



Gender Dynamism: Deconstructed and Reconciled in Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* and Rao's *Girls Burn Brighter*

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Abstract

In Indian society, a “boy baby” is another name for family income, a social leader, and a source of dowry. A girl baby's connotative gender dynamic is to digest social humiliation and to be silent before all arrangements are made to make her inferior before menfolk. Sudha's mother-in-law in *Sister of My Heart* took her to a temple to pray for a ‘boy baby’. These social narratives accelerate biological difference. In *Girls Burn Brighter*, Poornima's father said, “Your mother had a dream, ... if we named you Poornima, we'd have a boy next.” Androcentric society expects women to sew, cook, and rear children. Postmodern psychoanalysts construct a new discourse. Because women, in cities or rural areas, teach, write novels or poetry, drive, and can be class toppers... police officers. They can even run shops or any business firm. Even though women bear the same tag of the “Second Sex”, that is, being inferior to men. If women can perform “mannish” work, then postmodern feminists agreeably suggest a new discourse: reconciliation of gender treatment by the society for the society. The paper tends to demonstrate the gender status of traditional Indian society through the exclusive lens of gender dynamism, highlighting the dichotomy of gender performativity of females, and finally proposes to reverse the existing concept of agency to reconcile honour or power with performativity, not arbitrarily with gender, in the light of the two novels:

1. *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1999)
2. *Girls Burn Brighter* by Shobha Rao (2018)

Keywords: Binary Opposite, Dichotomy, Gender Dynamic, Gender Performativity, Masculinity

Introduction

“A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men.”
– Gloria Steinem

Feminism dates back to the age of the ‘equal suffrage movement’ or a consciousness towards human rights; later it has shifted to gender equality and, subsequently, to gender roles. These very gender roles in Indian society have been configured to privilege ‘men’ for centuries, and women, knowingly or unknowingly, have been cooperating with the norms or indulging them. Gender dynamism or gender role denotes those certain tasks, responsibilities, and reactions are assigned by society to men, while others are expected from women. For example, all family finances, external responsibilities, and decision-making capabilities are entitled as masculinity and are connotated with ‘masculine’. On the other hand, all domestic chores, child-rearing, and loyalty towards family decisions are attributed as ‘feminine’ and are assigned to ‘women’ so that male oligarchy remains undisturbed. The researcher attempts to expound the fatality of disgrace towards women despite their multifaceted capability, in the light of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Sister of My Heart* and Sobha Rao’s *Girls Burn Brighter*, and tends to reconcile the two-gender-based performativity through reversing the tenets of existing gender roles.

Research Objective

This paper navigates to several truths regarding gender performativity as to ascertain why they are congenial to establish male oligarchy in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent. Divakaruni and Shobha Rao in the two novels, do not intentionally render ‘male’ characters as ‘less able’ than the female ones; rather, they proclaim that, in every society, male characters like Hector, Hamlet, the Red Cross Knight, Robin Hood, and Harry Potter exist, side by side, people are familiar with such ‘men’ like Savitha’s brothers (who neglect family responsibilities), Mohan, Guru (two women traffickers who frequently have sex with anyone, including Poornima), or Savitha’s and Poornima’s fathers (who are dependent on their wives and daughters financially). This latter group is still retaining their ‘Manish’ crown.

So, the writer endeavors to investigate the answer to the three pivotal questions:

- Is financial contribution by women not an ability?
- Are women truly aware of their own status?
- Can sexually abused girls start a new life of their own choice?

The study will delve into the approach of gender roles by reversing socially constructed gender dynamics in the light of two novels: *Girls Burn Brighter* by Shobha Rao and *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni thereby achieving due honour through redeeming or reconciling performativity theory and by reversing the existing conceptualization of gender roles.

Methodology

The study is conducted through a qualitative method, relying on extensive research through the consultation of libraries, books, scholarly journals, and magazines. This qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of the gender binary, comprising a postmodern feminist lens and the sociopolitical study of female subjugation contained in the two novels. The researcher refines the analysis with the help of Judith Butler's poststructuralist feminist theory, especially her ideas about gender performativity, subjectivity, and power, evaluating how women overpower men. Iris Young's intersectionality and marginalization are also applicable here.

