



NISARGA

An International Peer-Reviewed Journal of
English Literature and Language

ISSN: 3107-9407

VOL.: 1

ISSUE: 1

JUL-DEC 2025

A Bi-Annual Journal



NISARGA

**An International Peer-Reviewed Journal of English
Literature and Language**

ISSN: 3107-9407

Vol. 1

Issue: 1

Jul—Dec 2025

A Bi-Annual Journal

Department of English

Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College

Virudhunagar

Publisher's Information

Publishing Body	Department of English, Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College
Address	Dr. S. Ramanathan Assistant Professor of English Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College Virudhunagar—626 001 Tamilnadu
Editor in Chief	Dr. S. Ramanathan
Address	Assistant Professor of English Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikaumar Nadar College, Virudhunagar 626 001 ramanathan.s@vhnsnc.edu.in Tamilnadu
Mode of publication	Print
E.mail	nisargavhnsnc@gmail.com

Nisarga
**An International Peer-Reviewed Journal of English
Literature and Language**

Editorial Board

Managing Editor

Dr. S. Ramanathan

Assistant Professor of English

ramanathan.s@vhnsnc.edu.in

Editorial Board (Advisory)

- 1. Dr. Justin James,**
Professor & eLearning Coordinator
English Language Center
University of Technology and Applied Sciences –
Nizwa
Sultanate of Oman
justin.james@nct.edu.om
- 2. Dr. P. Dalai**
Professor of English
Faculty of Arts
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi
p.dalai10@bhu.ac.in
- 3. Dr. C. Govindaraj**
Professor & Head
Periyar University Centre for Postgraduate and
Research Studies
Dharmapuri
drgovindpupgec@periyaruniversity.ac.in

Editors in Chief

1. Dr. R. Kabilar

Associate Professor of English
kabilar@vhnsnc@edu.in

2. Dr. R. Meena

Associate Professor of English
meena@vhnsnc.edu.in

Editors (Internal)

1. Dr. K. Muthurajan

Associate Professor of English
muthurajan@vhnsnc.edu.in

2. Dr. M. Meena Devi

Associate Professor of English
meenadevi@vhnsnc.edu.in

3. Dr. R. Anandam

Associate Professor of English
anandam@vhnsnc.edu.in

4. Dr. B. Rajkumar

Associate Professor of English
rajkumar@vhnsnc.edu.in

5. Dr. Y. Vidya

Assistant Professor of English
vidya@vhnsnc.edu.in

Editors (External)

6. Dr. Nilufar Abdurakhmonova

Head & Professor
Department of Linguistics
National University of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan
n.abduraxmonova@nuu.uz

7. Dr. Subbiah Rajadurai

Senior Lecturer
Department of English Language Teaching
University of Colombo
Srilanka
rajadurei@delt.com.ac.lk

8. Dr. M. Palanichamy

Associate Professor of English
Kanchi Mamunivar Government Institute of Postgraduate
Studies and Research
Lawspet
Pondicherry
drpalanisamykkl@gmail.com

9. Dr. K.M. Shamla

Associate Professor of English
University of Calicut
Kozhikode
dr.shamla.k.m@uoc.ac.in

10. Dr. Arjun Kharat

Associate Professor of English
Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College
Mattunga, Mumbai
arjunkharat@ruiacollege.edu

11. Dr. C. Parveen Kumari

Assistant Professor
Central University of Jammu,
Jammu&Kashmir
Pleiades.the77@gmail.com

12. Dr. A.Ramasubbiah
Principal & Associate Professor of English
Mannar Thirumalai Naicker College
Madurai
mannarsubbu@gmail.com

13. Dr. B. Chandra Bose
Associate Professor of English
The Madura College
Madurai
boseac@gmail.com

14. Dr. A. Hariharasudhan
Associate Professor of English
Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education
Krishnankovil
dr.a.hariharasudhan@gmail.com

15. Dr. A. Parvathavarthini
Assistant Professor of English
Aditanar College of Arts and Science
Tiruchendur
apvarthini@gmail.com

About the Journal

Title of the Journal	Nisarga An International Peer-Reviewed Journal of English Language and Literature
Starting Year	2025
Frequency	Bi-Annual (July—December & January—June every year)
ISSN No.	3107-9407
Editor in Chief	Dr. S. Ramanathan Assistant Professor of English Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College Virudhunagar—626 001 Tamilnadu ramanathan.s@vhnsnc.edu.in
E.mail. (Journal)	nisargavhnsnc@gmail.com
Subject	Literature
Language of publication	English
Format	Print
Mobile.No.	9080620981
Publisher's Details	Published by Dr. S. Ramanathan on behalf of the Department of English Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College Virudhunagar – 626 001 Tamilnadu
Copyright	Department of English Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College, Virudhunagar, Tamilnadu

Solicitation for Manuscripts

The journal solicits a diverse array of theoretical and empirical contributions, encompassing research articles, case studies, review papers, comparative analyses, dissertation chapters, progress reports, analytical and simulation models, technical notes, and book reviews pertinent to English studies. Submissions are welcome from esteemed academicians, business professionals, corporate representatives, scholarly researchers, and students affiliated with academic institutions, research organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and various industries, both in Indian and international forum.

Manuscript Submission

- **Email your articles to nisargavhnsnc@gmail.com**
- The manuscripts/papers must be research-based, original, and previously unpublished.
- Authors are required to submit an abstract of the work, limited to 250 words and at least five key words. All submissions must be formatted in Times New Roman, size 12, with double line spacing, and submitted exclusively in MS Word.

- All manuscripts must adhere to either the MLA or APA style guides. The complete manuscript must not surpass 5000 words, inclusive of tables and references.
- The manuscript must be systematically structured to include a Title, Abstract, Keywords, Introduction, Literature Survey, Problem Definition, Materials & Methods, Findings & Results, Interpretation & Discussion, Conclusion, and References.
- All quoted and replicated contents must be explicitly cited in the reference section.
- Tables and figures must be positioned in the document adjacent to or following their textual references.
- All contents must be unique, comprising the writers' own words, ideas, discoveries, and arguments.

Evaluation of Article / Manuscript

- The manuscript will be assigned a number and submitted to the review committee for evaluation and reporting.
- The author will be notified of the evaluation, and the procedure will require a maximum of 15 to 20 days.
- Following the adoption of the article, contributors must provide a "statement of declaration."

Code of Ethics

- Authors are encouraged to comply with publication ethics to be eligible for consideration of their manuscripts.
- It is essential to acknowledge creative ideas obtained from other references.
- The authors of original research (previously unpublished or under consideration for publication elsewhere) must submit an accurate account of the conducted work, articulate the significance of the research in relation to prior studies, and include sufficient details to facilitate further investigation by others.
- The authors shall bear full responsibility for any violations of legal obligations and ethical standards in publication or communication media.
- Articles will undergo a plagiarism assessment using Turnitin software, with an acceptable similarity threshold set at 15%.

Publication Policy and Peer Review Procedure

- Peer review exists to guarantee that journals publish articles that benefit the whole scholarly community. Comments and recommendations from peer reviewers are crucial in guiding the editors' judgment regarding a manuscript's modifications and enhancements. They contribute to the publication process and enhance the

quality of the work. It also fosters the readers' confidence in the research integrity of the piece.

- The Editors will evaluate each manuscript.
- The editor-in-chief will notify the authors on the manuscript's acceptance via email.
- The work will be assessed based on originality, practical significance, topic relevance, scientific rigor, and its contribution to the contemporary academic landscape.
- The accepted manuscript will undergo the double-blind peer review process. The journal maintains the confidentiality of the reviewer(s) from the author(s) and vice versa.
- The review committee bears no responsibility for the removal of any information during the panel review, as the original author remains unknown to the committee.
- If required, the copy-editing will be conducted by the Editorial Board members.
- The evaluation procedure may need a minimum of 20 business days.
- Upon acceptance of the paper and favorable recommendation for publication, it will be published promptly. If a paper, article, or manuscript is not approved for publication, the rejected manuscripts will not be returned.

Copyright Notification

The submission of an article signifies that the work presented has not been previously published (except as an abstract or within a published lecture or academic thesis), currently under review for publication elsewhere, received approval from the editor and, either explicitly or implicitly, from the relevant authorities where the work was conducted, and that, if accepted, it will not be published in the same form, in English or any other language, without the Publisher's written consent. The editors retain the authority to modify or amend any submissions; however, authors will be provided with proofs for approval prior to publication.

Confidentiality Declaration

We may gather contact information from authors, including names, titles, institutional addresses, email addresses, postal addresses, phone numbers, and other relevant data to comprehend their needs and enhance service delivery. This information will be utilized solely for the specified purposes of this journal.

CONTENTS

Mission:

- To foster scholarly engagement with English literature and language through the publication of high quality peer reviewed original research articles.
- To advance knowledge to understand the complexities of language and culture.
- To provide a platform for academic discourse, offering new perspectives and contributing to more inclusive scholarly knowledge.

Vision:

- To be an exceptional platform for cutting-edge research in English studies, recognised for its commitment to excellence and its ability to shape the future of the field.
- To serve as a global hub for scholarship connecting researchers and readers across the globe

Disclaimer:

- Contributors are urged to adhere rigorously to academic ethics regarding the crediting of original ideas sourced from others.

- The Publisher and editors shall not be liable for any instances of plagiarism or unauthorized quotes in the contributors' submissions.
- The publishers and editors have no responsibility for the opinions articulated in the articles.
- The authors shall assume complete responsibility for any deficiencies pertaining to legal duties and ethical standards of publication.

Sl. No.	Title & Author	Page No.
1	Cognitive Chronicity and Predominant Polarity: Unveiling the Enduring Mental Maze in Preeti Shenoy's Life is <i>What You Make I</i> P.V. Deepa and P. Sivasangari	1
2	Postcolonial Perspectives in <i>The Hungry Tide: The Legacy of Colonialism on Contemporary Lives</i> M. Kathiravan and R. Meena	19
3	Predestined Path and Spiritual Awakening: Exploring the Essence of Spirituality through Coelho's Vision S. S. Karthik Kumar and B. Rajkumar	30
4	Morality and Ethical values in Amish Tripathi's <i>The Secret of Nagas</i> A. Vasantha Lakshmi and B.Rajkumar	35

5	Revisiting African Myth: A Study of Flora Nwapa's <i>Efuru</i> and <i>Idu</i> S. V. Krishnapriya	39
6.	Spiritual Quest and Mysticism in Paulo Coelho's <i>Brida</i> R. Meena and Glariya Jasin	45
7	Emotional Isolation: Exploring Existential Themes in Haruki Murakami's <i>Sputnik Sweetheart</i> P. Suwathy and M. Meena Devi	50
8	Decoding Femininity in Male characters of Kuvempu's Novels Ms. Gopika N. Kulakarni and Kavita S. Kusugal	56
9	Reconsidering Nature and Time: Queer Ecologies in Sarah Hall's <i>The Electric Michelangelo</i> Vinaya Bhaskaran	61
10	Exploring The Dimensions Of Emotional Intelligence In Thiruvalluvar's <i>Thirukkural</i> Dr.A.Chandra Bose	70

**Cognitive Chronicity and Predominant Polarity: Unveiling the
Enduring Mental Maze in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It***

P. V. Deepa
Assistant Professor
PG Department of English,
Rajapalayam Rajus' College
Rajapalayam
Mobile no: 8610007543
Email ID: pvdeeparesearch@gmail.com

P. Sivashankari
Assistant Professor
Research Department of English
Sri S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College
Sattur
Mobile No: 9500486540
Email ID: umasivashankari@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper examines the intricate aspects of cognitive chronicity, referring to the long-term endurance of psychological distress, and predominant polarity, which indicates the recurring emotional patterns in bipolar disorder, as depicted in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It*. The novel narrates the psychological journey of Ankita, a young woman grappling with mental illness and healing within the constraints of a socially conservative Indian environment. Using Neuroqueer Theory as a foundation for analysis, this study questions pathologized views of neurodivergence by presenting mental differences as a means of resisting normative cognitive and behavioral frameworks. Neuroqueer Theory, which intertwines neurodivergence with queer theoretical concepts, allows for a reinterpretation of Ankita's mental fluctuations not as clinical shortcomings but as avenues for genuine self-expression and identity exploration. This research aims to investigate how Shenoy's story disrupts the dichotomies of sanity and madness, unveiling a more fluid and comprehensive psychological spectrum. It posits that *Life is What You Make It* serves as a platform for neuroqueer expression, where the persistent mental complexities mirror both the internal struggles and external stigmas related to mental health in India. This study adds to the wider discussions on mental health, identity, and neurodiversity in modern Indian literature.

Keywords: *Cognitive chronicity, predominant polarity, Neuroqueer theory, mental illness*

Introduction:

In recent years, Indian English literature has increasingly provided a rich landscape for in-depth explorations of mental health, personal identity, and defiance against societal expectations. As the public stigma surrounding mental illness gradually diminishes, literary narratives are beginning to capture the psychological intricacy and emotional upheaval experienced by individuals grappling with mental differences. Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It (2011)* stands out as a notable addition to this emerging genre, serving not only as a narrative of resilience but as a powerful literary platform that questions conventional beliefs about mental wellness, female empowerment, and the norms of neurotypical behavior. The novel depicts the emotional and psychological journey of Ankita Sharma, a bright and driven college student whose hopeful future is suddenly disrupted by the onset of bipolar disorder. Her fall into turmoil and eventual recovery takes place within a highly conservative Indian culture, which perceives mental illness through a prism of stigma, silence, and shame.

This analysis centers on the intertwined concepts of cognitive chronicity and predominant polarity, both crucial for understanding the neuropsychological framework of bipolar affective disorder. Cognitive chronicity pertains to the persistent patterns of dysfunctional thoughts and feelings that continue over time, even during periods of remission. As Zimmerman and Chelminski highlight, chronic cognitive distortions are a defining characteristic of bipolar spectrum disorders, often resulting in ongoing difficulties with self-image and emotional regulation (Zimmerman and Chelminski 1223). Conversely, predominant polarity—describing the tendency of individuals with bipolar disorder to encounter more frequent episodes of either mania or depression—offers an analytical framework to assess the recurring emotional states represented in the novel (Popovic et al. 4).

While these clinical concepts offer a medical perspective on the protagonist's condition, this paper does not seek to label Ankita's experiences solely through a biomedical framework. Instead, it employs Neuroqueer Theory as the main theoretical lens through which to explore her psychological differences. Introduced by Nick Walker and developed

by scholars like Remi Yergeau and Robert McRuer, Neuroqueer Theory occupies the crossroads of neurodiversity and queer theory. It resists the normative pressures of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral "standards," valuing neurodivergent modes of existence as legitimate and subversive to structural conformity (Walker 13; Yergeau 18).

Through the lens of neuroqueering, this study emphasizes Ankita's mental experiences not as medical aberrations, but as representations of a neurodiversity reality. Her emotional fluctuations, impulsivity, and defiance of institutional norms—across education, romantic involvement, or gender expression—can be interpreted as forms of cognitive and emotional resistance. As Yergeau asserts, "neurodivergent rhetoric is often interpreted as incoherence, but that incoherence is also a form of argument—a challenge to the ideological framework of normalcy" (Yergeau 25). Ankita's fragmented yet poetic narrative voice, chaotic yet meaningful, reflects this neuroqueer challenge to linearity and predictable logic.

From a genre-specific lens, Shenoy's novel falls into the realm of psychological fiction, where the narrative trajectory is propelled by internal consciousness and emotional experiences. In contrast to the Western-focused tradition of psychological realism, which often contextualizes mental illness in terms of existential alienation, *Life is What You Make It* grounds its exploration of psychological issues within a culturally specific Indian context. The novel examines the societal silence surrounding mental health, the gendered ramifications of psychiatric labeling, and the clash between personal aspirations and societal expectations. As Kalpana Sharma observes, "In Indian society, mental illness is not just a medical issue but a deeply gendered and moralized subject" (Sharma 54). Ankita's journey into bipolar disorder is viewed not merely as a medical dilemma, but as a moral failing—a breakdown of self-discipline, propriety, and family honor.

This dual aspect—of medical classification and ethical judgment—creates the narrative space in which Shenoy addresses the concept of cognitive chronicity. Even as Ankita undergoes treatment and ultimately regains a semblance of normalcy, her inner thoughts reflect ongoing self-doubt, guilt, and existential confusion. These persistent mental patterns

resonate with Judith Herman’s statement that “recovery from trauma is never linear; it is a spiral process marked by repetition and re-interpretation” (Herman 133). Viewed in this manner, the “life” that Ankita is meant to reclaim signifies not a return to her pre-illness identity, but a reconstructed self—one that is haunted, self-aware, and consistently navigating the landscape of neurodivergence.

