
Traversing Gendered Margins through the Lens of Mother-Daughter Relationship: A Reading of Krishna Sobti's *Listen, Girl!* and Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb Of Sand*

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to examine the obfuscating yet definitive and detrimental presence of patriarchal control and gendered realities in family dynamics through an analysis of Krishna Sobti's *Ai Ladki (Listen Girl!)* and Geetanjali Shree's *Ret Samadhi (Tomb of Sand)*. These two fictional texts can help to understand the intricate relationship between gender, identity, and other cultural constructs within the context of Indian literature in Translation through a close examination of the power dynamics and social norms underlying the family system as portrayed in these narratives. The objective is to investigate these complex interplays so as to locate the position and subjectivity of Indian women in specific contexts and relationships. Both texts map the space of the historically victimized female subject and further explore the possibility of alternative subjectivities within the framework of Indian feminism. The paper is divided into three sections, each of which foregrounds the importance of equal representation of all genders as well as individuals from the periphery, making inclusivity the central theme. The first section explores the distinct fields of literary and cultural translation and their contribution to the making of "Women's Writings" within the expansive framework of "Indian Literature," highlighting the often-overlooked status of women writers and translators and their invaluable contributions to shaping and amplifying the voices of Indian women relegated to obscurity due to the burden of being both women and Indian. The second section sheds light on the strong and intense presence of women writers in indigenous languages and their considerable impact on the wider literary landscape. The third section probes the chosen literary works as specimens of "écriture féminine" (to use the term coined by Helene Cixous).

I

Indian literature in translation, an incredibly fecund and promising domain, exhibits striking richness and diversity as it mirrors the profundity of the growing Indian literary traditions. These works deftly explore the intricacies of Indian life, capturing the very essence of its people, their cherished thoughts, culture, philosophy, and history with remarkable lucidity but not without a touch of introspective scrutiny. In his thought-provoking essay titled "Propositions," excerpted from the seminal work "Some Positions on a Literary History of India," Sujit Mukherjee, a renowned cultural historian, astutely delves into the unique literary culture of our nation. He notes, "...Just as voices or instruments may differ but Indian music retains its identity, similarly, the languages may differ but need not disrupt the entity that is Indian Literature." (16) In fact, what the Upanishads declare with "*Ekam Sat Vipraah Bahudha Vadanti*" rings true when applied to Indian literature. "Truth is one, yet wise persons may articulate it variously." In a similar vein, one might suggest that the Advaita philosophy permeates the literary, spiritual, and cultural spheres of the northern hemisphere, despite the obvious disparities manifested on many levels. Therefore, it is not difficult to infer how the inherently diverse and heterogeneous Indian literature composed in a variety of languages, translated, read, and admired even in international languages can still reflect Indian reality, its ethos, its milieu, and the sentiments of its living traditions with effectiveness and sensitivity. K Satchidanandan, a renowned poet, translation theorist and critic, points to the possibility of "multilogue" when discussing the multifaceted, polyphonic nature of Indian literature. "Multilogue" refers to the reciprocal interaction between languages, cultures, and positions. By drawing a parallel between the multitude of languages existent in India and the unwavering unity that persists despite the variations in form and content, critics and scholars widely concur

that linguistic differences are incapable of eroding the cohesive entity that is Indian Literature, or more accurately, Indian literatures. U.R. Ananthamurthy, former president of Sahitya Akademi, observes pertinently in this regard: "If you look at the diversity of Indian literature you come to see its unity, and if you look for unity, you are struck by its diversity." This profound insight reveals the enduring and collaborative nature of India's literary heritage. The components of Indian Literature are constantly being redefined and reevaluated. To gain insight into this, we can refer to the following deliberations by linguist and comparatist, Sisir Kumar Das, who explains the construction of "Indian Literature" as follows:

Indian Literature is not a literature in the common sense of the term determined by its linguistic location. It is a larger construction based on evidence of an unbroken continuity of themes, genres, symbols, canons and traditions. It is a complex of literatures involved in a contentious negotiation with one another, all aware of the existence of many traditions and their simultaneity- or what Professor Gokak once described as consubstantiation- which gives them a location in the history of Indian literary activity. Its boundaries are not fixed forever, and even its components are not permanent. There has been a continuous arrangement and rearrangement among its linguistic components. (25)

Apparently throughout history, boundaries of all kinds—tangible, psychological, or metaphorical—have stifled people's ability to think creatively and logically. Therefore, it was imperative to find ways to overcome those barriers and foster more connectedness. The act of translation, here, serves as an influential catalyst that corrodes the barriers and hierarchical distinctions and endeavours to bring about both poetic and social justice, albeit in certain respects. Interestingly, professionals, students, teachers, and intellectuals all the world over have greatly benefitted from transcending linguistic boundaries. It's remarkable to note that individuals unjustly persecuted or silenced by the repressive forces of patriarchy and victims of systemic gender-based discrimination have gained their powerful voices through the transformative act of translation. It is also irrefutable that this unique mode of transfer of ideas, thoughts, intentions, and values across nations and cultural boundaries has particularly ignited the imagination of literature enthusiasts. Translation activities have enhanced the beauty of the originals by endorsing intellectually stimulating ideas, enabling literary and cultural exchanges, and expanding the imaginations of discerning readers by making them more empathetic, tolerant, and less judgmental. From Katherine Parr, Constance Garnett, Constance Bache, Sarah Austin, Lucy Hutchinson, Emily Wilson, Don Me Choi, Mini Krishnan, Baran Farooqi, Maya Pandit, Amritbir Kaur, Lakshmi Holmstrom, Meena Kandasamy, Syeda Hameed, Tahira Naqvi, Rahul Soni, Sangeetha Sreenivasan, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to Daisy Rockwell, among many others, constitute a burgeoning tribe that has made significant contributions to the dissemination of transformative ideas and emotions expressed by socially committed writers and their efforts have resonated with individuals worldwide.

Translation yields significant advantages for both writers and readers, granting individuals a voice and agency to challenge epistemic violence and deconstruct hierarchies embedded within knowledge systems. By breaking down the insularity and hegemony of the prevalent dominant ideology, translation has opened up spaces for subversive readings, fostered cross-cultural interaction and empathy, and paved the way for a more inclusive, egalitarian society. Translations have been recognized for displaying various forms of resistance against established systems, hierarchies, sexism, feudalism, and so on. Edwin Gentzler, in his work *Contemporary Translation Theories* notes that translations have been engaged in "representations of alternate value systems and views of reality."⁽⁹⁾ Translations as reinterpretation and rewriting strategies have suitably addressed pressing social and political causes, exposed concealed ideologies and discriminatory policies, and also brought into question logocentrism, and the belief in a single, objective reality. While translators have been diligent, steadfast, pragmatic, sensible, sensitive, accurate, ethical, and moral in their efforts, they have unquestionably facilitated the dialogue between cultures, individuals, and linguistic

