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Editor's Note

The Investigator is an International Peer-Reviewed Multidisciplinary Journal published quarterly (March, June, September and December), launched under the auspices of the academic community *Association for Cultural & Scientific Research* (ACSR). Keeping the panoramic scopes of research as a vibrant path, *The Investigator* intends to reflect on the skilled minds attitudinally conjuring from humanities to other disciplines. The journal explores the currents of criticism and unleashes divergent thinking. It welcomes original, scholarly unpublished papers from the researchers, faculty members, students and the diverse aspirants writing in English. It is a peer reviewed journal that brings the scholarship of academicians and practitioners around the world. *The Investigator* hopes and wishes to provide a self-assuring means to you for your further accomplishments.

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Echoes of the Empire and the Lost World in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *After Lives*

After Lives unveils the long-lasting psychological scars left by colonialism and war through cultural disintegration and the struggle for belonging in a fractured world. Set against the backdrop of post-colonial East Africa, Gurnah's narrative echoes on key issues like the historical violence, displacement, and identity loss. This paper focuses on the usage of cultural and historical disintegration in the novel to reveal the trauma of colonialism is not only a personal affliction but a collective wound. Thus, through the lens of postcolonial and trauma theory, this research article contends that After Lives portrays both the destructive power of colonial history and the enduring resilience of those who seek to reclaim and redefine their cultural identity. By examining the psychological and emotional repercussions of colonial violence, Gurnah highlights the complex process of rebuilding identity in a world where cultural roots have been violently uprooted. This research paper aims to highlight the cultural disintegration and how the echoes of empire continue to haunt the present through the characters in the novel

Key Words: *Trauma, Cultural disintegration, Historical disintegration, identity*

Introduction

Culture Studies has evolved as an interdisciplinary study for more than three decades. Culture Studies has its effects on studying literature by challenging the idea of canonical literature and the medium through which literary texts are theorized and read. We look at the text associating it with the role of literature in society, and to represent literary texts in relation to its cultural forms, cultural history and other practices. Cultural Studies initially developed in Britain against political positions like liberal humanism that focussed on culture and civilization followed by orthodox Marxism and finally the media culture. Thus, culture has conflicting meanings and values, that represents various class. In fact, culture has become the center of class struggle. Hegemony is the outcome of the same. In the recent decades, Sociology, History and Literary studies have been an area of interest for its interdisciplinary mode with Culture studies breaking down the privileged canonical boundaries. In the view of Glen Jordan and Chris Weedon,

> Culture Studies work on working-class writing, popular fiction, and women's

> writing also sought to redefine what is valuable and worthy of study. Exclusions concerned questions not only on class, but also of race, gender, sexual orientation, colonialism and Eurocentrism. (250)

In the view of Elleke Boehmer the term postcolonialism addresses 'itself to the historical, political, cultural, and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the West and non-West, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day'(340). This research paper aims to highlight the cultural disintegration and how the echoes of empire continue to haunt the present through the characters in the novel *After Lives* by Abdulrazak Gurnah**.** The research will center on exploring the themes of colonialism, empire, displacement, and the lost world that appears in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel After Lives. It will examine the style that Gurnah uses through his narrative to convey these ideas and their impact on identity, memory, and history.

An Overview of the novel *After Lives*

Through its multi-generational narrative*, After Lives* reveals how the traumas and disorder of the colonial era continue to shape identities, relationships, and social structures in postcolonial societies. Gurnah's detailed portrayal of characters navigating the complexities of cultural hybridity and historical memory offers a poignant meditation on the enduring legacies of empire in the modern world. Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian-born British author and Nobel laureate, is known for his exploration of postcolonial themes, identity, migration, and the lingering effects of colonialism. His novels often focus on the complexities of East African identity, the legacy of European imperialism, and the individual life that arise in the wake of colonization. *After Lives* published in 2020 is one of Gurnah's most notable works, set in the aftermath of World War I, it addresses the impact of colonialism, war, and displacement met by individuals and communities in East Africa. The novel's themes are rooted in the interweaving of personal lives and the grand historical forces of empire, exploring the dark shadows of the colonial rule followed by the collapse of western empire. This paper will explore how *After Lives* reflects the "echoes of the empire" and the concept of the "lost world," focusing on the themes of memory, trauma, and displacement as experienced by the characters. The paper will analyze how Gurnah's narrative structure and character development illuminate the personal and collective legacies of colonialism. East Africa, particularly the region Tanzania, was subjected to brutal German and later British colonial rule. Gurnah's novel is set against this backdrop, drawing attention to the complex legacies of empire. The characters'

lives Khalifa, Ilyas, Hamza are marked by the disruption of traditional social structures, the exploitation of land and labor, and the rebuilding of identities through colonial policies. Throughout the novel the trauma of colonialism is a pervasive force, and the past often intrudes into the present, creating tension between personal desire and the historical forces that shaped individual destinies o Khalifa, Ilyas and Hamza. Khalia was twenty-six years old when he met Amur Biashara a stingy merchant. Khalifa did not look Indian, though his father was an Indian and mother was from Africa. The tension builds at the beginning of the novel through the Bushiri uprising of Arab and Waswahili coastal and caravan traders and the Germans. Shortly after three years, Wahehe uprising was also controlled by the Germans. We encounter shortly the hanging of Al Bushiri by the German administration by displaying a public spectacle of the execution. This important demonstration displayed the German control on the colony. Another character Ilyas comes to Tanga. He is a young Tanzanian educated by the Germans. He reaches the big sisal estate recommended by the German landlord for his work. He speaks German fluently. Shortly Khalifa and Ilyas meet and they become friends, where he shares his past as a run-away child and was kidnapped by a schutztruppe askari at the train station and taken to the mountains. There he was released and sent to a German school, a mission school. Gurnah presents individuals like Ilyas, a soldier returning from the war, and his involvement with German colonial authority, reflecting the ways in which empire's influence persists long after it formally collapses. In the view of Ilyas, “The Germans are honourable and civilized people and have done much good since they have been here.” (42) Khalifa was surprised when Ilyas announced his volunteer involvement for the schutztruppe. Khalifa knew the bitter truth that both the invaders are violent and are ready to swallow the people overall. Ilyas only wanted to make arrangements for his sister before leaving for the war. Hamza was assigned as a German officer’s personal servant. In the first few weeks of his new posting as Julius’s personal servant, he joined their German troop in their drill session. When they went far in the field for target practice or manoeuvres he could not join them. Later on with the support of the Julius, he too was a part of the mission against the British. War, one of the central themes in *After Lives*, as World War I disrupts the lives of many East Africans, including Ilyas, who is forced into the German military. His experience reflects not only the physical displacement but also the psychic dislocation that results from being removed from one’s home and subjected to forces of war and empire. Beyond physical displacement, characters like Ilyas and others struggle with emotional and psychological dislocation. Suffering and Survival becomes key elements in this novel.

Postcolonial Theory and *After Lives*

In postcolonial thought, Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity speaks to the creation of new, blended identities that emerge out of the colonial encounter. The idea of hybridity, which challenges the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized, is present in *After Lives*. The characters' struggles with their own identities as they navigate between the traditional African world and the imposed European colonial structures reflect the tension between these two worlds. For instance, Ilyas, upon returning from the war, finds himself unable to fully reconcile his colonial past with his post-war present. His physical displacement in Europe becomes a psychological displacement as well, a result of colonial influence that leaves him unable to return to his pre-colonial life, which no longer exists in the same form. The novel explores this hybridity, where both colonizer and colonized create new forms of identity in the liminal spaces between two cultures. Bhabha's notion of the "third space" can also be applied here. The "third space" is where colonial subjects form their own identities in the spaces between the cultural dominance of the colonizer and the resistance of the colonized. In *After Lives*, characters live in that "third space" of constant negotiation. Khalifa, Hamza and Ilyas are perfect example of the same. Khalifa embodies hybridity both in ethnicity and identity. Being of Indian and African descent, Khalifa occupies a liminal space as he is never fully accepted by either community. His cultural hybridity reflects Bhabha's "third space," where identity is not fixed but formed through negotiation. He works for a German merchant, speaks multiple languages, and navigates different cultural expectations, which puts him in a position of both insider and outsider. Ilyas and Hamza, working for German (the Schutztruppe) adopts the manners, language, and discipline of the colonizer, yet is always marked as different. Both have assimilated the German culture without acceptance. These three characters constantly redefine themselves in their hybrid space. They reflect the painful legacies of German colonialism in East Africa. However, unlike Ilyas, Hamza begins to reclaim his identity. Through his relationship with Afiya and his efforts to build a new life, Hamza asserts agency over his narrative. Afiya, raised by Khalifa after being separated from her family, represents a new generation of hybrid subjects. Her life is shaped by colonial history, loss, war, and migration but she is also the character most able to assert her own identity. She is literate, educated, and increasingly aware of her own agency.

Conclusion

Gurnah's *After Lives* has the conflict of identity formation in the context of historical violence,

displacement, and cultural imposition. Gurnah's work is a reminder that the past is never truly past; The "lost world" that his characters attempt to recover is not just a reflection of personal nostalgia but a symbol of a larger historical and cultural upheaval that cannot be undone. Gurnah's narrative, therefore, serves as an essential reflection of pain with the past and present. Thus, the novel offers a window into understanding the dark shadows of empire haunting the lives of individuals and societies long after colonialism's formal end.

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Retrieving Indigenous identity through language: A social study of noongars in Western Australia

British colonialists utilized colonial linguistics to "other" the Indigenous communities who were the continent's first settlers during the formation of Australia. Language was employed as a weapon to destroy culture, eradicate Indigenous tongues, and subjugate the Aboriginal population when the nation was established. Today's government legislation, such as native title, which ostensibly restores respect to Indigenous Australians, aids in the continuation of this linguistic imperialism. In spite of the fact that the goal of native title varies from the harm it does to the community, this study found that language may still be utilized to heal.

Key words: *Indigenous language, Sociolinguistics, Colonial linguistics, Noongars, Native title*

Sociolinguistic concepts of language, culture, and topography can be used to revive and reaffirm Indigenous identity in communities where native title processes have contributed to the further erasure of Indigenous identities. They can also help resolve intra-Indigenous conflicts centered on identity or who has the right to claim what and where. Native title conflicts between indigenous peoples are significantly more frequent than those between non-Indigenous peoples, which put additional strain on an already overburdened institution and causes unneeded suffering and uncertainty in an already traumatized society. This study affirms that the system, as it now stands, is ineffective because it is incompatible with Indigenous cultural norms or communication practices, but rather promotes their Othering (Errington, 2008), reinforcing the dominance of white Australian society. However, there is a space in the design of claims systems for Indigenous voices and culturally appropriate involvement. The finest person to speak about a nation is someone who is from that country, and the same is true of native title practices. The Indigenous population of Australia is more than capable of speaking for itself. More so than White Australia, they are able to explain how linguistic and cultural variations in their communities serve as proof of social groupings and customary custodianship. Additionally, they are able to pinpoint ways that the existing system may be enhanced in a way that takes into account culturally particular information and, most crucially, has the potential to restore first nation peoples' dignity. The goal of the current study is to

investigate how language's evidential qualities might help resolve disputes resulting from native title design. Despite to early predictions, the bulk of native title-related issues in Australia have not included claims, individual states, or business. Instead, they have typically involved claim groupings or intra-Indigenous conflicts (Palmer, 2018). Discussions concerning Indigenous land rights between White Australians and Aboriginal groups are less frequent than disputes among requesting parties about who has the power to investigate claims for which countries. These terms of inter conflicts are identity-related, and this research makes the case that they may be settled by looking at how dialect, topography, and cultural traditions shape identities. In light of this, the present study addresses the linguistic and cultural distinctions between the First Australians and European settlers. It will refer to and address popular conceptions of "language" as they were created by colonizers. It also directs the reader's attention to meanings of language that are different from those used traditionally in the Western or in the Third World (Ndhlovu, 2016, p. 29). This study also discusses the impact of colonial linguistics (Makoni, 2012) and how this viewpoint on dialect as a device for regulation has made a contribution to a racial oppression that has allowed the ongoing extinction of Indigenous culture and identities throughout Australian history, right up until today. Native title in Australia is an attempt to confront the issue of land rights for Indigenous groups (Errington, 2001). I'll also make the case that the planning and design of native title systems did not take cultural differences into account, which simply contributed to intensify already existing conflicts amongst Indigenous groups. The structure is ineffective since it was not created to accommodate Indigenous Australians' traditional or communication practices. This study thus wants to determine if sociolinguistics may play a part in resolving challenges with community structure and identity. Native title should be made simpler for all, but especially for the claims. According to this study, this may help first peoples regain their sense of dignity. The Noongar native title issue was being taken into consideration by the court. In order to accommodate financial restrictions, accommodations were given to ancient tribes and groups during the claim preparation process. The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, often known as SWALSC (previously the Noongar Land Council), merged fourteen tribes into six because it lacked the funds to prosecute individual claims for every tribe. Indigenous borders, such as those determined by Tindale and replicated by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, had to be moved as a result of this rearrangement (AIATSIS). These startups in certain instances received designations that weren't always indicative of the tribes they were made up of. This study focuses especially about boodjar, associated with Noongars.

