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Gender, Genre, and the Idea of Indian Literature:
The Short Story in Hindi and Tamil, 1950-1970

by

Preetha Laxmi Mani

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

South and Southeast Asian Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Vasudha Dalmia, Co-Chair

Professor George Hart, Co-Chair

Professor Paola Bacchetta

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Spring 2012

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in South and Southeast Asian Studies
and the Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality

Professor Vasudha Dalmia, Co-Chair
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In the wake of Indian Independence, the short story emerged as the most active genre in both Hindi and Tamil literature, establishing new representations of selfhood and citizenship that would shape popular expression across India for decades to come. This is evidenced by increased circulation of short stories in post-Independence magazines and their continued study as part of the Hindi and Tamil literary canons. These short stories thus provide an important window into the cultural production of enduring paradigms of Indian modernity and citizenship in the context of national efforts to create an all-Indian identity after decolonization. My dissertation is motivated by an interest in explaining how post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short stories mobilize and construct representations of the “Indian citizen,” locating them within a regionally specific cultural context, as well as the broader imaginings of a modern India. I ask: what was literature’s role in establishing universal understandings of the Indian citizen in the postcolonial moment?

I address this question through an analysis of tropes of the feminine ideal in the state, public, and literary spheres in North and South India to illustrate the relationship between these tropes and popular understandings of the Indian citizen-subject. Focusing on the short stories and critical and biographical writing by canonical post-Independence Hindi and Tamil authors, I juxtapose the tropes of the feminine ideal they invoke with those generated by state discourses on law and policy, as well as public debates surrounding them. Through this juxtaposition, I show that the same tropes – such as the widow, the virgin, the concubine, and the good wife – carry saliency in all three spheres (state, public, and literary). In this way, tropes of the feminine ideal provide the platform for a cohesive articulation of modern Indian citizenship across these discursive arenas.

Part I traces the colonial state’s fixation on defining and regulating the widow, the virgin, the concubine, and the good wife. I show how these historically specific legal categories become commonly used tropes for expressing Indian ways of being and that the liberal humanist freedoms the postcolonial state guarantees its citizens sometimes maintain and sometimes

rework these tropes' colonial forms. I then demonstrate the ways in which the Hindi and Tamil literature draw from these very same tropes to articulate regional concerns in the terms of an all-Indian nationalism. Specifically, both literatures employ tropes of the feminine ideal to depict characters wrestling with changing gender norms, the position of the modern Indian woman, and the meaning of citizenship, thus giving Hindi and Tamil characters pan-Indian resonance. Despite their similarity in form, however, the manner in which Hindi and Tamil short stories supply these tropes with meaning reveals fundamentally distinct regional articulations between gender, caste, and religious structures, as well as divergent points of alignment and conflict with pan-Indian struggles for equality. This comparison reveals the heterogeneous perceptions of gendered subjectivity comprising postcolonial Indian citizenship, as well as the instability of the category of "Indian Literature."

Part II studies six canonical Hindi and Tamil writers. I detail these authors' novel uses of existing tropes of the feminine ideal to rewrite characters' relationships to desire and structures of caste, religion, and gender. Both literatures depict individuals who are produced by the coupling of individual choice with resistance to tradition, thereby connecting their characters to a broader liberal humanist national politics that emphasizes individual freedom. In the Hindi short story, this coupling takes form in the language of intellect and emotion—rationalizations, emotional turmoil, and alienation. By contrast, the Tamil short story expresses it in the language of the body—physical descriptions, bodily sensations, and sexual impulses. This comparison thus provides insight into the varied ways of being within post-Independence India's liberal humanist frame, rejecting the premise that liberal humanism represents a singular project.

My research demonstrates the integral role of literature in shaping gendered inflections of democratic citizenship. It further illustrates how culturally specific representations of gendered subjectivity shape and sustain state discourses on citizenship. While scholarship on modern India has paid particular attention to the relationship between gender and nation, it has rarely examined cultural and state constructions of gender together. This has led to a tendency to read cultural formations of gender as either derivative of or separate from law and state policy. Building on feminist theory that sees the state and cultural spheres as linked, I show how gender formations move between geographical regions and discursive spheres. In the current global context in which gender is mobilized by both religious and secular nationalisms, this study underscores the continuing need for attention to the cultural mediums producing formations of gender.

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations from the Hindi and Tamil are my own unless indicated in the text.

In transliterating the Hindi and Tamil words, I have used diacritical marks in the first instance that the word appears in each chapter. I do not retain them in subsequent instances in order to maintain the readability of the text. Recurring words are included in the Glossary to this dissertation.

I have followed the transliteration scheme developed by R.S. McGregor in *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* for Hindi and the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon scheme for Tamil.

Hindi and Tamil words that have become part of the English language, like Brahmin or dharma, have been written without diacritical marks. I do not transliterate the names of persons and places. Lastly, I use the Hindi transliteration scheme for Sanskrit-derived words common to both languages.

Introduction

The Short Story and the Idea of Indian Literature

साहित्य के रूप केवल रूप नहीं हैं, बल्कि जीवन को समझने के भिन्न-भिन्न माध्यम हैं। [...] कहानी की इसी ऐतिहासिक भूमिका की माँग है कि वर्तमान परिस्थिति में उसकी सार्थकता की परीक्षा व्यापक संदर्भ में की जाय।

Forms of literature are not just forms, but rather diverse mediums through which to understand life. [...] The very historical demand of the short story is that it examine the significance of the present circumstances within the broader context.

(Singh 1998 [1956-1965], 20)

கற்பனையை ஆதாரமாகக் கொண்டு புனையப்படும். ஒரு நிஜம் போல் தோற்றமான, வாழ்க்கை அனுபவ, உணர்ச்சி வெளியீட்டு வரலாறுதான் கதை.

It is created on the basis of imagination. The short story is, indeed, a history expressing life's experiences and feelings in a form like reality.

(Chellappa 1974 [1959a], 146)

Scholars of both world literature and South Asian literature have consistently viewed the short story as a minor genre in comparison to its “major” counterpart, the novel. The genre has thus received little attention in postcolonial studies, theories of world literature, and studies on nationalism, all of which privilege the novel as the most effective medium through which to understand national culture and the postcolonial condition.¹ Even theorists of the short story tend to interrogate the form by juxtaposing it with the novel (see, for example: Kennedy 1980; May 1976, 1995); O’Connor 1962). Whereas the novel “thinks in terms of totality” (Lukacs 1994 [1920], 56) and presents a sustained narrative grounded in character development and historical temporality (Watt 1987 [1957], 9-34), the short story is, by contrast, incomplete, fragmentary, and less elaborate in subject matter and its range of narrative techniques. Short story scholars describe these features of the short story as central to its ability to connect with the

¹ Scholarship in the field of postcolonial studies—concentrated in the humanities and as such, much of it oriented towards the literary—has tended to view the novel as *the* medium offering insights into the problematics of imperialism, the postcolonial condition, and national identity and culture. Three well-known examples of this are Bhabha 1994, Jameson 1986, and Said 1993. Recent studies on world literature, too, hold the novel as the preeminent global genre, underscoring this form’s translatability across geographical distance and cultural difference. See, for example: Casanova 2004; Moretti 2000, 2003.

Finally, studies on nationalism, such as Anderson (1991 [1983]) and Chatterjee (1986), inadvertently prioritize the role of novel over other genres belonging to the print culture facilitating the rise and evolution of the “imagined communities” undergirding nations and nationalist movements. For example, Chatterjee, in tracking the “moment of departure” of nationalist thought in India, concludes his chapter by highlighting Bankim’s novels as the repository for envisioning a liberated Indian landscape (1986, 79). Mukherjee (2002) provides an overview of the rise of the novel in regional Indian languages, highlighting the critical role of this form in shaping ideas of tradition, modernity, and indigenous community in colonial India.

popular (Pratt 1994, May 1995). Yet, it is still the novel that gains the upper hand, for the short story, unlike the novel, is admired as a craft and not an art. It is a peripheral genre, a training ground for the novel—proximate to folklore, journalism, and pop culture. The short story genre reveals moments of truth, not complete life stories, and performs in a more oral, less authoritative voice. It offers a pithy image, a brief sketch, a lyrical outline of mundane life through which to glimpse the marginal experiences of the downtrodden, the forgotten, and the outcast.²

For example, Amir Mufti (2000, 2007) has recently played upon this idea of the minor nature of the short story to situate the minority status of Urdu language and literature within India. He builds upon Deleuze and Guattari, who define “minor” as that which exists within the “major” itself: “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language” (1986, 16). For Mufti, Indian Muslims make up this minority, and the Urdu short story provides the medium of expression for this minority within the major of India: Hindi. If the novel stands in for the majority Hindi speaking, Hindu nation, then the short story, for Mufti, represents the status of the Muslim minority: “Urdu is perhaps unique among the major literatures of South Asia in its emphasis on the short story as the primary genre of narrative fiction, even in the decades since Partition. In Urdu the hierarchical relationship of the novel to short story that one would expect of any major narrative tradition is reversed” (2007, 182). Mufti here inverts a common refrain in the study of nationalist movements, articulated most prominently by Benedict Anderson (1991 [1983]), that the novel is the genre through which national identity is constructed and circulates. In this way, Mufti celebrates the “minor” status of the South Asian short story, noting its inextricable ties with minority Muslim culture.

While Mufti’s treatment of the Urdu short story as a minor genre provides rich ground for understanding the relationship between Urdu and Hindi, Muslim and Hindu, this dissertation demonstrates how the short story, not the novel, was the preeminent genre in the periods leading up to and following Indian Independence.³ In their theorizations of the short story, Hindi and Tamil authors writing in the immediate post-Independence period considered this genre to be *the* vehicle through which the idea of a unified Indian nation and people could be imagined. As the opening epigraphs demonstrate, these writers regarded the short story as a historical record of the present and the primary medium through which to understand individuals’ life experiences and personal emotions. Towards this end, they produced an extensive and widely circulating body of

² Scholars of western literature have also pointed to a conflation between the “minority” of the short story form and the minority of the female gender, tracing the relationship between genre’s “feminization” as a women’s genre in relation to classically “male” genres such as high tragedy, epic poetry, sermons, the philosophical treatise, and criticism. This feminization plays an important role in fueling the widely accepted understanding that the short story is more proximate to popular culture, minority populations, oral genres, and journalism than the novel. See Duff 2000, Eagleton 2000, and Gerhart 1992.

³ In his essay “Reformulating the Questions” published in Meenakshi Mukherjee’s important edited volume on *Early Novels in India*, Namwar Singh (2002) argues that the novel gave birth to the sense of India as a country, and that central to these novels were representations of the Indian woman. This dissertation shows how representations of the Indian woman are central to the short story in Hindi and Tamil, as well. But one main difference between the generic roles of the novel and the short story in the Indian context is that the short story gains pre-eminence at a later period than the novel—in the 1930s, a moment when the Independence movement was struggling to envision India not just as a country, but also as a nation among nations of the world (see Chapter 2).

short story writing and criticism, wielding the genre as a tool to observe and fashion the post-Independence condition from their regional locations. They rarely discussed the novel or figured it as a counterpoint to the short story. For these writers, the short story was not minor to the novel, for they saw it as neither peripheral nor a training ground. Rather, they emphasized the short story as the ideal genre for conveying the newness of the present, a characteristic current studies on the short story overlook, and constructed the genre self-referentially—that is, in dialogue not with other genres, but with earlier short story writers and with each other. If at all, these writers juxtaposed the short story with folklore and journalism (what they called “reportage”), and viewed the story as the formalization and artistic elevation of these more popular genres.

Moreover, it was Hindi and Tamil short story writers, perhaps more so than novelists, who participated in broader debates on national and world literature—that is, questions of what comprised Indian literature and how this national canon related to world literature movements of the time. These writers were deeply concerned with the development of their own regional short story traditions and regarded their short story writing as critical to shaping both their regional contexts, as well as the new post-Independence Indian nation. At the same time, they saw their work as belonging to a larger world story tradition, and were intimately familiar with, and drew direct inspiration from, world story writers outside of India from Chekhov to Hemingway.

The critical and creative endeavors of these Hindi and Tamil short story writers thus offer a fresh and thus far unappreciated lens for understanding post-Independence Indian literature and the conditions under which such a coherent category could be imagined, as well as how globally circulating genres take shape within specific historical and cultural locations. Despite the limited cross-regional dialogue between them, what led Hindi and Tamil writers to contemporaneously theorize the short story as the most suitable form for addressing their regional contexts in the aftermath of Independence (1947)? Furthermore, how did they use the genre to contribute to popular understandings of regional and national literature and identity at a moment of heightened concern with pan-Indian unity and international recognition?

In this dissertation I will explore these questions through an in depth analysis of the 1950-60s theorizations and short stories of six canonical post-Independence writers: Rajendra Yadav (1929-), Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972), and Mannu Bhandari (1931-) in Hindi; and C.S. Chellappa (1912-1998), D. Jeyakanthan (1934-), and R. Chudamani (1931-2010) in Tamil. By canonical, I mean not only that their short stories were widely circulated in literary magazines and recognized by regional and national institutions during the 1950-60s, but also that these writers remain well-known within literary circles today. Their works are part of university curriculums today, are widely recognized by contemporary writers as forbearers of the modern short story, have been translated into English and (less often) other Indian languages, and in many cases have been adapted for film.

Yadav, Rakesh, and Bhandari were pioneering members of the *Nayī Kahānī*, or New Story, movement that took off in Hindi-speaking North India after Independence. Similarly, Chellappa, Jeyakanthan, and Chudamani belonged to the well-known post-Independence group of writers seeking to revive the influential 1930s *Maṇikkōṭi* project—a movement that sought to develop the Tamil *ciṟukatai*, or short story, at the height of the Indian nationalist movement in South India. All six of these writers published prolifically during the 1950-60s and actively

participated in the literary discussions of their time. They viewed their short story writing as critical for envisioning the contours of Hindi and Tamil literature and society, as well as the broader categories of Indian literature and national identity. These writers were thus key to establishing the “major” position of the short story form in post-Independence India.

The rest of this Introduction frames the significance of the *nayī kahānī* and *cirukatai*, both within their regional literary contexts, as well as in relation to a national Indian literature. As I hope to show, comparative study of these two parallel, yet non-aligning regional literary projects is critical for understanding not only the way generic norms moved across contexts, but also how genre was central to imagining and establishing a national literary canon. The post-Independence short story writers I consider here saw themselves as engaging in a new literary moment that required redoubled efforts to speak to regional, national, and international audiences. Emerging out of complex regional literary histories, Hindi and Tamil authors saw the short story—in particular, its experimental language, imagistic style, and subjective content—as the most suitable genre for articulating this newness and providing inroads into imagining and practically constructing modern Indian life. The central challenge that each set of authors confronted, for reasons that will become clear below, was how to define literary projects that spoke to regionally specific tensions and fissures, while simultaneously resonating with pan-Indian and even world literary themes and conventions.

Herein enters the significance not only of genre, the medium through which “newness” and a popular yet still literary style of writing could be developed, but also the second key term of this dissertation: gender. As I will argue in the pages that follow, *nayī kahani* and *cirukatai* writers used already familiar representations of the Indian woman to articulate this socio-historical newness in ways that spoke to regional concerns while resonating nationally. These authors, like national cultural institutions and state discourses of the time, understood the role of literature through a liberal-humanist frame, by which I mean an emphasis on human connection and universality above identity-based difference. By describing the experience of “newness” through what I will call tropes of the feminine ideal—namely, the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife—*nayī kahani* and *cirukatai* writers were able to express pan-Indian notions of identity and belonging, while simultaneously embedding these characters in regionally specific settings. Because the colonial government and Indian nationalist movement had invested such symbolic significance in these very figures, short story writers after Independence were able to mobilize these tropes to define new literary techniques and the very nature of postcolonial literariness through themes and characters already recognizable to Indian readers. The widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife, in other words, placed readers within a shared cultural frame already referenced to the tensions between tradition and modernity, thereby allowing these writers to reinvest these forms with new meanings. Thus, whereas the formal conventions of genre allowed authors to express the newness of the moment, tropes of the feminine ideal offered the medium through which that newness could be tied to a shared cultural past in often unstated ways.

In order to understand *nayī kahani* and *cirukatai* writers’ efforts to speak both regionally and nationally, I next outline the national political and literary contexts within which post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writing arose. I here establish what the new nation-state saw as the social and cultural role of literature in its liberal humanist project to achieve

national integration. I then address the specific contours of the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* projects, locating them in this national literary moment. In the following section, I arrive at the important intersection between gender and genre that is the focus of this dissertation, elaborating how Hindi and Tamil short story writers' shared uses of representations of the Indian woman are central to understanding the "major" role of short story writing in shaping post-Independence regional and national identities. Based on this intersection of gender and genre, the penultimate section offers an alternative methodology for studying Indian literature. Finally, I provide an overview of the writers this dissertation examines and summaries of each chapter.

Nehru and the National Academy of Letters

From the perspective of the new central government, minimizing regional difference was essential for establishing national unity in the post-Independence moment. Recent scholarship has emphasized the liberal humanist leanings of the first prime minister Nehru's conception of national unity, underscoring his firm adherence to the "civic and universalist rather than ethnic criteria, which guaranteed a principle of inclusion [i.e., citizenship] in India's democracy" (Khilnani 1997, 173). These criteria were secular in nature, emphasizing the rights of individuals to universal suffrage, civil liberties, and constitutionally guaranteed basic rights (Chatterjee 1986, Parekh 1991). Nehru's emphasis on the universalist nature of membership in the Indian nation was intimately connected with his thinking on the position of India within the world community. Manu Bhagavan (2010) demonstrates the interconnections between India's involvement in drafting the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "which would set the bar for human action everywhere" (332), and Nehru's vision for Indian citizenship based on the codes of international justice and universal human rights. Sunil Khilnani (1997) links this vision for a modern India taking its place among the world community of nations to Nehru's conceptualization of Indian identity as a layered one. Khilnani argues that for Nehru, Indianness embodied the multiple affiliations of an individual to community, region, nation, and world. In Nehru's understanding, these different layers coalesced into a unified Indian identity through the synthesis of two ideas: a shared Indian past shaped by cultural and religious diversity and a shared modernized future defined by progress and development. This layered identity based on the grounds of a common past and future lay at the heart of Nehru's "unity in diversity"—the catchphrase he gave to his philosophy for achieving national integration. From Nehru's perspective, it was a liberal humanist investment in individual freedom and equality coupled with the creation of a strong centralized state that could ensure the robustness of this unity and thereby India's standing as a nation among nations on the world stage.

Nehru's perspectives on language and literature also reflected his firm belief in liberal humanism and progress. As early as the 1930s, Nehru expressed deep anxieties about the literary deficiencies of regional Indian languages, particularly Hindi, in the face of English. For example, in his 1937 speech "The Question of Language" Nehru contends: "Hindi and Urdu are both at present inadequate for the proper expression of modern ideas, scientific, political, economic, commercial, and sometimes cultural..." (Nehru 1941, 249). In light of the need for the development of regional languages, Nehru viewed English as a linking language between regions (King 1997). To put it in the terms of Khilnani's framework of "layers": if dialects

operated at the level of an individual's community and officially recognized state languages at the level of regions, then English facilitated dialogue at both the national and international levels. It served as the model of the receptiveness, flexibility, and capacity for growth required by all major Indian languages and possessed the universalist literary qualities Nehru saw lacking in them, such as conciseness, precision, and national (not to mention global) comprehensibility (King 1997).⁴ For this reason, Nehru repeatedly stressed the importance of translation, in particular of great European works into Indian languages.⁵ If Indian literatures, like the Indian nation, were to carve out a space in the world community, it would be through their growing interactions with English.

Raka Ray and Mary Katzenstein (2005) characterize the post-Independence period between 1947 and 1966 as one driven by social democratic Nehruvian idealism in which Nehru and the Congress Party “spoke in the name of the nation and all interest groups” (7). Yet while most social movements during this period aligned with the state project, vociferous opposition to state power took shape through regional unrest based on linguistic identity (*ibid.*, 17; see also Das Gupta 1970, Harrison 1960). By virtue of its colonial status and the elitism it embodied, English simply could not remain the sole official language of the Indian state (Harrison 1960, King 1997). But despite Nehru's efforts to install national unity on non-linguistic grounds, and despite the fifteen year transition period during which English functioned alongside Hindi as an official language, implementing Hindi at the national and regional levels proved impossible. By the late 1950s Nehru resolved that both Hindi speakers' opposition to English, as well as non-Hindi (in particular Tamil) speakers' opposition to Hindi, were too deep-rooted to overcome. Following Independence, the Hindi speaking elite in the North vehemently protested retaining the use of English at the national level (see Das Gupta 1970, Rai 2001). Conversely, Tamil Dravidianists launched violent anti-Hindi agitations against the central and Madras governments to keep Hindi out of school curriculums and government transactions (see Ramaswamy 1997). These language protests, coupled with the contentious mid-1950s restructuring of states along linguistic lines, led Nehru to pledge in 1959 that English, alongside Hindi, would remain a governmental language indefinitely (Annamalai 1979). In 1963 the Official Languages Act (amended 1967) inscribed Nehru's assurance into law (Das Gupta 1970). Nehru's speech inaugurating the act underscored the liberal humanist vision for equality among Indian languages that the state had adopted: “There is no question of any one language being more a national

⁴ Nehru had very clear ideas of what comprised bad writing. For instance in his essay “The Meaning of Words,” Nehru writes that bad writers “hide their weakness in long, confusing and to some extent meaningless words. That prose in which [imprecise] words are used becomes weak” (Nehru 1972-1982, Vol. 6, 448; quoted in King 1997, 188). In “The Question of Language,” Nehru specifically criticizes Hindi and Urdu writers for their insularity: “...my own impression is that the average writer in Hindi or Urdu does not seek to take advantage of even the existing audience. He thinks much more of the literary coterie in which he moves, and writes for them in the language that they have come to appreciate. His voice and his word do not reach the much larger public, and, if they happen to reach this public, they are not understood. Is it surprising that Hindi and Urdu books have limited sales?” (Nehru 1941, 251).

⁵ For example, in a memo to the Madras Hindi Sahitya Sammelan dated July 6, 1937, Nehru writes: “It is essential that the famous books of Europe be translated into Hindi. Only thus will we be able to bring here the ideas prevalent in the world and derive advantage from foreign literatures” (Nehru 1972-1982, Vol. 8, 826-829; quoted in King 1997, 198).

language than another. I want to make perfectly clear: Bengali or Tamil is as much an Indian national language as Hindi” (Nehru 1949-1968, Vol. 5, 16-32; quoted in King 1997, 219).

Central to fashioning this linguistic equality was the Sahitya Akademi, or national academy of letters, established by the Nehru administration in 1954.⁶ D.S. Rao (2004) recounts in his official history of the Sahitya Akademi that national leaders were aware that a national academy of letters would function differently in the context of India than in European countries because of its necessarily multi-lingual composition. But this was precisely why such an institution was needed, for “A national academy could promote mutual appreciation of the wealth and variety of literatures in all the languages of India” (2). Nehru, considered a man of letters in his own right, took on a leading role in running the Sahitya Akademi: he served as its first Chairman from its inception to 1958, and following this, as its first President. Alongside Nehru, S. Radhakrishnan, the first Vice-President and second President of India, was elected as the Akademi’s first Vice-President from 1958 to 1964, and upon Nehru’s death, he took over as President. The Sahitya Akademi’s activities were, thus, intimately linked to the central government’s efforts towards national integration.⁷ For example, Radhakrishnan, in an address on “A Writer’s Role in National Integration,” emphasized the role of the Sahitya Akademi in overcoming linguistic divisiveness: “Sahitya Akademi is doing its best so far as linguistic controversies are concerned. It is bringing writers together, bringing the peoples together by its translations” (Radhakrishnan 1962b, 25).

⁶ The Sahitya Akademi was established alongside the Sangeet Natak Akademi (national academy of music, dance, and drama, founded 1952) and the Lalit Kala Akademi (national academy of art, founded 1954), and together these three institutions formed the basis of the central government’s efforts to fuel the state sanctioned production of “Indian culture” across the different regions of India (see Lalit Kala Akademi 2012, Sahitya Akademi 2011, and Sangeet Natak Akademi 2012). In her analysis of the Sangeet Natak Akademi’s activities in the first decade after Independence, Anita Cheria (2009) has demonstrated that the central government viewed culture as the basis of Indian tradition and social solidarity substantiating the modern state. Towards consolidating a pan-Indian understanding of this culture, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, she writes, “replicates the state’s centralizing ambitions, striving to incorporate into its purported ‘unity,’ all difference and diversity” (33). As I will demonstrate below, the literary activities of the Sahitya Akademi, too, elevated (and continues to elevate) the cultural and historical unity of the nation above regional difference and diversity. In this way, the Sahitya Akademi shares with the Sangeet Natak Akademi an institutional “desire to serve as a critical instrument mediating the Centre and the regions” (39).

⁷ The Sahitya Akademi Committee voted in its first year to function as an institution autonomous from the central government. This resolution passed, and apart from governmental funding, the institution began to make all its decisions independently of governmental approval. However, the influence and decision-making power that central government figures such as Nehru and Radhakrishnan held in the first two decades of the Sahitya Akademi’s activities are clearly evident in D.S. Rao’s official history of the Sahitya Akademi (2004). For example, Nehru personally recommended writers, such as the Hindi poet Nirala, whom he felt should be supported by the Akademi (Rao 2004, 194). It was also evident from Radhakrishnan’s “Editorial Note” published in the first issue of *Indian Literature* (the Sahitya Akademi’s literary journal) that regional writers were suspicious of the Akademi’s affiliations with the central government. In this note Radhakrishnan attempts to alleviate regional writers concerns about control and possible censorship by the central government by underscoring the liberal humanist notion of individual freedom that the Nehru administration advocated, one that “all writers and indeed all intelligent human beings” should, and from his perspective did, necessarily support (1957, 2). The Sahitya Akademi operated on the assumption that the writers and scholars participating in its activities shared this belief.

Not surprisingly, several of the writers this dissertation examines expressed concern over government intervention in their literary activities. For example, Mohan Rakesh underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between governmental support for literary activities while simultaneously defending writers’ freedom of expression (1975e, 24-25)

The Akademi was founded on this premise that the unity that comprised Indian literature had to be made evident to regional literary traditions and defined as its primary purpose promoting “cooperation among men of letters for the development of literature in Indian languages” (11). On the one hand, this entailed describing “individual regional literary traditions in a way that would show the citizens of the new nation ‘the essential unity of India’s thought and literary background’” (Pollock 2004, 6). Towards this end, the Sahitya Akademi immediately initiated a project to publish the literary histories of the major Indian languages. In the forward to the *History of Bengali Literature*, the first of the series to be published in 1960, Nehru expresses the unifying goal of this project:

One of the principle functions of the Sahitya Akademi is to encourage all these great languages of India and to bring them closer to each other. Their roots and inspirations have been much the same and the mental climate in which they have grown up have been similar. [...] it may, therefore, be said that each of these languages is not merely a part of India, but is essentially a language of India, representing the thought and culture and development of this country in its manifold forms.

(Nehru 1960, Introduction; quoted in Rao 2004, 103)

For Nehru and the Sahitya Akademi, chronicling the literary histories of the major Indian languages was a way of substantiating the shared cultural past upon which the nation’s unity was built.

Developing Indian literature meant, on the other hand, creating a space within which regional writers could engage. Some of the Akademi’s activities towards this goal included commissioning translations of canonized regional texts; funding writing workshops; running regional, national, and international seminars and symposia; organizing “literary evenings” focusing on the great writers of world literature; incorporating regional lecture series; and instituting travel grants, scholarships, and national awards for regionally recognized writers. The Sahitya Akademi also set up its own publishing house, and apart from translated anthologies and conference publications, it began to distribute a national bibliography of Indian literature, a “Who’s Who” list of regional writers, monographs of important regional literary figures, and an encyclopedia of Indian literature (see Rao 2004, 94-128; Sahitya Akademi 2011). The Sahitya Akademi’s prolific efforts towards recognizing past and present regional writers and historical moments underscores the important canonizing role it played (and continues to play) in consolidating the body of work comprising Indian literature.

The Akademi’s bi-annual English language journal *Indian Literature* was also created towards this canonizing project. Since 1957 when the journal was launched, it has published both translated and English-medium short story writing and poetry, critical essays, book reviews, and surveys of important regional literary trends and new publications. As S. Radhakrishnan writes in the “Editorial Note” to the first issue, the journal was viewed as integral to the Sahitya Akademi’s goal to construct pan-Indian literary unity:

The Akademi’s aim is a modest one—to help writers and readers in the various languages of India to know each other better. It is unfortunately true that we in India suffer from and are handicapped by our ignorance about ourselves. As

things are, a Bengali poet or writer is likely to know a great deal about Ezra Pound or T.S. Elliot or Jean-Paul Sartre while knowing almost nothing or next to nothing about poets or writers in, say, Tamil or Malayalam or perhaps even in Hindi. The same is no doubt true of writers in every language. What is even more regrettable is that ignorance breeds contempt and some of our writers are apt to imagine that nothing worth reading is being written in any Indian language save their own.

There are fortunately some journals and literary organizations that are honestly and bravely trying to dispel the mists of this ignorance. [...] The present journal is one such humble effort.

(Radhakrishnan 1957, 1-2)

In this passage, Radhakrishnan points to the same (dis)connection that *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* writers themselves recognized: regional writers considered themselves a part of the same world literary dialogues while remaining unfamiliar with one another (see, for example: Yadav 1965, 1; Chellappa 1974 [1964-1969], 1-2). This lack of conversation was, for Radhakrishnan, precisely what had led writers to adhere to their provincial linguistic nationalism. *Indian Literature* sought to address this problem by creating a shared literary space through the medium of English. But Radhakrishnan was also careful to insist in his preface that English was the language not of creation in *Indian Literature*, but rather of unification:

[The journal] is not a forum for creative literary expression, for such a journal in India can only be in the Indian languages, and fortunately, there is no dearth of them. [...] Its contents are informative rather than creative or critical and their interest will therefore be limited. Nevertheless the information supplied is of permanent value and needs to be recorded somewhere.

(ibid., 3)

If, as in Nehru's view, English was to serve as a linking language between regions and the nation, then the journal *Indian Literature* (and the Akademi in general) functioned as a vehicle for linking regional literary value and circulating it at the national level.

Despite Radhakrishnan's insistence that the aim of the journal and the Akademi in general was solely to mediate and bring writers together, examining early Akademi publications and issues of *Indian Literature* reveals the extent to which the Sahitya Akademi on the one hand tried to incorporate regional literary production into the fold of its liberal humanist aesthetic, yet on the other hand failed to completely smooth over the varying politics of canonization driving regional literary production. For in these publications, Hindi and Tamil writers jockeyed over and intentionally controlled the ways in which these modern literatures would be represented in national literary space. For example, in *Contemporary Indian Literature*, (1957) and *Indian Literature Since Independence* (1973)—two symposium anthologies that bookended the first two decades of the Akademi's activities—major contentions arose over the writers selected to compose the Hindi reviews, as well as the information their articles conveyed. When the former was published, the media and Hindi writers criticized their contemporary S.H. Vatsyayan (1911-1987), also known as Agyeya, for the self-aggrandizement and biased overview of modern Hindi literature that he wrote. They felt he had elevated poetry, which was his own preferred genre, and too harshly dismissed the work of the Progressive writers, a younger generation of

more socially-oriented, Marxist-leaning writers. The Hindi poet Ramdhari Sinha (1908-1974), who wrote under the pen name “Dinkar,” appealed to the General Council of the Sahitya Akademi that since it was too late to undo the damage that Agyeya had caused, the Akademi should at least take steps to expose the biases in Agyeya’s overview.⁸

A second controversy arose over Namwar Singh’s review of Hindi literature in the 1973 symposium anthology. Singh was by this time an already well-established literary critic who had written extensively in the mid fifties and sixties about the newness of realism and form in the *nayi kahani* through the short stories of Nirmal Verma (1929-2005). Singh’s 1973 Hindi review reflects a sharp change in opinion and a profound skepticism of the Nehruvian humanist project. In the article, Singh specifically points out what he sees as the Hindu biases of post-Independence poets, such as Agyeya (whose 1957 Hindi review had also raised controversy), and novelists, such as Renu (whose work launched the *āncalik upanyas*, or regional novel, movement) (Singh 1973, 83-84). He also criticizes “new poetry” (such as Agyeya’s) and “new writing” (such as Renu’s) for elevating the “authenticity of feeling,” which Singh feels is an apolitical, middle class, universal humanist stance that “in effect provided sustenance to the ‘illusions’ created by the Nehru Era” (85). Singh’s review does not directly implicate the *nayi kahani* writers in these wrong doings, but it does applaud the rise of a late sixties generation of short story writers who were beginning to overturn the *nayi kahani* writers’ realist leanings (89).⁹ In these ways, his article undermines most of the mainstream aesthetic endeavors of the 1960s in Hindi literature, treating them as implicitly middle class and Hindu. When the article was first circulated, writers involved with the new poetry and regional novel movements felt so strongly that Singh had presented an unbalanced historical survey that the Sahitya Akademi recommended he revise his article. The Sahitya Akademi eventually published Singh’s article in its collection, albeit with the introductory caveat that the anthology did not reflect the views of the Akademi (Rao 2004, 112-113). Neither Rao’s account, nor the anthology itself makes the changes Singh made to his article evident, and it is unclear whether he made any at all.

