness and collaborators in shaping Sita's personality.*

*Keywords: environment, nature, soil, Sita, Ramayana*

## Introduction

Valmiki's "The Ramayana" is embraced as the embodiment of Hindu religious commandments. The characters of Ramayana are the symbolic representation of traditional values and are viewed as a epitome of culture. The writers across the world refer back to their conventional mythology to address contemporary issues by reinterpreting the past in the light of the present. Chitra Banerjee's **"The Forest of Enchantment"** is a feminist retelling of the epic through the lens of its female protagonist Sita. Sita holds a very strong and powerful role in shaping the entire mythology.

**"She is there in songs, in poetry, in the tears that Indian women have been shedding through generations as they tread the *Lakshmana rekhas* that barricade their lives" (Namita Gokhale)**

Originally written by greatest sage Valmiki, "Ramayana" is an epic poem which is divided into 7 books and consisted 24000 verses. This epic represents the journey of Rama, his childhood, his marriage with Sita , his fourteen years in exile with his wife and brother Laxman, abduction of Sita and the combat between Rama and Ravana. This epic ends with the death of Ravana and Rama's returning back to his

kingdom. This epic focuses on the life and journey of Rama, Ravana, Laxmana or other male characters of this epic but nobody really notices the side of Sita. The most important female character of this epic who is none other than "Sita" was given very less attention but not in this dissertation as this paper will focus on her journey. Many modern writers wrote the epic from Sita's point of view but Chitra Banjerjee's **" Forest of Enchantment"** is a feminist retelling of Sita in which a reader notices the existence and role of Environment in shaping and strengthen the character of Sita. Whether in epics or poetry, nature holds a very significant role in every being's existence. This paper will focus on the energetic and unmatched energy of (Prakarti) environment through the character of Sita. In Ramayana, the impulsive temperament of Sita can be observed as the natural expression of environment, forests, rivers and soil.

In Chitra Banerjee's **"Forest of Enchatment"** Sita is considered as the embodiment of nature. Born from earth and returning back to Earth, her story lies in between this filled with endless sufferings, ill-treatment, abduction by Ravana, sufferings, tearful journey.

After reading "Ramayana" majorly every reader will appreciate the heroism, intelligence, kindness, patience and sinless life of Rama whose life revolved around the circle of morality but there will be very less people who will appreciate the life of Sita as a whole and decisions which she took and accepted everybody's welfare. Sita was the epitome of purity. She was the daughter of mother earth and that's why she had all the qualities which a nature has. Incarnation of Goddesses Laxmi, she married Rama who was the incarnation of Vishnu. She had all the qualities which a daughter, a sister, a wife, a daughter in law and a mother should have. She is a true inspiration for all the women. Pure in nature, she was sinless. An ideal woman, a faithful wife, a dutiful mother, Sita was the greatest women yet was not well appreciated. Valmiki in his "Ramayana" gives a very less attention to Sita and majorly portrays the heroism of Rama "Sita is strangely absent. Valmiki allows her very little space" (Namita Gokhale pg 3) but even the name of Rama is incomplete without Sita. "Siyavar" is one of the many names given to Ramchandra which means "the groom of Sita". Though very less is written about her in mythological period, many writers, poets and authors have written about her and her strength. Namita Gokhale in her work not only wrote about her but also mentioned various people who wrote about Sita and her nobility. Few of them are Meghnad Desai, Arshia Sattar, Reba Som, Ratna Lahiri, Kren Gabriel, Malashri Lal and Devdutt Pattanaik. The writings of all these great personalities focuses on Sita and wrote about her goodness and integrity. This text can be considered as a very unique way of portraying mythological character "Sita" in a modern style if literature.

Written in 2019, **"The Forest of Enchantment"** focuses primarily on the female protagonist of Ramayana. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The entire story revolves around Sita's journey throughout Ramayana. Chitra Banerjee first wrote **"The Palace of Illusion"** which received critical acclaim from various scholars, writers, poets and critics. Story entirely revolving around Draupadi, it depicts the journey and sufferings of Panchaali from her angle. In the same manner, she wrote this book to highlight the entire journey of Ramayana from an angle of a women.

To understand the status of a women in the epics, one must first read and understand the myths which were considered in these epics. The most hilarious myth is the gender-based role which is determined by nature and not by society. The role of women and men were biologically decided which were unchangeable. If one is born as a woman in a male dominated society, she is responsible for homemaking, family, children and husband. The major role of women was to serve and nothing so huge and impactful. Men were supposed to control their destinies.

Women were only supposed to witness and agree quietly and peacefully. Rather than their strength, their weakness was highlighted in terms of physical, emotional or mental. It is inevitable that men have not only been the main originators but also the main practitioners of writing. It is very well known that both the literary composition of both the epics were done by men.

The main purpose of this paper is to understand the character of Sita in depth and how nature plays a vital role in shaping her identity in the Ramayana. Also, this paper will highlight all the similarities between mother Earth and Sita Devi which will help us to understand the character more deeply. The theoretical framework used to understand the similarity between Sita and nuture will be-

- **Ecocriticism:** This theory will help us understand the literature from the perspective of nature and environmental ethics. Ecocriticism is a component which leads in understanding how nature in shaping literary identity shaping.

- **Ecofeminism:** Ecofeminism helps us to understand how women and mother earth holds unique spiritual and cultural attachment in a male dominated society and how both were exploited by men.

   Both the frameworks in the paper will not only help us to understand the character more deeply and accurately but will also highlight her voice of ecological wisdom and feminine strength.

**Birth from the Mother Earth**

In Vedic Literature, the name "Sita" is mentioned twice. The first Sita mentioned is considered as the **"Devi of Agriculture".** The second Sita is mentioned in the "Taittiriya Brahmana" in which Sita, Savitri, Surya's daughter and Raja Soma's tale is given. Other than this, there is no mention of Sita in Vedic Literature. Henceforth one can consider why King Janaka named her daughter Sita in Valmiki Ramayana. In Valmiki Ramayan, King Janaka while ploughing the field, received Sita from the furrow of the soil. As King Janaka and his wife had no children, they decided to adopt the girl child and thanked all the Gods for this blessing. They named their daughter Sita which means **"Furrow".**

The origin of Sita directly from the earth presents her character as very unique from others as it is diretly rooted in nature and purity. Sita since her childhood had a very deep and strong bond with the nature and mother Earth. Through the epic, sage Valmiki without any overbearing picture of feminity, describes her as the woman filled with love, respect, care and purity. Her story and her personality in whole gives reverence and respect in the mind of readers. Before marriage she was completely devoted to her family and after her marriage her devotion towards her husband is still mentioned today. In Ramayana, Valmiki calls Sita **"Ayonija"** which means not born from mother's womb. Instead of being born from a mother's womb, she was born from the furrow of the earth which sets the tone and motto of her life: silent strength, endurance and fertility. Her birth from the Earth's womb in whole is symbolic of agriculture.

**Sita's Journey in Forest Exile: Role of nature and Sita during the journey of Rama in exile, her abduction, her stay in Ashol Vatika and her abandonment**

Sita' life in forest exile is the transformative phase of Sita's Life. We hear Sita's voice for the first time in "**Ayodhya Kaanda".** Sita's opinion and her strong stand for her Dharma is worth mentioning. Sita's strength, endurance and true dedication towards her husband in the exile in mentioned in the "Aranya Kaanda". In Ayodhya Kanda, when Shri Rama was asked to leave

**Literary Enigma**

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

ISSN (Online): 3049-2033

the throne and go into exile for 14 years, Sita Devi herself decided to go with Shri Rama. Though he opposed her decision but she remined him about her Dharma towards her husband. Living away from royal luxurious and comfortable lifestyle, she passionately accepts to live in the forest with dignity and grace.

**"The forest opened itself to me, not as a place of fear, but of learning." (Divakaruni, *The Forest of Enchantments*)**

The forest life is very difficult to adapt but she did graciously which make her character strong and powerful. Instead of taking 14 years of exile as a punishment, she took it as a blessing to spend more time in serving her husband. Exile in forest acted like a spiritual mentor which helped her in developing her inner strength. During her stay in forest, her character reflected deep ecological awareness. With respect and love, she used to interact with the common people, forest dwellers and sages. She learned about Ayurveda and herbal medicines. The forest offers Sita an education in resilience, nonviolence, and empathy—not through courtly instruction, but through lived experience in a wild, natural setting.

**Sita's Stay in Ashok Vatika**

After being abducted by Ravana, When Sita was held captive in Lanka, rather than staying in the palace, she chose to stay in Ashok Vatika. As Shri Rama was sentenced for 14 years of exile in the forest, she stayed in the garden under the Ashoka tree. Throughout her journey, one can observe that nature is not playing a passive role. Nature is always present around her. Even during the period of exile, we see birds and trees sympathizing with her.

*"The trees of Ashoka Vatika bent toward me, shielding me with their branches." (Divakaruni)*

Even today, the place where Sita stayed in Lanka exists. Ashoka Vatika  is the name of the garden in Seetha Ehilya exists near Nuwara Ehilya in Lanka which has been a beautiful place filled with flowers. This place hold mythological importance.

During the abduction, nature itself become her shelter, offering her emotional comfort. This moral ecology strengthens Sita's resolve to remain dignified even when stripped of material protection. Sita gains strength not through any weapon but the nature around her. In the later Ramayana, it is mentioned when Ravana came to Sita with an offer to marry him, in order to protect her dignity, she picked one small piece of leaf and asked Ravana not to cross that leaf or else he will die at the same moment. Though physically small, one tiny leaf symbolizes Sita divine energy (Shakti) and moral strength. Ravana despite being very powerful, lost against the subtle force of Dharma and inner strength.

**Sita's final return to Mother Earth:** After the end of period of exile, Shri Rama along with his brother wife came back to Ayodhya. Soon after the end of exile, Rama was declared the king of Ayodhya. Soon after the coronation, why the questions started arising on Sita' chastity, public doubted on her character which made her husband abandon her. She accepted the decision of her hasband calmily and peacefully. Pregnant Sita left the palace and started living in Valmiki's ashram. She raised her sons Luv and kush all by herself in the ashram. After the encounter of Luv and Kush with Shri Rama and getting to know about their relationship with their father, Sita Devi was again called in the palace and asked to prove her chastity and she finally decided to return back to her Mother earth. Tired from all societal questions and insults, Sita returns back in the lap of nature. The scene of finally returning to mother Earth is viewed as a tragic exit of Sita.

*"The earth opened her arms for me. It was not death. It was a coming home." (Divakaruni)*

From the ecofeminist view, the scene can be observed as the act of agency as after being doubted again and again on Sita's chastity, she finally decided to call her mother "Bhumi Devi" as leaves with her. Her act of returning back to Mother earth completes the whole cycle of her

life- from being born from Earth, she returns back to the same place. Also, it projects her complete rejection against patriarchal norms and systems.

**Conclusion**

Ramayana or one can call the journey of Rama is not a new story but writers of today's generation is bring out whole new perspectives from an old epic. Chitra Banerjee Devakurni's small attempt to present Ramayana from the viewpoint of Sita makes her book re-readable. ***"The Forest of Enchantment"*** retrieves Sita's journey from an ecological and ecofeminist lens. Chitra Banerjee projects that nature is not only a backdrop of Sita's journey but an energetic and powerful force that develops and nurture her and made her character different from the other female characters in the epic. Devakaruni through her style of positioning the forest, nature and animals as the most important figure in the evolution of Sita in Ramayana makes her style of writing different from others. In her novel, enviornemnt plays a very big role in shaping Sita's identify. For readers and scholars, this reading invites a broader appreciation of how literary narratives intertwine with ecological consciousness, and how women's stories—especially in mythology—are often rooted in and empowered by the natural world.

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**8**

**Listening: The Cinderella Skill, and Its Pivotal Role in the Language Classroom**

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***Abstract:*** *This paper discusses the importance of the Receptive Skill, listening. The author wants to highlight the importance of listening skills, as far as the English as a Second Language Classroom is concerned. This paper deals with the theoretical aspects of listening skill, listening comprehension, as well as the pivotal role of the teacher in English classrooms. Moreover, it elaborates on the vivid tasks for enhancing the most overlooked skill, listening, in the language classroom.*

***Keywords:*** *Receptive Skills, Listening Skill, Listening Comprehension, Tasks for Listening Skill, Importance of Listening,*

**Introduction**

Communication is a process of exchanging thoughts, feelings, ideas, information, etc., with another person. The cycle of communication is only completed when the receiver sends feedback to the sender. To give feedback to the sender, the most important skill among all the language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the listening skill is one of the pivotal skills.

Listening involves an active concern of an individual. Listening involves a sender, a message and a receiver. It is the psychological course of action of receiving, attending to, constructing meaning from and responding to spoken or non-verbal messages (Tyagi, 2013, p.1).