Additionally, Shenoy’s narrative format itself defies a straightforward recovery. The novel opens with a retrospective perspective—a recovered Ankita contemplating her past—yet this framing does not provide closure. Instead, it destabilizes the dichotomy between “illness” and “wellness,” implying that psychological divergence is not a condition to be cured or eliminated but must be perpetually managed. This non-linear sense of time aligns with McRuer’s concept of “crip time” in disability narratives—an alternative way of experiencing time that resists capitalist demands for productivity, stability, and progress (McRuer 71).

Employing Neuroqueer Theory to interpret *Life is What You Make* allows for a fresh view of Ankita’s predominant polarity—her depressive incidents—as not merely pathological conditions, but as forms of misidentifications from a society that enforces constant positivity, performance, and control. As Eli Clare articulates, “Our bodies and minds are not broken; the world is” (Clare 142). Ankita’s emotional instability can therefore be seen as a physical critique—a rejection of emotional coherence in a world that penalizes excessive emotions, particularly in women. Her institutionalization serves as a metaphor for a society that disciplines non-conforming minds under the pretense of care.

Furthermore, the gendered aspect of Ankita’s illness is crucial. Initially, she is depicted as exceptionally bright, socially active, and romantically sought after—traits that ultimately attract scrutiny and repression. Her independence is viewed as a threat to established patriarchal norms. As Susan Bordo posits, “Female bodies and minds that refuse containment are subjected to correction—often through medical or moral means” (Bordo 195). Within this framework, Ankita’s diagnosis functions as a form of gendered restriction, a mechanism to restore patriarchal order under the guise of psychiatric care. Ankita is not

romanticized as a tragic figure nor celebrated as a victorious survivor. She inhabits a space in between—a liminal entity continually maneuvering through the divide of wellness and illness, self and society, conformity and defiance. This is in line with the neuroqueer perspective of identity as fluid, evolving, and inherently resistant to strict categorization.

The current study posits that Shenoy's novel acts as a significant space of neuroqueer resistance, redefining what it means to navigate life with a neurodivergent mind. By blending the psychological concepts of cognitive chronicity and dominant polarity with the critical perspectives of Neuroqueer Theory, this paper aims to present a multi-dimensional analysis of Ankita's journey. It challenges the interpretation of the novel as a straightforward recovery story and instead appreciates its complexity, emotional richness, and its refusal to adhere to conventional literary or psychiatric standards. Through this perspective, *Life is What You Make It* is revealed not as a self-help narrative, but as a profound literary reflection on madness, meaning, and the politics of being mentally "other" in a society that insists on uniformity.

Review of Literature:

Mental Illness in Indian English Literature

Mental illness, especially mood disorders like bipolar affective disorder, has frequently appeared as a theme in contemporary literature. The depiction of mental illness in Indian English fiction, although still emerging, has garnered academic interest for its authenticity and psychological complexity. Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It* (2011) holds an important role in this discussion as it deeply examines the fluctuating mental states of its protagonist, placing the story within the larger context of cognitive persistence and prevailing polarity—ideas commonly addressed in both psychiatric and literary studies.

The convergence of literature and psychology in Indian English writing is characterized by works that seek to reveal the socio-cultural foundations of mental illness. Observers note that Indian fiction has historically swung between spiritual mysticism and colonial rationalism, often placing mental health in a metaphorical context. However, in modern narratives, mental illness is depicted not in metaphorical terms but

with genuine medical and psychological accuracy. As Anjana Neira Dev states, “In contemporary Indian fiction, mental illness is portrayed as both a personal struggle and a critique of socio-cultural factors” (Dev 89). Shenoy’s novel moves away from mythological representations and offers a reflective, first-person narrative rooted in authentic psychological experiences.

Narrative Techniques and Psychological Realism

The confessional style of narration in *Life is What You Make It* aligns with what Patricia Waugh refers to as “the self-reflexive narrative,” which acts as a means to reflect internal psychological struggles (Waugh 12). The protagonist Ankita Sharma’s journey into a bipolar condition is depicted through reflective flashbacks, journal entries, and disjointed thoughts—methods that mimic the collapse of mental clarity. These narrative techniques correspond with what Elaine Showalter discusses in *The Female Malady*—where women’s stories of madness frequently adopt nonlinear, circular frameworks to illustrate psychic chaos (Showalter 82). Shenoy’s narrative structure imitates the concept of “cognitive chronicity,” where the ongoing presence of dysfunctional thought patterns defies straightforward resolution.

Bipolarity and Predominant Polarity

In the realm of psychiatry, predominant polarity refers to the recurring state (either mania or depression) observed in bipolar disorder. This notion assists clinicians in comprehending and treating the disorder by allowing them to predict its likely future trajectory (Popovic et al. 106). Shenoy’s depiction of Ankita exemplifies depressive predominant polarity with intermittent manic episodes—her depressive phases are typically more extended, psychologically intense, and richly detailed in narrative. The use of imagery such as “an endless tunnel” or “a mind enshrouded in fog and silence” corresponds with Aaron Beck’s cognitive theory of depression, where cognitive distortions such as overgeneralization and catastrophizing permeate the individual’s inner narrative (Beck 56).

Trauma and Gendered Silence

Beyond the clinical aspects of mental illness, Shenoy explores the sociological factors involved. Ankita's psychological decline is partly triggered by societal demands, gendered expectations, and parental oversight. The research on trauma and memory, particularly by Cathy Caruth, emphasizes that trauma encompasses not only the event but also the lag in its comprehension (Caruth 7). Ankita's ultimate breakdown is spurred by repressed affection, guilt, and a crisis of identity—feelings that patriarchal structures tend to invalidate. In this regard, Shenoy's novel contributes to feminist psychiatric discussions, as reflected in Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness*, which posits that women's mental health challenges often stem from sociocultural oppression (Chesler 33).

Resilience and Cognitive Reframing

Shenoy's narrative also serves as an exploration of resilience and recovery. As the story unfolds, Ankita's progression from despair to healing aligns with the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), particularly the idea of cognitive restructuring. Judith Beck suggests that confronting dysfunctional beliefs and nurturing self-efficacy are essential for mental recovery (Beck 112). Ankita's healing journey, supported by psychotherapy, journaling, and establishing goals, exemplifies this psychological concept. This evolution signifies a move away from deterministic views of madness and underscores agency and transformation—a characteristic that links Shenoy's writing to bibliotherapeutic narratives (Gregory 93).

The Bildungsroman and Mental Health

Furthermore, the novel resembles the *Bildungsroman* genre, reinterpreted within the context of psychological maturation rather than simple social assimilation. Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the "chronotope" is pertinent here: the intertwining of time and space is used to deepen subjective transformation. The ashram, the mental hospital, and university environments serve as transitional spaces where Ankita experiences various stages of psychological reconstruction. Literary scholar Priya Joshi notes that modern Indian women's literature often utilizes these liminal spaces to explore identity formation amidst turmoil (Joshi 144).

Representation and Stigma

Preeti Shenoy's work is part of a burgeoning collection of Indian popular literature aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. While scholars like Pramod K. Nayar criticize mainstream Indian literature for oversimplifying psychological intricacies, *Life is What You Make It* manages to strike a balance by offering a narrative that is both engaging and nuanced (Nayar 58). The novel has gained recognition in mental health advocacy communities for its truthful portrayal of bipolar disorder, particularly for young adults facing academic stress and emotional challenges.

The current body of research shows an increasing interest in examining mental health through literary narratives, particularly within the realm of Indian English fiction. Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It* stands out as an important work that connects psychological authenticity with literary sensitivity. The intersection of cognitive theories, feminist viewpoints, trauma studies, and narrative techniques underscores the complex nature of Shenoy's portrayal of bipolar disorder. Viewing the novel through the lens of cognitive chronicity and dominant polarity allows it not only to personalize the conversation about mental health but also to confront the cultural silence and stigma associated with it. This review lays a critical groundwork for more in-depth analysis, positioning Shenoy's work within wider interdisciplinary discussions involving literature, psychology, and social change.

Methodology

This research employs a neuroqueer theoretical perspective to analyze the portrayal of bipolarity, identity, and societal conformity in Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It*. Situated at the crossroads of queer theory and neurodiversity studies, neuroqueer theory critiques the normalization of neurotypical cognitive frameworks, framing neurodivergence as a tangible, rebellious form of subjectivity. This perspective moves away from conventional psychiatric or pathologizing interpretations of mental illness and instead regards neurodivergent identities as spaces of epistemological disruption, creative expression, and challenges to cultural narratives.

Neuroqueer theory, developed by thinkers like Nick Walker and

furthered by scholars such as Remi Yergeau, challenges the systemic enforcement of neurotypical ideals, particularly coherence, linear time, and rational selfhood. As Yergeau explains, to be neuroqueer means to “exist in defiance of compulsory able-mindedness” (29), opening up possibilities for identities and stories that are fluid, chaotic, and emotionally charged. This theoretical framework is particularly effective for dissecting literary representations of mental health, especially in stories that resist neat conclusions and welcome cognitive multiplicity. Shenoy’s novel serves as an excellent case for this approach, presenting a first-person account of a main character whose journey with bipolar disorder is characterized not just by emotional highs and lows but also by altered experiences of time, memory, embodiment, and reality.

The methodology utilized in this analysis is largely qualitative and interpretive, relying on a close examination of the text to highlight the expressions of neurodivergence in the narrative voice, structure, and thematic content. The novel is scrutinized for instances that reveal disruptions in normative timelines, such as flashbacks, memory loops, and discontinuous narrative segments. Through a neuroqueer lens, these narrative forms are understood not as signs of pathology, but as modes of storytelling that challenge the prevailing logics of coherence, productivity, and emotional control.

Moreover, this examination looks at how language within the novel reflects emotional and cognitive states that contest binary norms. Descriptions of Ankita’s manic episodes— “My mind raced faster than my body could keep up” (115) —and her depressive downturns— “I felt hollow, as if the world had drained its colors”(115) —evoke sensations that dissolve the lines between the body and mind, clarity and confusion. Instead of simply depicting clinical characteristics of bipolar disorder, these expressions are viewed as neuroqueer articulations of a consciousness that transcends the dichotomy of sanity and insanity.

The narrative voice itself, which is confessional and richly emotional, becomes an essential aspect of the neuroqueer analysis. The fluctuations in Ankita’s identity, her defiance of conventional academic

and gender norms, and her eventual redefinition outside societal constructs of success all illustrate what neuroqueer theory terms “queering the mind”—navigating and narrating experiences that disrupt neurotypical timelines and expectations. In addition to close reading, this study incorporates intertextual and interdisciplinary sources to contextualize its findings. Perspectives from cognitive psychology, trauma theory, and feminist psychiatry enhance the neuroqueer analysis. The theories presented by Judith Halberstam, especially in *The Queer Art of Failure*, inform the understanding of Ankita’s departure from typical life narratives, while Lennard Davis’s contributions to disability studies highlight how deviations from the idealized mind-body model face cultural stigmatization. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that the analysis remains literary while also engaging with broader societal constructions of illness, identity, and recovery.

Despite being labeled as inspirational fiction; this approach avoids simplifying the text to a mere tale of success over struggles. Instead, it views Ankita’s experience as a profound redefinition of neurodivergent identity—one that neither dismisses her bipolar disorder nor aims to eliminate it, but rather incorporates it as an essential, genuine part of her existence. The concept of “recovery” is therefore redefined: not as a return to a conventional state, but as a process of neuroqueer evolution, where significance is derived from within altered mental states instead of in opposition to them.

By examining how the text expresses and portrays neurodivergence through its structure, narrative voice, and metaphors, this method demonstrates how literature can create avenues of resistance to prevailing psychiatric and cultural standards. The analysis emphasizes narrative complexity and emotional authenticity over rigid diagnostic categories, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of mental health in literature. In this way, the approach not only critiques how Shenoy depicts bipolarity but also how these depictions enrich the developing realm of neurodivergent literary aesthetics.

Utilizing a neuroqueer perspective, this approach highlights the importance of reassessing mental health stories in Indian literature beyond medical binaries and societal stigmas. Reading Shenoy’s novel through

this lens transforms it into a platform where neurodivergent identity is not only expressed but validated—through non-linear timelines, heightened emotional experiences, and fragmented storytelling. Ultimately, the neuroqueer approach provides a critical framework for examining how literature can contest standard definitions of sanity, gendered strength, and cognitive conformity, offering a more inclusive and challenging interpretation of mental health in modern Indian narratives.

Discussion

a) Disrupting Normative Temporality: A Neuroqueer Lens

Preeti Shenoy's **Life Is What You Make It** presents a nuanced examination of bipolar disorder through the experiences of Ankita Sharma. The novel's portrayal of mental health challenges conventional biomedical frameworks by depicting neurodivergence as a complex interaction of anguish, creativity, identity exploration, and societal stigma. Central to Ankita's story is a disruption of standard temporal experiences, which neuroqueer scholars assert is essential for understanding cognitive differences (Walker). Shenoy's portrayal of Ankita's manic episodes vividly illustrates this altered sense of time:

It felt like my thoughts were racing faster than I could process them. I existed everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. Time no longer moved forward; it circled and twisted around me like a storm, carrying me along. I couldn't discern if it was day or night, or if I was even awake or dreaming. Everything was excessively loud, bright, and overwhelming... I was trapped within my own mind" (Shenoy 102).

This intense, disorienting sensation defies conventional linear perceptions of time, instead highlighting a cyclical, fragmented temporality that mirrors Ankita's neurodivergent thinking. As Nick Walker discusses in his seminal essay on neuroqueer theory, such experiences reveal the shortcomings of "chrononormativity"—the societal enforcement of linear, productive time—and promote the acceptance of temporal multiplicity and chronicity as legitimate modes of existence (Walker 107–110). Ankita's lived experience embodies this, as her understanding of time becomes a realm of both suffering and significant

divergence.

b) Stigma and Internalized Ableism: Culture and Constraint

Life Is What You Make It critiques the social and familial stigma surrounding mental illness within the Indian cultural framework, revealing how ableist standards heighten suffering. Ankita's parents, embodying traditional expectations, react with shame and denial when faced with her struggles and personal relationships:

My parents destroyed the letters I had kept hidden for years. 'This is not who you are,' they said. 'You are shaming the family.' I wanted to yell, to express that I was still myself—just fractured, yes, but still me. Yet their disappointment clamped down on my voice" (Shenoy 145).

This instance powerfully illustrates the erasure and invalidation encountered by neurodivergent individuals. The tearing apart of Ankita's personal history metaphorically represents society's refusal to recognize neurodivergent perspectives. As Remi Yergeau notes in **Authoring Autism**, neurodivergence frequently experiences "epistemic violence" when dominant cultures deny the validity of non-normative cognitive experiences (Yergeau 28–30). The novel thus highlights the psychological pain of stigma, demonstrating how it intensifies mental health struggles by cultivating internalized ableism.

c) Medicalization and the Role of the Psychiatric Gaze

In contrast, the empathetic character of Dr. Madhusudan provides a counter narrative of normalization and medical understanding:

You need to realize, Ankita, mental illness is a genuine illness, just like any other. It's neither a moral failing nor a weakness. We address it with the same seriousness we give to diabetes or hypertension. Your brain chemistry is unbalanced, and with appropriate support, you can lead a fulfilling life" (Shenoy 159).

His statements work to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness by likening it to physical health issues, promoting a biopsychosocial perspective that aligns with neuroqueer concepts aimed at dismantling the separation between mind and body (Walker 114).

d) Creativity and Cognitive Difference

The novel's focus on Ankita's personal experience adds complexity, ensuring she is not merely defined by her diagnosis but is presented as a multifaceted individual navigating a constantly evolving sense of self. The story also nuances the connection between bipolar disorder and creativity, indicating that neurodivergence can provide significant artistic insight and emotional richness:

Many individuals with bipolar disorder go through intense feelings and possess an increased sensitivity to their surroundings. Though challenging to navigate, this sensitivity often stimulates creativity. Ankita, your art serves not only as therapy — it stands as a testament to your distinctive vision and emotional profundity” (Shenoy 161).

This reinterpretation contests medicalized deficit frameworks that frame neurodivergence solely in terms of dysfunction. Instead, Ankita's art therapy evolves into both a healing modality and a demonstration of her neuroqueer identity, embodying what

Walker refers to as “aesthetic queerness”—where neurodivergence reshapes sensory experiences and emotional involvement in ways that conventional standards cannot adequately define (Walker 112). Through her art, Ankita surpasses the confines of her diagnosis, representing a form of flourishing that reclaims cognitive differences as innovative. The novel further delves into Ankita's internalized ableism—her conflicted feelings and self-denial in reaction to her diagnosis:

I detested the diagnosis. It felt like a punishment. Like a scarlet letter seared onto my soul. At times, I longed to simply be ‘normal’ again — whatever that entailed. However, the more I resisted it, the more I understood that I had to embrace this new iteration of myself if I ever wanted to find tranquility (Shenoy 178).

d) Negotiating Identity and Self-Acceptance

This honest introspection exposes the psychological impact of adhering to neurotypical expectations. The term “scarlet letter” evokes societal condemnation, and her struggle underscores the friction between societal standards and personal identity development. Neuroqueer theory

critiques these standards as limiting “neurotypical” benchmarks that invalidate and disenfranchise various cognitive styles (Yergeau 33). Ankita’s evolution culminates in a redefinition of identity and purpose through her acceptance of art therapy as both a vocation and a means of social involvement:

Art therapy provided me with a method to understand my turmoil. It transformed from merely a coping strategy into my true calling. Assisting others like me, who endure similar internal storms, became my mission. I was no longer incomplete—I was a bridge connecting different worlds (Shenoy 212).