Literature Review

From a rational point of view, the position of women has never been agreeably identified. They never take any attempt to investigate the cause of their inferior status. The financial dependence on men has affected the image of 'women' both in society and literature, so that women are professed to be handicapped before men. The module of patriarchal agency as illustrated above will demonstrate the varied discourses of feminism to the readers.

In "Reconceptualization of Gender Relations in Saeed's *Amal Unbound* and Rao's *Girls Burn Brighter*", Asif, Zafar, and Iftikhar (2021) reflect that:

"The post-feminist development is giving way to pseudo connections of sexual identity in the culture at large."

Jayakumar (2021), Associate Professor and Head of the English Department, in his article, "Manifold Multitudes of Women in the Writings of Shobhaa De", informs the readers about the sufferings of women and the injustices inflicted by their male counterparts. Prashant Arjun Raut (2024), in "Gender Dynamics in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novel *Sister of My Heart*," states that male characters like Gopal, Bijoy, Ashok, Sunil, and Ramesh appear to be in comparatively passive roles and often lack the agency displayed by their female counterparts. Obviously, the novelist borrowed it from

our everyday life, where these characters are deliberately valued over capable or potentially capable women. Surprisingly enough, these women do not feel humiliated for this or struggle to claim their due recognition.

Pappy Vincent (2015), in his paper “Female Bonding in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Sister of My Heart*” stated:

“Widowhood is the biggest curse bestowed upon any Indian woman. These three women are widows. Nalini and Gowrimma accept the challenge fully. But Pishi is forced to sit in the back of the hall on feast days, because widows must not take part in the auspicious occasion, according to the orthodoxy and traditional system of Indian family”

Unexpectedly, these widows play the masculine role. N. Divya (2019), in her journal article “The Theme of Diasporic Role of Women in Chitra Banerjee’s *Sister of My Heart*” comments,

“The anchor to *Sister of My Heart* is the belief that storytelling not only lights the path for succeeding generations, but also possesses shamanistic power. Both teller and listener may be healed or transformed, cursed or freed.”

Dr. Parmendra Kumar Mishra (2020), in “Diaspora and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” has employed the term *bildungsroman* to signify the story of Sudha and Anju. M. Rodrigue (1987), in the article “The Origins of Women’s Subjugation”, opines that in class-based social systems, women have historically faced lower social status, exploitation, oppression, and a lack of autonomy.

Sasha Roseneil (2000), in *Postmodern Feminist Politics: The Art of the (Im)Possible*, mentions that postmodern feminism is trapped in philosophical abstractions, ignoring the sociological issues that are of practical concern for this purpose. In her opinion, postmodern feminism is to some extent apolitical and ahistorical. She also supports cultural feminism that transforms the category of woman (Roseneil, 2000). Roseneil evokes a question:

“Can citizenship transcend the gendered dichotomies on which it has historically rested: between public and private, reason and emotion, the cognitive and the embodied?” (Roseneil, 2013, p. 2).

Marianne Ailes (2020), states in her article, “Desiring the Other: Subjugation and Resistance of the Female”:

“The subjugation of women, particularly sexual subjugation, has long been employed as a strategic instrument to ensure cultural dominance.”

Braidotti (2005) asserts that feminists have to construct a complete transformation of subjectivity which is based on a new discourse that privileges positive terms. In

"Subverting Subjugation of Women Oppression: A Postmodern Feminist Analysis in Rao's *Girls Burn Brighter*", Saniya Afzal and others (2025) claim:

"In line with Butler's concept of gender as performative rather than innate, the novel illustrates how the identities of women are shaped by external norms that define femininity as passive and subordinate."

Wilma Afrilia Rizky (2023), in the research paper "The Main Female Characters' Oppression in *Girls Burn Brighter* by Shobha Rao" says:

"One country that reflects a society established on the notion of male superiority over women is India. In India, male superiority and positioning of women as servants... (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). The existence of hierarchical unequal power between men and women leads to the disregard of women's rights in households, workplaces, education systems, and decision-making processes. This has led to the prevalence of oppression of women in India. For instance, in 2021, there were 4,05,861 cases of crimes against women registered in 2021, up 15.3% from the previous year (NCRB, 2022)."