Many researchers had been volunteering at the Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation (NBLCAC), where they had witnessed the positive effects of reclaiming a forgotten language on the neighbourhood. When learned about the problems with native title, it set out to show how language might be used to resolve disputes as well as heal them. If we contend that language has the ability to assist in resolving challenges impacting Indigenous people, it implies that we need to take into account this practice as it is practiced by such communities. This isn't a metaphor to the customs that imperial invaders with political objectives who used colonial linguistics to conquer First Nations imposed on them. Instead, this relates to communication systems as they were traditionally utilized. Practitioners within Second And third world concepts are more preoccupied with how well the language will be comprehended by the target audience than they are with rank or universal understanding. Under this state, communication among users and the capacity to identify participation by understanding are the two characteristics that characterize what we refer to as language. The function of language as a method of communication is fulfilled by its simplicity. Similar to how language is compartmentalized and arranged in categories and classifications that regulate its use, an indigenous (or Global South) transmission system is separated from that which is common to occidental (or Global North) society. The contrast between them in terms of difficulty is crucial and shouldn't be ignored. In fact, the Indigenous people have been displaced and are in a terrible position because white Australia's organizational architecture did not account for this disparity in methods of communication. But despite this, Australia continues to work to integrate Indigenous populations into settler-designed practices, of which native title is only one. Consequently, this study make a distinction between communication as it is understood by western civilizations and an evolutionary method, which, I shall argue, is a characteristic of Indigenous forms of intercultural communication. The south-west quadrant of Western Australia has historically belonged to the Noongar people. Noongar is the only name used to characterize the dialect, the nation (boodjar), and the way of life (Bracknell, 2014). There are fourteen tribes in Noongar territory, and they all communicate three varieties of the same language (Noongar Boodjar Language Centre, 2014). An additional differentiation and method by which Noongars choose to self-identify is through clan organization. Despite the fact that several Noongar do neither talk nor understand the language (waangkiny), they remain known as Noongar and utilize the name to describe their heritage, nation, and faith. The Noongar language spoken by the people during the period of colonization in 1829 is very different from the one being rebuilt now (Barcham, 2008). The Noongar language of today has changed significantly from the language that was used by the ancestors 230 years ago under

the impact of time and external influences like linguistic diversity and territory loss. This is partially attributable to the effects of colonists, cultivators, and preachers who sought to preserve and retain the First Australians' languages but had any linguistic skills or not. Numerous variants were developed as a result of the absence of a standardized language (Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation 2014). These differences are frequently discovered when phonetic symbols from one dialect are used to transliterate another. Imperial writing indicates a non-European language that has been filtered through European phonology rather than accurately representing Noongar sounds and spelling. Think about this group's name: Noongar. There are various frequently used spellings of this one term, including Nyunga, Nyoongar, Yonga, Nyungah, and Njunja (McConvell, 1996; Bracknell, 2014). Although some aspects of colonial culture worked to preserve Indigenous Australian dialects, many were dedicated to eradicating them. In order to dominate a people by colonialization, it was necessary to learn alien dialects. This is known as "command over language" for the sake of creating "languages of command," as described by Janina Brutt-Griffler (2006). According to Makoni (2012), white adventurers and colonizers established language and ethnicity as social categories to further their goals of empiricism. The establishment of infrastructure somewhat on Australian continent to highlight the supremacy of the British invaders, and linguistic regulations reinforced both of the covert and overt enslavement of the indigenous inhabitants (Fesl as cited in Harkins, 2000, p. 76; Host, 2009). Since language was the means through which Indigenous communities were established and sustained, Aboriginal culture and all activities carried out inside it were thus inferior (Muhlhausler, 1987, p. 11). Federal programs were made to explicitly eliminate first languages and, by consequence, the societies were formed by them, forwarding English language and culture (Host, 2009). The exercise of taking kids from one‘s homes and repatriating them in operations almost guaranteed the end of Indigenous language transmission inside the home and, at the absolute minimum, managed to make the Aboriginal community too afraid to utilize their indigenous codes in general populace for fear of being incarcerated (Jackie Coffin, 2018). Well how does work in the community be done if it isn't in the native tongue? Considering the Northern and Southern viewpoints on language that were previously explored, there are several ways that a common tongue might be used to bring people together. We could talk about the emergence of Australian Aboriginal English (AAE) when we wish to think about imperial (Northern) linguistic categories. Indigenous Australian groups have developed this nontraditional dialect of Australian English, which now serves as a means of identity and connection in modern Indigenous society (Harkins, 2000, p. 62). Australian Aboriginal English serves to meet linguistic demands for the

inter -community interaction, unity, identification, and mysticism; Indigenous symbols formerly satisfied these communication and emotional neediness (Malcolm, 2013, p. 43; Harkins, 2000, p. 62). By highlighting the code's difference from the conventional variation, individuals are identifying the language as theirs and redefining collective identity (Malcolm, 2013, p. 42). Nevertheless, AAE continues to get criticism among enthusiasts who just don't grasp the role it plays in Aboriginal communities, such as "broken English" or "butchered English" (Malcolm, 2013, p. 42). Such designations, although Australia's self-proclaimed post-colonial status, conceal an imperial perspective which persists inside the nation as long as Standard Australian English (SAE) is regarded as the proper or right way to talk. The development of this system among Indigenous groups shows that, despite language's potential for conquest and division, it may also contribute to repatriation and reunification. Written and verbal engagement is preferred in individual communities, like the ones inherited from British colonists. These (individualistic) groupings are what Cohen refers to as low context societies (as cited in Vayrynen, 2011). Due to limited communications channels, these individuals aren't used to being calm, alert for clues, or cognizant of their surroundings. In contrary, the communal structure of Indigenous Australian cultures implies that visual clues and sign gestures are crucial to linguistic competence (Cohen, as cited in Vayrynen, 2011). Whatever is regarded courteous for White Australians may not be appropriate for Indigenous people due to cultural differences. Addressing a person in the eye, especially if they have a higher rank, is how you pay tribute and sincerity in a European context. For Noongars, who demonstrate reverence by refraining from eye contact, this is viewed as a defiant behaviour (Jackie Coffin, 2018). Although Southern populations are trained to savoring the present, Northern civilizations desire quick pleasure. It contends that this is the talent required for a living on the land and for one who is reliant on the earth, the weather, and hearing to and watching climatic factors. People learn to comprehend whatever their nation is saying them fairly fast whenever the existence of the clan depends on the capacity to scrape by through hunting and gathering. Consequently, I assert that Indigenous knowledge of country is a form of language—the dialect of the territory, closely related to a person's indigeneity—and that we should temporarily set aside rigid Northern concepts in order to explore this theory from a deeper adaptable standpoint. While Noongars inside the settlement who worked on fields made competent workers, according to Hammond (1980), many remained unreliable by conventional criteria since they frequently disappeared into the bush for months at a time. This really is due to the fact that the shift in climates served as a cue to go farther inland in search of sustenance (Jackie Coffin, 2018). The Noongars were able to survive off the land for some time after they arrived

in the bush. The technique is indeed illustration of how Indigenous and White Australian civilizations are incompatible in as well as showing close connection to the land. One faction revered industry, whereas the other section answered to the earth. Nevertheless, the colonists occasionally benefited from the Noongars' knowledge of the land. Take into account the usage of Aboriginal hunters, who were regularly hired to assist settlers and soldiers in navigating the wilderness or track down escaped convicts (Hammond, 1980). The colonists saw the benefit of speaking the language effectively in this regard. As a result of this ability, Noongars were also able to navigate through the bush covertly (Hammond, 1980). It is a dialect that differentiates the inside group from outer group in as much as that understanding equates to life. Since people were unable to interpret their circumstances or comprehend what the nation's environment was trying to tell people, many white Australians died in the desert. It's hesitant to say that a Southwestern dialect is superior to AAE or (Global North) Australian languages as a communication tool. Both contribute to defining culture and identity, and both must be learned through local residents who are knowledgeable about them. Nevertheless, one of them was eradicated by advancing colonialists, whereas the other was viewed as a risk to Australian uniformity (by settlers). Notwithstanding the worst attempts of advancing colonists, the Noongar have managed to preserve their dialect, despite the fact that it changed significantly from the form it had before the arrival of the British. Language, in which every aspect it may assume, is essential to the process of society, civilization, and the construction of self (Kirsch, 1979). This enables deeper investigation of a theory of language as evidence in as much as society and justice were always exercised and transmitted in the traditional manners. Such a linguistic society's heritage and culture can be traced though the languages in terms of the size of the society as well as its limits, Language was always played a vital a to identify significant social categories. Tribes that are close to one another frequently have a code of conduct in similar along with strong social and cultural ties (Jupp, 2001). This implies that such societies will embrace ideals on traditional practices including ritual and observance, taboos, and grief. If we believe this is the case, we must equally acknowledge that what unites individuals in one situation could be utilized to set them apart in another. It will demonstrate Sociolinguistic notions of language, toponymy, and heritage will construct, identify, and divide groups. In this sense, societies striving to reinforce identity as it is placed in doubt, like as we encounter with native title issues when tribal identity is being put into question or endangered, might gain from the understanding and thoughtful implementation of these methods. Such activities seem intertwined as well as interconnected to the extent that culture and heritage cannot be completely done without language actions or the context in which they take place (Liddicoat,

2009, p. 115; Kirsch, 1979). The fact that a group of speakers never has the same past or perspective as another is exactly what makes the interplay of language and society a point of proof. According to Liddicoat (2009, p. 116), discourse is utilized to establish and preserve social bonds during cultural exchange. Among parents and children, among employers and employees, among teachers and students, and among ethnicities when one utilizes language to rule and control another are just a few examples of where this may happen. These kinds of linguistic actions are crucial in defining communities. In accordance with the debatable and outmoded Sapir-Whorf theory, a linguistic society's history, perspective, and behaviour are influenced by the community's code, or language (Goldin-Meadow, 2007). It is true that language may help to untangle social group boundaries, but not in the manner that Sapir and Whorf suggested. Modern linguists contend that culture affects language, not the other way around (Liddicoat, 2009, p. 116). Therefore, language is a pliable thing that can be shaped and influenced by the people who utilize it. Language's unique characteristics give linguists, archaeologists, and sociologists a detailed picture of the speaking community's culture. Linguistic development through age can be explained, for instance, by diachronic linguists but certain things lead to transformation of the dialects. Dialect of a society preserves historical facts, whether it is written or oral (Liddicoat, 2009, p. 128). Language learners may detect significant moments by examining the vocabulary of a group of participants since language emerge to express such. For instance, it is claimed that debts from Indonesia indicate that Indigenous Australians and Indonesian sailors communicated before the First Fleet arrived (Simpson, 2015, p. 1; Jupp, 2001). The language of a community may also be used to track and pinpoint the occurrence and timing of events that contribute to social reform, such as conflict, disease or epidemics, connection, and conquest (Liddicoat, 2009, p. 128). Similar towards the colonization of South America, India and Africa, it took little time for such a dominant linguistic community and the overwhelming power of an advancing kingdom to have an impact on the manner of life of the earliest Australians. The very first tribes to encounter the intruders quickly created a plethora of fresh phrases (Simpson, 2015, p. 1). Due to the way society evolved and the invention of terms which used to alert others about the British presence, we may conclude that the British had a significant influence on Indigenous Australia (Simpson, 2015, p. 5). Indigenous communities generated unfamiliar phrases by adopting, extending the connotation of existing terms, or inventing new lexemes using the grammatical resources of language, affected by the ways of thinking of the language system, in order to be able to talk about these new notions (Mc Gregor, 2000). Take into account the police officer, who is a typical and well-known representative of western culture yet is totally unknown to Indigenous

people. Before the entry of the Europeans, this phrase was not used in Aboriginal dialects of Australia; nevertheless, after their arrival, it spread fast throughout the nation's language families. Due to parallels between both the manatj (cockatoo) and the native troopers that the Noongar noticed, police officers in the South West were referred to as manatj (Mc Gregor, 2000). The Matuthunira people of the Pilbara employed the term *ngarniwurtu* that implies equally violent and scorching to the tongue (Mc Gregor, 2000). This suggests that the Noongar had better encounters with the police than their northern counterparts who were also Aborigines. These terms may be defined as similar but distinct since they were coined from each society or social group to relate the same idea, but diversely. This ubiquitous word has been given connotations specific to the speakers in each place as a result of the norms of each dialect paired with the cultures or worldviews of the speakers as evidenced by their interactions with police officers. As a result, if language is actually an indicator of distinct communities that are distinguished from one another by the cultural norms and belief systems of its users; it may also be used as evidence in contentious situations like native title claims. The process of area renaming may alternatively be described as comparable yet distinct. Parallel seeing as how the fourteen Noongar tribes use the same language, but distinct in that each group's mountainous regions, waterways, cliffs, holy sites, and prohibited locales were given unique names based on its Dreamtime progenitor (Chatwin, 1987; Hodges, 2007, p. 383). The maintaining and recounting of naming through Dreamtime tales and Indigenous songlines persisted from down the generations, just like they were transmitted in the beginning, notwithstanding the oral heritage of Australia's original inhabitants. In addition, having a link to a nation grants you the freedom to communicate with it (Jackie Coffin, 2018). This is also known as the "Ask Him rule" (Hammond, 1980). Territorial symbolic geography, according to Palmer (2011), is a tool to keep folk tales unaffected by localized change, and the Ask Him rule bans any Indigenous person from speaking to a nation that have really no relationship to (Palmer, 2011, p. 279). Furthermore, while actions of modification are prohibited, processes have been established to guarantee the accuracy of narration by rituals. The avoidance of localized modification and the Ask Him rule demonstrate the evidential character of topography as it is used by Indigenous Australians. The system of landmarks used to describe the First Peoples' environment in Australia is distinctive, connected, and important in that each site with a unique significance has a name based on a Dreamtime narrative (Hodges, 2007, p.383). As a result of the names serving as recollection triggers for Dreamtime stories provides data regarding how that location began to be, which include a law, the custom of place naming could be another norm used to designate various social groupings. Labeling strongly resembles