This statement dismisses the prevalent cultural narrative of brokenness, substituting it for a narrative of empowerment and interconnectedness. The image of being a “bridge between worlds” encapsulates the neuroqueer celebration of difference as a source of strength and potential, rejecting the dichotomies of normal/abnormal or sick/well. As Halberstam asserts, queering the mind entails “disassembling conventional notions of identity, time, and productivity” and devising new forms of subjectivity that honor diversity (Halberstam 75).

e) Toward a Queer Reconstruction of Purpose

Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the significance of community and relational dynamics in the process of mental health recovery. Ankita’s healing journey is not solitary but is nurtured through empathetic bonds with her psychiatrist, friends, and eventually with others who face similar challenges. This illustrates neuroqueer criticisms of the individualistic biomedical model, instead spotlighting the socio-cultural aspects of neurodivergence and the importance of supportive networks (Walker 118). Through these relationships, Ankita navigates the complexities of lifelong conditions, learning to coexist with mental illness rather than aspiring to a simplistic remedy. The depiction of cognitive chronicity—the persistently fluctuating nature of mental health issues—is essential. Ankita’s story does not guarantee complete recovery or a return to normalcy but rather embraces continuous management and adaptation:

Some days, the fog lifted and I felt almost like myself. Other days, the darkness returned without warning. But I learned to live with

this rhythm, to accept the unpredictability, and to find joy in moments of clarity (Shenoy 195).

This recognition of fluctuation defies cultural expectations for tidy recovery narratives and resonates with the neuroqueer focus on chronicity as a legitimate lived experience (Yergeau 35). The novel's transparency about ongoing challenges offers an authentic and inclusive representation of mental illness.

Ultimately, *Life Is What You Make It* enhances the growing conversation around neurodiversity in Indian literature, where discussions on mental health often face stigma. By highlighting Ankita's journey, Shenoy sheds light on neurodivergence and confronts societal taboos, advocating for empathy and change. Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It* surfaces as a transformative tale when viewed through the lens of neuroqueer theory, presenting an unconventional yet profoundly humane depiction of bipolarity, identity, and resistance. Rather than framing mental illness as merely a crisis or deficit, the novel paints a dynamic picture of cognitive chronicity as a core aspect of the self—chaotic, nonlinear, and resilient. Ankita's experience challenges the moral dichotomies of health versus illness or success versus failure; instead, it embraces a model of becoming that is fluid, neurodivergent, and affirming.

Findings

The insightful application of Neuroqueer Theory to Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It* reveals important understandings regarding the depiction of cognitive differences, fluid identities, and opposition to standard psychiatric frameworks. By focusing on Ankita Sharma's experience with bipolar disorder through a sociocultural and neuroqueer lens, the novel reveals how psychological nonconformity is both medicalized and marginalized, particularly within conventional Indian settings.

A primary observation is that the protagonist's cognitive chronicity is not merely depicted as a disorder but viewed as an existence that defies linear healing narratives. Ankita's shifting mental states—characterized by periods of manic happiness and deep depression—are not neatly resolved but are instead woven into her self-perception. For example, during her

time in the hospital, she contemplates, “I was not who I had been. I was not sure who I was anymore” (Shenoy 142). This sense of existential uncertainty illustrates the neuroqueer experience of existing beyond rigid cognitive identities—a malleable, often tumultuous mental state that eludes categorization.

Another notable observation is Shenoy’s approach to structuring time and narrative. Ankita’s narration is temporally fragmented, with memories, hallucinations, and dreams merging with her current reality. “Time passed in a blur,” she recounts. “Some days I floated above myself, some days I curled into a ball and wept” (Shenoy 123). These non-linear narratives embody what Alison Kafer describes as “crip time,” a temporal lens that challenges productivity and conventional schedules (Kafer 27). Ankita’s experience of time becomes neuroqueered—deviating not only from psychiatric demands for improvement but also from capitalist and patriarchal expectations of linear advancement. Collectively, these observations confirm that Shenoy’s novel serves as a neuroqueer narrative of resistance, providing a compelling counter-narrative to prevailing psychiatric and cultural discourses.

Conclusion

This paper has illustrated that Preeti Shenoy’s *Life Is What You Make It* provides a rich and transformative depiction of mental illness through the analytical framework of neuroqueer theory, transcending conventional psychiatric and cultural perspectives. By emphasizing cognitive continuity and prevailing variances, the novel undermines the linear, recovery-centric narratives typically associated with bipolar disorder, uncovering the intricacies involved in living with persistent mental differences. Ankita’s mental health challenges within wider systems of oppression, highlighting the necessity for culturally aware interpretations of mental illness in the Indian context.

Ankita’s artistic expression and her eventual position as a counselor further exemplify the neuroqueer principle of survival and transformation, underlining agency without negating identity. By merging neuroqueer theory with South Asian literary analysis, this paper helps to broaden critical discussions surrounding mental health, identity, and

resistance. It emphasizes how *Life Is What You Make It* not only humanizes neurodivergence but also challenges prevailing psychiatric models, prompting readers to reconceptualize cognitive differences as a dynamic, persistent, and liberating mental state.

Works Cited

- Armstrong, Thomas. *The Power of Neurodiversity: Unleashing the Advantages of Your Differently Wired Brain*. Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2010.
- Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. University of California Press, 1993.
- Brown, Tara, and Samuel Decker. "Reframing Mania: An Affective Neuroscience Perspective." *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2020, pp. 112–128.
- Burstow, Bonnie. *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness: An Ethical and Epistemological Accounting*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Clare, Eli. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- Carvalho, André Ferreira, et al. "Predominant polarity as a course specifier for bipolar disorder: A systematic review." *Journal of Affective Disorders*, vol. 163, 2014, pp.56–64.
- Gopal, Priyamvada. *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 1992.
- Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013.
- McRuer, Robert. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. NYU Press, 2006.
- Mehta, Riya. "Embodied Depression in Contemporary Indian Fiction." *South Asian Literary Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2021, pp. 45–63.
- Mondimore, Francis Mark. *Bipolar Disorder: A Guide for Patients and Families*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Nair, Anjali, and Deepa Raghavan. "Neuro-literary Affect Studies in Indian Popular Fiction." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2023, pp. 178–195.

Panksepp, Jaak, and Lucy Biven. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions*. W. W. Norton, 2012.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Puar, Jasbir K. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Duke University Press, 2017, pp. 148–160.

Shenoy, Preeti. *Life is What You Make It*. Srishti Publishers, 2011.

Solms, Mark, and Oliver Turnbull. *The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of Subjective Experience*. Other Press, 2002.

Walker, Nick. *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities*. Autonomous Press, 2021.

Yergeau, Remi. *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*. Duke University Press, 2018, pp. 62–68.

Zimmerman, Mark, and Ivy Chelminski. "A Review of the Relationship Between Bipolar Disorder and Personality Disorders." *Annals of Clinical Psychiatry*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2006, pp. 123–129.

**Postcolonial Perspectives in *The Hungry Tide*: The Legacy of
Colonialism on Contemporary Lives**

Mr. M. Kathiravan

Ph.D., Research Scholar (Part-time),
Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara
Nadar College (Autonomous),
Virudhunagar.

Dr. R. Meena

Research Supervisor,
Associate Professor,
Research Centre in English,
Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars'
Senthikumara Nadar College
(Autonomous), Virudhunagar.

Abstract

*This research examines the postcolonial perspectives presented in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, focusing on the enduring legacy of colonialism on contemporary lives in the Sundarbans. The novel intertwines personal narratives with the historical realities of colonial exploitation, exploring how these legacies shape identities, environmental dynamics, and social justice issues in modern India. Through an analysis of key characters such as Piya, Kanai, and local marginalized communities, the study highlights the complex interplay between colonial histories and present-day struggles for belonging and recognition. The findings illustrate that Ghosh's work serves as both a critique of colonial practices and a call for ecological and social awareness, emphasizing the need for inclusive narratives that honor diverse voices. This research article explores the novel through a postcolonial ecocritical lens, arguing that Ghosh critiques both historical colonial exploitation and its enduring manifestations in modern ecological and socio-political frameworks. By analyzing key themes—ecological justice, subaltern dispossession, cultural hybridity, non-Western ecological epistemologies, and counter-memory—this study demonstrates how *The Hungry Tide* articulates a vision of resistance and ethical belonging in a postcolonial world.*

Keywords: Postcolonialism, colonial legacy, identity, environmental justice, agency, Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*.

Introduction

Postcolonial literature often engages with the lingering effects of colonial rule, emphasizing how imperial structures continue to shape cultural, political, and ecological realities even after independence. It addresses how formerly colonized societies grapple with the residues of imperialism, not only in their governance and social structures but also in how they understand their landscapes and histories. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) exemplifies this narrative by situating its plot within the Sundarbans, a liminal landscape shaped by tides, rivers, and resistance. This setting is not merely a geographical location but a complex site where history, culture, and identity intersect, deeply influenced by the legacies of colonialism. This unique ecosystem becomes a metaphor for flux, vulnerability, and resilience—characteristics that also define the postcolonial experience. Through the experiences of characters like Piyali Roy, Kanai Dutt, and Fokir, Ghosh constructs a narrative that intertwines personal transformation with broader historical and ecological tensions. These characters symbolize different aspects of postcolonial identity and dislocation. This article examines how Ghosh critiques the colonial legacy in contemporary India, especially through ecological displacement, refugee marginalization, linguistic and cultural hybridity, and the reclamation of subaltern memory, ultimately arguing for a more inclusive and ethically grounded model of environmental and social justice.

Ghosh's portrayal of the refugee community, particularly the plight of Bangladeshis displaced by political strife, underscores the fragmented identities that arise from historical dislocation. Characters like Kanai grapple with their own identities, navigating between their urban lives and the complex realities of the Sundarbans. Moreover, the novel examines the ecological ramifications of colonial exploitation. The Sundarbans has a long history of being seen as a resource-rich territory, first exploited by colonial powers and now threatened by modern economic practices.

In addressing these themes, Ghosh draws attention to the voices of those often marginalized in postcolonial narratives, particularly the displaced Bangladeshi refugees and the indigenous inhabitants of the Sundarbans. Their stories challenge dominant historical narratives and highlight the resilience of communities facing the dual challenges of

ecological and cultural survival.

Through the lens of postcolonial theory, this article explores how Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* reflects on the enduring impacts of colonialism, revealing the complexities of identity, environmental justice, and the struggle for agency in contemporary lives. By analyzing the text in relation to these themes, the study seeks to illuminate the intricate connections between historical legacies and present realities, demonstrating how literature can serve as a powerful medium for understanding and addressing the multifaceted nature of postcolonial existence. Ghosh's narrative invites readers to engage with the ongoing repercussions of colonialism, emphasizing that the past is not merely a backdrop but an active force shaping the present.

Ecological Justice and Postcolonial Eco-Criticism

Ghosh utilizes the Sundarbans as a metaphor for contested ecological and political spaces, where environmental policies intersect with human survival. Conservation efforts in the region, particularly the preservation of the Royal Bengal tiger, mirror colonial control over indigenous livelihoods, echoing the imposition of external authority on native populations. Kanai observes the hypocrisy of conservationists: "These people are too poor to matter... we choose not to see it" (Ghosh 246). This remark encapsulates the neocolonial attitude embedded in contemporary environmentalism, where state and international interventions prioritize wildlife over the lives of marginalized human communities, often without engaging with the socio-economic conditions of the local population.

Postcolonial ecocriticism interrogates such dynamics, challenging the nature-culture dichotomy established by Western paradigms. It critiques the way colonial and postcolonial governments impose environmental policies without considering the human costs, especially for subaltern populations. According to Panta, Amitav Ghosh's novel, *The Hungry Tide*, destabilizes the universalist claim of Western superiority by highlighting the interconnectedness of human and natural histories, challenging the Western binary of nature and culture, and showcasing the agency and knowledge systems of local, marginalized communities. Piyali

Roy's transformation from a detached scientist to a compassionate advocate for collaborative conservation highlights this shift in perception and values. Her recognition that local knowledge could guide scientific inquiry reflects Ghosh's call for inclusive ecological ethics, where scientific practice must be complemented by indigenous experience and empathy for marginalized voices.

Subaltern Dispossession and the Postcolonial Uncanny

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* powerfully engages with the fraught dynamics of subaltern dispossession, particularly through its invocation of the 1979 Morichjhapi massacre—an event that lies at the political and moral heart of the novel. This massacre involved the violent eviction of thousands of lower-caste Bengali refugees from the island of Morichjhapi in the Sundarbans, where they had attempted to settle after repeated displacements, including the trauma of Partition. These refugees, primarily Dalits from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), had migrated to India with the promise of rehabilitation, only to be met with hostility and forced expulsion under the pretext of preserving the ecological sanctity of the Sundarbans. In invoking this history, Ghosh exposes the complicity of the postcolonial Indian state in perpetuating structures of exclusion and marginalization that echo colonial strategies of control.

The novel's use of Nirmal's diary entries serves as both a narrative device and a moral commentary on this act of erasure. His reflections convey not just the bewilderment of a retired intellectual but also the suppressed violence of state machinery: "In 1978 a great number of people suddenly appeared in Morichjhapi... it was more like a concentration camp" (Ghosh 221). The comparison to a concentration camp is jarring and deliberate, underscoring the inhumane conditions imposed on the refugees. By presenting this through Nirmal's increasingly radicalized conscience, Ghosh invites the reader to interrogate the ideological contradictions of a nation-state that positions itself as democratic while denying dignity and rights to its most vulnerable citizens.

This episode, though central to the lives of many affected, remains conspicuously absent from dominant historical discourses. Ghosh thus recuperates a forgotten history, aligning with the broader objectives of

subaltern studies, which seek to retrieve marginalized voices from the silences of official historiography. Scholars like Amardeep Singh Dahiya and Pramod K. Nayar have read *The Hungry Tide* through the lens of subaltern theory, arguing that the Morichjhapi incident exemplifies how certain communities—particularly those at the intersection of caste, class, and regional identity—are rendered voiceless and invisible in the public sphere. These are populations not merely displaced in a geographic sense but also excluded from epistemological and discursive frameworks.

Nayar’s concept of the “postcolonial uncanny” is especially relevant here. He posits that displacement produces a condition of spectrality, wherein the displaced become ghostly presences within the nation—simultaneously acknowledged and denied, remembered and forgotten. This uncanny presence disturbs the seamless narratives of national progress and environmental stewardship propagated by the state. The Sundarbans’ physical landscape—a mangrove delta perpetually redefined by tidal shifts and erosion—serves as a potent metaphor for this spectral instability. As an environment that resists fixed borders and stable habitation, the Sundarbans mirrors the refugees’ precarious existence: always in flux, always vulnerable to erasure.

The character of Kusum emerges as the emotional fulcrum of this political tragedy. Having suffered successive dislocations, Kusum articulates the anguish of a community betrayed by both colonial and postcolonial promises. Her haunting words—“They came and said this was a protected place... but protected for whom?” (Ghosh 261)—expose the moral duplicity of state policies that deploy conservation as a cover for social cleansing. Her eventual death, along with the ambiguous fate of her son Fokir, illustrates the devastating human cost of these policies. Ghosh does not romanticize Kusum’s struggle; instead, he positions her within a lineage of resistance that remains unrecognized in formal historical accounts.

The dispossession of the Morichjhapi settlers is thus not only a material event but also a symbolic rupture in the idea of the postcolonial nation. It reflects how postcolonial governance, despite its anti-colonial origins, can replicate the oppressive mechanisms of colonial rule, particularly in its treatment of land, environment, and marginalized

populations. The designation of the Sundarbans as a protected reserve is emblematic of this dynamic: while it purports to protect biodiversity, it simultaneously renders human inhabitants—especially those of lower socio-economic status—disposable.

In presenting this layered narrative, Ghosh challenges the reader to confront the ethical and historical implications of such state actions. His fiction becomes a site for what Homi K. Bhabha describes as “the enunciation of counter-narratives,” offering a platform where subaltern memories and voices can emerge. Literature, in this sense, becomes a medium for restorative justice—a space where suppressed histories can be voiced, acknowledged, and perhaps, in some measure, redeemed.