Similar disputes also emerged over the way Tamil literature should be framed. The Akademi, for example, expressed wariness over the work of the Tamil novelist R. Krishnamurthy (1899-1954), better known as Kalki, for the way it “harked back to past glories of Tamil life.” From its perspective, Kalki’s regional emphasis and consistent efforts to locate Tamil writing in a Dravidian, rather than Indian, past embodied the narrowness, parochiality, and jingoism that conflicted with the Akademi’s humanist enterprise of creating a unified Indian literature (Harrison 1960, 81-82; quoting Sahitya Akademi 1954-55, Appendix 6, 21). This was the same critique of Kalki that the post-Independence Tamil writers examined in this dissertation expressed. In contrast to the reified Tamil language and specifically ancient Tamil cultural contexts that writers like Kalki employed, in a 1965 article in *Indian Literature*, Mu. Varadarajan hailed modern Tamil writing that used spoken language to portray everyday contexts and modern

⁸ See Rao 2004, 310-312 for a reprint of Dinkar’s full letter, dated October 20, 1957, to Krishna Kripalani, the Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi. Incidentally, in the same letter, Dinkar also appeals to the Akademi to curb the partiality the writer-scholar Prabhakar Machwe expressed towards some Hindi writers and trends in his frequent reviews of Hindi literary publications in *Indian Literature*. Some of Machwe’s early reviews in *Indian Literature* of the goings on in modern Hindi literature include 2:2, 127-129; 10:1, 68-81; and 10:2, 101-105.

⁹ Ironically, the “reality” that the *nayi kahani* expresses is precisely what Singh praises in his earlier 1950-60s critical essays on the movement (see Singh 1998).

Tamil life. This emphasis on modern everydayness reflects the general praise of non-regional identities that was prevalent in *Indian Literature* and other Sahitya Akademi endeavors.

Another example can be seen in the work of Ka.Naa. Subramanyam (1912-1988), a fellow *Manikkoti* writer and contemporary of C.S. Chellappa. In the first issue of Chellappa's magazine *Eluttu*, Subramanyam published an article called "Sāhitya Akāṭami Tamil Paricu" [The Sahitya Akademi Tamil Award] (2001 [1959]a), in which he not only criticizes the Akademi for its choice of the first three Tamil recipients for the award, but also pinpoints the Tamil scholars affiliated with the Akademi who were responsible for this choice. In a move befitting the Sahitya Akademi's intentions, Subramanyam's article recognizes the Akademi's role in developing a universalized understanding of Indian literature through awards and translations. He thus worries over the effects of the recent Tamil winners' texts on the reception of Tamil literature in other Indian literature because these texts did not adhere to the "art for art's sake" stance that Subramanyam and other post-Independence writers in Chellappa's circle shared.¹⁰ Though he does not say it outright in the essay, Subramanyam is bothered by more than the entertainment oriented nature of these works; it is also their Dravidianist, Tamil revivalist, and traditionalist implications that cancel out their literary merit. This is made clear by his indictment of the members of the Akademi's Tamil committee whom he holds accountable for endorsing the three winning texts (see also Subramanyam 2004 [1964-1965]). The magazine editors and Tamil professors forming the committee were precisely the Tamil revivalist individuals against whom Chellappa's writers' circle pitted their work.

Subramanyam attempted to offset the Tamil committee's biases by becoming one among a small number of spokesmen for Tamil literature in Sahitya Akademi publications, and in these he constructed a very specific universe of what constituted it. For example, in his 1959 overview article of Tamil literature in *Indian Literature* (published eight months after the *Eluttu* article I just discussed), Subramanyam gives no space to the Dravidianist, entertainment-oriented, or social realist literature to which he objects, even to offer a critical perspective on it. Instead, the article praises the incorporation of world literature into Mu. Varadarajan's new critical work on poetry; describes Subramanyam's own new books as benchmarks of Tamil literary criticism; and hails the debut of Chellappa's *Eluttu* for its avant-garde and experimental content. It also draws attention to the new works of the older *Manikkoti* generation writers and the new, award-winning writing of R. Chudamani. Similarly, in his 1964 *Indian Literature* overview, Subramanyam highlights the work of Chudamani and Jeyakanthan, notes the prevalence of the short story genre in Tamil, gives a nod to Chellappa's publishing house publications, and applauds the launch of his own literary magazine *Ilakkiya Vaṭṭam* [The Literary Sphere]. Subramanyam's criticisms of the early Sahitya Akademi awards and his later efforts to keep Tamil identity politics out of Akademi publications highlight the ongoing struggles over how regional literatures should be represented at the national level, as well as a general movement in Akademi publications towards framing these representations in humanist terms rather than on the basis of regional identities.

¹⁰ The three texts Subramanyam's article refers to included the Dravidian philologist R.P. Sethu Pillai's collection of essays entitled *Tamil Inbam* [The Delight of Tamil] that won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1955; Kalki's novel *Alai Ōsai* [The Sound of Waves] that won in 1956; and the first Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, C. Rajagopalachari's *Cakravarti Tirumakan* [Chakravarti's Divine Son], a prose retelling of the *Ramayana* that won in 1958 (see Rao 2004, 275-293 and Sahitya Akademi 2011).

If the Sahitya Akademi was established to counter Nehru's worry that regional writers thought "much more of the literary coteries in which [they] move[d]" than of a wider Indian audience (Nehru 1941, 251), then it was those Hindi and Tamil writers whose work mitigated this problem—including the authors I examine in this dissertation—who were most often represented in Sahitya Akademi publications. The regular overviews of regional literatures in *Indian Literature* demonstrate this effort to align regional literary projects with the Sahitya Akademi's liberal humanist outlook on literary unity and national integration. Subramanyam's effacement of all but the avant-garde, experimental, and humanist strands in modern Tamil literary activity is one example of this how aligning occurred. Another example is evident in Balakrishna Rao's overview of Hindi literature in the 1958-1959 issue of *Indian Literature*, which reports on a 1957 Hindi writers' conference that took place in Allahabad:

[The conference] was not only a spectacular success [...] it rendered a valuable service for the future of Hindi letters by successfully demonstrating the falseness of the popular belief that Hindi writers are incapable of rising above group and coterie loyalties and discussing controversial subjects with known opponents. The year, thus, ended on a happy note of goodwill and *camaraderie*.
(Rao 1958-1959; 102; emphasis in original)

In pointing out the excellence of Hindi literary discussion, Rao uses the same words as Nehru did in his criticisms of regional divisiveness. But Rao turns them around: the criticism of bigotry among Hindi writers is false, he says, for events such as the 1957 conference show that they are moving beyond their insularity to embrace the spirit of goodwill and camaraderie. For Rao, this is a sign of the humanist progress of Hindi letters and thus deserves mention in his report of the year's Hindi literary activities.¹¹ What these examples demonstrate is not that the Sahitya Akademi's publications prohibited representation of diverse regional literary perspectives, but rather that they limited, flattened out, or sometimes entirely effaced the regional politics enmeshed with these perspectives in the name of liberal humanist unity.

To the extent that they invested in this spirit of unity and progress, the views of the writers I examine in this dissertation align with the Sahitya Akademi's representations of modern Hindi and Tamil literature. The short stories and critical work of Yadav, Rakesh, Bhandari, Chellappa, Jeyakanthan, and Chudamani were all recognized in *Indian Literature* as new and notable literary endeavors.¹² In addition, all except Chudamani were in some way or another involved in Sahitya Akademi affairs. Four of these writers—Bhandari, Rakesh, Chellappa, and Jeyakanthan—were formal members of the Akademi. Chellappa and Jeyakanthan received

¹¹ Mannu Bhandari (2007, 40-41) recounts her memories of this conference, which was organized by a group of Progressive writers with Amrit Rai at the helm. Bhandari considers it the event at which she became initiated as a writer among others. It was here that she first interacted with other *nayi kahani* writers and critics such as Namvar Singh, Mohan Rakesh, and Kamaleshwar.

Bhandari also recounts that Yadav refused to attend the conference, presumably due to his disagreements with the Progressive writers' social realist literary views. Yadav's position on the Progressives was not uncommon (as Agyeya's summary of Hindi literature in *Contemporary Indian Literature* confirms) and is indicative of some of the tensions among modern Hindi writers that were not made explicit in representations of Hindi literature in *Indian Literature* and other Sahitya Akademi publications.

¹² For examples see the following issues of *Indian Literature* (3:1, 59-64, 102-105; 6:2, 130-134; 7:2, 97-103; 10:2, 101-104; 10:4, 24-29; 11:2, 52-57; 11:4, 91-98; 12:4, 57-62, 102-108).

Sahitya Akademi awards in 2001 and 1972, respectively, and in 1996 Jeyakanthan was named a Sahitya Akademi fellow (Bhandari 2007; Rao 2004). As I discuss in the second part of this dissertation, these *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* writers were committed to establishing human connection through short story writing. For them, it was the writer who was responsible for undertaking this crucial task in post-Independence India. These efforts coincided neatly with the vision of the writer's responsibility in national integration that the Sahitya Akademi expressed. For instance, in the opening note to the *Indian Literature* issue on the writer's role in national integration, Radhakrishnan articulates this vision in terms almost identical to the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* writers this dissertation examines:

At a time like this when we are divided among ourselves and the world is divided and threatened with destruction, what is essential is to establish some kind of solidarity, a communion of minds. That is what all literary artists, *if they are true to themselves*, should aim at. A true piece of literature is not merely a tract for the times but it is a work for all time, if it is a true piece of literature, *if the writer has intensity of experience and is able to express his or her ideas in clear and shining words, in penetrating expressions*, these things will endure for long.

The most effective means of achieving national integration and international solidarity is by means of these literary productions. Literary artists have a great function in our society and in our country. *It is, therefore, their duty to reckon with the evils from which we suffer; educate the human mind, remove these evils and establish a more decent society.* It is the only way we can improve the quality of life of our people.

(Radhakrishnan 1962a, 2-3; emphasis added)

For Radhakrishnan and the Sahitya Akademi, just as for the writers I examine in this dissertation, it is the inherent creative ability of Indian writers that would establish a modern, nationally integrated Indian society. Their writing thus bore the responsibility of educating the human mind, erasing social evils, and arousing the solidarity that forms the basis not only of the nation, but of the global human community. That the writers I examine in this study situated their short story writing traditions in relation to a world story tradition signals one way in which Hindi and Tamil short story writers took on this task. The rest of this dissertation explores the generic conventions, literary techniques, and reoccurring tropes through which they attempted to forge this national and global solidarity.

But, if Nehru and the Sahitya Akademi sought to establish an understanding of Indianness based on individual's layered affiliations to region, nation, and world, then this abstract, liberal humanist Indian citizen-subject was distinctly marked in the Indian literary imaginary. As I will discuss in further detail below, Hindi and Tamil short story writing of this period demonstrates that only particular ways of being—in most cases those that fit into an upper-caste, middle class, Hindu worldview—could be incorporated within Nehru's layered schema. In outlining Nehru's view of Indianness as a layered identity, Sunil Khilnani observes that it has been a misguided assumption among scholars that "Indian nationalism had subsequently to unite and subordinate regional identities" in the period following Independence. He goes on to say, "In fact, a sense of region and nation emerged together, through parallel definitions—and this point is essential to any understanding of the distinctive, layered character of Indianness" (Khilnani 1997, 153).

What my study of post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writing adds to this assertion is that only particular understandings of regional identity were suited to embracing this layered Indianness, that it was specific representations of the Indian woman that writers continuously used to convey this Indianness, and that constructing regional identities accommodative of this Indianness entailed the effacement of other, non-aligning regional identities. It is to these specificities and exclusions that I now turn.

The *Nayi Kahani* and the *Cirukatai*

If 1950-60s Hindi and Tamil writers used the short story to express new forms of human connection in nationally recognizable ways, then these new forms arose alongside the newness of the genre itself. In both the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres, writers theorized the short story as signifying a break from the past, and it was precisely for this reason that these writers took up the genre. They saw this break as one of the genre's most defining characteristics, one that tied it to the particular historical and political circumstances out of which the *nayi kahani* and the *cirukatai* arose. As the opening epigraphs express, what made the short story an effective medium for Hindi and Tamil writers was its ability to most introspectively and truthfully chronicle the circumstances of the historical present.

But, even though these new circumstances were shaped by the larger context of decolonization, they were markedly different in the Hindi and Tamil regions. For the *nayi kahani* writers, the break from the past belonged to the *sankrāntīkāl*, or transition period, within which the *nayi kahani* writers saw themselves— a moment of turmoil, uncertainty, and disillusionment in the aftermath of decolonization and Partition (see for example: Kamleshwar 1963, preface; Rakesh 1975c, 39; Yadav 1966, 26). It took shape in the *nayi kahani* as a newness divorced from the Hindu-Muslim identity politics and outdated caste-based traditions that writers felt had brought about the disarray of the present. Alternatively, for the Tamil *cirukatai* writers, the short story represented a break from the classical Tamil language and culture that Dravidian nationalists glorified, particularly in the context of the anti-Hindi agitations Dravidianists led between the mid-1930s and the late 1960s. The *cirukatai* embodied this break from the past as the new literary usage of the modern Tamil language. It rejected the Dravidian movement's elevation of an antiquated classical Tamil and expressed instead the everyday connections between spoken Tamil, Sanskrit, English, and other Indian languages (see for example: Chellappa 1974 [1959]a, 1974 [1959]b; Jeyakanthan 2000 [1964]; Pudumaipittan 2002 [1934]). Thus, while both Hindi and Tamil short story writers emphasized the newness the genre expressed, they shared neither the same historical present that demanded this newness, nor the same political commitments that led to theorizing it. The second part of this dissertation explores these differing emphases on newness in 1950-60s Hindi and Tamil short stories, revealing how a shared investment in the same conventions of genre produced very different regional idiomatic expressions and stylistic techniques in these two literatures.

What I want to emphasize here, however, is that these different pasts in relation to which the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* projects defined themselves also led to differing engagements with the short story genre itself. For instance, while the *nayi kahani* writers established their project as a movement, the *cirukatai* writers did not. *Nayi kahani* writers, like Yadav and Rakesh, began

publishing around 1950, and began to designate their work as part of the *Nayi Kahani* movement in the mid 1950s.¹³ Those associated with the movement self-consciously took on the project of imagining the lived experiences of Indians in the post-Independence moment through short stories and criticism.¹⁴ Some writers, such as Kamleshwar (1932-2007), assumed editorship positions and others, such as Yadav, launched new publishing houses towards this end. The bulk of writers associated with the movement concentrated if not specifically on urban environments, then at least on the urban sensibilities of individuals living in the countryside.¹⁵

Tamil *cirukatai* writers of the 1950s, by contrast, situated their work as a more dispersed extension of the 1930s *Manikkoti* short story movement. *Manikkoti* [The Jeweled Banner] was the name of the path-breaking Tamil literary magazine published from 1933 to 1939, as well as the writers circle that formed around the magazine. The *Manikkoti* writers professed that literary production was critical to developing the creative spirit of both modern Tamil culture and the Indian Independence movement and viewed the short story as the ideal genre for carrying out this development. As Chellappa (1974 [1964-1969]) recounts, his experiences as a key member of the *Manikkoti* circle were formative to his post-Independence literary efforts to rejuvenate the short story and other genres, such as criticism and poetry. He began his own literary magazine *Eluttu* [The Letter, or Writing], as well as (like Yadav) a publishing house, to facilitate these efforts. Through these he gave publication space to several writers who had earlier been associated with *Manikkoti*, as well as to new writers such as the two I examine in this dissertation: Jeyakanthan and Chudamani.¹⁶ Those associated with the *Eluttu* magazine and publishing house viewed their literary production in line with the *Manikkoti* project to expand modern Tamil sensibilities through portrayals of everyday life in everyday spoken Tamil. They

¹³ For example, the *nayi kahani* critic Namvar Singh (1927-) writes that the bulk of his work on the *nayi kahani* was written between 1956-1965 (1998, 9). Rajendra Yadav mentions that his first story “Devatāon kī Mūrtiyām” [Images of Gods] came out in 1950 (2001, 17), and Mohan Rakesh recalls that he wrote his first stories in 1947 (2004, “Bhūmikā” [Introduction]).

¹⁴ In her memoir of her writing career and domestic life with Rajendra Yadav, Mannu Bhandari (2007) names Rajendra Yadav, Mohan Rakesh, and Kamleshwar as the three responsible for launching the *Nayi Kahani* movement. Although some writers were popularly associated with the movement without formally declaring their involvement, in 1964 the popular magazine *Dharmyug* published a series on what it considered the primary twenty-six writers associated with the movement. These included: Mannu Bhandari, Nirmal Verma, Amarkant, Usha Priyamvada, Kamleshwar, Krishna Baldev Vaid, Mohan Rakesh, Ramesh Bakshi, Naresh Mehta, Phanishwarnath Renu, Krishna Sobti, Bhasham Sahni, Markandeya, Raghuvir Sahay, Rajendra Yadav, Ramkumar, Lakshminarayan Lal, Vijay Chauhan, Sharad Joshi, Shani, Shivprasad Singh, Shekhar Joshi, Shailesh Matiyani, Sarveshwar Dayal Saksena, and Harishankar Parasi (Roadarmel 1969, 7-8).

¹⁵ De Bruijn (2003, 143 fn.) describes a falling out between *nayi kahani* writers in the 1960s. The more mainstream group insisted upon the *nayi kahani*'s urban focus, while the other, which included writers such as Rajendra Avasthi (1930-2009) and Phanishwarnath Renu (1921-1977), called for attention to the experience of rural poverty and social injustice. As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, the *nayi kahani* writers I examine in this dissertation insisted upon the short story's importance for describing and understanding the city-centered lifestyle of modern individuals.

¹⁶ Some of the *Manikkoti* generation writers that published in Chellappa's literary magazine include Ka. Naa. Subramanyam (1912-1988), Pe. Ko, Sundar Rajan—known as Chitty (1910-2006), La. Sa. Ramamritham (1961-2007), and Na. Piccamurthi (1900-1976). A second generation included writers such as Thi. Janakiraman (1921-1982), Sundara Ramaswamy (1931-2006), Jeyakanthan, and Chudamani (see Sundarajan and Sivapathasundaram 1989, Zvelebil 1968, 1974). For a more detailed discussion of these and other participating writers, see Chellappa 1974 [1964-1969]; Sundar Rajan and Sivapathasundaram 1989; Vallikannan 2001; and Zvelebil 1968, 1973, and 1974.

See Jeyakanthan 1959, 1961, and 1972 [1962] and Chudamani 1959a and 1959b for pieces these authors published in Chellappa's magazine *Eluttu*.

portrayed both urban and rural settings and focused largely on Brahminical characters, domestic spaces, and philosophical concepts.

Current scholarship on Hindi and Tamil short story writing has almost entirely overlooked the historical circumstances shaping ideas of newness in the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* projects. For instance, Gordon Roadarmel (1969), whose work still remains the most sustained literary-historical treatment of the *Nayi Kahani* movement, discusses the idea of newness as one component of the overarching theme of alienation, which for him characterizes the movement as a whole. For Roadarmel, alienation drives the movement's focus on literary techniques and perspectives such as an investment in the fluidity of morality rather than in fixed ideologies; the use of subtle and experimental language; and an emphasis on characters' internal reflection rather than adherence to plot, history, or tradition. His study classifies and examines five main settings (both metaphorical and literal) portrayed in *nayi kahani* stories through which the theme of alienation takes shape: the family, love relationships, marriage, societal status, and the city. Within each of these locations, argues Roadarmel, the *nayi kahani* protagonist—most often marked as middle class—is portrayed as an individual whose relationships with others are severed, whose connection to religion and tradition is tenuous, and whose sense of belonging is irreparably shattered. Roadarmel stresses that the solution to alienation, when suggested in *nayi kahani* stories, is not the individual's reintegration into old forms of society (such as the joint family), but rather the development of self-reliance: repeatedly, *nayi kahani* stories convey that only the individual can provide his or her own contentment and solace.

While the portrayal of individual alienation and loneliness is, as Roadarmel points out, an important characteristic of the movement, this study argues that it must be situated in relation to both the longer literary historical tradition out of which the movement arose, as well as other equally prevalent themes and techniques through which the *nayi kahani* writers addressed the specifically Indian postcolonial context. Failing to do so risks elevating the “world literary” resonances of the *nayi kahani* (such as with contemporaneous movements like Sartre's existentialism and Hemingway's minimalism) above its geographical and historical rootedness in the Indian context, something which the *nayi kahani* writers themselves stressed to the utmost degree. It is only through attention to the relationships between urbanity, alienation, and *nayi kahani* concepts such as (to name just a few) a focus on the present (*vartamān*), the imagistic conveyance of significance (*sārthaktā*), and the use of linguistic and symbolic layers (*dharātal*) that we can understand the self-defined and rigorously theorized project of the *Nayi Kahani* movement to shape the post-Independence Indian context. Furthermore, viewing the development of themes like alienation through the lens of Hindi literary history reveals that the *nayi kahani* writers' reworking of symbols of Indian tradition in no way entailed a straightforward rejection of that tradition. By situating the development of prevalent *nayi kahani* concepts in relation to preceding Hindi literary movements, my analysis broadens the scope of Roadarmel's study, demonstrating the distinct ways in which *nayi kahani* portrayals of individuality and subjectivity arise within and in response to the Indian context, addressing and shaping a specifically post-Independence Indian readership.

Like Roadarmel's work, most existing studies of the *Nayi Kahani* movement survey the themes and structural features of the new story, either through overviews of representative stories or through attention to the relationships between voice, narrative technique, and thematic content

(see for example: Damsteegt 2003, de Bruijn 2003, Kumar 1990, Meisig 1996, and Svobodová 2003). In particular, they have noted trends in the *nayi kahani*, such as a shift away from authorial mediation, the prevalence of the mood of alienation, and an emphasis on atmosphere and present circumstance. In reviewing these *nayi kahani* features, these studies also highlight the highly constructed nature of the movement. Thomas de Bruijn (2003), for example, notes how *nayi kahani* writers used the popular Hindi magazine *Dharmyug*'s 1964 series on the *Nayi Kahani* movement as a venue to carefully define and articulate their project on their own terms. Roadarmel (1969), too, attributes the success of the movement to the extensive critical attention the writers themselves gave to their short stories in the publishing world. In this light, it is worth recalling Francesca Orsini's urging for deeper scrutiny of the *nayi kahani* project: "...the New Story's claim to neutrality and objectivity of vision, and the writers' claim that theirs is a bold step, comes under question once we realise how partial, heavily inflected and controlled their approach to the 'slice of reality' is" (1998, 85-86). I hope to address Orsini's call in this dissertation by locating the close readings I perform of *nayi kahani* theorizations and stories in relation to the changing politics of the modern Hindi literary tradition, as well as the broader goals of Indian nationalism in the post-Independence moment. In doing so, I show that what the *nayi kahani* writers "heavily inflected and controlled" approach deliberately glosses over is their erasure of the politics of religion, caste, and class in favor of the aestheticization of modern urban life. I also add to current scholarship on the *nayi kahani* by demonstrating the centrality of representations of the Indian woman to its urban aesthetic, arguing that it was through these representations that the *Nayi Kahani* movement participated in debates over regional and national identity. Specifically, I show that their engagement with representations of the Indian woman reveals the *nayi kahani* writers' affiliations with the upper caste Hindu bias prevalent in preceding movements within modern Hindi literature, despite their efforts otherwise.

In a similar vein to scholarship on short story writing in Hindi, very few studies on the modern Tamil short story have traced the relationship between the development of the *cirukatai* and the literary history to which it belongs. Existing scholarship notes the preeminence of the short story genre from the mid-twentieth century onwards and provides summaries of representative stories, focusing on thematic trends without attention to narrative techniques or structure (see Annamalai 1968, Kennedy 1980; Zvelebil 1968, 1973, 1974). These studies generally critique the genre, finding post-Independence Tamil short story writing lacking in literary quality and style due either to a prevailing tone of didacticism or unsophisticated content, based on entertainment value. The few short stories and writers they tribute are situated within the *Manikkoti* tradition. Existing studies also underscore the absence of literary criticism during the immediate post-Independence period, which they suggest has further contributed to what they consider to be the substandard condition of the post-Independence Tamil short story. This dissertation revises this position in current scholarship, demonstrating that there was in fact lively literary production during the two decades following Independence, both critical and creative. Chellappa launched and dedicated his magazine and publishing house to this enterprise (see for example, Chellappa 2001 [1959]), and the literary output he produced reflects only a small portion of the larger Tamil publishing sphere in the late 1950s and early 1960s. As Sundarajan and Sivapathasundaram point out, a new generation of short story writers arose

alongside Chellappa in this period, publishing prolifically in magazines such as *Eluttu*, *Ānanta Vikaṭan*, *Kalki*, *Kalai Maḱal*, and *Kumutam* (1989, 206-207).

Furthermore, in contrast to the prevailing tendency in current scholarship to dismiss the literary merit of post-Independence short story writing, I hold that Tamil writers' preferences for or against didacticism and the entertainment value of literature must be understood as part of a long standing debate stemming from the 1930s about what the purpose of literature should be. Tamil writers formed two camps in the late colonial period, one led by the writer Kalki (1899-1954) that emphasized the social import of literature (be it didactic or entertaining) and another led by the *Manikkoti* writers that adopted an "art for art's sake" stance. An important driver of this debate, I will show, was Brahmin-Dravidian identity politics: through their focus on the aesthetic function of literature the *Manikkoti* writers sought to distance themselves from the populism and politics of Tamil revivalism and the Dravidian nationalist movement. They looked down upon any writing that they felt employed an antiquated Tamil language, glorified the Tamil past, and overused social realism to construct a rigid, social reformist moral universe. Conversely, their own stories centered to a large extent on representations of the Indian woman set in a Brahmin context, through which the *Manikkoti* writers portrayed the internal worlds of freedom-seeking individuals exploring the moral boundaries of modern life (see, for example: Chellappa 1990, 1974; Kennedy 1980; Ramaiah 1980). The *Manikkoti* critique of the social function of literature coupled with their particular emphasis on representations of the Indian woman carries over into the post-Independence period through writers like Chellappa. Through tracing the interconnections between caste politics and representations of gender in modern Tamil literature, I rethink current scholars' dismissal of didactic and entertainment-based modern Tamil literature, arguing instead that it must be evaluated on the basis of its own historically situated definitions of literariness. In short, I argue that 1950-60s Tamil short story writers utilization of representations of the Indian woman to produce aesthetically oriented, rather than socially oriented literature, belongs to a Brahminizing trend within modern Tamil literature.

Gender and the Story Form

I have suggested in the above discussion of current Hindi and Tamil short story scholarship that it is not just the newness of the short story genre that brings post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writing together, for Hindi and Tamil writers' ideas of the short story's newness took shape based on their divergent literary-historical contexts. Rather, this dissertation argues that it was the Hindi and Tamil short story genres' joint utilization of nationally circulating representations of the Indian woman to articulate regionally specific notions of generic newness that enabled them to speak beyond their regional locations to the pan-Indian post-Independence condition. The mobilization of these representations to convey ideas of generic form has been almost entirely overlooked in Hindi and Tamil short story scholarship thus far, despite the enduring prevalence of representations of gender in Hindi and Tamil short

story writing since the early twentieth century.¹⁷ However, as I will show in this dissertation, Hindi and Tamil short story writers engaged post-Independence debates on tradition and modernity by using representations of the Indian woman to articulate the new rights, freedoms, and individualities modern Indians now possessed. These representations built on historically specific legal categories of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife that had become commonly used tropes for expressing Indian ways of being in colonial debates on social reform and nationalism. By renewing these already circulating tropes of the feminine ideal, Hindi and Tamil writers' representations of gender maintained a continuity with the colonial past while simultaneously breaking with that past to imagine post-Independence presents and futures based on human freedom and equality. This shared focus on tropes of the feminine ideal thus provided a common representational language across Hindi and Tamil short stories for discussing pan-Indian themes. If, as I showed above, the Sahitya Akademi sought to establish the cultural unity of Indian literature and thereby the nation through the cultivation of a liberal humanist literary aesthetic, then it was through their renewals of these tropes that Hindi and Tamil short stories expressed this pan-Indian humanism. Indeed, these tropes served as the humanist vehicle through which Hindi and Tamil short story writers actively reflected on the relationship between literary form and the historical present, in this way constituting these writers' renewal of the genre itself.

In short, what I am arguing is that the transparent crossovers of these ideal feminine tropes between the state, public, and Hindi and Tamil literary spheres underscores their centrality to understanding what comprised cultural unity across the Hindi and Tamil regions after Independence: in all three spheres, these feminine figures have historically embodied the overlaps and contradictions between what it means to be culturally Indian, to be an individual with rights and freedoms under the auspices of the state, and to have a Hindi or Tamil regional identity. Given the near universal intelligibility of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife in the Indian context, Hindi and Tamil writers' mobilization of these tropes to define the short story's aesthetic and social significance helps reveal the genre's "major" aspirations and ideological import in constructing widely circulating understandings of regional and national

¹⁷ Among the studies of the Hindi and Tamil short story that I discussed in the previous section, two exceptions that attend to the role of gender include Kumar's 1990 study on the New Story, which includes a chapter on representations of the New Woman, and Lakshmi's 1984 study on the Tamil short story, which provides an overview of representations of women in modern Tamil literature. However, neither of these studies situates these representations in relation to the larger literary-historical processes shaping modern Hindi and Tamil literature. Nor do they examine how these representations themselves embody the aesthetic and formal conventions that have shaped the modern Hindi and Tamil short story genres.

Other studies, such as Gupta (1991) and Ananta Raman (2000), also discuss representations of gender in modern Hindi and Tamil short stories and novels. However, they situate these representations in relation to public sphere debates on social reform without taking up questions of literary history, aesthetic, and generic form.

identity and human connection in the post-Independence moment.¹⁸ For, in conceiving of the short story as the most dextrous genre for experimenting with the role of the literary in shaping post-Independence identity, Hindi and Tamil writers found renewed uses of old feminine tropes as the ideal medium for signaling how old categories and characters negotiated the newness of modern Indian society. Here, the newness of the short story genre corresponds with these writers' new engagements with traditional female roles.

This correspondence can be traced even further: in the same way that the newness of Hindi and Tamil short stories references different regionally specific pasts, the tropes of the feminine ideal these stories portray reference different regionally specific identities. The Hindi stories this dissertation examines envision tropes of the feminine ideal as secular, casteless characters, whereas in the Tamil stories I discuss, they possess the signs of Brahmin caste and religious identity. As with newness, this difference is explained by the divergent regional contexts with which the Hindi and Tamil short story forms dialogue: secular, casteless feminine tropes enabled the Hindi short story to sidestep the uneasy linguistic, religious, and caste politics between Hindi and Urdu, and Hinduism and Islam, that characterized the North Indian historical context, while Brahminized feminine tropes allowed the Tamil short story to position itself against the anti-Brahmin movements that maintained fierce control over South Indian politics in the two decades following Independence.

These diverging traces of regional identity in that nationally circulating tropes of the feminine ideal bear expose the regional articulations, appropriations, and reconfigurations of pan-Indian humanism that the Hindi and Tamil short story genres perform and, in this way, shed light on the diverse ways in which the post-Independence state's abstract liberal humanist project took concrete shape across India. In an effort to unravel the possibilities for female agency and freedom, feminist scholarship has foregrounded the ways in which the abstract rights-bearing subject of liberal humanist political frameworks is far from universal, but rather distinctly marked by structures of gender, class, race, caste, religion, and sexuality.¹⁹ Scholars have observed that in the Indian context this normative subject has historically been and continues to be upper caste and class, Hindu, and male and has been propped up by the figure of the ideal

¹⁸ Amir Mufti's claim that the short story is a minor genre articulating the "process of minoritization" (2007, 12) is based on his analysis of the Partition Urdu stories of Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955), in particular their portrayal of the figure of the prostitute. He argues that this modern figure recalls the Muslim courtesan, a stock figure representing the distinctness of the elite Muslim community in the Indian imaginary (179) and in this way, serves as the minor double of the major "domesticated, desexualized figure of the [Indian] mother" (180). However, that Manto developed the short story genre, rather than the novel or poetry, demonstrates not his peripheral status, I would argue, but rather his inclusion within a pan-Indian literary trend of short story writing that recognized and dialogued with Manto's work (see, for example, Yadav 1966; de Bruijn 2003). Manto's focus on the figure of the prostitute, thus, also belongs to and must be situated within broader pan-Indian discourses on social reform that have spanned the state, public, and literary spheres throughout the colonial period. In these discourses, it was not the mother-figure that articulated prevailing understandings of national belonging and Indianness, but rather the interrogation of Indian woman's role as widow, prostitute, virgin, and goodwife.

¹⁹ In particular, scholars have observed the ways in which liberal citizenship is founded upon multiple exclusions based on locationally specific formations of gender, class, race, caste, religion, and sexuality within modern nation-states. For an overview of this literature with regard to the relationship between gender and nation see Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem 1999; Sinha 2006; Sundar Rajan 2003 (especially Chapter 1); and Yuval-Davis 1997. See Irving 2007, Kotef 2009, and Sinha 2000 for examples of feminist discussion on the racial and gendered inflections of the seemingly abstract universal liberal citizen-subject.

Indian woman through which this subject derives its lawful authority.²⁰ My analysis of ideal feminine tropes in Hindi and Tamil short story writing adds to this observation by highlighting the regionally specific identity markers instantiating this supposedly abstract universal subject, while also demonstrating how regional literary practices envisioned this universal subject in sometimes non-aligning, non-uniform ways.