According to Tyagi (2013), Listening encompasses some of the key components, which are indicated as under:

➢ Discriminating between sounds
➢ Recognizing words and understanding their meaning
➢ Identifying grammatical groupings of words,
➢ Identifying expressions and sets of utterances that act to create meaning,
➢ Connecting linguistic cues to non-linguistic and paralinguistic cues,
➢ Using background knowledge to predict and to confirm meaning and
➢ Recalling important words and ideas.

The process of listening occurs in five stages. They are hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding (Tyagi, 2013, p.2).

This paper focuses on the most overlooked skill, listening in the area of research and its vital role so far as the English as a Second Language learning classroom is concerned. The elementary language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four language skills are associated to each other. These language skills are divided into Productive skills i.e. speaking and writing, and Receptive skills i.e. listening and reading. Without the active role of listening no speaking can be feasible and without reading no writing can be possible. So, the four skills go in pairs. They are interwoven with each other. Nevertheless, listening is the

Cinderella skill which is overlooked by its elder sister, speaking in second language learning (Nunan, 2001, p.51).

In general, it is believed that listening skill is a natural skill. Due to this conviction, it has been neglected so far as the systematic study and the area of research is concerned. The first research in the field of listening did not appear until the year 1971(Cayer, Green, and Baker, 1971).

## Listening Skill

Listening skill plays a pivotal role so far as language learning process is concerned. It is not merely the process of to proceed to particular sound or text, but also the course of action to comprehend the meaning out of particular language. In the process of language acquisition, listening is the most preceding skill. It is considered to be a constant flow or an active process, the listeners have to have analyzed and comprehend the provided information simultaneously.

Listening comprehension is an active process of conveying meaning and this is can be done by applying acquaintance to the incoming sound in which numbers of different types of knowledge i.e. linguistic and non – linguistic knowledge are involved. "Comprehension is affected by a wide range of variables and that potentially any characteristic of the speaker; the situation or the listener can influence the comprehension of the message". (Gary Buck, 2001, p.31)

"Listening Comprehension has two common senses. In its narrow sense it denotes the mental processes by which listeners take in the sounds uttered by a speaker and use them to construct an interpretation of what they think the speaker intended to convey.... Comprehension in its broader sense, however, rarely ends here, for listeners in general put the interpretations they have built to work". (Clark and Clark, 1977, pp. 43-44)

"listening is adjudged successful when the listener is able to comprehend the message of the speaker"

"listening is adjudged successful when the listener is able to comprehend the message of the speaker"

"listening is adjudged successful when the listener is able to comprehend the message of the speaker"

## Definitions of Listening skill

"Listening is a complex cognitive process that allows a person to understand spoken language" (Rost, 2005, p.503).

Listening means to "the act of paying attention; thoughts, interpretation and imagination" (Saricoban, 2010, p.112).

"Listening refers to an active and dynamic process of attending, interpreting, perceiving, remembering and responding to the expressed needs, concerns and information offered by other human beings."(Purdy, 1997, p.83)

## Importance of Listening

In the entire language organism listening is considered to be fundamental skill. It is being well established prior to other skills i.e. speaking, writing and reading. "We can expect to listen a five times more than we write, four times more than we read, and twice as much we speaks" (Morley, 1991, p. 82).

Listening skill revolves around the listener's background knowledge like, his/her comprehension power, life experiences, culture of society, semantics of language, and vocabulary. Without obtaining any input no learning can be happen.

Listening comprehension is an extremely complex cognitive process. One can properly comprehend the provided message if he/she has the necessary knowledge of grammar,

discourse, and socio-linguistics. Listening skills require proper concentration on inferring the message. By giving complete attention to the sound, the listener can comprehend the message.

Listening is important for the following reasons: it is the key component of effective communication, it is the most important part in communication, it is important for productive collaboration, and it is crucial when someone to learn effectively. (Eatough, 2022, p.83) Listening is important because it occupies a big chunk of the time we spend communicating in the language, provides input that can be very significant for second language acquisition in general and the development of the speaking skill in particular, and promotes non-linear processing of language and encourages learners to develop "holistic" strategies to texts (M. Karimova, et al., 2020, pp.400-402).

Listening is now recognized as an interpretive process in which listeners actively construct meaning based on expectations, inferences, intentions, prior knowledge, and selective processing of the input (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Anderson & Lynch, 1988).

The expansion of listening skills in English as a foreign language holds a particular significance, as it underpins effective communication in today's world (Richard, R., 2002). Despite its vital role, listening skills are repeatedly overlooked in numerous educational settings, leading to a deficiency of focus, motivation, and appropriate content for learners. (Maley, 1998, p.99)

Thus, listening skill plays a very essential role as far as the English as a Second Language classroom is concerned.

**Various Strategies to Enhance Listening Skills**

There are two general types of strategies: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. (Oxford, 1990, p.17)

The taxonomy of language learning strategies is provided below:

- ❖ **Direct Strategies**
  - ➢ Memory strategies
    - The memory strategies conveys the acquired information to the long term memory
  - ➢ Compensation Strategies
    - It helps learners to comprehend the input to make logical assumptions and by referring to body language

  - ➢ Cognitive Strategies
    - It helps the learners to make inference out of what is there in schema
- ❖ **Indirect Strategies**
  - ➢ Metacognitive Strategies
    - It enables the self-learning process of learners for proper organization, evaluations and planning
  - ➢ Social Strategies
    - It assistances the learners to communicate with the society in organized way
  - ➢ Affective Strategies
    - It provides motivations, controls emotions and feelings of the learners so far as learning process is concerns

**The Role of Teacher in the Language Classroom**

So far as English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom is concerned, teacher plays a pivotal role as a facilitator. Teaching of listening skill is so difficult task because one can acquire it by much more practice. It is time consuming process as well.

ESL teachers are supposed to provide systematic opportunities to learners to learn how to comprehend the particular conversation or utterance as well as the attitude and mood of the speaker (Underwood, 1989, p.22).

The various roles of the teacher are indicated as below:

- ➢ A Facilitator:
  - • A teacher should provide the support to learners to explore the new spectrums so far as language learning process is concern.
- ➢ A Manager:
  - • A teacher should have quality of perfect classroom management techniques. So that the classroom learning process can run smoothly and the learners can achieve the desired goals.
- ➢ An Evaluator:
  - • As an evaluator the teacher should highlight the competence and the comprehension level of the learners rather than to point out the weaknesses of the learners.

**Tasks for Listening Skill**

Generally, there are three kinds of task for listening, which are known as pre-listening task, while-listening task and post-listening task. Pre-listening task should be based or prepared upon the Schema of the learners. Pre-listening tasks should be consisted of various activities, which can enhance and expand the comprehension level of listening skill (Underwood, 1989, p.25). The activities are supposed to be reflective so far as ESL learners are concerned.

**There are varieties of tasks like**:

- ➢ Matching activities
- ➢ Fill in the gap activities
- ➢ Multiple type choice based question
- ➢ True-false activities…, etc.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have discussed about the importance of listening skill so far as language classroom is concerned as well as its wide scope in area of research. I have also set out some theoretical aspects of listening comprehension. This paper also deals with the crucial role of the teacher in the language classroom. It also focuses about the varieties of task, its implementation in language classroom for the advancement and enhancement of the most overlooked language skill, listening.

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## Women's Voices and the Role of Education in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*

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***Abstract:*** *The aim of the present study is to examine how the novel portrays female agency in post-liberation Bangladesh and how education operates as a medium for empowerment and resistance against man-made structure in Tahmima Anam's novel The Good Muslim. Objectives of the study include exploring how the story shows women shaping their own identities, understanding the impact of sociopolitical changes on women's roles, and evaluating how education influences the way women think and act in society. The present study uses a qualitative approach. By closely examining the text, show how women's character development, dialogue, and patterns of gender roles and education affect them. The study reveals that the protagonist Maya's journey offers a different view from the usual male-centric histories. Education emerges as a central theme that empowers Maya and other women to question religious beliefs and cultural limits. The narrative emphasises how educated women deal with complex intersections of religion, politics, and gender while the nation is rebuilding its identity. In conclusion, the novel shows women's education not merely as a personal success of liberation but as a collective force capable of challenging systemic inequalities. Thus, the novel becomes a critical commentary on the silencing of women and the subversive potential of education in post-war nationhood.*

***Keywords****: education, women's voice, feminism, freedom, etc*

**Introduction**

In contemporary South Asian literature, the themes of partition, gender, and displacement have become a powerful lens through which the experiences of women are narrated and critiqued. Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* portrays the picture of post-liberation Bangladesh, highlighting the struggles of women to assert their voices in a society governed by patriarchy, tradition, and shifting political ideologies. The novel follows the journey of Maya Haque, an educated and politically aware woman who advocates for women's empowerment and transformation, and tries to find her place in a male-dominated society. The term women's voice refers to the expression of women's thoughts, experiences, identities, and emotions, which are often ignored or silenced in traditional societies. In this novel, Maya's voice challenges dominant cultural norms and becomes a medium for social critique, especially concerning women's position, religious extremism and political corruption. Anam portrays women not as passive recipients of history but as active agents whose lives reflect the tensions between public duties and private convictions. Maya challenges conventional roles given to

women and refuses to conform, highlighting the potential for reimagining womanhood in postcolonial societies. Education plays a transformative force in the novel, not only enabling Maya's self-awareness but also equipping her to engage critically with the world around her. It serves as a tool for empowerment and resistance, shaping both personal identity and public engagement. Thus, education in *The Good Muslim* is not just formal learning but learning to think freely, stand up for what is right, and fight for justice. This paper explores women's voices and highlights the empowering role of education in redefining gender roles in a turbulent sociopolitical landscape.

**Review of literature**

The study by Ahmed (2019), a paper titled "Questioning Global Muslim Diaspora: Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*", highlights the debates that followed the 9/11 attacks, especially how Islam became linked with terrorism, leading to the dichotomy of "good muslims" and "bad muslims". The paper provides an analysis of how Muslims were viewed and stereotyped after Islam post-terrorism incidents. The article talks about the global Muslim diaspora, emphasising on their experiences, difficulties, and identity of the global Muslims community, specially those living outside their origin countries. The author throws light on the struggles and mental consequences they face in different parts of the world, influenced by various social, political, and cultural settings. The study also shows how war and public opinion affect people's mental and emotional well-being, using the novel *The Good Muslim* as a central reference.

Majid and Jalaluddin (2018) examine the struggles and clashes arising from the intersection of religious and secular ideas in Anam's *The Good Muslim.* The study adds to ongoing discussions on the complex relationship between the secular and religious in the years following the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The authors not only show the crises between secular and religious but go deeper into the broader societal, political and cultural dynamics with reference to the characters, setting, plot development, and themes of the novel. The character of Sohail's radical transformation and Maya's response resulted in an estranged relationship and a family tragedy. Their growing distance and the tragedy in their family show how strong beliefs can tear apart personal relationships. Overall, research articles point out the broader social implications of challenging and destabilising binary classifications, particularly those calling someone a 'good' or 'bad' Muslim.

Avishek Bhattacharya's (2017) *Of Erasure and Resistance: Negotiating History and Identity in Tahmima Anam's The Good Muslim* offers a detailed exploration of how the national identity of Bangladesh after its independence is shaped through the two key forces: the loss of historical truth and individual resistance. Through characters like Maya and Sohail, Bhattacharya shows conflicting narratives of secular nationalism versus religious orthodoxy not only divide families but also cause deep tension within the country itself. The paper draws on theories of memory, identity, gender, and nationalism to highlight the marginalisation of

war heroines and children born of rape, revealing how their silences symbolise broader societal repression. In the end, the paper argues that Anam's narrative proposes healing through acts of remembrance and recognition of these hidden parts of the past. By doing so, the story suggests that recovering repressed histories is key to constructing a more inclusive way of building the nation's identity.

The existing research studies focus on the themes of identity, secularism, religion, partition and diaspora, etc. However, none of this work has addressed how education affected and how it helped women to raise their voices after post-war Bangladesh. Identifying this gap, the present study investigates the transformative influence of education in the immediate aftermath of the conflict and explores how it enabled Bangladeshi women to speak out and shape their roles in society, politics, and their personal lives. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) In what ways does a woman's voice serve as a form of resistance and empowerment during times of socio-political turmoil?
2) How does Maya's educational background influence her sense of self and her role in post-liberation Bangladesh?
3) In what ways does education empower women to challenge patriarchal norms in Anam's *A Good Muslim*?
4) How does education serve as a tool for shaping and reshaping female identity after Bangladesh's independence?