literary traditions, treating them as worthy of mutual respect. D. P. Pattanayak's following observation makes sense as translation resolves many confusions and creates bridges of understanding, "Translators are neither traitors nor transcorruptors as some allege. Good translators perform the important role of cultural ambassadors among languages and cultures." It is a fascinating spectacle to witness the literary world awaken to the astounding talent and prowess of Indian fiction writers, as their works are now being embraced in languages across the globe. Indeed, the global literary landscape has been enriched by the ascent and success of Indian fiction writers, whose translated works have mesmerized readers all around the world. However, it is imperative to figure out whether these literary voices align with the distinct Indian perspective, their creative aesthetic philosophy, or not. Simultaneously, one also needs to ponder whether this recognition truly aligns with the "Indian response" to the most profound iniquities that plague our world. Will global thinking resonate with the Indian perspective on issues such as inclusivity, secularism, and democratic temper, as well as the intricate dynamics of caste, class, race, gender, human rights, climate change, and other pressing concerns? Only time will tell! One thing is certain though, the translation of Indian literature has caused a stir, and tremendous excitement in the global literary community. Despite the fact that "the telling has not been easy", as famously said by Raja Rao about the fiction writers of the post-independence era who nonetheless have told memorable tales "in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own" (Rao), one can only speculate about the difficulties translators face when rendering our shared realities into foreign languages. The world has indeed recognized the talent and craftsmanship of Indian fiction writers through the publication of their works in various world languages. Today, the act of translation facilitates not just the 'survival' and 'recognition' of the vernacular, encompassing the fervent and impassioned expressions of indigenous voices, but also the oral experiences, oral narratives, and oral histories of the subaltern, thereby proving their commitment and ethical stance. A striking illustration of this phenomenon could be seen in the recent and phenomenal reception of Geetanjali Shree's masterpiece, *Tomb of Sand*, which not only secured the prestigious International Booker Prize but also invited contemplation on the profound and empowering ideas woven through its pages. In this particular context, it is evident that languages serve as channels, facilitating the connection between individuals from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, and leading to a shared understanding of lived realities. Moreover, literary works assume the role of vehicles that traverse these linguistic bridges, enabling people to engage in the exploration of groundbreaking ideas and the dissemination of knowledge for the greater good of humanity.

It is with this backdrop, that the present study aims to analyze the 'systemic and structural oppression' of women and other gendered realities as depicted by Krishna Sobti in her monumental and intriguing novella *Ai Ladki* and Geetanjali Shree in her magnum opus, *Ret Samadhi*. Centred on the English translations of these writings, this analysis shall direct its attention towards the representation of mother-daughter relationships within these literary works, which serve as an incisive exploration of the gender roles and the ensuing conflicts that permeate familial bonds. Both Krishna Sobti and Geetanjali Shree are writers with acute perception and remarkable foresight as they see through the warp and weft of family relations and document the transformation of their female personas from passive, voiceless entities to women endowed with discernment and passionate intensity. Both of these legendary authors are responsible for bringing women characters out of the depths of ignominy and into the light, demonstrating that they are capable of having strong, independent voices, that they can overcome their fragility and vulnerability to experience moments of intense living instilling in them a sense of identity and purpose. Both iconic writers are known for penning tales of courage and ferocity with their protagonists rising from the "mundane" and ultimately getting transformed into heroic figures exhibiting remarkable grit, vitality, and resilience.

Krishna Sobti, the esteemed recipient of the Jnanpith Award (2017), widely regarded as the preeminent figure in Indian literature, variously hailed as the 'doyen of Indian literature' by learned academician Sukrita Paul Kumar and as 'the original feminist' by the discerning critic Kuldeep Kumar, stands as a fierce spokesperson for the collective experiences of women coming from different backgrounds. Sobti's literary genius is manifested in her poignant awareness of life and the struggling humanity. She paints a vivid picture of the pivotal moments that governed the fates of countless individuals, particularly women, during the tumultuous times of pre-independence, the India-Pakistan divide, and the aftermath of gaining independence. With a remarkable ability to demystify the 'female experience,' Sobti delves into the subtleties of identity, the secrets of desire, individuality, and other sensitive themes that concern both the personal and social evolution of her subjects. Her characters, with a fire in their belly, navigate the complex terrain between tradition and modernity, offering a panoramic view of Indian society in all its nuanced tensions. Eminent literary critic Sukrita Paul Kumar's perspective on her oeuvres provides the key to deciphering her philosophy: "Krishna Sobti develops in her fiction a sense of history that ironically pushes one to go beyond it. By looking at the divisive politics of the past squarely in the eye, she wished to suggest a path towards an integrated social vision. Defying the conventional portrayal of women characters, she carved out space for women who could express 'desire' and come into their own." (Frontline)

In opposition to the entrenched biases that persist against women writers and more specifically against those writing in vernaculars, Geetanjali Shree emerges as a formidable literary figure who ardently strives to amplify the female perspective in her native language. Her resonant voice strikes a chord with contemporary women who are engaged in the pursuit of self-discovery and individuality. Shree's narratives open the floodgates of women's hearts, giving voice to their suppressed emotions, unconscious longings and projecting a spotlight on their journeys. In a self-assured manner, she reflects upon the exquisiteness of socially relevant literature in our times, asserting that it "entails a dialogue both with oneself and with the world at large". (Geetanjali Shree) As a discerning and compassionate chronicler of women's lives and stories, Shree exhibits a heightened awareness of the multifaceted personalities of Indian women, showcasing their remarkable fortitude and ability to bounce back from adversity. By doing so, she evocatively imbues the wide canvas of female literary tradition, which includes luminaries such as Ismat Chughtai, Krishna Sobti, Amrita Preetam, and many more powerful names, adding a touch of brilliance and intensity. Her writings reverberate with the voices of 'real women', immersing us in their untold and hushed stories and enabling us to embrace our own experiences without shame or inhibition. Her characters, Ma and Beti from *Tomb of Sand*, translated into English by Daisy Rockwell, are at once endearing and intriguing and display firmness of mind and spirit eliciting our affection as well as an admiration for their naivety as well as tactful demeanour suited to the circumstances. The novel *Tomb of Stone* has a circular time frame, with the stories moving back and forth as is typical of a feminist narrative that breaks the mould. On the other hand, the novella *Listen Girl!* is all about the musings of an octogenarian protagonist and deviates from typical storytelling by focusing solely on 'women's lives' through a heart-to-heart conversation between a mother and her daughter. Both texts map the position of gendered subjects in the patriarchal world and further explore cultural possibilities for the protagonists, especially for those for whom their personal independence and individuality matter more than any materialistic possession. The mother-daughter bond is at the heart of both works and is presented in an entirely new light. The entire process of 'remembering' by the mother and 'listening' by the daughter is a remarkable feature in both writings as it is empowering, cathartic and aids the characters in reclaiming their past and revamping their present in connection to it or in defiance of it. Talking about the centrality of the discussion on mothers and daughters in relation to questions of identity for women in feminist discourse Marianne Hirsch talks about it in her work, *The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis and Feminism* :

There can be no systematic study of woman in patriarchal culture, no theory of woman's oppression, that does not take into account woman's role as a daughter of mothers and as a mother of daughters, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that does not study that relationship in the wider context in which it takes place: the emotional, economic and symbolic structures of family and society.