Oppression of women in India is an everyday phenomenon, including domestic violence, dowry-related fatalities, sexual assault, and rape. Indian women are still nurturing this inferior status by teaching their upcoming generation. However, in the two novels, the young protagonists have learned to be 'deer' before the 'wild' (constructed wild), yet they dreamt of coming out of their ancestral "wild cave" through the strength gained through sisterhood.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni stands out as a feminist writer par excellence, showcasing her expertise in crafting narratives with strong feminist characters who courageously navigate adversities. Toni Morrison says,

"Nobody even talked about friendship between women unless it was homosexual, and there is no homosexuality in *Sula*" (qtd. in Barat 53).

Divakaruni, a post-colonial Indian diasporic writer and a part of this literary tradition, confirms in an essay *Bold Type*,

". . . I find myself focusing my writing on friendships with women, and trying to balance them with the conflicting passions and demands that come to us as daughters and wives, lovers and mothers."

Aparupa Mookherjee says in her research, "The Dynamics of Female Friendship: A Reading of Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*" that

"The unfathomable and enduring nature of sisterhood surpasses all other familial ties, and the key to survival (for women) in a man's world lies in the creation of a strong

and endearing female network.”

To her, female complementarity can be defined by quoting Cicero’s words: “as almost to create one person out of two” (111).

Since their childhood, the two girls “bathed together and ate together, often from the same plate, feeding each other our favourite items . . .” and “lay in twin beds” (12) at night giggling and whispering till they slept, and when they had nightmares, they “squeezed into one bed and held each other” (12). This bosom intimacy between the two girls soon became a matter of grave concern for the teachers at their convent school, who did not consider it to be ‘normal’ (12) and changed their sections. But soon they were forced to reconsider. This separation was too much for Anju and Sudha to bear.

Aparupa Mookherjee notices a correlation between the lotus and the sisters; that is, the lotus has the ability to remain dry in spite of being afloat on water and can hold water droplets, so also the girls remain indomitable and empowered to achieve selfhood. Fathers and mothers in India or Bangladesh, as stated earlier are proud of having a son, that is, a financial security, a future leader, and a potential source of dowry. On the other hand, after the birth of a girl baby, a mother is sometimes addressed as an ominous one; they are asked to abort if the family can know the gender before birth. In the novel *Sister of My Heart*, the readers witness Sudha’s sufferings as she does not agree to abort. Even in rural areas, the mother herself may not wish for a girl baby and may inflict physical and mental torture on them. For example, Poomima’s father (*Girls Burn Brighter*) wanted to let her drown in the river while she was a baby. Besides, in villages, parents get their daughters married to unworthy people like Kishore in *Girls Burn Brighter* and Ramesh in *Sister of My Heart*. The researcher claims, undeniably, that a male-dominated society creates all possible constraints for women, such as forced financial dependence, the dowry system, religious bindings or rituals, discriminated status in jobs, and the threat of physical abuse, only to fortify and justify men’s superiority.

“People share a common nature but are trained in gender roles.” – Lillie Devereux Blake

Prashant Arjun Raut (2024), in “Gender Dynamics in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Novel *Sister of My Heart*” denotes, women consider the societal barriers to be natural; if someone defies them, they need to leave their abode and are separated from their near and dear ones due to social criticism. Furthermore, if a woman is successful in shouldering the household, she can never expect a dignified place among her family members or in the society.

Qamar et al. (2023), in their paper “Agentic Female Fraternity of The Recovering Patriarchal Women in Shobha Rao’s *Girls Burn Brighter*” assert,

“Butler calls for a reconceptualization of subjectification, signification, and agency vis-à-vis women. Butler also posits intentionality, self-reflexivity, and autonomy as some of the tools that emancipate women. Butler believes that feminism should call for the social

transformation of gender relations. Poornima's struggle typifies Butler's quest for the emancipation of women through social change."