The aim of the study is to critically analyse how women's voices and the theme of education intersect to shape female identity, agency, and resistance in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* within the socio-political and cultural context of the post-liberation war of Bangladesh. The objectives of the present study;

1) To explore how women raise their voices against the patriarchal oppressive culture.
2) To examine the role of education in the empowerment or shaping of female identities.
3) To investigate how the novel reflects the conflict between tradition, modernity, and women's rights in a post-war Bangladeshi society.
4) To contribute to feminist literary discourse by evaluating how Anam's work critiques gender norms and educational inequality.

**Methodology**

This study uses qualitative methods to examine women's voices and the portrayal of education in *The Good Muslim*. Using close textual analysis, which is integrated to contextualise gender and education within Bangladesh's sociopolitical backdrop. This approach helps uncover deeper meanings embedded in the text regarding gender and learning.

**Tahmima Anam (b. 1975)**

Tahmima Anam is a well-known author in English from Bangladesh. She was born on October 8, 1975, in Dhaka, but spent her childhood in places like Paris and New York. Anam

started her literary career with her debut novel, *A Golden Age* (2007). This book won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2008. Anam is recognised for her *Bengal Trilogy*, which includes *A Golden Age* (2007), *The Good Muslim* (2011), and *The Bones of Grace* (2016). These works depict the story of Bangladesh's past, its people, culture and their struggles, focusing on how different generations deal with change and hardship. Being a Bangladeshi woman, Anam knows the country's traditions, culture, beliefs, and everyday life. Her literature often explores themes like family life, politics, women's issues, national identity, and how patriarchy affects society. She portrays strong female characters who challenge unfair customs and stand up against injustice. Through her female characters, Anam highlights women's aggression, which is often unheard of, and questions the rules that limit women's freedom.

### *The Good Muslim* (2008)

*The Good Muslim* continues the story from *A Golden Age*, which was about the 1971 war for Bangladesh's independence. *The Good Muslim* shifted to the aftermath of the war. It is set in Dhaka during the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period when the country was trying to rebuild a newly independent nation. The story continues with Haque's family, Rehana, and her children, Maya and Sohail, as they deal with the changing social and political landscape in post-war Bangladesh. It explores the war's deep wounds and the complexities of a newly independent society. Rehana, a widowed mother, is a powerful character who goes beyond traditional boundaries. She emerges as a modern and bold woman who fights to keep her family safe after the death of her husband, Iqbal. Similarly, her daughter, Maya, becomes more involved in the liberation movement. She fights for equality, standing up for the people of Bangladesh. Maya's character shows the strength of women who speak up and take action, even in difficult times. The novel provides themes such as finding one's quest for identity, love for the nation, women's empowerment, dealing with pain and loss, and the crisis between old traditions and modernity. It also explores how religion affects people's beliefs and the rebuilding of the country after the war. Through her female characters, Anam shows how women faced many complexities but stayed strong, fought for change, and contributed to the Bangladesh liberation war.

### Women's Voices and the Role of Education

In this novel, Anam turns the spotlight from the mother, Rehana Haque, to her children, Maya and Sohail, who were once active participants in the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. The central female character, Maya, plays an important part in the formation of the nation. She is educated, bold, and thinks freely. Maya is a doctor by profession, showing that she is both intellectually and professionally independent. Her role as a doctor also highlights the challenges faced by women in post-war Bangladesh. Maya's personal and professional life reflects the deeper struggles with ideas, gender expectations, and cultural clashes that shaped Bangladesh after independence.

Maya's journey clearly illustrates the transformative role of education, particularly in empowering women to act as agents of change. Maya goes through a very painful time when she works in a refugee camp, helping young women who were raped by Pakistani soldiers. She gives up her childhood dream of becoming a surgeon and decides to become a gynaecologist instead. She changed her career plans to take care of victimised women during the war. Her early ambition to become a surgeon shows that she has access to education and aspires to break traditional gender roles. The scientifically minded Maya chooses to be a "lady doctor" (Anam 11). She wants to help victimised women and challenge patriarchal superstitions that surround pregnancy and childhood (cited in Shama 13). For her, being a gynaecologist is not just a job; it is her way of resisting the societal norms that women are expected to follow. By choosing a path where she takes care of and supports other women, especially those who have suffered, she represents her feminist approach, advocating for women's health and rights. Her career is not just about work; it's about making a real difference in women's lives and stepping beyond traditional roles expected of women.

As a doctor, Maya works mainly for women in rural areas, as she helps to deliver war babies safely. She also spread awareness about health and hygiene among villagers. "Maya taught everyone in the village how to make oral rehydration fluid: a handful of molasses, a pinch of salt, a jug of boiled water. And they passed that season without a single dead child. By the following year, when she succeeded in petitioning the district to build them a tube well, she believed she had won their hearts" (Anam 12). This line represents Maya's dedication to improving women's health in rural areas and shows her belief in empowering women. Her actions extend beyond medical treatment; she also works to improve women's literacy and independence, helping them take charge of their own health and lives. Maya raises her voice against the unhygienic things. It showed that education is not confined to classrooms; it is most impactful when it directly addresses people's needs. In this sense, education becomes a form of resistance against structures that keep women dependent and voiceless.

In the village of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, Maya started a small clinic. She works hard to help women give birth safely and create awareness about family planning and hygiene practices. Her efforts not only bring down the death rates of children but also the health of the whole village improves. One day, Maya's friend and patient, Nazia, said she wants to dip her legs in the village pond to prove her innocence and that she is not guilty. Her husband, Masud, and many villagers blame her for giving birth to a cursed child. They think the baby is cursed. Masud blames Nazia and punishes her for the child's distinctive appearance. Maya tries to make them understand that the baby looks different because of a disease and not because Nazia did anything wrong. She explains the scientific reason for the baby's appearance and the nature of the disease. Maya stands up strongly in front of a crowd of men and villagers to defend a child with Down's syndrome saying, "It's not a curse, it's Down's syndrome. The child will be different, he'll have problems, but he'll survive, I can show you how to care for him" (ibid

**Literary Enigma**

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

23). Her words show her progressive and scientific understanding of health issues. By finding the diagnosis correctly instead of labelling it a curse, Maya goes against the superstitions and fears that many people in the village still believe in. This moment shows her desire to help women by giving them knowledge and support.

Maya also offers to help the family take care of the child, which reveals her kindness and concern for people who are often marginalised or judged unfairly. Maya believes in using facts and scientific knowledge, which makes her stand out as someone with a clear, modern vision. Through Maya, the author Anam shows the struggle between old beliefs and modernity and how one person can make a difference by choosing understanding over fear. Maya's actions are strong and meaningful because she raises her voice in a space where men usually make the decisions. She does not remain quiet or say what others expect just to avoid trouble. Instead, she speaks out about what is right and wrong and tries to change people's thinking. This shows that women also have the power to lead and make a difference, even in a world where they are often ignored.

During the war, many women were brutally raped and went through deep psychological trauma. They have sacrificed their pride and dignity for the sake of their country. Women gradually lose their confidence, self-worth, and clear thinking because of the terrible things done to them by the Pakistani army, both physically and mentally. Anam shows women's struggle quietly inside themselves, trying to hold on to their basic rights and longing to be accepted. Maya tells their stories and memories, showing how each woman was affected in her own way. "Maya was tasked with telling these women that their lives would soon return to normal, that they would go home and their families would embrace them as heroes of the war" (ibid 69). Maya's kind words are meant to comfort and respect women who have gone through pain. By assuring that they would be seen as heroes, she tried to change how society often views women in such situations as stigmatised. Instead, Maya's words aimed to admire their strength and bravery. She wanted people to understand that these women were not just victims but made great sacrifices. Her actions reflect a strong belief in women's bravery and hope for a better future where women are respected and valued for all they have endured. It also shows a feminist approach that women have the power to make their own choices and deserve to be included and respected in the story of the nation's struggle and healing after the war.

In a society where men usually have more power, it is difficult for girls to live their own way. The birth of a baby girl often shows the ongoing struggle against social prejudices that treat women as less important. When Rokeya feels exhausted from trying to give birth, Maya softly tells her, "You know what? It's a girl. This is your little girl" (ibid 237). These words give Rokeya emotional energy, strength and hope. With that, the delivery became successful. Maya's voice becomes a tool of empowerment, renewing Rokeya's strength. Her whisper is more than just comfort; it stands against the rules of a male-centred world. Rokeya understands the values of her daughter and believes in her potential. Her quiet celebration of

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*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
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*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

the birth of a girl becomes an act of defiance against unfair traditions. It shows her belief in the strength and importance of women, even in a society that often ignores it. This moment also shows the strong bond between women. It highlights how they support each other, keep going in tough times, and continue to hope for a better future. Maya's words and actions represent that she believes in a world where girls can live independently and happily, showing the feminist idea of gender equality and empowerment. Thus, characters like Rokeya and Maya show the fight for gender justice between men and women by learning, helping each other, and believing in equal rights. Their actions step toward a conservative society that recognises and celebrates the worth of every girl born into it.

Thus, Maya's journey represents the theme of women's voices and how education can change lives. As both a doctor and activist, Maya fights against the conservative structure and asserts her freedom through learning and helping others. Her rejection to conform to traditional roles highlights how education equips women to speak out against unfair treatment. Maya's voice becomes a symbol of resistance, advocating for social reform and gender equity. Despite societal pressures, she remains firm in her convictions. Maya's journey proves that educated women can lead change in society. Her character reaffirms that education is not just knowledge; it's about gaining freedom and speaking against injustice.

**Conclusion**

In *The Good Muslim* by Tahmima Anam, the female protagonist, Maya shows how a woman's voice emerges as a powerful form of resistance and empowerment in the socio-political turmoil of post-liberation Bangladesh. As a doctor, activist, and deeply principled individual, Maya refuses to conform to rigid societal expectations. Instead of staying quiet, she speaks out against the injustices she witnesses in society. Her strong commitment to honesty, justice, and women's rights becomes a way for her to push back against both unequal treatment to women and the conservative culture that tries to keep women quiet. Maya stands against the patriarchal norms that expect women to be secondary and weak by asserting their independence, both intellectually and socially. She becomes a doctor and works in villages to help women, which not only defies gendered expectations but also empowers others. Maya refuses to follow the usual path of getting married or being a mother. Through her bold choices and strong beliefs, Maya's character represents the powerful symbol of raising women's voices within a patriarchal society.

Maya's educational background plays a big role in shaping her identity and ideological stance in post-liberation Bangladesh. As a medically trained, secular, and politically aware woman, her learning teaches her to think rationally and a commitment to progressive values, gender equality, justice, particularly women's rights and fairness in society. Education gives her the strength to challenge patriarchal and religious norms, especially those that harm women. It thus not only defines her role as a reformist but also isolates her, reflecting the broader

tensions between secular nationalism and religious revivalism in the newly built nation, Bangladesh.

Education is shown as an influential tool that enables Maya to stand up against unfair rules made by men in post-liberation Bangladesh. As a doctor, Maya thinks logically and questions superstition and oppressive traditional beliefs. Her critical thinking helps her to identify how patriarchal structures harm women and prevent social progress. Education provides her with emotional and economic independence; she earns her own money and feels strong on her own. She doesn't depend on male family members for support, which allows her to make her own choices, such as moving away from home, working in rural areas, and standing by her beliefs. Maya's awareness of politics and justice, gained through her education, pushes her to become an activist for women's fundamental rights and equal treatment. She supports freedom fighters, writes in newspapers, magzines and talks about sexual violence during the war, and tries to make society aware. Through Maya, Anam shows that education is more than just gaining knowledge. It gives them the strength to speak out, take action, and hope for a more equal society.

Education emerges as a potent instrument for shaping and reshaping female identity. Her education empowers her with a secular, feminist consciousness that challenges traditional gender norms and societal expectations in post-independence Bangladesh. Through her medical profession and political activism, Maya reclaims a voice for women in a patriarchal society, asserting autonomy in personal and public spheres, where women expect to follow social laws. It gives her the courage to challenge old rules and create a new space for herself and other women. Education, in this context, isn't just about holding a degree; it is transformative, enabling women like Maya to question, redefine, and reconstruct their roles in a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

Thus, in *The Good Muslim* by Tahmima Anam, shows education plays a vital role in empowering women to speak up and stand against traditional gender norms. Maya's character proves that learning is not just for personal growth but also a resistance against a male-dominated society, where women are treated as secondary and unfairly. Her knowledge and strength allow her to go beyond social expectations and advocate for other women, especially in villages where such help is rare. Thus, it clearly represents that educated women can bring change by using their voice and strength to question unfair traditions and inspire progress within their communities.