Due to the oppressive nature of orthodox society, the biasedness of Dharma Shastras, and the perpetuation of myths and fables prioritizing stridharma, the attitudes of the masses in Indian society are deeply constricted. This results in a severe compromise of women's agency and autonomy, even within privileged communities and upper-class/caste families. In her thought-provoking article titled "Our Women, Their Women," Vrinda Nabar discusses the limited scope of women's lives as a result of the pernicious influence of herd mentality, preconceived notions, and unqualified assumptions:

In the traditional Hindu view, human life has been commonly perceived as falling into four successive stages: Brahmacharyasrama, Grhasthasrama, Vanaprasthasrama, and Sanyasasrama. Each of these was seen as a quasi-entity with its own norms of behaviour, its set of values and system of ethics. The passage of a woman's life may be seen as similarly slotted into different phases corresponding to defined roles: girl-child, adolescent, wife, daughter-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, sowbhagyavati, widow. (41)

It is crucial for women to recognize the deeply ironic nature and workings of patriarchy in India, where they are simultaneously revered and treated as goddesses, as exemplified by the adage "*Yatra naryastu pujiyante, ramante tatra devtaah.*" Yet, conversely, when women dare to challenge the submissive code, they are immediately stigmatized as witches, vamps, home-wreckers, embodiments of sensuality and sin, and so on. The perpetuation of damaging stereotypes and the constricting of women's freedom and agency through the forming of 'female-ness' are evident in every walk of life. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan offers insightful reflections on the interplay of politics surrounding the representation and subjectification of women in the Indian context, "The construction of women in terms of recognizable roles, images, models and labels occurs in discourse in response to specific social imperatives even where it may be offered in terms of universal and abstract rhetoric of 'woman' or 'women' (or the Indian woman', as the case may be)." Through the discernment of this 'entrapment' or 'ideological manoeuvring', women can interrogate the prevailing patriarchal norms and assert their rightful claim to parity in terms of rights and opportunities across all spheres of existence. It is important to acknowledge that due to their social conditioning and marginalized status, women may unintentionally contribute to perpetuating injustices against women. With their limited agency and ignorance, they may also play a role in inadvertently misguiding and misinforming younger generations of women. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan passionately identifies and investigates the implications of restricted resistance within feminist narratives, asserting, "The truth about agency is that the dividing line between compliance and subversion is thin and the woman's body is often the conflicting site of both giving in to, as well as resisting dominant constructions... We must therefore recognize the limited nature of agency even though the possibilities may be endless. (11) As one can see that in both texts, the mothers fuss about the necessity of marriage and motherhood for girls leaving little choice for their educated liberated daughters. Here one can clearly discern the pervasive influence of patriarchy that makes women believe that true happiness lies in acquiring the virtues of the feminine. The paper, thus seeks to locate women protagonists reflecting strong individuality even while trapped in conventional roles, inevitably calling into question the century-old stereotypes pertaining to gender and their associated normative value through a re-reading of some Hindi fiction of enduring significance. It is an empowering 'reading of resistance' in Hindi fiction written by women authors- a distinct field which contrary to common misconceptions, is non-scintillating, philosophically profound, psychologically nuanced, and politically informed, as it discloses the magnitude of female relationships at the heart of the writings that vociferously

challenge and critique the patriarchal discourse and gendered stereotypes embedded in our day-to-day existence. It is an attempt to analyze specific narratives in order to uncover the important relationships that shape the lives of women protagonists. These women face challenges and persevere, all while making significant contributions to the overall “women's experience”. Both Sobti and Geetanjali challenge gender politics by pointing out the construction of the “Indian Woman,” echoing Simone de Beauvoir's well-known assertion that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” The paper explores the strategies of ‘resistance’ that women have adopted over generations to secure their freedom through small yet significant actions. The present discourse further scrutinizes the process in which, by means of deliberate actions and a conscious repudiation of cultural paradigms of womanhood, as well as oppressive doctrines of paternalistic ideology, one may effectively validate certain changes within the domestic and familial milieu. The characters assert themselves with tremendous resolve. These individuals exude confidence, nerve, and a thorough understanding of their environment as they go about making decisions that have strong bearings on positive social change. Enmeshed within an intricately interconnected ecosystem, they feel the need to assert their individuality and engage in a fierce battle for their very survival. It is a spectacular example of ‘sisterhood’ when a mother and her daughter both come together for each other and even draw strength from one another in their fight against inequality. This is done with the intention of highlighting an entirely reformed point of view on the lives and worldviews of women that are provided by them. The texts under study are crucial to the understanding of intergenerational discourse and help redeem the limitations imposed by patriarchy on the female psyche and lives. Over the years, feminist fiction has attacked the non-personhood and self-diminishment of women, as well as the constraints women face in procreative activities. The texts under study challenge the mythification and reduction of women to mere archetypes of ‘perfect mothers’, ‘perfect daughters’, and ‘perfect wives’, which only serve to romanticize the harsh realities of their physically and mentally draining experiences. These roles often lead to extreme isolation, alienation, and repression of feelings in most individuals, yet are highly glorified. Women absolutely deserve the opportunity to choose between what J.S. Mill precisely refers to in *The Subjection of Women* “a life of subjection to the will of others, and a life of rational freedom”. When it comes to challenging the slavery of women at the hands of ideological institutions, Sobti is a pioneer in the field. Both texts with coming-of-age narratives depict the protagonist's inner development over successive generations. While the mothers were initially entrapped in the patriarchal enclosure, the daughters reject their en-genderment, refuse to be regarded as objects of desire, implying a rejection of compulsory heterosexuality, and refusal to be the archetypal “angel at home.” In contrast to the maternal image that appears to represent, in the words of Elisabeth Badinter, “society's idealism,” both mothers question, examine, and dissect the politics of ‘difference’ between male and female and other genders in a very realistic manner and transcending patriarchal norms by following their desires and feelings. It's certainly, “civilization as a whole that produces this creature-which is described as feminine”.(Beauvoir) Further talking about the devaluation of women in India, V. Geetha discusses how motherhood gives women a high value, but no individuality. “Worshipping women as mothers, while devaluing them in every other sense, thus became a way of displacing as well as managing fears about female power and sexuality. Valuing their essential nurturing qualities of love and compassion, as most scriptures do, confirmed the idea that women were naturally and fundamentally meant to be mothers.” (15) These works within folds of familial tales encapsulate narratives of mothers, daughters, and women in general who have been excluded from sociopolitical, financial, and creative spheres in the name of honour of family, community, and nation.

Both texts contest the essentializing of categories such as motherhood and parenting, which are often understood through the lens of biological determinism and gendered norms. It is suggested that motherhood and parenting can facilitate the attainment of personal identity and

self-discovery in tandem with nurturing and caregiving roles, which need not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Although motherhood and parenting have been viewed factors as posing serious threats to one's ambitions and career opportunities over the years, we need an inclusive understanding of these roles in the Indian context where answers to questions of identity, meaning, and existence can be found through mutual acceptance and consideration of one's rights without causing serious antagonism or hostility. In a notable departure from previous ideological dispositions, one observes within these narratives a discernible inclination among women to interrogate their predetermined destinies. Both texts emphasize the perpetual victimization of Indian women within the confines of the family system and a recognition of the purposelessness they endure. While Indian society's favouritism towards male children is blatantly obvious, it leaves little or no space for a female child's existence to be acknowledged. Daughters, who are often neglected, are expected to conform to social expectations of 'femininity' by obediently imitating their mothers. It should also be noted that the system of "benevolent paternalism" has only exacerbated women's subordination in society and deprived them of all meaning. In her paper titled "A Note on Patriarchy," Uma Chakravarti, a feminist and a historian discusses the devaluation and subjugation of women under Brahmanical Patriarchy as an inevitable outcome of the prescribed gender roles that women have historically been assigned:

Paternalism has great significance for an analysis of the position of women since their subordination has been primarily expressed in the form of paternalistic dominance within the structures of the family. The ideology of paternalism is successfully internalized by women who experience the full impact of cultural models based on religion, mythology and law. Paternalism has been extremely successful in India, as elsewhere, and was reinforced by pre-independence and post-independence thinkers and policymakers and has easily adapted itself to moderate reforms in the status of women without in anyway changing the power relations between men and women in the family or in wider society. Paternalism reinforces the sexual division of labour, as well as the sexual division of power, as is fundamentally based on the notion of biological differences requiring women to work in separate spheres from those of men. Thus we can see that paternalism leads us to think that the differences in the status of men and women are merely biological rather than a series of maternal and social structures that enable men to dominate over women i.e. it fairly successfully invisibilizes the institution of patriarchy so that neither women nor men can recognize its working in society and in their own lives. It is when women and men regard the subordinate status of women as 'natural' and thus invisibilise the subordination that patriarchy becomes established firm as an actuality and as an ideology. (4)