the Dreamtime and the law is particular to the group, which makes it distinctive. Indigenous toponymy avoids using names more than once. Each title derives from a particular progenitor deed or ceremony. There was no accident and due to these traits, names are distinctive and evidential. Hercus and Simpson (2002) claimed that while addressing Indigenous toponymy, a group or clan's place names constituted a network that connected to those of their neighbour. This indicates that certain regions may have had more than one Dreamtime narrative, even if place naming customs prevented name repetition. The narrative of the same ridge may be delivered in several ways depending on whose nation you were in. A boundary or distinction in communities is established at the point when this changes. Insofar as predecessors passed down law to their family, toponymy for Indigenous Australians is determined by the Dreamtime. In light of this, a boundary symbolizes a new nation, according to the forefathers. The knowledge of sacred sites and ceremonies, including their names, might also belong to a single family that has been granted ownership or stewardship rights by their ancestors (Hercus & Simpson, 2002; Palmer, 2011, p. 282). Words used in initiation ceremonies were prohibited from usage or perhaps even knowledge by those who did not require them, similar to the Ask Him rule (Jackie Coffin, 2018). These terms' function in a speaker's native dialect shows how culture is enacted by language and identifies a pattern as flexible, identifiable, and detectable. As what is crucial to one speaker may be banned to another, this term is attributable. The ceremony cannot be carried out if the words or language are unknown. By contrasting resemblance and variance, this study has shown how language, toponymy, and cultural values may be utilized to distinguish one society from the other. It also demonstrated how all these three ideas interact with one another and affect one another. These customs are practiced with and through language, which, as it has shown, are demonstrative and may thus be used to pinpoint social groups. This way of thinking about language allows us to perceive it as a process that we engage in on a daily basis rather than as an object (Liddicoat, 2009, p. 117). Many speakers, as well as politicians, would not be familiar with the linguistic structure. This otherness may be evident in the native title process, which extends the colonialist ideology that colonized this land and persecuted the First People by being given through white Australian practice of languages and with white Australian legislation. By taking part in this act, the disparity between the legal and linguistic traditions of these two civilizations becomes even clearer. The colonial history of Australia lends weight to this perspective since the social structures developed by one linguistic group were used to divide and rule the other. In addition, despite laws that purport to restore dignity and acknowledgment, domination through linguistic practices and institutions persists until today. Until the ancestors of colonial Australia see the

value of creating room for social infrastructure developed with the involvement of Indigenous Australia, this dominance will not alter. Colonial linguistics, language supremacy, and Indigenous extinction were created and continue to be a problem. The majority of Indigenous Australians believe they are under colonization, however since Federation in 1901; the Australian Government has functioned autonomously of the British Empire. Therefore, whenever we analyze the nature of relations between First People and white settlers, we are actually talking about the legacy of the colonial past. This lasting legacy implies that all elements of cross-cultural interactions in Australia are viewed through a post-colonial perspective, including linguistic use trends (Makoni, 2012). The Native Title Act of 1993 is an example (henceforth NTA). This act was intended to recognize the First Nations of Australia's rights and interests regarding land and seas (Smith & Morphy, 2007), however at its heart, what seems to be legislation intended to recognize Australia's Indigenous community is essentially another act of colonialism. This is clear from the manner that every element of the NTA reiterates the presumption that one culture is better to another. While ostensibly keeping the rights of Indigenous groups in mind, the procedures put in place to implement the Act were planned and developed from a Eurocentric perspective. Consequently, neither party benefits from these procedures because conventional Indigenous cultures do not acknowledge the rule of law established by the whites, and the Australian judicial system does not recognize customs or laws of marginalized groups as superior to its own (Palmer, 2011, p. 269; Reilly, 2003, p. 3). Given that autonomy (a European idea) was never relinquished, one would be excused for assuming that the incorrect party is making the argument. The hypocrisy of a procedure created with minimal involvement from a similar society yet intended to favour a specific segment of it shouldn't escape the observer. I also explained about how language may be used to show one is a part of a community. When distinct linguistic aspects and structures are present, as they are in Australian languages, these can be employed to show a person's affinity for their native land. Language supports identification and belonging in this way. However, language may also depreciate, command, and indicate doubt, in addition to informing and connecting. This is a characteristic of colonial civilizations that is employed throughout the native title procedure. The criteria used to determine whether to give native title are designed in a way that reinforces this imperial attitude (Carey, 2009, p. 163). The Noongars are now involved in a native title dispute, which has resulted in the third allocation (relocation) of tribal boundaries in 230 years. Australian First Inhabitants were operating their own frontier monitoring systems before the British arrival (Reilly, 2003, p. 4). Every generation was educated on the location of the middle of the field that occurred between different locations as well as how to recognize one's own

nation's territory (Jackie Coffin, 2018). Shrub, vegetation, bushes, the soil, and different animals all indicated a different nation, and these alterations to the terrain served as a telltale marker of the new nation. The maps indicating the details of Australian inhabitants were not present in the exact way that they were replicated by organizations like AIATSIS because cartography is a colonial practice (Reilly, 2003, p. 3), not to mention that the inhabitants of Australia followed an oral culture. The Noongar Nation, as mentioned earlier, is made up of fourteen clan groupings that share three different varieties of the same language. Every clan had its own nation, customs, legal framework, lands, and most significantly Dreamtime tales. Everything including their family, Dreaming, dialect, society, and places to go hunting or fishing, was constituted within these areas. The British began charting and labelling the new colony as Terra Nullius (open or uninhabited territory) as soon as they arrived. Language is the tool that a community uses to build its social structure. This social structure involves partition as well as command for a settlement or throughout the colony-establishing process (Errington, 2001). Colonial linguistics (CL) is characterized by the use of language to construct and subsequently assert dominance over minority populations, which has the dual effects of uprooting existing communities and forcing repositioning identities (Makoni, 2012). With the use of this designation, Terra Nullius, the colonizers were free to create Australia as a British invention without interference from the Indigenous population (Reilly, 2003, p. 5). The colonizers were able to accomplish this goal because to language and the way it was utilized to erase tradition, community, and identity (Muhlhausler, 1987). New locations in colonial culture were called after leaders, as well as after home towns or after what the location symbolized to the named (Hodges, 2007, p. 383; Hercus & Simpson, 2002). Fremantle, named after Admiral Sir Charles Fremantle, is one of the names that continue to be usage today on Noongar Boodjar, whereas Stirling Street in Bunbury pays homage to Western Australia's first governor, Governor Stirling. Indigenous place names were disregarded as a consequence of colonial naming conventions in support of European names. Traces of Indigenous culture, community, and, consequently, Indigenous methods of delineating boundaries also vanished along with them. Due to this, European position to obtain is completely distinct from Indigenous town names in terms of both form and function (Hercus & Simpson, 2002). White Australia successfully eliminated the previously established Indigenous Australia and with it: cultural, communal conduct, and identity by charting and labelling Australia in accordance with what immigrants perceived in the (allegedly) empty area. The decline of Indigenous Australia coincided with the emergence of white Australia.

The British conquerors stripped the indigenous identity of native Australians by delegitimizing the structure through which it was conveyed by granting culture and language significance under the guise of colonial linguistics (Errington, 2001). Years later, under the colonizer's terms, the Australian government passed laws to allow traditional owners to reclaim their land and culture, but only after meeting specific requirements (Smith & Morphy, 2007). The requirements of this law have striking resemblances to their colonial forebears' language customs, which exposes the still prevalent colonial mindset noted previously. Since it has been previously shown that colonizers favour cartography, native title, which was developed by colonizers, uses maps in the evaluation of claims (Reilly, 2003, p. 3). Six groups were formed out of the fourteen clans that made up the Noongar native title claim (see map 1.5.2). Only three of the six groups still have their traditional identities, but the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) has given each of them titles. The reminders may have been developed to reflect the merging. The Ngadji Ngadji are asserting their identity as a clan distinct from the Balardong and their territory has been united, as an aspect of the native title claim in the northern side of Noongar boodjar. This presents issues of identification and connection, which is one that this study is particularly interested in. The evidence given and analyzed in the following chapters suggests that it would be beneficial to have a procedure that is more open to the thoughts and involvement of Indigenous Australians. A system created with the involvement of individuals whose native title is intended to benefit would also lead to fewer disagreements. Fewer hours spent debating legal issues in court, and potentially a greater understanding began between Indigenous and European Australians. Maps showing six states and two territories, all of which claim to have been found and inhabited by explorers and pioneers, serve as a visual representation of the Australia created by white settlers. It comprises rivers, mountains, cities, and towns that were built by famous personalities, in honour of such men, or as a loving homage to hometowns. In areas where there were Indigenous names, the words that make up these labels and the Australia they represent have taken the place of Dreamtime Australia and the cultures that existed there. In its haste to establish a procedure for recognizing land rights, bureaucracy has overlooked the fact that the procedures intended to make recognition easier are nonetheless rooted in a colonizer's mentality. The traditional Indigenous approach to life has been disturbed, along with the identity of both people and communities as a whole, by borders and boundaries that are realigned to fit the organizations they serve. This study aims to determine how much a language-based strategy that is more in line with Indigenous culture may assist to address some of these problems.

In spite of the detrimental consequences of colonizing forces, it has been stated that Australia's First people have been able to maintain their codes. I stated previously that these codes may and do change based on the situation and the user. By using and engaging with each, the individual is able to perform their identity and culture. Codes function in this way to enable speakers recognizes and be recognized as Noongar. I expanded on this claim in earlier by demonstrating how language serves as evidence to distinguish communities through toponomic processes and cultural practices, which are carried out through and are inseparable from language. I also showed how these similar cultural practices are different for European Australians, and how this distinction has over time led to conflict and miscommunication across cultures. The prevailing culture still does not take into account these disparities. I covered how Colonial Linguistics was applied to rule and manage the Indigenous population during colonization. I asserted that language was employed as a means of eradicating Indigenous Australian signals and of endorsing European culture as the authentic Australian culture. One method used by colonists to do this was through mapping, where Aboriginal place names and languages were eliminated to make room for the creation of a white Australia.

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Mirrored Selves: Exploring the Intersection of Literature and Identity Formation

Literature has always been significant in forming both cultural and personal identities. Literature reflects the complexity of human identity via the representation of individuals' experiences, cultural origins, and personal development. By exposing readers to a variety of viewpoints and tales, they help readers get a greater knowledge of their own sense of self. This article will examine the significant influence of literature on the development of identity at the individual and cultural levels. We learn how characters' journeys operate as a mirror for readers, exposing the complexity of identity and its ever-changing nature, through examining the storylines of various literary works. Readers can see characters overcoming obstacles, considering social norms, and growing as people via these stories. Readers are prompted to consider their own personal development and the transformational potential of life events as a result of this investigation, which builds a greater awareness of the fluidity of identity. Readers are given a richer knowledge of the complexity of identity and its ongoing growth through the various viewpoints and travels portrayed in literature. Overall, this article examines the profound impact of literature on identity formation, highlighting the ways in which literary works reflect, shape, and challenge individual and collective selves.

Keywords: *Literature, Identity Formation, Self-Discovery, Cultural Negotiation, Social Critique.*

Introduction

The intricate relationship between literature and identity formation has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Literature serves as a reflective surface, allowing individuals to explore and understand their identities through the lens of narrative, character, and theme. This exploration is not merely an academic exercise; it is a deeply personal journey that resonates with readers across cultures and time periods. In this article, I would like to say how literature acts as a mirror to ourselves, shaping and reflecting our identities through various genres, themes, and characters.

The Role of Literature in Identity Formation

Literature has the power to articulate the complexities of human experience, providing readers

with a means to navigate their own identities. Through storytelling, authors create characters that embody diverse experiences, struggles, and triumphs. These characters often serve as reflections of the readers' own lives, allowing them to see aspects of themselves in the narratives. The process of identification with literary characters can lead to a deeper understanding of one's own identity, as readers engage with themes of race, gender, sexuality, and class. For instance, in Toni Morrison's "Beloved," the protagonist Sethe grapples with her past as a slave and the haunting memories that shape her present. Readers may find themselves resonating with Sethe's struggle for self-definition in the face of trauma and societal expectations. Morrison's work underscores how literature can illuminate the intersections of personal and collective identity, offering insights into how history and culture inform individual experiences.

The Mirror of Representation

One of the most significant ways literature influences identity formation is through representation. The visibility of diverse voices in literature allows marginalized groups to see themselves reflected in narratives that have historically excluded them. This representation is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and self-acceptance. When readers encounter characters who share their cultural backgrounds or life experiences, they are more likely to feel validated in their identities. Contemporary works such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Americanah" explore themes of race and identity in a globalized world. The protagonist Ifemelu navigates her identity as a Nigerian immigrant in America, confronting stereotypes and cultural differences. Through her journey, readers gain insight into the complexities of identity formation in a multicultural context. Adichie's exploration of hair politics, for example, serves as a powerful metaphor for the broader societal pressures that shape self-perception among women of color.