Furthermore, Ghosh’s intertwining of ecological discourse with socio-political critique complicates the binaries often drawn between nature and culture. By showing how ecological conservation can be weaponized to justify human suffering, he critiques the neoliberal appropriation of environmentalism, which often prioritizes abstract ideals of preservation over lived human realities. In doing so, Ghosh interrogates the ethics of environmental policy, especially when it is enacted without the participation of the very people most affected by it.

Ultimately, *The Hungry Tide* demands a rethinking of what it means to belong, to inhabit a place, and to be heard within the structures of the nation. It calls into question the legitimacy of a state that fails to protect its most vulnerable, and instead, uses the language of protection to justify their removal. The novel’s insistence on remembering Morichjhapi is not merely historical—it is political, ethical, and urgent. As Nirmal writes, “Who are these people, and why must they vanish from the earth as if they had never existed?” (Ghosh 224). In asking this question, Ghosh speaks not only to the fate of those at Morichjhapi but to all subaltern groups who live in the shadow of state neglect and historical silence.

Cultural and Linguistic Hybridity

Ghosh presents the Sundarbans as a zone of cultural intersection, shaped by centuries of migration, colonial encounter, and hybridization. Piya, an American-born Bengali, struggles with her linguistic and cultural identity: “I am not a native of this land... I speak Bengali, but it’s not my speech” (Ghosh 82). Her disconnection from her ancestral roots reflects the diasporic experience of cultural alienation. In contrast, Fokir’s intuitive, localized knowledge and Kanai’s cosmopolitan elitism offer competing models of cultural authenticity and privilege. These juxtapositions reflect Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, where identity is constructed in the in-between spaces of cultures—neither wholly native nor foreign, but something fluid and evolving.

Through linguistic pluralism and cultural juxtaposition, Ghosh illustrates the complexities of postcolonial identity. Place-names like Lusibari and Garjontola, rooted in colonial history, serve as palimpsests bearing layers of cultural contact and transformation. These names evoke forgotten histories and raise questions about who has the authority to name and narrate. Scholars note that such hybridity challenges rigid binaries of colonizer and colonized, instead emphasizing negotiation, adaptation, and resilience. Piya and Fokir’s non-verbal communication—gestures, shared silences, and cooperative action—signifies a deeper form of connection that transcends language, echoing Irigaray’s ethics of difference, which values the irreducibility of the other and promotes relational understanding over assimilation.

Subaltern Geoaesthetics and Indigenous Knowledge

Fokir, despite being illiterate and economically marginalized, emerges as the novel’s most profound ecological thinker, whose deep knowledge of the tides, fishing patterns, and animal behavior stands in contrast to formal scientific understanding. His understanding of the tides, wildlife, and riverine patterns embodies a non-Western ecological epistemology—one that is intuitive, experiential, and spiritually grounded. When he explains, “When a tiger comes into a human settlement, it’s because it wants to die” (Ghosh 195), he reveals a worldview that sees humans and animals as spiritually intertwined, not as adversaries but as co-inhabitants of a sacred space.

What scholars have termed *subaltern geoaesthetics* emerges powerfully in *The Hungry Tide* as a counterpoint to the dominant, often

commodified representations of nature that characterize global environmental discourse. Rather than viewing the natural world as an object to be quantified, managed, or consumed, this alternative aesthetic foregrounds an intimate, embodied relationship with the environment—one that is deeply informed by the daily struggles, cultural practices, and sensory experiences of marginalized communities. In this context, the novel challenges the authority of technocratic knowledge systems that privilege satellite images, data sets, and bureaucratic language over the experiential insights of those who inhabit and depend upon these ecologies.

This contrast is poignantly illustrated through the evolving relationship between Piya, a trained marine biologist shaped by Western scientific paradigms, and Fokir, an illiterate fisherman whose understanding of the tides, mangroves, and riverine rhythms stems from generational knowledge passed down through oral traditions and direct engagement with the landscape. Initially, Piya relies heavily on scientific instruments and institutional frameworks to interpret the ecosystem. However, as she witnesses Fokir's intuitive navigation and profound attunement to the environment, she gradually comes to appreciate the limitations of her formal training. Ghosh captures this shift in perception when Piya reflects that “speech was only a bag of tricks,” realizing that genuine comprehension often lies beyond linguistic articulation and rests instead in attentiveness, humility, and embodied presence.

Memory, History, and Resistance

Through Nirmal's diary and Nilima's oral history, Ghosh reclaims silenced narratives, positioning literature as a means of resisting historical erasure. Morichjhapi is not merely a backdrop but a reclaimed historical space, where memory serves as resistance. As Nirmal writes, “I am writing these words in a place... Morichjhapi” (Ghosh 219), he affirms the need to document what the state erases and to speak for those whose voices have been silenced. His act of writing becomes a form of bearing witness, challenging the state's monopoly over historical truth.

This historiographic metafiction aligns with Linda Hutcheon's theories, wherein literature becomes a site for counter-memory—a space where the excluded can reclaim agency. Dahiya emphasizes that Ghosh

legitimizes subaltern resistance by centering those marginalized by official histories and showing how personal testimony can disrupt dominant narratives. The narrative's structure—alternating between past and present, diary and third-person narration—further destabilizes linear, dominant historiographies, highlighting the fragmented and contested nature of history itself. Ghosh crafts a literary archive that holds the state accountable, foregrounding memory as both a political and ethical imperative. In doing so, he encourages readers to rethink how history is written, who it serves, and whose stories remain untold.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* offers a profound and layered exploration of the enduring impact of colonialism, tracing its reverberations through the ecological degradation, fragmented memories, and complex identities of the Sundarbans' inhabitants. By positioning the tide country as both a literal and metaphorical space, Ghosh examines how colonial and postcolonial forces continue to shape environmental policies, displacement narratives, and socio-political hierarchies. The novel critiques the legacy of imperial cartography and governance, revealing how seemingly neutral frameworks of conservation and development often mask deep-rooted exclusions and violences—particularly against marginalized communities such as the Dalit refugees of Morichjhapi.

In centering the lived experiences of individuals traditionally relegated to the periphery—like the fisherfolk, refugees, and indigenous inhabitants—Ghosh challenges dominant historical narratives and reclaims silenced voices. These characters are not merely victims of structural violence; rather, they emerge as repositories of cultural knowledge, resilience, and alternative worldviews that question Western epistemologies of science, nature, and civilization. The interplay of memory and place becomes central to the novel's ethical vision, where personal histories intertwine with ecological consciousness to offer a richer, more inclusive understanding of the postcolonial condition.

Moreover, *The Hungry Tide* urges a critical reconsideration of how progress is defined and pursued in the contemporary world. The novel foregrounds the need for environmental stewardship that is deeply rooted

in social justice and cultural sensitivity. It proposes an ethical framework that transcends binaries between nature and culture, modernity and tradition, center and margin. In doing so, Ghosh calls for a renewed engagement with the past that does not merely commemorate suffering but transforms it into a source of collective insight and action.

Finally, *The Hungry Tide* stands as a compelling literary intervention that not only interrogates the ecological and political residues of colonialism but also envisions a more just and sustainable future. Through its intricate interweaving of narrative, history, and landscape, the novel affirms the interconnectedness of people, place, and memory, advocating for a postcolonial ethos grounded in empathy, pluralism, and ecological responsibility.

Works Cited

- Anjana, K.M., and M. Thenmozhi. "Tracing the Postcolonial Ecocritical Aspects of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *World Journal of English Language*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2024, pp. 448–461.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Dahiya, Amardeep S. *The Refugee and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947–2000*. Sage Publications, 2021.
- Dahiya, Disha. "The Politics of Subalternity: A Postcolonial Analysis of the Subalternised Other through Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *International Journal of English Literature & Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 6, 2023, pp. 130–139.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. Harper Collins, 2004.
- Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2010.
- Nayar, Pramod K. "The Postcolonial Uncanny: The Politics of Dispossession in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *College Literature*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2010, pp. 88–119.
- Panta, Pradip. "Post-Colonial Ecocritical Dynamics in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *Dhaulagiri Journal of Contemporary Issues*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2024, pp. 126–133.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271–313.

Predestined Path and Spiritual Awakening: Exploring the Essence of Spirituality through Coelho's Vision

S.S. Karthick Kumar,
Reg. No. MKU24PFOL11648,
Ph.D Research Scholar,
Madurai Kamaraj University,
Madurai.

Dr. Rajkumar. B,
Associate Professor,
Research Centre in English,
VHNSN College.
Viruthunagar.

Abstract

This paper explores the belief that our lives follow a predestined spiritual design that is being shaped by a higher force. Instead of focusing on religious rules or dogmas, it takes a more intuitive, heart-centered view of spirituality, that can be experienced every event in our lives, whether joyful or painful, as part of a larger cosmic plan. Drawing inspiration from Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, *Brida*, and *The Valkyries*, the paper looks at how his stories reflect timeless truths about destiny, inner transformation, and the quiet solitude needed for spiritual growth. Through Coelho's narratives, we begin to understand that our personal journey isn't random or solely up to us but it is woven into a much larger story. When we surrender to that journey rather than resist it, we find peace. In this way, spirituality becomes the silent, guiding force behind everything our joys, our losses, and even our deepest longings.

Keywords: spirituality, boredom, loneliness, meaninglessness

Since the beginning of time, humans have been looked at the stars, are faced hardship, and asked the same questions; why am I here? Why did this happen to me? Why does this moment feel like it was meant to be? For those who believe in spirituality-not as religion, but as a connection to something greater-these moments aren't just coincidences. They're signposts, gently reminding us that our lives are not accidents. They're unfolding according to a deeper plan, one written long before we were born. In many ways, Paulo Coelho's novels are literary mirrors for this belief. Through his stories, we get a glimpse of a universe that is alive, purposeful, and deeply involved in our personal journeys.

The Alchemist, for example Santiago, the young shepherd, doesn't just chase a treasure. He is really chasing something that every human longs for- meaning and purpose of the life, and a role in the universe. When he

hears that “when you want something, the entire universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.” (Coelho: *The Alchemist* 22), as the readers won’t just hear a pretty phrase and experience the exercises of the character. The various situations in one’s life when things fell into a place, when a dream felt just within reach, or when a stranger changed everything. In Santiago’s story, every twist—every loss, delay, and hardship—turns out to be a part of a divine setup and that feels deeply reassuring.

Spirituality gives depth to our lives. Without it, success and failure lose their meaning. Coelho doesn’t suggest that one can’t enjoy worldly things, but rather that the one isn’t the end goal. He reminds that the physic and psyche are just a part of a larger equation. It is the soul, our quiet center that connects us to the bigger picture. That’s why, in this view, we can’t really control the life. One can make choices, but are moving along a path that’s already been sketched out by something far wiser than.

This becomes clear in the way that relates to the others as one like to think, to choose the friends, our partners, our mentors. But, Coelho offers a different view; what if the people one who meet mean to cross our path? In *Brida*, the title character finds teachers and lovers at exactly the right moments in her journey. These aren’t co-incidents. As Coelho writes, “*Nothing in the world is ever completely wrong. Even a stopped clock is right twice a day*” (*Brida* 65). Even painful relationships serve a purpose. The bonding teaches, shapes one to breaks out from the unwell towards the dreamt.

Often, one may suffer because of the expectations that never match the reality. But, what if even our frustrations are part of the plan? Santiago’s golden treasure isn’t there. But without that loss, he would never have gone to the desert, never met the Alchemist, and never understood his soul. Sometimes, that seems as risk is really a redirection to the right, the purpose. What feels like delay is actually divine timing. When an individual fears about the unknown, trusting the process towards something bigger than our limited view of the world.

And sometimes, that trust demands solitude. In *The Valkyries*, Coelho explores what it means to walk alone through the desert—both

literally and metaphorically. He spotlights that real transformation doesn't happen without risking the routine. It happens in within them. "The path to your destiny is yours alone," as he writes. (Coelho: *The Valkyries* 103). In our own lives, the most profound growth often happens when we feel isolated. Not because we are being punished, but the solitude is the space where the soul can be heard.

Nature, too, becomes a spiritual companion in Coelho's world. The wind, the stars, the sun-they aren't just scenery. They're teachers. In, *The Alchemist*, Santiago learns to read the language of the world, to listen to what nature is expressing without words. "Everything on earth is being continuously transformed, because the earth is alive... and it has a soul" (Coelho: *The Alchemist* 77). This isn't just poetic. It's deeply spiritual. It reminds us that the universe is talking to us all the time- just have to be quiet enough to listen.

Coelho often plays with the idea that destiny is fixed, but how one step on the path up to us. Coelho's characters aren't tries to rewrite their own routine story, but do choose how to show up for it. All his characters constantly face moments where they must decide: do I move forward or turn back? Do I trust or run? And through these decisions, they're being reminded that the journey is as important as the destination. As the Alchemist tells Santiago, "every search begins with beginner's luck and ends with the victor's being severely tested" (Coelho: *The Alchemist* 56). Spiritual growth isn't easy but it's worth to live the real life.

Coelho's the skill of derailing the spirituality from religion without referring the religion-but his characters rarely engage in traditional rituals. Instead, they listen to their dreams, follow the omens, and trust their gut. It makes the stories feel accessible to anyone, regardless of faith or background. He shows that the divine isn't locked in the place of worship or scriptures-it's everywhere: in a desert wind, in a stranger's words, in the ache of the heart.

None of this means we should sit back and do nothing. Trusting the plan isn't about giving up the routine life. It about showing up fully and letting go of control towards the unknown. In *Brida*, pain teaches her resilience. In *The Valkyries*, emotional wounds become doorways to divine

love. Even the hardest moments are woven into the spiritual curriculum. As the readers, remind that our own struggles might not be obstacles—they might be stepping stones.

And this changes everything. When his readers believe they're being guided, life feels different. The characters move with less fear, more grace and they understand that even our failures carry hidden gifts. The world stops being chaotic and starts feeling intentional. Coelho's stories remind us that we are never walking alone. That every longingness carry is sacred. The challenges they faced during the journey is a sacred whisper pushing them toward a kind of awakening from the nothingness.

At the end, the treasure seeking isn't far away. It's inside everyone. Santiago doesn't find gold in Egypt—he finds it where he dreamt about it. Because, the real journey is the one that take within themselves. Spirituality is about coming home from oneself.

Coelho skillfully portrays his characters without any societal roles. Most of them are being freed from the routine responsibilities. Most of his characters look at the world in a different way. They response to the language of the universe by being free from all.

Coelho focuses the theme of usual to unusual, normal life to adventure life, risking the belongings towards the unknown, uncomfortable with the boredom in their life, trying to be meaningfulness to carve his characters with the real self.

For instance, through his novels, *The Alchemist*, *Brida* and *The Valkyries*, Coelho designs the character, Santiago as an orphan Andalusian shepherd, *Brida* a teen girl in the desire to learn and practice the divine music and the author co-traveler's experience during their journey. All the three are the example for the individuals who risking all their belongings, normal life to do something unknown in the name of adventure. According to Coelho, adventure is a response towards unknown to enclose the life as meaningful one.

All his characters experience the loneliness, separatism from the normal societal people that make them to feel boredom of the usual routine

life like lambs. The same feel of being nothing, supplement them to be brave to rise anything at the cost of life and anything they own. They value more about the things that disvalued by the other common people.

On stepping towards the unknown, meaninglessness, boredom, changeless, the characters reach the life of their own. Observing the signs along their routine life, they hope for the dreams of life, they hope for the dreamt life, light full space from the dark, sameness in the life.

Being differ from the others' routines, result them into unique one. They look at the universe within the same. They feel the entire universe is their own physic and mind that work for the one 's self. On accounting the feel of being the same as universe, the characters enjoy a lot of uncontrollable voiceless joyous within them. They realize the meaning of the life and the way of living the life meaningfully. Thus, Coelho through his novels awake the spiritual being of all his readers.

Works Cited

Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*. Translated by Alan R. Clarke, HarperOne, 1993.

Coelho, Paulo. *Brida*. Translated by Margaret Jull Costa, Harper Perennial, 2008.

Coelho, Paulo. *The Valkyries*. Translated by Alan R. Clarke, HarperOne, 1996.

Mishra, Jyoti. *Paulo Coelho's Fiction Existential and Spiritual Preoccupation*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012.

Morality and Ethical values in Amish Tripathi's
The Secret of Nagas

Ms. A. Vasanta Lakshmi,
Research scholar,
Department of English,
VHNSN College.

Dr. R. Raj Kumar,
Research Supervisor,
Department of English,
VHNSN College.