In both texts, one can occasionally perceive a steadfast allegiance to the paternalistic ideology. The older women in both settings overtly emphasize and subsequently normalize the significance of patrilineal ideology, thus forging a complicit alliance with the dominant forces of patriarchy. As can be evidenced through the following extract from Sobti's novel, in which Ammu doth pass on the traditional wisdom unto her progeny, "A family doesn't come about by mere wishing. You earn it in your previous lives, the fruit of good deeds done. Ladki, a father is like a reservoir of water. He provides the sap generation after generation to the family tree. (58) Reproductive responsibilities, although often seen as a huge restriction, are to blame for women's obliteration, powerlessness, invisibility, and absolute marginalization within society. Through her long monologue, Ammu is able to reminisce, recapture and resituate all her inner turmoils and frustrations in the right perspective, "Ladki, everyone's life passes through a series of points and counterpoints. In a family, the game is never amongst equals; it's between unequal players. The master of the house provides for the family; he grows in strength and authority. The mother of his children is mortgaged to this authority." (70)

Similarly, the predicament and anguish of Ma in *Tomb of Sand* after her husband's demise is a clear example of the emotional vulnerability and dependence that women often experience within the confines of their familial roles. It is disheartening to witness the burden placed upon

women, as they are expected to bear the weight of their family's emotional well-being, even in the face of personal tragedy. This portrayal serves as a stark reminder of the exhaustion and societal expectations that women are forced to endure: "She had grown tired of breathing for them, feeling their feelings, bearing their desires, carrying their animosities. She was tired of all of them, and she wanted to glide into the wall with a tremor; if a bug slipped into a crevice would the crevice itself start breathing? (TOS,39) It is the daughter's tender care and gentle affection that enables the fragile, emotionally distraught, grieving Ma to reopen her eyes to the world, "The eyes which have also grown on the unwilling back. Which see the fingers of Beti reaching towards it. Which insist: *we will lift you up*. Which smugly declare: *we know how*. Which touch the back, rub it, caress it, as though their insistence will descend into the veins of the back and finally the back will have to acquiesce, how could it not?"(TOS,51) It is indeed the symbiotic relationship between mother and daughter and their open communication that frees them from all kinds of fears and fills them with a certain radiance and lightness of being. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that these responsibilities have also provided women with a semblance of purpose and have inadvertently given hopes of change by facilitating fair communication with future generations. Moreover, as women navigate the complexities of nurturing and shaping the next generation, they can also find friends and advisers in their offspring who could open channels for their personal development and self-discovery. In *Tomb of Sand* Mother and daughter watch films together, laugh awkwardly at the Western kissing and chuckle like girls, joyfully embark on trips together, and sow the seeds of hope and change. Looking beyond the Freudian and other psychoanalytical perspectives on the mother-daughter relationship as embodying Oedipal conflict, ambivalent attitudes, hatred, desire, guilt, and other hostile emotions and rejections, it becomes evident through the reading of these texts that the mother and daughter roles are changing in Indian society and these two with the right mindset can actually rescue and support each other in an amicable manner, thereby contributing to each other's pursuit of life's purpose and fulfillment. Talking about the important role served by daughters in contemporary Hindi fiction Ira Raja calls the daughter's presence, "enabling" and explores the rich history of mother-daughter relationships by sharing their stories. "...the thematic manifestation of a feminist sensibility in women-authored texts in India in contrast takes the form of mother-quest much more than matrophobia. The feminist daughter in these stories is an enabling presence who attempts to retrieve the sense of her mother's marginal life as she enters her perspective in order to reveal her dreams, her forbidden desires and her frustrated ambitions, registering emotions ranging from difference and dissent to anger and resentment, but rarely rejection."(863) However, these mothers are evolving figures, as they manifest a palpable discontent with their prevailing circumstances while also showing a profound appreciation for even the most modest gains achieved by their daughters through their steadfast resistance against the pervasive patriarchal forces that seek to condition and domesticate them. They compel us to consider the possibility of social and spiritual rejuvenation through the ability to think for ourselves. By challenging the notion that motherhood and parenting are to be solely defined by biological factors and social expectations, these texts invite us to explore the transformative power of these experiences as they would eventually lead to self-awareness and feminist consciousness. They prompt us to question the limitations imposed by traditional definitions of these roles, encouraging a broader understanding that encompasses individual agency and spiritual fulfillment through connecting with future generations for the betterment of society.

II

In the realm of Hindi fiction, within the folds of a critical investigation of the intricate power dynamics surrounding mother-daughter relationships and gendered expectations emerges a rich tapestry of deconstructing patriarchal discourse and dismantling gendered stereotyping. These works delve deep into the women's world, and locate their position within the family

economy, shedding light on the challenges that arise when social expectations intersect with the questions of individual identity, desire, and fulfillment through the explorations of intimate bonds between mothers and daughters. Through a lens reminiscent of feminist writers and critics', Sobti's incisive prose leads us on a journey that offers a thought-provoking exploration of the prevailing narratives surrounding dominant gender roles and the systemic structures that perpetrate and sustain gender inequalities and social injustices. Through intricate characterizations and nuanced narratives, these authors skillfully navigate the complexities of mother-daughter dynamics, exposing the underlying power imbalances that perpetuate patriarchal structures. By examining the multifaceted relationships between mothers and daughters they also foreground the apparent strength, resilience, and preparedness of Indian women in finding a voice and a space as they navigate their way in a constantly evolving society.

Within the distinctive landscape of Hindi fiction Krishna Sobti, Amrita Preetam, Mannu Bhandari, Maitreyi Pushpa, Mridula Garg, Geetanjali Shree, Usha Priyamvada, Mamta Kalia, Anamika, Alka Saraogi, and a host of other female writers have long been working to expose the conflict that lies between women's social roles and their aspirations towards the realization of female subjectivity and the perpetual struggle for rights. In their efforts, they have not only deconstructed the deeply ingrained misogyny of the patriarchal structures but also brought into discussion the alienation, loneliness, angst, victimization, and the resultant mental health issues faced by these women. Their depiction of women characters is unquestionably empathetic and inspired by democratic ideals. These texts unambiguously constitute "women writing women" as in the words of Helen Cixous that women for historico-cultural reasons have refrained from talking about the struggles as well as desires which are nevertheless crucial for their empowerment: "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement." (334) This discourse allows us to envision Indian women at the forefront of democracy, demanding their rights and a life of dignity. The entire process of viewing women as individuals from a theoretical, political, and philosophical standpoint is extremely enabling, and it allows us to situate not just their points of view, but also their fantasies, aberrations, willfulness, and imperfections in the right context, further helping us understand their objectification and long-held subordination, which could be taken as a concrete step towards women empowerment. Through nuanced characterizations and exquisite storytelling techniques, these authors challenge the conventional roles assigned to women, exposing the limitations imposed upon them by a male-dominated society. By looking at and researching the complexities of mother-daughter dynamics, we gain insight into a power relationship that is the least explored, often overlooked as something primal and a given, but which with its propensity is conducive to bringing changes in generational thinking patterns and can give a boost to movements of women empowerment in the field of literature by igniting the imaginations of readers and writers alike to envision new possibilities. Ostensibly, the mother-daughter relationship seems to be an exclusively feminine bond in an Indian family setting, but within the folds of generations lie the propensity to decode the reasons behind centuries of violence and domination experienced by the subaltern. This enigmatic, complex relationship facilitates understanding of issues and relationships that intersect with labor, public and private ethics, pleasure, civil rights, and perception among many others. It's long been felt that as women remain concentrated to a narrow range of functionality mostly confined to the home and family their full potential goes unutilized and that also has a serious impact on their status and position in society.