Literary Genres and Identity Exploration

Different literary genres offer unique avenues for exploring identity. For example, autobiographical literature provides a direct lens into the author's life experiences, allowing readers to witness the formation of identity in real-time. Memoirs such as Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" reveal the profound impact of racism, trauma, and resilience on personal identity. Angelou's narrative not only chronicles her own journey but also serves as a testament to the collective struggles faced by African American women. Similarly, speculative fiction often challenges conventional notions of identity by presenting alternative

realities. Works like Octavia Butler's "Kindred" blend elements of science fiction with historical narrative to explore themes of race and power dynamics. By transporting readers between different time periods, Butler invites them to confront the legacies of slavery and systemic oppression, prompting reflection on how these histories shape contemporary identities.

The Impact of Digital Literature

In recent years, the rise of digital literature has further transformed the landscape of identity exploration. Online platforms allow for diverse voices to emerge, creating spaces for marginalized identities to be expressed and celebrated. Social media, fan fiction, and online literary communities provide opportunities for individuals to share their stories and connect with others who share similar experiences. Digital literature often blurs the lines between author and reader, allowing for collaborative storytelling that reflects the complexities of modern identity. For example, platforms like Wattpad enable writers from various backgrounds to share their narratives, fostering a sense of community and belonging. This democratization of literature empowers individuals to take ownership of their stories and contribute to the broader discourse on identity.

Conclusion

The intersection of literature and identity formation is a rich and multifaceted field that continues to evolve. Through its capacity to reflect and shape individual experiences, literature serves as a vital tool for understanding ourselves and our place in the world. As readers engage with diverse narratives, they are invited to confront their own identities, fostering empathy and connection across cultural divides. In an increasingly globalized society, the importance of representation in literature cannot be overstated. By amplifying marginalized voices and exploring complex themes of identity, literature plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of ourselves and each other. As we continue to navigate our mirrored selves through literary exploration, we are reminded of the profound impact that stories have on our identities—both as individuals and as members of a shared human experience.

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Politics of Personal and Social Identity as seen in Pa Ranjith's *Natchathiram Nagargiradhu*

Pa Ranjith's Natchathiram Nagaragiradhu explores the political construction of personal and social identity of individuals in the society. The experimental film traces the conscience of characters from various factions of the society with different ideologies regarding caste, gender, and sexuality. The multicultural characters come together in a utopian theatre troupe that transgresses the heteronormative binaries and Brahmanical hegemonic boundaries. The nonlinear narrative seamlessly flows back and forth from showing the conceptualisation, making and staging of the drama titled "Kaatu Poonai, Naatu Poonai" (Wild cat/ Domestic cat), paralleling it with the effect the discussions create in the minds of the characters and audience. Thereby reflecting the politics of cinema itself. The paper will study the polemics of socio-personal identity construction presented through semantics of the film including setting, lighting, symbolisation, music, and camera angles that revolve around the societal politics of love. It will also explore the alternative culture presented in the film for creating a conducive space for individuals to consistently unlearn and learn to positively reconstruct one's socio-personal identity to construct an inclusive society.

Keywords: *Socio-Personal Identity, Cultural Politics, Alternative Culture, Gender inclusivity, Sexual Politics, Identity Construction, Parallel Cinema*

Ranjithi's *Natchathiram Nagargiradhu* starring Dhushara Vijayan is socio-political, musical-drama film. This highly experimental, nonlinear plot is based on colliding narratives around love. The film was released worldwide in theatres on 30th August 2022. Ranjith's artistic visualisation of a highly controversial subject, raw performances of the actors along with Tenma's fresh and contemporary music has been lauded by critics and public alike. The paper will study the polemics of the multicultural characters' arc with varying contesting perspectives around politics of love. The film attempts to provide an alternative narrative through subversion of existing societal norms to create an inclusive path to egalitarian society by constant positive reconstruction of socio-personal identities. Cinema has been one of the major sources of societal knowledge for the public as it is one of the main mediums of entertainment for the

masses. Tamil cinema specifically has been reflecting the various socio-cultural practices, ideologies and politics and the paradigm shifts of different times especially with regards to the role played by caste-system in Tamil society. Starting with movies justifying Brahmanical hegemonic practices of caste atrocity using religio-mythical historical consciousness, the focus shifted significantly with the Dravidian movement (1930-1950s) that promoted the ideals of an egalitarian society free of caste and creed. Paradigm shifts within this movement have also evolved from using the savarna collective consciousness of considering Dalits as lowly furthering their denigration in society to dignified, authentic representation of the community by Dalit filmmakers. Pa. Ranjith is one of the most significant voices in this new wave of Anti-caste cinema whose works have created a cultural revolution. His cinema, production house and Neelam cultural space promotes arts, education and anti-caste culture which has paved the way for constructing an inclusive space in the mainstream cinema and society for the subaltern people to gain visibility. Director Pa. Ranjith says, " It is not a love film but a film that talks about the politics of love" (Rangan)

Natchathiram Nagargiradhu (Pa.Ranjith 2022) traces the conscience of characters from disparate backgrounds,worldviews and identities who come together forming a collective consciousness in a theatre troupe. The space set in Auroville, Pondicherry serves as the microcosm of modern Indian society based on the idea of community and allyship as symbolised through the blue-themed contemporary paintings and murals filling the space. The introductory song, *Rangaraatinam* (18:00- 22:08) presents this as an almost utopian transgressive space just like the film itself, thereby not limiting the narrative to merely portray but live and breathe in the inclusive society of love it espouses. The audience are introduced to this space through the lens of an outsider, Arjun, an aspiring movie actor who comes to the city with hopes of using the theatre troupe to kick-start his career. The character is used as the complex dialectic between the utopian space and the outside society, both of which shape and are shaped by each other and thereby affects the identity constructs of the characters. Arjun, who represents the faction of society whose conscience is limited and shaped by the binary lens of heteronormative ideology that mainstream cinema propagates is completely put off-beat as he gets to meet the troupe who express their socio-personal identities without any inhibitions. "Imagine how much easier it would be for us to learn how to love if we began with a shared definition." (Hooks 4). The group's brainstorming session on the subject of the upcoming play on love tries to open up a discussion on exactly this- various interpretations of love that are weaved by the society(26:00- 33:00). The scene embodies the power of conversations. It begins with positive statements of love being the path of universal unity and allyship as suggested by

Medellin, a French woman. Further, Sylvia, a trans woman expresses her idea of love as a feeling of acceptance against the cruel societal exclusion that the trans community faces and Praveen & Diana, a gay couple, talks about love being genderless and casteless as well as gives freedom to find oneself. Arjun puts forth extremely problematic views including branding a certain community's love as *Nadaga Kadhal*(Fake love) as his father has taught him leads to a heated face off where Yashwanth interjects that "Love is politics" (29:09). When one of the members hits at the Brahmanical hegemonic ideology of caste, another member who identifies with the Brahmin community misunderstands it as an attack against the community, a common misconception. The discussion reveals Arjun's casteist, misogynist, ignorant ideology; Iniyavan's dismissive liberal attitude teamed with his patriarchal anger at Rene when she asserts her opinion and Rene's palpable rageful intelligence throughout which comes from deep personal-communal trauma and understanding of the systemic caste violence perpetuated in society. The conversation is intricately designed to give equal space for representation and understanding of all political perspectives. As portrayed in the composition of the film's poster, Rene is the mural and the muse of the narrative and carries the hope of the film signified by her love for shooting stars. The free-spirited, self assured and vocal Dalit Ambedkarite feminist protagonist uses her agency assertively and compassionately. She is a complex three-dimensional force painted in vibrant hues of blues and reds of strength and vulnerabilities, carrying a Buddha's picture and pride flag to signify her inclusive political stance. She brings out the other part of Dalit resistance in Pa. Ranjith's cinematic narratology that till now had focused more on the physicality of the issue to lay the foundation of the mechanics of the system. It vividly presents the fight against the Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser) of the patriarchal caste system that people from marginalised communities and allies put up with on a daily basis. She performs her socio-personal identity loudly and fiercely that comes with her constant fight for survival and consistent conscious practice of the praxis of anti-caste politics and assertion. Carol Hanisch who popularised the slogan of "Personal is Political" during the second wave feminism through her 1970 essay titled the same explains the significance of "political therapy"(Pg 4) as opposed to personal therapy for women and marginalised factions of society to get rid of the internalised self blame that the society imposes. This is based on the understanding that people and in particular women's personal experiences can be traced to one's location within the social system of power relationships. Rene is acutely aware of her social marginalisation based on the intersections of caste and gender. She is seen reading Babasaheb's *Castes in India* (1916-17) and *Buddha and his Dhamma(1957)*in the film. In a highly symbolic scene, she proudly eats beef fry and asserts her political standpoint as an

Ambedkarite, sipping blue soda. Throughout the film, the shot-compositions featuring her subverts the mainstream cinematic gaze on women and are taken at eye level or low angle to signify her confident progressive social ideology that reflects in the stability of self. The film opens with the camera tilting vertically to capture Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* painting and Nina Simone's song playing from Iniyan's playlist in his bedroom. He irritably uses Rene's Dalit name *Tamizh* to stop her from humming a tune. The scene establishes his Nehruvian liberal ideology. He understands and empathises with global politics but isn't sensitive to caste politics which is the reason behind Rene's conscious choice of a new identity - *Renetta* based on her favourite character and perceives the music composer Ilayaraja as symbol of Dalit empowerment. She identifies her fight with him is ideological. The savarna man uses reverse-casteist ideology to defend himself but doesn't try acknowledging and unlearning his mental blocks even when Rene offers help empathetically as highlighted in another scene where she tries to lead him in the path of light in her space-themed small room(57:28). She doesn't put up with his casual casteism and leaves him though they are attracted to each other. This is the reason his character arc is stunted. On the other hand, Arjun's regressive ideology is based on conservative ideas because of limited exposure and distance from inclusive politics perpetuated through his parents and mainstream cinema. The song *Perinba Kadhal* highlights the predatory gaze of Arjun and is presented through the random camera movements and disco lighting in the claustrophobic chaotic space that heightens fear in the audience for Rene's security in Sylvia- Joel's party where he tries to assault her. Whilst the troupe unanimously decide to throw him out, the camera shifts to Rene's gaze. Through a wide angle shot she is seen observing the event sitting in a Buddha-like posture. She doesn't accept his apology but asks him to stay as "Political correctness will not come in a day. It's a lifelong process" and pushes him to face his mistakes to learn and correct himself in this inclusive space.(1:28:00- 1:34:57) This embarks his journey to change. Rene's powerful monologue reflects her Dalit identity of "a shattered glass" that she had recollected and constructed a social identity of her own. The heart wrenching visual representation of her life struggle in animation along with the stage designing of her monologue links it to *Parasakthi* (Panju 1952) Sivaji Ganesan's most culturally revolutionary iconic monologue in Tamil cinema. Ironically, Rene, a Dalit woman who uses her own agency to voice out only gets to address an empty gallery except for a clueless Arjun who confesses his romantic feelings and his confused inability to understand her "true" identity. (2:00:10-2:05:00). This highlights the cultural annihilation of Dalits and simultaneously challenges it. However as soon as Arjun steps out of the space to his village, the old regressive factors threaten his progress in socio-personal ideology. The satirical scene of Arjun's mother

and sister emotionally manipulating him to marry Roshini from their own caste highlights that women are oppressed and are also perpetrators of regressive ideologies. The scene ends with a hilarious positive flourish as his dying grandmother stops them as she feebly utters "I don't want my grandson's life ruined like mine was (within the system)" as she too is a victim of Brahmanical hegemony. (2:16:45). Muthamal's oppari *En Janame* with Uma Devi's lyrics and visualisation of women deities' mutilated parts being worshipped is one of the most haunting songs in the film. During a rehearsal session, the troupe is made to listen to people talking about their stories of honour killings. This is weaved along with shots of CCTV cameras capturing murders in present time which establishes the brutal reality of caste practices as alive and thriving in society. The session affects and visibly sensitises the members. The same is dealt with in the play titled "*Kaatu Poonai,Naatu Poonai"* (wild cat/domestic cat)that the troupe puts up. They use animal allegory to address the sensitive issue in order to not be banned. However, the troupe encounters their greatest threat while stepping out of the space and performing the drama to the masses. The roaring master cat, Sagas Ratchagan which literally translates to saviour of stories is the opposing force. The villain meets the troupe the day before the performance as he orders a cake for the "bloody rebels"(2:18:54) always seen in white to reverse the narrative of purity. He represents the guardians of caste hegemony and "culture" itself who try to stop the subversive performance challenging the mainstream narrative. This is symbolised as the tracking camera shoots his movements with Mahatma Gandhi's statue in the background. He gets along with the Repressive State Apparatus(Althusser) as he talks to the Master in power through phone and the police force join hands with him, abandoning the troupe instead of protecting them. The eery climax of him beating up the troupe is followed by his speech to which Rene kicks him and the group follows. The camera captures the war-like scene of the collective struggling to fight him across a sea of red chairs from a bird's eye angle to highlight the magnanimity of the ideological war. Francis Ford Coppola in an interview says, "[Cinema] combines so many other art forms, as do theatre and opera, but the essence of cinema is editing. It's the combination of what can be extraordinary images, images of people during emotional moments, or just images in a general sense, but put together in a kind of alchemy. A number of images put together a certain way become something quite above and beyond what any of them are individually." (Ignoramous). The vivid cinematography by A.Kishor Kumar is enhanced with an intelligent use of combination of cutaways and cross cuts used to interweave the seamless nonlinear narrative, especially the intercuts for Rene and Iniyavan have given it an almost magical realistic quality. The amalgamation of artistry and artifice of the theatre with the camera is brought out through the experimental theatre group that synthesises a variety of

raw theatrical forms reflecting the filmmaking itself. The film does not black out in a didactic tone with the destruction of Sagas Ratchagan. The group is seen stargazing together on the beach and a star shoot across the sky to which Subeer's daughter prays for her Dad's performances to not be hindered by fight (2:43:46) and the camera fades into the starry sky with the soft hopeful music of the title track *Natchathiram Nagargiradhu* (A star shoots across the sky). The film continuously reverses the language of cinema through its dialogues, aesthetics, gaze, and culture that is formed by collective experience, shared histories, solidarity and a movement of assertion. It opens dialogue with the audience to challenge existing stereotypes and explore one's construction of identity through questioning the societal factors that affect it. The egalitarian space of the theatre is brought out through L. Jayaragu's artwork with Buddha's murals and galaxies signifying the utopian cosmic. It creates an alternative culture of Buddhism that counters and transgresses caste, class, sexuality and gender boundaries of the present social reality of a society infested with hegemonic caste hierarchies. Thereby, creating a conducive environment for the construction of progressive identities through the purification of the self-achieved through constant learning and relearning to adopt a socially inclusive gaze.