Abstract:

Amish Tripathi's *The Secret of Nagas* is the second book in the Shiva Trilogy explores the multi-dimensional symbolism of the Nagas, examining how their secret represents both an ancient, hidden knowledge and a universal theme of spiritual awakening, transformation, and the integration of opposites. The Naga archetype, in its many forms, serves as a powerful metaphor for personal and collective journeys toward higher awareness and a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of life. The Nagas, often depicted as serpent like beings in various mythologies, have long fascinated scholars, mystics, and storytellers across cultures, particularly within South and Southeast Asia. The mythos surrounding the Nagas is rich with symbolism, encompassing themes of duality, transformation, and hidden wisdom. While they are typically portrayed as guardians of sacred knowledge, ancient wisdom, and powerful forces of nature, their true nature remains shrouded in mystery. In Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, Nagas are considered semi-divine beings with the ability to shape-shift, control elements like water, and possess immense spiritual power. The Naga's secret lies not only in their mystical abilities but also in their connection to the Earth's unseen energies and the hidden realms of consciousness.

Keywords :

Amish Tripathi, Symbolism, Spiritual awakening, Serpent, Mystics, Guardian, Sacred Knowledge, Buddhist, Jain, Mystery.

The *Secret of the Nagas* by Amish Tripathi is the second book in the Shiva Trilogy, a series that re imagines the story of Lord Shiva in a fictional setting inspired by ancient Indian mythology. The novel is set in a time when gods, demons, and men coexist, and it presents a compelling narrative about the journey of the protagonist, Shiva, who is evolving from a tribal leader to a divinely inspired figure. The novel explores various

moral and ethical dilemmas, as the characters face complex situations that challenge their beliefs and values. In addition to its gripping plot and rich world-building, *The Secret of the Nagas* delves deep into the themes of justice, duty, revenge, power, and sacrifice often questioning the very nature of morality and ethics.

At its core, *The Secret of the Nagas* is a story about the battle between good and evil. However, Amish Tripathi does not present these concepts in the simplistic, dichotomous terms that we are often accustomed to. Instead, he portrays a world where the definition of good and evil is subjective and complex, where characters often find themselves in moral quandaries and have to make decisions that question their integrity.

In this novel, morality and ethics are not presented as rigid principles but as fluid concepts that can evolve depending on the circumstances. The characters are constantly forced to challenge their assumptions and re-evaluate their actions in light of new information and changing loyalties. This exploration of moral ambiguity is one of the most intriguing aspects of *The Secret of the Nagas*, as it encourages readers to reflect on their own ethical beliefs and the reasons behind their actions.

One of the key philosophical ideas explored in the book is moral relativism. The belief that morality is not absolute but instead shaped by cultural, historical, and individual perspectives. The characters in *The Secret of the Nagas* embody different moral frameworks, often making decisions based on what they believe is right, even if it means defying conventional standards.

For example, Sati, the warrior queen and one of the central characters, believes that the end justifies the means when it comes to protecting her kingdom. She is willing to engage in morally questionable actions if they serve the greater good, which reflects the idea of utilitarianism, a theory that emphasizes the greatest good for the greatest number. Her stance demonstrates the tension between personal duty and ethical compromises.

Lord Shiva, the protagonist, is perhaps the most notable example of moral evolution throughout the series. Initially portrayed as a simple, almost naive figure, Shiva is thrust into situations that force him to

reconsider his sense of right and wrong. His personal journey is about discovering the truth behind the Nagas and confronting the ethical complexities of his world. Shiva's journey is a constant struggle between personal duty and a larger, more universal sense of justice. He is tasked with avenging the death of his family, but as the story unfolds, Shiva learns that the line between revenge and justice is often blurred. The ethical dilemma arises when Shiva realizes that he is not merely seeking revenge against the Nagas but also uncovering the deeper, hidden truths of the world. Shiva's personal journey towards understanding his own moral beliefs. As the protagonist, Shiva is faced with the monumental task of reconciling his sense of duty to his people with the realization that his preconceived notions of good and evil may not align with the reality of the world around him. Throughout the novel, Shiva struggles to come to terms with his past actions, his role as the leader of the Meluhan civilization, and the consequences of his decisions. His transformation from a vengeful warrior to a more thoughtful and introspective figure is emblematic of the internal ethical conflict that the story explores.

Shiva's journey also highlights the importance of empathy and understanding in ethical decision making. Early in the story, he is driven by a desire for vengeance against those who have wronged him, but as the narrative unfolds, he begins to understand that morality is not always about punishing wrongdoers, but about understanding their motivations and the circumstances that led to their actions. This shift in perspective is an essential aspect of his character development and underscores the novel's emphasis on the importance of growth and self-awareness in moral decision making.

In contrast to characters like Daksha, who are motivated by power and control, the compassionate characters in the story are often portrayed as possessing a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings. This reflects the novel's broader theme that ethical behavior is not about asserting dominance over others, but about recognizing the humanity in all individuals and acting with understanding and kindness.

In Conclusion, The secret of Nagas is a novel that explores the complexities of ethics and morality in a world that is far from black and white. Through the experiences of Shiva and other key characters, the novel

challenges readers to reflect on their own moral beliefs, to question the rigidity of societal rules, and to consider the importance of empathy, compassion, and personal growth in making ethical decisions. By portraying morality as a fluid, evolving concept rather than a fixed set of rules. The characters in the novel grapple with complex ethical dilemmas that force them to confront their deepest beliefs and confront their own flaws.

Work Cited :

- Tripathi, Amish. *The Secret of Nagas*. Westland Publications, 2011.
- Kumar, Ashok. “ Myths, History and Religion in Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy”. *International Journal of English Literature and social Sciences*, vol. 5 no.3, 2020.
- Choudhury, Alpana. “ Rewriting Mythology: A study of Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy”. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research.*, Vol.8, no. 3, 2019.

Revisiting African Myth: A Study of Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *Idu*

S. V. Krishna Priya

Full Time Research Scholar

(English)

Research Center in English

VHNSN College (Autonomous)

(Affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University)

Virudhunagar

Abstract :

Flora Nwapa uses myth to accomplish a creative objective. She uses myth as a tool to empower women. In West African novel writing, Nwapa is a maternal figure. Like the majority of African writers, she incorporates both Western and African literary styles into her fiction, fusing Igbo storytelling techniques, especially the folktale and mythic modes, with the Western realist mode. The well-crafted plot of a traditional realist novel is immersed in conversation or verbal dialogue in Nwapa's writing, which sets it apart. She establishes a new tradition in which women are the centre of attention, heavily relying on the mythic reservoir to explore every aspect of the female experience, despite being born into a society where negative myths and the idea of feminine inferiority destroy the female psyche. Nwapa's use of mythology facilitates the manifestation of her literal feminism. In her novels, she both creates and recreates the Ugwuta Community. The two novels capture the history, culture, and spirit of the Ugwuta people and represent traditional Ugwuta society. The novels portray a largely traditional society, complete with devotion to regional deities such as Okita, Utuosu, and Uhamiri. This paper focuses on the myth of Uhamiri in *Efuru* and *Idu*.

Key words: *traditional, myth, folktale, women, and community*

Myth is a reconstructed reality, a belief that controls a specific group of people, the truth of which cannot be established or proven but is accepted as truth by the community. Many different people have tried to define myth in ways that work for them, and as a result, myth has come to mean many different things. Myths can be invoked as authority in response to ignorance, scepticism, or disbelief; they can be taught to be believed; or

they can be accepted on faith. Myths and other oral literature are incorporated into the works of African authors. The legend of Uhamiri is well-known among the folklore of the people of Oguta, a town in the eastern part of the country's Imo State, where Flora Nwapa is from. Due to her pride and admiration for her culture and the folklore of the people, this myth surely persists in almost all of her works. This is definitely one of the reasons why Flora Nwapa included the story of her people, the myth of Uhamiri, the woman of the lake, and the Oguta Lake in her writings. Oguta Lake has grown over time to become a popular tourist destination where both locals and tourists gather to honour and value nature's amazing gift to humanity. Legend has it that the beautiful and compassionate god of Oguta Lake, Uhamiri, watches over and defends the region. The story of Uhamiri has been incorporated into works by authors who have no direct connection to the town, either as a celebration of or a reflection of the town's rich cultural value, legend, and belief. In her novels, Flora Nwapa frequently incorporated elements of folklore. Proverbs, stories, riddles, myths, and folk songs are a few examples of these.

One of the recurring themes and motivations in the two chosen works is the myth of Uhamiri, which greatly shapes the novels. The mystical influence of the "beautiful blue Ugwuta lake," which the community relied on for food, transportation, and life sustenance, was essential when Nwapa began writing her women-centered fiction. The Ugwuta people worship the strong female deity Uhamiri, also called the Woman of the Lake, as the spiritual force that governs this body of water and the origin of the strength in her fabled imagination. In *Efuru* and *Idu*, the feminine principle is represented by the dominant and ruling image, Uhamiri. In the war novel *Never Again* (1975), the Woman of the Lake becomes a powerful, important figure and a deity to whom the populace turns. Uhamiri is the epitome of female achievement, beauty, strength, and independence. Everything suggests that Nwapa alters the myth to support her objectives of empowering and uplifting women. It seems that Nwapa was introduced to the core idea of Efuru's personality through the story of Uhamiri. Efuru's development is determined by her relationship with Uhamiri because both patriarchal and matriarchal elements are incorporated into the Uhamiri story. It maintains the idea of gender equality

while giving cultural legitimacy to female dominance. In addition, Nwapa's story exalts a matriarchal past while articulating feminist philosophy. In *Efuru*, where myth and reality converge and the human nearly spirals towards the Divine, Nwapa has also created a striking and inspirational portrait of African femininity. After saving Efuru, Uhamiri transports her into the spiritual realm of Uhamiri devotion, leaving behind the temporal realm of men, childbirth, and domesticity. The root word "mmiri," which means water, is present in this name but is not translated. "An elegant woman, very beautiful, combing her long black hair with a golden comb" is how Nwapa characterises Uhamiri (E146). Additional descriptions highlight her richness, calmness of expression, fair skin, and fine hair texture. Efuru and Idu's mythological world has two functions. First, the novelist uses myths to dispel older social myths that perpetuate the societal delusion of women by using thinking and imagination in a naive and deliberate manner.

Nwapa debunks several myths, including the idea that women are less valuable, in her first two books. By presenting female characters as heroines in a context where bravery is usually associated with men, she achieves this. The notion that infertility is a natural occurrence rather than a sign of a woman's failure is another misconception in this area. A child born with two top teeth defiles the earth and will result in a poor harvest, according to other urban legends in *Efuru*. The false belief that sending girls to school is a financial waste is still being propagated by Efuru's husband, Gilbert. Because women quickly get married and waste the money they spent on their education, he thought that boys should be given preference. Other myths in Idu threaten the woman's personhood. "When a lady starts with money, children ran away" (I 3) is not true. Nwapa protects this story because Idu later has a son and is pregnant with another child when she dies.

Additionally, Flora Nwapa exhibited natural religious values that the people value and respect. Every society has its own rituals, religion, and culture, as Flora Nwapa demonstrated with the myth of Uhamiri. The author illustrated the value and significance of this belief when the Dibia informed Nwashike Ogene that his daughter is a beautiful woman and will be rewarded with wealth, but that this must be accompanied by a number

of ceremonies and religious activities in order for Efurū to be approved by the Dibia.

“You have to keep her taboo if you want to worship her. Her best day is Oriē's. You should convince others not to fish, even though I know you don't fish today. It is forbidden for you to eat yams today. You are not allowed to have sex with your spouse. On orie days, you must boil, roast, or fry plantains. On Oriēnights, you have to be wearing white when you go to bed. On this day when you are especially joyful, you can offer a white fowl as a sacrifice to Uhamiri. Keep yourself holy above all else. You will see for yourself what the woman of the lake will do for you when you accomplish all of these things” (E 153).

Even without the gift of a child, Efurū worked hard to fulfil the religious and ritual undertone that accompanied the worship of Uhamiri. Oriē day are marked out for the worship of Uhamiri that people help to preserve this day and caution people who try to defile orie day as omirima cautioned Amede in these words:

“Amide, are you going fishing? Since today is Oriē Day, you let Ogei go fishing. According to our Uhamiri, we should observe the day as holy and refrain from disturbing our women. And your daughter-in-law worships our lake with fervour? There are no fish in the lake because I am ashamed of you. Our Uhamiri is upset with us because of this” (E 195).

When people are most in need, in danger, or ill, they often worship the revered deity Uhamiri. Efurū gave birth to the child after being asked to make a sacrifice to the lake woman during the early years of her marriage to Adizua. The dibia had told Ossai that there was no cure and that she should only offer sacrifices to the ancestors when she became gravely ill as a result of his son Adizua's continuous disappearance.

Flora uses the story of Uhamiri in *Idu* to bolster her claims, in *Efurū* regarding the role of Uhamiri in fostering loyalty among married women in Igbo land. A woman should not divorce her husband and start dating another man while they are still legally married. The characters in the story obeyed her laws, customs, and beliefs because the woman of the lake was highly regarded and revered in the two novels. No one wanted to offend her because they knew how serious the offence was. A religious, cultural,

ritualistic, and traditional preference for the woman of the lake is ingrained in the culture, beliefs, and way of life of the Oguta people, an Igbo group in eastern Nigeria. Alongside Achebe and others, Flora Nwapa worked to preserve and communicate African culture and traditions to the outside world as part of their responsibilities as artists representing African culture. The religious, cultural, and ritualistic perspective of a people is depicted in the Uhamiri myth. In her book, Flora Nwapa presents and showcases her people's culture and traditions through the use of myth as one of the folklore elements. Nwapa adds the myth of Uhamiri to her story to highlight and illustrate this important aspect of her people's culture as well as the cultures of the Oguta and Igbo society at large. Their way of life, including their respect and admiration for Uhamiri, the Lake woman who serves as a moral and ethical legislator for the general populace, was portrayed in the novels. One can immediately state that many of these elements of our culture and heritage are no longer present, and those that are may no longer have the same high religious or ritual significance, but they are still preserved in Nwapa's works for future generations. We are transported to the past, present, future, and paranormal realm by the mythical world of Nwapa. Even though Nwapa depicts a patriarchal and sexist society in *Efuru* and *Idu*, she elevates the culture to legendary status in order to highlight the significance of the female experience. Idu questions the traditional mores that require a woman to wed her husband's brother after his death. To avoid such a marriage, she makes the decision to die. She decides that one marriage is enough for her to live and die as a decent person. Just like the mythological heroine, she ends abruptly. Being a priestess of Uhamiri provides Efuru with access to the spiritual realm of female experience. She returns to the cradle of the mythical world of female abilities. In an attempt to modernise her culture, Nwapa uses mythology to create her own concepts.

Work Cited:

- Asika, Ikechukwu and Akabuikelfeoma. “Re-reading Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* and *Idu*: Myth as a vehicle for Cultural Transmission and Awareness”. *An International Journal of Arts and Humanities*. vol.1 (2), May, 2012, pp. 85-99. ISSN 2227-5452
- Eldred, Jones. *African Literature Today: Myth and History*. Ed London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980.
- Iji, Edde. Mythic Imagination and Heroic Archetypes: Modern Myth to Osofisan’s Morountodun. *Critical Theory and African Literature*. Ed Emenyonu Ernest Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1987.
- Malpotra, Seema. “The Mythic World in the Fiction of Flora Nwapa”. *Research Scolar*. Vol. I, No. IV, Nov. 2013.
- Nwapa, Flora. *Efuru*. London: Heinemann, 1966.
- ... *Idu*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1970.

Spiritual Quest and Mysticism in Paulo Coelho's *Brida*

Dr. R. Meena,
Research Supervisor,
Department of English,
VHNSN College

Ms. A. Glariya Jasin,
Research Supervisor,
Department of English,
VHNSN College

Abstract:

Paulo Coelho's *Brida* presents a compelling narrative centered on the spiritual awakening of a young woman who seeks to uncover her true self through mystical traditions and esoteric knowledge. This article explores the themes of spiritual quest and mysticism as they unfold in *Brida*, analyzing how Coelho intertwines elements of Wiccan beliefs, soulmates, intuition, and the search for meaning. Drawing on literary, philosophical, and religious frameworks, the study examines the protagonist's journey as an archetype of feminine spiritual transformation. The novel is read not only as a tale of personal growth, but also as a reflection of broader metaphysical concerns, such as the nature of destiny, the duality of knowledge and faith, and the integration of light and shadow within the self. Through symbolic imagery and mystical teachings, Coelho constructs a narrative that resonates with readers on both spiritual and psychological levels. This research highlights how *Brida* contributes to contemporary mystical literature and illustrates the enduring human desire to find purpose and connection beyond the material world.

Keywords:

Paulo Coelho, Brida, Spiritual quest, Mysticism, Feminine spirituality, Esotericism, Soulmates, Inner journey, Destiny, Wicca

Paulo Coelho's *Brida* is a rich, mystical novel that explores the spiritual journey of a young Irish woman seeking deeper truths about life, love, and the divine. Like many of Coelho's novels, *Brida* is both a narrative and a metaphysical reflection, blending storytelling with spiritual teaching. Coelho uses the story of *Brida* to explore themes of destiny, the search for meaning, the feminine aspect of spirituality, and the mystic traditions of the world. Through *Brida*'s journey, Coelho creates a narrative of spiritual quest infused with elements of mysticism that resonate with his

larger body of work, including *The Alchemist*, *The Valkyries*, and *Veronika Decides to Die*. This essay analyzes the spiritual and mystical elements of *Brida*, referencing both Coelho's oeuvre and broader mystical literature.