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# 10
## Dalit, Tribal – Heard and Unheard Voices

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***Abstract:*** *The most deprived and ignored strata of society, Dalit and Tribal community are the two faces of the same coin. India has the largest sectors of tribal community. The culture, traditions and the geographical conditions has generated many such communities who are barely seen on screen. The research paper represents the conceptual approach to the tribal community in Karnataka and was given a new dimension to the study of Tribal Literature. The monotonous and recurring concepts of deprivation and downtrodden were overwhelmed with new developments and initiatives of tribes in grandeur to reach the zenith. The focus is made on the culture, status, lifestyle and literacy levels of the tribal community and the upbeat of the same to get fame and recognition in the society. It also points the growth of tribal community and the various government schemes for the overall development in the society.*

***Keywords****: Tribal Community, Dalit, Empowerment, Forest, Karnataka*

## Introduction

Dalit and the Tribal Literature have gained its own place as any other literature which has marked a very different panorama. The replica of pain and agony are seen in many forms like poetry, novels, plays, biographies and essays. It's a genre that expresses the scream towards equality, status and liberation was echoed and few were heard and many unheard. It's a form of resistance against the human norms and regulations which is persistently a struggle to achieve liberty for a peaceful environment. It focuses on challenging the existing social and political order to bring some revolutionary changes in the society. They address the themes like caste discrimination, identity, and reclamation of cultural heritage.

The term 'Dalit literature' was first used in 1958, at the first ever Dalit conference held in Bombay. They were called as "Untouchables" and somewhere the struggle was as same as the African-American for their rights. Dalit is not a caste but related to the experiences, joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest strata of society. They were treated in a very low layers of caste system which were dominated by the so-called elite caste of Brahmin. The transformation of the slurred identity of these so called 'untouchables' to create self - identity as Dalit is a story of collective struggle waged over centuries. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, two soaring figures in Dalit history, were the first to appropriate the word Dalit as to recognise and identify in the society.

In the recent study, the Tribal study has gained much importance, as many tribal groups has witnessed by creating their own place through their talent and creativity. Tribal literature, also known as Adivasi Sahitya, is a rich body of oral and written narratives that reflects the unique cultures, traditions, and experiences of indigenous communities. We adhere to many folk

songs, dance, narratives, and riddles which preserves our culture and traditions. The tribal people also known as the Adivasi's are the poorest in the country, who are still dependent on hunting, agriculture and fishing. Some of the major tribal groups in India include Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Angamis, Bhils, Bhutia's and Great Andamanese. All these tribal people have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle. Most tribes are from thick forested areas who are deprived of all the facilities and were ignored.

## Literature Review

The tribes in Karnataka, the most prominent tribal groups are known in different names Soliga, Siddi, Lambani, Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, Koraga, Iruliga, Kodava, Adiyan, Barda, Bavacha/Bamcha, Bhil, and Yerava present in the state and are scattered in different geographical areas with different languages apart from Kannada. These tribes contribute to the rich cultural drapery of Karnataka. In fact, the twentieth century has given importance to them with recognition and identity in society.

Demographic Profile

The total number of tribal people recognized by the Government in Karnataka is about 42,48,978 which is 6.95 per cent of the total population of the State. There has been a 6 per cent increase in the tribal population during the last decade.

Literacy Rate

The literacy rate of Tribal community in Karnataka is a cause for concern, as it has consistently been lower than that of the total population, which was 36.0 per cent in 1991, increased to 48.3 per cent in 2001 and further increased to 53.9 per cent in 2011, while the State average moved up from 66.64 to 75 per cent in last decade. The literacy rate among the tribal population in Karnataka is 51 per cent in urban and 65.7 per cent in rural areas, while the overall figure of the State is 60.4 per cent in rural areas and 76.2 per cent in urban areas. The literacy rate among male population was found to be significantly higher at 57.5 per cent than the female counterparts where it is 42.5 percent.

In the field of education, the government measures to uphold and identify the tribal community is significant. Some of the schemes which has really helped them to reframe their status and to maintain a better livelihood are substantial. Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme Post Matric Scholarship Scheme National Scholarship Scheme (Top Class) Multi Sectoral Schemes: Grants to States Grants under Article 275(1) Scheme for Development of PVTGs Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PM-AAGY) Research Monitoring & Evaluation Livelihood Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PM-JJVM) Venture Capital Fund for STs Logistics and Marketing of tribal products in North East Support to NSTFDC 2 National Overseas Scholarship Scheme and National Fellowship Scheme.

Health Status

The health status is the major concern, where despite of setting up many Primary health centres, by the government, the awareness towards it is very low. Existing literature ranges from studies on tracing the genetic origin and understanding of some of the tribes to the assessment of availability of health care facility and their utilization, and to study of anaemia and hypertension among the tribes, their nutritional status, lifestyle disorders, and oral hygiene. Overall, the challenges faced by them are poverty, lack of health care, low literacy level and loss of traditional livelihood.

**Objective**

1. To study the Tribal Community as a new dimension.
2. To analyse the social condition and status of Tribal Community in Karnataka.

The government assistance to uplift the community is very wide, but unable to penetrate few tribal areas. The Forest Right Act of (FRA) 2006, aims to distinguish and vest forest rights in forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in and cultivating forest land for generations. It acknowledges in conserving and managing forests recognising the tribal's traditions and culture. The ministry is well aware of the taboos and ethnic culture that enable them to lead a satisfactory solution to their issues. The multi sectoral schemes with grants and financial assistance under the State Developmental Projects are provided to them. Education, Livelihood Skill Development, Health Nutrition, Animal Husbandry (AH) Infrastructure Development Admin, R&D Irrigation and watershed management Road connectivity Sports and Games Drinking Water, Market and Value Chain Development, Eco-Tourism, and Art and Culture are the sectors which were given space for the development.

The community, once deprived of everything, where the voices were disregarded, today with their struggle and hard exertion, has achieved the lost identity. This is one of the milestones towards the development and progressive efforts. The best upshot is Tulsi Gowda, born in Honnali village in Karnataka, known by the environmentalists as "Encyclopaedia of the Forest", and her tribal community recognises as "VanaDevi – Tree Goddess" a member of the Halakki Vokkaliga tribe in Karnataka, is prominent for her deep knowledge of the forest and her dedication to environmental conservation.  She was born into the tribal community with a strong connection to nature and traditional ecological knowledge.  Growing up in a forested area, she had developed her understanding of plants and their properties from a young age, working alongside her mother at a nursery. She joined the forest department as a volunteer and later as a permanent employee, dedicating her time in planting and nurturing trees. Her traditional knowledge and expertise include identifying different plant species, understanding their medicinal properties, and utilizing sustainable harvesting techniques. She has planted and nurtured over 100,000 trees, contributing to the restoration of ecosystems and the preservation of biodiversity. In this era, she has set a right example to protect our environment with the tag line – Grow Forest, save the land.

Born in an economically background community, she has lost her father when she was two or three, even the data is not known, her mother started working at the nursery she joined hands later. She was married off at the age of 10 or 12 (which too she doesn't quite know), and lost her husband in her 50s. She served another 15 years at the nursery before retiring 12 years ago, at the age of 70. During the time, she made invaluable contributions to the forest department's afforestation and efforts with her traditional knowledge of the land. She is the best example for using her native knowledge to save forest.  She was an expert in medicinal properties of various plants, sustainable harvesting techniques, and forest conservation methods that have been developed by indigenous communities over centuries.

Her expertise includes understanding:

- Which seeds will thrive in specific soil conditions
- The optimal seasons for planting different species

- Natural methods of pest control

- Identifying plants with medicinal properties

- Sustainable harvesting techniques

Her focus was not only to grow trees but to cultivate a paradigm in her community to recreate things and stood as a model for the whole nation. Her dedication to environment earned recognition and admiration, and was recognized with the Padma Shri award in 2022. Her legacy is an exemplary for our future generations as the world faces climate change and deforestation. In 1986, she received the Indira Priyadarshini Award, also known as the IPVM award. The IPVM award recognizes pioneering contributions made by individuals or institutions to afforestation and wasteland development. In 1999, Gowda received the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award, the "second highest civilian honour of the Karnataka state of India". It is given yearly to distinguished citizens of Karnataka State aged over sixty.

**Conclusion**

The legacy of Shrimati Tulsi Gowda is an inspiration to our young generation**.** She has showcased how community-led initiatives can lead to substantial ecological change. She has also exhibited the importance of developing a culture and connected towards the environment. Born in a poor community, without proper education and guidance, she withstood all the odds and storms which made her community proud. The struggle towards equality and identity was a prominent matter of pride for the community. She is a bare footed incarnation of Devi (Goddess) to all the researchers and environmentalists. Deprivation withstands and lead to a better life where in her case it proved and the whispers were heard.

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**11**

**Beyond the Binary: Intersectionality and Queer Identity in Global LGBTQ+ Cinema**

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*Abstract: This paper essentially tries to study the representation of queer identities in films through the lens of LGBTQ+ themes and queer theory. The curated selection of seven landmark LGBTQ+ films—Moonlight, Portrait of a Lady on Fire, Paris Is Burning, Call Me by Your Name, A Fantastic Woman, The Handmaiden, and Weekend—showcases the rich thematic and traditional diversity within queer cinema. These works not only portray queer experiences with authenticity and emotional depth, but also engage with broader socio-political issues such as gender roles, race, class, and societal marginalization.*

*Moonlight is a quiet yet powerful coming-of-age story that explores Black masculinity, queerness, and vulnerability across three phases of one man's life. Portrait of a Lady on Fire offers a radical feminist reimagining of the love story, centering the female gaze and emotional autonomy. Paris Is Burning, a seminal documentary, captures the resilience and creativity of New York's drag ballroom scene, highlighting the intersecting oppressions faced by queer people of color.*

*Call Me by Your Name paints a tender and poetic picture of first love and sexual awakening within a fleeting summer. A Fantastic Woman gives voice to a transgender woman navigating grief and social prejudice, making a compelling case for dignity and representation. The Handmaiden disrupts traditional gender and power dynamics through an erotic, psychologically layered lesbian romance set in colonial-era Korea. Finally, Weekend brings intimacy and honesty to a brief yet impactful gay relationship, resisting stereotypes by focusing on emotional realism.*

*The paper aims to analyse how selected LGBTQ+ films represent queer identity, intimacy, resistance, and intersectionality, and how these representations challenge traditional, heteronormative narratives in global cinema. Together, these films illustrate how cinema can both reflect and shape queer lives, offering counter-narratives to dominant ideologies and helping imagine more inclusive, fluid, and liberated futures.*

*Keywords: Queer identity, intersectionality, resistance, intimacy, representation.*

**Introduction**

Cinema has long served as a mirror of societal norms, values, and philosophies, but it also holds the radical potential to reimagine worlds and identities. In recent decades, LGBTQ+ cinema has emerged as a influential cultural and political space, articulating diverse queer experiences while challenging the supremacy of heteronormative narratives. This paper explores how queer identities are represented in seven landmark films: *Moonlight* (2016), *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019), *Paris Is Burning* (1990), *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), *A Fantastic Woman* (2017), *The Handmaiden* (2016), and *Weekend* (2011). Drawing from queer

theory and intersectional frameworks, this study investigates how these films portray intimacy, resistance, and identity across lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

## I. Theoretical Framework: Queer Theory and Intersectionality

Queer theory, as articulated by scholars such as Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, critiques the notion of fixed identity categories and challenges the binaries that reinforce dominant understandings of gender and sexuality—such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual (Butler 23; Sedgwick 8). Rather than viewing gender and sexuality as innate or biologically determined, queer theory understands them as socially constructed, fluid, and performed. Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity is especially influential, proposing that "gender is not something one is but something one does—an ongoing series of acts, gestures, and performances" (Butler 25). These performances are shaped by cultural norms and power relations, which reward conformity and punish deviation.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick further expands the discourse by analyzing how societal structures imposes heteronormativity and repress queer desire. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick identifies how the dichotomy of ""in the closet" versus "out" oversimplifies queer existence, and how knowledge and ignorance about sexuality are strategically deployed in power structures" (Sedgwick 9). Queer theory thus dismantles rigid taxonomies of identity and instead explores multiplicity, contradiction, and ambiguity.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, complements queer theory by emphasizing that "identity is not singular but composed of multiple, intersecting dimensions—such as race, class, gender, and sexuality" (Crenshaw 1244). Crenshaw originally used intersectionality to examine how Black women face unique forms of discrimination that are not reducible to either racism or sexism alone. In LGBTQ+ studies, intersectionality becomes vital in discovering how experiences of queerness are arbitrated by other axes of power and oppression. A queer identity cannot be disentangled from the racialized body that carries it, the socioeconomic context in which it is lived, or the cultural narratives that define it.