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Beyond Glass Slippers: Unpacking Cultural Narratives in Chinese Cinderella Story

Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah is a poignant exploration of cultural narratives within children's literature, offering a window into traditional Chinese family structures, societal expectations, and the clash between personal identity and cultural values. Set in 1940s China, the autobiographical novel centers on a young girl who navigates a tumultuous relationship with her father and stepmother, while also grappling with the cultural norms that dictate her position within the family. Through her story, the book highlights the tensions between filial piety and the desire for individual recognition, a key aspect of Chinese cultural identity. The narrative also contrasts Western and Eastern values, providing insight into how traditional Chinese concepts of hierarchy and respect shape the characters' behaviors and interactions. For young readers, Chinese Cinderella offers a nuanced portrayal of resilience, cultural expectations, and the pursuit of self-empowerment within a family framework, making it an essential text for understanding the role of cultural narratives in shaping children's literature.

Keywords: *Cultural narratives, Children's literature, Identity, young adult literature, cultural heritage*

Introduction

Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah is a powerful autobiographical novel that gives young readers insight into the cultural and social structures of 1940s China. The book tells the story of a young girl, Adeline, who faces emotional neglect and rejection within her family, especially from her father and stepmother. Through her experiences, the novel presents important cultural themes such as traditional family hierarchy, societal expectations, filial piety, and the struggle for personal identity. This paper explores how *Chinese Cinderella* serves as a significant work in children's literature by portraying the complexities of cultural heritage and personal growth, and the role they play in shaping the lives of children.

Traditional Chinese Family Structure

One of the central themes in *Chinese Cinderella* is the traditional Chinese family structure. In 1940s China, families were typically patriarchal, meaning that the father held the most authority. In Adeline's family, her father is distant and emotionally unavailable. He makes decisions without consulting his children and expects complete obedience. This reflects the

Confucian value of filial piety, which teaches children to respect and obey their parents without question. Adeline's relationship with her father is marked by a lack of affection and support. He favours his children from his second marriage, especially his son, and sees Adeline as unlucky because her mother died giving birth to her. This belief contributes to her being treated as inferior and unworthy. The family structure in the novel shows how cultural traditions can shape the way children are valued and treated.

Societal Expectations and Gender Roles

The novel also highlights the societal expectations placed on children, especially girls. In traditional Chinese culture, boys were often seen as more valuable than girls because they carried on the family name and were expected to provide for their parents in old age. Girls, on the other hand, were often expected to marry and serve their husband's family. Adeline's achievements in school are consistently overlooked, and her talents are not recognized by her family. Despite winning awards and excelling academically, she receives little praise. This lack of acknowledgment reflects the cultural norms that undervalue girls and their accomplishments. Her struggles emphasize the gender inequality that was common in traditional Chinese society.

Filial Piety vs. Personal Identity

Filial piety, or the deep respect and duty children owe to their parents, is a key element of Chinese culture. In *Chinese Cinderella*, this concept is challenged as Adeline begins to question her place in the family and her desire for independence. While she understands the importance of respecting her elders, she also yearns for love, recognition, and the freedom to pursue her dreams. The tension between filial piety and personal identity is a major conflict in the novel. Adeline tries to please her parents by excelling in school, but she also starts to see the unfairness of her situation. Her internal struggle represents the broader conflict many young people face when traditional values clash with personal desires. The novel encourages readers to think critically about cultural expectations and the importance of self-worth.

Cultural Heritage and Identity

Adeline's story is not just about family conflict; it is also about discovering one's identity within a specific cultural context. As a Chinese girl growing up in a traditional household, Adeline learns about her heritage, values, and customs. However, she also encounters Western influences through her education and aspirations. These influences challenge the cultural norms she has grown up with and provide her with a different perspective on life. For example, when Adeline is allowed to study in England, it marks a turning point in her life. This chance

represents not only personal freedom but also exposure to a different culture that values individual achievement and self-expression. Her decision to embrace this opportunity shows her courage and determination to shape her future.

East vs. West: A Cultural Contrast

Chinese Cinderella offers a contrast between Eastern and Western values. In the East, especially in traditional Chinese culture, there is a strong emphasis on obedience, family loyalty, and humility. In the West, there is more focus on individual rights, personal success, and self-expression. Adeline's experiences reveal the strengths and weaknesses of both cultural systems. While she respects her heritage and understands the importance of family, she also sees how rigid traditions can lead to unfair treatment. At the same time, the Western values she is exposed to provide her with hope and the possibility of a better future. This cultural contrast helps readers appreciate the complexity of identity and the importance of finding a balance between tradition and change.

Resilience and Empowerment

Despite the many challenges she faces, Adeline remains strong and determined. Her resilience is one of the most inspiring aspects of the novel. She continues to work hard, stay positive, and believe in herself, even when her family dismisses her achievements. Her story is a powerful example of how inner strength and perseverance can help a person overcome difficult circumstances. Adeline's empowerment comes from her ability to see her worth. Even though she is often told she is unwanted or unlucky, she refuses to let these labels define her. Her success in school and her eventual opportunity to study abroad show that she is capable of achieving great things. This message is especially important for young readers, as it encourages them to believe in themselves and follow their dreams, no matter what obstacles they face.

Conclusion

Chinese Cinderella is a deeply moving story that explores the challenges of growing up in a traditional Chinese family. Through Adeline's experiences, the novel addresses important cultural themes such as family hierarchy, gender roles, filial piety, and the search for personal identity. It also provides a valuable comparison between Eastern and Western values, helping readers understand the cultural forces that shape behaviour and expectations. For young readers, the novel is more than just a story of hardship; it is a story of resilience, self-discovery, and empowerment. By showing how Adeline overcomes rejection and finds her voice, "Chinese Cinderella" teaches valuable lessons about self-worth, cultural understanding, and the importance of pursuing one's goals. It is a significant work in children's literature that

continues to inspire readers around the world.

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Fractured Identities, Fragmented Lives: exploring Identity crisis and the politics of belonging in Benyamin's Goat Life

Benyamin's "Goat Days" is a heart-rending novel that explores the entanglements of identity, culture, and the sense of belonging in the context of diaspora and dislocation. The novel narrates the story of Najeeb Muhammad, a young Indian who travels to Saudi Arabia in pursuit of a job and ends up getting trapped in a life of alienation, suffering and helplessness. Identity becomes a significant concern while analysing the life of an expatiate. Najeeb Muhammad navigates new cultural, social, and political aspects of life as he has been displaced from his homeland. The feeling of disorientation, alienation, nostalgia, longing, existential despair , emotional and psychological struggles in him, becomes the themes of the novel. The paper tries to explore the complexities and challenges faced by Najeeb Muhammad to develop a deeper understanding of the human experiences of migration, displacement, and loss of identity

Key words: *Diaspora, Identity, Alienation*

Introduction:

Benyamin's *Goat Days* is an agonizing glimpse into the real life struggles of Najeeb, a malayali migrant worker who got trapped in the endless desert of Saudi Arabia. Najeeb was a sand miner from Arattupuzha, Haripad, Kerala. A desire for better life and opportunities made Najeeb migrate to Saudi Arabia with dreams of securing a well paid job that would help him clear all his debts, build a new room in his house and save some wealth for his future kid. Shortly after reaching Riyadh, the city of his dreams, his illusion of the gulf dream shattered and turned into an ordeal of suffering, abuse and alienation. Benyamin's unsettling narrative of Najeeb's emotional and psychological journey stands as a testament to the struggles faced by many Indian migrant workers in the Gulf region.

Blurring the line between the Man and the Beast

Najeeb who ended up becoming a goatherd lived along with hundreds of goats in a fenced enclosure. He suffered without proper shelter, sanitation and food. His physical condition became worse each day due to lack of food, water, and proper rest. Najeeb who was too concerned about bathing two times a day to keep himself fresh gradually became a goatherd who was not bothered about cleanliness anymore. The absence of human connection led him to develop a psychological bond with the Goats as they became his only companions in the desert. Over a period of time, he became indiscernible from the goats he herd as he was denuded

of his name, language and independence. His identity gradually changed from Najeeb, an aspiring and hopeful individual to a nameless, voiceless migrant stuck in the endless desert.

Dehumanisation as a symbol of oppression:

Najeeb shedded his identity as a human and slowly started connecting with the goats. Despite his lack of knowledge and experience as a shepherd, he quickly learned all the chores. After a couple of days at the desert, he became a skilled shepherd by learning to milk a goat, and do other chores in the masara, the fenced enclosure. He named a newborn goat as 'Nabeel' and pampered it as his own son. He gave special attention to Nabeel and made it his priority. He even felt that he had lost his virility when Nabeel was castrated by the Arbab. He named each goat based on their looks and character traits. He named them after the people of his own hometown. He started sharing his sufferings, emotions and dreams with them. He felt good after talking to them as the unspoken words no longer choked inside him. The goats became his only listeners. He got used to the extreme heat and cold of the desert, the routines, smell and the lives of the goats. He ate and slept in the masara becoming one with the goats. He felt that goats understood things better than humans. He even stopped eating mutton as it made him feel that he was devouring his own brother's flesh. The days in the desert had completely changed him. He was not the same Najeeb as before. The living conditions of the masara had unconditionally changed his shape beyond recognition. He had become a pest reserve by accommodating the bugs and lice from the goats in his body and hair. "I had not looked in a mirror since I entered the desert. If I had, I might not have been able to recognise myself as well." (Benyamin 137)

Displacement and desolation:

The Novel deals with the theme of displacement in three levels. Najeeb's life in Kerala was simple, uncomplicated and rich with human connection. He enjoyed all the little aspects of life with his family, friends and neighbours. He had a great connection with nature and a strong sense of community. After his arrival in Riyadh, he was completely cut off from his normal life, language, and human community. The physical displacement from Haripad to Riyadh, and from his family to the masara of goats lead to emotional trauma. His longing for home, family, and love symbolises the emotional displacement in him. The estrangement he faced in the alien land leads to the feeling of helplessness and intensifies the loneliness and disconnection in him. Benyamin tries to highlight the cultural displacement faced by the migrant workers through Najeeb's struggle to adapt to the new land, its culture, language and climatic conditions.

Absence of belonging:

Goat Days explores the painful absence of belonging when one is stripped of his identity and dignity. The story not only narrates Najeeb's act of survival, but also his desperateness for the feel of belonging. It reflects the human need to feel connected to fellow humans, land, language, culture, and self. The only trustable connection he felt in the arid desert is with God himself. He firmly believed in Allah and hoped that one day he would be able to escape from the loop of endless sufferings.

Desire to escape:

Najeeb who had faced brutal physical abuse, non-standard living conditions, humiliations and emotional trauma had always dreamt of breaking free from the desert life. He wanted to escape from the clutch of his Arbab and from the sterile wasteland. He longed to see his family again. The thought of his wife and his child kindled the strong desire of escapism in him. Isolation, abuse and hardship did not put off his positive spirit for survival. Despite the struggles he endured, he was still hopeful that he could get back to his hometown. Finally, he risked his life to escape from the Desert and ended up successful in that attempt.

Conclusion

Benyamin captures the harsh realities of the lives of the migrant workers through the narration of Najeeb's life in the desert. Every migrant worker travels to the distant land with dreams and hopes of prosperity but in reality most of them turn out to be exploited by their masters. Their economic desperation makes them survive through severe working conditions, lack of proper food and self-respect. Homesickness, isolation and loneliness adds on to their emotional trauma. The stark contrast between their dreams and the unpleasant reality becomes a most used theme in the migrant narratives. Regardless of the adversities, Najeeb's determination to hold on to life and escape from the sufferings symbolise the perseverance and hope that many migrant workers believe in during the times of misery. "The two factors that helped me through that phase were my desire to live and my infinite faith in Allah". (Benyamin 119)

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The grapes of wrath: the transmission of struggle, identity, and resilience in american shifting culture

John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath is a profound exploration of the American Dust Bowl migration, converging on the Joad family's scuffle for persistence amidst economic hardship and social injustice. This paper scrutinises the novel through the lens of cultural transmission, delving into how the characters navigate the intricacies of identity, displacement, and the adaptation of cultural norms in a rapidly changing world. By analysing the cultural shifts faced by the Joad family as they transition from their Agrarian roots to the alienation of the Californian labour camps, the paper highlights the transformative process of cultural adaptation and the resilience of side-lined communities. Ultimately during phases of displacement, offering insights into the power of collective memory and the ways in which people find strength in unity amidst adversity.