At its core, *Brida* is a tale of initiation and self-discovery. The protagonist, Brida O'Fern, is a young woman with a deep yearning to understand the mysteries of the universe. Her journey begins with her decision to seek out a spiritual teacher who can guide her on the path of wisdom. She first encounters Magus, a hermit who practices the Tradition of the Sun—a mystical path rooted in nature, discipline, and solitude. Later, she meets Wicca, a teacher of the Tradition of the Moon, emphasizes intuition, ritual, and the sacred feminine. These two traditions form the mystical framework of the novel, symbolizing the dualities of masculine and feminine energies, rationality and emotion, light and darkness.

Brida's spiritual quest is marked by her struggle to reconcile these opposing paths and to find her own spiritual identity. Magus teaches her about the power of solitude and the importance of confronting fear. In one lesson, he tells her, "Nothing in the world is ever completely wrong, Brida. Even a stopped clock is right twice a day" (42). This statement highlights one of the key tenets of mysticism—that truth can be found even in imperfection, and that the universe contains hidden patterns and lessons.

Mysticism, by its nature, involves a direct, personal experience of the divine or ultimate reality. Brida's mystical journey includes visions, past-life memories, and rituals. One of the pivotal moments in the novel occurs when Brida undergoes a ritual to confront her shadow—the unknown and feared parts of her psyche. This confrontation mirrors the Jungian concept of individuation, where one must integrate all aspects of the self to achieve wholeness. Through these experiences, Brida begins to understand that spiritual knowledge is not solely the product of intellectual study but of lived, often painful experience.

The feminine aspect of spirituality is a central theme in *Brida*, distinguishing it from many other spiritual quests in literature that focus on male protagonists and patriarchal traditions. Wicca, as a character, embodies the wisdom of the sacred feminine. She teaches Brida about the

cycles of nature, the importance of intuition, and the idea that love is a divine force. “When you find your soulmate,” Wicca says, “you’ll know it. No matter what happens, you’ll always feel a sense of peace when you’re near them” (61). This emphasis on intuition and love reflects the mystical tradition’s reverence for personal revelation over institutional dogma.

Coelho contrasts the Tradition of the Sun and the Tradition of the Moon not to suggest one is superior to the other, but to show that both are necessary paths to the divine. This duality can also be seen in *The Alchemist*, where the protagonist, Santiago, learns from both spiritual and material experiences. In that novel, the concept of the Personal Legend—one’s spiritual purpose—guides Santiago’s journey. Similarly, Brida seeks her place in the universe, ultimately learning that her quest is less about choosing between teachers and more about integrating their wisdom into her own truth.

One of the key mystical concepts explored in *Brida* is that of the soulmate. Coelho defines soulmates as people whose souls recognize each other from past lives, and who are destined to meet in this life. This idea draws on mystical traditions such as Sufism, Kabbalah, and Eastern philosophies that emphasize reincarnation and the interconnectedness of souls. Brida’s realization that Magus is her soulmate, yet she is in love with someone else, presents a spiritual paradox. It raises questions about free will, destiny, and the nature of love—questions that are central to many mystical teachings.

The notion of reincarnation is also significant in Brida’s journey. Her visions of past lives, including scenes of persecution during the Inquisition, connect her to the collective suffering and wisdom of the feminine spiritual lineage. Mysticism often involves a recognition that the soul transcends time and space. As Evelyn Underhill notes in *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, mysticism is “the art of union with Reality” (Underhill 4). For *Brida*, this union involves not only understanding her current self but integrating her past identities into a coherent spiritual narrative.

Coelho’s treatment of mysticism in *Brida* is not unique among his works. In *The Valkyries*, for example, he recounts a spiritual journey

involving angelic visions and inner healing. In *The Alchemist*, the mystical wisdom is more allegorical but equally powerful. Santiago learns to “listen to his heart” and to read the omens of the universe. The language of the world, which Santiago learns to interpret, is comparable to the rituals and symbols that Brida learns to decode. Both protagonists learn that the universe conspires in favor of those who seek their spiritual truths.

The influence of Christian mysticism is also evident in Coelho’s work. Though *Brida* draws heavily on pagan and esoteric traditions, Coelho often blends these with Christian symbols and values. The idea of surrendering to a higher power, of trusting divine timing, and of undergoing a dark night of the soul are central to both Christian and non-Christian mystical traditions. St. John of the Cross, for instance, writes about the “dark night” as a necessary phase in the soul’s purification. Brida’s moments of doubt and isolation echo this theme.

Furthermore, Coelho’s emphasis on love as a spiritual force aligns with mystical traditions across cultures. From Rumi’s ecstatic poetry to Teresa of Avila’s visions, love is portrayed as a pathway to the divine. Brida learns that to truly understand the universe, she must love unconditionally and transcend the ego’s desires. “Accept your path,” Wicca tells her, “and follow it with faith, knowing that everything you learn will one day be used to help others” (214). This message reinforces the mystical ideal that spiritual enlightenment is not a selfish pursuit but a means to serve humanity.

In addition to these theological and philosophical influences, Coelho’s use of simple language and allegorical storytelling makes mystical ideas accessible to a broad audience. His narratives avoid doctrinal complexity, focusing instead on universal human experiences such as fear, love, longing, and transformation. This accessibility has led some critics to dismiss his work as overly simplistic, but others argue that this simplicity is what makes his spiritual messages impactful. As Mircea Eliade points out in *The Sacred and the Profane*, myths and rituals are effective precisely because they speak to the archetypal structures of the human psyche.

The final stages of Brida’s journey are marked by integration. She

realizes that the mystical path is not about choosing between light and dark, masculine and feminine, but about embracing the totality of existence. Her initiation is not a dramatic conversion but a deepened awareness of her place in the cosmos. This mirrors the concept of gnosis in Gnostic traditions, where spiritual awakening comes not from external authority but from inner revelation.

In conclusion, *Brida* is a novel rich in spiritual and mystical meaning. Through the journey of its protagonist, Paulo Coelho explores themes central to the mystical quest: the search for identity, the integration of opposites, the role of love, and the experience of the divine. Drawing from multiple spiritual traditions and blending them into a coherent narrative, Coelho invites readers to consider their own path toward enlightenment. His portrayal of mysticism is not confined to esoteric rituals or ancient teachings but is woven into the everyday experiences of fear, choice, and love. As with *The Alchemist*, *Brida* ultimately teaches that the journey itself is the destination, and that the divine is not found in distant heavens but within the human heart.

Works Cited:

Coelho, Paulo. *Brida*. Translated by Margaret Jull Costa, HarperOne, 2008.

Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*. Translated by Alan R. Clarke, HarperOne, 1993.

Coelho, Paulo. *The Valkyries*. Translated by Alan R. Clarke, HarperOne, 1995.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Harcourt, 1959.

Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*. Dover Publications, 2002.

Emotional Isolation: Exploring Existential Themes in Haruki Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*

P. Suwathy
Full-Time PhD Research Scholar
VHNSN College (AUTONOMOUS)
Virudhunagar

Dr. M. Meena Devi
Associate Professor of English
Research Supervisor & Guide
VHNSN College (AUTONOMOUS)
Virudhunagar

Abstract

Haruki Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart* delves deep into the human psyche, exploring existential themes of loneliness, identity, and the elusive nature of "the Other." Set in a world suspended between the real and the surreal, the novel follows the triangular relationship between K, Sumire, and Miu, each of whom is unmoored in emotional isolation. This paper examines the existential motifs that permeate the narrative—most notably, the experience of radical loneliness, the search for self through the gaze of the Other, and the metaphysical displacement of the individual. Through a close reading of the text and the integration of relevant existentialist theory, particularly the works of Sartre, Heidegger, this study seeks to interpret Murakami's novel as an exploration of the emotional isolation of the self.

Keywords:

Existentialism, Emotional Isolation, The Other, Alienation, Identity, Authenticity, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger

Haruki Murakami, in the novel *Sputnik Sweetheart*, crafts a narrative infused with melancholy and metaphysical ambiguity through which he portrays the existential crisis of human beings in this uncertain world. Murakami writes with a minimalistic style, yet the emotional and philosophical weight of his words often speaks volumes. Through the experiences of his characters, he illustrates the fundamental alienation of human existence—an estrangement from others, from the world, and ultimately from oneself.

The novel centers around three characters—K, a quiet school teacher; Sumire, an aspiring writer; and Miu, an older woman with a traumatic past. At its heart, the novel is not merely a story of unrequited

love but an ontological inquiry into what it means to be oneself, to be seen by others, and to remain isolated despite connection. As K narrates Sumire's mysterious disappearance and his own unfulfilled desire, the novel opens up as a meditation on the existential experience of being and nothingness.

From the outset, Murakami presents loneliness not just as a feeling but as a defining mode of existence. K's narration reveals a life lived in quiet solitude—emotionally detached, socially withdrawn, and haunted by unfulfilled longing. K is in love with Sumire, but his inability to express this love keeps him locked within his own mind. K sees Sumire as “She was a hopeless romantic, set in her ways—a bit innocent, to put a nice spin on it. She loved books, and lived for them” (22).

Sumire, too, is isolated—not because of an external lack of relationships, but due to her intense internality. She reads voraciously, writes with passion, and distances herself from conventional life. Her withdrawal from the world is both an act of resistance and an existential condition. Her attraction to Miu, a woman she cannot fully possess or even comprehend, intensifies her alienation.

Existential philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre argue that human beings are condemned to be free. This is explained by Sartre in the book *Being and Nothingness* in the following words: “I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free”(439). This condemnation of freedom is thrust into a world without inherent meaning, Human beings are forced to create their own essence through acts of will. In this novel for Sumire, writing is this act of will—a way to define herself—but even that fails when her inspiration is repressed by her unreciprocated desire for Miu. Sumire laments, “She could no longer write. Her words had vanished like smoke” (54).

One of the central existential themes in the novel is the gaze of the Other—the idea that selfhood is formed, yet simultaneously disrupted, in relation to how one is perceived by others. In *Sputnik Sweetheart*, this theme plays out in the complex triangle between K, Sumire, and Miu. Sumire idolizes Miu, projecting onto her a version of the self she wishes to become: elegant, competent, worldly. But this desire remains unfulfilled

because Miu cannot return Sumire's feelings. The dissonance between how we perceive others and how they perceive us creates a rift where authentic connection stumbles. Miu states, "The thought hit me like a blow: Sumire had vanished from the world like a puff of smoke" (138).

Sartre's notion of the look suggests that when another person sees us, we become objectified—we become a being-for-others. Sumire's identity dissolves in the presence of Miu, not only because of her longing but also because she sees in Miu an unreachable ideal. Miu, in turn, has her own traumatic history: a night in a Ferris wheel in Switzerland where she sees herself from the outside and is split in two. Miu reveals, "After that night, something inside me was gone. Something very important. I can't explain it, but it's like I became a different person" (196). Miu's psychological splitting mirrors the existential alienation of the self. The trauma disconnects her from her past desires, leaving her emotionally barren—unable to reciprocate Sumire's feelings or reconnect with her former self.

Heidegger's concept of authenticity—*Eigentlichkeit*—is crucial in understanding the characters' existential crises. Authenticity arises when individuals confront the truth of their own being, especially the inevitability of death (*Sein-zum-Tode*). Heidegger, in the book *Being and Time*, while explaining the concept of Being and Time, states, about death "Death is a possibility of being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case with death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality for being"(294). In *Sputnik Sweetheart*, none of the characters are able to live fully authentic lives. K hides behind the mask of normalcy, teaching and living in silent despair; Sumire escapes into fiction and fantasy; and Miu floats through a half-life, emotionally numb after her trauma. Murakami's use of metaphor and dreamlike imagery frequently alludes to an "other world"—a parallel realm where the self might be more whole, more real. "I'm on the other side of the moon now", Sumire writes in a letter to K. "It's a world where things are different. Where all the ordinary rules don't apply" (109). Sumire's disappearance is symbolic, marking a transition from one mode of being to another—perhaps an attempt to transcend the constraints of her existence. Her vanishing also echoes the existential motif

of absence—the presence of nothingness that defines being.

Time in *Sputnik Sweetheart* is fluid and unstable. The narration resists linearity, and memory plays a dominant role in shaping the characters' perceptions of reality. This temporal distortion is an existential tool: it reveals how the past constantly haunts the present. K's narration is filled with flashbacks and meditations on past conversations, dreams, and moments that seemed inconsequential at the time but acquire gravity in hindsight. Memory becomes both a bridge to others and a barrier that keeps him locked in solitude. K expresses, "And now she was gone. And the funny thing was, I couldn't even picture her face anymore" (221). This gradual fading of Sumire in K's memory is an existential tragedy his sense of self is tethered to another, and as she disappears, so does his certainty. The impermanence of memory undermines identity, exposing the fragility of our constructed selves.

Another major existential motif in *Sputnik Sweetheart* is the inadequacy of language. Sumire, a writer, loses her ability to write when consumed by desire. K, a man of few words, cannot articulate his love. Miu, after her trauma, is reduced to silence about her past. Murakami's prose is rich in pauses, ellipses, and moments of quiet. This silence is not empty but pregnant with meaning. It reflects the ineffable nature of inner experience and the impossibility of fully conveying the self to another as Murakami supports this idea through the line, "There are certain things you can only learn in silence"(138). The existentialists often regarded language as a double-edged sword: it allows communication, but also obscures truth. Murakami's characters, suspended in the ambiguity of language, struggle to forge genuine connections and their silences speaking louder than their words.

The metaphysical elements in *Sputnik Sweetheart* are not merely plot devices—they are existential metaphors. The idea of another world, accessed through dreams, hallucinations, or disappearance, suggests the possibility of alternate modes of being. When Sumire disappears, K experiences a collapse of reality. The possibility that she crossed into another realm becomes a symbol of existential rupture. The "other side of the moon" becomes a metaphor for the parts of the self we cannot access—

the unconscious, the repressed, the hidden. Miu's story of watching herself from outside the Ferris wheel encapsulates this splitting of the self. The person she once was becomes inaccessible, her past self exists now in a different world, unreachable. She expresses, "I was no longer myself, and I couldn't go back to the person I'd been" (225).

In *Sputnik Sweetheart*, loneliness is not merely circumstantial—it is ontological. Murakami's characters are alone not because they lack relationships, but because of the fundamental condition of being. Their attempts to reach the Other—through love, desire, memory, language—are all frustrated by the abyss that lies between self and world.

The novel is a poignant meditation on the existential quest: to find meaning in a world that offers none, to seek connection in a world where each person remains ultimately unknowable. Murakami's subtle prose, filled with ambiguity and metaphor, reflects the elusive nature of truth in a fragmented world. In the end, K stands on the precipice of understanding, calling Sumire's name over a disconnected phone line—a powerful image of human yearning reaching out into the void. The following words of K shows his hope amidst loneliness: "I put the receiver down and sat there staring at the phone for a long time. As if I'd just spoken to someone on the other side of the moon" (220).

Thus, emotional isolation is not a personal struggle, it is all about the universal and existential state. Every character desires something from the other, but there are some inner barriers which prevent them from fully acknowledging their love for the other. Through the novel *Sputnik Sweetheart*, Murakami apprehends how loneliness occurs even between the closest relationship. Thus, Murakami uses emotional isolation to showcase the basic solitude of human existence through the characters.

Works Cited

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper & Row, 1962.

Murakami, Haruki. *Sputnik Sweetheart*. Vintage International, 2001.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel Barnes,
Washington Square Press, 1956.

Decoding Femininity in Male characters of Kuvempu's Novels

Ms. Gopika N. Kulakarni
Research Scholar
Department of Studies and
Research in English
Rani Channamma University,
Belagavi.
Email Id: gkulakarni250@gmail.com

Dr.Kavita S. Kusugal
Professor and Head
Department of studies and
Research in English.
Rani Channamma University,
Belagavi.

Introduction

This paper is Exploring and Examining how men are embracing and displaying characteristics typically associated with femininity, "Decoding femininity in male" moves beyond strict gender roles and toward a more complex conception of masculinity. This change is evident in domains such as fashion, personal hygiene, and emotional expression, where some men are embracing softer styles and questioning conventional ideas of power and control, some traits often associated with femininity include empathy, nurturing, creativity, intuition, kindness, confidence, patience, independence, honesty, and intelligence. We can see these kind of traits in Male characters of kuvempu's Novels. "Male femininity" is called "Effeminacy", which relates to boys or men who possess feminine traits that are often viewed as out of place for men and masculinity. For each of his male characters, Kuvempu provides an internalised emotional landscape. Kuvempu challenges conventional ideas of masculinity and presents a more complex depiction of male characters in his novels, especially "The House Of Kanooru," "The Bride in a Rainy Mountain". which explores masculine characters that demonstrate empathy, compassion, and concern. Male characters in Kuvempu's Novels are characterised by empathy, emotional sensitivity, and the ability to nurture others in addition to strength, stoicism, and domination. Kuvempu is true voice of new Millenium. He proved this through his Novels. He is champion of Samvedana(Gender sensitization).