The regionally inflected manifestations of these pan-Indian tropes in Hindi and Tamil short story writing also has implications for understanding how modern liberal humanist subjectivity takes shape. Recent feminist scholarship, such as Saba Mahmood's (see Mahmood 2001, 2005), has identified the ways in which liberal humanist subjectivity is comprised by the coupling of individual agency with resistance: the liberal humanist individual's freedom to act and choose based on its own desires hinges on this individual's ability to resist external impositions on its freedom—that is, its ability to “do” or “undo” social norms (2005, 12-13, 158-159). In this way, it is the possession of the capacities for both agency and resistance that together constitute the liberal humanist subject. Based on this observation, Mahmood raises the question of how to understand subjectivity outside the liberal humanist framework, in particular when speaking about non-liberal contexts in which the coupling of agency and resistance cannot be presumed as the core of subjectivity. My analysis of Hindi and Tamil short story writing modifies this question towards understanding liberal humanist subjectivity in a context in which non-liberal ways of being still endure within a liberal humanist framework. For instance, the figure of the sati—both goodwife and widow—has functioned as a longstanding trope for expressing ideas of tradition, community, and social propriety in the Indian context that only in the colonial period began to be endowed with liberal humanist notions of individual desire and choice (see, for example: Chakrabarty 2000, Mani 1998, Spivak 1985, and Thapar 1988). Here, the question that arises is, how does liberal humanist subjectivity get instantiated through non-liberal idioms in the first place? Or, in other words, how is the coupling of agency and resistance enacted and galvanized into liberal humanist action? As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, both Hindi and Tamil short story writers depict tropes of the feminine ideal that are produced by the coupling of individual choice with resistance to older understandings of tradition, thereby connecting their characters to a broader liberal humanist national politics that emphasizes individual freedom. However, I will also show that this coupling does not take shape in the same ways in each context—in Hindi stories, agency gets linked to resistance through the language of intellect and emotion (such as rationalizations, emotional turmoil, alienation), while in Tamil stories, this coupling occurs in the language of the body (such as physical descriptions, bodily sensations, sexual impulses). Part II traces the ways in which these stylistic and idiomatic

²⁰ This normative Indian subject has been interrogated by a few different threads of scholarship. The Subaltern Studies project, for example, has sought to reveal not only the networks of power that both establish this subject and are kept in place by it, but also the range of non-normative subjectivities that support the liberal institutions of the Indian state even as these subjectivities are minoritized, marginalized, or excluded from formal political participation (see, for example: Chatterjee 1993, Guha and Spivak 1988; Spivak 1985). Another thread, which I discuss in further detail in Chapter 1, is Indian feminist scholarship on constitutional law and individual rights, which demonstrates the ways in which the assumed subject of the law is the upper caste, upper class, Hindu male (see, for example: Jaising 2005, Parashar 1992, and Sundar Rajan 2003). Finally, scholars such as Das (2007), Sundar Rajan (2003), and Sinha (2007) have illuminated the ways in which the Indian state has utilized the figure of the Indian woman to install the upper caste, upper class, Hindu man as the normative citizen-subject of its rule.

differences arise through Hindi and Tamil writers' regionally specific, historically situated theorizations of the short story genre. Through this juxtaposition, I reveal how the coupling of agency and resistance concretely takes shape and is itself a varied and geographically rooted project, thus offering insight into the ways that abstract liberal humanism is neither a singular, nor uniform project.

The Idea of Indian Literature

Hindi and Tamil short story writers' uses of tropes of the feminine ideal also offer insights into the study of Indian literature more generally. Indeed, scholars have noted the prevalence of representations of the Indian woman across regional literatures. For example, in his two volume *A History of Indian Literature* commissioned by the Sahitya Akademi, Sisir Kumar Das (1991, 1995) observes that a focus on this figure is a common theme running through all the main modern literary traditions of India. In a chapter entitled "Women," Das thus contends that "The representation of the woman has continued to be one of the major concerns of the Indian literature of the twentieth century as it was in the nineteenth" (1995, 323). Das is one among several scholars who have observed that the figure of the Indian woman has been constitutive of the category of modern Indian literature as a whole, in particular because it secures two of this canon's defining characteristics: 1) the intimate connection between Indian literature and social reform discourses, and 2) the Hindu bias operating at the heart of Indian literature. For instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), Partha Chatterjee (1993), and Tanika Sarkar (2000) have illustrated the centrality of representations of the Indian woman, in particular the Hindu widow, to the formation of modern Bengali literature after the 1820-30s public debates over the Sati Act of 1829 and the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Rajul Sogani (2002) extends this observation to the literatures of all modern Indian languages, suggesting that the rise of representations of the Hindu widow after the sati and widow remarriage debates is the essential unifying trait of the Indian literary canon. Early novelists across different regions—such as Bankim (Bengali), Chandu Menon (Malayalam), Mizra Ruswa (Hindi-Urdu), A. Madaviah (Tamil), and Baba Padmanji Mulay (Marathi)—focused on feminine tropes such as the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife to demonstrate the "Indian" and "Hindu" characteristics of vernacular literatures in the context of a growing anti-English and anti-colonial sentiment (Mukherjee 2002, Sogani 2002). Das builds on this observation by schematizing these representations of the Indian woman into three chronological categories: 1) as belonging to the framework of domesticity, 2) as challenging norms and traditions and joining social movements, and 3) as a new woman educated and impacted by western knowledge and socio-political movements (1995, 323-324). For Das, these three categories represent the shared evolution of regional literatures from the late nineteenth century to Independence.

Das, in particular, offers his schematization of representations of the Indian woman across modern regional literatures as a corrective to current scholarship on Indian literature. He argues that despite this scholarship's generally held understanding that Indian literature is a unified universe of thoughts and ideas expressing the psyche of the Indian people as a whole, existing studies still lack an integrated understanding of Indian literature: "Either these scholars believe, or they give the impression to readers, that Indian literature is an aggregate of literatures:

Assamese + Bengali + Gujurati + Hindi...” (ibid., 8). Alternatively, scholars such as Aijaz Ahmad and Sheldon Pollock circumvent the question of gender, cautioning instead against the nationalist narrative of literature that a unified model like Das’s advances. Ahmad warns that this narrative has privileged “High Textuality of the Brahminical kind to posit the unification of this literary history” (1992, 244). And Pollock, citing the Sahitya Akademi’s goal to create a shared awareness of Indian literature among regional writers, underscores the constructed-ness of the Indian canon: “...none of those writers actually producing Indian literature knew that there was a singular Indian literature. It is the nation-state alone that knows, if only obscurely...” (2004, 10). However, their vigilance against nationalist hue of the idea of Indian literature do not lead Ahmad and Pollock to abandon the project of exploring the idea of Indian literature as a sum greater than its parts. Rather, they insist, alongside Das, that attention to methodology is critical to such an exploration. In doing so, all three scholars offer tools that they believe will better advance the contemporary study of Indian literature: scrutiny of linguistic and literary processes through literary historical analysis (in Pollock’s terms—the scrutiny of “literary cultures in history”); sensitivity towards the artificiality/constructed-ness of linguistic and geographical boundaries within texts and bodies of literature; and importantly, attention to the movement of genres across languages and literatures. Together these approaches gesture towards a way of understanding the unity of Indian literature on methodological, rather than nationalist terms.

Studies of Indian literature like Das’s and Pollock’s are admirable scholarly collaborations that provide detailed overviews of key literary historical moments, trends, and concepts that arise across regional literatures. However, although they seek to move beyond an “aggregate model” of Indian literature, these studies evidence a still persisting dilemma in the study of Indian literature: it is explored either through a theme-based overview of texts and movements that leaves out close textual analysis (as in the case of Das’s study), or as a lineup of in-depth studies of regional literary texts and trends placed side by side so that readers must draw connections between them on their own terms (as in the case of Pollock’s study). That is to say, thus far there exist no studies that attempt to compare regional literatures on both literary historical and textual-analytical grounds *in the same space*. The present comparative study of post-Independence Hindi and Tamil literature seeks to understand close textual readings of short stories in the context of the larger literary historical process of which they are a part. In doing so, I offer an additional methodological approach to the study of Indian literature: deep engagement with how definitions of literariness take shape, congeal, and evolve within texts and corpus over time. For, it is through particular notions of literariness—ones caught up with specific representations of gender—that the unity of Indian literature has been and continues to be comprised. And it is through the possession of such literariness that regional texts and authors acquire membership within the Indian canon. As I demonstrated above, Radhakrishnan defined the literariness of Indian literature in the period immediately following Independence in specifically liberal humanist terms: for the Sahitya Akademi, it was defined as *true literature, enduring literature* that arises out of the *truth of writerly selves* and worked to *better human society, achieve national integration, and promote international solidarity*. In the context of this state-endorsed liberal humanist literariness, the rest of this dissertation examines how ideas of literariness took shape in the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story: what pressures—

both external and internal—bore upon these notions of literariness, how do the short stories articulate literariness on their own terms, and in what ways do these articulations of literariness align with each other and with the state’s liberal humanist definition?

My treatment of the “literary” draws from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin (1981) views literariness as a category of value, where the literariness of language is what makes language respectable: “The category of ‘literariness’ and ‘respectability’ [which are one and the same for Bakhtin] lies on the boundary between the requirements and value judgements inhering in *style* on the one hand, and the constitutive and normative requirements of *language* on the other” (381, emphasis in original). That is to say, literariness performs the boundaries that delimit both established understandings of style and the norms of standardized language. For Bakhtin, literariness is inseparable from questions of genre and style, for it is these elements that give literariness its seemingly fixed quality. He posits genre as a model-representation of the world and for this reason, it operates, in Tzvetan Todorov’s words, “on the side of the collective and the social” (1984, 80). Genre possesses a formal reality that not only represents the world, but also shapes different understandings of the world by mediating between language and social reality. This is because “Every genre has its methods, its ways of seeing and understanding reality, and these methods are its exclusive characteristic” (Bakhtin 1978, quoted in Todorov 1984, 83; see also Bakhtin 1981, 259- 422; Tihanov 2000, 59).

Bakhtin does not limit genres to the realm of the literary, for they first and foremost belong to speech, and they stratify language into lower and higher types. Low genres, such as journalism and “penny dreadfuls,” are situated closer to primary language (which is largely pre-literary and oral), while high genres constitute a type of metalanguage that belongs to the sphere of the literary. But as “relatively stable types,” genres also unify language by linking utterances—the most basic unit of language—to the larger social, historical, and ideological frameworks by which they acquire meaning. Genres are, in other words, “typical forms of utterances” (Bakhtin 1981, 288-289; 1986, 60-63). In this scheme, “Style enters as one element into the generic unity of the utterance,” for “*styles are nothing more than generic styles* for certain spheres of human activity and communication” (1986, 64; emphasis added). The style of an utterance locates it within a genre, and particular styles belong to particular genres. Furthermore, style is one crucial element that constitutes the formal characteristics of a genre.²¹ In other words, the different styles Bakhtin speaks of—poetic, individual, authorial, novel, that of tales and folklore to name a few—evoke the high or low, literary or primary, genres to which they belong. For example, the *nayi kahani* writers held their imagistic style as constitutive of the post-Independence Hindi short story, while *cirukatai* writers viewed the style of spoken language as formative of the Tamil story form. The intimate connection between style and genre means that, “Where there is style, there is genre. The transfer of style from one genre to another not only alters the way a style sounds [...], but also violates or renews the given genre” (66).

Because it inheres in high generic styles, literariness is a centralizing force for Bakhtin. It works against and attempts to order heteroglossia—what Bakhtin describes as the multiplicity of voices and matrix of diverse social and historical forces comprising each utterance. In this

²¹ In his essay on “The Problem of Speech Genres,” Bakhtin lists three elements constituting the make up of genres: theme, style, and compositional structure (1986, 60).

way, literariness is essential to the processes of canonization and re-accentuation. On Bakhtin's view, canonization entails the drawing of boundaries, the hardening of generic forms, and the elevation of existing norms to facilitate a single-voiced reading of texts. In a similar vein, re-accentuation is a stylistic method employed by an author to accent some meanings of a word while suppressing others to express particular ideological intentions. As such, re-accentuation is an important collaborative process to canonization. Processes of canonization and re-accentuation stabilize and normalize particular understandings of literariness in "precisely [...] the most sharply heteroglot eras, when the collision and interaction of languages is especially intense and powerful" (1981, 418). It is, thus, in those moments when form is used to narrow and normalize meaning that centralizing literary processes demand special scrutiny.

Thinking alongside Bakhtin's understanding of literariness as a centralizing force enabling canonization and re-accentuation, I suggest that the study of Indian literature be approached not as a question of what texts and authors comprise this canon, but rather in terms of a *centering process* bolstered by regionally and nationally circulating understandings of literariness. As a centering process, Indian literature is stabilizing but not stable, universalizing but not universal, nationalizing but never completely nationalized. Understanding Indian literature in this way demands attention to the specific ways in which texts and corpuses gravitate towards this centering, reeled in by intersecting notions of literariness. The focus of Indian literature on representations of the Indian woman is, on this view, not a definitive characteristic of this canon, but rather a centering technique articulating literary value. Literariness thus flows in diverse ways through the tersest of textual utterances, as well as the broader dialogues arising between literature, literary criticism, and social and historical contexts. Accounting for processes of centering necessitates careful consideration of how these conversations between literary and meta-literary genres develop and change over time, congealing around particular forms, norms, and limits at particular historical junctures. In this light, my above analysis of the Sahitya Akademi's literary activities helps track the meta-literary genres through which post-Independence ideas of "literariness" began to coalesce.

But, taking "Indian literature" to be a centering process also means recognizing that it is only one centering process among others, and that the forcefield of this centering process excludes other gravitational centerings, such as region, from its purview. In viewing Indian literature this way, my comparative study seeks to give space to the regionally competing notions of literariness that catalyzed the drawing of literary boundaries, the hardening of generic forms, and the elevation of existing literary norms in the post-Independence moment. These regional understandings of literariness constitute centering processes in and of themselves, and for this reason, the alignment of canonization processes and notions of literariness in Hindi and Tamil with that of Indian literature does not suggest the subsumption of these literatures within the national one. In particular, I will show that through their use of pan-Indian tropes of the feminine ideal, the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil story forms attempted to cordon off the "literary" from the "popular" and the "modern" from the "traditional." In this way, representations of these tropes constitute the regional centering processes through which the Hindi and Tamil literary canons defined their boundaries while simultaneously bolstering that other centering process through which Indian literature constructed the broad-reaching contours of its pan-Indian liberal humanist aesthetic. Through this comparative study, I thus argue that

seeing regional and national literatures as separate but intersecting processes reveals the distinct, though sometimes aligning, literary foreclosures these centering processes enact.

The Writers and Structure of the Dissertation

As I have indicated above, the six writers upon which this dissertation focuses were preeminent short story writers in the two decades following Independence, who have continued to receive recognition at the regional and national levels for their literary contributions. But while I take their work to be representative of larger trends within the Hindi *nayi kahani* and the Tamil *cirukatai*, I have also chosen these writers from among their notable contemporaries for the specific ways that their literary outlooks and short story writing dialogue with one another. My hope in comparing the literary endeavors of these six writers is that drawing out fruitful resonances and dissonances across Hindi and Tamil literature through their writing sheds light on the role that literature played in establishing universal understandings of the Indian subjectivity in post-Independence India. Due to the constraints of this comparative analysis, this dissertation only touches upon some of the important work of other *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* writers. For example, I engage very little with the literary criticism and short stories of Kamleshwar and Nirmal Verma, who were integral to the development of the *Nayi Kahani* movement. Similarly, in the case of the Tamil *cirukatai*, I have overlooked the work of short story writers such as Thi. Janakiraman (1921-1982), Sundara Ramaswamy (1931-2006), and La.Sa. Ramamritham (1916-2007)—to name just a few—which was also formative to the modern Tamil literary tradition I examine in this dissertation.

The aim of my comparison is not to define the “Indian canon,” but rather to illuminate its constant centering gesture. To do so, each chapter pairs a Hindi author with a Tamil one to draw out both the similarities in the centering processes at work in their writing, as well as their different orientations and manifestations. Accordingly, each pairing engages in a method of close-reading to explore how Hindi and Tamil short story writers use tropes of the feminine ideal to articulate intersecting notions of literariness that are simultaneously rooted in their regional literary traditions. For the sake of maintaining structural consistency, each chapter places the Hindi stories before the Tamil ones. The extent to which this structural ordering maintains the separateness of the Hindi and Tamil literary traditions is evidence of my own ongoing struggle to address the current lack of comparative scholarship on modern Hindi and Tamil literature.

Rajendra Yadav (1929-) was born into a professional, upper caste family in Agra in what is now Uttar Pradesh. He completed his M.A. in Hindi from Agra University in 1951. The same year, Yadav published both his first collection of short stories, as well as his first novel *Pret Bolte Hain* [Ghosts Speak] (later renamed *Sārā Ākāś* [The Whole Sky]). The filmmaker Basu Chatterjee adapted this much acclaimed novel into the 1969 film *Sara Akas*, launching the Parallel Cinema movement that countered more popular forerunners of Bollywood produced at the time. Yadav and Mannu Bhandari met while living briefly in Calcutta in the early 1950s and were married shortly after. As Bhandari (2007) recounts, the *Nayi Kahani* movement arose out of literary discussions at Yadav’s and Bhandari’s home in New Delhi, in particular between Mohan Rakesh, Yadav, and Kamleshwar. Yadav established his own publishing house in 1965

called *Akṣar Prakaśan*, or Letter Publications (uncannily the same name as Chellappa's). He was the editor of a series of volumes featuring *nayi kahani* writers in the mid fifties through sixties, and in 1986, he relaunched the Hindi journal *Hams*, which fell under after the death of its famous writer-editor Premchand (1880-1936). Yadav has published short story collections, novels, critical essays, translations, edited volumes on Hindi literature, as well as a memoir. He continues to write and serve as editor of *Hans* in New Delhi.

Cinnamanur Subramaniam Chellappa (1912-1998), whom I have situated as Yadav's Tamil interlocutor in this dissertation, was born into a Tamil Brahmin family outside of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. He began his writing career much earlier than Yadav. As I mentioned above, he belonged to the 1930s *Manikkoti* circle of writers, who considered themselves Gandhian Indianists wielding the short story form as a tool in the fight for Independence. Like most of the *Manikkoti* writers, Chellappa moved to Chennai to serve as an active participant in the Independence movement, as well as to work as a journalist and fiction writer. Chellappa's short story "Caracāviṇ Pommaī" [Sarasa's Doll], written in this era, has become one of his most well-known stories and is still studied for its formative role in developing the *Manikkoti* short story project. After the *Manikkoti* movement died out in the late 1930s, Chellappa continued to write short stories and short story criticism. Feeling the need to revive Tamil literature and criticism in the mid 1950s, he began his publishing house, the *Eluttu Piracaram* [Letter Publications] and launched his own literary magazine *Eluttu* in 1959. It ran until 1972. Chellappa's novel *Cutantira Tākam* [The Thirst for Independence] won the Sahitya Akademi award in 2001. Chellappa wrote vast number of short stories and critical essays, several still-studied novels, and a play. He died in 1998.

Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972) was born in Amritsar, Punjab, into an upper caste, professional family affiliated with the Hindu reformist Arya Samaj movement. He completed an M.A. in English and Hindi at Punjab University in Lahore. Afterwards, Rakesh went back and forth between Jalandhar in Punjab, where he taught literature at the university level, and New Delhi, where he worked as a writer. Rakesh also served for a short period as editor of the literary magazine *Sārikā*, published out of Bombay. He began writing shortly before Independence and published his first collection of stories in 1950. His short story "Uskī Roṭī" [Her Daily Bread] was made into a film in 1971 by the famous director Mani Kaul. Rakesh is known equally, if not more so, for his plays as for his short stories, and much of his early thinking on the *nayi kahani* crosses over into his emphasis on realism and alienation in drama. He won an award from the Sangeet Natak Akademi (the national academy of music, dance, and drama) in 1968 for his playwriting. When he died in 1972 at the young age of 46, Rakesh had published numerous collections of short stories, novels, and critical essays, a travel memoir, a diary, and several plays.

Dhandapani Jeyakanthan (1934-), whose short stories and critical writing I have paired with Rakesh's, was born into an upper caste non-Brahmin family in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, in 1934. After his father abandoned him at an early age, Jeyakanthan moved to Chennai (then Madras), where he lived with his uncle as part of the Communist Party of India (CPI) commune. During his early years, Jeyakanthan was an ardent CPI member and wrote for the CPI journal *Janacakti*. But he gradually turned away from the party, withdrew his membership in the 1960s, and became a Congress Party supporter, driven in particular by his views on language politics.

His fiction and critical essays reflect this political turn: they move away from ideological expositions on class oppression to a focus on the interconnections between modern Tamil, Sanskrit, Hindi and English, and to portrayals of Brahminical characters, themes, and concepts in line with fellow writers like Chellappa. Despite this shift, however, Jeyakanthan's work has remained as popular now as it was when he began writing in the early 1950s. And unlike Chellappa and other *Eluttu* writers, Jeyakanthan has continued to publish widely in literary, popular, and party-affiliated magazines. He won the Sahitya Akademi award for novel *Cila Nerankalil Cila Manitarkal* [Some Moments, Some People] in 1972, and the Jnanpith Award—a prestigious all-India literary award established by the Bharatiya Jnanpith Trust—in 2002. In 2009 he was the first Tamil writer to win the esteemed the Padma Bhushan award given by the central government. Several of his novels, including the one that won the Sahitya Akademi award, have been made into films: *Yārukkāka Alutān* [For Whom Does He Cry] (1966), *Cila Nerankalil Cila Manitarkal* [Some People in Some Times] (1975), *Oru Naṭikai Nāṭakam Pārkiṛāḷ* [An Actress Watches a Play] (1978), *Putuc Ceruppu* [New Shoes] (1978), *Ūrukku Nūru Pēr* [A Hundred People of the Town] (2002), and *Unnai Pōl Oruvan* [Someone Like You] (2009). Jeyakanthan directed *Yarukkaka Alutan* and *Unnai Pol Oruvan* himself. He has written a vast array short story collections, novelettes and novels, as well as a few critical essay collections, two autobiographies, and two biographies (one on Mahatma Gandhi and another on the Hindi writer Premchand). He currently lives in Chennai and remains active in the Tamil literary sphere.

Mannu Bhandari (1931-) was born in an upper caste, non-practicing Arya Samaji family in Bhanpura, Madhya Pradesh. She spent most of her childhood in Ajmer, Rajasthan, and was greatly influenced by her father, who was also a Hindi scholar. She completed her higher education in Calcutta and her M.A. in Hindi in Benares, and then returned to Calcutta to teach. It was during this period that she met Rajendra Yadav. After their marriage, she moved to New Delhi, where she began teaching Hindi literature at Miranda House College at Delhi University. Bhandari was a member of early *nayi kahani* discussions with Yadav, Rakesh, and Kamleshwar, but portrays herself in her memoir as an observing outsider, in part because she was a woman and in part because she believed writing should be less complicated and less entangled in the politics of literary movements than other *nayi kahani* writers. Her stories, however, were published in several *nayi kahani* anthologies and series in the fifties and sixties. Her first short story collection appeared in 1957. Apart from short stories, Bhandari has written several widely acclaimed novels, screenplays, television scripts, and a memoir. Basu Chatterjee adapted her well-known short story “Yahī Sac Hai” into the film *Rajnigandha*, which one the Filmfare Award for best film in 1974. She currently lives in New Delhi.

Chudamani Raghavan (1931-2010), like Bhandari with whom I have paired her, was one of the very few women writers of the 1950-60s to be considered preeminent among short story writers. She was born in 1931 in Madras in a Tamil Brahmin family. Because of her physical disability, Chudamani was home schooled for most of her childhood and took up writing upon the encouragement of her artist mother. She published her first story in 1957 and was immediately recognized as an important writer of her time. She won the Kalaimagal Silver Jubilee award—given by the literary magazine *Kalaimakal*—for her fiction writing in 1957 and a second award for her novel writing from the same magazine soon after. Chudamani published

her writing in a variety of literary magazines including Chellappa's *Eluttu*, but the most significant portion of her work appeared in *Kalaimakal*.²² Unlike the other writers this dissertation examines, Chudamani wrote no literary critical or autobiographical pieces. She remains well known for her numerous short story collections, novels, and plays, and wrote continuously until her death in 2010.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. Part I traces the making of tropes of the feminine ideal from the late nineteenth century to the post-Independence moment in the state, public, and literary spheres. Chapter 1 demonstrates that these tropes were central to framing the relationships between the individual and the community both in state and public discourses, as well as in Hindi and Tamil literature. Specifically, I show three things. First, I discuss how the historically specific legal categories of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife became commonly used tropes for expressing Indian ways of being during the colonial period. Underlying these tropes is a colonial and nationalist anxiety about who should be the guardian of the Indian woman. Second, I show how the postcolonial state aimed to protect and guarantee specific humanist freedoms with reference to these colonial tropes of the feminine ideal. While it maintained the tropes themselves, the state also reinvented them with new consequences for modern Indian subjectivity. Third, I demonstrate how post-Independence Hindi and Tamil literature drew from these very same tropes to articulate regional concerns in the terms of an all-Indian nationalism. Specifically, both literatures employed tropes of the feminine ideal to depict characters wrestling with changing gender norms, the position of the modern Indian woman, and the meaning of community. In this way, Hindi and Tamil characters achieved pan-Indian resonance.

Chapter 2 focuses on the intersection of these tropes with the rise of the short story and new notions of literariness in 1930s Hindi and Tamil literature. Literary debates in both Hindi and Tamil coincided with the rapidly expanding pan-Indian nationalist movement, mobilized to a large extent by the women's question. It was, thus, in relation to social reform discourse that literary production began to center even more so on tropes of the feminine ideal to convey the limits of nation and the function of literature. I demonstrate, however, that while Hindi writers used these tropes to emphasize the social function of literature, for Tamil writers they embodied literature's aesthetic function. I argue that this difference must be understood through the specific histories of the Hindi and Tamil canons: modern Hindi literature takes shape through a long-standing effort to define Hindi/Hindu language and culture separately from Urdu/Islam, whereas the formation of the modern Tamil canon is intimately connected to the attempt to foreclose Dravidian, Non-Brahmin, and Self-Respect Movement identity politics from the realm of Tamil literary culture.

Part II examines the divergent legacies of these tropes in Hindi and Tamil short story writing of the 1950s and 60s. Chapter 3 examines the theorizations of the Hindi *nayi kahani* and the Tamil *cirukatai* largely through the work of Rajendra Yadav and C.S. Chellappa. I demonstrate 1) the terms these short story writer-critics use to differently theorize the ways in which the short story establishes human connection, and 2) the ways in which they evoke tropes

²² In fact, she was the only woman writer to ever be published in Chellappa's magazine *Eluttu*.

of the feminine ideal to enable the short story to break from the past while simultaneously speaking to already-established communal readerships. In Yadav's case, this readership community is the Hindu one that the pre-Independence Hindi writers addressed. In Chellappa's case, this community is the Tamil Brahmin one to whom his pre-Independence predecessors directed their writing. Through the juxtaposition of Yadav's and Chellappa's fiction and theoretical writings, this chapter argues that despite Hindi and Tamil writers' shared investments in nationally circulating tropes of the feminine ideal and conventions of genre to portray pan-Indian ideas of newness and modernity, post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short stories were as directed, if not more so, towards regional literary concerns as towards national ones.

Chapter 4 juxtaposes the short story writing of Mohan Rakesh and D. Jeyakanthan. I demonstrate how these authors use tropes of the feminine ideal to convey new understandings of human desire and connection in their stories. Both Rakesh and Jeyakanthan depict characters who are produced through the coupling of individual choice with resistance to tradition, thereby connecting their characters to the national liberal humanist politics emphasizing individual freedom. But these characterizations manifest differently: in Rakesh's story, this coupling takes form in the language of intellect and emotion—rationalizations, emotional turmoil, and alienation. By contrast, Jeyakanthan's stories express it in the language of the body—physical descriptions, bodily sensations, and sexual impulses. This difference can be understood, I argue, in terms of the regionally specific literary histories, readership communities, and definitions of literariness Rakesh and Jeyakanthan address: Rakesh's short story writing shares an emphasis on the present and the Hindu/Indian community with his fellow *nayi kahani* writer Yadav, while Jeyakanthan's writing echos the anti-Dravidianist aesthetic politics of his contemporary Chellappa.

Chapter 5 dwells further on the newness of human desire through a comparison of the short stories of Mannu Bhandari and R. Chudamani. I show that in order to negotiate the tension between their status as women writers on the one hand, and canonical writers in male-dominated literary traditions on the other, Bhandari and Chudamani use the language of justice to authorize new expressions of feminine desire that may have otherwise been inexpressible. Their use of the language of justice is legitimizing, I argue, precisely because it draws from the liberal humanist conventions their male contemporaries employ to define the literariness of the Hindi and Tamil short story genres. In other words, by adhering to these conventions of literariness, Bhandari and Chudamani gain the authority to express unconventional freedoms within the Hindi and Tamil canons. Their portrayals of tropes of the feminine ideal thus provide insight into the radical extents to which Hindi and Tamil short story writers could give concrete shape to the post-Independence state's liberal humanist promises of individual freedom. However, I also highlight idiomatic differences in Bhandari's and Chudamani's writing: whereas Bhandari's characters operate within an idiom of loss, Chudamani's characters approach the world through an idiom of anger. These idiomatic differences, I show, fall in line with the different generic projects of the Hindi *nayi kahani* and Tamil *cirukatai*. These idioms allow us to see, then, how new expressions of feminine desire emerged in each literature, as well as how liberal humanism was adopted and in turn shaped by regional literary projects.

Part I
The Making of the Feminine Ideal

Chapter 1

The Widow, the Prostitute, the Virgin, and the Goodwife

इन मेहँदी लगे हाथों से कैसे अपनी बर्बादी की कथा लिखूँ। बस यही समझ लो, ये बहुत अच्छे हैं, और मैं सुखी हूँ। एक छोटा-सा शहर है। और यह इसके नामी वकील हैं। काम में बहुत व्यस्त रहते हैं, यों भी काफी साधु प्रकृति के पुरुष हैं। परिवार का कोई झंझट नहीं, घर में अकेली ही हूँ। साधनों का कोई अभाव नहीं, पर जिसकी सब साध ही मर गई हो, वह क्या करें इन साधनों को लेकर? मेरे लिए बहुत-सी पुस्तकें मँगा दी गई हैं, जिससे इस बड़े से घर में अकेली रहकर भी मेरा मन लगा रहे—पर कैसे बताऊँ उन्हें कि जिसका मन ही मर गया, उसके मन लगने न लगने का प्रश्न ही कहाँ उठा है भला!

How could I write my tale of ruin with these henna stained hands. *Bas*, just understand this, [my husband] is a very good man, and I'm happy. It's a smaller town. And he is one of its reputed lawyers. He stays very busy at work, generally he's quite a goodnatured man. I have no quarrels with his family, as I'm alone at home. There's no lack of means, but what does one do with these things if all her desire has died? He has brought me many books, which might keep my mind occupied even though I'm alone in such a big house—but how can I tell him that the question of whether or not one's mind is occupied hardly arises when that mind is dead!

(Bhandari 2001 [1957], 56)

कल्याणम् तदादत्तवदत्तल अवल कवले. तन् उरिमे पढिपोवतुतान् अवलुक्कु ताङ्कविल्ले. पेण् एन्ऱ पिरुपिन् पेनुमेयुदन् अवलु निरुक्कु पोतु अन्ऱ अन्ऱस्ते अदयान्ऱम् कण्डुकुण्डु ओरु आरुतनेपु पारुवै कुतर्कुक् काणुक्के सेलुत्तियुक्कुमानाल अवलु नेनुसुल अडु वुन्ऱुक्कुतु. पणुत्तेक् केडुक्कु वायुल अवलुक्कुक्क ओरु पुन्ऱुक्के ओडुयुक्कुमानाल अन्ऱत्तु तुमुक्के सेलुवत्तुल मन्ऱ वरुमेकल् मरुन्ऱु पोयुक्कुक्कुम्.

Her worry wasn't the objection to marriage. It was the snatching away of her self-entitlement that she couldn't bear. She stood proudly born a woman. Had a single venerating glance been offered in recognition of this stature, her heart wouldn't have felt so wounded. Had a smile for her darted across the mouth that requested [dowry] money, she could have forgotten her other poverty in the richness of its adoration.

(Chudamani 1965b, 35)

The female characters in these passages take issue not with marriage, but with the terms on which marriage takes place. In the first passage, from Mannu Bhandari's short story "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" [The Story of a Weak Girl], Rup prefaces her description of life with her new husband by gesturing to the henna stained hands that signal her auspicious status as a married woman. Her husband is a successful, kind man, she writes, and her life is without hardship or worry. But while she recognizes the good fortune of being married and finds no complaint with her generous husband, Rup finds life empty and unhappy because her desire

remains unfulfilled. Similarly, in the second passage, Buvana, the main character of Chudamani's story "Pirappurimai" [Birthright], unquestioningly accepts the dowry-based norms of her arranged marriage. What she cannot bear, however, is the inability of her potential suitors to recognize her womanhood, something she believes is sacred and essential to her self worth. Both Rup and Buvana contest the manner in which the norms of modern, Hindu marriage, are fulfilled, seeking greater space for women's participation and agency. They explore the possibilities for articulating their own desires and individualities within this framework, asking how modern man-woman relationships might be conceived on more equal terms without toppling the institution of marriage itself.

The importance Rup and Buvana give to their desires and choices in envisioning their conjugal relationships shares with post-Independence debates about legal citizenship and national belonging a focus on the terms under which women consented to the care of a guardian. During this period of heightened regional and minority discontent with the centralizing policies of the state, the issue of how individuals and religious communities related to the state was paramount. In this context, the figure of the Indian woman became the battleground upon which conflicting perspectives on state-guaranteed rights and communal authority played out. Competing definitions of the Indian woman's consent flagged the tensions between the state and religious communities: if this figure knowingly and willingly chose to enter into a conjugal contract with her husband, her marriage was viewed as contractual and protected by the secular individual rights conferred by the state. But if she consented to the will of the religious community into which she was born, her marriage was viewed as sacramental and ordained by divine authority. Fixing the definition of her consent to marriage as based on individual choice meant placing the figure of the Indian woman under the jurisdiction of the state. On the other hand, fixing its definition on the basis of her always already willing agreement to marriage meant placing this figure under the auspices of the religious and social community into which she was born. The post-Independence tension between individual rights and community rights thus took shape as the question of who was the rightful guardian of the Indian woman.

The centrality of the question of women's consent to post-Independence understandings of Indian citizenship and subjectivity first arose through colonial legal debates on the conditions under which the state could intervene in the practices of religious communities. These debates centered on a set of ideal-typical representations of the Indian woman—such as the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife—that the colonial state and religious communities used to articulate the limits of their authority, or in other words, the ways in which Indian subjects fell under their jurisdiction. In those instances when the colonial state assumed guardianship over the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife, women's consent was defined as individual choice that required the protection of the law. Conversely, in those instances when religious communities assumed guardianship of these figures, women's consent was defined as their presupposed acceptance of the authority, choices, and desires of the community. The dual understandings of consent that these figures expressed made evident and came to define the conflicted nature of colonial subjecthood.