Keywords: *Dust bowl Migration, Displacement, Alienation, Cultural shift, Resilience, Adversity*

John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath is more than just a story about a family trying to survive the Great Depression and it's a powerful reflection on what it means to be American during a time of deep cultural and economic upheaval. Through the journey of the Joad family, Steinbeck explores the realities of struggle, the reshaping of identity, and the unbreakable thread of resilience that runs through people trying to hold onto their humanity. As America faced one of its most challenging periods in history, Steinbeck gave voice to those often left out of the national narrative. This novel doesn't just tell a story, it also transmits emotion, experience, and an evolving culture that was being rewritten in real time. The word "struggle" defines almost every moment in The Grapes of Wrath. From the beginning, the Joads are up against forces they can't control: the land dries up, the banks evict them, and they're forced to pack everything into a rickety truck and head west. What Steinbeck captures so well is that their struggle isn't just individual but it's shared by thousands of families during the Dust Bowl migration. And more than that, it's systemic. The real enemy isn't just the drought or poverty, it's the faceless banks and corporate interests that treat human beings like numbers. In one unforgettable moment, a tenant farmer talks about how the bank "isn't like a man... it's a monster" (Steinbeck 33). That one line says it all. These people aren't fighting other people,

instead they're fighting systems they don't understand and can't reason with. Steinbeck uses this moment to show that the Joads' story isn't just about them. It's about an entire population being pushed to the margins. As the Joads leave their home, they don't just lose their land but they lose the things that defined who they were. Identity is something we often take for granted, but when you're stripped of your job, your home, and even the respect of others, who are you?This question plays out especially in the changing family dynamics. At the beginning of the novel, Pa Joad is the head of the household. But as the journey gets harder, he starts to falter. Surprisingly, it's Ma Joad who steps up. Her strength doesn't come from loud speeches or big actions but it's in the quiet, determined way she holds the family together. In one of the novel's most powerful moments, she tells Pa, "We're the people that live. They can't wipe us out; they can't lick us. We'll go on forever" (Steinbeck 280). Her words are a reminder that even when everything else falls apart, identity can rebuild itself around resilience and community. And that's another important shift Steinbeck shows us identity becomes less about where you're from or what you own, and more about the shared experience of survival. The word "Okie," originally meant to insult migrants, becomes a strange sort of badge. The people Steinbeck writes about find pride in endurance, even when the world tells them they don't matter. One of the most beautiful things about The Grapes of Wrath is how it captures quiet resilience. Not the loud, dramatic kind, but the kind that lives in small acts like sharing food with a stranger, fixing a truck, taking care of each other when no one else will. These moments are where the real strength of the Joads, and the migrant community, shines through. Tom Joad's transformation is a key example. When we meet him, he's just out of prison and mostly focused on his own survival. But by the end, he becomes a voice for something bigger. Influenced by the former preacher Jim Casy, Tom starts to believe in the power of collective action. In his final scene, Tom tells Ma he'll keep fighting for justice, no matter what happens to him: "Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there" (Steinbeck 419). This line isn't just the end of Tom's character arc but it's Steinbeck's message to all of us. Hope, resistance, and compassion are how people survive and pass on something more powerful than despair. Even the novel's ending, often debated and misunderstood, is a symbol of resilience. Rose of Sharon, after losing her baby, breastfeeds a starving man. It's a deeply human, unsettling, yet incredibly moving moment. It says: even when we have nothing, we still have something to give. That act of selfless care becomes a final, powerful image of hope. By the time the Joads reach California, it's clear that the American Dream as it was traditionally known is broken. The promise of land, work, and stability has failed them. But Steinbeck doesn't stop there. He shows us that even in the ashes of that dream, something new is being

born: a culture built on cooperation, shared struggle, and quiet defiance. Steinbeck was writing in real time, watching the country shift from rural independence to industrial exploitation. Through his characters, he questions what it really means to be American. Is it about owning land and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps? Or is it about standing by each other when the world turns cold? In many ways, The Grapes of Wrath redefines the American spirit. It's not about individual success, it's also about collective survival. And that shift in values is what makes the novel still feel relevant today. Whether it's economic inequality, housing crises, or the treatment of immigrants, the struggles Steinbeck wrote about haven't gone away. But neither has the resilience he so clearly believed in. The Grapes of Wrath isn't just a book about the past but also it's a mirror held up to any moment of hardship. Through the Joads' journey, Steinbeck gives us a window into how struggle shapes people, how identity can evolve under pressure, and how resilience isn't just a personal trait but a cultural legacy. The novel invites us to care, to connect, and to imagine a better way forward. In the end, it's not about winning or losing but it's about staying human when everything else is lost.

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Personal Identity and Memory in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*

The novel Norwegian Wood in 1987 by Haruki Murakami explores the complex interrelationship between memory and identity, examining how a person's sense of self is shaped by their prior experiences. The main character of the novel, Toru Watanabe, and his quest for self-discovery are the subject of this study, which emphasizes how memory serves as both a catalyst and a barrier in this process. Watanabe's connections with two significant women, Naoko and Midori, show two different ways of dealing with the past. The burden of unresolved pain and the effort to get past the past are embodied by Naoko, who eventually gives in to its grip. Her memories serve as an unbreakable cage that prevents her from creating a secure present and future. On the other hand, despite a complicated personal background, Midori stands for the ability of reinventing oneself and creating a new identity. She shows that she can go forward by actively interacting with the present. The novel makes the argument that although our history has a big influence on who we are, it does not define who we are as a whole. Our developing sense of self is greatly influenced by our emotional ties as well as how we interpret and integrate our experiences. The Japanese student movements of the 1960s provide further background for this examination of memory and identity. The novel's setting and the protagonists' experiences within this specific historical period deepen the complex relationship between social constraints and personal identity. These socio-political changes act as an external force, influencing the protagonists' internal conflicts and quest for identity and significance in a rapidly changing society.Using literary analysis and critical viewpoints from academics such as Jay Rubin, Susan Napier, and Matthew Strecher, this research seeks to show how important Norwegian Wood is as a moving meditation on the fundamental conflict between memory and self-discovery. Identity, according to the report, is a dynamic and ongoing balancing act rather than a static thing. Recognizing the impact of memory while also welcoming the possibility of change and development necessitates a continuous balancing act between the weight of the past and the opportunities of the present. Finally, Norwegian Wood argues that this complex dance between remembering and reinventing is where authentic selfhood arises.

Keywords: *Personal Identity, Memory, Nostalgia, Self-Discovery, Norwegian Wood.*

Norwegian Wood, written by Haruki Murakami in 1987, delves deeply into the themes of memory and identity via Toru Watanabe's experiences. The novel explores themes of self-

discovery, nostalgia, and the ways in which one's identity is shaped by prior experiences. The fact that it takes place in Japan in the 1960s, a time of countercultural revolution and societal instability, makes Watanabe's battle with identity much more difficult. Murakami highlights the conflict between embracing the present and conserving the past by using Watanabe's travels to show how memory defines one's identity. Watanabe's strong bond with memory is one of the main ways *Norwegian Wood* examines identity. Watanabe recalls his history at the start of the novel after hearing the Beatles song *Norwegian Wood*, demonstrating how sensory triggers may evoke memories that influence an individual's identity: "Once, many years ago, when I was still young and my memories were clearer, I often tried to think of what it was I had lost" (Murakami 3).This arranging method highlights how a person's concept of self is influenced by their prior experiences, especially painful ones. Memory is both a comfort and a burden for Watanabe as he battles his past and tries to control his present. The relationship between Watanabe and Naoko significantly influences his identity crisis. Because of her battles with mental illness and unresolved trauma, Naoko represents a history that bothered him. He is committed to the past and dislikes change, which is shown in his loyalty to Naoko:"I had to be with her. If she was lying in the depths of the earth somewhere, I wanted to be a part of her" (Murakami 112). Murakami uses the relationship between Watanabe and Naoko to show how identity is influenced by previous events and losses. He keeps thinking about her, despite the fact that it keeps him from completely interacting with the prese In contrast, Midori is a dynamic, progressive heroine who stands for the possibility of self-reinvention. Midori pushes Watanabe to remake himself and rise above the constraints of his past: "You don't get it, do you? I'm looking for a new kind of relationship, not one that gets tangled up in the past" (Murakami 235).Unlike Naoko, whose presence is intimately linked to grief and memory, Midori offers Watanabe an other routeone that welcomes new experiences instead of holding on to loss. This difference draws attention to Murakami's examination of identity as a balancing act between the changing present and the effects of the past. This novel also examines how identity is shaped by introspection and solitude. Watanabe often isolates himself in order to think back on his past:"Memory is a funny thing. When I was in the middle of all that, I couldn't see it. I couldn't sort things out in my head. Now that it is over, I see it clearly" (Murakami 178).The struggle between remembering and letting go is highlighted by his self-examination, which also highlights Murakami's larger point about the human condition: identity is a continuous process of balancing who we were with who we want to be. Murakami often employs physical and mental isolation as a means for character development. The sanatorium where Naoko stays becomes a metaphorical space where memory and self-perception

converge. "This place is for people who need to heal themselves, to heal their souls" (Murakami 147). It provides a forum for talking about past traumas that aren't always addressed, which supports the notion that unresolved internal conflicts determine identity. Norwegian Wood goes beyond personal recollection to examine how identity is shaped by larger socio-political factors, with Watanabe's journey taking place against the external backdrop of countercultural movements and student uprisings in the 1960s."The world around me was changing, but I remained trapped in my own history" (Murakami 89. Watanabe is experiencing an identity crisis as a result of the generational divide, cultural chan ge, and ideological disputes of the moment, as he tries to figure out where he fits in during thi uncertain period.Scholars have examined Murakami's use of memory as a defining element of personal identity. Jay Rubin argues that "Murakami regularly emphasizes the conflict between memory and self-perception in his works, as characters try to make sense of their past and present selves" (Rubin 57). Similarly, Susan Napier explores the theme of nostalgia, contending that "his characters often exist in liminal spaces where memory and reality intersect, shaping their evolving identities" (Napier 88). Matthew Strecher expands on this notion, suggesting that "Murakami's protagonists navigate between memory and transformation, often struggling to reconcile the two" (Strecher 45). Another significant aspect of Norwegian Wood is its use of nature as a metaphor for Watanabe's internal transformation. Seasonal changes throughout the novel, especially in the landscapes surrounding Naoko's retreat, mirror his emotional development: "Everything was changing. The trees, the grass, even the sky seemed different from day to day" (Murakami 147).This theme supports the novel's examination of identity and memory as malleable and dynamic. Music also plays a crucial role in reinforcing the themes of identity and nostalgia.The Beatles song Norwegian Wood serves as more than just a title reference; it acts as a mnemonic device connecting Watanabe's past and present. Jay Rubin notes that "Murakami frequently uses music in his works to bridge emotional gaps and underscore the ways in which memory constructs identity" (Rubin 102). Norwegian Wood ultimately illustrates the complex interplay between memory and self-discovery that shapes human identity. Murakami suggests that identity is neither fixed nor easily defined but is instead molded by one's encounters with the past. Through Watanabe's relationships, emotional struggles, and reflections, the novel raises profound questions about whether memory confines or liberates us. By exploring these themes, Murakami crafts a poignant meditation on identity, nostalgia, and the human experience. The novel remains a timeless examination of self-awareness, love, and loss, emphasizing the universal struggle to balance the past with the present.

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The Power of Silent Love: A Journey of Resilience and Inclusion in Barfi!

The film Barfi! (2012), directed by Anurag Basu, presents a comprehensive examination of love, resilience, and social inclusion through its depiction of characters with disabilities. This study investigates the significance of non-verbal communication in romantic relationships and the emotional and social trajectories of its protagonists—Barfi, an individual with autism, and Jhilmil, a hearing-impaired woman—as they navigate societal expectations and personal challenges. The film deviates from conventional representations of disability by emphasizing the characters' resilience and their capacity to form profound emotional connections despite their non-verbal communication. By focusing on the themes of love and inclusion, Barfi! challenges societal prejudices and promotes a more comprehensive understanding of disabilities. This research aims to analyze how the narrative structure and character development in Barfi! contribute to the discourse on inclusion, social acceptance, and the diverse manifestations of love, particularly among marginalized individuals. Through an examination of cinematic techniques and character arcs, this study advocates for a more inclusive and empathetic portrayal of disability in mainstream media.

Key words: *Love, Resilience, Inclusion, Disability, Social Acceptance*

Introduction

The portrayal of disabilities in Indian cinema has often been confined to stereotypical representations, depicting individuals with disabilities as objects of pity, helplessness, or dependency. These portrayals have perpetuated societal misconceptions, reinforcing the marginalization of disabled individuals rather than fostering empathy or inclusion. However, *Barfi!* (2012), directed by Anurag Basu, challenges these conventional narratives by presenting the lives of two protagonists with disabilities—Barfi, a man with autism, and Jhilmil, a woman with hearing impairment—through a lens of dignity, resilience, and emotional depth. While *Barfi!* is undeniably a romantic drama, it also serves as a poignant commentary on social inclusion, the transformative power of love, and the capacity of individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Through its unique narrative style and richly developed characters, the film advocates for a more empathetic and inclusive understanding of

disability. This paper explores how *Barfi!* portrays love and resilience through its disabled characters, specifically examining how it redefines societal perceptions of disability and inclusion. By analyzing the film's narrative structure, character arcs, and cinematic techniques, this study investigates its contribution to the ongoing discourse on disability representation and the emotional journeys of individuals living with disabilities.