Together, queer theory and intersectionality provide a powerful lens for analyzing LGBTQ+ cinema. They move the discussion beyond visibility and representation to ask: Whose stories are being told? How are they told? What power structures are confronted or reinforced through these cinematic narratives? These frameworks allow us to cross-examine the ways in which film not only reflects but also shapes the lived realities of queer individuals—realities that are always molded by overlapping structures of privilege and oppression. As such, they are instrumental in decoding how queerness is arbitrated, performed, counterattacked, and politicized on screen.

## II. Moonlight: Black Queerness and Emotional Vulnerability

Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight* is a tender, tripartite coming-of-age film that traces the emotional and psychological growth of Chiron, a young Black queer man navigating a world marked by racial, sexual, and economic marginalization. Rather than following a typical "coming out" narrative, the film centers on silence, touch, and longing, using close-ups and ambient sound to reveal Chiron's inner world. "Rather than dramatize coming out or sensationalize queerness, *Moonlight* meditates on silence, touch, and longing" (Fleetwood 163).

Chiron's queerness is shaped not only by personal repression but by systemic forces that criminalize Black male vulnerability and queer desire.

The film's subtle, sensory style emphasizes the emotional costs of conforming to rigid ideals of masculinity. As Rich argues, "Black queer cinema must navigate the intersecting stigmas of race and sexuality" (Rich 36). This is most poignantly felt in the final act, where Chiron confesses to Kevin that he hasn't been touched since their adolescent encounter. Mercer

interprets this as evidence of "sexual repression but the systemic denial of tenderness for Black queer men" (Mercer 121).

Through its quiet intimacy, *Moonlight* reclaims emotional depth and softness for Black queer identities too often rendered invisible.

### III. Portrait of a Lady on Fire: The Female Gaze and Erotic Resistance

Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* reimagines the romantic period drama by centering female desire and eliminating the male gaze. Set in 18th-century France, the film explores the growing intimacy between Marianne, a painter, and Héloïse, her subject. Their relationship unfolds through acts of mutual observation, creating what Doane calls "one woman looking at the other with equal agency" (Doane 95). This visual reciprocity challenges traditional cinematic dynamics that render women passive.

Sciamma's resistance lies not only in content but in form—her camera emphasizes emotional nuance and shared glances over objectification. As Mulvey notes, "the male gaze traditionally positions women as passive subjects of erotic spectacle" (Mulvey 62), but Sciamma counters this by portraying mutual desire and emotional autonomy. The film also resists queer tragedy by focusing on memory and longing rather than loss, embodying Halberstam's idea of "queer temporalities" that reject linear, heteronormative endings (Halberstam 109). Through its gaze and structure, the film becomes a radical act of queer storytelling.

### IV. Paris Is Burning: Ballroom Culture and Structural Oppression

Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning* (1990) is a seminal documentary that captures the vibrant drag ballroom culture of 1980s New York, centering the lives of queer and trans Black and Latinx individuals who created spaces of visibility, expression, and resistance amid systemic oppression. The ballroom scene—composed of categories like "realness," voguing, and house affiliations—functions not merely as entertainment but as a complex site of identity formation and survival. As Bailey observes, the pursuit of "realness," or the ability to convincingly embody roles such as a businessman or a wealthy white woman, becomes a tactical performance that offers "temporary relief from structural marginalization" (Bailey 364). In this way, the ball becomes a space where fantasy and aspiration intersect with lived trauma and social critique.

Livingston's film provides a rich visual ethnography of queer life under duress, documenting how performance becomes both a personal and communal tool for reclaiming dignity in the face of poverty, racism, transphobia, and homophobia. The film celebrates the artistry, wit, and resilience of its subjects, revealing how the ballroom is not only a stage, but a haven of chosen family, affirmation, and subversive creativity. Yet, the documentary also raises significant questions about authorship, power, and gaze. bell hooks critiques *Paris Is Burning* for its framing, arguing that it reflects a white, external gaze that extracts spectacle without fully empowering its subjects: "the film reproduces white spectatorship and does not grant subjects full narrative control" (hooks 149). This tension situates the film as both a celebration of queer culture and a contested site of cultural commodification.

Ultimately, *Paris Is Burning* stands as a foundational text in queer and documentary cinema—one that simultaneously illuminates the beauty and struggle of its subjects while provoking ongoing debates about ethics, agency, and the politics of representation.

### V. Call Me by Your Name: Desire, Ephemerality, and Queer Nostalgia

Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name* (2017) offers a lush, introspective exploration of first love through the unfolding relationship between Elio, a precocious 17-year-old, and Oliver, a confident graduate student staying with Elio's family in northern Italy during the

summer of 1983. The film's aesthetic—marked by slow pacing, warm lighting, classical music, and idyllic landscapes—creates a dreamlike atmosphere that evokes nostalgia and sensuality. This atmosphere allows the narrative to focus not on overt declarations of identity, but on the subtleties of queer longing and emotional awakening. As Andrews notes, the film "subtly explores the emotional complexity of queer desire" rather than engaging directly with identity politics (Andrews 211), portraying queerness as a deeply felt, personal experience rather than a political statement.

The film has sparked debate, particularly around the age gap between Elio and Oliver. However, many readings emphasize that *Call Me by Your Name* captures the bittersweet and universal experience of ephemeral love. The relationship is brief, but its emotional impact is profound, highlighting what Edelman calls "queer temporality"—"a nonlinear experience of time shaped by longing, loss, and fleeting moments of connection" (Edelman 41). Queer love in the film is not framed as deviant or tragic, but as formative and deeply human.

This affirmation is most powerfully expressed in the climactic monologue by Elio's father, who gently urges his son to honour his feelings rather than repress them: "To feel nothing so as not to feel anything—what a waste." This parental recognition serves as a radical gesture of acceptance, positioning queer love as worthy of reflection, grief, and memory. In resisting shame and validating queer emotional depth, the film contributes to a broader cinematic project of humanizing queer experience, even when it exists within the boundaries of a single transformative summer.

## VI. A Fantastic Woman: Trans Representation and Social Exclusion

Sebastián Lelio's *A Fantastic Woman* centers on Marina, a transgender woman navigating the grief of her partner's death while facing institutional and familial discrimination. Played by transgender actress Daniela Vega, Marina embodies a complex, dignified, and emotionally rich portrayal of trans identity—"an exception in global cinema where trans characters are often reduced to stereotypes or played by cisgender actors" (Serano 43).

The film critiques the systems—legal, medical, familial—that attempt to erase Marina's legitimacy. "Whether through misgendering, denial of inheritance, or physical threats, the institutions surrounding her embody what Dean Spade terms "administrative violence" against trans lives" (Spade 57). Yet Marina fights through poise, performance, and perseverance. A prominent scene where she sees herself defiantly singing on stage illustrates the liberatory potential of fantasy in resisting oppression.

Vega's casting is politically significant, challenging the erasure of trans actors and inviting audiences to witness trans experiences from a place of authenticity. As Trujillo notes, "representation without embodiment leads to symbolic annihilation" (Trujillo 211). *A Fantastic Woman* therefore offers more than visibility; it constructs trans subjectivity as resilient, nuanced, and indispensable to contemporary queer discourse.

## VII. The Handmaiden: Erotic Sub version and Colonial Context

Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden*, based on Sarah Waters' novel *Fingersmith*, relocates the narrative to colonial-era Korea and transforms it into a visually lavish psychological thriller and lesbian romance. The film's three-part structure offers everchanging perspectives, each revealing new layers of manipulation, desire, and agency.

Unlike Western portrayals of lesbianism, which often axis around tragedy or objectification, *The Handmaiden* centers mutual eroticism and resistance. "Its sexually explicit scenes are neither gratuitous nor voyeuristic but embedded in the characters' quest for autonomy" (Kim 310). Sook-hee and Lady Hideko, first complicit in patriarchal exploitation, eventually subvert

their roles and escape together—physically and symbolically dismantling the structures of male domination.

Colonialism, class, and gender traverse deeply in the film. The Japanese occupation of Korea provides a backdrop of cultural hegemony, and the exploitation of Hideko by her uncle reflects broader systems of imperial and patriarchal violence. Through deception, alliance, and eventually escape, the protagonists endorse a queer form of insurgency—"subverting both the male gaze and colonial power" (Chun 187).

## VIII. Weekend: Queer Intimacy and Everyday Realism

Andrew Haigh's *Weekend* is a quiet yet profound film that explores the fleeting yet impactful relationship between two men, Russell and Glen, over a single weekend. Avoiding melodrama or spectacle, the film focuses on dialogue, emotional vulnerability, and the ordinary details of intimacy—trademarks of realist cinema.

What sets *Weekend* apart is its authenticity and refusal to conform to romantic clichés. The film explores issues of disclosure, internalized homophobia, and the socio-political implications of being openly queer. Russell, more reserved and closeted, contrasts with Glen's assertive queer politics, "creating a space for conversations around identity negotiation and self-acceptance" (Dyer 99).

The temporality of their relationship—a mere weekend—highlights the fleeting but transformative potential of queer connection. Rather than romanticizing or pathologizing queer love, Haigh presents it as ordinary, flawed, and deeply human. As Edelman posits in his theory of queer negativity, "resisting normative futures is a form of political resistance" (Edelman 4). *Weekend* quietly asserts this through its embrace of short-lived, non-teleological queer romance.

## Conclusion: Queer Cinema as Counter-Narrative

Across diverse topographies, genres, and time periods, these seven films exemplify the array of queer identities and experiences. Each challenges dominant narratives—whether through aesthetics, narrative structure, or casting—and offers a vision of queerness as dynamic, intersectional, and resistant.

From *Moonlight*'s tender portrayal of Black queer vulnerability to *The Handmaiden*'s erotic subversion of patriarchal and colonial hierarchies, these films resist generalization. They interrogate structures of power—racism, transphobia, patriarchy, capitalism—and foreground queer agency and intimacy. Through memory, fantasy, resistance, and love, they present queerness as a lived, felt, and fought-for reality.

The representational politics at work in these films are not deprived of complexities. Questions of appropriation, access, and audience reception remain critical. Yet, as this study has shown, queer cinema is not merely a genre but a radical act of world-building. These cinematic texts expand the possibilities of queer futures, reminding us that representation matters not just for visibility but for existence, joy, and deliverance.

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## 12

### From Picture Books to Page-Turners: Authorial Intent and Audience

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Page no. 96-106

*Abstract: Young minds are greatly influenced by the diverse content of children's literature, which spans all genres and age categories. It's designed to cater to a wide range of age groups, from infant picture books to young adult fiction for teenagers, and it takes into account their cognitive, emotional and social development stages. By encouraging empathy, self-awareness, and personal development through children's literature, young readers can shape their perception of the world and their attitudes. Through the use of stories, children cultivate qualities such as empathy, self-awareness and emotional intelligence -- vital life skills that help them navigate complex worlds in young adult fiction. YA literature offers readers a range of genres that can be explored, including fantasy (especially modern day) romance and realistic fiction, which allows them to discover new interests and find engaging books. Understanding others through different experiences and viewpoints is achieved by young readers.' The intricate topics in YA literature promote critical thinking and a more comprehensive understanding of the world. This type of literature presents a diverse range of themes and genres, providing readers with the opportunity to explore their interests and relate to relevant stories. The use of YA literature can foster an environment where young readers can explore themselves, develop empathy and self-awareness, and engage in emotional exploration. Several benefits make reading children's literature and young adult fiction significant: Children's books, and young adult fiction, can provide readers with skills, values of thought which are essential to life. YA fiction and children's literature share many similarities in terms of themes and motifs, which are tailored to the specific audiences of their respective genres.*
*The writing style, tone, and content of the work must be tailored to the cognitive, emotional, or social development of its target audience. Rather than publishing content for children, writing should be considered a labor of love that necessitates hard work and skill in shaping the target audience. These skills and values give young readers the opportunity to move on to more elaborate plots, themes, and writing styles in young adult fiction. Young readers can learn essential skills and values from children's literature, which will serve as a foundation for young adult fiction, allowing them to explore more mature themes and engage with intricate narratives. There are differences between children's literature and young adult fiction in terms of moral teachings and character development.*

*Keywords: Cognitive, Emotional Intelligence, Empathy, Self – Awareness, Social Development, Genres.*

Children's literature is a dynamic and diverse field that plays a significant role in shaping young minds, encompassing a wide range of genres, formats, and age groups. From picture books for infants to young adult fiction for teenagers, it is tailored to specific age groups, taking into account their cognitive, emotional, and social development. This literature fosters literacy, imagination, and emotional intelligence, while also educating and informing young readers about the world around them. It fosters diversity, inclusivity, and social awareness by reflecting and influencing cultural heritage, society values, and conventions. By inspiring empathy, self-awareness, and personal growth, children's literature has the power to shape young readers' perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the world. It can inspire a lifelong love of reading and learning, essential for personal and academic success. Overall, children's literature is a vital part of a child's educational and personal development, providing a foundation for future growth and success. Its significance cannot be emphasized, and its impact is deep. By encouraging a love of reading, children's literature creates the foundation for a lifetime of education and exploration.