Post-Independence constitutional debates on the guardianship of the Indian woman focused on these very same ideal female figures, which continued to carry with them the double meaning of consent: as an individual right on the one hand, and as a community (or birth) right

on the other. The repeated citation and narration of these ideal character types led to a narrowed understanding of women's agential capacity: they consented either to state protection of their individual rights or to religious authorities' safeguarding of their social and moral welfare. Given the preeminence of these debates on female subjectivity, it is not surprising that 1950-60s Hindi and Tamil short stories, too, often drew upon these same tropes. As the passages above demonstrate, Rup and Buvana interrogate what it means to be a goodwife and how their choices and desires are circumscribed by this role: the ways they can and will express their consent shape their relationships to the men around them. But, what these two characters—like the female characters I will explore throughout this dissertation—show is a far greater range of agential capacity *within* the strictures of legal and community norms. Rup and Buvana view their choices and desires as substantive of their selfhood, but they also see themselves as firmly embedded within the codes of their communities. Rup emphasizes her auspicious married status, and Buvana her willing acceptance of dowry norms. Through such reconciliations, Rup and Buvana offer insight into the complex everyday ways in which individual and community rights were imagined in the post-Independence moment. These stories, I thus set out to show, conceive of a type of modern society in which individual rights and community rights are not pitted against one another, but rather coexist as one and the same, mutually defining the horizons of womanhood. They thus shed light not just on the “rules of the game,” but also how these rules were lived and imagined in the cultural sphere and, thus, how they contributed to real subjective possibilities.

This chapter broadly asks, what was the role of literature in shaping understandings of Indian subjectivity in the post-Independence moment? Through the juxtaposition of expressions of the feminine ideal in the state-judicial and literary spheres, I argue that post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short stories imagined alternative understandings of Indian subjectivity and citizenship that more closely aligned with the state's project of national integration than constitutional frameworks did. If, as I demonstrated in the Introduction to this dissertation, the new post-Independence state's main objective was to achieve national integration by bringing regions and communities under the auspices of its rights-based liberal humanist framework, then Hindi and Tamil short stories depicted the possibilities through which this integration could be achieved. For, post-Independence literary representations of these tropes envisioned Indian citizen-subjects whose affiliations towards the self were intimately and irrevocably bound up with their affiliations to community. It was thus in the literary sphere that the tensions between individual and community rights opened up spaces in which individual desires and choices could be articulated within, and not outside or in opposition to, the community. The non-oppositional intermingling of individual and community voices was the very aim driving the state led project to achieve national integration.

The first section of this chapter traces the colonial and postcolonial states' legislative and administrative fixation on tropes of the feminine ideal to define the state's jurisdiction over Indian subjects while also maintaining a policy of non-interference in religious community practices. Through a review of historical and legal scholarship, I touch on three exemplary acts—the Sati Act (1829), the Age of Consent Act (1891), and the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929)—to illuminate how tropes of the feminine ideal take on the double meaning of consent. I then turn to the debates surrounding the passage of the four Hindu Code Bills (1955-1956) in lieu

of a broader Uniform Civil Code that would bring all personal law (and not just Hindu personal law) under the jurisdiction of the postcolonial state. Importantly, these debates drew from the already circulating question of guardianship of the Indian woman to establish the rights of individuals and communities in post-Independence India.

In the next section, I return to Bhandari's and Chudamani's stories with which I began this chapter to demonstrate how they tackle the very same problems of Indian woman's guardianship and the nature of her consent. In doing so, these stories also highlight the tensions between individuals and communities, but they engage them differently than state-juridical debates of this period. In particular, these stories locate Indian women's individual choices and desires as central to the maintenance of Hindu community practices and beliefs. In this way, despite their important differences, Bhandari's and Chudamani's stories both imagine a type of Indian subjecthood that coalesces the individual- and community-based understandings of conjugal man-woman relationships. The following chapter traces the centrality of tropes of the feminine ideal to articulating the relationships between individuals and communities in the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres, and the second part of this dissertation argues that despite their rootedness in colonial debates, post-Independence short stories effectively used these tropes to express new understandings of modernity and subjectivity in a form already recognizable to regional and national audiences. I have chosen two exemplary stories by Bhandari and Chudamani here to emphasize the way that literary tropes of the feminine ideal—especially the “goodwife” in this case—presented characters that were intelligible in terms of juridico-political discourse. But they supplied these characters with agential capacity that illuminates how postcolonial readers, and indeed postcolonial subjects, negotiated the tensions between the state's social reform agenda and the constraints of “tradition.”

The concluding section of this chapter addresses scholarly understandings of legal and cultural citizenship in the Indian context, underscoring that both have taken shape through the negotiation of individual and community identities. In contrast to much of the literature on gendered subjectivity, I insist that legal and cultural citizenship must be seen in constant conversation with one another. Too often the cultural sphere is cordoned off from debates over rights, citizenship, and subjectivity. As I hope to show in this chapter—and more so in those that follow—the literary sphere offers crucial insights into the form and practice of female and male subjectivities. It is precisely because individual- and community-based notions of selfhood are intertwined in the production of Indian citizenship that Hindi and Tamil literary expressions of individuality and cultural belonging illuminate how the post-Independence state's goal to achieve national unity was imagined in everyday ways.

The Either/Or of Indian Citizenship

Scholars have demonstrated that the perceived incompatibility between individual rights and community rights in the Indian state-juridical sphere stems in large part from the colonial administration's decision to cordon off personal law from civil and criminal law in 1772. In effect this division created two types of subjects to be regulated by the law: individuals in relation to their religious community on the one hand, and individuals in relation to the colonial state on the other. Thus, from the outset of the Indian legal system, the category of religious

community has received special status with regard to the state—in name situated beyond the reach of the state but in practice produced and regulated by the judicial arm of the state (see for example: Cohn 1997, Parashar 1992). This was because from the perspective of the colonial state, both personal law and civil law held not the community, but the family as the primary religious unit (Agnes 1999). The colonial administration’s regulating focus repeatedly centered on and attempted to streamline individuals into the framework of the nuclear, conjugal unit, which held the male patriarch as its moral and economic head. That is to say, even though the colonial administration provided judicial recognition for the category of the religious community, colonial efforts to use social and legal reform to bring all Indian subjects under its jurisdiction and moral order was oriented towards the production of the conjugal family (Agnes 1999, Nair 1996, Sreenivas 2008).

The colonial state’s focus on the conjugal family unit was driven by several intricately interconnected motivations: its civilizing mission, its anxieties about female sexuality, and its desire to make property alienable through patriarchy. These motivations intersected in a number of legislations, the result of which placed Indian women under the guardianship of both her husband and the state. The Sati Act, the Age of Consent Act, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act were three of the most important pieces of this legislation for our purposes here (see Appendix for a full list).¹ Debates surrounding these acts show that the colonial state’s efforts to regulate Indian subjects within the moral-ideological framework of the nuclear, conjugal family also raised the problem of overstepping the personal law jurisdiction of religious communities. I take each of these in turn, focusing on how they simultaneously limited the definition of “women” into ideal-typical framings and established a framework for reconciling community/state juridical problems. As importantly, what I seek to show is how the construction of these

¹ *Satī* is derived from the name of the goddess Sati, the consort of Siva. In the Hindu myth, Sati marries Siva against the wishes of her father Daksha. When her father purposely neglects to invite the young couple to the grand *yajna*, or ritual sacrifice, that he is holding, Sati attends of her own accord. Father and daughter get into a heated argument in which Daksha criticizes Siva’s lack of virtue. In anger Sati calls upon her yogic powers and self-immolates, vowing to be born as the daughter of a father she would respect in her next life. She has thus come to stand for the fierce loyalty of a wife willing to stand by her husband to the greatest extent possible.

Sati has figuratively come to mean “goodwife.” As a practice it refers to a woman’s act of self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. It is also the name of both the woman who performs this act, as well as the faithful wife who would perform such an act in the instance of her husband’s death. Apart from the references I examine below, see Thapar (1988) for an overview of the changing historical understandings of this figure and Kumar (1993) for an overview of nineteenth and twentieth century social reform movements surrounding sati. In addition, Ashis Nandy has examined the possible psychological motivations that enabled the sati ritual to become “a battleground between the old and the new, the indigenous and the imported, and the Brahmanic and the folk” (1998 [1980], 2).

Following the death of Roop Kanwar in 1987—when she “ascended or was forced to ascend the funeral pyre of her husband” (Das 1995)—a resurgence of Indian scholarship on the practice of sati has brought to light the historical and still current problematics of sati practice and the figure of the sati for understanding individual-community dynamics and subjectivity in the contemporary Indian context. See for example: Das 1995, Nandy 1995, Oldenburg 1994, and Sundar Rajan 1993, as well as the articles included in the 1988 “Special Issue on Sati” published in *Seminar* (342). See Nandy 1995 and Sundar Rajan 1993c for bibliography of debates on the incident and its implications for understanding contemporary incidents of sati that took place in the media.

For legislations on widow remarriage see Carroll (1989); on widow inheritance: Choudhary (1996); on Malabar matrimony: Arunima (2004); on regulation of prostitution and trafficking: Nair (1996); on Devadasi dedication: Anandhi (2000) and Nair (unpublished); on Tamil conjugality: Anandhi (2008), Hodges (2008), and Sreenivas (2008); on Coorg marriage legislation, Poonacha (1996).

tropes embodied a definitional narrowing of agential capacity, or what these debates call “consent.”

The debates surrounding sati abolition were to a large extent about the nature of the Hindu family and what comprises the “goodwife” within it. From the colonial state’s moral-ideological perspective, the practice was horrifying, such that the indigenous patriarchy (presumably forcefully) encouraging this act required the hand of governance to provide proper care for Indian women. The coercive and barbaric man-woman relationship that the Hindu practice of sati exposed, in other words, compelled the colonial state’s civilizing mission to bring Indian subjects within the compass of proper conjugal decorum (Agnes 1999, 46). For how could the moral project the colonial state undertook allow sexually domineering, perverse, and depraved activities, such as this one, to continue?

The question at stake, however, was not whether the goodwife was defined as one who faithfully followed her husband into the afterworld, or one who fulfilled her chaste, widowed existence in this one.² Although such terms may have provided justification for the outright abolition of a custom prescribed by religious law, the colonial state’s policy of non-interference made the regulation of sati on such grounds impossible. In light of this restriction, the colonial administration engaged indigenous positions both defending and opposing sati through the question of whether sati, when it was performed, was carried out with the right intention. From this perspective, the goodwife could be one who remained faithful to her husband either by performing sati, or by living her austere widow’s life to its end. Once the question of the morality of the practice of self-immolation was bracketed off, the legal debate shifted to whether the act was undertaken by a good sati or a bad one, a difference framed in terms of whether she *chose* to undertake this rite or was coerced into doing so. It was this fascination with what drove the sati to her action that dominated official colonial discourse and the legislation outlawing coerced widow immolation in the late nineteenth century (Dalmia 2003; Mani 1989, 1998; Nair 1996; Sarkar 2007; Spivak 1985, 1999).

Lata Mani (1989, 1998) and Tanika Sarkar (2007) demonstrate the complex ways in which the indigenous male elite also zeroed in on the sati’s intention.³ The two main indigenous positions on the issue of sati abolition were reformist-nationalist and revivalist-nationalist.⁴ Reformist-nationalists, such as Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), who sided with colonial authorities, sought to demonstrate *sastric*, or scriptural, evidence for its abolition, claiming not

² Needless to say, the necessary widow’s chastity was an unquestioned and underlying assumption of the sati debates. It is one that points to an overwhelming anxiety over controlling female sexuality that drove the debates surrounding many colonial legislations. This anxiety arose because the sexual freedom of the widow/non-wife was in and of itself a threat to good governance and the conjugal unit and family-based, patriarchal mode of rule it propped up.

³ Mani’s main objective is to demonstrate the ways in which the debates surrounding sati served as a site for what she shows to be the particularly colonial constructions of tradition, modernity, and religion. Sarkar’s is to show that despite the fact that sati legislation did not take women’s voices into account, it opened up a space in the public sphere for the entrance of these voices by both producing the possibility of women’s volition and investing it with historical being. I am interested, here, in simply pointing out that both scholars have established the centrality of Indian women’s consent to this important community-defining legislation. I am operating on the basis of their work and that of other scholars I have cited above that “modernity,” “religion” and “tradition” were also in the process of being newly constructed in this moment.

⁴ This is Mrinalini Sinha’s (1995) terminology for distinguishing between the social reformist and orthodox positions that came to characterize the indigenous nationalist arena in the colonial period.

only that ancient Hindu law awarded greater freedoms to women, but also that “no widow ever voluntarily *ascended* on and *entered* into the flames in the fulfillment of this rite” (Roy 1982, 367-84, emphasis in original; quoted in Mani 1989, 104). Sarkar points out that Roy’s use of Hindu scripture to argue against widow immolation rewrote not only Hindu/Indian religion, tradition, and modernity within the language of colonial discourse, but also constructed “women’s right to life and knowledge on grounds of her innate goodness and common humanity” (Sarkar 2007, 128). Clearly, for Roy, and other indigenous abolition supporters like him, the widow’s consent lay at the heart of the reason for outlawing sati—they shunned the act because it was founded upon 1) the ultimate annulment of an individual’s right to live and 2) the faulty belief that a widow—a willing individual—would actually desire and choose to die. The revivalist-nationalist position, conversely, re-centered the widow’s consent within the confines of scriptural sanction of the act: “Under the sanction of immemorial usage as well as precept, Hindoo widows perform of their own accord and pleasure, and for the benefit of their husband’s soul and their own, the sacrifice of self immolation...” (Majumdar 1941, 156-63; quoted in Mani 1989, 107). On their view, the Hindu widow chose to perform sati in accordance with scriptural law and community values.

While the scholars I cite above emphasize that the voices of widows were utterly absent and almost entirely irrecoverable in early colonial debates over sati, I am more interested in the role of the notion of consent in both the colonial administration’s civilizing mission and indigenous interpretations of sati and what this tells us about the publicly available forms of feminine identity in this moment. The colonial administration’s take on sati located the practice within the jurisdiction of community legislation by framing it in terms of the “consent” of the good sati verses that of the bad sati. Thus, colonial regulation of sati mobilized consent both to establish the limits of the Hindu religious community and to overstep these limits by revealing the coercive nature of the practice. Furthermore, the reformist-nationalists and the revivalist-nationalists also situated the practice of sati in terms of the interpretation of consent within Hindu scriptural and customary tradition—whether as something that had earlier been awarded to women and then taken away (in the case of the nationalist-reformists), or as something always already given by virtue of a pious Hindu woman’s birth into the community (in the case of the nationalist-revivalists). The sati debates show that for both these groups, the definition of Indian women’s consent was critical to mapping the boundaries of the Hindu community into which the colonial state could or could not intercede. This tricky boundary making process meant that when the Sati Act was passed in 1829, the legislation still awarded the “good sati” the right to self immolation, a practice that remained legal for more than another half a century of colonial rule (Sarkar 2007, 124).

The civilizing anxiety and the protector role the state assumed through the sati legislation becomes clearer in light of the Age of Consent controversy that concerned the appropriate age for marking Indian women’s consent to conjugal sex. An 1860 act mandated that a husband could legally cohabit with a wife who was ten years old. But the question of raising the age of consent arose anew in the aftermath of two important court cases. The first occurred in 1887 when young Rukma Bai was brought before the courts because she refused to live with her elder husband on the grounds that her marriage was contracted in her infancy. The second was that of Phulmoni, the ten-year old wife who died after being raped by her thirty-year old husband (see

Sarkar 2001, Sinha 1995, Sreenivas 2008). Similar to the sati debates, these cases raised the issue of consent in relation to conjugal rights, launching the controversy over women's age of consent—specifically, whether or not to raise the minimum age of consent for women to twelve. From the perspectives of both the colonial state and the indigenous patriarchy, the definition of consent was not based on Indian women's volition, but rather on the maturity of their wifely bodies. The colonial administrative point of view was that it was the conjugal contract that guaranteed a husband's ownership of his wife and thus her consent to sexual consummation. The state argued to raise the age of consent because it viewed premature consummation as an impediment to female education and progress. For this reason, the state sought to protect and aid women's advancement by legislating the wife's age of physical readiness.

The nationalist-reformist and the nationalist-revivalist camps, in contrast, held that the body of the wife always already consented to the will of her husband by virtue of the nature of Hindu wifehood. The reformists concurred with the colonial state that raising the age of consent to twelve ensured the protection of a wife's already consenting body until it was mature enough for consummation. The native revivalists, on the other hand, maintained that the colonial state had no right to impede in Hindu religious practice: to insist upon a particular age for consummation would interfere in the religious rite initiating consummation at the attainment of a Hindu wife's puberty, regardless of her age. Importantly, these varying indigenous nationalist points of view operated on the same understanding of consent as the colonial state: in all three cases the definition of consent was narrowed through the singular reference to an agreed upon female subject whose consent was bodily. In this way, the figure of the Indian woman functioned as a trope cited across all sides of the debate.

The point of contention in these debates was, instead, the type of conjugality that consent presumed. For colonial authorities and nationalist-reformists, conjugality represented a more "modern" contract, which, while still Hindu, was based on facilitating the female education and progress that would make wives more compatible with their husbands. The goodwife's body (as sati and as matured woman) embodied consent in this case as the voluntary fulfillment of her wifely role as companion and benefiter of her husband's good will, maintenance, and protection. Conjugality, on this view, stood for the modern form of guardianship a rightful husband gave to his dutiful wife. The orthodox Hindu nationalist-revivalists, on the other hand,

...argued that a higher form of love distinguished Western from Hindu marriages. While the former seeks social stability and order through control over sexual morality, the latter apparently aspires only towards the 'unification of two souls.'

(Sarkar 2001, 204)

This unification of two souls, Sarkar demonstrates, was based in revivalist discourse on a higher form of love that placed Hindu conjugality within the Hindu community and its worldview. The mutuality of love between husband and wife, thus, was not based in individual choice or desire, but rather in the bond of marriage itself, which was anchored in "the woman's absolute and lifelong chastity" to her husband (ibid.). This, in turn, implied her husband's possession of her, body and soul. As in the sati debates, this type of Hindu conjugality was based on the wife/widow's already willing (by virtue of her Hindu piety) and absolutely chaste, monogamous

relationship to her husband. Her consent was signified by her already given concession to the structures of marriage, and conjugality entailed no less than the union of souls in a higher love. Significantly, then, in both colonial and nationalist discourses on the age of consent controversy, the definition of consent entailed a limiting of women's agential capacity. The abstract figure of the Hindu wife was reduced to the singular dimension of her bodily consent, which gestured either towards her modern guardianship under her husband, or her belonging within the Hindu community. Ultimately, the 1891 Age of Consent Act depended upon partially decriminalizing marital rape—so that the indigenous patriarchy still retained some possession of their right over the Indian woman's body—for its passage (Sinha 1995).⁵

The definition of women's consent as bodily that the Sati and Age of Consent debates established was renewed in the 1920s when efforts to raise women's age of consent once again began to surface. But this time, bolstered by the growing momentum of the Independence movement and the rise of the Indian women's movement, indigenous nationalist leaders joined with women's groups to petition not just for a higher age of consent, but rather for a ban on child marriage altogether. This took shape as the Child Marriage Restraint Bill (also known as the Sarda Bill). Mrinalini Sinha (1999, 2000, 2007, and 2008) demonstrates that because the colonial state—less willing to intercede in community affairs in the late colonial period—refrained from offering its support for the bill, women's groups critiqued its inability to follow through on its guardianship responsibility towards Indian women: by continuing to allow the backward practice of child marriage, the colonial state failed to fulfill its task to foster the progress, development, and modernity of its Indian subjects. Indian women thus called upon the indigenous patriarchy to recognize and give space to their choices, desires, and actions by stepping in to offer them its guardianship in the shape of an independent state. If the Sati Act had established the colonial state's authority as the modernizer of Indian patriarchy, in this moment, the debates surrounding the Child Marriage Restraint Act constituted the Indian national state in the very act of its staking claim to this modernizing, guardianship role. Nationalist discourse now articulated the stance that only an independent Indian national state could legitimately grant rights and freedoms to its communities. Sinha (2008) thus argues that the ideological implications of the Child Marriage Restraint Act were far greater than the practical changes brought about after its passage in 1929: it served to realign the relationship between women, community, and the state, creating a direct relationship between an (as yet not fully realized) Indian national state and Indian women independent of both religious communities and the colonial state.

In this way, the figure of the Indian woman that had earlier animated nationalist opposition to the colonial state now mobilized the movement towards Independence. Shortly afterwards, the Government of India Act 1935 awarded India a degree of autonomy towards the creation of an independent government by making provisions for a federal center, expanding the

⁵ Sinha (1995) demonstrates that the collusion of colonial and indigenous perspectives on the age of consent were complicated by the different debates occurring in the British and Indian public spheres in relation to women's rights. That British feminists were pushing for a redefinition of women's rights led to a British male sympathy with the Indian patriarchy's desire to maintain possession of women's consent. However, due to their necessary adherence to the civilizing mission, colonial authorities could not as easily side with nationalist positions on the age of consent controversy.

Indian electorate, and establishing an Indian representative legislature (see Metcalf and Metcalf 2006, Parashar 1992, and Sarkar 1983). Even in this early stage of the transfer of power from the colonial to the postcolonial state, the guardianship of women's consent was placed in the hands of the Indian national state, which framed it as an individual right guaranteed protection by law. In the aftermath of the Child Marriage Restraint Act debates that sealed the definition of women's consent as a bodily possession requiring the safeguarding of the state, the Indian nationalist patriarchy's efforts to establish an independent state were intimately bound up with the way it envisioned the women it protected as its ideal citizens (Sinha 2000).

This was because from the perspective of the Indian national state reeling towards independence, taking on this guardianship role also entailed—at least, initially—the possibility of realigning state-community relations such that the new Indian state could also broaden its reach over community practices and affairs. In other words, the question driving the formation of the independent state was one of how to extend a legal framework over all its future citizens that did not retain the colonial personal law/civil-criminal law distinction. Towards this end, a Hindu Law Committee was formed after the 1935 Government of India Act to investigate the possibility of enacting a comprehensive law that would both reform Hindu personal law and make it applicable to Indians of all communities as a Uniform Civil Code. Just months before Independence in 1947, the committee proposed the first version of the Hindu Code Bill to deal with marriage and divorce, intestate succession, minority and guardianship, maintenance and adoption, and the *mitakshara* joint family—all matters that at this time fell under community jurisdiction.⁶ This Bill went through several revisions and committee investigations. But ultimately, its inclusion in the constitution as a Uniform Civil Code was not possible because of vehement objections from non-Hindu communities to state interference in community affairs. Thus, apart from its expression as a non-enforceable directive principle, the Uniform Civil Code failed to actualize. It took shape, instead, as the four legislative acts comprising the Hindu Code that pertained solely to the Hindu community. These were the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), the Hindu Succession Act (1956), the Hindu Maintenance and Adoption Act (1956), and the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (1956).⁷

Following in the footsteps of the earlier legislations on sati, the age of consent, and child marriage, all four acts comprising the Hindu Code focused on the figure of the Indian woman in her roles as widow, prostitute, virgin, and goodwife. For example, the Hindu Marriage Act was established to oversee marriages solemnized under Hindu sacramental law. The act abolished bigamy, fixed the age of marriage at fifteen for women and eighteen for men, required the consent of the bride's guardian (father, mother, brother, or paternal grandparent) to marriage, and made divorce in Hindu marriages permissible in extreme circumstances, such as proven bigamy, mental incompetency, or impotency. By defining women's consent through their relationship to their husbands and the Hindu community, the act reinforced already circulating understandings of conjugality, wherein the goodwife entered into lifelong guardianship under her husband. The unspoken other constituted by this act was the prostitute, who was figured in debates surrounding

⁶ The Mitakshara school of law determines property rights and inheritance among the joint family most widely across India. The “mitakshara joint family” refers to a system of patrilineal inheritance in which women are also granted exclusive ownership over property they have been granted (see Agnes 1999).

⁷ For further explication of the debates surrounding these acts, see Majumdar 2009, Parashar 1992, Som 2008.

the act as “the type of woman who would agree to become a concubine [and] not the type to whom marriage, albeit a second one, is likely to be offered” (Parashar 1992, 115). Similarly, while the Hindu Succession Act entitled Hindu widows to succeed to their husbands’ property and Hindu daughters to claim a share in their fathers’ property, these shares were significantly limited compared to the inheritance rights of sons. The Maintenance and Adoption Act and the Minority and Guardianship Act fixed the nature of patriarchal Hindu conjugality by installing the husband as the legal guardian of the household. The former barred married women from adopting, and the latter recognized the father as the natural guardian of legitimate children and the mother as natural guardian of illegitimate children.

In initially proposing the Hindu Code Bill as a legislation encompassing all—and not just Hindu—citizens, the state unquestioningly assumed the authority to intervene in and legislate personal law in the name of social progress (Parashar 1992).⁸ Importantly, in actively seeking to intercede in and define personal law, the postcolonial state extended the colonial focus on the figure of the Indian woman as a solution to the tension between individual and community rights. Specifically, the state renewed tropes of the feminine ideal towards the end of establishing uniform rule over its new citizen-subjects. The four Hindu Code acts established the new state’s authority over the Hindu family through the ways in which it defined the nature of Indian women’s guardianship. But because these legislations were limited to the Hindu community, they effectively re-articulated the individual-community divide by pitting the individual rights guaranteed by the state against the (non-Hindu) community rights protected by religious authorities. The state’s guarantee of individual rights, particularly to women and minorities, extended only as far as it was expressed in the Hindu Code acts and the Special Marriage Act of 1954, the latter which conferred inheritance and divorce rights to individuals who chose to register their civil marriage under the auspices of the state.⁹

This either/or seemingly situates the secular state one side and the religious community on the other. But, in the case of the Hindu community, Patricia Uberoi (1996) suggests that the relationship between the state and the community should be viewed instead as a collusion, or as state ratification of the Hindu sacramental contract. Uberoi questions scholarship that views the transition through the colonial period of marriage as sacramental to an institution of secular

⁸ On the one hand, says Parashar, this assumption follows from a colonial legacy of intervention into this sphere and on the other, it reflects no trace of the colonial state’s so called policy of non-interference.

⁹ Parashar (1992) argues that the postcolonial state’s efforts to install the Hindu Code as a uniform law encompassing all citizens demonstrates not its desire to create equality among Indian citizens, but rather to establish uniformity among them in the name of national unity. In other words, the hope of creating a Uniform Civil Code outweighed the state’s capacity and desire to establish gender equality. In its ratified form, the closest the Indian Constitution came to instating uniform equality was in its dual guarantees of equality and non-discrimination on the one hand, and freedom of religion on the other. Feminist scholars have flagged these as creating a contradiction for gender justice because the individual right of women to equality and non-discrimination has continually been sacrificed in the name of guaranteeing freedom of religion (see for example: Agnes 1999, Jaising 2005, Kapur 1996, Menon 2003, and Sundar Rajan 2003). That is to say, there has been a constant coming to heads of individual rights with community rights since the inception of the Indian constitution (ratified in 1950) and a constant trumping of individual rights by community rights. This is because women’s rights have been circumscribed by personal laws such that, although the notion of consent has evolved significantly by the post-Independence moment, it is still defined either by women’s birth into a particular religious community and subjection to its stewardship, or alternatively by the secular Indian state that serves as women’s guardian if they turn away from this community.

contract. Though legislation consolidated legal subjects into nuclear conjugal units, the institution of marriage, she shows, was never fully liberalized—that is to say, transformed into a consent-based, companionate unit. Judicial decisions from the 1950s up to the 1990s consistently view marriage as sacramental: holy, indissoluble, ordained by the divine, and irrespective of the consent of the parties involved. In this way, marriage within the courts is still viewed similarly to the “union of two souls in a higher love” that Tanika Sarkar (2001) illuminates in the context of the nineteenth century age of consent controversy, as opposed to a contractual conception that holds the institution to be secular civil union between two knowingly consenting individuals. Even the language that frames consent in the Special Marriage Act and the Hindu Marriage Act define it as requiring the parties involved to be of sound mind and consenting age. No where is the notion of choice raised. Thus, in the judicial decisions Uberoi examines, the wife is regarded as a member of her husband’s family, not her natal one, who has been transferred as a gift. Her consent to the marriage, furthermore, is given not by way of her volition but rather by way of the act of sexual consummation. Consent, here, is bodily—as it took shape in the sati and age of consent debates. Further, it entails a particular affective relationship between husband and wife: the act of consummation instills in the wife eternal devotion and faithfulness toward her husband and in the husband, eternal ownership of his wife. In this way, the postcolonial institution of marriage inherits its colonial sacramental form and suggests that community rights win out over individual rights, for the affective ties of the community define the conjugal unit and not the individual desires of the couple (Uberoi 1996; see also: Majumdar 2009, Sreenivas 2008, and Uberoi 2006).

This particularly Hindu “conjugal family ideal” (Sreenivas 2008) that regards the husband as the head of the household and his wife as his consenting dependent was set in place by the Hindu Code and Special Marriage Act and central to the way that the postcolonial Indian state installed itself as guardian of the Indian woman. Because this conjugal ideal worked in conjunction with rather than replacing community understandings of family and religiosity, the state derived its authority as *parens patriae* by rearticulating Indian women’s legal status through these acts. The Hindu Code and Special Marriage Act conferred rights to women, but these rights were formulated on the basis of women’s particular relationships to men as widows, prostitutes, virgins, and goodwives. This has meant that women’s ability to claim rights from the postcolonial state has been determined by their capacity to fulfill (or not fulfill) these roles. The persistence of these tropes in postcolonial state-judicial legislations thus also demonstrates the preservation of the definition of women’s consent as bodily and the restriction of what women’s agency could mean.

In this way, the postcolonial legislative and juridical construction of women’s consent leaves little space for women’s autonomy and expression of their volition outside the conjugal unit. It is interpreted either as a woman’s faithful companionate devotion to her husband, or as her always already given birthright within her religious community. But also, the double meaning of consent enables the elision of marriage-as-contract with that of sacrament because, from both the state’s and the community’s perspectives, it is embodied by Indian women rather than articulated through individual choice. In the postcolonial state-judicial sphere, consent thus functions as a pivot upon which individual and community rights hinge.

Both Women and Men, Consent and Community

Mannu Bhandari's "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" and R. Chudamani's "Pirappurimai," like many of the stories I explore in this dissertation, raise this very same question of Indian women's guardianship and its relationship to consent as the state-juridical debates I outlined above. Both these short stories—Bhandari's written just after the passage of the Hindu Code Bills and Chudamani's shortly after in the early sixties—examine the nature of women's consent as both individual right and birthright in relation to conjugal relationships. However, in contrast to the incongruity arising between individual and community in the state-juridical sphere, the main characters of these two stories renegotiate the two meanings of consent by *choosing* to take on the conjugal contract as a way of also embracing their birthright within their communities. In this way these characters demonstrate Saba Mahmood's insistence that "if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific..., then its meaning and sense cannot be fixed a priori... In this sense, agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that result in (progressive) change but also in those that aim toward continuity, stasis, and stability" (Mahmood 2001, 212). Put in the terms of my analysis of these stories, the either/or tension between individual rights and community rights here becomes a *both: individual choice chooses community* by choosing the norms of an arranged marriage.

In the previous chapter, I argued that post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writing must be viewed in relation to the new postcolonial state's investment in literary production as a means for achieving national integration. Bhandari's and Chudamani's stories, as well as those of all the authors this dissertation examines, may thus be viewed as part of civil society's participation, "with varying degrees of autonomy, in the state-directed project of development" (Chatterjee 1998, 13). In light of the new post-Independence realignment of individuals and communities in relation to the modernizing Indian state, Geeta Kapur notes that in this period "what is interrogated in contemporary Indian film, as also in literature with its longer history, is bad faith in interpersonal relationships, bad faith of a man to a woman...there is now the turmoil of the middle class worked out in psycho-social terms" (1987, 81). This interrogation of bad faith man-woman relationships, propelled by the question of guardianship of the Indian woman, is precisely what Bhandari's and Chudamani's stories undertake. In this way, they participate in the cultural thematic of the time. What is particularly interesting, however, is the ways in which their uses of tropes of the consenting female enable expressions of feminine choice and desire not articulable in contemporaneous state-juridical debates on consent, conjugality, and citizenship.

In the opening lines of Bhandari's "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani," thirteen year old Rup mentally prepares to confront her father, who has decided to take her out of school and have her taught at home:

जैसे ही रूप ने सुना कि उसका स्कूल छुड़वा दिया जाएगा, वह मचल पड़ी—“मैं नहीं छोड़ूँगी स्कूल। मैं साफ़-साफ़ पिताजी से कह दूँगी कि मैं घर में रहकर नहीं पढ़ूँगी। घर में भी कहीं पढ़ाई होती है भला! बस, चाहे कुछ भी हो जाए, मैं यह बात तो मानूँगी ही नहीं। आजकल

कुछ बोलती नहीं हूँ तो इसका मतलब तो यह नहीं हो जिसकी मर्ज़ी हो वही करता चले।” वह मुट्टियाँ भींच-भींचकर संकल्प करती रही और पिता के आने की राह देखती रही। सन्ध्या को जैसे ही पिताजी आए, वह सारा साहस बटोरकर, अपने को खूब दृढ़ बनाकर उनके कमरे की तरफ चली।

As soon as Rup heard she would be taken out of school she rebelled—“I won’t quit school. I’ll tell father plainly that I won’t study at home. As if any learning happens at home! No matter what happens I won’t accept it. Just because I don’t talk much these days, doesn’t mean a person can do whatever he wants.” She clenched her fists vowing [this] to herself and waited for her father’s arrival. As soon as he returned that evening, she gathered up all her courage and set off toward his room with firm resolve.