Literature Review: Disability in Cinema

The representation of disability in cinema has historically been marked by reductive stereotypes and limited perspectives. In early cinematic history, characters with disabilities were frequently cast as villains, tragic figures, or objects of pity, reflecting societal biases and a lack of understanding. These portrayals often emphasized the limitations imposed by disability, overshadowing the individuality, agency, and emotional depth of disabled characters. However, as societal attitudes toward disability began to shift, so too did their representation in film. Internationally, films such as *The Miracle Worker* (1962) and *Rain Man* (1988) marked pivotal moments in the cinematic portrayal of disability. *The Miracle Worker* highlighted the struggles and triumphs of Helen Keller, a deaf-blind individual, while *Rain Man* brought autism into mainstream consciousness, showcasing the emotional complexity and independence of its protagonist. These films played a crucial role in challenging stereotypes and fostering a more empathetic understanding of disability. In the Indian context, films like *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) and *My Name Is Khan* (2010) have contributed to changing perceptions of disability. *Taare Zameen Par* sensitively depicted the challenges faced by a child with dyslexia, emphasizing the importance of empathy and inclusive education. Similarly, *My Name Is Khan* explored the intersection of disability and identity through its portrayal of a protagonist with Asperger's syndrome, challenging societal stigmas and advocating for acceptance. Despite these advancements, many films continue to rely on tropes of inspiration or tragedy, reducing disabled characters to one-dimensional figures. *Barfi!* stands apart by focusing not merely on the disabilities of its characters but on their emotional, romantic, and social lives. The film avoids the pitfalls of pity or inspiration narratives, instead celebrating the authenticity of human connections that transcend verbal communication and societal norms. By centering the story on Barfi and Jhilmil's unique ways of experiencing the world, *Barfi!* offers a refreshing perspective on disability, one that emphasizes resilience, love, and the universal desire for connection.

Disability Representation in *Barfi!*

The central premise of *Barfi!* revolves around Barfi, a young man with autism, and Jhilmil, a woman with hearing impairment. Both characters navigate a society that marginalizes them due to their disabilities. Barfi's journey is shaped by his interactions with those around him, particularly his love interests—Shruti, a woman who initially struggles to accept him due to his disability, and Jhilmil, whose relationship with him evolves in profound and unconventional ways. The film subverts typical disability narratives by portraying Barfi and Jhilmil as fully realized individuals with desires, ambitions, and the capacity to experience complex emotions such as love, joy, and sadness. Rather than framing their disabilities as obstacles to be overcome, the film emphasizes how their disabilities shape their unique forms of communication and relationship-building.

Barfi's Character: The film challenges the stereotype of the disabled individual as pitiable or a mere object of inspiration. Barfi is not portrayed as someone merely struggling with his disability but as someone fully immersed in the world around him, capable of deep emotional connections and complex personal relationships. His silent communication—through gestures, facial expressions, and sounds—forms the emotional core of the film.

Jhilmil's Character: Jhilmil represents a different aspect of disability. Initially introduced as an isolated character with speech and hearing impairments, her development throughout the film reveals her as an autonomous individual. Her relationship with Barfi evolves into a profound bond, demonstrating how two people with disabilities can build a fulfilling, inclusive, and loving relationship. Through the character arcs of Barfi and Jhilmil, *Barfi!* challenges preconceived notions about love and disability. The film emphasizes that love transcends physical and verbal communication, proposing a more inclusive and holistic view of romantic relationships.

Love and Resilience: A Silent Journey

At its core, *Barfi!* is a story of love, resilience, and the human spirit. The film's treatment of love diverges from conventional portrayals in cinema, where love is often linked to verbal communication and physical appearances. Barfi and Jhilmil's love story is built on emotional resonance, mutual understanding, and silent expressions. Their relationship demonstrates that love does not require words or societal validation; it can exist in silence, gestures, and shared experiences. The theme of resilience is particularly evident in Barfi's life. Despite being

ignored and isolated due to his disability, he refuses to be defined by societal norms or expectations. He maintains a positive outlook on life and forms meaningful relationships. The relationship between Barfi and Jhilmil is equally resilient, as both individuals confront societal stigma yet find solace and joy in each other's company. The film also portrays the resilience of the human spirit through the ups and downs of Barfi's journey. From being abandoned by his family to facing rejection from Shruti, Barfi's perseverance in maintaining his sense of self and his capacity to love despite adversity embodies the theme of emotional resilience.

Inclusion and Social Acceptance

One of *Barfi!*'s most significant contributions is its exploration of social inclusion and the challenges individuals with disabilities face in an able-bodied world. Throughout the film, Barfi and Jhilmil navigate a society that excludes them, often treating them as invisible or inferior. However, the narrative suggests that inclusion is not merely about societal acceptance but also about self-acceptance and forming meaningful connections with others. Barfi's life is a testament to the power of inclusion. Though marginalized by society, he never internalizes this exclusion. Instead, he builds his world through his closest relationships, including his bond with Jhilmil. Their love serves as an act of resistance against societal norms that prioritize verbal and physical abilities over emotional depth and mutual respect. Furthermore, the film critiques the societal tendency to oversimplify the lives of disabled individuals, often reducing them to symbols of tragedy or inspiration. Instead, *Barfi!* presents the complexity of their emotional and social lives, demonstrating that individuals with disabilities have the same capacity for love, resilience, and social interaction as their able-bodied counterparts.

Cinematic Techniques and Their Role in Disability Representation

The film's use of cinematic techniques—particularly its non-linear narrative structure, sound design, and visual style—plays a crucial role in representing disability. The non-linear storytelling mirrors the fragmented and non-verbal ways in which Barfi and Jhilmil experience the world. The audience is invited to understand their emotions and experiences not through dialogue but through visuals, gestures, and music. The absence of traditional dialogue in many scenes reinforces the theme of silent communication. For example, the use of sound reflects the inner worlds of Barfi and Jhilmil, as well as their relationships with others. The music, composed by Pritam, complements this quiet yet profound communication, conveying the emotional undercurrents of each scene. Moreover, the film's aesthetic—soft lighting, expressive close-ups, and vibrant color palettes—emphasizes the emotional depth of the

characters. This cinematographic approach humanizes the characters, allowing the audience to connect with them on an emotional level rather than focusing on their disabilities.

Conclusion

Barfi! presents a compelling and refreshing portrayal of disability, love, and inclusion. By focusing on the inner lives of its disabled characters and their capacity for resilience and love, the film challenges societal norms and provides a powerful narrative that advocates for inclusion and acceptance. The film invites viewers to reconsider their perceptions of disability, urging them to recognize the value of silent bonds and the strength of the human spirit. Through its innovative storytelling and sensitive treatment of disability, *Barfi!* sets a new standard for disability representation in cinema.

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Conceptualizing Realism in Indian Philosophy: A Critical Analysis of Nyaya and Mimamsa Perspectives

This study undertakes a critical examination of the concept of realism within Indian philosophy, focusing on the epistemological and metaphysical frameworks of the Nyaya and Mimamsa schools. Realism, understood broadly as the affirmation of an objective reality independent of the mind, is a foundational theme in these classical traditions, yet it manifests with distinct gradations that reflect their divergent philosophical goals and methods. The Nyaya school, renowned for its rigorous logical and epistemic analysis, posits a realist ontology grounded in the existence of external objects, valid cognition (pramana), and the self as a substantive entity. Nyaya epistemology asserts that knowledge corresponds to real entities, which exist independently of human perception or conception, thus endorsing a robust form of metaphysical realism. In contrast, the Mimamsa tradition, primarily concerned with the hermeneutics of Vedic ritual and dharma, articulates a form of realism that emphasizes the objective reality of Vedic injunctions and dharmic duties. Mimamsa epistemology validates the Vedas as an eternal and authorless source of knowledge, thereby anchoring its realism in the transcendental reality of moral and ritual laws, which exist independently of individual beliefs or opinions. This study critically analyzes these perspectives, highlighting how Nyaya's empirical realism complements Mimamsa's ritual realism to provide a comprehensive account of reality that integrates both the material and normative dimensions.

Keywords: *Realism, Epistemology, Dharma, Pramana, Ontology, Metaphysics*

Introduction

Realism, as a philosophical doctrine, asserts the existence of an objective reality independent of human cognition or perception. In Western philosophy, realism, is a long-standing and evolving doctrine that affirms the independence of reality from the mind. At its core, realism asserts that the world, its objects, properties, events, and structures, exists and retains its character regardless of our thoughts, perceptions, or linguistic practices. This belief, although broadly shared, gives rise to diverse interpretations across metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, and language. Realism in Indian philosophy refers to the view that objects, events, and truths exist independently of our mental constructs or linguistic expressions. While this aligns broadly with Western realism, Indian philosophical schools

interpret realism through their own metaphysical, epistemological, and soteriological frameworks. Within the major debates of Indian philosophy, realism assumes a distinctive form shaped by the epistemological and metaphysical concerns of various schools. Among these, Nyaya and Mimamsa stand out as prominent traditions that uphold realist views, though their approaches and emphases diverge significantly. The Nyaya school, primarily focused on logic and epistemology, advocates for the reality of external objects and the validity of knowledge derived through perception, inference, and testimony. Its realist framework is grounded in a metaphysical commitment to the existence of substances and their qualities independent of subjective experience. Conversely, Mimamsa's realism is embedded in the ritualistic and normative domain, emphasizing the eternal and authorless nature of the Vedas as the ultimate source of knowledge and dharma. This school affirms the reality of moral and ritual duties as objective truths, underscoring a form of realism that transcends mere physical existence and extends to the prescriptive dimensions of reality. The contrasting yet complementary realist perspectives of Nyaya and Mimamsa provide a nuanced understanding of how Indian philosophy conceptualizes reality, knowledge, and their interrelation. This paper aims to critically analyse the realist doctrines of Nyaya and Mimamsa, exploring their epistemic foundations and metaphysical implications. Through a comparative study, it seeks to highlight the diversity within Indian realism and its relevance to contemporary philosophical discourse on the nature of reality and cognition.

Revising Realism: Indian Perspective

As a foundational issue in philosophy, realism deals with the nature of reality and its relationship to human cognition. It occupies a central place in Indian philosophy as well, where it is complicatedly linked to broader metaphysical, epistemological, and normative concerns. Unlike the Western philosophical tradition, where realism is often narrowly framed around questions of mind-independent existence, Indian philosophical realism encompasses a wider spectrum, addressing not only the ontological status of external objects but also the reality of knowledge sources, moral duties, and cosmic order. For example, the Vaiśeṣika system constructs a detailed ontology of independently existing entities. It postulates eternal, indivisible atoms (aṇu), which combine to form all material objects. In his comprehensive analysis, Dasgupta elaborates on the Vaiśeṣika conception of atoms and their role in the composition of the material world as, "The Vaiśeṣika holds that the ultimate substances are the atoms which are eternal and indestructible. These atoms combine to form dyads, triads, and so on, leading to the formation of the gross elements."[1] This account highlights the system's explanatory model of causality and perception, wherein both particulars (atoms) and universals

(such as qualities and actions) are real and discoverable through reason and observation. These atoms possess inherent qualities and operate under universal laws such as *karma* and *adrṣṭa* (unseen moral force). The Vaisesika, divided the reality into seven categories such as, (*padārthas*) such as substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), motion (*kriyā*), generality (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), and inherence (*samavāya*). These categories are not linguistic constructs but ontological facts. This realist framework of Vaiśeṣika allows for an explanatory model of causality and perception. The presence of universal categories that can be instantiated in particular objects reveals a double-layered realism: both particulars and universals are real and discoverable through reason and observation. Samkhya, on the other hand, proposes a distinctive form of realism rooted in its dualistic metaphysics. It posits two fundamental and eternal realities: *puruṣa* (consciousness or the self) and *prakṛti* (primordial matter or nature). According to Sāṅkhya, both puruṣa and prakṛti exist independently of each other and are irreducible. This dualism forms the basis of its realist outlook, which stands in contrast to monistic or idealist philosophies that reduce reality to either a single substance or to consciousness alone. For them, the entire phenomenal world evolves from prakṛti through a systematic transformation governed by the interaction of the three guṇas of *sattva, rajas, tamas*. Unlike idealist schools, Samkhya affirms that material evolution is real, and that the world is not illusory (*māyā*). However, puruṣa is never tainted by change, and its pure subjectivity is also real, though entirely distinct from the material realm. This dual realism enables Samkhya to explain both psychological and physical phenomena without collapsing one into the other. This realist framework affirms that both consciousness and matter exist in their own right, independently of any observer's cognition or linguistic description. Perception and inference are reliable means of acquiring knowledge about the world, reflecting an epistemology aligned with its metaphysics. The material world is neither illusory nor dependent solely on the mind; it is a real and persistent manifestation of prakṛti's transformation. Gerald James Larson explains in his commentary that, "The realism of classical Samkhya is grounded in the acceptance of both the material and the spiritual as real. The transformation of prakṛti into the manifold world is an actual process, not an illusion."[2] This affirms that in Sāṅkhya, both consciousness (*puruṣa*) and matter (*prakṛti*) exist in their own right, and the epistemological tools of perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) are considered valid means for apprehending this reality. Among the various schools that articulate realist positions, Nyaya and Mimamsa hold a significant and influential place due to their systematic development of epistemology (*pramana* theory) and metaphysics.