The mother-daughter dyad is a typical subject of Indian family system and has received wide attention from authors like Krishna Sobti in *Ai Ladki (Listen, Girl!)*, Mitro Marjani (*To Hell*

With You, Mitro), Shashi Deshpande in *The Dark Holds no Terror*, *Roots And Shadows And Small Remedies*, Geetanjali Shree in *Mai* (Mother) and *Ret Samadhi* (Tombs of Sand), Avni Doshi's *Burnt Sugar or The Girl In White Cotton*, Arundhati Roy in *Gods of Small Things*, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, Gita Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Before We Visit The Goddess*, Krupa Ge's *What We Know About Her*, Anindita Ghose's *The Illuminated*, Anuradha Roy's *All The Lives We Never Lived*. In the Indian context, where women are conditioned to take satisfaction in their roles as wives, mothers, daughters, caretakers, dutiful parents, and so on their nurturing selfless hardworking self is duly emphasized and their longing for personal fulfillment and an "aesthetic space" remains a far-fetched dream. It certainly makes sense when Showalter writes, "Women like men are shaped by the country they inhabit, by their nation's language, history, literary canons, cultural mythologies, ideologies and ideals. (Showalter: 87) Both texts instead of focusing on women's victimization in a patrilineal society focus on women living their lives afresh which is a departure from the typical women's writings aimed to vindicate the much-wronged woman. The diverse studies in 'Feminisms' thus help contend women's perpetual subordination and oppression. As explained by Saugata Bhaduri and Simi Malhotra :

Feminism as a theoretical form, deals with 'gender' or the culture baggage that accompanies the sexes, rather than the physical sexual dichotomy, and it is more bothered about the complex machinations of gender power, rather than the simple polemic of man-woman dichotomy. (Bhaduri and Malhotra 111)

Writing against the cultural and historical forces that have subjected women to lifelong servility, both Sobti and Geetanjali Shree's narratives talk about the different choices of women in the raising of consciousness and what Michelle Barrett refers to as 'transformation of subjectivity'.

The unique relationship that has invariably supported the family system is held into focus to find the possibilities of re-articulations of female subjectivity and empowerment. The vision that has been shared by Sobti, Geetanjali Shree, and the likes is a strong testament to the fact that women are not to be circumscribed by the situations and circumstances they are caught in but are capable of higher thinking and reflection through their analytical and cerebral capabilities. More than anything, the depiction of women by these post-modern Hindi writers is realistic and relatable as they look beyond the stereotypical images of women as crying, sobbing, and silently suffering helpless women. These women are capable of self-reflection and criticism as they traverse their life incidents with a certain detachment, objectivity, and foresight to discover new meanings of survival and existence for themselves and their progenies. These writings are inevitably steeped in moments of self-awareness that help readers to find their place in a similar universe and critical questioning of the ways of deception and illusion that mar one's perception of reality. They rebel against the stifling conventions and hold out the power of support for other women by providing caution and advice albeit in a subtle manner.

Mridula Garg in her essay on "Metaphors of Womanhood in Indian Literature" talks about how women have never been seen as economic beings rather it's their presence as a house angel that matters the most to the patriarchy :

The exclusion of women as economic beings is especially significant because the woman's image as householder included a host of tasks, relating not only to housewifely nature but also to sowing, harvesting, and other farming operations. The thread that interlinked the Shakti-Devi and the householder was the concept of woman as mother. The mother figure embraced within itself not only the concept of the dutiful wife or the Sita-Savitri image but also the image of woman as the provider of food and comfort in the family. This Annapoorna image is, perhaps, the single most significant aspect of womanhood in India, celebrated through the ages. Like other figures, it has its beneficent and exploitative repercussions. But it remains the most

significant aspect of the metaphor of motherhood in India. (409-410)

Krishna Sobti, a fervent advocate for women's autonomy and rights, ostensibly expressed her discontent with the appellation "woman writer," despite the fact that she vociferously fought for gender equality and depicted all individuals with similar compassion and sincerity. She was honoured with the highest literary awards of her time, and she persistently wrote about the various lives, diverse experiences, and different journeys of women. She fearlessly highlighted their subjugation, exploitation, and the lack of fulfillment they often faced while confined to domestic roles and other societal expectations. Krishna Sobti's intriguing novella *Ai Ladki* is an in-depth delineation of the mother-daughter relationship, a subject that has long been the focus of feminist discourse. Sobti's exploration of this dynamic not only contributes to the vast body of knowledge within motherhood studies and maternal theory but also offers a profound opportunity to engage with perceptions towards elderly and the pervasive stereotypes of ageism. Rarely does the depiction of an elderly character in a literary work elicit admiration, but Sobti's deft handling of an aging protagonist surprised readers and sparked an important discussion about the treatment accorded to senior citizens and their rights and status within society. Her treatment is as much a subject of caregiving and provision of health services for the aging population as it also lays emphasis on their inclusivity, diversity and equity to elevate their position in society. The novel by Sobti not only refrains from depicting discrimination against the ageing and differently-abled mother, but it also portrays a dynamic and lively friendship between the mother and daughter, despite their frequent disagreements and obvious generational differences.

Sobti emerged as a formidable spokesperson and an ardent supporter of women's rights and individuality, pushing the boundaries of Hindi Women's Writings to unexplored yet progressive territories. Her writings mark a complete departure from the literary works produced by both male and female writers of the preceding era, a paradigm shift as she could articulate the concerns of the subaltern vehemently. She vocalized women's issues: their displacement from their maternal homes, their desires, their sexuality, their body, their victimization within marriage, and myriad forms of violence they were subjected to within their families and outside.

Sobti's treatment of the mother is way different from the images of the archetypal mother. Her mother is a force to be reckoned with, challenging and fiercely navigating the gendred expectations surrounding motherhood. Her act of 'turning the pages' of her life book as she 'retraces her steps' down memory lane, grants her the power to analyze her hardships and triumphs, turning it into a story of lessons learned for others, maybe. *Ai Ladki*, which is often alluded to as a fictionalized biography of her mother, is now regarded as a case study for what Rekha calls "a poignant interplay of mother-daughter mutual neuroses at the intersection of tradition and modernity." (IL vol. 53, p.169) Her description brings to mind the following statement of Julia Kristeva, describing the mother as a maternal body that is both a site of subjugated socialized feminine and is also the un-socialized 'pulsionistic' female subject with female power. While she seems to agree with Kristeva's view of maternal and the feminine as important components in the psychosexual development of a woman, one can clearly see that she finds objections to this kind of social conditioning of women to be mothers, dutiful daughters, and individuals seeking fulfillment through marriage, childbirth and mothering. Sobti's narrative thoughtfully examines the construction of "feminine bodies," and the way they are "appropriated" and "internalize" feminine principles within a patrilineal economy. It also highlights the "deprivation" of individual choices and the process of "assimilation," prompting us to reflect on the fate of many who unwittingly become complicit in this oppressive system.

The portrayal evokes a claim made by Julia Kristeva, wherein she characterizes the mother as a

maternal entity that embodies both the marginalized, societal construct of femininity, as well as the unassimilated, instinctual female subject with inherent feminine potency. Whilst it appears that she is concurring with Kristeva's perspective on the significance of the maternal and the feminine in the psychosexual growth of women, it is evident that she harbours reservations regarding the social imposition of roles such as motherhood, filial duty, and the pursuit of fulfillment through marriage, childbirth, and nurturing.