(Bhandari 2001, 42)¹⁰

Throughout the story, there are moments like this one, where the third person narrative gives way to Rup’s internal monologue, and where often, she expresses both self-righteous anger and frustration with others for taking advantage of her. In this very first image we get of Rup, she is a firebrand—full of vigor, passion, and self-certainty. She is clear about what she wants and what is best for her despite her young age. The passage gives no inkling of self-doubt or hesitation.

It is, thus, surprising that Rup immediately gives in to her father’s request. He tenderly tells her he has arranged for a teacher to come home the next day and asks if she will concede. In response, “Rup felt all her resolve, all her determination dissolving. ‘Yes, all right,’ were the only words that escaped her mouth.”¹¹ She runs to her room to hide her tears and castigates herself for not speaking her mind, “Why didn’t I just tell father...?” (43).¹² But neither she nor the narrator answers this question, and so while it is clear Rup doesn’t have the courage to tell her father, it never becomes clear why. The only explanation we receive is that Rup has lost her stubbornness since her mother’s death three years earlier.

Soon after the home-school teacher’s arrival, Rup’s father realizes the venture is a mistake—not only is Rup’s education of lesser quality, but also it has now become secondary to the domestic responsibilities Rup’s stepmother has more frequently begun imposing on Rup. He decides to send Rup to her uncle’s home to remedy the situation—Rup’s uncle and aunt have no children and live in the city, where education and resources are better, and opportunities easier to come by. Again, Rup is incensed by the thought of being sent off and rehearses her refusal in her mind before setting off to talk to her father about it. But—and this time perhaps more expectedly—she gives in without protest to her father’s kindly proposition, though afterwards she sobs alone and heartrendingly, feeling unloved and uncared for.

Fortunately, Rup quickly comes to feel at home with her uncle and aunt and their adopted son Lalit. They treat her as their own daughter, and she and Lalit become kindred companions.

¹⁰ “Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani” [The Story of a Weak Girl] was originally published in 1957 in Bhandari’s first short story collection *Maim Hār Gai* [I Lost].

¹¹ “रूप को लगा कि उसकी सारी दृढ़ता, सारा संकल्प बहा चला जा रहा है। उसके मुँह से केवल इतना ही निकला—‘जी ठीक है।’”

¹² “क्यों नहीं मैंने साफ़-साफ़ कह दिया...”

They banter often, especially over Rup's schooling, the responsibility of which Rup's aunt and uncle have put in Lalit's hands. In the first section of the story (the story is divided into three parts), Lalit and Rup have several squabbles, most of them having to do with Lalit's telling Rup what to do. In one significant one, Rup has grown older and is applying for admission to college. Lalit attempts to give Rup advice, but she resists:

रूप भी बिगड़ पड़ी—“जाओ, नहीं समझते हैं तो नहीं सही, पर तुम्हारे विषय कभी नहीं लेंगे। कोई तुम्हारे गुलाम है, जो हर बात तुम्हारी ही मानें।”
 और जाते-जाते एक बार फिर कह गई—“तुम्हारे विषय कभी नहीं लेंगे, कभी नहीं लेंगे।”
 पर जब रूप ने फ़ार्म भरा तो सब वही विषय भरे जो ललित ने बताए थे। ललित को जब यह मालूम पड़ा तो जाने कैसा-कैसा लगा उसे। उसने कहा—“क्यों री रूप! तू अपनी बात पर टिकती क्यों नहीं। विरोध तो बड़े ज़ोर-शोर करेगी, दुनिया-भर की अकड़ दिखाएगी पर करेगी वही जो दूसरे चाहते हैं।”
 “क्या करूँ, फिर तुम्हीं कहते कि बड़ी जिद्दी लड़की है।”
 ललित को रूप की यह कमज़ोरी अच्छी भी लगती थी, बुरी भी लगनी थी।

Rup, too, was angry—“Get lost. If you don't understand, then fine, but I won't do what you say. As if I were your slave that I would follow your every word.”

And as she was leaving, she said again, “I'll never do what you say, never.”

But when Rup filled out her application, she wrote exactly what Lalit had said. And when Lalit found out, imagine how he felt. “Why, Rup!” he said. “Why don't you stick to your opinion? You protest loudly and display all the conceit known in the world, but you do exactly what others want.”

“What could I have done, you're the one who said I'm a stubborn girl, after all.”

Lalit was both pleased and displeased with this weakness [*kamzori*] of Rup's.

(ibid., 47)

Rup and Lalit argue like siblings, and Lalit always seems to have the upper hand. The passage above, however, makes it clear that the reason for this is not his unmatched force or superior skills in argumentation. If anything, Rup's remonstrations are more aggressive and final (“I'll never do what you say, never”). Her argument with Lalit is reminiscent of the internal one she has with herself before confronting her father (“No matter what happens, I won't accept it!”), except this time she is anything but timid about speaking out. She conceals neither her boldness nor her opinions from Lalit. But she also concedes to him; despite what she says she will do, in the end she does what he says she should do. Thus, while her expressed resistance to Lalit's interventions in this scene indicates Rup's growth—she is now older, more sure of herself, and more willing to stand up for herself—it also reveals her enduring tendency to give in to what others desire for her, in particular to the wishes of her father and Lalit. Not surprisingly, Lalit is both benefited and impinged upon by Rup's *kamzori*, or weakness—her failure to see her desires

through to their actualization. For on the one hand, this weakness always gives Lalit authority, but on the other, it undermines Rup's character.

In this way, Rup's *kamzori* articulates the question of guardianship, or who is the rightful protector of Rup's interests and desires? In the above passage this question takes shape as a weakness—a deadlock, or inability to resolve the gap between Lalit's convictions and Rup's own agency. But soon after, Rup's *kamzori* begins to express a different tension, one between Lalit's desires for Rup and her father's. In the initial clash Lalit's wishes win out: when Rup's father writes a letter requesting Rup to come home for a while, Rup is distraught, unwilling to leave college and her surrogate family and return to a place she hasn't visited since leaving. Lalit wants Rup to go even less than she does, and to him her course of action is clear and simple: she should write her father that she's too tied up by her college responsibilities to go.

“हाय राम, पिताजी को टूटता जवाब कैसे लिख दूँ?”

“हाँ! पिताजी को टूटता जवाब कैसे लिख दे, टूटता जवाब देने के लिए हम हैं। कुछ भी कहो, और फट से 'नहीं करेंगे' सुन लो।”

“तुम्हारा क्या?”

“हाँ साब! हमारा क्या, हम कोई आदमी थोड़े ही हैं। पर सच रूप, तुझ पर बड़ा गुस्सा आता है। तू इतनी डरपोक क्यों है? घरवालों के सामने तेरी जान निकलती है। देखती नहीं, आजकल की लड़कियाँ कितनी बेधड़क, कितनी निर्भीक होती हैं। दो साल हो गए तुझे यहाँ रहते, पर रही देहातिन-की-देहातिन। मना कर देगी तो पिताजी यही तो सोचेंगे कि लड़की बड़ी ढीठ हो गई है। सोच लेने दे।”

“तुम जानते नहीं ललित, वह मेरे लिए क्या सोचते हैं। ऐसा जवाब दूँगी तो उनको बड़ा धक्का लगेगा।”

“बस, यही तो तेरी कमज़ोरी है। घरवाले ज़रा-सा कह दें, हमारी रूप बिटिया जैसा है कोई दुनिया में, और फिर रूप बिटिया से चाहे कुँ में कुदवा लो तो कूद जाएगी। मैं कहता हूँ, अपनी यह आदत छोड़ और ज़रा हिम्मत से काम लेना सीख।”

“मुझसे तो नहीं लिखा जाएगा, पर मैं जाऊँगी भी नहीं।” और उसका गला भर्रा आया।

“*Hai Ram!* How can I write father a half truth?”

“Well! How could you write your father a half truth, I'm here to give it. Whatever you say to her, you immediately hear she won't do it.”

“What's it to you?”

“Yes, sir! What is it to me, I'm a nobody. But really, Rup, I get so angry at you. Why are you such a coward? You lose all your nerve in front of your family. Don't you notice how unhesitating, how fearless girls are nowadays. You've been living here two years, but you're still the most country girl of all [*dehātin-ki-dehātin*]. If you say no, your father'll think his daughter's stubborn. So let him think it.”

“You don't know what he's planning for me, Lalit. He'll be shocked if I reply with that.”

“See, this is exactly your weakness [*kamzori*]. If your family even hinted that there's no one in the world like our little Rup, and we want her to jump into

a well, then you'd jump. I tell you, give up this habit and learn to do things with a little courage."

"I can't write that. But I won't go either." And her throat filled with tears.

(ibid., 49-50)

Once again, Lalit brings up Rup's *kamzori*, or weakness, to point out her reluctance to do what she wants. He is critical of her unquestioning willingness to listen to her father and characterizes it as a quality belonging to rural, uneducated girls. For Rup, however, the question is not one of her own identity as an un/educated woman, but rather one of respecting her father. She contends that her father must have plans for her that neither she nor Lalit can assume and that her refusal would surprise him, as it would be an unexpected response from his daughter. Though she recognizes that her desires are different from her father's, she cannot bring herself to directly oppose him. What Lalit views as Rup's weakness to resist her father is thus for her an intense struggle between multiple inextricable desires that are her own, Lalit's, and her father's: to remain with her current family, to respect her father, to impress Lalit, to be an independent woman. Rup silently resolves the matter by allowing Lalit to send word to her father.¹³

The difference between Lalit and Rup, one characterized by Rup's *kamzori*, persists, arising again at the beginning of part two of the story, when Lalit is embarking abroad for study and work. The two have grown very close by this juncture, and about to part for an indefinite period of time, they confess their intimate feelings for one another. Lalit presses Rup to promise she will remain committed to their relationship. He worries that despite her love for him, she will give in to her family's wishes to marry someone else because of her *kamzori*: "You're terribly weak, this is why I worry. Tell me, Rup! Can I trust you with this pledge?" (52).¹⁴ She promises he can, he departs for England, and she continues her studies. The two keep in touch through letter writing, but the frequency of their exchanges dwindles.

Suddenly, however, the narrative switches from third person to a series of letters from Rup to Lalit narrated in first person. The first is a desperate appeal for Lalit to do something, as Rup has just learned of her father's intentions to marry her off. Without even asking Rup's opinion, her father has finalized all the arrangements and set a wedding date. She feels estranged from her family as she did when she was being sent away—that her feelings and desires have no place within the family. Her words are forceful and frantic: "Will my dreams, which colored my world gold with such longing, be torn apart and scattered so casually? No, I won't let this happen, tell me a way, or I swear I will die, I'll commit suicide" (54).¹⁵ Rup signs this letter with a final goodbye, leaving her fate in his hands.

¹³ Another factor influencing Rup's acquiescence to Lalit might be her realizing the stubbornness with which she adheres to her own opinion, as was the case in the previous example in which Rup blames herself for her resistance to Lalit's advice. That is to say, it seems that both cowardliness and stubbornness deflect the significance Rup invests in Lalit's opinion and that one reason she is so torn is because she cares as much about what Lalit thinks of her as about what her father does.

¹⁴ "तू बड़ी कमज़ोर है, इसी से मन डरता है। बोल रूप! मेरी धरोहर को रख सकेगी ना?"

¹⁵ "इतनी साध से सपनों का जो सुनहला संसार सँजोया था, वह क्या यों ही बिखरकर चूर-चूर हो जाएगा? नहीं-नहीं, ऐसा नहीं होने दूँगी, तुम कोई रास्ता बताओ, नहीं तो सच कहती हूँ मैं मर जाऊँगी, मैं आत्महत्या कर लूँगी।"

The second letter acknowledges her wedding and the fact that Lalit's reply has arrived too late. Rup does not indicate what Lalit has written; she only responds that she could commit suicide, though she had so fervently declared she would in her first letter because she had received neither Lalit's permission for this act, nor his retribution for betraying her promise to him. She remains alive, she says, because "...my wrongs toward you are greater than those toward god...even the right (*adhikār*) to die is no longer mine" (55).¹⁶ That is to say, it is not god, nor Rup herself, who decides Rup's fate, but Lalit. In the meanwhile, she vows to willingly bear the consequences of her weakness ("*Maim to apnī kamzorī kā phal bhogūngī hī...*"), and resolves to live the married life her father has arranged for her. She asks Lalit to forget her and never write again. A third letter, which I translated in part in the first epigraph to this chapter, concludes part two. In it Rup appeals again to Lalit to cut off all contact with her. She tells him to trust she is happy and well, for after all, she lives the comfortable life of an auspiciously married woman.

The unique ways in which Rup recognizes and questions the nature of guardianship is striking in these letters, which contain the most sustained expression of Rup's first person voice in the story. She is utterly distraught to discover the hold of her father's guardianship claim upon her—that he could arrange her marriage and see it through without once asking for her consent. Her evocation of suicide in this context as a means to retain some hold of her dreams and desires recalls the sati trope, but rewrites it to bear the markings of her own intentions: Rup mobilizes suicide as a way of articulating her own position on the question of guardianship; if Lalit cannot rescue her, she herself will. She immediately undermines this position, however, by revoking her right to perform this act without Lalit's permission. Because of her betrayal of her commitment to him, she feels she no longer possesses "even the right to die." She thus transfers the guardianship she took on for herself to Lalit, who now bears responsibility for her life. In yet another turn in her final letter, Rup invokes her status as a goodwife and places her guardianship in the hands of the man she now sees as its rightful owner: her new husband. In taking away Rup's right to die, Lalit has lost his claim over her. Guardianship has passed from Rup's father via Lalit to her new husband. It is now this figure who watches over Rup, shepherding her right to life and the way she lives it.

But this means nothing to Lalit, who, having bought a house and found a job abroad, shows up at Rup's doorstep in the third part of the story to take her away to a new life. Under the pretense of being a visiting relative, Lalit stays a week with Rup and her lawyer husband. The minute the lawyer leaves for work each day, Lalit presses Rup to run away with him. It is clear to him that she is unhappy in her marriage and that she still loves Lalit, and he refuses to accept her resignation. As he did earlier, he compares Rup's approach to life with that of modern women, who are independent and love, marry, and divorce according to their own desires. On their view and his, Rup's running away with him is not only acceptable, but also a moral responsibility to herself. Rup resists by evoking her commitment to the oath she took before her family and community, "Don't you realize I wear another man's *sindūr* in the parting of my hair—I took an oath before the fire and became his... What would my father say when he heard,

¹⁶ "विधवाता से भी बड़ी अपराधिनी तो मैं तुम्हारी हूँ...मरने का अधिकार भी मुझे नहीं है।"

what would the whole world think when it heard?" (60).¹⁷ The same conflict between Lalit's self-interest and Rup's family-interest that divided Rup and Lalit over her reply to her father's letter is here replayed, this time burdened by more dire consequences.

Lalit is outraged by Rup's insistence on her vows:

“जहन्नुम में गई दुनिया और जहन्नुम में गए तुम्हारे पिताजी! पिताजी को बिटिया इतनी ही दुलारी होती ना, तो यों कुएँ में न ढकेल देते। तुम्हें पिताजी की भावनाओं का खयाल है, पर मेरे अरमानों, मेरी तमन्नाओं का कुछ खयाल नहीं, मानो मैं आदमी नहीं, मिट्टी का लौंदा होऊँ? तुम मुझसे दंड चाहती हो ना? तो समझ लो, मैं यह दंड तुम्हें देना चाहता हूँ, मैं तुम्हें ले जाना चाहता हूँ, भगाकर ले जाना चाहता हूँ!” उसका आवेश बढ़ता जा रहा था।

“नहीं, नहीं ललित! इतना बड़ा दंड मुझे मत दो, यह सब मुझसे नहीं होगा, मुझसे कभी नहीं होगा।” रूप सिसकती रही।

“To hell with the world and to hell with your father, too! If his daughter were so dear to him, he wouldn't have pushed her into a well like this. You worry about your father's feelings and the world's, but you don't care at all for my desires, as if I weren't a man, as if I were a lump of dirt? You wanted my retribution, didn't you? Well, this is the one I want to give you, I want to take you away, I want to free you and take you away.” His frenzy grew.

“No, Lalit, no! Please don't punish me this way, I can't do this, I shall never be able to do this.” Rup was sobbing.

(ibid., 61)

Significantly, Lalit considers Rup's obligation to her family and community a personal insult, a charge that he is not even a man. He requires Rup's recognition of his desires—by way of running away with him—to acquire this status. This is something Rup feels she cannot do, however; her entire being is incapable of undertaking such a punishment, almost as if she would no longer be who she is were she to do so. The *sindur* in her hair and her oath before the fire become, in this way, symbols of Rup's commitment to and identification with her family and community, their expectations, and the dominion she gives them over her.

Thus, although she finally agrees to run away with Lalit, the concluding paragraph recounts Rup's ultimate betrayal. Even though Lalit leaves insisting that she resist giving in to her *kamzori* at the final moment when she will join him at the train station, and although she reassures him that she will not because when he is near, she has strength; she allows the planned departure hour to pass by. An ironic turn of events seals Rup's decision: the lawyer comes home late that evening to recount the story of his friend whose educated wife has left him for another man. The lawyer has advised his friend to initiate a legal inquiry (*kānūnī kāryavāhī*) into the matter and to stop blaming his wife's education for the event. The lawyer chuckles to Rup: “*Arē!* You're educated, too, and running away isn't even an issue; two years have passed, and I can't

¹⁷ “जानते हो, मेरी माँग में किसी और के सुहाग के सिन्दूर है—अग्नि को साक्षी देकर मैं उनकी हो चुकी हूँ।... पिताजी सुनेंगे तो क्या कहेंगे, सारी दुनिया सुनेगी तो क्या सोचेगी?”

Sindūr is the vermillion powder married women apply to the parting in their hair to signify their auspicious status as married women.

recall a single time when you've even spoken to another man. As if being educated were an issue!" (ibid., 64).¹⁸ The lawyer cannot even imagine Rup's desires inclining toward another man; and as Rup herself has been insisting to Lalit, education has nothing to do with it. Rather, the issue is one of being faithful to the strictures of her Hindu marriage, which circumscribe Rup's actions within a moral framework that excludes the coupling of desire with education or self-interest.¹⁹ It is Rup's adherence to this framework that compels the last lines of the story: "It had struck one a.m. Drop by drop the tears fell from her eyes as one by one each article was removed from her suitcase" (ibid.).²⁰ Nothing, except perhaps the lawyer's dismissal of Rup's desires immediately preceding these final sentences, intimates the specific motivations driving Rup's decision to stay with the lawyer. But what *is* evident is that though she is saddened by her present circumstances, she has decided conclusively to stay, thereby giving preeminence to her regard for her husband, family, community, and tradition over Lalit's wishes and her feelings for him.

A similar circumscription by home and family occurs in Chudamani's "Pirappurimai," but in this case the boundaries are more physically present. When the story opens, twenty-three year old Buvana, the main character, mechanically cleans up the lunch she and her parents have just eaten, trying to put the morning's major event out of her mind: yet another letter has arrived rejecting her family's proposal to give Buvana away in marriage.²¹ She fusses over the dishes in purposeful avoidance, sweeps and mops the floor, and worries over the pickle jar that has been left lidless. She distracts herself with a short story about the love of a doting young hero for his heroine; she attempts to nap. But nothing drowns out the conversation about Buvana's marital woes that her parents are having in the next room. Though they continue to consider eligible boy after eligible boy, they cannot sidestep the fact that the heart of the problem lies not in any deficiency on Buvana's part, but rather in the family's poverty. No matter on what bases these bachelors have sent their marriage refusals, it is clear to all three of them that the real reason in every case has been the meager dowry the family is able to offer. Unable to listen to their heartfelt worrying over her future, Buvana throws down the love story in which she had tried to escape and sets out on a walk, thinking to herself. She begins by pondering the lack of respect her suitors have for her womanhood, which I translated above in the second epigraph to this chapter. Her thoughts continue:

அந்த உரிமை எவளுக்குத்தான் இல்லை? இத்தனைக்கும் புவனா குருபியல்ல.
பணம் என்பது உயிரெழுத்தாய்ச் சேர்ந்தால் அழகின் முழுச் சொல்லை

¹⁸ "अरे पढ़ी-लिखी तो तुम भी हो, भागने की बात तो दूर रही; दो साल हो गए, मुझे कभी याद नहीं पड़ता कि तुमने आँख उठाकर किसी पुरुष से कभी बात भी की हो। यह कोई बात हुई भला!"

Ironically, Lalit does not count as a man in the lawyer's eyes, either.

¹⁹ Rup's vow before the fire and the *sindūr* in her part indicate the specifically Hindu nature of her marriage.

²⁰ "रात का एक बजा था। रूप की आँखों से एक-एक करके आँसू टपकते जा रहे थे और उसके सूटकेस से एक-एक करके कपड़े बाहर निकलते जा रहे थे।"

²¹ "Pirappurimai" [Birthright] was published in Chudamani's short story collection *Paṭikal* [Steps] in 1965.

Chudamani writes in the acknowledgements to this collection that this story was also published a few years earlier in the Calcutta based journal *Vangacceyti*.

ஆக்கும்படியான வடிவம் அவளுக்கு இருக்கத்தான் செய்தது. ஆயினும் உணர்ச்சிகளின் வெள்ளத்தில் வண்டலுக்கு அடியிழையாய் ஓடி ஓடிச் சூர மெழும்பும் இசைத் தந்தியென அவளுள் கிடந்த பெண்மை என்ற பொருளுக்கு அஞ்சலி செய்ய ஒரு பார்வைகூட இது வரை வந்ததில்லை.

சாதரணமானதா அப் பெண்மை என்ற பொருள்? ஒளியும் பொருளும் நிலவும் மதுவும் உதித்த ராஜ பரம்பரையில் வந்தது அது. மென்மைக்கும் தண்மைக்கும் வாரிசு. தேனும் தென்றலும் அதன் இரு கரங்கள். இசை அதன் மூச்சு. கனவே அதன் சரீரம்: கன்னியென்றும் அன்னையென்றும் பெயர் கொண்டு உலக இயக்கத்தின் ஒருமித்த, ஒப்பற்ற மூலமாய்த் திகழும் அந்த 'பெண்' என்ற உயிரின் அரசு உரிமைக்கு ஆர்த்தி எடுக்கும் ஒளிர் தீபமாக ஒரு பார்வையேனும் வந்திருந்தால்!

அவள்மேல் பதிந்த பார்வைகளோ நகையாலும் பணத்தாலும் சீராலும் அளக்கப்படும் சிறுமையைத்தான் அவளுக்குத் தந்தன. அவளைப் பாராமல், அவள் உரிமையை உணராமல், பெண்மையின் பீடத்துக்கு ஒரு சிறு இதழைப் பறித்துப் போடாமல், 'பணம் போதவில்லை' என்ற பல்லவியால் அவள் இருப்பை பொய்யாக்கிப் போனவர்களே அனந்தம். தனக்குரிய சிறு காணிக்கை கிடைக்காததுதான் அந்தத் தெய்வத்தை அவமானத்தால் பொருமச் செய்தது. கல்யாணம் தடைப்படுவது கூட அதற்கு அடுத்தபடியான சிந்தனை தான்.

What woman didn't have this right [to womanhood]? And besides, Buvana wasn't bad looking. [The problem of] money may have belonged to her fate, but she possessed a form that was the absolute embodiment of the word beauty. Her femininity [*penmai*] was a possession that lay within her, mixed beneath the sediment running in the flood of her emotions, stirring a melody like a musical string. And yet, she hadn't received a single glance paying it homage.

Such femininity, was it an ordinary possession? It was of the royal lineage that gave rise to light and matter, the moon and intoxication. It was heir to tenderness and kindness. Honey and the cool breeze were its two hands, music its breath; dreams themselves formed its body. If only she'd received just a glance, like a lamp burning in worship before the royal right of this feminine life, known as virgin and mother, shining through the unique and unified movement of the world!

The regard she did receive was quantified by jewelry, money, and dowry. Many were those who failed to see her, failed to recognize her right, failed to offer even a petal in worship to the throne of her femininity; who with the preface of "not enough money" made falsehood of her very existence [*iruppu*]. The goddess rumbled, insulted by not having received an appropriate offering. And so, objection to marriage was but an afterthought.

(Chudamani 1965b, 35-36)

I translate this extensive passage because it is here that Buvana first expresses how she conceives of her self worth and its relationship to the institution of marriage. For Buvana, the money constraint preventing her marriage from being arranged elides any acknowledgement of Buvana's self worth. She identifies money as an erroneous measure and with a way of being regarded that overlooks the femininity (*penmai*) within her, something she feels is economically incalculable. Further, she equates this femininity with her own being, such that the disregard she has experienced not only insults her, but also literally makes a lie of her being. The word she uses here, *irrupu*, or being, is, like in English, a gerund indicating the state of existence.

Femininity as *irrupu* is Buvana's essential nature, what enables her to be a woman in the world. Without its recognition, she is not herself. Nor is her divinity venerated.

This is why marriage itself comes second—Buvana calls for this institution and the transactions it entails to be first premised on the perception of her *penmai*. She considers this recognition her fundamental *urimai*, right or entitlement, as a woman. As such, it is possessed universally by all women. She indicates this again as she notices passersby on her walk:

இதோ ஒரு நரிக் குறத்தி. பெண் என்றதொரு சிறப்பு. பார்க்கச் சகிக்காத முகம்தான். ஆயினும் அதிலும் அந்த ராஜ உரிமை இருந்தது. வயதேறியதால் சிறிது முன் வந்திருந்த அடி வயிற்றின் மீது கட்டம் போட்ட பல வண்ணப் பாவாடை உடுத்திருந்தாள். மேலே ரவிக்கை மறைபட்டுப் போகும்படி வடம் வடமாகப் பாசிமணி மாலைகள். கரிய வடிவம் எனினும், அருகில் நடந்த குறவனது பார்வையின் தொழுகையில் தன் ஆட்சியுரிமையை நிலை நிறுத்தித்தான் நடந்தாள் அக்குறத்தி.

Here was a gypsy woman. She possessed the special quality of being a woman. Her face was unbearable to look at, but nevertheless, it held that royal entitlement. She wore a colorful checkered skirt tied around her belly protruding with age. Large, round clay-bead necklaces almost entirely concealed her blouse. Even this black-bodied woman walked endowed with her regnant right, established by the worshiping gaze of the gypsy man treading beside her.

(ibid., 37)

The unknown gypsy woman, too, possesses *pennurimai*, the regal right of womanhood. It is something she holds despite her ugliness, depravity, and old age (just as it is something Buvana is entitled to hold despite her beauty). Importantly, this quality within the old gypsy woman is both established and secured by the worshipping glance of her male companion. Conversely, Buvana's femininity is being washed away by the want of recognition. For her, "it seemed as if some throne inside her was left empty. A longing, like a poem written in some unfamiliar language, resided in her heart" (37).²² For, Buvana's longing and its emptied out throne of femininity can only be fulfilled by a man's recognition. The feminine ideal—which is, in Buvana's view, royal and goddess-like, but also (as she earlier exclaims) both virginal and motherly—is both realized and maintained by a man's gaze alone. Buvana's understanding of this ideal rewrites the question of guardianship on more equal terms: while womanhood requires a man-woman relationship for its realization, it is also something solely and completely possessed by women themselves.

Frustrated, Buvana sits down on a stone bench, buries her head in her hands, and escapes into herself. She is unaware of time passing until she is stirred by someone inquiring if she is okay. The stranger turns out to be the rascal (*pōkkiri*) Thangadurai, a young man who lives on the next street over and whose wayward manners are notorious. Finding her weak and reticent, he runs off to buy a soda to revive her. Buvana is startled and initially refuses to respond to him. She becomes, instead, painfully aware of the smug, judgmental stares of a flock of girls standing

²² "தன்னில் ஏதோ ஒரு மணிப்பீடம் காலியாய் நிற்பது போல் தோன்றியது. கல்லாத மொழியில் செய்த காவியத்தைப் போன்ற ஓர் ஏக்கம் இதயத்தில் குடைந்தது."

nearby and her own outrage that this good-for-nothing boy should so boldly, publicly, and casually address her. She interprets his audacity as disrespect. But when he returns with the soda bottle and she looks up to accept it, she is surprised:

தன் மீது பதிந்த அவனுடைய பார்வையை நோக்கிய புவனாவின் உணர்ச்சிகள் அப்படியே படபடத்து நிமிர்ந்தன.

என்ன பார்வை! அவள் தேடிய பார்வை! கண்ணின் மூலம் ஏதோ அந்தரங்கச் சுரங்கத்திலிருந்து பொங்கி எழுந்த ஓர் ஒளி அவன் பார்வையுள் புகுந்து நிறைந்து அவள்மேல் பொருந்த மௌனத்திலே மற்ற எல்லாமே மறந்து போயிற்று. இது தலை; இது கால் என்று சிறு அளவு கொண்டு அவளை அளக்காமல் அடிமுடியற்ற ஒரு மர்மத்தின் அதிகார பீடம் இது என்று தொழுதேத்தும் அந்த மெச்சுதல் நிறைந்த பார்வையைக் கண்டு அவள் மனம் திடீரென்று பனியில் முழுகியதுபோல் குளிர்ந்தது. தன்னையறியாமலேயே அவள் நிமிர்ந்து உட்கார்ந்தாள்.

When Buvana noticed his gaze upon her, her emotions fluttered and rose up.

What a glance! The very one she had been searching for. A splendor overflowing from some reservoir within him rose in his eyes, entered and filled up his gaze. She forgot everything else in that agreeable silence. This is my head, this my foot; she slowly but unsuccessfully tried to assess herself. Her heart was suddenly cooled as if swallowed by dew when she noticed his worshipful, admiring glance acknowledging the boundless, mysterious, and rightful throne within her. She sat up straight completely unaware of herself.

(ibid., 39-40)

Buvana's femininity is finally acknowledged and the throne she had only minutes before felt deserted is now filled. The resurgence of her womanly entitlement is so powerful that it momentarily discombobulates her. It saturates her with a limitlessness that leads her to lose conscious control of her limbs and movements. It is almost as if Buvana is reborn through this initial experience of his glance. For, when she does regain her steadiness, she sits upright and is confident, calm, and expressive rather than deferential, dismayed, and silently wrathful as she was before. She appraises Thangadurai regally and unabashedly, and "entitlement (*atikāram*) and godliness naturally entered her actions...as divinity takes presence in an idol" (40).²³ But also, she moves and speaks *suvātīnamāy*—that is to say, in a manner of ease, at home with herself, and entirely consciously and voluntarily. In this way, the femininity that takes seat within her does not alter or overtake Buvana; rather, it enables her to more completely reside in and as herself.

Buvana is, thus, no longer too shy to converse with Thangadurai. And despite the disapproving looks of the girls nearby, she does not hesitate to let him walk her home. She moves majestically (*kampīramāy*), her head held aloft as she observes her kingdom (*cāmṛājyam*), the sunlight unfurling beneath her feet like a grand carpet. The leaves of the trees, which she had earlier noticed quivering in the breeze, now hang over the streets as if bowing and raising parasols before her to shade her from the glaring sun (42). Each time she turns towards

²³ “புவனாவின் செயல்களில் எங்கிருந்தோ ஓர் அதிகாரமும் இறைமையும் இயற்கையாய் வந்து படிந்தன. மந்திரத்தைச் சொன்னதும் விக்கிரகம் தெய்வமாகப் பிரதிஷ்டை ஆவது போன்ற ஒரு செயல்.”

Thangadurai, she sees devotion in his eyes and an unspoken inquisitiveness: “Are you an enigma?...Are you a miracle? A dream or grace? My annihilation?” (ibid.).²⁴ She smiles, a queen honored by the obeisance in his eyes, as he surrenders to her.

Thus, Buvana enters into her full being and assumes the voice of which earlier she had felt deprived:

நான் அழிவு. நான் ஆக்கம். நான் கன்னி. நான் அன்னை. உலகில் ஆண் பெண் என்று இரு குலங்கள் உண்டு. அவற்றின் பெயர்கள் ஆண்குலம், பெண்குலம் என்பதல்ல. ஒன்று ஆண்குலம், மற்றது அரசகுலம். அதுவே என் குலம். ஊர்வசியும் அரம்பையும் வந்த வம்சம் நான். உவப்பும் புகழ்ச்சியும் எனக்குரிய குலச் சொத்து.

I am destruction. I am creation. I am virgin. I am mother. There are two categories in the world: man and woman. But their names are not “man” and “woman.” One is the class of man, the other that of kings. This is my class. I am the descendent of celestial maidens and dancers. Pleasure and fame are my inheritances.

(ibid., 42-43)

In this one instance, the third person narrative switches to first person, and Buvana theorizes her position in the world. She sees herself as both divine and regal, of the lineage of kings. Further, if men and women are the two categories of being in the world, the class of women is the same as the class of kings. By fully inhabiting the category of woman, Buvana necessarily and simultaneously takes on her noble pedigree and position among celestial beings. And, as this nobility is her *pennurimai*, her feminine right, it is something only women can possess. This is why the old gypsy woman bears it via the look bestowed upon her by the old gypsy man following after her and why Buvana now retains it by way of Thangadurai’s deferential glance. These men, who presumably belong to the class of men, become servants to the women they regard. Buvana thus categorizes the feminine ideal as a class of its own. It is contingent upon the subjection of men, yet also entirely independent of and greater than that merely human class.

As Buvana and Thangadurai near Buvana’s home, he asks her what her name is, but she refuses to tell him. Even when he suggests she is obliged to do so since he has just bought her a soda, she replies that his gift is irrelevant to her decided reticence. With this, she walks off toward home. Thangadurai follows after her, removes his gold ring, and gives it to her, saying it is his first gift to her. Buvana’s immediate, unspoken reaction is one of elation; her face brightens, she smiles and raises her head. Her heart softens and is filled with gratitude towards him. Holding his ring in a raised hand before him:

“உங்களுக்கு நான் மிகவும் நன்றி கூறக் கடமைப்பட்டிருக்கிறேன்,” என்றாள். பிறகு உயர்த்திய கையை நிதானமாய்ச் சற்றுப் பின்னுக்குக் கொண்டு வந்து அந்த மோதிரத்தை அவன் முகத்தில் வீசி எறிந்தாள். ஏதும் புரியாமல் நின்றுவிட்டான் தங்கதுரை. அவள் நடந்தாள்.