Limitations

This paper deals with gender role, the binary opposite of gender role among the female characters of the two novels. Feminine suffering, trauma, sisterhood, comparison among the characters or scenic differences are signified little in the study. Findings and arguments are text-based and the analysis focuses on the discovery of the issues related to gender role, binary-opposite roles, and the essential track of the reversal of gender dynamics in line with the story developed in the two novels. The study contemplates on constructing a platform for identifying the latent causes behind the inferior status of female folk, and it also investigates the validity of male chauvinism or male superiority in these novels. If not, then, why do androcentric social, literary, or politically apolitical discourses not bother about transcending the constraint of existing patriarchal pedagogy?

Analysis of the Novels

The settings of these novels span India and America. Both contain strong female protagonists, and even the surrounding characters are not passive or typically feminine. The portrayal of male characters also conforms to both literary tradition and the real-life patriarchal social structure of South Asian countries. Especially in rural regions of India and Bangladesh, women are kept uneducated or less educated, restricted to being within four walls, whereby rural male leaders exercise their arbitrary rules and preserve male oligarchy for ages.

Gender Performativity or Gender Role

Simon de Beauvoir says in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman".

Judith Butler posits that; Gender is what one does not what one is; it is not something natural or internal; the performative acts create the identity itself in accordance with social norms. Traditional Indian society requires women to cook, clean, sew and rear children. Agreeably, it had been the established theory of 'performativity' or 'gender role' assigned for the 'feminine gender' up to the mid-20th century all over the world. In India and all backward societies, this theory is still on the run. People admit it or not, since the historical past, women read, taught, wrote poetry, and now they are class toppers, doctors, engineers, drivers, pilots, and even run businesses if they are given the chances like men.

Patriarchy worsens the minacious status of girl-birth by adding 'dowry' to the burden of the bride's father. The society breeds newer categorical imperatives to prove biological differences to be fatal. In rural or aristocratic settings, females are identified as 'no' or 'less human', 'second sex'. Poornima's father (GBB), wanted to let her drown; Sudha's mother-in-law (Sister of My Heart) asked her to go to temple for a 'boy' baby; In *Girls Burn Brighter*, Poornima's father said, "Your mother had a dream, ... if we named you Poornima, we'd have a boy next." later attempted to make her abort the 'girl' baby. Poornima's face got burned by her husband for being unable to give the promised amount of dowry.

Women themselves are likely to be in the dark about their discriminated gender roles thereby facilitating 'men-empowerment' in the society. Women are to abide in their fathers', brothers', and husbands' residence in a way that they should rather accept patriarchy to be 'safe', 'honor', and thereby women achieve the attribution of good 'womanhood' or the 'standard' of goodness in the male hegemony. This 'standard' is the maxim of being happy in rural Indo-Bengal society. Therefore, feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, and Mary Wollstonecraft have challenged conventional patriarchal tenets. Later, Judith Butler, Caroline Criado Perez, Kate Millett, Ismat Chughtai, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speak for female identity and empowerment through epistemological interpretations. Obviously, readers with or without a feminist lens are expected to agree with the aforementioned scholars as Emma Watson resolves:

"We need to live in a culture that values and respects and looks up to and idolizes women as much as men."

All the four protagonists, in the two texts, were to leave school at an early age. Both the novels show the 'locks', like 'no schooling', 'no grooming', 'no choice', 'no right' or no 'honour', for girls or for women, except duties and self-sacrifice both in the maternal and in-laws' house. A 'boy' baby is another name for extracting dowry, leadership, stakeholder, and dignity or social superiority. Again, whether the men can earn or not is socially constructed to be masculine. Whereas society or family instruct women to perceive themselves to be a 'burden', 'inferior to men', not performativity-based.

Joseph Conrad (1925) in *Heart of Darkness* says,

"It's queer how out of touch with the truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there has never been anything (truth) like it."

They never learn to navigate why they are not allowed to do jobs? Or, if they are not, then, why are they assessed as worthless or a burden? Rizky says, "Savitha also encountered a form of exclusion when looking for jobs. Savitha's inability to get employment reflected how marginalized women were in the workplace." The constitution provides written laws for the solution of all these discriminations. But women in the family

or in the society bother much about the communal norms, that is, 'Androcentric hegemony'; they never learned to go against society. In GBB, Savitha after being raped left the village. The society did not make any arrangements for punishing abusers. Here, Savitha's father, Poornima's husband, or Guru- neither need to go into exile, nor, lose their dominance as an infallible 'man'. Neither the parents, nor the victims think of taking the help of state law for the fear of being boycotted by the society. In real life, women come across the same hurdles as these female protagonists' face, being devoid of academic accomplishments. Iris Young has termed it as 'Intersectionality and Marginalization'. The researcher demands a reversal of this illegal society-bred gender dynamics as a locked prison for females, with a view to keeping the male kingdom well-fortified and superior to women.