Keywords: Femininity, Male version of Femininity, Kuvempu, Novels etc...

Objectives:

- ❖ To understand the concept of male femininity.
- ❖ To analyse femininity in male characters of Kuvempu's Novel.
- ❖ To enlist feminine traits in male characters of Kuvempu.
- ❖ To comprehend effeminacy through the feminine behaviours of male characters.
- ❖ Methodology:
- ❖ This paper is based on qualitative method. Female traits in male characters of Kuvempu's Novels taking into consideration for analysis. Male of version of femininity and female traits enlisted and described.

Male version of femininity in novels: Analysis

Kuvempu is true voice of new Millenium. He proved this through his Novels. He is champion of Samvedana(Gender sensitization). For each of his characters, Kuvempu provides an internalised emotional landscape. Kuvempu challenges conventional ideas of masculinity and presents a more complex depiction of male characters in his novels, especially "The House Of Kanooru," "The Bride in a Rainy Mountain". which explores masculine characters that demonstrate empathy, compassion, and concern. Male characters in Kuvempu's Novels are characterised by empathy, emotional sensitivity, and the ability to nurture others in addition to strength, stoicism, and domination.

Feminine traits:

- Empathy** : The ability to understand and share the feelings of others.
- Nurturing** : Taking care of oneself and others, with compassion and understanding.
- Creativity** : Being open to new ideas and experiences, and expressing oneself in unique ways.
- Intuition** : Having a strong sense of knowing or understanding something without conscious reasoning.
- Kindness** : Being generous, caring, and compassionate towards others.
- Confidence** : Having a strong belief in oneself and one's abilities.
(Mukundaiyya)

Patience	: Being able to remain calm and understanding in difficult situations.
Independence	: Being self-reliant and able to make decisions for oneself.(Hoovayya)
Honesty	: Being truthful and sincere in one's dealings with others.
Intelligence	: Having a high capacity for learning and understanding.
Emotional	: Being able to express and understand a wide range of emotions.
Collaborative	: Being able to work effectively with others.
Vulnerable	: Being able to open up and share one's feelings.
Caring	: Showing concern and affection for others.
Humble	: Being modest and not boastful.

Above mentioned points are feminine traits. Kuvempu's male characters having these kind of traits and For each of his male characters, Kuvempu provides an internalised emotional landscape. Kuvempu challenges conventional ideas of masculinity and presents a more complex depiction of male characters in his novels, especially "The House Of Kanooru," "The Bride in a Rainy Mountain". which explores masculine characters that demonstrate empathy, compassion, and concern. In contemporary culture, where there is a rising awareness of the need to question conventional gender roles and adopt a more inclusive and compassionate image of masculinity, Kuvempu's depiction of masculine characters who display tenderness and care is pertinent.

Characters analysis:

Hoovayya: In "Kanooru Heggadithi," (The House of Kanooru) a novel by Kuvempu, the character Hoovayya represents a more liberal and intellectual viewpoint that contrasts with the patriarchal ideas of the period. His presence also challenges the power dynamics that were in place at the time, especially with regard to women. Hoovayya represents himself, Openly expressing feelings such as grief, vulnerability, or empathy is known as emotional expressiveness. Having qualities like empathy, focus, and a desire to look out for others are examples of nurturing and caring.

Empathy and sensitivity: Demonstrating an awareness of the emotions and experiences of others. Participating in activities or voicing viewpoints that are customarily linked to women or femininity are examples of non-conforming behaviours.

Mukundaiyya: he is the protagonist of "The Bride in Rainy Mountain". He represents the strong passionate, Having a strong belief in oneself and one's abilities. he believes himself.

Aitha: In the story, Aitha is portrayed as a youthful, naive, innocent and rustic figure who frequently enjoys the outdoors and partakes in straightforward, country pursuits alongside Peenchal. Like Peenchal, Aitha is depicted as leading a modest life in the Malenadu region, unaffected by the intricacies of the contemporary world.

Aigalu: A character who is known for his intelligence and compassion, and who is able to connect with people on a deeper level.

Jivaratnayya: A character who is able to see beyond the surface and understand the complexities of human relationships.

Kanna Pandita: A character who is able to see the beauty in the world and appreciate the simple things in life.

These are the main instances for the male version of femininity in Kuvempu's Novels.

Conclusion:

Thus my paper explored the feminine traits represents through male characters in Kuvempu's Novels, The House of Kanooru and The Bride in a Rainy Mountain. Above mentioned characters are representing male femininity traits such as innocent, intelligence, Having a high capacity for learning and understanding. Being able to express and understand a wide range of emotions etc. Kuvempu expose his samvedana, femininity through the male characters Hoovayya, Mukundaiyya and other characters.

References:

Dr. Jatinder Kumar Sharma (March 2016). "Understanding the Concept of Sensitisation in Humanities and Social Sciences: An Exploration in Philosophy of Mind". International Journal of Scientific Research.

Kuvempu – The Poet Who Redefined Kannada Literature retrieved on March 8,2024 Karnataka.com

Kuvempu's messages to society recalled on his birth anniversary, December 29, 2023 07:27 pm. The hindu. Retrieved from thehindu.com

Kuvempu. (2000). The House of Kanooru. Penguin UK.

The Bride in the Rainy Mountains. (2020, January 1). http://books.google.ie/books?id=UGaczgEACAAJ&dq=bride+in+rainy+mountain&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

K. (1990, January 1). Shri Ramayana Darshanam. http://books.google.ie/books?id=8q25AAAIAAJ&q=shri+Ramayana+Darshanam&dq=s+hri+Ramayana+Darshanam&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Reconsidering Nature and Time: Queer Ecologies in Sarah Hall's *The Electric Michelangelo*

**Dr. Vinaya Bhaskaran,
Assistant Professor,
PG Department of English,
NSS College,
Manjeri, Kerala**

Abstract:

This study delves into the connection of environmental and queer themes in modern fiction by reading Sarah Hall's *The Electric Michelangelo* (2004). Despite not being categorized as environmental fiction, the novel provides fertile ground for an eco-queer study by emphasizing bodies, landscapes, and sensory experience as interconnected spaces of inscription and resistance. Using theoretical frameworks from queer ecology and affect theory, particularly the works of Catriona Sandilands, Stacy Alaimo, and Jack Halberstam, this study investigates how Hall destabilizes heteronormative and anthropocentric paradigms by aligning queerness with fluidity, transgression, and embodiment in relation to the nonhuman world. The article contends that by focusing on tactile experience, fleeting beauty, and the oceanic sublime, *The Electric Michelangelo* reconfigures intimacy and identity beyond binary gender and human-nature dichotomies. In doing so, the novel contributes to the growing genre of eco-queer literature by proposing new conceptions of family, temporality, and ecological belonging.

Keywords: *Eco-queer literature, organic decay, nature, time, embodiment, queer temporality*

In recent years, scholars in queer studies and environmental humanities have focused on the relationships between non-normative sexualities and the natural world. Queer ecology, as Catriona Sandilands defines it, “troubles the binaries of human/nature and heterosexual/reproductive normativity by locating queerness in ecological entanglements and non-normative intimacies” (Sandilands 34). Sarah

Hall's *The Electric Michelangelo* provides a compelling literary instance of this entanglement. Though set in early twentieth-century coastal resorts and tattoo parlours, the novel's sensual depictions of body metamorphosis and organic degradation point to a queer ecological imagination. Cy Parks, the protagonist in Hall's work, is a tattoo artist whose work depicts the writing of identity on flesh. However, this flesh is not static; it is porous, delicate, and ever-changing, much like the coastlines and weather systems that frame the novel's geographical settings. One of the novel's most notable sentences reads: "The sea had a way of rubbing out its own tracks. Storms rearranged the beaches, high tides took back what had been laid down... Nature did not archive" (Hall 117). Here, the sea acquires a queer temporal energy that is non-linear, resistant to preservation, and careless about human involvement. This impermanence is congruent with the challenge queer theory poses to teleological narratives of identity and legacy.

An Indian reader may see a striking thematic resemblance in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. *The Hungry Tide*, like Sarah Hall's *The Electric Michelangelo*, shows the coastal environment as a fluid and disintegrating force that defies human attempts to impose narrative, memory, and permanence on the natural world, which may appeal to Indian readers. Both pieces highlight the dynamic instability of littoral habitats, stressing how nature creates and disrupts the human desire for continuity, identity, and archive preservation. Ghosh explores nature's instability via the lens of the Sundarbans, a region notorious for shifting tides, frequent storms, and disappearing islands. The ground is inherently unstable, continually being altered by the elements. Ghosh's tide country resists archival stability, just as Hall's sea does.

One of the novel's most notable elements is its constant focus on environment and weather, particularly fog, sea air, tides, and storms. These environmental features are not incidental; they serve as markers of affective and narrative time. For example, the seaside town of Morecambe, where Cy Parks grew up, is described as mist, water, and perpetual flux: "The sea mists came in slow and thick... dampening and swallowing the colour and shape of everything they touched" (Hall 9). Mist and sea act as temporal

agents, relaxing boundaries, delaying perception, and dissolving fixed coordinates. This environmental ambiguity reflects the narrative's temporal uncertainty, in which memories rise and fall like tides, and identity is perceived as atmospheric rather than grounded.

One of *The Electric Michelangelo's* most profound contributions to eco-queer discourse is its constant focus on organic decay, such as the rusting of seashore metal, the weathering of pier boards, the erosion of tattoos, and the aging of flesh. Rather than dismissing these indicators of entropy as mere symbols of moral decline, loss, or narrative closure, Hall sees them as critical components of a wider ecological temporality that is essentially nonlinear, entropic, and queer. The novel's material world is neither static nor immaculate; it is always changing, with degradation serving as a manner of becoming rather than an ending.

The pier town of Morecambe is shown in *The Electric Michelangelo* using visuals of corrosion and decay, rotting wood, salt-eaten railings, faded signage, yet Hall imbues these elements with a weird beauty, even respect. Rather than a place of death or decay, the deteriorating beach is portrayed as a site of feeling, memory, and ecological renewal, where transformation is constantly taking place. Such imagery is replicated in the narrative's treatment of the human body. Cy's clients get older; their tattoos blur and stretch; the skin that once held crisp lines becomes mushy and vague. However, Hall does not lament this loss of definition. Instead, she interprets it as evidence of the body's temporal existence, susceptibility to environmental factors, and involvement in the common fate of organic matter.

Hall's work embraces the materiality of rot, rust, and ruin, aligning with what Mel Chen and other queer materialist philosophers have defined as matter's vibrancy, a worldview in which even the degraded and abject have agency and aesthetic power. The deteriorating pier town is not a nostalgic backdrop, but rather a dynamic, breathing ecology that reflects the body's entropic rhythms. It reminds the reader that all things, human and nonhuman alike, are vulnerable to time's erosive touch, and that this condition should not be feared, but rather accepted as the foundation of ecological intimacy and queer relationality. Hall's story rejects the

sanitized, future-oriented models of sustainability that are frequently promoted in environmental discourse. Instead, it envisions an environment based on impermanence, entropy, and entanglement, a world in which time does not redeem, but rather wears away, and beauty is found not in preservation, but in the gradual, sensual process of decay.

This vision is highly aligned with contemporary theoretical advancements in queer ecology, particularly the work of Catriona Sandilands, Stacy Alaimo, and Jack Halberstam, all of whom challenge dominant, normative conceptions of nature, time, and embodiment. Catriona Sandilands' seminal work *Queer Ecologies* emphasizes the need to go beyond heteronormative notions of environmentalism that portray nature as reproductive, family, and orderly. For Sandilands, queer ecology “is not simply about including LGBT people in the environment; it’s about questioning the heteronormative, reproductive, and naturalized terms on which environmentalism itself often rests” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 31). Hall's narrative challenges these normative ecological imaginaries by depicting a radically queer relationship with nature, not just in terms of sexuality, but also in its rejection of structure, teleology, and reproductive futurism. The sea's ongoing act of "rubbing out its own tracks" serves as a metaphor for queer resistance to memory and narrative fixity, calling into question the notion of nature as a stable reservoir of meaning.

The *Electric Michelangelo's* instability of human-nonhuman boundaries extends beyond symbolic representation and into the realm of the material, which is consistent with Stacy Alaimo's thesis of trans-corporeality. In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Alaimo defines trans-corporeality as an epistemological and ontological shift that acknowledges the human body's permeability and ongoing interactions with the material environment. “The human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world. The environment is not located somewhere out there, but is always the very substance of ourselves” (Alaimo 2). This conceptual framework emphasizes the body as a location of ecological entanglement, not just a container for identity, but also a porous, dynamic surface through which the self is formed in relation to its surroundings. Hall's novel, through its protagonist Cy Parks and his

employment as a tattoo artist, literalizes this theory by portraying the body as both a canvas and a contact point. Tattooing is more than just an aesthetic or narrative gesture; it has evolved into a material inscription ritual in which ink, pain, memory, and the outside world are written on the flesh.

In Hall's story, the skin serves as a threshold, vulnerable to both human and environmental factors. Tattooing, which involves puncturing the skin, inserting ink, and leaving permanent marks, is fundamentally ecological and trans-corporeal. The physical surface is not only shaped by human activity, but it is also subjected to the same variable natural elements that change the environment. As Hall wrote, "A tattoo is not just a picture on a surface, it is a wound, a scarring. It is the body's conversation with the world, in blood and ink" (Hall 45).

This "conversation with the world" demonstrates the type of material-semiotic interplay that Alaimo sees as key to trans-corporeality, in which meaning and matter are co-constituted in ways that blur traditional subject-environment distinctions. As Alaimo explains: "Trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures and the environment, challenging the bounded, sovereign subject" (Alaimo 16). Cy's customers carry their experiences, traumas, and wishes on their skin, indelible marks left by his hand and the broader ecological forces that surround them. Nature in *The Electric Michelangelo* is never inert or backgrounded; it constantly interacts with and reshapes bodies. The sea, for example, is regarded as a force that rejects human efforts for permanence. The tattoos Cy designs may seek for permanence, yet they exist on bodies that sweat, age, degrade, and are constantly subjected to nature's corrosive touch.

Alaimo's emphasis on material agency is especially pertinent in this context, as Hall's story is heavily invested in how natural and cultural systems interact with bodies. In *Bodily Natures*, Alaimo warns against separating environmentalism and the corporeal. "To theorize bodily natures is to attend to the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of substances and forces — toxins, hormones, phthalates, and so on — that move through bodies" (Alaimo 2).

While *The Electric Michelangelo* does not overtly address toxicity or contaminants, but he does depict the body as a site of environmental inscription, absorbing rather than resisting the world around it. This is most clearly represented in the character of Grace, Cy's muse and eventual lover, whose body transforms into a palimpsest of inked art, a living, breathing union of natural flesh and human imagination. Grace's decision to have her entire body tattooed reflects the trans-corporeal idea that the self is never independent, but rather porous, receptive, and vulnerable.

Beyond its ecological entanglements, *The Electric Michelangelo* fundamentally questions normative temporal structures, in line with Jack Halberstam's philosophy of queer temporality. Halberstam, in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, argues that queer time is a departure from what he terms “chrononormativity,” the socially acceptable sequence of birth, marriage, reproduction, and death. Halberstam thinks that queer time emerges “in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction” and instead embraces “discontinuity, errancy, delay, postponement, and negation” (Halberstam 4). Sarah Hall's work demonstrates these alternate temporalities, both in terms of narrative form and the protagonist, Cy Parks' life trajectory.

Hall's novel is nonlinear, rejecting the cause-and-effect logic of classic bildungsroman storylines. Rather than moving through stages of steady identity formation or traditional social milestones, Cy's existence unfolds in fragmented moments punctuated by grief, sensory recollection, and artistic absorption. The narrative begins with memory and retrospection rather than origin or birth, which immediately disrupts any sense of sequential progression. As Cy thinks on his history, childhood, apprenticeship, war trauma, and love longing merge into one another, resulting in a looped temporality that reflects subjective resonance rather than chronological order.

Halberstam notes that “queer uses of time and space develop... in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction, and are developed... through the political agendas of those most disenfranchised by the chrononormative” (Halberstam 6). Cy Parks' rejection of familial structure, his profound emotional attachment with

Grace, and his lifetime devotion to an art medium that physically engraves impermanence all serve as critiques of conventional temporal narratives. Cy does not marry, procreate, or settle in the traditional sense; instead, he creates a life defined by aesthetic intensity, physical activity, and profound emotional stasis.