The text often critiques and challenges stereotyped images of motherhood, which are an amplification or magnification of social expectations of femininity that exert a highly restrictive influence on women, and impose severe limitations, often leading to the curtailment of their individuality and freedom. Whilst it is apparent that Ammi hails from a relatively liberal or progressive family, as evidenced by her father-in-law's commendation of her enthusiasm for horse riding pursuits, it becomes apparent that she finds herself discontented with the limited scope of her roles as solely a wife, a mother, or a family woman. This dissatisfaction is evident as she engages in deep meditation, pondering her circumstances.

“ . . . if I had known I was going to live for so long, I would have done something worthwhile with my life. This world is so huge, at least I could have gone around it. But I spent my days enmeshed in family responsibilities.” (AL, 91) This desire to have had a more productive and purposeful existence is the very impetus behind the mother's remorse and melancholy as she reflects upon her bygone days as a wasted opportunity.

When the daughter tries to comfort her by arguing that her efforts were not futile, as she successfully nurtured a complete family, she retorts with utmost clarity:

“ . . . Don't exaggerate, ladki. I'm the mother of all of you, no doubt, but I, am me. I'm not you and you're not me.” (AL, 91) The profound yearning to embody a certain meaning, to be someone, to possess agency over one's existence, and to navigate it in accordance with one's own terms and conditions is the very sentiment that Ammi laments with a tinge of sorrow. She perceives motherhood as an impediment to a woman's autonomy and the realization of her true potential. Similar to Adrienne Rich and other feminist thinkers, she also perceives it as a patriarchal mechanism utilized to exert control over women's bodies, desires, and capabilities. Ammi possesses a discerning ability to perceive beyond the embellished facade and cultural constructs surrounding the concept of motherhood within a patriarchal social structure. Recognizing it as a socially prescribed responsibility, she astutely acknowledges its tendency to perpetuate the subjugation of women and the corresponding dominance of men:

The mother produces. Nurtures with love and care. Then why is she alone sacrificed? The family divides her into fragments and scatters her to the four winds. Why? So that she may not remain whole, may not stand up in her own authority. A mother is kept either like a cow or a nursemaid. She should keep working, catering to the comforts of its members; that is all she is good for. She can conjure any image she wants of herself, but for her children she is no more than a housekeeper. (AL, 91)

This is an absolutely unflattering picture of maternity which may not sit well with traditionalists and chauvinists who have believed that a woman's primary role is to serve society by raising children and nursing the elderly. She has an intuitive understanding of women's needs and desires and vividly depicts the exhausting mental, emotional, and intellectual toll a life of loneliness must have taken on them. She unabashedly talks about the 'void' that encompasses a woman's heart during pregnancy and after childbirth, “When I conceived this daughter of mine, I don't know why I felt so lonely, so alone in my heart and mind. I felt like wandering alone on mountain paths.” (85) Sobti was a true feminist who risked the wrath of a large majority by eloquently articulating the sense of futility and loss felt by women who spent their entire lives facilitating the happiness of others but had little control over

their own destinies.

The text excavates the unresolved emotional content of the protagonist's life and through the mother-daughter dialogue lightens the dark corners of her life. Despite her irritability, her interfering attitude, Ammu is a likeable character and she rises in our esteem through her very weaknesses and honest admission of her frailties. Her soul expands when she speaks out what she has been carrying all through her daughter becomes her sole/soul mate empathizing with her mostly and diligently adhering to her wishes and orders. When she finally lets everything out, reaching a cathartic relief, her daughter becomes her confidante, the one person who understands her the most and who will do anything she asks of her. Eventually, it is the daughter who emerges as her kindred spirit, the only person obviously among the family who comprehends her most profoundly and willingly fulfills her every request. Although it is unexplored what emotional/physical wounds the daughter must have endured in her personal life or what alternate sexuality she would have preferred over the normative one, as a result of which she chooses to remain celibate and "unfulfilled" in the conventional sense, she seems to have undergone a profound transformation in the journey of caring for her mother and leads a fairly independent and unconventional life herself, and now, as her mother revisits her past, she too, contemplates her own existence, perceiving it as lacklustre but nonetheless satisfactory existence. However, she remains resolute in safeguarding her freedom, unwilling to compromise her autonomy for the sake of conformity. She finds solace in her artistic proclivities and derives contentment from being able to serve her ailing mother, and decides to live independently which in some sense give a measure of gratification to her mother too although she keeps criticizing her choices. In *Tomb of Sand*, the mother "the growing smaller woman" is becoming fearless and stronger; an elderly widow opens up about her unexpressed, pushed-aside feelings of love and longing. In Beti's home, which is strictly an "apatriarchal space" (Annis Pratt) and amidst her empowering bohemian lifestyle, Ma receives ample freedom and attention necessary for her to embark on a fresh chapter following the loss of her spouse. Her camaraderie with Rosy Bua and gradual retreat into "naturalistic epiphany" (Annis Pratt) brings her back to life to the extent that she takes control of her life, discarding not only her traditional attire but also indulging in activities that her heart desires. "Slowly Ma pours herself into the crannies and crevices of the house. She feels though as she's flying. She likes it. My feet don't touch the ground here. She flies about silently. She listens to the coming and going of her breathing. She hears the curling of a tendril. She hears the growing of the grass. She hears the undulation of the sunlight. She hears the descent of the evening. She hears the unfurling of her own body. She hears the blossoming of the unfurling." (TOS, 2. 20) The critically acclaimed novel has two women protagonists just as in Sobti's work *Ai Ladki* Mother and daughter form a formidable duo and through their honest conversations the story moves. Geetanjali Shree describes the cast of her work thus: "There are two women in this story. Besides these women there are others who came and went, those who kept coming and going, those who always stayed but weren't as important, and those yet to be mentioned, who weren't women at all. For now, let's just say that two women were important, and of these, one was growing smaller, and the other bigger." (TOS, 1.1) Coming from her Elder son's home and the suffocating care and protection, she regains her breath in her Beti's home where the 'green and the blue happily mix' and bring peace to her soul. While they laugh and talk together in the comforting presence of each other, in the 'door-less wall-less' house of Beti, the silence is more potent than speech, "Taking on the burden of all women, she'd been worrying about her mother's lamentable state. Today she was presenting Ma with a new life. She would make her live again. (TOS, 239) Both the daughters in the texts under study take on the role of mothers after a point and virtually take care of them as their mother would have taken of them in childhood, "Beti became the mother and made Ma the daughter, and stroked her brow. Now she's come home. I won't let her go away. How weak she's become, if it weren't for me she'd fall right over.... You see if I don't bring her slowly back to life! (TOS, 241) Thereupon the narrator

observes that this role reversal is probably true for all women.

The mother-daughter relationship, like any other familial relationship, is characterized by emotions, understanding, and shared experiences. In both texts, it is evident that there is a strong connection between the daughters and their mothers. However, the daughters choose to diverge from social expectations imposed by patriarchy, specifically by denouncing compulsory heterosexual relationships. Instead, they navigate their lives with confidence, competence, and courage. These daughters defy social norms and expectations by actively seeking independence and forging their own unique paths. Their rejection of conventional gender norms enables them to embrace their distinctiveness and pursue their own fulfillment, as well as foster a distinctive connection with their mothers founded on reciprocal respect and admiration. This dynamic companionship enables both the mother and daughter to liberate themselves from the limitations imposed by patriarchy and cultivate a relationship founded on principles of equality and transparency. The individual's entire outlook on life undergoes a transformation upon witnessing their mother be 'reborn'. Their behaviour, aspirations, desires, self-image, expectations from others, ability to handle adversity, conflicts, and challenges, as well as their overall perspective on life, can all be impacted by their maternal relationship. The special connection between mothers and daughters has the potential to influence and shape their personalities, values, and beliefs, ultimately having a significant impact on the trajectory of their lives.