Masculinity

"I would put all the efforts to humanize the "masculine" and "feminine" gender roles that are the beginning of a false human hierarchy and normalize race, class, and other systems of domination to come." - Gloria Steinem.

In SMH², Bijoy and Gopal were killed or died, Gouri (Bijoy's wife), a loyal Hindu woman, starts looking after her husband's bookstore while Nalini and the young widowed Pishi handle the household and support Gouri. In GBB³, Poornima's (young protagonist) mother works relentlessly on the loom, without any expectation of recompense. Savitha's father is an alcoholic and starts begging in the temple; her mother cleans other people's houses, and she, along with her sisters, collects trash from the garbage dumps by fighting with other collectors, dogs, and monkeys for financial subsistence. This earning ability rendered by the 'second sex' is not hailed in popular judgement as 'ability', 'masculinity', or this discourse is kept aside in the family, or in the society. Young Poornima works harder to earn two rupees only to "buy for her mother every day: two bananas, a tiny apple, and a handful of cashews." (GBB 8).

Rao represents the female characters with the symbol of charka.

"Each spool of thread she completed—the thread sometimes red, sometimes blue, sometimes silver—earned her two rupees, and this seemed like a fortune to her." (GBB 7).

Savitha (GBB), another young protagonist, works on a loom, later failing to secure another job, she joins prostitution. Anju (SMH) works harder in America, even at the time of pregnancy, to pursue her own dream. Sudha, too, started earning money to rear her child.

²SMH denotes *Sister of My Heart*. This study utilizes the 336-page edition of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*, published by Anchor Books in 1999.

³GBB denotes *Girls Burn Brighter*. This study utilizes the 416-page first edition of Shobha Rao's *Girls Burn Brighter*, published by Flatiron Books in 2018

Hence, the women are doing the ‘mannish’ work, earning money, they possess ‘masculinity’ in both the novels. So postmodern feminists raise the fundamental question: don’t these women reverse the gender dynamism or gender performativity? If so, then, as the researcher claims, performativity theory should be deconstructed. In other words, we expect, whoever is earning money, he or she will be the agency, an empowered gender. But in real life, the male characters solely possess authority. In the novel, SMH, from the crude portrayal of Gopal and Bijoy to the nuanced portrayals of Ashok, Sunil, and Ramesh, Divakaruni’s male characters are often overshadowed by the masculine valour and agency of their female counterparts. Prashant Arjun Raut comments:

“In Divakaruni's literary landscape, male characters often pale in comparison to their female counterparts. The narrative unfolds male characters who, more often than not, embody weakness or conformity, or become catalysts for the female plight. The portrayal of male characters reflects Divakaruni's deliberate exploration of gender dynamics and power imbalance.”

In GBB, Savitha’s father is also unable to work. Poornima’s father cannot run his family only by his effort. Even though society is crowning these males as ‘masculine’ or ‘decision-makers’ in spite of their inability, that is, agency — why? The writer asserts the needed transformation in the treatment of gender to crown one who is deserving of it.

Ambivalence / Binary Opposition / Dichotomy

"Feminism is an attack on social practices and habits of thought that keep women and men boxed into gender roles that are harmful" - Robert Webb

The study discovers a wonderful track of characteristics among the senior women who retain submissiveness towards family or society even during their hardest hours; they are at the same time able to transgress themselves from "typical femininity" to a patriarchal agency whenever financial crisis or social complications require them to do so. Elderly female characters such as Nalini, Gouri, and Anju’s Pishi (SMH) observe traditional Hindu rituals. They arrange for the marriage of the two girls, complying with all social restrictions. Even the girls themselves remain passive. Pishi, being a young widow, sacrifices her “liveliness”, which she recycles as a kind of superfluous energy that she successfully instills into the minds of Sudha and Anju.