Nyaya and Mimamsa on Realism

Indian philosophy is marked by a rich plurality of schools and traditions, each developing unique metaphysical and epistemological positions. Realism, within this context, is not uniform but emerges as a response to various philosophical challenges. These include the problem of perception, the status of inference and testimony as valid knowledge sources, the existence and nature of the self, and the authority of the Vedas. Nyaya and Mimamsa, in particular, represent two complementary but distinct realist positions, the former emphasizing empirical verification and logical analysis, the latter ritual and normative authority. Both schools engaged with and respond to the challenges posed by rival traditions such as Buddhism and Charvaka materialism, which question the existence of an enduring self or the validity of inference and scriptural authority. Nyaya defends the self, the reality of the external world, and the *pramanas* against Buddhist scepticism and idealism. Mimamsa counters the denial of Vedic authority and the effectiveness of rituals by establishing the eternality and infallibility of the Vedic corpus

The Nyaya school, traditionally recognized for its logical rigor and analytical precision, upholds a robust metaphysical realism that affirms the independent existence of substances, their qualities, and the self (*atman*). Nyaya philosophers maintain that knowledge arises from valid means such as perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony, all of which correspond to objectively existing entities and facts. This realist stance serves as a foundation for their broader philosophical system, enabling a coherent account of cognition, language, and reality. Nyaya's insistence on the correspondence between knowledge and external reality positions it as a classical example of an empirical realist framework within Indian philosophy. Nyaya' commitment to realism is clear in its insistence that knowledge must correspond to real entities and facts in the external world. Unlike idealist or skeptical schools, Nyaya holds that the external world is not a mere mental construction but objectively existent. This realism is grounded in the correspondence theory of truth, where a valid cognition (*prama*) must correspond to the object it apprehends (*prameya*). For Nyaya, error or illusion occurs when cognition does not correspond to reality, but such cases do not undermine the basic realist framework. We can see that the realism proposed by the Nyaya is grounded in a pluralistic ontology that affirms the existence of an external world independent of human cognition. This ontology comprises substances, qualities, actions, universals, and the self, all existing in a framework of inherent relations. Such a worldview presupposes that objects are not mere projections of the mind but possess an intrinsic reality that can be reliably known through valid means. The insistence on correspondence between cognition and object underscores an epistemology where truth is defined by the congruence of perception or inference with actual

entities. For instance, the foundational Nyaya text posits that perception is "the knowledge produced by the contact of the senses with the object, untainted by error or doubt,"[3] emphasizing the directness and reliability of sensory knowledge. Inference is similarly treated not as speculative, but as a disciplined process that deduces the presence of unobservable causes from observable effects, such as concluding the presence of fire from the sight of smoke. This reliance on multiple *pramanas* reflects a balanced epistemology that neither reduces all knowledge to sensory data nor elevates mere testimony without critical assessment. Moreover, Nyaya's ontology insists on the self (*ātman*) as a real, eternal substance distinct from the body and mind. This assertion is critical for explaining consciousness and agency. The *Nyaya Sutras* declare the self to be the "locus of knowledge, distinct and indivisible"[4] countering Buddhist doctrines of *anātman* (no-self) that deny any enduring subject. The self's reality underpins the possibility of sustained cognition and moral responsibility. This concept of selfhood is not only central to Nyāya metaphysics but also forms the foundation of its epistemology, ethics, and theory of liberation. In contrast to Buddhist schools, particularly those that argue for *anātman* (non-self), Nyāya maintains that cognition, memory, desire, and moral agency are unintelligible without positing a continuous and enduring self. For Gautama the self is an entity that is the substratum of cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, and volition. These are internal states that, according to the Nyāya system, must inhere in something stable and persistent. The body and mind, being perishable and variable, cannot serve as the final locus of these experiences. Instead, the Nyāya philosophers argue that there must be a permanent substance that persists through time and change, and this is what they identify as the self. The self, for Nyāya, is not a product of material processes nor a momentary flux as the Buddhists suggest. It is *nitya* (eternal), *eka* (unitary), and *niravayava* (without parts), making it indivisible and not subject to destruction. This conception allows Nyāya to argue coherently for personal identity over time, memory retention, and ethical responsibility. If there were no enduring subject, the system argues, there could be no meaningful connection between actions performed and the fruits of those actions experienced at a later time, undermining both moral accountability and karmic continuity. Uddyotakara, in his *Nyāyavārttika*, famously argues that memory presupposes a subject who both had the original experience and later recollects it. Without a permanent self, there would be no continuity between these two moments. This line of reasoning is employed not merely to refute Buddhist momentariness but to defend a metaphysical structure in which knowledge and liberation become intelligible. Uddyotakara says that, "If the self were not permanent, there could be no memory, for that which remembers must have also experienced."[5] This permanence of self is also essential to Nyāya's theory of

realist view of the self, which can only be meaningful if there is an enduring self that is freed from such suffering. If the self were only a stream of momentary states, as in Buddhist doctrines, the notion of liberation would be incoherent. Thus, the Nyāya affirmation of the self is not a metaphysical but a necessity for grounding knowledge, moral responsibility, personal identity, and ontological freedom. Their realism about the self is tightly interwoven with their broader commitment to an objective, knowable world, one in which both external objects and internal subjects are real and intelligible. In contrast, the Mimamsa school, primarily concerned with the interpretation and application of the Vedas, articulates a form of realism that transcends physical ontology to embrace normative and ritual dimensions of reality. Mimamsa posits the eternality and authorless-ness of the Vedas as a unique source of valid knowledge, thereby affirming the objective reality of dharma, moral and ritual duties, that govern human conduct and cosmic order. This ritualistic realism underscores the authority and binding nature of Vedic injunctions, independent of human cognition or volition, and reflects a distinct metaphysical commitment to a normative order underlying the cosmos. Mimamsa accepts the existence of the world and empirical reality but emphasizes that the ultimate reality lies in dharma and the Vedas. They holds that dharma is a real, eternal principle, not derived from human convention or empirical observation but revealed through Vedic language. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa argues that cognition is inherently valid and points to real objects or duties. The world, the Vedas, and the duties enjoined are not mental constructs, they are real and have ontological and ethical weight. According to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, "Dharma is that which is indicated by Vedic injunctions and is not accessible by perception or inference."[6] It holds that the moral and ritual orders are objectively real, independent of human opinions or cognition. For Mimamsa, the Vedic injunctions and their prescribed rituals are not mere symbolic acts but have real causal efficacy, producing desired results when properly performed. One may object that such a realism is unverifiable. But Kumārila turns this criticism into a strength. For him, the inaccessibility of dharma to other pramāṇas, perception, inference, comparison, proves the unique and irreplaceable role of Vedic testimony. The very fact that perception cannot apprehend *puṇya* (merit) or *adrṣṭa* (unseen result) supports the necessity of *śabda* as a reliable cognitive tool. Hence, the Mīmāṃsā epistemology is not only realist but epistemically pluralist, assigning different domains to different pramāṇas. Dharma exists; it simply requires a non-empirical method to be known. It should be noted that, Mimamsa recognizes several *pramanas* but gives primacy to verbal testimony, especially of the Vedas. Perception and inference are accepted but are considered subordinate to the eternal and infallible Vedic knowledge. The school argues that Vedic knowledge is unique because it deals with dharma, which cannot be

known by sensory experience or logical inference alone. Here, dharma is ontologically real but not empirically detectable, it exists independently of one's belief or knowledge and is apprehended only through the Vedas. This contrasts sharply with empirical realism, pointing instead to a scriptural realism. Mimamsa articulates realism through the lens of normative and ritualistic imperatives. Its realism is not primarily concerned with the empirical world but with the eternal reality of dharma as enshrined in the Vedas. This framework asserts that the Vedas, as authorless and eternal, provide infallible knowledge about duties that transcend sensory verification. The efficacy of rituals, for example, is not contingent on empirical proof but is an ontological reality grounded in the power of correct performance, which sustains the cosmic order. Karl Potter explains that Mīmāṃsā is committed to a form of "scriptural realism," where prescriptive truths have real-world implications and are not psychological constructs or symbolic fictions. He says that, "For the Mīmāṃsaka, to say that an injunction exists is to say that the performance of the act it prescribes leads to a real result, whether or not it is observable."[7] B.K. Matilal clarifies that Mīmāṃsā's realism "involves a deep metaphysical belief in the reality of dharma and the truth of Vedic utterances, even when they refer to entities or outcomes that lie beyond sense experience"[8] What makes Mīmāṃsā's realism compelling is that it applies not only to metaphysical entities but also to human action. The performance of a Vedic ritual is not a symbolic gesture, it is a causal act, producing real effects. According to the doctrine of apūrva, the ritual generates an unseen potency that later manifests as a result, such as attaining heaven. This causal link is unseen, but that does not make it less real. Thus, Mīmāṃsā offers a metaphysical grounding for the efficacy of prescribed action, treating ritual not as symbolic but as a mode of engaging with reality. However, both, the Nyaya and Mimamsa affirm the existence of an objective reality independent of individual cognition. They accept the reality of the external world and reject idealist or nihilist perspectives. They recognize verbal testimony as a valid and important source of knowledge, reflecting the centrality of scriptural authority in Indian philosophy. Nyaya focuses on empirical realism, grounding knowledge in perception, inference, and logical analysis of substances and qualities. It affirms the self and the material world as real entities and stresses correspondence between cognition and reality. While Mimamsa emphasizes normative realism, grounding reality in the eternal authority of the Vedas and the objective existence of dharma. It views ritual efficacy and moral duty as real and independent of empirical verification. The Mimamsa stance challenges naturalistic epistemologies by asserting that verbal testimony, particularly of the Vedas, is a unique and authoritative source of knowledge. This does not reject empirical cognition outright but situates it as insufficient for apprehending dharma, which is beyond

direct perception or inference. The acceptance of dharma as an independently real entity parallels the Nyaya affirmation of physical substances but shifts focus to the moral and ritual dimension, emphasizing that reality encompasses more than the physically observable. Both Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā affirm strong forms of realism, but they differ fundamentally in what they consider to be real, how reality is known, and what its significance is. The divergence is not merely one of scope or detail, but of philosophical orientation: Nyāya defends an ontological and epistemological realism focused on external objects, while Mīmāṃsā advances a normative and textual realism centered on dharma and ritual efficacy. Nyāya realism begins with the premise that the world exists independently of the mind, and that the means of knowing it, particularly perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*), are reliable. Cognitive acts are valuable insofar as they reflect the objective features of the world. This view defends not only the knowability but also the structural intelligibility of reality. In contrast, Mīmāṃsā realism operates in a different key. It is not concerned with the reality of external objects, but with the reality of prescribed duties, results, and the moral order disclosed in the Vedas. For Mīmāṃsā, *dharma* is real not because it is perceptible, but because it is revealed by a reliable and eternal source, *śabda*, especially the *apauruṣeya* Veda

Conclusion

The study of realism in Indian philosophy through the lenses of Nyaya and Mimamsa reveals a rich and complex tradition that transcends simplistic categorizations. Nyaya offers a detailed, logic-based account of an independently existing material world and self, grounded in valid cognition. Mimamsa, on the other hand, presents a distinctive normative realism anchored in the eternal authority of the Vedas and the reality of dharma. Together, they demonstrate that Indian realism is multifaceted, bridging ontology, epistemology, and ethics. Their perspectives challenge contemporary thinkers to reconsider the boundaries of realism, showing how philosophical inquiry can integrate both the empirical and the normative. Mimamsa's primary philosophical concern is the affirmation of *dharma*, the moral and ritual duties codified in the Vedas. It argues that the Vedas are eternal, authorless (*apaurusheya*), and infallible, serving as the ultimate source of knowledge, particularly for duties that cannot be known through sensory experience or inference. This leads to a form of realism cantered on the normative order, where dharma and the efficacy of rituals have an objective reality independent of human cognition. Unlike Nyaya's broad ontology, Mimamsa's realism is more narrowly focused on the reality of dharma and ritual actions. Nyaya's epistemology and metaphysics continue to influence analytic philosophy, particularly in discussions on perception, inference, language, and the mind-body problem. Its systematic approach to valid knowledge offers a model for addressing

scepticism and establishing realism. Mimamsa's normative realism resonates with the contemporary ethical theory, especially the debates about moral objectivity, the role of tradition, and religious epistemology. Its recognition of a reality beyond empirical verification challenges naturalistic assumptions and enriches discourse on metaethics. Thus, the critical study of Nyaya and Mimamsa perspectives on realism reveals a sophisticated and nuanced Indian philosophical tradition that integrates metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Nyaya's empirical realism provides a strong account of an external, knowable world and an enduring self, grounded in rigorous epistemic methods. Mimamsa's normative realism affirms the eternal authority of the Vedas and the independent reality of dharma, emphasizing the significance of ritual and moral order. They challenge the reductive understandings of realism, illustrating how Indian philosophy embraces both the physical and the normative, the empirical and the ethical. Their enduring insights offer valuable resources for contemporary philosophical inquiry, encouraging a holistic approach to understanding reality. Thus, the two schools jointly broaden the concept of realism beyond mere material existence to include normative truth. Nyaya offers a robust defence of an external, knowable reality and a permanent self, which is necessary for meaningful cognition and inference. The self is not an illusion but an enduring substance that witnesses experience and underlies personal identity. Mimamsa, meanwhile, demonstrates that realism must also account for non-empirical realities that govern ethical action and spiritual order, realities that demand recognition of the infallibility of scriptural injunctions. By exploring Nyaya and Mimamsa perspectives, one appreciates that Indian philosophy offers a sophisticated model of realism that transcends the dichotomy of objectivism and subjectivism. Reality is neither wholly external and detached nor merely a construct of the mind; rather, it is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon that includes physical substances and ethical imperatives, all of which are knowable through diverse, rigorously validated means.

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