As children grow, their reading preferences naturally evolve, leading them to transition from children's literature to young adult fiction. This shift is driven by improved reading skills, exposure to diverse genres and themes, and a desire to relate to characters and experiences that mirror their own lives. By encouraging a love of reading, children's literature creates the foundation for a lifetime of education and exploration.

Through stories, children develop empathy, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence, essential life skills that benefit them as they navigate more complex themes and issues in young adult fiction. This transition is crucial in shaping young minds, promoting academic attainment, and supporting psychological wellbeing, ultimately setting the stage for a lifelong love of reading and learning.

As children mature, they naturally transition to young adult (YA) fiction, drawn by several key factors. Improved reading skills enable them to tackle complex themes, genres, and storylines, appreciating nuanced language and deeper themes. YA literature's diverse range of genres, including fantasy, sci-fi, romance, and realistic fiction, allows young readers to explore new interests and find resonating books. Relatable characters and experiences are also a major draw, as YA literature features protagonists navigating adolescence, making it easier for readers to identify with their struggles and triumphs. Themes like identity, self-discovery, and transitioning to adulthood resonate deeply. YA literature provides escapism and a means of self-expression, allowing readers to immerse themselves in fantastical worlds or complex issues, exploring their identities and understanding their place in the world. The transition to YA fiction can be gradual, with some readers starting with middle-grade novels that offer more mature content and complex characters. Ultimately, YA literature's impact on young readers is profound, fostering empathy, self-discovery, and critical thinking. By reading about diverse experiences and perspectives, young readers develop a deeper understanding of others. Young adult literature fosters introspection, self-awareness, and personal development.

Complex issues in YA books help readers develop critical thinking skills and nuanced understanding of the world. Engaging YA literature can cultivate a lifelong love for reading, essential for personal and academic success. As young readers navigate the challenges of adolescence, YA fiction provides a powerful tool for exploration, growth, and connection. By embracing this genre, readers can discover new worlds, characters, and experiences that shape their perspectives and inspire their imaginations. This transition marks an important milestone in a reader's journey, opening doors to new possibilities and understanding.

As children mature, they naturally progress to young adult literature, attracted to its complexity, diversity, and relatability. This genre offers a broad spectrum of themes and genres, enabling young readers to explore new interests and connect with stories that resonate with their experiences. By featuring characters navigating similar challenges and triumphs, YA literature fosters a sense of connection, allowing readers to explore their identities and understand their place in the world. Whether through escapism or emotional expression, YA literature provides a powerful tool for young readers to develop empathy, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of the world around them. This transition is shaped by individual preferences and reading experiences, ultimately playing a significant role in shaping young minds.

**Reading children's literature and young adult fiction is vital for several reasons:**

- Language and Literacy Development: These texts build a love of reading, develop literacy skills, and enhance language acquisition, vocabulary, and phonics.
- Imagination and Creativity: Stories spark imagination, fostering creative thinking and problem-solving.
- Literary Appreciation: Reading these works fosters an awareness of literary devices, narrative structure, and the expressive power of language.
- Cultural Understanding and Diversity: Children's literature reflects and promotes cultural diversity, fostering empathy and tolerance.
- Emotional and Psychological Development: Stories provide a safe space for exploring emotions, navigating challenges, and developing identity.
- Didactic Value: Children's literature teaches valuable lessons about ethics, values, and social responsibility.
- Preparation for Adult Fiction: Young adult literature bridges the gap to adult fiction, preparing readers for complex themes and literary styles.
- Engagement and Motivation: Well-crafted stories captivate readers, fostering a love of reading and learning.
- Understanding Childhood and Society: Children's literature offers insights into childhood experiences and societal values.
- Impact on Educators: Studying these texts equips teachers with knowledge and tools to select engaging and culturally appropriate texts.

By exploring children's literature and young adult fiction, readers can develop essential skills, values, and perspectives that benefit them throughout their lives. These texts play a significant role in shaping young minds, fostering a love of reading, and promoting personal growth and development.

**History of Children's Literature**

Since the start of the 17th century, when the only books produced for children were school books that taught them the alphabet and spelling as well as morals, etiquette, and religion, there have been numerous developments in the publishing of literature for children. At the time, Puritan ideas that children were naturally bad and required moral instruction shaped the content of school textbooks. But at the same time, inexpensively printed volumes known as chapbooks with well-known tales and stories started to be created and marketed. These novels were frequently condemned for deviating from Puritan principles because they did not feature exclusively moral tales (Gangi, 2004). After a while, Puritanical ideas gave way to the Enlightenment principles exemplified by John Locke's philosophy, which changed how children were perceived as a "blank slate" that could be written on. While moral stories and

fables continued to be written throughout this period, children's books also started to include more whimsical works with wordplay, riddles, rhymes, and games. Children's books have also appropriated tales like Robinson Crusoe, Ivanhoe, and Gulliver's Travels that were originally created for adults.

During the Enlightenment and Romantic eras, childhood was perceived as a period of innocence that was separate from adolescence (young adulthood) and adulthood, whereas before to the 17th century, children were considered miniature adults (Avery & Kinnell, 1995). Because children were no longer viewed as little adults but rather as innocent, playful beings, these shifts in perspective opened up a new market for the creation and publishing of books especially for them. Children's book author John Newbery founded the first publishing firm devoted to children's stories in the 18th century, which had a significant impact on children's literature. In addition to other children's book authors' works, he published his own stories (Gangi, 2004). A change in the way society saw children was reflected in the concept of a publishing business dedicated to children's literature. A higher number of books were created for children's play and enjoyment during the 19th century, including Randolph Caldecott's first picture book.

**History of Young Adult Fiction**

The young adult (YA) genre was pioneered by librarians, notably those at the New York Public Library (NYPL). A significant milestone was the NYPL's 1929 launch of its annual "Books for Young People" list. The term "Young Adult" was formally adopted in 1944 when NYPL librarian Margaret Scoggin renamed her column from "Books for Older Boys and Girls" to "Books for Young Adults." Early YA literature often centered on romance, but the 1960s saw a shift towards more nuanced portrayals of adolescent life, exemplified by S.E. Hinton's ground breaking novel "The Outsiders." This evolution marked a significant turning point in the genre, paving the way for diverse and complex storytelling that resonated with young readers. The YA genre offers accessible and powerful fiction that continues to represent the evolving experiences and viewpoints of teenagers.

**Pre-20th century**: The concept of childhood and adolescence has evolved significantly over time. Historically, children were not viewed as distinct from adults, and the modern notion of childhood emerged relatively recently. The term "teenager" gained prominence around World War II, driven by advances in psychology and sociological changes. This led to targeted marketing, including literature, for young adults. However, authors like Sarah Trimmer recognized young adults as a distinct age group as early as 1802, categorizing literature for those between 14 and 21 years old. Early children's literature was limited, with many works not specifically designed for young readers. Nonetheless, certain works, such as those by Lewis Carroll, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mark Twain, have become classics in the genre, appealing to both children and adults. These works have had a lasting impact on popular culture and literature, shaping the way we think about childhood and adolescence today.

According to M. O. Grenby, "there were very few... enjoyable books for children... at the beginning of the eighteenth century." Children read, of course, but the novels they most likely loved to read (or hear) were not created with them in mind. These were published for both children and adults, and included fables, fairy tales, long chivalric romances, and short, inexpensive pamphlet tales and ballads known as chapbooks. Consider Winter-Evenings Entertainments (1687) by Nathaniel Crouch. It has been proposed by some that it could be considered an early children's book because it includes puzzles, illustrations, and "pleasant and delightful relations of many rare and notable accidents and occurrences." The claim that it is "excellently accommodated to the fancies of old or young" is made on the title page.

The concept of childhood and adolescence has undergone significant evolution over time. Historically, children were not viewed as distinct from adults, with the modern notion of childhood emerging relatively recently. The term "teenager" gained prominence around World War II, driven by advances in psychology and sociological changes. This led to targeted marketing for young adults, encompassing literature, music, and film.

Notable authors and works that have contributed to the development of young adult literature include:

**Early Works:**
- Nathaniel Crouch's "Winter-Evenings Entertainments" (1687)
- Daniel Defoe's novels
- Jonathan Swift's works
- Jane Austen's novels

**Classics:**
- Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" (1865)
- Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," and "The Black Arrow"
- Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn"

**Influential Authors:**
- Sarah Trimmer, who recognized young adults as a distinct age group in 1802
- Philippe Ariès, who argued that the modern concept of childhood emerged in recent times

The 1960s marked a pivotal moment for young adult literature, with works that explored the complexities and challenges of adolescence. S.E. Hinton's The Outsiders (1967) is a seminal work that portrayed a darker, more realistic side of teenage life. Other notable works from this period include Maya Angelou's autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969) and Sylvia Plath's semi-autobiographical novel The Bell Jar (1963 in the US, 1967 in the UK).Authors like Judy Blume and Ursula K. Le Guin made significant contributions to the genre. Blume's Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret (1970) tackled topics like menstruation and puberty, while Le Guin's A Wizard of Earthsea (1968) influenced YA fantasy fiction. The 1970s to mid-1980s are often referred to as the golden age of YA fiction, with novels addressing complex themes like rape, suicide, and parental death. This period also saw a resurgence of interest in romance novels. The 1990s and 2000s saw the rise of speculative fiction in YA literature, with series like J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games gaining widespread popularity. Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy also sparked controversy and debate with its critique of established religion.

The evolution of YA literature reflects changing societal attitudes and a growing recognition of the importance of literature that speaks directly to the adolescent experience. Today, YA fiction continues to push boundaries and explore complex themes, offering readers a diverse range of stories and perspectives.

Notable authors and works include:
- S.E. Hinton's The Outsiders
- Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
- Judy Blume's Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret
- Ursula K. Le Guin's A Wizard of Earthsea

**Literary Enigma**
*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

- J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series
- Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games trilogy
- Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy

**21st century:** The young adult fiction category has expanded to include a wide range of genres and media, such as:

**Genres:**
- Graphic novels/manga
- Light novels
- Fantasy
- Mystery fiction
- Romance novels
- Cyberpunk
- Techno-thrillers
- Contemporary Christian fiction

**Popular YA Texts:**
- Speak
- The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
- The Giver
- The Outsiders
- The House on Mango Street
- American Born Chinese
- Monster
- The Book Thief
- Persepolis
- The Perks of Being a Wallflower

**Boundaries between children's, young adult, and adult fiction**

The line separating adult and children's literature is arbitrary and contingent on the situation. Adult and YA novels frequently intersect, and certain works are suitable for both readerships. Popular YA series include, for instance:

Middle Grade Novels:
- Percy Jackson & the Olympians by Rick Riordan
- The Underland Chronicles by Suzanne Collins
- Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney

Young Adult Novels:
- Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling
- The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins
- Alex Rider series by Anthony Horowitz
- Mortal Instruments series by Cassandra Clare

**Key differences between middle grade and YA novels**:
- Age range: Middle grade (10-13), YA (12-18)
- Themes and content: YA novels tackle more mature themes, but with less graphic detail than adult fiction
- Protagonist age: Middle grade (10-13), YA (14-18)

Depending on elements like description and topic, it might be difficult to tell YA from adult fiction.

The topics and motifs explored in Young Adult (YA) fiction and children's literature vary greatly, reflecting the distinct struggles and experiences of their respective target audiences.

**Children's Literature Themes**:

- Friendship and cooperation
- Courage and resilience
- Diversity and inclusion
- Imagination and creativity
- Humor and playfulness
- Family dynamics
- Empathy and compassion

These themes are often presented in a way that is relatable and accessible to younger readers, with a focus on promoting positive values and life skills.

**Young Adult Fiction Themes:**

- Coming-of-age and identity formation
- Self-discovery and personal growth
- Social justice and activism
- Complex relationships and human connections
- Mental health and wellness
- Bullying and trauma
- Dystopian worlds and societal commentary

Young adult fiction frequently examines increasingly sophisticated and nuanced subjects, mirroring the difficulties and reality of puberty. These themes offer a secure environment for discussing challenging subjects and can assist readers in navigating their own feelings and experiences.

**Motifs:**

- Recurring symbols and imagery
- Character arcs and personal growth
- Genre conventions and expectations
- Narrative voice and perspective

Motifs are used in both YA fiction and children's literature to give their stories depth and significance as well as to provide a unique mood and reading experience.

**How authors adapt their writing style to cater to different age groups**

Writing for children and young adults requires a distinct approach, as authors must adapt their style to suit different age groups and reading levels. Key considerations include understanding the target audience's cognitive, emotional, and social development, and tailoring the writing style, tone, and content accordingly.