However, apart from financial duties, this novel (SMH) shows how these three women provide a mental refuge for Sudha after her separation; their blessing eventually leads her to the USA. Sudha wants them to bless her thus:

“Bless me that I might have the courage to go into battle when necessary, no matter how bleak the situation. Bless me that I may be able to fight for myself and my child, no

matter where I am.” (SMH 270).

In GBB, both Savitha and Poornima’s mother run the family finances and have been loyal to their husbands and society. This dualistic role, the combination of ‘submissive’ and ‘masculine’ actions in single female character that the females manifest in the two novels, is termed as “binary opposites ” or ‘dichotomy of gender roles ” in feminist discourse. This research intends to emphasize on the very fact that this dualism is not an innovation either in society or in literature; rather, it has been recurrently available throughout history. Even though all the female characters are to define their status (whether they are good or bad) as per the male-dominated society’s definition. Savitha, Poornima and Sudha protect themselves and their family’s well-being by leaving their native village. The writer, through the reconceptualization of gender, claims for the arrangement by the society, so that Savitha’s family will not be scared of being defamed; Poornima will dare to refuse to marry physically deformed Kishore; she or Sudha (SMH) can file a case against their abusive husbands; the dowry system will not be a tool to intimidate a daughter’s father.

As Dr. Md. Asif and two other authors state, “...women can discover themselves through agency and autonomy by challenging and undermining patriarchal structures that have subjected them to submission, leaving no room for resistance”.

In the case of the later generation, the binary opposite takes a new dimension. Because from the beginning, they have been with dreams, they grow up to be confident and non-conformist. Anju (SMH) has been charmed by Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*. Unexpectedly, she submits to destiny; is married to Sunil, a computer scientist. There, late pregnancy, an absence of conjugal intimacy, and cultural challenges have troubled her marital journey. Besides, Sunil is an alcoholic, is habituated to American culture, and embodies Indian patriarchy; he is even cynical of the English words used by Anju.

“Shit!’ Of all the American terms I’ve avidly gleaned in the three years I’ve been here, it’s my favourite. It’s explosive, exact conciseness expresses how I feel a lot of the time. But I am careful to use it only when Sunil isn’t around because he thinks it isn’t ladylike. I point out that I hear far worse from him when he’s driving. He claims that’s different.” (SMH 205).

She tried her best to adjust to his Indian masculinity, though feels herself an ‘outsider’. Later, she starts working only to bring Sudha to America even at the cost of a miscarriage. Anju exclaims, “My baby, I killed him” (SMH 304).

Sudha, the second protagonist (SMH) knows her father happens to be responsible

for Anju's father's death and therefore, for family reputation, marries Ramesh, a Railway worker, instead of eloping with Ashok. After her marriage, she is intimidated by her in-laws, but later she has to come out of it as she refuses to abort her baby girl. The young protagonists in GBB, Savitha and Poornima, have been with dreams, been loyal to family or society with no appraisal words, rather with drastic torture. Poornima's father slaps her before the marriage suitors because she dares to refuse to marry a person with a physical deformity. At the prostitution, both never stop pursuing their dream and finally manage to go to America.

After the marriage, the dichotomy of roles emerges in Anju and Sudha in SMH. In GBB, Poornima (married) and Savitha (not married), being raped, joins Guru's den, works as a sex worker, and finally gets her old self and later plans to leave this country to lead a life of her own. These defiant young girls have also once led a submissive life like their feminine predecessors. Such dual roles or ambivalence are found in Sarat Chandra, Tagore, Jhumpa Lahiri, and even in Taslima Nasrin's writing and in our everyday society as well. Postmodernists define it as 'binary opposite', the dichotomy of role. The second stage of Transformation, that is, the visionary for a life of one's own choice, bears testimony to the need for the review of Gender Role.

Dr. Md. Asif and two other authors mention,

"Gender relations reflect an imbalance of power that is constructed by discursive practices and social norms and need to be recontextualized and revised to ensure a fair and just society..."