²⁴ நீ என்ன மர்மமோ?... அற்புதமோ? நீ சொப்பனமோ? அருளோ? என் அழிவோ?”

“I am indebted to say thank you very much,” she said. Then she calmly lowered her hand behind her and hurled the ring in his face. Thangadurai stood dumbfounded. She walked away.

(ibid., 44)

The story concludes here with a few more short sentences: Buvana enters the house; her mother scolds her for being seen with Thangadurai; Buvana tells her mother to let it go, for she cannot endure any more worries today. Thus, Buvana’s impetuous action is left completely unexplained and resolves the story enigmatically. On the one hand, the narrative immediately preceding it describes her elation at Thangadurai’s gift. She feels recognized, proud, and grateful. She even expresses this verbally to him. But on the other hand, her physical response, while calculated in its calmness, is abrupt and forceful. The action of hurling suggests her violent rejection of not only Thangadurai’s gift, but of Thangadurai himself. Between these two polar emotions—elation and rejection—are a number of possible interpretations: Buvana’s sudden and immediate change of heart, her realization of the consequences of roaming with a loafer, an attempt to play hard to get, or perhaps a vacillation between competing commitments to fulfill her parents’ wishes and her own.²⁵ In effect Buvana defers any interpretation in the last lines of the story: “She would think about it tomorrow. She couldn’t endure a single worry today” (44).²⁶ The story seems to want to linger on the possible implications of Buvana’s actions—all of them willed, from deciding to interact with Thangadurai to deliberately throwing his ring back at him. But also, the narrative delimits the futures her actions imagine within the confines of Buvana’s family and home, for this is where she chooses to return. Whatever connection or disconnection Buvana may maintain with the events of the day must necessarily proceed from this final deed.

Throughout the story, Buvana clearly enunciates her aspiration to fulfill her *penmai*, or femininity, something that she sees as her right to both desire and possess. She acts upon her own guidance to talk and walk with Thangadurai and accept the ring he gives her. And when she flings the ring back in his face and turns into her home, this action, too, is completely her own. But in this final act, Buvana also willfully reinscribes the boundaries of her femininity: its rightful expression is within the home and through the conjugal relationship her parents will arrange for her. Thus, even though Thangadurai enables Buvana to express her *penmai*, he does not acquire the right to guardianship over it. Rather, the right of guardianship, on Buvana’s view, belongs to a properly-arranged-for husband over his goodwife, whom she defines as a woman who is in complete possession of her feminine right.

Rup, like, Buvana, also locates the limits of her desires at the boundaries of her home, family, and community. While her internal monologues against her father and her fights with Lalit establish her unique wishes and outlook of the world, carrying these wishes out is more fraught—in the beginning, she simply gives in to her father’s requests, and later, she makes a conscious choice to take up Lalit’s advice. Until the last moment, the motivation behind her

²⁵ Another possible reason for Buvana’s rejection of Thangadurai could be due to their caste difference. The dialect that Buvana and her parents use in the story indicates their Brahmin status. Thangadurai’s name suggests, conversely, that he belongs to a lower caste. While the question of caste does not surface explicitly in the story, the clear separation between and privileging of Brahminical characters’ perspectives from lower caste ones is a recurring theme in Chudamani’s writing, as well as the other canonical Tamil writing this dissertation examines.

²⁶ “அந்த கவலையை அவள் நாளைக்குப் பட்டுக்கொள்வாள். இன்று எந்தக் கவலையும் அவளை அணுக முடியாது.”

actions swings between her father's desires and Lalit's, such that in the crucial moments of the story, she sides with one or the other. In the last lines of the story, however, Rup decides of her own accord to remain with the lawyer. On the one hand, she does what she says she will ("I can't do this [run away with you], I shall never be able to do this.")—that is to say, no matter what she concedes to Lalit, first and foremost she accepts the strictures of her marriage oath and the community to which she belongs and is unwilling to transgress them. On the other hand, she does the unexpected (and in this way, the ending serves as a device to enable the story's plot to bear narrative and moral weight) because she is, in this moment, resisting the *kamzori*, or weakness, that Lalit feels always leads her to do what others say. Rup thus negotiates a triple bind between 1) Lalit's interpretation of *kamzori* as blindly following the authority of her family and community, 2) her husband's (as well as father's and community's) interpretation of it as transgressing the rules of her family and Hindu community, and 3) her own as an inability to sacrifice her self interest in order to live the life her husband, father, and community want for her. When she chooses to stay in the last instance, it is as if Rup has finally defined for herself what it means to resist *kamzori*—which in this case, also implies her acceptance of it. She metaphorically walks back into the confines of home, family, and community (Buvana does so literally), thereby inscribing her selfhood (i.e., her self interest and her willed actions) within its limits.

Importantly, then, both stories raise the "problem of marriage" and its relationship to consent, or, in other words, to the ways in which the women in these stories come to inhabit the conjugal contract. For both, the sacramental symbols of the contract remain unshaken: in Rup's case, they are expressed in the story in terms of her oath before the sacramental fire (*agni kī sākṣī*) and the *sindur* in her hair (*māṅg meṁ suhāg kā sindūr*). In Buvana's case, these entail the negotiations surrounding the arrangement of her marriage according to the rules of caste, family name, horoscope (*jōciyam*), and dowry (*cīr*).²⁷ Neither Rup nor Buvana indicates any desire to abandon or change these symbols. Rather, they are concerned with exploring the possible ways of taking them on. When Buvana throws the ring in Thangadurai's face, she actively chooses to rethink man-woman relationships from the starting place of the family, and in doing so, she also rejects the type of man-woman relationship for which the ring stands: conjugal, but also secular-Christian, and individually- (as opposed to family or community) focused and initiated. Rup, too, fully embraces the sacramental symbols in her own way—via desiring Lalit, committing her love to him, and even aligning her will with his for a while, she comes back to the site of her marital sacrament as that which provides the ground for her future actions. This returning is simultaneously a turning away from the self-interested, modern outlook Lalit encourages her to welcome. In these ways, Rup and Buvana inscribe their choices and desires into the trope of the goodwife, demonstrating that their consent is not already given by virtue of their birth into the community, but rather something they tussle with and choose to convey.

²⁷ It can be assumed that rules of caste, family name, dowry, and horoscope play a role in Rup's case, as well, even though the only information given in the story is that Rup's father has made all the necessary arrangements for her marriage. Especially since it is clear Rup has a Hindu marriage ceremony, some version and extent of these rules (which are an important feature of most Hindu marriages) probably operated in performing Rup's marriage. However, these rules—based on regionally specific caste traditions—would be markedly different from those that would operate for Buvana.

It is important to note, however, that neither do Rup's elaborations of *kamzori* and Buvana's of *pennurimai* lend themselves to straightforward interpretations, nor do these devices function commensurately. Rup's tearful final decision to remain with her new husband expresses the deeply ambivalent way in which she takes on *kamzori*, or weakness, as a character-defining trait. Her resistance to Lalit's hold over her in the last instance can also be read as a giving in to her weakness, or a resignation to her lack of agency and control. What Rup's bind demonstrates—and what is important to the argument of this chapter—is that the struggle with *kamzori* is precisely the struggle with the meaning of women's consent and its guardianship. “Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani” answers this question by situating Rup's consent both as a trait of her individuality, and as a function of her relationship with her husband and community. *Kamzori* thus straddles between individual- and community-based understandings of consent, undermining the possibility of its settling on one side or the other. Similarly, while the *pennurimai*, or feminine right, seated within Buvana's being is integral to her individuality, it also requires a man's recognition for its expression. For this reason, it is Buvana's delight with Thangadurai's gift (a sign of his regard for her femininity) that enables her to so confidently and utterly reject him. This contradictory nature of Buvana's rejection is, thus, a rewriting of the relationship between consent and conjugality; through her delighted rejection, Buvana claims full possession of her agency—for she owes Thangadurai nothing more than a word of thanks—and places it within the hands of her family and community. Like Rup's *kamzori*, Buvana's *pennurimai* articulates a way of understanding women's individual desires in concert with the community's.

But, the difference between these devices is also notable and signals how the question of guardianship in the post-Independence moment is able to absorb various ways of choosing into a worldview that is defined as belonging specifically to the Hindu community. Buvana's *pennurimai* is located physically, as a seat or throne within her body, and manifests in her movements, such as her posture and her gait. Moreover, it is defined in relation to other objects that belong to the transaction of marriage, such as money and jewelry. Rup's *kamzori* is, conversely, entirely abstract. Both she and Lalit define it as part of her mental state and character, and while it underlies Rup's actions in the world (as *pennurimai* does for Buvana), it always exists irrespective of her physicality. The physical presence of *pennurimai* within Buvana is reinforced by the physical choice she makes at the end of the story to throw the ring and walk away. The mental overcoming of Rup's *kamzori* at the end manifests as her internal decision to stay with the lawyer, one that begets no changes in the physical world around her. I elaborate on Bhandari's and Chudamani's approaches further in Chapter 5, defining this mental/physical difference in terms of both these women authors' stylistic idioms, as well as larger literary historical debates in the Hindi and Tamil canons. I show how both these authors use the language of rights to think through the tropes of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin and the goodwife to address the problematics of women's writing and Hindi and Tamil short story writing in unique ways. Here, I simply want to underscore that the comparison between Rup's *kamzori* and Buvana's *pennurimai* illuminates how Hindi and Tamil short stories use the very same tropes to imagine the very same concerns with women's consent and the question of guardianship, but in very different ways.

Despite the qualitative difference between *kamzori* and *pennurimai*, both these conceptual devices raise the issue of consent and locate its definition within the (Hindu) community. First, both women define consent in terms of man-woman relationships. That Rup and Buvana refuse the individual, consent-based man-woman relationships Lalit and Thangadurai would like them to accept does not override their ability to act and choose. Rup and Buvana choose to enter into their relationships with these men. Moreover, these women's choices to leave Lalit and Thangadurai in the final instance are contingent upon the relationships they have made with them. Rup understands her *kamzori* through Lalit (and, significantly, his insistence upon her overcoming it by recognizing him as a man—and not, as he says, a clump of dirt). Thus, it is through her engagement with Lalit and her articulation of her desires in relation to him that she finally comes to a decision about what *kamzori* means. Buvana feels she does not embody her full self until Thangadurai recognizes her *penmai* and is not in a position to make the choice to walk away from him until she acquires this recognition. And secondly, Rup's and Buvana's refusals reconceptualize the definition of consent. Choice is not antithetical to the sacramental contract for them; rather their consent both buttresses it and broadens its scope. For not only do these women *choose* to enter into it, but also in doing so, they create and maintain space for their self expression.

Legal Citizens and Literary Subjects

A large body of feminist scholarship has demonstrated the need to move beyond the understanding of citizenship as a formal legal relationship between individuals and the state, suggesting instead that it is, “a more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging” (Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999, 4; quoted in Sundar Rajan 2003, 1).²⁸ These scholars argue that critical to the construction of “normative” citizens is the notion of “difference,” or what lies beyond the limits of normative citizenship and thereby defines what comprises it. Moreover, it is representations within the cultural sphere that accomplish the boundary-making necessary for expressing and internalizing individuals' rights in relation to one another, or in other words how individuals achieve membership within a community. Thus, cultural representations play an important role in constructing the imagined communities (Anderson 1983) that come under the auspices of the law. The distinctions between citizenship-as-rights (or legal citizenship) and citizenship-as-national identity (or cultural citizenship) are inextricable but in no way collapsible (Sundar Rajan 2003). Rather, the relationships between them are continually remade through everyday

²⁸ See for example: Berlant 1997; Alarcon, Kaplan, and Moallem 1999; Irving 2007; Kotef 2009; Peterson 1999; Sinha 2006; Sundar Rajan 2003; and Yuval-Davis 1997. See Sunder Rajan 2003 for a brief overview of literature on citizenship.

practices and performances of the social and psychic norms, laws, entitlements, and desires of citizen-subjects.²⁹

In so far as citizenship entails the establishment and protection of individual rights, it is a liberal concept based on an investment in individual freedom and the ability to act on the desires of one's true will.³⁰ But in the Indian context, the history of the citizen-subject is necessarily different due to the unequal status of the colonial subject, who could not attain citizenship under imperial rule (Chatterjee 1993, Chakrabarty 2000). As I have demonstrated above, tropes of the feminine ideal served as an important marker of difference in determining who counted as a normative subject under colonial law: it was through these figures that both the colonial state and the nationalist patriarchy defined the freedoms and rights of Indian subjects, as well as who possessed the authority to protect these. The regulation of the "unlawful" tendencies of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife, which brought them into the fold of conjugal man-woman relationships, set the discursive scope encompassing who counted as colonial subjects and under what conditions. The colonial state thus assumed a parental role, conceiving of India as a child that it was responsible for guiding, civilizing, and enlightening. In this light, the individual choice of Indian subjects was limited by what the colonial state viewed as India's lagging stage of progress, and until it had matured fully, Indian subjects were restricted from possessing full individual rights (see Mehta 1999). Through its constitutional and legislative frameworks, the postcolonial Indian state inherited this guardianship position, establishing its purview through the very same tropes of the feminine ideal. The new state renewed them with a different civilizing mission, but one still premised on using the figure of the Indian woman to adjudicate between social reform and community authority.

²⁹ I find Sundar Rajan's distinction particularly useful for parsing out the interconnections and distances between legal and cultural understandings of citizenship, which cultural mediums such as literature bring to the foreground. This is because, as she writes, "Citizenship may be a birthright, but its value and weight are produced only through exercising it" (2003, 19). Scholarship on the ways in which social and psychic norms and laws shape and are shaped by the actions, habits, and desires of the self is vast and ranges across several disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, and postcolonial studies. See, for example: Bhabha (1994), Bourdieu (1998), Butler (1993), Fanon (1967), and Foucault (1980a, 1980b, 1995).

³⁰ On liberalism's conceptualization of individual freedom and true will see, for example: Gray 1995, Mahmood 2005, and Mehta 1999.

Etienne Balibar's influential essay "Citizen-Subject" traces the rise of the citizen with regard to the history of the modern subject, arguing that "After the subject comes the citizen" (1991, 38). Balibar goes on to say:

Who is the citizen?... The citizen is a man in enjoyment of all his "natural" rights, completely realizing his individual humanity, a free man simply because he is equal to every other man... *The citizen is the subject*, the citizen is always a *supposed subject* (legal subject, psychological subject, transcendental subject).

(ibid., 45; emphasis in original)

Balibar situates the rise of the citizen in the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, a fundamental document of the French Revolution. For him, the *Declaration* marks the moment when the subject was conceived not as a *subjectus* (or one who is subjected) under the divine right of the sovereign, but as a *subjectum* (one who subjects or acts of his own accord) whose rights to freedom and property are served by government, the sole function of which is to protect these rights in the interest of the community of man. The category of citizen comes after the subject because it presupposes a free subject (*subjectum*) that became subjected to sovereign power and whose freedoms citizenship seeks to restore. In this way, Balibar demonstrates the continuity between modern subjectivity and modern citizenship.

Veena Das has demonstrated how in creating the legal category of the abducted woman in the aftermath of Partition, the new post-Independence state claimed its authority as *parens patriae* by extending its protection to include the honor and purity of its own community of women.³¹ This claim was based, however, on the recognition of Indian women's rightful and citizenly roles as sexual and reproductive beings within the conjugal family, which came under threat in instances of abduction. Das thus argues that "the figure of the abducted woman allowed the state to construct 'order' as essentially an attribute of the masculine nation so that the counterpart of the social contract becomes the sexual contract in which women as sexual and reproductive beings are placed within the domestic, under the control of the 'right' kinds of men" (2007, 19). In this way, the state mobilizes the legal category of the abducted woman to use the sexual contract that founds the conjugal Hindu family in the service of installing its own authority. The abducted woman, like the tropes I have discussed in this chapter, is one among a range of tropes of the feminine ideal invoked by the state as it assumed its guardianship role over the rights of male and female citizens in post-Independence India. A slippage exists between these tropes: the sati is both child and adult, goodwife and widow, virgin and prostitute, possessed and abducted (see also: Lal 2008, Sundar Rajan 1993b). It is the question of guardianship—of bringing women's volition under "the control of the 'right' kinds of men"—that gives shape to these tropes while simultaneously enabling the slippage between them.

But the post-Independence schism between the individual and community interests that these tropes evoke underscores that the abstract citizen-subject endowed with rights by state does not encapsulate the range of concepts, idioms, and modes of being operating in the post-Independence moment. Literary production during this period, however, provides an alternative account of how the liberal concepts of freedom and individual rights were taken up—sometimes disregarded, sometimes contested, and sometimes integrated with other non-liberal and non-individualistic understandings of subjectivity and community. Rup's and Buvana's engagements with the nature of consent and the question of guardianship imagine the possibilities of integration. These characters adhere to the form of the feminine ideal, shaped as it is by the problem of consent. But they also exceed its limits by portraying female agency and subjectivities that go beyond the narrow definition of consent these tropes uphold. The ways in which Hindi and Tamil short stories use these already circulating—and as I have shown here, already universalized—feminine tropes to express new understandings of feminine desire is precisely what I will explore in the rest of this dissertation. What these stories demonstrate are the complicated ways in which the post-Independence consolidation of community also required the construction of Indian/Hindu citizen-selves, full of desire, hope, and vision for their relationship to conjugality and thereby their place in the world.

³¹ Menon and Bhasin (1998) were the first to define and examine the category of the abducted woman in their important study *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*.

Chapter 2

Literariness, the Short Story, and the Feminine Ideal

साहित्य उसी रचना को कहेंगे जिसमें कोई सचाई प्रकट की गई हो, जिसकी भाषा प्रौढ़, परिमार्जित और सुन्दर हो, और जिसमें दिल और दिमाग पर असर डालने का गुण हो और साहित्य में यह गुण पूर्ण रूप में उसी अवस्था में उत्पन्न होता है, जब उसमें जीवन की सचाइयाँ और अनुभूतियाँ व्यक्त की गई हों। तिलिसमाती कहानियों, भूत-प्रेत की कथाओं और प्रेम-वियोग के अख्यानों से किसी ज़माने हम भले ही प्रभावित हुए हों, पर अब उनमें हमारे लिए बहुत कम दिलचस्पी हैं। इसमें सन्देह नहीं कि मानव-प्रकृति का मर्मज्ञ साहित्यकार राजकुमारों की प्रेम-गाथाओं और तिलिस्माती कहानियों में सृष्टि कर सकता है; परन्तु इससे भी इस सत्य की पुष्टि ही होती है कि साहित्य में प्रभाव उत्पन्न करने के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि वह जीवन की सचाइयों का दर्पण हो। [...] साहित्य अपने काल का प्रतिबम्ब होता है।

We call literature a work which expresses some truth, whose language is mature, polished and beautiful, and which has the ability to leave an impression on the heart and mind. In literature, this power emerges in full when it is the truths and experiences of life that find expression. Although we once used to be impressed by stories of magical adventures, ghost tales and romances of parted lovers, now they hardly hold any interest for us. Undoubtedly a writer who knows human nature can describe the truths of life even in tales of magic and in love stories about princes and princesses, but this confirms the dictum that in order for literature to exert any influence it necessarily has to mirror [*darpan*] the truths of life. [...] Literature is but a mirror [*pratibimb*] of its age.

(Premchand 1985e, 6-8; trans. by Orsini in Premchand 2004, Appendix)

வாழ்க்கை இலக்கியமன்று. வாழ்க்கை முடிவடகிற இடத்தில் இலக்கியம் ஆரம்பமாகிறதென்று சொல்லலாம். காம்பு முடியும் இடத்தில் காயும், பழமும் போல. வாழ்க்கையை பூமி என்றால், இலக்கியத்தை அதிலிருந்து கிளம்பி அதை மீறி நிற்கும் மலர் எனலாம். வாழ்க்கைச் சேற்றிலிருந்து இலக்கியத் தாமரை உயிரடைந்து உயர்கிறது. இவையே அவற்றின் இடையே இருக்கும் சம்பந்தம். இலக்கியம் வாழ்க்கையின் பிரதிபலிப்பு அன்று. புகைப்படமன்று. வாழ்க்கையிலிருந்து வடிகட்டி எடுக்கப்பட்ட சில மேலான அம்சங்களின் சேர்க்கை; வார்ப்படம்.

Life is not literature. We might say that literature begins at the place where life ends. Like the vegetable or fruit at the end of a branch. If life is the earth, we might say that literature is the blossom that grows out of and stands above it. Literature is a lotus that attains [its] spirit and rises up from the muck of life. These are the relationships between them. Literature is not a reflection [*pratipalippu*] of life. It is not a photograph. It is the amalgam of the several higher qualities filtered out of life. It is a casting.

(Rajagopalan 2001, 153)

These two nearly antithetical definitions of literature were articulated in the mid-1930s—the famous Hindi writer Dhanpat Ray (1880-1936), better known as Premchand, expressed his in his 1936 presidential speech, “Sāhityā kā Uddeśya” [The Aim of Literature], which he delivered at the first Progressive Writers’ Association Conference in Lucknow. The Tamil writer, journalist, and editor Ku.Pa. Rajagopalan (1902-1944) included his in his 1934 essay “Maṛumarcci” [Renaissance], published in the groundbreaking Tamil literary journal *Maṇikkoṭi* [The Jeweled Banner] that circulated in and around Madras. Both well-known writers were actively involved in the production of modern literature in their respective linguistic and political spheres. As such, they were deeply aware of and took determined stances on Gandhian politics, the Indian nationalist movement, and pan-Indian social reform debates of the day. But despite their shared political milieu, Premchand and Rajagopalan arrived at very different conclusions about the purpose of literature: for Premchand, literature expresses the truths and experiences of life and in this way is a mirror of life. But for Rajagopalan, literature is the exact opposite—not a mirror, but an ideal formed from the filtered out essential qualities of life and that stands above and beyond it. This chapter explores this difference, asking: what led to the formulation of these contrasting, but highly influential understandings of literature in the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres at precisely a moment of heightened cross-regional discussion on the future of the Indian nation? Furthermore, what do these differing definitions of literature reveal about the configuration of regional politics in the period leading up to Independence?

The Interwar period saw numerous political events that took shape on a pan-Indian level. For example, the influence of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress were all-pervasive at this time, and their efforts to create national unity were both supported and contested intensely across the North and South through public debates, as well as political action.¹ Furthermore, the Indian women’s movement expanded its networks rapidly in this period and united groups across India in the struggle for social reform, women’s rights, and independence from colonial rule (see, for example: Ananta Raman 2001; Basu and Ray 2003; and Kumar 1993). Indeed, as I touched on in the previous chapter, it was largely due to the concerted rise of women’s voices in the nationalist movement across different regions that an independent Indian state first took shape in the 1920s, mobilizing women as ideal citizens whose rights it rose to protect (Sinha 2000, 2007). The Hindi and Tamil literary spheres were anything but detached from this political context, as evidenced by literary journals, which were dotted with essays debating these very processes. To the contrary, what this chapter seeks to show is that it was through contrasting engagements with the politics of nationalism and social reform debates that competing definitions of literature took shape.

I argue, specifically, that the difference between Premchand’s insistence upon the social realist nature of literature and Rajagopalan’s focus on literature’s aesthetic elevation can only be understood through the specific histories of the modern Hindi and Tamil canons: modern Hindi literature takes shape through a long-standing effort to define Hindi/Hindu language and culture separately from Urdu/Islam, whereas the formation of the modern Tamil canon is intimately connected to the attempt to exclude Dravidian, Non-Brahmin, and Self-Respect Movement

¹ See pages 317-318 in Metcalf and Metcalf (2006) for a bibliographic essay on Gandhian politics in this period across different regions of India. For further analysis of the Congress’s and Gandhi’s impacts in the South see Geetha and Rajadurai (1998) and Pandian (2007).

identity politics from the realm of Tamil literary culture. Scholars have demonstrated that nineteenth century canonization processes in both Hindi and Tamil took shape through the dual avenues of education and publishing.² The establishment of Hindi and Tamil language departments in colonial universities, coupled with the growth of print presses, initiated the distribution of classical Hindi and Tamil texts, as well as the creation of new genres in new idioms and vernaculars. However, these avenues were directed towards different readerships and drew on different understandings of the past: whereas the Hindi literati developed Hindi language and literature for a Hindi speaking community that shared a Hindu cultural and religious heritage, Tamil scholars and writers directed their efforts towards an ethnically Tamil populace who traced their roots to the Dravidian past. Picking up on these relationships between Hindi and Tamil literature and the Hindu and Dravidian communities, this chapter focuses specifically on how efforts to define “literariness” enabled the constructions of Hindi and Tamil nationalisms in the late colonial period.

Regional debates on literariness coincided with the rapidly expanding pan-Indian nationalist movement, mobilized to a large extent by the women’s question (see Chatterjee 1989). In this context, not only was the literary defined in relation to popularly circulating debates on social reform, but also—and precisely because it was in relation to social reform discourse—the literary began to center even more on tropes of the feminine ideal to convey both the limits of an Indian nation and the function of literature. For writers like Premchand in the Hindi context, these tropes embodied both the existing social condition of society, as well as its potential for change. In this way, Premchand used these tropes to convey an understanding of literariness as a type of idealistic realism. Conversely, for Rajagopalan and other *Manikkoti* writers theorizing literariness in the Tamil context, these tropes articulated a determined disinterest in social reform, which they believed fell outside the boundaries of the literary awakening they sought to instill in readers. For them, representations of the feminine ideal articulated literariness as a type of newness. In what follows, I demonstrate how Premchand’s idealistic realism, by investing in already existing notions of community, maintains the connection between Hindi literature and a Hindu readership that the nineteenth century development of Hindi literature had established. Conversely, the Tamil *Manikkoti* writers use tropes of the feminine ideal to sever modern Tamil literature from classical canonization processes, ultimately rejecting Non-Brahmin, Dravidian, and Self Respect notions of literariness. Thus, while 1920-40s Hindi literature continues the Hindu-izing trend of the modern Hindi canon, Tamil literature of this period takes a turn towards the Brahminical. But, although these influential trends in Hindi and Tamil literary production articulated quite different interpretations of literariness, interwar writers of both regions deepened 1) the short story genre and 2) tropes of the feminine ideal as key forms through which literature was to be defined and audiences were to be addressed. As I have begun to show in Chapter 1 and as I will continue to demonstrate in the chapters that follow, post-Independence writers wrote through the same forms in order to address the function of literature and writerly responsibility in the new nation.

² For a discussion of the role of education and publishing in consolidating the Hindi canon, see Dalmia 1997, Orsini 2002, Rai 2001, and Trivedi 2003. For the Tamil canon, see Arooran 1980, Blackburn 2003, Cutler 2003, Ebeling 2010, and Venkatachalapathy 2005.

The first section of this chapter briefly traces the interconnections between literary production and the construction of community, emphasizing how, from the nineteenth century onwards, literary production in Hindi and Tamil has been directed towards consolidating the Hindu and Dravidian communities, respectively. Importantly, regionally specific idioms embodied by regionally specific representations of the Indian woman have been central to the hailing of these communal readerships. But while twentieth-century Hindi literary production maintains connection between Hindi literature and the Hindu community that comprises its readership, modern Tamil literary production divides into two streams, one directed towards a Dravidian community, and another directed towards a readership that is simultaneously Indian nationalist and Tamil Brahmin.

The next two sections focus on the rise of new understandings of literariness in 1920-40s Hindi and Tamil literature. The second section of this chapter examines the Hindi context, in particular the writing of the influential Hindi writer Premchand. For him, literariness took shape through an emphasis on the social function of literature, which he considered a cultural medium to guide the Indian community towards progressive self-transformation. Premchand's short stories thus use tropes of the feminine ideal to convey his vision of a more egalitarian, socially progressive Indian society, and his theoretical essays on the short story underscore the genre's literary accessibility, which he saw as necessary for creating social change. Yet, I will argue that Premchand's understanding of the social function of literature and emphasis on accessibility leads his work to build on an already existing Hindu-ized Hindi literary sphere. This is not a deliberate project; quite the contrary, Premchand develops a new humanist understanding of social reform and progressive change largely through idealized female characters. Yet, that Premchand's writing speaks through an already defined, implicitly Hindu sense of community confirms the structuring power of canonization and definitions of literariness even in his groundbreaking writing of the time.

In the third section, I will show how Tamil short story writers from the same period also confront a canonized literary tradition. However these authors' project was not one of social reform, but rather one to redefine what the Tamil community should be. Thus, in contrast to Premchand who sought accessibility through speaking to a shared community of Hindi/Hindustani speakers, these Tamil short story writers emphasized the short story form's newness, which for them enabled a break from the Dravidian past. These writers underscored the aesthetic function of the short story as something detached from the divisive political debates on social reform, language politics, and cultural exclusivism in which entertainment-based, Dravidianist, and Self-Respect movement writing engaged. They expressed this literariness through a refashioning of tropes of the feminine ideal so that they conveyed not idealistic platitudes for social betterment, but rather the tumultuous inner conflicts of individuals living in a directionless society. I look, in particular, at the short story writing and essays of the preeminent *Manikkoti* writer Pudumaipittan, who employed tropes of the feminine ideal to provide glimpses of individuals' multiple realities and novel ways of being to Tamil short story readers. Through his work, I demonstrate that the *Manikkoti* writers' humanist portrayals of Tamil individuality were embedded within a specifically Brahmin/Indianist politics.

The concluding section places Premchand's and Pudumaipittan's work in conversation with each other, rearticulating these writers' understandings of literariness in the terms of the

different types of literary humanism these writers conveyed. Premchand's investment in idealistic realism, drawing on earlier ideas of Hindi literariness, places individuals within the Indian community, thereby elevating the greater good of the community above individual choice and desire. Pudumaippittan's emphasis on the aesthetic function of Tamil literature conveys, by contrast, an elevation of the individual above society that encourages individuals to break away from social constraints to reconvene as part of the greater human community. In this way, his understanding of Tamil literariness coincided with the Tamil Brahminical view of literature that sought to detach itself from Dravidianism and its notion of an ethnically pure community and secular past. These divergent understandings of literary humanism, both based on representations of pan-Indian tropes of ideal femininity, were crucial to shaping the Hindi and Tamil short story genres well into the post-Independence era.

Indian Literature, Ideal Women, and the Making of Community

For several scholars of Indian literature, the idea of “community” is encompassed by the meaning of the term *sāhitya*, or literature, itself: “It is this sense of communality, *sahitya*, which is the force unifying the Indian people and their activities, social, religious and intellectual, a force that brings the diverse creative urges together” (Das 1991, 4-5). One way that modern literary production evokes this sense of communality is through the community-based idioms and tropes it engages. For example, Dipesh Chakrabarty has demonstrated how nineteenth century literary representations of the Bengali widow tap into already circulating understandings of *pabitra*, or purity, to convey an alternative sense of modern Indian subjectivity that is collective in nature, as opposed to individualistic forms of Western subjectivity. He argues that literary representations of widow characters who possess *pabitra* gesture as much towards premodern, non-individualistic understandings of the relationship between devotees and the divine, as towards modern individuals who desire and choose to be with one another: “Thus while the documentary gaze of Bengali novelists created and opened up the interior space of the widow, modern secular romantic love emerged washed in the light of Vaishnava doctrines of ‘purity’” (2000, 136). Similarly, Sudipta Kaviraj argues through an analysis of Tagore's poetry that “The private memory and fantasies of individual selves requires a language-like template of collective memory out of which our self-interpretative moves are created” (2001, 68). It is through a collective memory rooted in a shared, preexisting language that the imagining of modern Indian selves takes place, these authors suggest. Thus, this collective memory—a communal sense of the past that is embodied by language and informs the present—is locationally specific and foundational to the modern Indian subjectivities it is mobilized to articulate.

But as scholars of Hindi and Tamil canonization processes demonstrate, this communal sense is equally as modern and constructed as the modern selves to which it gives expression: the nineteenth and twentieth century Hindu and Dravidian communities were consolidated in the very act of being hailed by new understandings of the Hindi and Tamil languages and literatures arising during this period. In the Hindi context, Vasudha Dalmia (1997) demonstrates how the writer, critic, and editor Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-1885) was a central figure to this process. Known as the father of modern Hindi literature, Harishchandra deliberately took on the

project of fashioning Hindi to equip it to become the national language of India. Through his literary activities, he constructed a modern idiom, what he called *nij bhāṣā*, or “one’s own language,” that negotiated both British colonial culture as well as Indian tradition. What made *nij bhasa* an effective communicatory medium for Harishchandra is the kinship alliance it both produced and represented among its speakers—it was the language one spoke with one’s fellow countrymen and one’s ancestors, those who belonged to an Aryan-Hindu brotherhood. That this language was *nij*, or private, meant that it is a language spoken in the interior spaces of the home, as opposed to the public sphere, where English and Urdu were the languages of transaction. *Nij bhasa* thus operated as an intimate bond shared only by Hindu families. In this way, this modern idiom defined the boundaries of the Hindu/Hindi community while simultaneously excluding both the English and Urdu cultural-linguistic universes.

Importantly, because *nij bhasa* was the language of the home for Harishchandra, its capacity to form a communal alliance depended on the figure of the Indian woman as *nij nāri*, or one’s own woman: as wife and mother—bearer and educator of the nation’s sons—she was the necessary medium through which the mother tongue uniting the nation could be passed on. In this way, it was the figure of woman that enabled Hindi as a *nij bhasa*—or personal language—to also be a national one. As such, she became the focus of much of the early literature Harishchandra produced, not only as the intended audience, but also as the subject of discussion. For example, Harishchandra’s journal *Bālābhodīnī*, launched in the early 1870s, was dedicated entirely to the discussion of women’s issues and directed towards women’s education and enlightenment within the domestic sphere. As women had not yet begun to enter the public sphere, the journal was edited and written mostly by men. Its content drew from the Sanskritic, Puranic tradition and Victorian morals and mores to represent the virtuous middle-class housewife and mother, projecting her as the embodiment of both Hindu modernity and tradition (Dalmia 1997, 245-251; 2004).