Authors must also use an authentic voice that resonates with their young readers, avoiding talking down to them or imposing adult perspectives. With the abundance of digital stimulation, authors need to craft compelling stories that can capture and hold a child's attention.

Children's books are typically shorter and more concise than adult books, requiring authors to be economical with their words while still delivering a satisfying story. Furthermore, the children's book market is dominated by well-known authors, making it challenging for new writers to break in.

To succeed, authors should write for children because they are passionate about it, and have a story that they believe will resonate with young readers. Writing for children should not be

seen as a shortcut to publication, but rather as a labor of love that requires dedication, skill, and a deep understanding of the target audience.

Some of the challenges authors face when writing for children include:

- Getting the voice right: Speaking in a genuine and approachable manner for young readers
- Capturing attention: Crafting stories that can compete with other forms of entertainment
- Word count and structure: Writing concise and engaging stories within a limited word count
- Market saturation: Breaking into a market dominated by well-known authors
- Appealing to adults: Ensuring that the book meets the approval of adults who control what children read

By understanding these challenges and adapting their writing style accordingly, authors can create books that will engage, inspire, and resonate with young readers.

**How children's literature prepares readers for young adult fiction**

Children's literature plays a vital role in developing fundamental reading and comprehension skills, building empathy and emotional intelligence, and fostering a love for reading. These skills and values serve as a foundation for young readers to transition to young adult fiction, which often features more complex plots, themes, and writing styles.

Foundational Literacy Skills:

- Following narratives and understanding story structure
- Making predictions and thinking critically
- Understanding cause-and-effect relationships
- Expanding vocabulary and language skills
- Developing comprehension and understanding of written text

**Building Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:**

- Introducing diverse characters and situations
- Addressing real-life issues and challenges
- Encouraging critical thinking and analysis
- Fostering empathy and understanding of different perspectives

**Developing a Love for Reading**:

- Engaging stories and visuals
- Positive reading experiences
- Building confidence through successful navigation of simple stories

By providing young readers with these essential skills and values, children's literature serves as a stepping stone to young adult fiction, enabling them to engage with more mature themes and complex narratives.

**Comparative analysis of moral lessons in children's literature and young adult fiction**

Children's literature and young adult fiction differ in their approach to moral lessons and character development.

**Children's Literature:**

- Emphasizes basic moral principles including bravery, kindness, and honesty.
- Features clear-cut good vs. evil characters
- Emphasizes consequences of actions
- Centers on basic values and social norms

**Young Adult Fiction**:

**Literary Enigma**
*The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*
*(Peer-Reviewed and Indexed)*
*Vol. 2 Special Issue 1 (July 2025)*

*ISSN (Online): 3049-2033*

- Explores complex moral dilemmas and gray areas
- Portrays nuanced and multifaceted characters
- Focuses on social justice, identity, and self-discovery.
- Often includes social and political commentary
- Celebrates individuality and challenges readers to think critically

Despite these differences, both genres serve as vehicles for moral education, helping young readers develop empathy, critical thinking skills, and a sense of social responsibility. Both genres feature relatable protagonists who navigate challenges and make decisions that readers can understand and relate to.

The main differences between the two genres lie in the complexity of issues, depth of character development, and the presence of social and political themes. Young adult fiction tends to tackle more mature and nuanced topics, reflecting the challenges and experiences of adolescence.

**Impact of technology on readership and engagement**

Technology has profoundly impacted readership and engagement in several ways:

**Readership:**

- Increased access and choice: Digital platforms have made information more accessible, offering a wide range of content, formats, and languages.
- Interactive experiences: Interactive components that promote exploration and interaction include timelines, charts, and maps.
- Short-form content: The rise of short-form video platforms has influenced audience preferences, leading to a demand for concise and impactful content.
- Personalized experiences: Technology allows for personalized recommendations and tailored content feeds, catering to individual interests and preferences.

**Engagement:**

- Enhanced two-way communication: Social media platforms facilitate direct engagement with audiences, fostering community-driven campaigns and enabling businesses to listen and respond to feedback.
- Emotional and relatable content: Platforms prioritize content that is emotionally engaging and relatable, leading to more meaningful interactions and connections.
- Data-driven insights: Technology enables data collection and analysis, providing insights into audience behavior and content performance, leading to more effective strategies.
- Potential for disengagement: Technology can contribute to disengagement if content is not engaging or if users experience technical difficulties.
- Increased competition: The vast number of online platforms and content options can lead to increased competition for attention, requiring creators to adapt and create compelling content.
- Misinformation and distractions: The rise of online platforms has also brought concerns about misinformation and distractions, which can negatively impact engagement and focus.

Overall, technology has transformed the way we consume and interact with content, offering both opportunities and challenges for creators and audiences alike..

**How authors balance entertainment and education in both genres**

Authors in genres like entertainment and education, or those who blend the two (edutainment), balance entertainment and education through various strategies. These include:

- Weaving educational content into narratives: Introducing educational elements through dialogue, plot twists, or character interactions.
- Using characters and plots to teach: Characters can represent different perspectives or demonstrate the consequences of certain behaviours, while plots can explore complex issues or challenges in a fictional setting.
- Creating engaging learning experiences: Using games, interactive stories, or other immersive formats to make learning fun and engaging.
- Focusing on audience engagement: Adjusting writing style and content to appeal to the target audience and make it more relatable.
- Using diverse media: Incorporating video, audio, or interactive elements to enhance the learning experience.
- Collaborating with experts: Working with subject matter experts to ensure accuracy and authenticity in educational content.

**Examples of balancing entertainment and education include:**

- Historical fiction: Blending historical events with fictional characters and plots to create educational and entertaining narratives.
- Educational video games: Incorporating learning objects and questions into gameplay to teach concepts in a fun and interactive way.
- Documentaries and TV shows: Using narratives to promote social change or raise awareness about important issues.

By using these strategies, authors can create works that are both entertaining and informative, engaging audiences and fostering a love for learning.

**Psychological impact of reading on children and young adults**

Reading has a profound impact on the psychological well-being of children and young adults, influencing their emotional development, cognitive abilities, and social behaviours.

**Emotional Development and Empathy:**

- Empathy: Reading exposes children to diverse perspectives and emotions, fostering empathy and understanding of others.
- Emotional Awareness: Books help children recognize, process, and manage their own emotions, as well as those of others.
- Emotional Resilience: Engaging with characters who overcome adversity builds resilience and teaches problem-solving skills.
- Reduced Anxiety: Reading provides a mental escape from everyday stressors and anxieties, offering comfort and a sense of safety.
- Therapeutic Support: Reading can be a therapeutic tool for children who have experienced trauma, providing a safe space to explore difficult emotions.

**Cognitive Development and Learning**:

- Enhanced Cognitive Skills: Reading stimulates comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities.
- Vocabulary Building: Reading exposes children to a wider range of vocabulary, improving their language skills.
- Improved Memory and Attention: Engaging with stories enhances memory and concentration skills.

- Brain Structure: Early reading for pleasure is linked to improved brain structure and function in regions associated with cognitive abilities and mental health.

**Social and Behavioural Benefits**:

- Improved Communication Skills: Reading enhances a child's ability to articulate their own emotions and understand the emotions of others.
- Stronger Bonds: Reading aloud with caregivers fosters a sense of security and connection, promoting emotional bonding.
- Increased Confidence: Successfully navigating stories and understanding complex narratives builds a child's confidence in their abilities.
- Lifelong Love of Learning: Reading cultivates a lifelong love of learning and intellectual curiosity.

Overall, reading plays a significant role in promoting the psychological well-being of children and young adults, supporting their emotional, cognitive, and social development.

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## Liquid Realities: Water Imagery in Virginia Woolf's Narrative World

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**Abstract:** *Throughout literary history, water imagery has been a recurring motif, symbolizing a range of themes from life and renewal to destruction and fluidity. From ancient Greek texts to contemporary works, the representation of water has played a pivotal role in exploring human emotions, relationships, and existential concerns. Among modernist artists, Virginia Woolf stands out for her profound use of water imagery, which intertwines seamlessly with her personal experiences and narrative style. Water, in Woolf's works, serves as a metaphorical bridge, connecting characters to their inner emotions, relationships, and the broader ebb and flow of life. This paper delves into Woolf's intricate use of water imagery in three of her seminal works, Mrs. Dalloway (1925), To the Lighthouse (1927) and The Waves (1931). In these texts, water not only reflects the fluidity of time and consciousness but also embodies the complexities of identity, memory, and connection. By examining how Woolf integrates water imagery to enhance the emotional and psychological depth of her characters and settings, this study aims to illuminate the profound symbolic and thematic significance of water in her oeuvre, offering insights into its role as a narrative and philosophical device.*

**Keywords:** *Water imagery, Virginia Woolf, Modernist Literature, Symbolism, Emotional Fluidity*

### Introduction

Virginia Woolf's fascination with water began in childhood and permeated her writing and worldview. In her autobiographical essay *A Sketch of the Past* (1939), Woolf recalls a vivid early memory of lying in bed at her family's summer home in St. Ives and listening to the waves break. She describes this memory of the sea's rhythmic sound and gentle motion as her foundation. This childhood immersion in the sights and sounds of the ocean left an indelible mark on Woolf's imagination, and these impressions informed the conception of her artistic vision. Decades later, Woolf would famously end her life by walking into a river,  a tragic bookend underscoring how water was a constant presence in her life and death.

Woolf's literary use of water imagery is deeply tied to her pioneering narrative techniques and thematic concerns. A leading figure of literary modernism, she sought new ways to represent subjective reality, particularly through the stream-of-consciousness method,  a term coined by psychologist William James (1980) , who likened the mind's continual flow of thoughts to a river or a stream. Woolf embraced this fluid narrative mode to delve into the recesses of ever-changing consciousness and to capture the flow of myriad impressions that constitute inner life. Notably, she found that the subtle processes of the mind are perfectly expressed by the

water element. Indeed, her diaries reveal that she deliberately employed symbols and images, especially water to convey her characters' psychological depths. Woolf's use of water imagery and stream-of-consciousness technique aligns with contemporary ideas of subjective time and self; it echoes Henri Bergson's concept of durée (time as continuous flow) and William James's description of consciousness as a flowing stream. Woolf also evokes what Freud called the "oceanic" feeling (1930), a sense of oneness with the world through moments when her characters' identities seem to dissolve into a larger whole.

In Woolf's novels, water imagery serves both as a symbolic device, carrying meanings of renewal, submersion, and flux and as a structural principle that shapes narrative form. Water recurs in her work as a source of connection and continuity and a force of disruption and loss. It mirrors the characters' inner tides of emotion and memory and often provides a measure for the passage of time outside of the clock or calendar. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *The Waves* (1931), Woolf uses oceans, seas, rivers, and other water forms not merely as background settings but as dynamic elements intertwined with the themes of time, identity, memory, and consciousness. This research examines each of these three novels, analyzing how water imagery operates within them, whether as a soothing cradle for memory, a threatening reminder of mortality, a metaphor for the mind's fluid nature, or a medium that unites and fragments identities.

## To the Lighthouse: Water as Protector and Destroyer

Early on, as Mrs. Ramsay listens to her boisterous family, Woolf notes how the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach lulls her mind. This rhythm is like a cradle song whispering to her, *"I am guarding you – I am your support"* (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 3). The sea's pulse gives Mrs. Ramsay maternal comfort in this lullaby-like moment. The quote continues at other moments when her mind wanders, the same surf becomes *"no longer whispering a lullaby but remorselessly beating a ghostly roll of drums,"* making her imagine *"the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea"* (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 3), and filling her with sudden terror. In one image, therefore, the sea is both protector (guards and supports) and destroyer (engulfs and terrifies). Critics have noted this tension: one writer observes that water in *Lighthouse* often evokes both comfort and death, dissolving boundaries yet erasing them (Igrutinović 112). The text's phrasing – waves as lullaby versus waves as drums makes the point.

Woolf also employs water images to track the passage of time across chapters. In "The Window," for example, Cam Ramsay's journey across a stream is described as waters that gave way and then closed over him. This brief river scene foreshadows the larger floods in the middle section. During "Time Passes," three characters (the Ramsays' elder daughter, Prue, Mrs. Ramsay herself, and Andrew Ramsay) die in a war that feels apocalyptic. Woolf depicts their deaths in terms of deluges and storms: a *"downpouring of immense darkness"* that *"flood[s]"* (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 195) the summer house, consuming even the mansion itself. The language of water – darkness as flood, house sinking like a ship – suggests that nature's inexorable flow can wash away human achievement. However, even here, light and water interact: through the chaos, rays of light from the lighthouse continue to shine onto the ruins. Lily Briscoe later notes how the morning light, symbolically purified like the sea, finds its way back into the house. Thus, water in "Time Passes" embodies destruction and the hope of new life, paralleling the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

When the novel returns to 1920 in "The Lighthouse," the memory of water bridges past and present. Ten years after the deaths, the remaining family members (Cam and James Ramsay) finally make the delayed trip to the lighthouse. The act of rowing across the sea becomes a rite of passage. Danica Igrutinović notes that Cam's boat trip is a symbolic crossing in which water dissolves, but then regenerates the hero (Igrutinović 115). Indeed, James's successful passage and the view of the lighthouse reassure him of his place in the world, healing old insecurities. Water, here, washes away fear. As the characters finally gaze upon the lighthouse, the imagery of endless waves underscores how, despite loss, life continues.