Existing gender performativity is reversed conspicuously in GBB, as Savitha (after being raped by Poornima's father) and Poornima (after passing a hellish stage at her in-law's house) join in a women-trafficking zone, don't break down; rather, run after the mission to live a 'life'!!! And, start for a new place in America. Anju and Sudha are victimized by their marriage. Never stop writing letters and, at last, start striving for a new 'possibility'.

As Anju says, "I have to believe in possibility..."

Anju does not want to rethink her dreamed pursuit of being united with Sudha even after the death of her Baby. Her yearning resonates like this,

"But when I see Sudha, her face bright with a simple, generous joy, the walls I have set up so carefully collapse around me like a house of cards. Inside my heart it feels wet, like new rain. I drop my bags and throw my arms around her. In spite of all my insecurities, in spite of the oceans that will soon be between us and the men that are between us already, I can never stop loving Sudha. It's my habit, and it's my fate." (SMH 193)

Finally, their sisterhood wins, and Sudha arrives despite every phase of predicaments. Both will start afresh!!! A life free from social irritation, free from loveless

arbitrary husbandry. This stage is referred as a Bildungsroman by Dr. Parmendra Kumar Mishra, who claims:

“The novel recounts the process of epistemological construction of Sudha and Anju. It also expounds how they experience social, cultural, and linguistic realities which shape the process of their becoming or the reality of their Bildungsroman formation.” [The novel has been divided into two books, 'The Princess in the Palace of Snakes' and 'The Queen of Swords']

Male Characters

Sunil, Sudha's husband, an alcoholic, a cynical life partner, and lets his wife work harder during her pregnancy. Anju, Sudha (SMH) and Poornima (GBB) show Indian wives' loyalty towards loveless and arbitrary husbandry. Though Sudha, Savitha and Poornima are humiliated as prostitutes by society, even after being in an independent phase, they never go for retaliation by calling Guru, Mohan or Savitha's father 'prostitute'. The researcher wonders---why? Surprisingly, here the girls in the world are silent. They are yet to be oriented with their humane status like the colonized. All the female characters in two novels are resilient, loyal to society, untutored to undertake any legal procedure to complain against the physical tortures, oil-burning, or the murders of their husbands. They think 'silence' to be a safe theory for women. Novelists too are silent, but ignite an auspicious impulse by making the girls desperate about starting a new, abolishing male-framed society's bar; these girls prove that they can reconcile their willpower by extinguishing blind feminine fear of masculinity. The paper proposes the reconciliation of the well-intended gender treatment of the male agent through deconstructing the social discourse by placing the social leaders and lawmakers through their ability, irrespective of gender status.

For Sudha, Anju, or Poornima, 'safety' in marriage converts into marital rape, violence, and male subjugation. Even Poornima's husband, Kishore, distorts her face by throwing hot oil. Then, she is also forced into a human trafficking group. There, she is raped by the Guru and works as a prostitute supplier. She is also raped by Mohan. At last, from Mohan, she learns that Savitha is a sex worker, and she (Poornima) becomes desperate to meet her (Savitha). Then, she also learns a little English, has a passport, and finally arrives in the US, where she searches for Savitha in Seattle. The story ends with a scene where Savitha and Poornima are on two sides of a wall, dreaming of meeting each other.

Despite all these inhuman tortures, the two girls feel a new drive whenever they visualize meeting each other once; their only dream derives an occult strength from sisterhood and sincere love. However, a very simple truth is discovered from the two

novels: Poornima and Savitha refuse to accept their assigned roles or their fate passively. They challenge the very norms that constrain them.

Dr. Muhammad Asif, Nimra Zafar, and Tahreem Iftikhar state:

“The relationship between postmodernism and feminism is not confined only to the First World but to the Third World as well. Postmodern feminism encourages replacing patriarchal society with meritocracy. Poornima's idea is to envision and assemble a world with an exclusive economy, human interactions, and language for girls.”