The towering literary figure Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (1864-1938) continued this focus on *nij bhasa* and the figure of the Indian woman into twentieth century production of Hindi literature. One way he did this was through his keen interest in consolidating Hindi as a *mātrī bhāṣā*, or “mother-tongue.” Echoing Harishchandra’s representations of *nij bhasa*, Dwivedi used the figure of *Bhārat Māta*, or mother India, to incite both language devotion and patriotism among Hindi speakers (Gupta 2001, 2002; Orsini 2002). Moreover, Dwivedi constructed a periodized view of modern Hindi literature, tracing it directly back to Sanskrit and bracketing it off from Urdu, which he portrayed as a separate language and community from Hindi (Mody 2008). The preeminent literary historian Ramchandra Shukla (1884-1949) followed in Dwivedi’s footsteps, Hindu-izing the Hindi canon by highlighting its roots in Vaisnava Bhakti poetry, while marginalizing the influence of Urdu literature and Islamic influences (Orsini 2002, Wakankar 2002). Shukla was the head of the Hindi department at Benares Hindu University and closely involved with a number of activities of the Hindi Nagari Pracharini Sabha (Society for the Promotion of the Nagari Script), which were since the late nineteenth-century directed towards the development and propagation of Hindi language and literature. In this capacity, Shukla produced several authoritative histories and criticisms and was largely responsible for canonizing the still accepted nationalist narrative of Hindi literature. It was a narrative that “had a glorious, martial beginning with the *rāsos* in Rajasthan,” climaxed in the Bhakti period, fell

into decline during the age of Muslim rule, and began a renewed ascent along a reformist path in the nineteenth century (Orsini 2002, 108-109; see also Wakankar 2002). This entanglement of modern Hindi literary production with the history of the Hindu community coincided with Harishchandra's and Dwivedi's and was precisely what *nayī kahānī* writers would draw on when theorizing the short story in the immediate post-Independence moment.

Whereas modern Hindi literature referenced the Sanskrit literary tradition, it was the rediscovery of the Dravidian Sangam corpus that launched the Tamil Renaissance spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, the rise of Tamil printing presses drastically altered Tamil literary culture by enabling the publication of recovered classical texts, as well as modern texts in a new Tamil vernacular (Blackburn 2003).³ The classical Tamil scholar U.V. Swaminatha Iyer (1855-1942), known as the Grandfather of Tamil, spearheaded a deliberate attempt to revitalize the Tamil canon by scouring homes across the South Indian countryside in search of old Sangam manuscripts (Swaminatha Iyer 1950, 1990). Iyer's enterprise to rehabilitate classical Tamil coincided neatly with the rise of Dravidian nationalism and its counter-Orientalist portrayal of Sanskrit as being alien to a "pure," non-Brahminical, non-hierarchical Tamil culture (Venkatachalapathy 2005; see also Arooran 1980). Classical Tamil texts bolstering the canon—such as the *Tirakkural*, *Tolkāppiyam*, and *Cilappatikāram*—were purged of their Jain, Buddhist, and Vaisnava religious elements (Cutler 2003), and emphasized instead were the secular, proleptically progressive nature of man-woman relationships and the timeless honor of great Tamil women such as Kannagi and Manimekalai.⁴ These Sangam heroines were hailed as the embodiment of the sacred, which was portrayed through poetic descriptions of their *aṇaṅku*—women's latent sacred and sometimes dangerous and taboo power—and their *karpū*—which encompassed the esteemed virtues of chastity, purity, and domesticity that true *Tamiḷ peṇ*, or Tamil women, possessed (Hart 1973). Classical figures like Kannagi thus crossed over into the production of modern Tamil, where they were evoked by a range of Tamil nationalists in the 1920s as manifestations of *Tamiḷttay*, or Mother Tamil, towards whom they directed their language devotion (Ramaswamy 1993, 1997). For example, the Dravidianist poet Bharatidasan (1891-1964) published a modern rendering of Kannagi's story, titled *Kaṇṇaki Puraṭṭik Kāppiyam*, or *Kannagi's Revolutionary Epic*.

While the rediscovery of classical Tamil texts fed into the narrative of an ancient Tamil past, the rise of a Tamil language publishing industry channelled the creation of a pure modern Tamil language stripped of most Sanskrit-derived vocabulary and carved out an exclusively

³ The Sangam period (or period of the literary academies) of classical Tamil literature is dated roughly between 100 B.C.E. and 250 C.E. See Cutler (2003, 280 fn. 21) for a brief description of the Sangam period and Zvelebil (1974, 7-51) and Varadarajan (1988, 26-59) for an overview of the literature of this period. For discussion on the Tamil Renaissance, see Arooran 1980; Ebeling 2010; Kennedy 1980; and Zvelebil 1974, 1992.

⁴ Kannagi, in particular, is particularly evocative of the feminine ideal. This heroine of the Sangam text *Cilappatikāram* is the wife of Kovalan, who squanders all his wealth on his mistress Madhavi. When Kovalan has a change of heart and returns to Kannagi, she graciously gives him her anklets to take to the city of Madurai to sell. At the very same time, one of the queen's anklets is stolen, and she mistakes Kannagi's for hers. The queen accuses Kovalan of thievery and the king beheads him as punishment. Upon hearing of Kovalan's death, Kannagi rushes to Madurai. She proves her ownership of the anklet, but not even the king's and queen's deaths appease her anger. In an outrage she tears out her breast and flings it on the city, setting it ablaze. Kannagi thus exemplifies goddess-like power, while also embodying the virtues of a chaste, good and loyal wife. She is hailed as the ideal sati—both goodwife and widow—who stands by her husband despite his unfaithfulness (see Sundar Rajan 1993b).

Dravidianist readership (Arooran 1986, Pandian 2007, Ramaswamy 1997). The influential Tamil activist Maraimalai Adigal (1876-1950) used this pure Tamil idiom to construct a religious identity based on an egalitarian Dravidian past. Alternatively, the founder of the Justice Party and leader of the Self Respect movement E.V. Ramaswamy (1925-1939) mobilized modern Tamil as the center of a distinct racial and political community (Ramaswamy 1997). In addition, Tamil activists rallied around the greatness of Tamil literature to secure the standardization of Tamil literary histories in university curricula that canonized the Dravidian origins of Tamil literature (see Arooran 1980, Cutler 2003). These histories sidelined the influences of Sanskrit and other literary cultures, clinching the linguistic-cultural boundaries of the Dravidian community.

In opposition to these literary and political efforts to consolidate the Dravidian community, Tamil Brahmin elites used the Tamil publishing sphere to construct a Tamil readership that identified with the larger Indian/Hindu community. For example, G. Subramania Iyer (1855-1916) founded the nationalist papers *The Hindu* (founded 1878) and *Swadeshamitran* (founded 1882), using these as venues to cultivate a counter-myth to Dravidianism: India as a nation belonging to Aryans and the “reinscription of Brahminical Hinduism as *the* sign of Indianness” (Pandian 2007, 55). Iyer and other Tamil Brahmin sympathizers critiqued the Dravidianist investment in a secular and pure Tamil past as being anti-Indianist. As M.S.S. Pandian has demonstrated, in the context of the early twentieth century Non-Brahmin movement and the rise of the Justice Party, “Claiming the Brahminic as the national was an important move made by the Tamil Brahmins...which implicitly reduced non-Brahmins and religious minorities as being inadequately Indian (ibid., 35). Through several successful publishing endeavors, which I will elaborate below, Tamil Brahmin writers effectively established a modern Tamil literary sphere in the early twentieth century that was separate from the Dravidian one—one that viewed Tamil culture as part of the Indian-Hindu past and modern Tamil language and literature as an aesthetic representation of the interconnections between Tamil, Sanskrit, and other Indian languages and cultures. The Tamil *cirukatai* writers of the post-Independence moment would trace their literary outlook to this Tamil Brahmin publishing sphere, arguing for a more modern, worldly literary view that turned away from the Dravidianists’ narrowed definition of Tamil literature and community.

From their early formations in the nineteenth century onwards, then, both Hindi and Tamil literary processes drew upon idioms of a collective past to shape regionally specific communities that traced their origins to distinct understandings of the past. In the Hindi context the past was situated in Sanskritic literature and culture and shaped a decidedly Hindu modern public, whereas in the Tamil context the past was constructed through Sangam literature and a Dravidian cultural heritage shared by modern non-Brahmin Tamilians. Importantly, it was through idiomatic representations of the Indian woman—whether as *nij nari* and *Bharat Mata*, or as *Tamil pen* and *Tamilttay*—that literary production in these languages facilitated the consolidation of communal boundaries. These feminine figures embodied regionally specific community ideals, thus hailing regionally specific readerships and securing the affiliations between them while excluding outsiders. These figures thus also expressed Hindi and Tamil literary value, or *sahitya* in the sense of communality that Das evokes, in these early moments of Hindi and Tamil literary canonization.

In the two sections that follow, I look closely at how this relationship between literature and community developed in the late colonial Hindi and Tamil literary spheres. In particular, I demonstrate how the literature-community nexus was reconfigured through debates on the function of literature, or Hindi and Tamil literariness, that arose in the context of pan-Indian debates on nationalism and social reform. For writers in both spheres, it was the short story genre and its portrayal of tropes of the feminine ideal that most effectively conveyed the function of literature during this period. In the Hindi context, the short story expressed its literariness through its vision of a socially progressive, non-individualistic Indian/Hindu community that was embodied by tropes of ideal femininity. In this way, the twentieth century Hindi short story's representations of tropes of the feminine ideal continued to invest in the same Hindi-Hindu nexus that earlier literary production had developed. In the Tamil context, conversely, the short story focused on these same tropes to articulate a literariness that eschewed separatist Dravidian politics and aestheticized the loneliness of individuals in a modern Indian/Hindu society that offered no clear-cut moral solutions. Here, these tropes expressed ideas of modern literariness in the Tamil short story that moved increasingly away from Dravidianist representations of the Indian woman towards a literature-community nexus that was Indianist, as well as global.

The Idealistically Real and Hindi Tropes of the Feminine Ideal

It was to Premchand, considered one of the most important Hindi writers of all time, that *nayī kahānī* writers would turn when defining the contours of their post-Independence literary project. In particular, the next chapter discusses how these writers invested in the same literature-community nexus that Premchand put forth when elaborating on the nature of the *nayī kahani*'s literariness. This section thus focuses on how Premchand understood Hindi literariness and the ways his ideas resonated with and departed from those of his equally path-defining Hindi literature contemporaries Dwivedi and Shukla. As I will show below, Premchand shares with Dwivedi and Shukla an understanding of the ancient Indian past as a type of golden era, and like them, he calls for modern Hindi literature to distance itself from the decline in literary merit brought on by the Middle Ages, returning instead to the idealism of the ancient past. In this way, although Premchand's literary project was distinct in its humanistic emphasis on idealistic realism, it also confirmed the Hindu-ized literature-community that Dwivedi and Shukla had already successfully established. To put it differently, despite Premchand's quite radical literary differences from Dwivedi and Shukla, he subscribed to and built his understanding of literariness upon the same nationalist history of Hindi literature as these influential critics. Importantly, it is the portrayal of the feminine ideal that articulates the function of literature for all three *littérateurs*.

Despite important variations in their literary views, Dwivedi constructed the narrative of Hindi literary history in the same way as Shukla, whose work became influential in the 1930s

following Dwivedi's main literary contributions.⁵ Together, these two critics were responsible creating the norms for Hindi literary production in the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, the *khari bolī* (or standardized Hindi largely purged of Urdu vocabulary and regional colloquialisms and syntax structures) that Dwivedi institutionalized in his early twentieth century journal still remains in widespread use. And as I mentioned in the previous section, Shukla's *Hindī Sāhitya kā Itihās* [The History of Hindi Literature], published in 1930, still remains the canonized view of Hindi literary history. Both Dwivedi and Shukla rooted the origins of modern Hindi literature in the ancient Sanskrit past, thereby Hinduizing the corpus of Hindi literature and the community to which it was directed (see Mody 2008, Orsini 2002, Rai 2001, Wakankar 2002).

Thus, when it came to Dwivedi's and Shukla's understandings of Hindi literariness, both critics viewed the function of literature as social and directed towards the progress of both the Hindi speaking community and the nation, which were interchangeable to them. While Dwivedi stressed the educational import of *sahitya*, or literature, in helping Hindi speakers to create a better Indian society (Mody 2008), Shukla underscored the modern role of Sanskrit aesthetic theory in evoking a shared imaginative and affective past. This meant that literature first and foremost served the community, "bring[ing] together not modern individuals, but persons, persons capable of being affected not individually but generally" (Wakankar 2002, 990; see also Orsini 2002). In this way, Shukla eschewed the notion of individuality, underscoring—even more so than Dwivedi—the good of the collectivity (*lok maṅgal*) that literature must both serve and solidify.⁶ For Shukla, it was this ability to enhance the collective good that comprised the literariness of Hindi literature. Towards this end, both Dwivedi and Shukla underscored the crucial role of the writer in society, for it was the writer's skill and moral vision that achieved the coherence and social advancement of the collectivity.

One important way that Dwivedi's and Shukla's emphasis on the social function of a modern Hindi literature rooted in the Sanskrit past took shape was through their critiques of existing feminine tropes. Dwivedi, in particular, lodged his arguments for the creation of a more elevated modern Hindi in his disdain for the convention of *nāyikā bheda* that was common in poetry of the *Rīti Kāl*, or period of courtly poetry (dated roughly from the mid-sixteenth century to the nineteenth century). This poetry featured older feminine tropes which articulated the

⁵ For discussion of the differences between the views of these two towering literary figures see Mody 2008 and Orsini 2002. In addition, Wakankar 2002 outlines Shukla's views on poetry and criticism, demonstrating Shukla's investment in Bhakti poetry as the location of an Indian ethic and aesthetic as opposed to the West. Whereas Shukla theorized poetry as the main generical vehicle of Hindi literature, Dwivedi actively experimented with and attempted to develop other modern Hindi genres alongside poetry, such as the short story and the novel. Dwivedi exerted his most substantial influence on the Hindi literary world through his groundbreaking journal *Saraswati* (1900-1920), where he was responsible for developing the short story genre and debuting several important writers. Whereas Dwivedi remained on the periphery of the Hindi Nagari Pracharini Sabha (The Society for the Promotion of the Hindi Script) and academic spaces, such as Benares Hindu University (BHU), Shukla was involved with a number of the Sabha's projects and was the head of the Hindi department at BHU. Shukla produced his authoritative histories and criticisms of Hindi literature while serving in these capacities.

⁶ Wakankar translates *lok maṅgal* as "responsibility" where "Responsibility is understood here as the imperative that determines the relation an individual has to the social world" (2002, 991). I have chosen a closer translation—"the good of the collectivity"—but am gesturing towards a point similar to Wakankar's, which is the particular stress Shukla puts on an ethical sensibility evoked by literature that "issues from outside one's sense of being a person or individual" (ibid., 994), residing instead within the collective.

bodily expression of romantic love. For Dwivedi, these tropes were the embodiments of obscenity, vulgarity, and impropriety that arose with the influence of courtly Muslim culture. It was this influence that modern Hindi literature sought to reform by returning the nation to the civilized greatness of its ancient past through new modern ideals (Gupta 2001, 2002; Mody 2008).

In addition, Dwivedi, as well as Shukla, held disdain for the work of the *Chāyāvād* poets of the 1920-30s.⁷ The *Chayavad* movement tapped into the *nayika bhed* tropes that Dwivedi harshly critiqued, while simultaneously breaking away from older poetry conventions by writing in a free verse that Shukla scorned for elevating mysticism above social relevance (Wakanakar 2003, 998; see also Orsini 2002, 154). Both Dwivedi and Shukla felt the *Chayavad* poets promoted the quest for individual freedom, thus laying claim to a philosophy of literature for art's sake (Rosenstein 2004, 4-5). In this way, the movement was directly opposed to Dwivedi's and Shukla's functionalist literary outlook. While Dwivedi era poetry portrayed women figures to advocate a reform of the social institutions that oppressed them, *Chayavad* poets depicted them in more abstract terms, their desires standing in for the subjective qualities of the human spirit. For example, the image of woman, or *nārī rūp*, was portrayed in entirely abstract terms in Sumitranandan Pant's *Pallav* (1926): "You are longing, tears, laughter,/ a sigh from the heart of creation,/ the object of all desires..." (Pant 2005, 67; trans. by Schomer 1998, 33).⁸ Dwivedi, and Shukla denounced *Chayavad* poetry for this more abstract conceptualization of the feminine and individuality in general, which employed excessively sensual, non metrical, and overly mystical language (Schomer 1998, 93-123). The unruly language and thematic content of this poetry that stressed the emotional, private, inner world of readers moved away from the community-based affective ties these scholars emphasized.⁹

In stark contrast to the *Chayavadi* portrayal of feminine figures were the social reformist tropes of the feminine ideal, which Dwivedi promoted through publication in his journal (Mody 2008, 150-153). The widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife were all central figures in fiction that presented the portraits of the ideal human conduct that Dwivedi felt would benefit society. One of Dwivedi's most remembered publications in this regard was Chandradhar Sharma Guleri's 1915 short story "Usne Kahā Thā" [She Had Said], which later literary critics, such as Rajendra Yadav, hailed as the first modern Hindi short story. Guleri's story depicted the ideal *deś hitaiṣī*, or patriot, who gives up his life for his country. But importantly, the story's action is driven by the hero's idealized love of his childhood sweetheart, now another man's wife. At the moment of his death on foreign soil, the hero's unconsummated love for this woman

⁷ *Chayavad*, meaning "shadow-ism," is often thought of as Hindi Neo-Romanticism, as it was greatly influenced by Western Modernism. The four main Chayavad poets were Jaishankar Prasad (1889-1937), Suryakanth Tripathi 'Nirala' (1896-1961), Sumitranandan Pant (1900-1970), and Mahadevi Verma (1907-1987). See Schomer (1998, 93-124) for a discussion of the differences between these poets views.

⁸ "तुम्हीं हो स्पृहा, अश्रु और हास,/ सृष्टि के उर की सांस;/ तुम्हीं इच्छाओं की अवसान [...]"

⁹ The *Chayavad* movement would give way in the 1940s to the rise of the less tradition-based Experimentalist movement (*prayogvād*) and then to the New Poetry movement (*nayī kavīṭā*) that sought to address the post-Independence moment. The *Nayi Kahani* movement would define itself in particular against the experimentalist writing of Sachidananda Vatsyayan (1911-1987), better known as Agyeya, who wrote both poetry and prose and was an important thinker belonging to both the Experimentalist and New Poetry movements. *Nayi Kahani* writers argued that Agyeya's writing was too focused on the individual and not enough focused on the circumstances in which they live.

stands in for his love of and commitment towards the Indian nation, expressing a nationalistic narrative that coincided with Dwivedi's literary project. Guleri's story was one of the more daring ones that Dwivedi published (Mody 2008), and the ideal man-woman relationship it portrayed was de-romanticized and taken to new heights in Premchand's writing, also first published in Dwivedi's journal: "Premchand..., though [he] stay[ed] away from the subject of romantic love, also explore[d] domestic relationships and social morality, with a special emphasis on the duties and responsibilities of the Indian who is part of a larger collectivity (e.g., family, society, nation)" (Mody 2008, 186). For example, Premchand's story "Saut" [Co-Wife] published in Dwivedi's journal in 1916, depicts both the disadvantages of the practice of polygamy, as well as the admirable qualities of the more ideal hardworking, self-sacrificing wife. This story is one of several Dwivedi published that advocated for more community-oriented man-woman relationships through the portrayal of social reformist feminine tropes. These tropes upheld traditional structures and customs, expressing them through new literary genres and in modern, nationalistic ways.

The community-based, social function of literature—which defined Hindi literariness for Dwivedi and Shukla—was thus also emphasized by Premchand, who saw himself as part of the Progressive (*pragativād*) writers movement. In line with Dwivedi's and Shukla's views, the progressive writers, too, pinpointed the *Chayavad* poets' metaphysical outlook, embodied particularly by the feminine, as abstract and apolitical.¹⁰ The Progressive writers officially inaugurated the All India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) with Premchand's speech in 1936, from which the first epigraph to this chapter is taken. Its members and sympathizers were Marxist leaning—though by 1938 the PWA would make a clear turn away from Communist Party politics (Ali 1974)—and adhered to a humanism inspired on the one hand by the concept of individual freedom more material than that aestheticized by the *Chayavad* movement (Rosenstein 2004), and on the other hand by Marxist secularism and class politics (Coppola 1974). This meant that at heart, Progressive writers were committed to the social relevance of literature and its emancipatory potential, and they expressed this through the mode of realism often combined with harsh critique of what they felt were traditional social hierarchies and rules of propriety.

Thus, the literature for society's sake mantra put forth by Premchand in his inaugural speech at the first PWA gathering in Lucknow in 1936, though in the same vein as the

¹⁰ The roots of the Progressive writers movement (1936-1954) are usually located in the publication of the Urdu short story collection *Angāre* [Hot Coals] in 1932 (Ali 1974, Coppola 1974, Gopal 2005). *Angare*, which included ten stories by Sajjad Zaheer (1905-1973), Ahmed Ali (1910-1994), Maudhuzafar (?), and Rashid Jahan (1905-1952) — all of who would eventually become involved with the PWA. The collection immediately raised protest for its brazen portrayal of sexual desire and its defiance of religion and patriarchy. Critics pigeonholed the collection as elevating the political to the extent that it sacrificed literariness, the content of its stories based on the shock value it could evoke rather than any aesthetic or ethical project. The collection was "too hot-blooded," too "revolutionary," and too "rebellious" (Coppola 1974, 3). Such criticisms continued to haunt those writers associated with the PWA, whether or not they were members, and may to some extent explain its eventual disintegration.

Some primary Hindi writers involved with the PWA included Shivdan Singh Chauhan, Amrit Rai, Prakashchandra Gupta, and Ramvilas Sharma—all of whom were based at the University of Allahabad. Some of those who wrote in Hindi/Urdu include writers such as Premchand, Sajjad Zaheer, Saadat Hasan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Ismat Chughtai, Krishan Chander, Muhammad Hasan Askari, Ahmad Naseem Quasmi, Upendra Nath Ashk and Akhtar Hussain Raipuri. Mulk Raj Anand and Ahmed Ali are two well-known members who wrote in English (Orsini 2002, 33 fn. 38, and Mufti 2000, 7).

community-oriented notion of literariness that Dwivedi and Shukla expressed, was shot through by a realist form of humanism:

वह कहानी लिखता है, पर वास्तविकता का ध्यान रखते हुए; मूर्ती बनाता है, पर ऐसी कि उसमें सजीवता हो और भावव्यंजकता भी—वह मानव-प्रकृति का सूक्ष्म दृष्टि से अवलोकन करता है, मनोविज्ञान का अध्ययन करता है और इसका यत्न करता है कि उसके पात्र हर हालत में और हर मौके पर, इस तरह आचरण करें, जैसे रक्त-माँस का बना मनुष्य करता है; अपनी सहज सहानुभूति और सौंदर्य-प्रेम के कारण वह जीवन के उन सूक्ष्म स्थानों तक जा पहुँचता है, जहाँ मनुष्य अपनी मनुष्यता के कारण पहुँचने में असमर्थ होता है।

[A writer] writes stories, but keeping in mind reality. A writer shapes images, but so that they may be alive and expressive. A writer surveys human nature with sharp eyes, studies psychology and tries to have characters who behave in every situation as if they were made of flesh and blood. Thanks to natural empathy and love of beauty, a writer can reach even the most subtle areas which human beings are usually unable to reach because of their humanity.

(Premchand 1985e, 10-11; trans. by Orsini in Premchand 2004, Appendix)

In opposition to the emotional escapism of Chayavad poetry, Premchand underscores the commitment a writer has to a reality so grounded in human nature that it can illuminate the subtle workings of humanity.¹¹ Here, Premchand emphasizes the responsibility of the writer in

¹¹ In a passage prior to the above quote, Premchand indirectly critiques the aims of the Chayavad movement, which were—as the Chayavad poets themselves claimed—to transcend the limitations of immediate circumstances through evoking the memory of love and separation (Schomer 1998):

निस्सदेह, काव्य और साहित्य का उद्देश्य हमारी अनुभूतियों की तीव्रता को बढ़ाना है; पर मनुष्य का जीवन केवल स्त्री-पुरुष-प्रेम का जीवन नहीं है। क्या वह साहित्य, जिसका विषय श्रृंगारिक मनोभावों और उनसे उत्पन्न होनेवाली विरह-व्यथा, निराशा आदि तक ही सीमित हो—जिसमें दुनिया की कठिनाइयों से दूर भागना ही जीवन की सार्थकता समझी गई हो, हमारे विचार और भाव सम्बन्धी आवश्यकताओं को पूरा कर सकता? श्रृंगारिक मनोभाव मानव-जीवन का एक अंग मात्र है, और जिस साहित्य का अधिकांश इसी से सम्बन्ध रखता हो, वह उस जाति और उस युग के लिए गर्व करने की वस्तु नहीं हो सकता और न उसकी सुरुचि का ही प्रमाण हो सकता है।

There is no doubt that the aim of poetry and of literature is to sharpen our perceptions, but human life is not just confined to love between a man and woman. Can a literature whose themes are confined to the emotional states of love and the pain of separation and despair that spring from it, a literature which believes that escaping from the problems of the world is the meaning of life, answer our needs for thoughts and feelings? The mental and emotional states of love are only a part of human life, and if literature remains largely confined to them it brings little honour to the community and the age it belongs to, and their taste.

(Premchand 1985e, 7-8; trans. by Orsini in Premchand 2004, Appendix)

Mahadevi Verma, one of the four principal poets of the Chayavad movement, recognized Progressive writers' critiques such as Premchand's, and responded that the Chayavad project should not be viewed as escapism, but rather as a literary orientation interested in using the expression of human desire—an essential human drive—to enrich reality (Schomer 1998, 266).

shaping society: only the writer is able to portray the humanness that defines human beings, which the limits of their own humanity prohibit them from accessing and understanding. A writer's characters are illuminating to readers precisely because they behave in recognizably human ways (made up as they are of flesh and blood), and by portraying this humanness through fiction, the writer serves to create a higher consciousness among his readers. The writer thus functioned for Premchand in the same way as Dwivedi and Shukla viewed this figure: as a vanguard and moral leader of society. But what Premchand added to Dwivedi's and Shukla's understanding of Hindi literariness as a collective sensibility is an emphasis on the human nature of that collectivity (rather than the collectivity's shared values or aesthetic sensibility, as in the cases of Dwivedi and Shukla). This emphasis was informed by Premchand's commitment to the anti-communal politics of the Hindustani movement, Gandhian nationalism, and Marxist struggle against class oppression, and manifested in his fiction through vivid portrayals of characters from all walks of life who spoke in regional idioms and used Urdu vocabulary.

Thus, for Premchand, the function of literature was best conveyed by the realistic depiction of the hardships men and women faced within existing structures of society. This function was most often performed by tropes of the feminine ideal, which were a key mechanism through which injustices were conveyed and social change imagined. The vast majority of Premchand's short stories and novels focus on figures such as the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife, which served as emblems of self-sacrifice and service to the nation (Orsini 2004, xxiii). Charu Gupta (1991) catalogues Premchand's short stories, demonstrating four main types of feminine tropes: the ideal woman, the suffering woman, the woman who protests, and the Westernized counter-ideal woman (see also Pandey 2000).¹² The image of ideal womanhood is embodied by characters such as Mulia in Premchand's "Sati" (1932) in which Mulia loyally cares for her mistrusting husband and refuses to remarry after his death, thereby epitomizing the actions of an ideal *sati*. Another example is Anandi in "Bade Ghar ki Beti," [Daughter in a Rich House] who marries into a rich family. At first Anandi is outraged at her brother-in-law's insults. This leads her husband to threaten to divide the family. But eventually, Anandi swallows her pride, bringing the family back together, and fulfilling their perceptions of her as an ideal goodwife. In other stories, Premchand's ideal women embody wifehood or widowhood through suffering, as in the case of Phoolmati in "Beton Vali Vidhva" [Widow with Sons] (1932), who loses her property rights and position at the head of the household after her husband's death. Sometimes these widows, wives, and prostitutes resign themselves to their conditions of abandonment and destitution. For example, Premchand's story "Vesya" [The Prostitute], published in 1933, depicts the prostitute Madhuri's unrequited love and ultimate death. But, sometimes these figures join the nationalist cause in protest, such as Mridula in "Jail," who becomes involved in the nationalist movement to the extent of being jailed after she is widowed. Premchand's many Westernized women characters serve as counter-ideals to such tropes—they are western educated, flirtatious, economically independent, and "liberal"—that is to say, they adhere to notions equality and (sexual, economic, and social)

¹² The following stories can be found in Premchand (1984), Volumes 1-8. "Sati" is from Vol. 4, 145-153. "Bade Ghar ki Beti" is from Vol. 7, 142-151. "Beton Vali Vidhva" is from Vol. 1, 68-88. "Vesya" is from Vol. 2, 38-60. "Jail" is from Vol. 7, 5-16. And "Miss Padma" is from Vol. 2, 94-104. Several of these stories have been translated in Premchand (2004) and Premchand (2008).

freedom for women. Such qualities—for example, Miss Padma’s (in “Miss Padma,” 1936)—take shape through these characters’ disrespectful and brazen attitudes and actions, and are counterposed to the wifely service and loyalty upheld by Premchand’s ideal women.

The significant extent to which these tropes saturate Premchand’s fiction attests to the deep-seated interconnections between social reform discourses and what Premchand defined as the function of literature—that is to say, literariness, or what makes written work literary. For, it was through these tropes that Premchand articulated what he called *ādarśonmukhī yathārthvād*, or the idealistic realism good literature conveys. This particular form of realism formed the basis of literariness because it exposed the material conditions of men and women’s lives in such a way that inspired and imagined social change. *Adarsonmukhi yatharthvad* was, thus, directed towards the creation of a more progressive Indian community, and in this way it differed from the more conventional understanding of realism:

कथा के चरित्रों और मन के बीच में जड़ता का वह पर्दा नहीं होता, जो एक मनुष्य के हृदय को दूसरे मनुष्य के हृदय से दूर रखता है। और अगर हम यथार्थ को हू-ब-हू खींचकर रख दें, तो उसमें कला कहाँ है? कला केवल यथार्थ की नक़ल का नाम नहीं है।

कला दीखती तो यथार्थ है, पर यथार्थ होती नहीं। उसकी खूबी यही है कि वह यथार्थ न होते हुए भी यथार्थ मालूम हो। [...] कथा-साहित्य मनुष्य का रचा हुआ जगत् है और परिमित होने के कारण सम्पूर्णतः हमारे सामने आ जाता है, और जहाँ वह हमारी मानवी न्याय-बुद्धि या अनुभूति का अतिक्रमण करता हुआ पाया जाता है, हम उसे दंड देने के लिये तैयार हो जाते हैं। कथा में अगर किसी को सुख प्राप्त होता है तो इसका कारण बताना होगा, दुःख भी मिलता है तो उसका कारण बताना होगा। यहाँ कोई चरित्र मर नहीं सकता जब तक कि मानव-न्याय-बुद्धि उसकी मौत न माँगे। स्रष्टा को जनता की अदालत में अपनी हर एक कृति के लिए जवाब देना पड़ेगा। कला का रहस्य भ्रांति है, पर वह भ्रांति, जिस पर यथार्थ का आवरण पड़ा हो।

That senseless screen that distances one man’s heart from another’s doesn’t exist between the mind and the characters of a story. And if we haul up reality exactly as it is, then where is the art? Art is not simply the name of the imitation of reality.

If art manifests, so does reality, but [art] is not reality. Its uniqueness is precisely that it appears as reality even though it is not. The short story is a world created by man and because it is bounded, it emerges before us as a whole. And where it seems to transgress our human moral sensibility or experience, we are prepared to censure it. If someone attains happiness in a story, [the writer] must give a reason for it; if someone meets with sadness, he must give a reason for that, too. Here [in a short story] a character cannot die unless [our] moral sensibility demands his death. A writer must answer for each and every work of art in the court of the people. The secret of art is delusion, but it is a delusion over which lies the veil of reality.

(Premchand 1985b, 33-34)

This passage, taken from one of three essays Premchand wrote called “Kahānī Kala,” or “The Art of the Short Story,” raises several concepts important to Premchand’s understanding of *adarsonmukhi yatharthvad* as literariness. First, the link between art and reality is such that art—when it is true art—sheds light on reality precisely because it is not reality. Art constitutes the inner workings of the short story that connects readers to characters in ways that their own biases would not allow in real life. This is why art is a delusion veiled by reality—art seems to be reality because of the connection it affords, a connection that is not possible outside the short story itself. And this is the second point Premchand makes in the above passage: the art of the short story form is inherently humanistic. Not only does it illuminate otherwise closed-off bonds between human beings, but it must also answer to human moral sensibilities.¹³ The content of a short story must make sense to, or in other words seem real to, readers—this is why a character’s happiness, sadness, or death cannot take shape in a story without reason.

Thirdly, it is the short story genre—and not the novel or the poem—that for Premchand evokes readers’ human moral sensibilities. This is because its bounded form enables the writer to create a self-enclosed and complete world, which pushes ordinary readers to react—either by subjecting the unrealistic elements of stories to interrogation or by identifying with the characters that artful stories portray. Thus, a successful story kindles its readers’ sympathy (*sahānubhūti*) (ibid., 39), and does so by illuminating the ideal qualities residing within its characters: “The best short story is that which is based on some psychological truth [...] Even a bad man is not entirely bad, somewhere godliness is certainly hidden within him—this is a psychological truth” (36).¹⁴ The psychological truths good short stories convey, thus, interlace the bad with the good, the real with the ideal, demonstrating both how humans beings are and how they could be.