Beyond these formal functions, Woolf uses water as a psychological mirror for characters. Lily's final epiphany, with her painting, is linked to the sea again. Lily has struggled for years to complete her portrait of Mrs. Ramsay. In the last chapter, she falls asleep and dreams by the window. Even in her sleep, the sea's presence is comforting: *"Messages of peace breathed from the sea to the shore… what else was it murmuring"* as she lays her head (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 129). In waking, Lily feels those messages in herself; she suddenly realizes how to finish the painting. The waves murmured to her the final touch she needed. Here, the ocean whispering symbolizes Lily's acceptance of change and unity. All dissensions within the family are merged and flowing through Mrs. Ramsay , and Lily's art unites time and relationships. Lily's words, *"I have had my vision"* and *"Yes, I have had my vision,"* echo the long lines and shapes of the sea (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 209). In Lily's mind, water represents the healing wholeness she has finally perceived.

*To the Lighthouse* (1927) uses water thematically to represent the flow of time (waves marking hours, floods marking the end of an era), memory and loss (echoing the childhood lullaby, recalling people long gone), and unity beyond individuality (merging of consciousness under the sea's rhythm). The motif is unified by what Woolf hinted was her aim: to find the pattern behind the cotton wool of everyday life. Through the constant sound and sight of water, Woolf threads the characters' isolated moments into a larger pattern of continuity.

## Mrs. Dalloway: Fluid Consciousness and the Ebb of Memory

*Mrs. Dalloway*'s (1925) setting shifts from coastal to urban, but water remains a living presence. London becomes a watery city. Woolf links her characters' inner tides through the day's rain and the fountains in Regent's Park. The novel's famous opening involves a fountain and Clarissa's thoughts. The text begins not with Clarissa but with the sky and weather: *"the air...stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like a flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp"* (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 3).

Meanwhile, Clarissa buys flowers for her party; her back turned to a fountain in the park: *"with the fountain between them, the spout (it was broken) dribbling water incessantly."* (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 96). This recurs twice (Clarissa's first walk and later Peter's arrival). Hassan Khalfih calls the fountain scene symbolic of a *"lack of fluid communication"* (Khalfih 17), as the broken spout dribbles impotently. The fragmented water mirrors Clarissa's tenuous connection with others at that moment: she feels distant from Richard, while the steady dripping of the fountain suggests time ticking away toward the inevitable reunion with Peter.

Like *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Clarissa's mind is matched with fluid images when memory surfaces. On her way to buy flowers, young Clarissa once played on a swing on Richmond Green. Woolf describes her childhood joy as *"like a flap of a wave; a kiss of a wave,"* with the air *"chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn"*(Woolf, Mrs.

Dalloway 3). This simile aligns Clarissa's exhilaration with the powerful motion of water: those childhood feelings are awful and exhilarating. The morning breeze is like the ocean's break on the shore, emphasizing that even London's urban morning is infused with Woolf's sea memory. Clarissa's security at age five is as enveloping as the ocean, which underlines how deep her sense of the world's continuity runs, even in the city.

As the story unfolds, Clarissa's consciousness flows around her party preparations, punctuated by episodes of rain and fountains. Woolf repeatedly notes reservoirs of water as contexts for consciousness shifts. One key moment: when Peter Walsh re-enters Clarissa's life, old emotions seem to roll back in waves (implicitly) at his presence. (Woolf does not use that exact metaphor here, but critics often note the implicit wave imagery.) Another: Clarissa's friend Rezia speaks to Septimus in mental time, asking him to stop crying *"like a contented tap left running, to no purpose"* – a simile that likens the tragic waste of Septimus's life to a leaking faucet (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 159). Woolf offers Rezia's image of water to capture Cephalus-like guilt – the feeling that life's joy has leaked away. Khalfih comments that Woolf's water imagery *"shapes the inner state of her characters' minds"* (Khalfih 20). For instance, the novel closes with Clarissa's epiphany at her party, in which she feels the splashing laughter and the flow of life around her. The reader sees that, as Clarissa stands on the porch, her identity dissolves into the crowd's vitality – *"a life which had no end"* and *"a sense of being… bound up with all these friends"* (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 351). The party, full of flowing champagne and a fountain in the square, enacts human communion like a pool where every drop matters.

At a structural level, rain and cloud imagery punctuate Dalloway's sections. Each time the narrative moves from Clarissa to Septimus or back, Woolf notes a shift in weather: a shower passes, puddles catch the light, or the heat intensifies like a tide. (In fact, in Part 5, "Interim," a sudden thunderstorm breaks just as Septimus reaches a point of suicide, as if nature's wave subsides.) These patterns make the day seem not linear but cyclical, like cycles of evaporation and rain. Through water, Woolf also suggests an underlying unity between Clarissa and Septimus: Clarissa thinks about the "river of life," connecting all people moments after hearing of Septimus's death. Through that unseen medium, she senses a link to him, as if both were drops in the same stream. This coincides with Freud's idea of the "oceanic feeling" – a boundaryless ocean of consciousness. While Freud found that feeling troubling as a regression, Woolf embraces it: her fluid narration literally moves from one mind to another, like water mixing streams. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) uses water imagery thematically to illustrate the characters' emotional ebbs and flows and the blending of past and present, and structurally to smooth transitions between inner monologues as if on a river. Thus, Woolf turns London into a metaphorical ocean, where taxis and crowds mimic tides, and the private stream of thought is as inexhaustible as a sea.

## *The Waves*: Unity and Fragmentation in Aqueous Form

In *The Waves* (1931), Woolf's most experimental novel, water imagery reaches its apogee. *The Waves* is structured around the sea from the title to the final line. Six characters speak in lyrical soliloquies, bookended by seven poetic interludes describing the sun's path over the ocean. The ocean is ever-present: as children, each had played together on a seashore; as adults, each finds water images in their consciousness. Woolf makes water not just a motif but the very form of the narrative. Nicole Rizzuto notes the novel has an aqueous form, with chapters orchestrated like waves. Images of waves rising, breaking, and merging underscore the interplay of individuality and unity.

One central theme in *The Waves* is the fluidity of identity. The characters often feel part of a whole rather than distinct individuals. Woolf directly compares them to waves: Bernard muses that *like the waves which come and go continuously,"* the waves of thoughts in their minds *"flow nonstop."* Jinny succinctly formulates it: *"I am rooted, but I flow."* This famous line (Woolf, *The Waves* 62) captures Woolf's paradox – humans have a core self ("rooted") yet are constantly changed by experience ("flowing"). Jinny's speech continues, *"All gold, flowing,"* highlighting change as energy. Similarly, Susan, who worships nature, laments her school loneliness with the line: *"I shall eat grass and die in a ditch in the brown water where dead leaves have rotted"* (Woolf, *The Waves* 7). Here, water is connected to dissolution and return to earth; Rhoda's line, for example, is in first person and tragic. Each character often speaks of dissolving or merging with water.

The ocean interludes measure time between these voices: day breaks in the first interlude as Bernard describes dawn, reflecting youth and new beginnings. The midday interlude is full of light, paralleling the energy of their youthful speeches. By the final interlude, it is nighttime: the waves *"paused…sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously"* (Woolf, *The Waves* 2). This single simile (*"like a sleeper"*) intensifies the cyclical rest and renewal motif, akin to old age's slowing pace. Indeed, in the novel's ending, as Bernard contemplates death, he hears the waves continuing – *"breaking on the shore."* The lines *"Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!"* / *"The waves broke on the shore."* (Woolf, *The Waves* 183) link human defiance to the ocean's eternal rhythm. The sea's continual breaking serves as a reminder that life persists; the characters' lives are but fleeting particles within the ocean's perpetual motion, as Bernard ultimately comes to realize.

*The Waves* (1931), Woolf literalizes the dialectic of fragmentation and wholeness. Individual consciousness is fluid throughout: the six voices often borrow each other's images and metaphors, blurring lines between them. There is no singular narrator or straightforward plot, only waves of prose that crest and recede, inviting the reader to feel the ebb and flow rather than follow a conventional story.

Beyond form, each voice explicitly ties to water imagery. Jinny's motto, *"I am rooted, but I flow,"* (Woolf, *The Waves* 62) . Susan's earlier line about wanting to *"eat grass and die…in the brown water"* (Woolf, *The Waves* 7) links water with a desire for dissolution. Rhoda is obsessed with water's nurturing sweetness (she fills imaginary pockets with water and petals). Neville, a poet, often compares love and self-awareness to waves. One image from Neville he feels peace breathed from the sea to the shore, just as Lily did in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), when he contemplates the loss of his friend Percival (who dies abroad). Indeed, when the friends learn of Percival's death in India, the narrative's landscape turns violent: *"The waves massed themselves, curved their backs and crashed… left pools inland where fish thrashed."* (Woolf, *The Waves* 101). This vivid, almost cinematic picture of the sea during their mourning shows the ocean enacting their grief. These lines read like natural phenomena but function as collective consciousness: all characters feel that turbulent sea inside themselves.

Water in *The Waves* (1931) embodies the tension between continuity and finality. Each sunrise in the interludes serves as a quiet reminder of renewal and the cyclical nature of existence. Bernard observes that the waves break on the shore again and again, even as each character's individual voice fades. In the closing pages, Bernard appears to merge almost physically with the dawn, embracing the falling wave of the sun as a symbol of ongoing cycles. He declares

that he will fling himself at Death, unvanquished, sustained by the belief that as long as the waves continue to break upon the shore, life itself endures.

*The Waves* (1931) makes water a metaphor for consciousness and community. The imagery runs deeper than mere allusions – it is embedded in the text's structure. As one scholar puts it, the oscillatory breaking and merging of waves becomes the "structuring metaphor for the entire novel." Without a traditional plot, Woolf's "liquid reality" emerges: boundaries between character, thought, and time dissolve and reform like tides. The result is a cosmic, almost mystical vision of life – individual drops of water in one vast sea.

**Conclusion**

Across *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse (1927)* and *The Waves (1931)* Virginia Woolf's use of water imagery reveals a central modernist concern: representing reality as fluid and interconnected. In each text, water operates on multiple levels. Thematically, it symbolizes the flow of time, memory, and consciousness. Waves and rivers represent the stream of consciousness itself; fountains and rainfall embody the emergence of recollection; the sea's duality (turbulent vs. calm) mirrors the characters' inner turmoil and peace. Woolf also shows water as a unifying element. Individual lives and moments are seen as drops in a continuous sea. As Clarissa muses about her party, she feels part of "something going on" in everyone's mind – a metaphorical ocean that carries "drops of rain" (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 290).

Psychologically, water images externalize feelings: waves rock babies and paint lullabies for adults; storms threaten and purify; rivers and fountains carry messages of past loves and losses. Woolf often uses the sea to express what words cannot: Septimus's fractured mind is portrayed through overflowing taps, while Lily's unity with art is shown through a calm, breathing sea. As Hassan Khalfih observes, Woolf transcends the cliché of watery symbols to make water itself "a power to shape the inner state" of her characters (Khalfih 20).

Structurally, water molds Woolf's narrative technique. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), water's rhythms align with London's clockwork, smoothing transitions between subjective scenes. In *The Waves* (1931), the novel's very form is water: cyclical, recursive, and wave-like. Through interludes of sunrise and sunset, Woolf measures human life in the same terms as oceanic time. As literary scholars note, *The Waves* (1931) has an inherently aqueous form, with repetition and variation mimicking the sea's motion. This formal fluidity reflects Woolf's statement that her novels attempt to capture the pattern behind the cotton wool of experience.

Woolf invites readers to experience her liquid realities. She believed, in the words of one critic, that literature could induce an oceanic feeling, a sensation of boundlessness and unity. Indeed, engaging with her prose often feels like drifting with currents – sometimes disorienting, sometimes exhilarating, but always uniting mind and world. Woolf's consistent imagery of waves breaking and seas embracing thus gives shape to the inexpressible: the continuity of life amidst loss, the interplay of isolation and communion, and the mysterious depths of the self.

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