Note to say, in these novels, the women possess profuse determination to build their own world of happiness, even at the cost of total degradation from society. No constraints or humiliations can stop Anju and Sudha or Savitha and Poornima from reaching their individual kingdoms. Lastly, the novels excavate a new notion from existing patriarchal autocracy: in our familiar acquaintances, characters like Ramesh, Sunil, Ashok, Appa, or Kishore, etc., are leading a sound life, who lack confidence, bravery, or financial ability; despite that, they exercise dominance over women. Examples in literary texts include Mohan in *That Long Silence*, Chanu in *Brick Lane*, and Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. These characters' financial inabilities do not cause them to be labeled as "feminine" nor are they as socially degraded as to be 'unprofitable' in the society. Nevertheless, women, whether married or single, are treated as 'burdens' because their duties from dawn to dusk are deemed to be worth no single penny.

Judith Butler's theory of 'Gender Performativity' denotes that gender is not a fixed identity but a 'repeated' performance shaped by power. Thus, society may recycle it as follows: the person (be it male or female) who can earn and think wisely should be given due honor and power. Equally, an inactive, irresponsible, or unwise person, whether male or female, should not be placed in a position to rule or dominate others. In GBB, Mohan, Guru, and other clients who visit prostitution, or work for supplying sex workers have been living a sound life in the society since its creation, never face such socially despicable treatment from the family or any designation like "prostitute", "kept", or "baijis" (singing or dancing stars of the imperial period). This paper attempts to hail the gracious inclination of the novelists, as they have piloted the pragmatically capable "women", like Nalini, Gouri, Pishi, Savita's mother and Poornima's mother, Anju, Sudha, Savitha, and Poornima, and the like, who do not become vindictive; or they do not ignore family responsibilities; have ultimately set an example of reconciling the gender role. The society may redefine its concepts by exempting the social leaders (Patrons of Male oligarchy) from the sin of discrimination so as to treat the two genders reconciling their potentials with their privileges so as to create laws for saving the human, not saving the 'man'.

Dr. Md. Asif et al says

“In postmodern feminist theory, a binary-based dichotomy, which prevails in society, is questioned. Conventional conceptions of manliness and patriarchy contribute to

women's oppression. There is a dire need to re-conceptualize gender elements and examine connections between men and women in society in a new way. Restoring gender imbalance is not easy and remains a goal that feminists dream to achieve, which can be possible only through a thorough revision of gender roles and constructions.”

The writers skillfully delineate the traditional framework of females who do not defy social requirements of silence or are not likely to raise their voices against the torture imposed by fathers, husbands, and other predatory male agencies, though they make the world insecure for girls. They assess girls' access to education and jobs as a rebellion against society. This paper does not focus on the oppression inflicted upon women by men; rather, it focuses on the question: how far traditional platforms for male dominance or the definition of 'masculinity' as resonates with the capability to earn, is justified? Because it has been evident that their roles can be performed even by illiterate or widowed women from rural families, though the word 'woman' connotes 'burden', 'worthless', a social 'menace'.

Reconciliation

State law proves to be futile before the social treatment of genders. Expected gender performativity from the social rulers and social members really matters, either for continuing the ongoing discriminations or, for reconstructing a mutually reconciled relationship of solidarity among the genders.

The novelists manifest a need for reconciliation, which means adopting some fairness in favour of the 'ruled gender' and curtailing some indulgence persistently enjoyed by the 'ruling gender'. It may precede further research, and thereby, through deconstruction of gender stereotypes, 'Women' will achieve 'Human' status in the upcoming future. The researcher reaffirms that 'Gender Role' is to be revised, only to be reversed to transcend the male hierarchy.

Conclusion

This study intensely idealizes both Shobha Rao and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, who have created two promising female protagonists in each novel, where the young girls do not spiritually die even after sexual assault, marital separation, or miscarriage. They do not degrade themselves, and they should not. Why should they? The societal conventions related to gender performativity must necessarily be revised, mustn't they? The novelists convey an innovative suggestion to the readers through the very decision of the young girls as to start a new independent life! But the novelists are silent about the potential frame of

that independent life, since this independent life is yet to be approved or may not be approved by a society which is steered by the patriarchal imperialists. Hence, society should necessarily deviate from the rigid negation towards punishing the abusers or rehabilitating the victims, in order to ensure a respectable reconciliation between the 'genders', a positive transformation. Then, in the process of reconciliation— an abuser, be it a husband, a male or a female, will be penalized by society; the victims need not go into exile; the social throne will not be authorized only for patriarchy, rather for anyone irrespective of gender.

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