It is curious to see how the ongoing discourse surrounding the value or the implications of motherhood for a woman as a catalyst for either emancipation or subjugation takes on a new significance when examined through the lens of a South Asian woman, ostensibly hailing from a privileged background, or at the very least, a relatively affluent middle-class milieu. Nevertheless, it is the priceless first-hand experiences she has had, coupled with her unwavering defiance of social norms and patriarchal conventions, that bestow upon her a profound understanding and a discerning reflection in the latter phase of her life. It is commonly observed that daughters often inherit many aspects of femininity from their mothers. However, it is evident that both daughters have defied the norms of society and have embraced their newfound independence and chosen paths in their adult lives. In the *Tomb of Sand* Beti is alternatively a trusted confidante, a patron, and subsequently a friend of Ma and leaves no stone unturned in fulfilling her wishes howsoever convoluted and improbable they might seem. She allows Ma to gratify her whims and have the time of her life by removing all restrictions that previously delimited her freedom. However, this hitherto unattainable liberty was made possible by her mother when she was younger and can be traced back to its source. She attempted to facilitate her daughter's independent exploration of the world despite being confined between social codes, traditions, cultures, and safety protocols. She literally and figuratively opened a window for her so that she could live her life as she desired :

But the funny thing was, amidst all the to-do, Ma managed to forge a path towards the forbidden. Like the window opening out into the guava orchard. It was Ma who had cleared this hidden path for Beti's comings and goings. Inside, there was a constant uproar of No, absolutely not, she won't go out! And in the meantime, Beti leapt through the open window and fluttered off like a bird. Only Ma knew. (TOS, 1.8)

From the most innocuous activities like climbing a mountain or plunging into the sea or to breaking off shards from the stars and swings from brittle bits of straw Ma helped her fulfill all her dreams as she would also do the same in the later year: "Ma still had confidence in her, and when those stars and straws evolved into the forms of friends and lovers, Ma would still open the window wide for her to leap out and go to them.(36)

Just like her Guru, her inspiration Krishna Sobti, Geetanjali Shree also acknowledges the vitality of the mother-daughter relationship as these two enlightened women challenge the

traditional patriarchal beliefs by exposing the illusion of the idealized, romanticized notion of “home” that supposedly brings fulfillment and security to women. Instead, they strive towards creating a progressive and liberated household where women can enjoy true freedom in the true sense. Beti's home is one such transformed setting, where they are no longer afraid to discuss taboo topics or express feelings openly. In the ninth section of Chapter 1, the narrator reflects on the possibilities that this relationship presents for women across various generations.

“Beti. Daughters are made of wind and air. Invisible even in moments of stillness, when only the very sensitive perceive them.(TOS,37) And on the same page she further says, “Daughter. You love her. You fear her. Now you see her. Now you don't. All women, don't forget, are daughters.”(TOS, 37)

The continuity of the female principle serves to unify the universe and encompasses various enigmas within its realm. The novel *Tomb of Sand* by Geetanjali Shree, translated by Daisy Rockwell, explores the issue of women's invisibility within families and society. It sheds light on how their contributions, status, and position often go unrecognized. Geetanjali Shree skillfully portrays the sense of alienation experienced by an elderly mother figure in her eighties. Following the passing of her husband, she has become despondent and has gradually withdrawn from her loved ones, often turning her back to them. The novel explores the concept of barriers, both physical and metaphorical, that women have historically constructed as well as dismantled as a means of self-preservation throughout the ages. “What can never be known for certain was whether the wall was playing the greater role in pulling Ma towards it, or whether it was her own desire to show her back to her family that drew her in. Ma just kept getting closer and closer to the wall, and her back became a wall itself, keeping at bay those who came to coax and cajole: Get up Ma, Get up! (17)

Apparently, both mother and daughter have independently embarked on personal journeys to discover their true selves, explored their individual identities, and sought a deeper understanding of themselves. The symbolic act of crossing the threshold marks a significant turning point in their lives, as they commence individual paths of personal exploration. As they gradually detach themselves from the bindings and denounce the comfort of their home, they draw nearer to comprehending their distinct roles and identities and even explore their rightful position within the larger community.

Both of the texts being discussed prominently feature a mother and daughter as central characters and highlight the significance of their friendship as a liberating and defining aspect of their lives. The plot of both works revolves around the characters' lived experiences. Mothers in both contexts have devoted a significant part of their lives as married women, fulfilling their responsibilities to their children and husbands with unwavering dedication. After the demise of their spouses, they embark on a journey of self-discovery. The bulk of the text focuses on how both protagonists navigate their burdensome past experiences. As mothers open up and express previously overlooked and unexplored facets of their personalities to their daughters, engaging in conversations regarding their ambitions, fantasies, wishes, and desires, it becomes evident that they are cultivating both authentic and fictional personas. Both women appear to be adequately cared for, however, they convey signs of despair, fatigue, loneliness, and emptiness, which they openly express in the presence of their daughters. As these adult ladies now going through advanced age vent out their repressed emotions, including anger, they experience a catharsis, an improvement in their emotional well-being, and a heightened sense of confidence within the homes of their daughters. Their daughters become their trusted confidantes, with whom they openly share their accumulated emotions, reactions, and thoughts. The daughters' unconventional choices and non-conformity create a liberating environment for their mothers, allowing them to move unhindered freely and pursue things of their liking. The mother possesses both tangible and intangible qualities. Both Sobti and Geetanjali through their

creative aesthetic activism enable the female protagonists to re-negotiate the spaces that have historically culturally confined them curtailed them subjugated them to experience liberation.

Tomb of Sand, authored by Geetanjali Shree and dedicated to Krishna Sobti, narrates the journey of Chandraprabha Devi, an individual in her eighties. Despite grappling with personal weaknesses, despair, societal norms, and the challenges faced by women in traditional set-up, Chandraprabha Devi gathers her strength and embarks on a transformative journey across the border. Her mission is to complete the unfinished tale she shared with her lover during her youth. Amma's courageous journey to rediscover her identity and reclaim what was unjustly taken from her serves as a driving force in her pursuit of self-realization. The love and motivation of the daughter serve as catalysts for her to pursue her aspirations and achieve her share of happiness by finding new meanings in life. Through the prism of her memories, she engages in a serious interrogation of the prevailing gender norms that are firmly entrenched within the fabric of our society and its collective consciousness. Both texts under study focus on the concept of the "woman's gaze," highlighting the notion that women possess a distinct perspective and asserting that this very divergence from the norm envisions liberation. Both of these texts contextualize women's personal experiences within a broader social framework, thereby illustrating the evolution of society. The protagonist's contemplations on the prevailing patriarchal ideologies liberate them, enabling them to reclaim their distinct selves in the face of the pervasive fragmentation and distortion of their psyche. The lead characters in both texts, quite literally and metaphorically, boldly traverse the artificial boundaries raised by patriarchy, which serve to divide and define. Geetanjali Shree asserts, "Anything worth doing transcends borders." Thus, her work explores the tragic ramifications of both physical geographical borders and symbolic borders in the form of binaries that essentialize and differentiate, such as male/female, us/them, home/unhome, and war/peace. It emphasizes the idea that any worthwhile endeavor goes beyond limitations and boundaries. Both mothers are tenacious, strong-willed, audacious women who persevere despite their physical and mental limitations and encourage their daughters to make the most of the opportunities available to them. Being infinite in power and energy, mothers continue to travel indefinitely through their daughters, "Sometime somewhere we are sure to meet again, we will recognize each other. Even in such a wide world, you can be sure of that. No matter where the mother is and where the daughter is, mother and daughter will always remain mother and daughter. Till the end of time." (LG, 99)