The novel's recursive narrative approach reflects the queer temporal ethos. Cy's recollections of Grace and their time together do not unfold in a linear fashion, but rather as shards that loop, return, and reconfigure. This looping structure enacts what Halberstam calls "temporal drag", a dragging back into the past that resists the onward propulsion of heteronormative time (Halberstam 50). Cy is never really grounded in the present; he is haunted by pictures, textures, and sensations: "the silvery ghost of her bare back," "the pull of salt on the skin," and "the warmth of her breath on his collarbone" (Hall 205), moments that linger outside of the usual narrative sequence.

Furthermore, the novel's ending defies narrative completion. Instead of ending with salvation or domestic stability, the story concludes with ambiguity, loss, and a return to the sea, the text's ultimate emblem of queer temporality. Just as the water refuses to maintain its past, the novel rejects the archival drive of finality, instead giving a temporality marked by erasure, return, and ambiguity. This sort of time resistance is both narrative and intellectual. As Halberstam asserts, "queer time is a way of being that is unscripted by the protocols of capital and reproduction" (Halberstam 10). Cy's reluctance to engage in mainstream economic or familial institutions, opting instead for a solitary, itinerant life dedicated to the transitory art of tattooing, places him in a queer temporality of negation. His existence challenges the capitalist and reproductive logics that drive modern life, a life lived in the liminal spaces of memory, desire, and loss.

Sarah Hall's *The Electric Michelangelo* questions and reshapes mainstream narratives about sexuality, nature, time, and embodiment by refusing to confine identification to heteronormative or anthropocentric frames. Instead of portraying the natural world as a static backdrop for human action, the novel depicts nature as an active, frequently disruptive force that interacts closely with the human body, memory, and desire. Hall's

coastal settings, the unpredictable sea, and the intensely sensuous process of tattooing all combine to create a world in which identities are produced via contact, interpenetration, and mutual transformation, rather than being fixed or separated.

This fluidity is crucial to the novel's engagement with queer ecology, a theoretical subject that challenges the binary distinctions between human and nonhuman, nature and society, and sex and survival. As Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson argue in *Queer Ecologies*, the task is not only to recognize queerness within nature but also to “unsettle the foundations of the natural itself” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 29). *The Electric Michelangelo* achieves precisely this: it challenges the concept of nature by relating it to erasure, flux, and bodily sensation, deconstructing the illusion of ecological static or purity.

At the same time, the narrative defies traditional temporal frameworks, evoking Jack Halberstam's concept of queer temporality as a disturbance of reproductive, linear time. Cy Parks' life progresses through recollection and pleasure, rather than familial advancement or societal productivity. His devotion to a dying art form, immersion in the sea's impermanence, and nonlinear emotional journey all represent an alternative temporal logic, one in which intimacy, loss, and art replace futurity and permanence. In this way, Hall's work does more than just reflect queerness; it embodies it structurally and conceptually, presenting time as a locus of queer resistance.

Finally, *The Electric Michelangelo* demonstrates the potential of eco-queer literature to conceive radical alternatives to conventional modes of being—alternatives that stress fluidity over fixity, feeling over stability, and connection over autonomy. Hall's novel contributes to a growing body of work that rejects the exclusionary binaries of man/nature, self/other, straight/queer, and instead embraces a future based on relationality, openness, and shared fragility.

In an age of ecological crises and climate upheaval, known as the Anthropocene or, more importantly, the Capitalocene, such literary interventions are not just aesthetic but also deeply political. They

encourage readers to envision ecological and social possibilities that go beyond dominance, exploitation, or certainty. *The Electric Michelangelo*, with its interweaving of the bodily and the environmental, the sexual and the ephemeral, advocates for a queerer, more embodied approach to how we live with and as part of the natural world.

Works Cited:

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press, 2010.

Barnett, Joshua Trey. *Ecology and Queer Theory*. University of California Press, 2021.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. HarperCollins, 2004.

Hall, Sarah. *The Electric Michelangelo*. Faber and Faber, 2004.

Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press, 2005.

Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson, editors. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Indiana University Press, 2010.

Sandilands, Catriona. "Queer Nature, Queer Natures." *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, edited by Catriona Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 29–46.

EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THIRUVALLUVAR'S *THIRUKKURAL*

Dr.A.Chandra Bose

Associate Professor of English

PG Department & Research Centre in English

The Madura College (Autonomous)

Madurai-625 011

Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI), though formally conceptualized in modern psychology by scholars such as Salovey, Mayer, and Goleman, has deep philosophical roots in ancient ethical literature. Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*, composed over two millennia ago, presents a remarkably rich foundation for understanding emotional competencies essential for personal, social, and moral development. This paper examines ten core dimensions of Emotional Intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social awareness, relationship management, conflict resolution, resilience, compassionate leadership, ethical decision-making, and emotional communication—through selected couplets from the *Thirukkural*. These verses reveal timeless insights into human behavior, interpersonal harmony, and emotional maturity. By aligning classical Tamil wisdom with contemporary EI frameworks, the study demonstrates how Thiruvalluvar's teachings continue to offer relevant guidance for modern education, leadership, and societal well-being. The analysis underscores that the *Thirukkural* not only anticipates the principles of Emotional Intelligence but also enriches its application in real-life contexts, especially for today's youth navigating complex emotional and social challenges.

Key Words

Thirukkural; Thiruvalluvar; Emotional Intelligence; Self-awareness; Empathy; Anger Management; Leadership; Ethical Decision-Making; Resilience; Communication.

Introduction

The primary aim of education for an individual is to enhance the ability of perceiving, regulating and using Emotional Intelligence (EI) constructively. It has become a central framework in contemporary psychology, organizational behavior, and education. However, the philosophical foundations of EI are not new. Early moral texts across cultures have stressed emotional self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal harmony long before the formalization of EI theories by western scholars like Daniel Goleman and Peter Salovey & John Mayer.

Among some of the greatest texts in India, Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural* stands out for its universal ethical insights. Composed over 2,000 years ago, *Thirukkural* is a collection of 1,330 couplets divided into Aram (virtue), Porul (wealth), and Inbam (love). Many of its teachings directly linked to modern EI experiences such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, relationship management, and wise decision-making. These are very essential skills for the Indian youths. Keeping this in mind, this paper unearths some of ten aspects of Emotional Intelligence reflected in the *Thirukkural*, illustrating each with a representative couplet.

1 Discussion with textual evidences

1.1 Self-Awareness

Knowing oneself is an essential skill for dealing with others. Modern generation youths have either superiority or inferiority complexes when they encounter others in their life. This results a grievous impact personal, professional and social life. Many of them confront with other without know who are they and what is their strengths and weakness. They lead their life with many shortcomings and confusions. In this context, several Indian intellectuals' texts arise as a rescue vehicle who stuck up in their life. Self-awareness is considered by Daniel Goleman (1995) as the foundational pillar of Emotional Intelligence. It refers to an individual's capacity to identify, understand, and reflect on their emotions, strengths, and limitations. Salovey and Mayer (1990) similarly describe emotional perception—the accurate identification of emotions within oneself as the first branch of EI. Thiruvalluvar offers a profound articulation of self-awareness in: The saint poet, Thiruvalluvar believes that self-awareness involves understanding one's emotions, strengths, and limitations. He emphasizes introspection as the basis of moral character.

He writes,

*“உள்ளாற்றின் உள்ளுவ தானே உடலை; வல்லறிவான்
வெளிப்படா தாகிக் கெடும்.”*

(One who does not examine himself internally will falter even if externally competent.)

Kural 131:

This couplet is the finest example for understanding one’s own caliber and his/her restrictions. It highlights the necessity of inner reflection which is a core element of EI.

1.2 Self-Regulation

A kind word is capable of saving, consoling and enriching a person rather a word with anger would definitely destroy the entire ambience of a person. The anger emotion is a weapon which tarnish personal, professional and social image of the person. Recent untoward incidents that are reported in the newspapers exhibit the failure of anger management of younger generations. They go on any extent to revenge over some silly heated arguments with family members, neighbors, fellow co-workers and even strangers in their day to day life. A small sparked anger landed many in jail and their families in endless distress. So managing impulses is a lifesaving skill which is the central idea of EI. Thiruvalluvar repeatedly warns against uncontrolled anger.

He writes,

*“கோபம் குன்றின் இழுக்கு மறுகின் விடுபறுக்கும்
தூபாய்த் தூரும்நோய் தரும்.” Kural 157:*

(Anger destroys even those who possess all advantages, just as a spark can burn a forest.)

This couplet is evidence that the emotion of anger is the deadliest weapon that a man holds naturally which should be regulated and managed. Anger management is the need of the hour to live peacefully in this fast changing world which concentrates martial benefits. This couplet is a life lesson for modern youths that through self-regulation they can stabilize their personal and social well-being.

1.3 Empathy

Nurturing empathy among youths is relatively essential duty of parents, teachers, governments and the entire society. The ancient Indian well-established social engineering systems get corrupted with the modern self-centered mutualistic life style. Nobody stops for nobody. They run after money, position and power. They inculcate a bad lesson that extending empathy towards others is a breach of personal space. But Indian intelligentsias advocate the importance of helping others at the right time with the suitable emotions. Empathy is one of such emotions that is to be nursed among youths through educational system of the country. States like Tamil Nadu witness a group of higher secondary students brutally attacked their classmate in the school and made him a brain dead person. So this is the right time to inculcate a live saving skill that teaches concerns on fellow human beings.

Thiruvalluvar frames compassion as the highest virtue of a human being. He emphases as follows,

*“அருளல்லது யாதெனின் கொல்லாமை கோறல்
பொருளல்லது போலப் படும்.”*

(Compassion is the essence of virtue; without it, all else is meaningless.) Kural 318:

This couplet aligns with emotional intelligence directly aimed at human conduct. Developing the emotion of compassion is the paramount duty of educational planners and stake holders.

1.4 Social Awareness

No man is island. Human beings are the entity of a universe. Everybody is interdependent and interlinked in the society. Society is formed to live with hormonal relationship and to create congenial atmosphere of living creature including animals. Understanding social fabrics and its importance, one has to create awareness among the fellow citizen. Even understanding social cues and context is vital for emotionally intelligent behavior. The greatest of all time, Thiruvalluvar awakes the citizens of the world by writing the following couplet. He writes,

*“பொருள்நீர்மை உள்ளது வினையல்ல வினையன்று
ஒழுக்கம் உடையார்க்கு உண்டு.” Kural 991:*

(The wise act with awareness of consequences and context.)

The present generations living with electronic gadgets are unaware of social conditions and make rucks with others. Valluvar highlights the need for situational sensitivity before acting. Creating sensitivity over the social order and norms is part

1.5 Relationship Management

Fragmented relationship is seen in the family, workplace, society and even everywhere. Healthy relationships depend on emotional balance and interpersonal skills. The current generation is lacking in it. An unhealthy relationship leads to various problems in personal and social life. One should know how build good relationship which shapes happy and contented life. The mutual understanding is the architecture in which one can create a good relationship. In this scenario, Thiruvalluvar advocates the fellow citizen to inculcate generosity as one of the key factors in maintaining a sustainable relationship that would pave the way to establish the congenial atmosphere in the digitally detracted world. The saint poet writes the following couplet as a life lesson to initiate relationship management. He write,

*“உடையர் எனப்படுவது யாதெனின் யாதும்
கொடையர் எனப்படுவது கொள்.” Kural 707*

(Those who give generously build lasting relationships.)

He emphasized that the relationship management arises from empathy and reciprocity.

1.6 Conflict Resolution

Conflict is the internal quality of human beings. It exists every nook and corner of the society. It arises between two individual, two sections of people in the name of economic disparities, and the way of social and religious practices, in the context ideological differences and even in unspecified contexts. Unwanted conflicts made people divide and disturbed the social fabrics and dismantled the well-established social engineering. Even a small conflict of two individual tarnishes their entire life span to resolve it. Sometimes individuals have internal conflict which never be climaxed until his/ her last breath. In these contexts, Thiruvallur unveils a lifesaving advice for the conflict inflicted persons to escape from such a gloomy atmosphere. He writes,

*“இயல்பினான் இயல்பாக நட்பாற்றிக் கொண்டே
கயல்போல வன்பாற்கு ஈர்.” Kural 636*

(The wise resolve conflicts gently, like easing a knot without breaking the thread.)

This speaks to peace-building through emotional restraint. The careful control of one's emotion is the real solution for ending conflicts. One should emotionally

intelligent to resolve disputes with calmness and wisdom. The knee jerk reaction of an individual is not a solution rather understanding the emotions of opponent. The complexity of conflicts slowly finds its own way to settle when the ample time is given.

7. Resilience and Emotional Strength

Human connectedness is going down in the modern, electronic prone and 24 x 7 internet connected world. Nobody is ready to spare their time with others without any monetary benefits. Resilience reflects the ability to handle setbacks.

*“இடனறிந்து ஏனை உணர்ந்து செயல்படும்
கடனறிந்து காலம்பார்.” Kural 667*

(The strong are those who remain unshaken, acting wisely even in difficulty.)

Thiruvalluvar compliments those who remain calm and think obviously under pressure mirroring the EI concept of emotional resilience. Such individuals act intentionally rather than reactively. Gardner’s intrapersonal intelligence also contains the capacity to withstand emotional turbulence. Valluvar’s wisdom supports with contemporary research displaying that emotional resilience predicts leadership effectiveness and mental well-being.

8. Compassionate Leadership

Emotional intelligence theorists argue that the able leaders inspire trust, empathy, and cooperation. Goleman states that 85–90% of leadership efficacy depends on emotional intelligence competencies, especially empathy and social skills.

*“இரவு தீர்ந்தாந் துயர்வு செயினும் பருவத்தால்
தருவார் பருவம் படுத.” Kural 542*

(A good ruler alleviates the suffering of the people.)

Thiruvalluvar designates leadership rooted in compassion and duty. This resembles to Goleman’s “resonant leadership,” where leaders empathize with

followers and create positive emotional climates. This kural proposed emotional responsibility as an essential characteristic of leadership. This is an idea now central in leadership psychology.

9. Ethical Decision-Making

Emotional intelligence stimulates moral reasoning by helping individuals evaluate emotionally intricate situations. Salovey & Mayer view EI as the ability to use emotions to guide decisions, leading to ethical outcomes.

“அஞ்சுவது அஞ்சாமை பேதைமை; அஞ்சுவார்
அஞ்சல் அறியார் தொழில்.” Kural 441
(Wisdom lies in fearing the right things and acting accordingly.)

Thiruvalluvar proposes that wise decision-making needs emotional clarity knowing when concern is suitable. This transmits to the emotional intelligence skill of correctly inferring emotional signals and evaluating risk. Thiruvalluvar accentuates the importance of balanced emotions in moral action, a point echoed in contemporary ethical psychology.

10. Emotional Communication / Speech Regulation

Speech is a major means of emotional expression. Goleman classifies the regulation of emotional expression as essential to interpersonal efficacy.

“தீயினால் சுட்டபுண் ஆறும்; ஆறாதே
நாவினால் சுட்ட வடு.” Kural 200
(A fire-caused wound heals; a wound caused by harsh words does not.)

Here, Thiruvalluvar highlights the emotional impact of speech. Words shape relationships, influence well-being, and can cause lasting psychological harm. This supports with EI theory: emotionally intelligent communication needs empathy, restraint, and sensitivity. Modern communication psychology similarly records that verbal aggression has long-term emotional consequences. Thiruvalluvar thus suggests EI-based approaches to help meaningful communication.

Conclusion

Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural* speaks values that closely support with modern theories of Emotional Intelligence. Across its ethical framework, the text supports self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, wise leadership, careful communication, and compassionate conduct. These EI components, though articulated today in psychological frameworks, were expressed succinctly by Valluvar over two millennia ago.

By citing ten couplets corresponding to ten EI competencies, this paper validates that *Thirukkural* offers timeless guidance for emotional wisdom. Thiruvalluvar's acumens enrich current discussions on human behavior, leadership, education, and moral development, proving the perennial relevance of this Tamil classic.

Works Cited

Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books, 1995.

Mayer, John D., and Peter Salovey. "What is Emotional Intelligence?" *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence*, edited by Peter Salovey and David Sluyter, Basic Books, 1997, pp. 3–31.

Nagarajan, K. *Ethics in Thirukkural*. International Institute of Tamil Studies, 2001.
Parimelazhagar. *Commentary on the Thirukkural*. Saiva Siddhanta Publishing, 2016.

Thiruvalluvar. *Thirukkural*. Translated by G. U. Pope, Tamil Nadu Textbook Society, 2010.

Research Centre in English

Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College

(An Autonomous Institution Affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University)

[Accredited with 'A+' Grade (5th Cycle) by NAAC]

Virudhunagar – 626 001.

ISSN: 3107-9407



ISSN: 3107-9407