III

Both Krishna Sobti and Geetanjali Shree have skillfully employed language that aligns with the lived experiences of their female characters, thereby intensifying the emotional depth of their narratives. Ammu's character consistently engages in questioning the system, challenging its norms and expectations. However, she also expresses deep affection and admiration for her daughter and the nurse who devotedly and compassionately cares for her. In Ammu's long, meandering, delirious yet nuanced speeches, Sobti artfully intertwines memories, fantasies, ambitions, desires, and even spontaneous reactions, allowing for the free play of meanings as is typical of feminist writing. In Geetanjali's case, one can clearly see the effect of "women writing through their bodies" as Cixous beautifully articulates. Ma's frequent breaking into giggles, groans and whining sounds punctuated with laughter implying resistance, disinterest and nonconformity gives us a clear picture of her ability to challenge and disrupt the standard norms of conversation and writing. Acknowledging that language use is inherently gendered, as Woolf has passionately argued in *A Room of One's Own*, both writers consciously reject the conventional approach of poised, controlled, logical, and politically correct statements favoured by male novelists. Instead, they opt for silences, omissions, and repetitions, employing a circular form of narration, as emphasized by Kristeva and considered viable to articulate their protagonist's inhibitions, uncertainties, and subordination in society. This deliberate choice serves to foreground the lives of their characters, utilizing an impregnable

language that defies all patriarchal regulations.

Knowing that translation involves the representation of language and culture, both of the texts under consideration have accurately and aesthetically conveyed the ideas embodied in the original texts. The translated texts effectively convey the “resistance” of the female subjects to patriarchal thought, gender stereotypes and prejudices, as well as their resilience in the face of incapacitating circumstances. They deftly portray the female characters' quest for self-definition, their desire for meaning in life, and their conflict with the world. Both Shivanath and Daisy Rockwell through their nuanced renderings have tried to capture the collective experiences of Indian women, encompassing their agony, suffering, alienation, nostalgia, euphoria, and other emotions. The translation of *Ai Ladki* effectively captures the spoken and unspoken words, as well as the underlying intentions, expressed through the conversations between a mother and daughter. It delicately evokes the kaleidoscopic stream of consciousness of Ammi. Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* rendered into English by Daisy Rockwell too interiorizes women's experiences and brings out the potential subversiveness and rebelliousness of her female subjects. Rockwell tries to capture the nuances of the Indian language, spaces, and other culture-specific experiences as closely as possible. Daisy's translations of linguistic frivolity, even nonsense, punning, use of idioms, use of homophones, homonyms, and, as Geetanjali eloquently puts it, “an intuition honed over the years- funded with her experiences, observations, her history, geography, osmosis in the air, and an aesthetic sense,” was an immense undertaking but could only be conquered with Rockwell's expertise as well as understanding of the nuances. Geetanjali Shree enthusiastically shares her experience of engaging in a 'dialogue' with her translator, with their shared understanding of the importance of preserving the inherent beauty of the original text while also the need felt for shedding light on the sections that needed additional illumination. She highlights the translator's understanding and appreciation for the unique nuances of language, their playful and inventive approach to English versus her Hindi, “Her enjoyment of idiosyncrasies in language, her parallel play and inventiveness with English versus my Hindi, (look at the crow sequences where we both go crowing happily and independently!), her confidence sometimes in 'ticking me off' and quoting no less than A K Ramanujan, once her teacher, about the inventive independence of translation, all carried forward our dialogue and the translation. A dialogue with new friends. Based more on a shared sensibility and recognition of the soul and essence of the text, rather than agreement about literalities.” In light of the indisputable success of these texts centering on female experiences, it is only logical to conclude, that translations should also embrace intersectionality, just as feminism has done over the years. A translation that remains unequivocal in its commitment to legitimate feminist voices and goals, not only offers valuable insights but also facilitates broadening the scope of human experiences through the expansion of “the vocabulary of life”, as Geetanjali Sree succinctly puts it. Both the translated works have triumphed in delving into the “textual subconscious” to uncover underlying patriarchal attitudes and explore the potential for subversion within them.

Conclusion

The aim of this study thus has been to analyze the depiction of mother-daughter relationships in specific Hindi fiction as a means to deconstruct patriarchal discourse through a 'subversive reading' and confront gendered stereotypes by questioning conventional attitudes surrounding these relationships. These 'transgressive' narratives are likely to resonate with the aspirations, hopes, and yearnings of the myriad of women ensnared in comparable predicaments, within the confines of familiar surroundings, thereby facilitating their reclamation of selfhood, legitimacy of their voices, and discovery of purpose. The possibility of intergenerational differences in cross-cultural incidents necessitates studies like these to further inform ongoing discussions surrounding gender, class, race, and identity. These discussions are effectively conveyed through a diverse array of literary works, and literary translations serve as valuable

exemplars for studying the complexities of the human predicament irrespective of differences in time, space, and thought. The literary works in translation will strengthen the movements begun for the emancipation of the subaltern and the marginalized in substantial ways. These works would prioritize the recognition of India's polyphonic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural reality, which vigorously resists any form of homogenization. Both texts move beyond the monolithic categorizations of the roles of mothers and daughters and rather see them as independent individuals striving for meaning in life.

The octogenarian protagonist, driven by her determination, overcomes her fears and vulnerabilities and sets out on a journey to Pakistan. This journey serves as an opportunity for her to confront the lingering traumas from her teenage experiences during the Partition. Additionally, she takes this chance to reassess her roles as a mother, daughter, woman, and feminist, reevaluating their significance in her life, as the blurb reads, "To her family's consternation, Ma insists on travelling to Pakistan, simultaneously confronting the unresolved trauma of her teenage experiences of Partition, and re-evaluating what it means to be a mother, a daughter a woman, a feminist." The texts subvert and redefine the psychological dynamics associated with the prevalent devaluation and subordination of women as mothers and daughters in social and cultural contexts. They do so by examining potential avenues for Individual development and maternal subjectivity. Thus, a study of the multi-voiced narratives of Krishna Sobti and Geetanjali Shree sheds light on the traditional and dogmatic forces that hinder the unrestricted development of women, even in the post-independence era. Throughout the annals of time, mothering and parenting have often been perceived as demanding yet unappreciated, discredited endeavours, burdened upon the females as their primary responsibilities. Both the texts, however, refrain from diminishing the significance of these vital responsibilities and instead embrace a holistic approach that acknowledges the rights of women, while asking for the due reverence, compensation, and even incentive for women's involvement in these indispensable yet arduous roles. Eventually, it can be said with certainty that both texts carry tales of women who survive the corrosive influence of patriarchy, and whose daughters undergo a rite of passage, becoming more confident, liberated, and evolved to go after their dreams as a result of their mothers' increased self-awareness and skill at negotiating within the oppressive system. While Krishna Sobti's work, despite its candid feminist conviction, holds out limited freedom for women, *Tomb of Sand* successfully completes the mission of amplifying female voices by transforming an elderly, dependent and melancholic mother into a sprightly, enterprising and desirous mother. Both texts hold significant value in terms of identifying the historically marginalized female subjects and in recognizing the possibility of alternative subjectivities that could defy the status quo and empower women to assert their agency to create and inhabit a more equitable world.

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