Premchand views the short story as better than the novel for conveying this amalgam of real and ideal, for whereas, “it isn’t necessary for all the events and characters [in a novel] to converge around a single focus,” (1985a, 28), “not a word or even a sentence should be there that doesn’t illuminate a short story’s aim (*uddeśya*)” (29).¹⁵ This pithiness makes the genre more egalitarian:

उपन्यास वे लोग पढ़ते हैं, जिनके पास धन होता है; और समय भी उन्हीं के पास रहता है, जिनके पास धन होता है। आख्यायिका साधारण जनता के लिए लिखी जाती है, जिनके पास न धन है, न समय। यहाँ तो सरलता में सरसता पैदा कीजिए, यही कमाल है। कहानी वह ध्रुपद की तान है, जिसमें गायक महफ़िल शुरू होते ही अपनी सम्पूर्ण प्रतिभा दिखा देता है, एक क्षण में चित्त को इतने माधुर्य से परिपूरित कर देता है, जितना रात भर गाना सुनने से भी नहीं हो सकता।

¹³ This sentiment resonates not just with humanism in general, but also with Premchand’s particular political stance on Hindustani as the language representing a unified Indian nation that exceeds Hindu-Muslim differences.

¹⁴ सब से उत्तम कहानी वह होती है, जिसका आधार किसी मनोवैज्ञानिक सत्य पर हो। [...] बुरा आदमी भी बिलकुल बुरा नहीं होता, उसमें कहीं देवता अवश्य छिपा होता है—यह मनोवैज्ञानिक सत्य है।”

¹⁵ “यह कोई आवश्यक बात नहीं कि वे सब घटनाएँ और चरित्र एक ही केन्द्र पर आकर मिल जायँ। [...] “एक शब्द, एक वाक्य भी ऐसा न होना चाहिये, जो गल्प के उद्देश्य को स्पष्ट न करता हो।”

People who have money read novels, and those who have money also have time. The short story is written for the ordinary people, who have neither money, nor time. Where feeling is created out of simplicity is a miracle. A short story is that note in a *dhrupad* performance through which the singer, at the very beginning of the gathering, displays his entire brilliance; in one moment he satisfies the soul with such a sweetness that couldn't come about even if one listened to his singing all night.

(Premchand 1985a, 29)

Here, Premchand reveals his preference for the short story through an elaboration of the genre's simplicity, accessibility, and brilliance. For him, it is this genre, and not the novel, that is most powerful for conveying social realities to ordinary men and women and inspiring change within them and their surroundings. This is because it is the most economical genre in terms of the money it costs and the brevity with which it conveys insights. If the ethical aim of literature is to evoke "in us the resolve and energy to act," and is that "which makes us realize the unhappy state we are in, the internal and external causes which have brought us to this wretched and lifeless state, and that which makes us strive to remove them," then the short story genre is the ideal medium through which this aim is expressed (1985e, 14-15; trans. by Orsini in Premchand 2004, Appendix).¹⁶ Premchand thus emphasizes that if, as Dwivedi and Shukla insisted, Hindi literariness is defined by the ability to enhance the collective good, then it is through the short story genre that this literariness most clearly takes shape.

The way the short story enhanced the collective good through blending the real with the ideal was a crucial feature of the genre for Premchand, because it was this characteristic in particular that defined the Indian short story distinctly from the European one. Premchand identified two short story camps in the West: the first is utterly realist while the second is utterly idealist. Neither suited the Indian context, which has its own unique historical lineage.

...यथार्थवादियों का कथन है कि संसार में नेकी-बेदी का फल कहीं मिलता नज़र नहीं आता, बल्कि बहुधा बुराई का परिणाम अच्छा और भलाई का बुरा होता है। आदर्शवादी कहता है यथार्थ का यथार्थ रूप दिखाने से फायदा ही क्या, वह तो हम अपनी आँखों से देखते ही हैं। कुछ देर के लिए हमें इन कुत्सित व्यवहारों से अलग रहना चाहिए, नहीं तो साहित्य का मुख्य उद्देश्य ही गायब हो जाता है। वह साहित्य को समाज का दर्पण मात्र नहीं मानता, बल्कि दीपक मानता है, जिसका काम प्रकाश फैलाना है।

भारत का प्राचीन साहित्य आदर्शवाद ही का समर्थक है। हमें भी आदर्श ही की मर्यादा का पालन करना चाहिए। हाँ, यथार्थ का उसमें ऐसा सम्मिश्रण होना चाहिए कि सत्य से दूर न जाना पड़े।

Realists maintain that nowhere in the world do the fruits of good and evil seem apparent; rather, often the effects of bad deeds are good and those of good deeds are bad. The idealist says, what's the value of realistically showing reality when we already see it with our own eyes? For a while, we must maintain a distance

¹⁶ "...जिससे हममें दृढ़ता और कर्म-शक्ति उत्पन्न को, जिससे हमें अपनी दुःखावस्था की अनुभूति हो, हम देखें कि किन अंतबहिः कारणों से हम इस निर्जीवता और ह्रास की अवस्था को पहुँच गए, और उन्हें दूर करने की कोशिश करें।"

from [both] these blameworthy practices, or the primary aim of literature will disappear. That [aim] holds literature not just as a mirror, but also as a lamp, the task of which is to spread light.

Indeed, the ancient literature of India supports idealism. We, too, must nurture a respect for ideals. Yes, reality must be intermingled with it so that we don't stray far from the truth.

(Premchand 1985a, 30)

Here, Premchand qualifies the aim of literature. It is not just a mirror, but a light, something that reflects reality while also illuminating its hidden potential, which is the truth that the ancient literature of India also reveals. In this way, Premchand situates idealistic realism—the blending of ideals with reality—within a specifically ancient Indian tradition. For Premchand, it is to the ideals expressed by literature of this golden era that the modern Hindi short story must aspire. As he describes at the beginning of “The Art of the Story,” the purpose of ancient stories, such as those included in the *Mahabharata*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Jataka Tales*, was not entertainment based, but rather to convey knowledge and philosophical truths. This literary function was lost, however, following the rise of stories of the Middle Ages such as the *Baitāl Paccīsī*, the *Bāg-o-bahār*, and the *Sahasra-Rajanī-Caritra*.¹⁷ These stories did not convey moral or religious truths or encourage reform, but rather were interested chiefly in entertainment (*ras hī kī pradhānata hai*). It was to these stories that Premchand refers to in the first epigraph to this chapter, where he calls for an idealistic realist literature that moves away from the “magical adventures (*tilimatī kahāniyan*), ghost stories (*bhūt-prem kī kathā*) and romances (*prem-viyog ke akhyān*)” that were in popular circulation in the period immediately preceding the social reformist literary project of his modern age. Premchand attributed the predominance of these fantastical stories to the time period: “This was the period of Middle Age poetry and drama; little attention was given towards prose narrative. [...] Writers became inclined towards prose again in the nineteenth century, and since then their particular interest (*mahatva*) has been in educational (*sabhya*) literature” (ibid., 26-27; see also 1985e, 1-8).¹⁸ Thus, only now was modern Hindi ripe for realizing the idealistic realist social function of literature.

By emphasizing the idealistic realism of the modern short story and its roots in ancient Indian tradition, Premchand confirms the Hindi literary history that Dwivedi and Shukla traced, which reached back to the Hindu past and viewed the Muslim era as a period of literary decline. This is not to argue that Premchand deliberately sought to separate modern Hindi literature from its close entanglements with Urdu language and culture. Quite the opposite, he wrote in both the Devanagari and Nastaliq scripts and was a firm adherent of the Hindustani literary and linguistic

¹⁷ The *Baitāl Paccīsī* is a collection of twenty-four stories framed within a larger narrative and was compiled in Sanskrit in the 11th century. It is about the adventures of the King Vikramaditya and his efforts to capture a vampire spirit who animated dead bodies. The *Bag-o-Bahar* is a Persian collection of stories recorded in the 13th century that recounts the tale of King Azad who seeks advice from the fantastical stories of four dervishes that he comes upon in a cemetery. The *Sahasra-Rajanī-Caritra* refers to the Persian classic *One Thousand and One Nights*, compiled sometime around the 8th century (?).

¹⁸ “मध्यकाल काव्य और नाटक-रचना का काल था; आख्यायिकाओं की ओर बहुत कम ध्यान दिया गया। [...] उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी में फिर आख्यायिकाओं की ओर साहित्यकारों की प्रवृत्ति हुई, और तभी से सभ्य साहित्य में इनका विशेष महत्व है।”

universe to which both Hindi and Urdu belonged.¹⁹ Rather, what I want to point out, here, is the ways in which Premchand's social reformist literary views coincided with Dwivedi's and Shukla's already circulating ideas of Hindi literariness. For Premchand, like for Dwivedi and Shukla, the immediate past was filled with literature that was too fantastical to have any aim or connection to life, and its poets were tainted by their individualism, selfish desires, and focus on self-fulfillment (1985e, 6-7). Furthermore, like them, he argues that due to the lack of recognition and responsibility a writer currently bears in India, "India is still in the Middle Ages" (ibid., 20).²⁰ In these ways, Premchand's emphasis on the present and its connection to the ancient rather than immediate past confirms the nationalist literary history that Dwivedi and Shukla put forth, maintaining a continuity with the literature-community nexus that these earlier writers set up.

But Premchand also expanded on their views by reframing them in the language of humanism: his literary endeavors elevated traditional and community-based values in the name of a shared understanding of human nature rather than religious or linguistic connection. Thus, Premchand's literary humanism allowed him to broaden the narrowed understanding of community in which Dwivedi and Shukla invested, while simultaneously maintaining the Hindi-Hindu nationalist narrative of progress they had established.²¹ Premchand also widened the scope of Hindi literature to address the relationship between the nation and the world by placing the Hindi short story in dialogue with both contemporary conditions in India, as well as with debates on the short story genre in Europe and America.²²

Premchand's extensive work on the short story was unmatched in the Hindi literary world of his time. Thus, although the earliest Hindi short stories took shape in Dwivedi's journal *Saraswati*, it was with Premchand (who also published some of his early stories in *Saraswati*) that the genre crystallized. He wrote innumerable stories, and published them in literary journals like *Saraswati*, as well as more popular and political ones like *Chand*. As a writer, critic, and activist, Premchand's short stories stood at the intersection of several contrasting strands of literary debate in the mid-1930s. His commitment to social change enabled his stories to straddle the literary-popular divide; in redefining literariness as the quality of the short story that awakens and inspires the ordinary populace, Premchand emphasized the accessibility of literature and its

¹⁹ Premchand's views on the relationships between Hindi and Urdu were not consistent. While he firmly promoted the PWA stance that Hindustani was the language of both Hindu and Urdu speakers, he also at times viewed the two languages as separate cultural universes. See, for example, Premchand's essays on Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani and on Hindi as a national language in Premchand 1985d. For a brief discussion of some of Premchand's views on the question of language see Faruqi 2001, 1 fn.; and Coppola 1974.

²⁰ "...हिन्दुस्तान अभी मध्य-युग की अवस्था में पड़ा है।"

²¹ Mody (2008) demonstrates that Dwivedi both broadened and narrowed ideas of community and nation through his literary activities. On the one hand, he held that "the usefulness of literary knowledge, though deemed appropriate for the entire population of the country [...] was determined by the needs and concerns of only a small sector of the population, a Hindu middle class elite comprised largely of men active in the literary-nationalist public spheres of the Hindi belt" (225). On the other hand, he published the work of Hindi writers such as Guleri, who "tested Dwivedi's limits" concerning community norms through experimentations with language and content (227).

²² The blending of ideals with realism that Premchand advocates is something that Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985, especially Chapter 4) also locates in the difference between Indian literature (in her case, nineteenth century novels) and English literature. For her, Indian realism, takes shape in particular through depictions of love and courtship, where women characters—usually widows or prostitutes—face real social constraints while trying to attain ideal, modern love.

ability to appeal to the masses.²³ In this way, his progressivist worldview (marked by idealistic realism) brought an element of political materialism to Dwivedi's and Shukla's figure of the lofty critic, while simultaneously maintaining their adherence to the rootedness of modern Hindi literature in an ancient Indian past.

Conversely, Premchand also expanded the linguistic registers of what Dwivedi and Shukla considered modern Hindi to advocate for the currency of Hindustani, which coincided with both his Gandhian and his progressivist principles. Even before inaugurating the All India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) in 1936, Premchand translated the PWA Manifesto in 1935 in his journal *Hams*, which committed PWA members "to propagate the acceptance of Hindustani as the national language and Indo-Roman as the national script" (Premchand 1935 quoted in Coppola 1974, 9). It was thus Premchand who filtered the London-based theorizations of what the PWA sought to accomplish by translating and transforming its visions and literary enterprises to suit the needs and conditions of the Hindi-speaking community, as well as the Indian nation. For example, Premchand added a clause to the London Manifesto that highlighted the critical endeavor of the PWA to test tradition through reason in order to produce "the strength of unity and integration, [for] that is what we call Progressive" (ibid., 8). This clause flags Premchand's effort to bring together diverse views not just on literature, but also language, religion, caste, class, and nation. While many Progressive writers were criticized for being too radical, and their writing too focused on sex and pornography (Ali 1974; Coppola 1974; Gopal 2005; Mufti 2000, 2007), Premchand's work thus rooted progressivist concepts within a more mainstream understanding of literature. He created a middle ground where, at least momentarily, an intermingling between the more conservative strands of Hindi literary production and the Urdu, English, and more radical strands of PWA literary production could take place.

²³ On Premchand's view, a key characteristic of the short story is its entertainment value (*manorañjan aur mānsik tṛpti*), which is why this genre so successfully reached so many ordinary readers:

उसका पहला ही वाक्य मन को आकर्षित कर ले और अंत तक उसे मुग्ध किए रहे...

The very first sentence [of a story] should attract one's mind and charm it until the very end...

(Premchand 1985c, 36)

But because this entertainment value was intertwined with and expressed through the lens of idealistic realism, the short story differed from the tales of the Middle Ages, which I touched on above. The unique feature of the short story that distinguished it from both the novel and older storytelling traditions was this combination of entertainment value and didacticism, which made the form both accessible and functional.

Premchand's relationship with his wife Shivrani Devi (d. 1976) also evidences the ways in which Premchand's literary work straddled the realms of the literary and the popular. Shivrani (1991) recounts Premchand's deliberate social-reformist, progressive choice to marry her after she had already been widowed and then trained her to read and write. Taking cue from her husband's work, Shivrani embarked on her own literary career by publishing in *Chand*. In her memoir about her life with Premchand, she writes about her struggles to produce both activist-oriented and "literary" writing of the quality of Premchand, while also remaining committed to her duties as a mother and wife, as well as her work for the Indian National Congress and the Independence Movement. Throughout the text, she raises questions about the relationship between the function of writing and political action, demonstrating the conflicting binds she experienced as a woman compared to her husband. From Shivrani's perspective, her writing was necessarily less literary and more popular than Premchand's given her other responsibilities as a woman and an activist, as well as her lack of formal education and writing experience. But Premchand encouraged Shivrani's work, valuing its contribution to the development of both society and literature (Mani 2010).

This middle ground enabled Premchand to remain a primary influence within modern Hindi literature, while the PWA itself rapidly disintegrated and was marginalized by subsequent literary trends. If the realism of most PWA writers was too obscene for the times, Premchand's idealistic realism—expressed through his depictions of tropes of the feminine ideal—was less radical and more connected to already existing notions of Indian tradition and propriety. Based on this grounding in Indian reality and its portrayal through the Hindi short story, *nayi kahani* writers took up the genre to tussle with the changing conditions of the new nation and its new citizen-subjects. These writers traced their literary project to Premchand, locating in his work the roots of the man-woman relationships that comprise post-Independence reality and its aspirations. But as I demonstrate in the second part of this dissertation, the *nayi kahani* writers employed Premchand's portrayals of tropes of the feminine ideal in significantly different ways. For example, Premchand's characters Mulia and Anandi are entirely antithetical characters to the ideal goodwives portrayed in Mohan Rakesh's and Mannu Bhandari's stories. Manorama, in Rakesh's "Suhāginain" (1961), and Darshana, in Bhandari's "Tīn Nigāhon kī ek Tasvīr" (1958)—unlike Mulia and Anandi—cannot fulfill their roles as ideal wives despite their best efforts, for they are at each moment confronted by their own desires as women and human beings. Soma Bua, in Bhandari's short story "Akelī" (1958), provides an interesting contrast to Premchand's widow figure. This character is not a widow, but has been forsaken by her ascetic husband such that apart from his visit a few days a year, she lives a widow's life. The story recounts Soma Bua's desire to be a part of the lives of those around her and ends with her realization that she exists in a condition of utter abandonment. The poignancy of Bhandari's story lies in the portrayal of an elderly woman who, whether widowed or not, is made invisible in the same way as a widow when she has no clear affiliation to husband or son.

Another example is Rakesh's protagonist Miss Pal ("Mis Pāl," 1961), who reconfigures Premchand's portrayal of Miss Padma. Both characters are westernized, educated, economically independent, and unmarried. But unlike Miss Padma, Miss Pal has not a single lover, nor does her story resolve in motherhood. Premchand's Miss Padma makes a commitment to Prasad, who shares her belief in free love and individual choice. The two live together out of wedlock, agreeing to share everything and be faithful to one another. But in the end, Prasad is unfaithful, and Miss Padma is left pregnant and alone. Rakesh's Miss Pal, while equally invested in modern love and individual freedom, cannot sustain relationships with men or women. Thus, whereas Miss Padma's story recounts the impossible binds of non-traditional and extramarital relationships, Miss Pal's tells of the impossibilities of human communication and connection. These impossibilities are due in part to Miss Pal's Western attitudes, but also in part to the general condition of individuals in the post-Independence moment. In these ways, although the *nayi kahani* writers traced their investment in the responsibility of the writer to serve as a moral vanguard for society back to Premchand (and through Premchand, also to Dwivedi and Shukla), they emphasized that this new general condition of humanity required a new literary approach. They thus differed from Premchand in the type of humanism they portrayed, which for them no longer embodied the "literature for society's sake" philosophy that Premchand, along with Dwivedi and Shukla, extolled. As I show in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the *nayi kahani* writers portrayed this new, different type of humanism through taking up Premchand's tropes of the feminine ideal and renewing them to embody a break from the traditional norms and social

circumstances of the immediate past—a break they saw as necessary for depicting the transitional turmoil of the post-Independence moment and addressed most suitably by the short story form.

Tamil Newness and the New Woman

It was the *Manikkoti* writers—and Pudumaipittian in particular—who gave definitive shape to the Tamil short story in a manner similar to what Premchand achieved in the Hindi sphere during the same period. C.S. Chellappa, whose work on the short story I discuss in the following chapter, belonged to the *Manikkoti* writers circle, and his post-Independence endeavors to revive modern Tamil literature and criticism also reinvigorated the *Manikkoti* vision. In this section, I examine the antecedents to and emergence of the *Manikkoti* short story movement, demonstrating how these writers' work was situated within a Brahmin-controlled publishing sphere that positioned itself in support of an Indianist/Hindu nationalism and in opposition to the Dravidianist and Non-Brahmin political projects based on Tamil ethnic identity and secular religiosity. The *Manikkoti* writers' discussions of literariness were, not surprisingly, intimately connected with this Indianist/Hindu worldview. As I will show below, this worldview was reflected in their theorizations of the Tamil short story as a break from social reformist ideology and the glorified ancient Dravidian past. In this way, the short story form itself embodied the *Manikkoti* writers' dismissal of Dravidianist, social reformist, and pure Tamil writing as non-literary, while expressing instead an emphasis on the aesthetic function of literature. These writers conveyed this new aesthetic literariness through the short story's use of ordinary spoken language to portray tropes of ideal femininity. It was these tropes, in turn, that provided insights into the uncertainties and turmoil that human beings experienced. However, as I will argue below, the particular form of literary humanism that the *Manikkoti* writers espoused, while universalist in scope, defined the boundaries of the Tamil Brahmin community, setting it apart from the separatist project of Tamil linguistic and cultural nationalism.

Prior to the *Manikkoti* movement, the Tamil short story was a little explored genre. It was thus the novel, not the short story, that dominated the rapidly growing early twentieth century Tamil publishing sphere. Between 1880-1915—what Kennedy (1980) calls the “period of the novel”—many of the first Tamil novels were serialized in the numerous literary journals emerging at the time. These were explicitly social reformist in nature, directed towards enhancing education for women, exposing the dangers of prostitution, and extolling duties of the goodwife. The tropes of the feminine ideal central to these novels departed from Tamil revivalist representations of *Tamilttay* and instead aimed to express the modernity and progressive ideals of the Tamil community (see Ananta Raman 2000, Blackburn 1998, Ebeling 2010, Subramanyam 1961).

Following in this lineage, V.V.S. Iyer (1881-1925), known as the father of the Tamil short story, undertook various literary and political publishing endeavors in the early twentieth century that would position the short story as the pre-eminent genre of modern Tamil.²⁴ Iyer's stories

²⁴ Iyer's politics were radicalized through his interactions with the revolutionary V.D. Sarvarkar (1883-1966) while he was studying law in London. Throughout his life, Iyer remained a vehement supporter of the Hindutva politics and violent resistance tactics that Sarvarkar promoted.

and essays focused on the *des hitaisi*, or patriot, figure that Guleri—whom I mentioned above—portrayed in Hindi during the same period. Iyer published his first short story collection *Manḱaiyarkkaraciyiṅ Kātal Mutaliya Kataikal* [Mankaiyarkkaraci’s Love and Other Stories] in 1917, in which many stories depicted the unrequited or tragic love between men and women, often sacrificed in favor of a love and duty towards the nation. In addition, Iyer was the first to write critical essays in Tamil, in which he theorized modern poetics and the short story genre. Iyer was the first to coin the word *maṛumalarcci*, or renaissance, in his criticism, using the term to refer to both the rediscovery of classical Tamil texts, as well as efforts to modernize Tamil. He also translated Tagore’s short stories from Bengali to Tamil and Tamil classics like the *Kamparāmāyaṅam* into English.²⁵ Due to these efforts, the *Manikkoti* writers recognized Iyer, together with the modern Tamil poet Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), as the forebears of their 1930s literary project.

Although Iyer was the first to write modern Tamil short stories, it was Subramania Srinivasan (1903-1969) that generated a widespread readership for the Tamil short story and modern Tamil literature in general. Srinivasan, known more commonly as Vasana, took over the journal *Ananta Vikatan* in 1928, a dying magazine at the time, despite being launched only two years earlier by Pudur Vaithiyana Iyer. Within a year and a half, Vasana turned the magazine around entirely, shaping it into the most widely circulating popular magazine of its time—a position *Ananta Vikatan* still holds in Tamil Nadu.²⁶ R.A. Padmanabhan, who joined Vasana’s editorial board in 1933, recalls that “Vasana wasn’t just a great administrator; he was a well-informed writer, and a skillful editor, too” (2003, 82).²⁷ According to Padmanabhan, Vasana revolutionized the Tamil journal publishing industry by repudiating the old, and valuing instead the use of comedy to cultivate readers’ pleasure. Underlying this entertainment-oriented credo (something the *Manikkoti* writers greatly criticized) was a particular nationalist politics that paid homage to *Bharat Mata* (as opposed to *Tamilṭṭay*) and placed the pleasures of the individual above all (ibid., 82). Vasana himself was an Indian nationalist and Congress supporter and sometimes used his magazine to express his polemics against the growing influence of the Dravidian movement. For example, during the height of the 1930s anti-Hindi debates, “*Ananta Vikatan* not only defended the introduction of Hindi in schools but also asked the government to introduce Sanskrit in higher classes as an optional course” (Pandian 2007, 222). Furthermore, the magazine itself was managed, edited, and written by Brahmins and directed towards a middle-class Brahmin readership (Kennedy 1980, 142). In the context of his Brahminical/

²⁵ This brief biography of Iyer is drawn mainly from Kennedy (1980, 62-95). See also Pandian (2007, 92) and Ramaswamy (1997, 200-204). Parallel to Iyer’s translations of Tagore at this time were the Hindi Tagore translations that Dwivedi commissioned in his journal *Sarasvati* (Mody 2008, 142-147).

Concurrent with Iyer’s work, was the rise of the Non-Brahmin movement and the establishment of the Justice Party (launched with the issue of the Non-Brahmin Manifesto in 1916) and Maraimalai Adigal’s (1876-1950) Pure Tamil movement (which also took off in 1916). In the context of an increasingly divided publishing sphere in the early twentieth century—one segment controlled by Dravidianist/Tamil nationalist politics and the other by a Brahminical/Indianist politics (see Arooran 1980, Pandian 2007, Ramaswamy 1997)—Iyer fell within the Brahminical/Indianist camp. He was a Congress supporting Indian nationalist, whom the Dravidian movement critiqued for his Brahminical language politics and his turn towards promoting traditional Sanskrit education.

²⁶ Vasana would later go on to become the cinema mogul who owned and ran Gemini Studio, where he produced and directed several well-known Hindi and Tamil films from the 1940s through the 60s.

²⁷ “வாசன் சிற்றந்த நிர்வாகி மட்டமல்ல; விஷயமறிந்த எழுத்தாளர்; திறன்மிக்க பத்திரிகாசிரியரும் கூட.”

Indianist politics, Vasana transformed modern Tamil literary production by pinpointing the genre of modern Tamil humor that no journal prior to *Vikatan* had developed and upon which he could capitalize. Vasana did so by inaugurating new sections such as “Vikatan Talk” (*vikaṭan pēccu*), “Small Amusements” (*cinnañciṟu tamāṣ*), “Women’s Talk” (*peṇ molikaḷ*), and “Readers’ Comedies” (*nēyarkaḷ vikaṭam*) for readers to send in their own humorous experiences (Padmanabhan 2003, 83). In addition, he installed several writers to publish comedic columns, essays, and fiction in each issue. One such writer, R. Krishnamurthy (1899-1954), better known as “Kalki,” instantly made a name for both himself and the magazine.

Kalki, hailed as a great modernizer of the Tamil language (Ramaiah 1980 [1969-1971], 73), mainly wrote short stories and critical essays in his early years at *Ananta Vikatan*. Later in his career, he went on to write several well-known and still widely read historical novels. On the one hand, Kalki was influenced by the style of intellectuals like the editor and Saivite scholar Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaram (1883-1953), who pioneered modern Tamil journalistic writing. This style was relatively simple—Kalyanasundaram’s sentences were “short and effective, forceful and living” (Meenakshisundaram 1958, 17)—and un-Sanskritized. But also, Kalyanasundaram’s writing differed from spoken Tamil, evoking instead the written style of classical Tamil texts. Kalyanasundaram was an early leader of the Dravidian movement, and his style would later surface in the oratory of Dravidian leaders of the 1950s such as C.N. Annadurai (1909-1969) and M. Karunanidhi (1924-) (Bate 2010, 34-35). Kalki took from Kalyanasundaram an investment in developing a simple, pure Tamil, but he departed from Kalyanasundaram’s Dravidian politics. Instead Kalki maintained a lifelong adherence to Congress politics and Gandhian principles. In line with this thought, he rigidly professed a didactic vision for modern Tamil literature, demonstrating through his work how good Tamil literature instills in readers a strong sense of what is right, utopian, and essentially Indian (Kennedy 1980, 103-148).

Kalki joined the *Vikatan* editorial board in 1932, just one year before T.S. Chokalingam (1899-1963), K. Srinivasan (1904-2001), and V. Ramaswamy Iyengar (better known as Va.Ra., 1889-1951) launched their journal *Manikkoti*. The *Manikkoti* editors shared Kalki’s Gandhian vision and Indianist politics. All four had worked for other Congress-espousing nationalist newspapers and magazines before taking on more literary endeavors, and all four believed in the integral role of literature in enabling social change. But as B.S. Ramaiah (1905-1983) recounts in his memoir about the *Manikkoti* era, the *Manikkoti* writers eschewed the didactic function of literature that Kalki articulated, as well as the entertainment-based comedy fiction *Ananta Vikatan* produced.²⁸ It was for this reason that Va.Ra., the primary architect behind the formation of *Manikkoti*, introduced Chockalingam and Srinivasan to Iyer’s short story writing and Bharati’s poetry (both of whom he had met while living in Pondicherry) and enlisted them in helping him publish a magazine that would use literature not as entertainment or instruction, but “as a means to awaken the desire for freedom in the reader” (Kennedy 1980, 126). They quickly recruited Ramaiah in order to fulfill this project, and in 1935 turned its editorship over to him.

²⁸ Ramaiah’s memoir *Manikkoṭi Kālam* [The Era of Manikkoti] was serialized from 1969-1971 in the journal *Deepam* and then published as a book in 1980. Ramaiah’s account of the rise of the Tamil short story caps a two-decade long endeavor by C.S. Chellappa—his fellow *Manikkoti* short story writer and critic—to revive and theorize the Tamil short story in the post-Independence moment through criticism, short story writing, and the publication of his own journal *Eḷuttu*. I discuss Chellappa’s work in the following chapter.

Ramaiah was largely responsible for transforming *Manikkoti* into the short story literary journal it is remembered as today—one that repudiated entertainment-based and didactic literature and enabled the elevation of literary taste. In his memoir, Ramaiah chronicles a series of events that led the *Manikkoti* writers to take this stance, recounting that the ideological differences between Kalki and the *Manikkoti* writers resulted in the solidification of two literary camps: Kalki and the other *Ananta Vikatan* writers formed a literary circle around an emphasis on the social function of literature, as well as its historical and entertainment values. Conversely, the *Manikkoti* writers positioned themselves on the side of literature’s aesthetic function in society, which brought to the fore the new conditions of modern Tamil existence.²⁹ One important divisive event was a short story contest—the very first of its kind—instituted in *Ananta Vikatan* in 1933 (the same year that *Manikkoti* was launched), of which Kalki was a judge. Ramaiah was a contestant, and although several writers thought his short story “Malarum Maṇamum” [Flower and Fragrance] should have won, Kalki gave it third prize. Ramaiah dwells little on his involvement in the contest, describing it as an admirable attempt to attract readers who read magazines for political reasons towards not just literature, but the short story genre in particular (Ramaiah 1980, 4). But it was this story that prompted the *Manikkoti* editors to recruit Ramaiah to join their more literary project, which they felt did not mesh well with the lighter, more moralistic stories Kalki preferred. The content of Ramaiah’s short story is telling in and of itself—whereas the winning short story was about the happy unification of a couple after overcoming several obstacles, Ramaiah’s story was about a widow who, when she finally remarries, experiences none of the joy she expected (Chellappa 1974 [1964-1969]).³⁰ In hailing Ramaiah’s story over Kalki’s preference, the *Manikkoti* writers thus also articulated their investment in those particular literary representations of the feminine ideal that eschewed social reform.

But Kalki on the other hand, wrote and encouraged the publication of comedic essays and fiction suitable for the masses, whether or not they were educated. This preference coincided with Vasana’s goals for *Ananta Vikatan* to increase its circulation among the Tamil populace. Vasana was aware of the reach of nationalist political papers such as *Cutantira Caṅku* [The Conch of Independence] and *The Hindu*, and made deliberate efforts to build a similarly broad readership for his amusement-focused magazine. He travelled across Tamil Nadu selling subscriptions in smaller towns outside Madras to achieve this end. Thus, from the *Manikkoti* writers’ perspective, the sole motivation driving *Ananta Vikatan* was an effort to increase sales: “In those days the goal to publish the quality of writing that the majority of the people would read drove *Ananta Vikatan*. Today too, it continues to be run [by it]. That goal was clear in

²⁹ Several of the main writers who belonged to the *Manikkoti* movement include: Va.Ra., Chockalingam, and Srinivasan—who were the founders; B.S. Ramaiah, who took over the journal in 1935; Putumaipittan and R. Shanmugasundaram, who were the only two Non-Brahmins in the movement; C.S. Chellappa, N. Piccamurti, Mowni, Chitti, K.N. Subramanian, Chidambara Subramanian, and K.P. Rajagopalan (see Kennedy 1980, Ramaiah 1980, and Padmanabhan 2003). Chellappa (1974, 16) records that the main writers belonging to Kalki’s camp include: Rali, Na. Ramasami (known as Thumilan), and Mahadevan (known as Devan).

³⁰ In the 1960s, C.S. Chellappa (1974) recounts this short story contest, detailing the differences between Kalki’s first prize short story and Ramaiah’s. For Chellappa, it is Ramaiah’s story that embodies the aesthetic qualities of literary Tamil short story writing. Based on this discussion, Chellappa re-initiates the effort to theorize and produce post-Independence Tamil short stories. I discuss Chellappa’s effort in the following chapter.

Vasan's mind" (Ramaiah 1980, 202).³¹ The *Manikkoti* writers viewed the magazine's short story contest as part of this endeavor (ibid., 200-222).

But, *Manikkoti* was different:

“மணிக்கொடி” வாரப் பதிப்பாகவும், மாதமிருமுறை கதைப்பதிப்பாகவும் வெளிவந்த வெறும் தமிழ்ப் பத்திரிகை மட்டுமல்ல. அது ஒரு இயக்கம். தமிழ் நாட்டில் சமூக அரசியல் வாழ்வில் மக்கள் உள்ளங்களில் புதிய எழுச்சியைத் தூண்டிவிடுதல், மக்களின் இலக்கியச் சுவையை உயர்த்துதல் என்ற குறிகோள்களுடன் தொடங்கிய இயக்கம்.

Even though *Manikkoti* was a weekly magazine and then a bi-monthly short story magazine, it wasn't just a Tamil magazine. It was a movement. It was a movement within the social and political life of Tamil Nadu launched with the aim of inciting a new awakening in people's hearts, of elevating people's literary tastes.

(Ramaiah 1980, ix)

The *Manikkoti* writers, thus, based their magazine on raising literary awareness, something more difficult, more elevated, and more important than entertaining the masses (ibid., 203-204). It was in this sense that the *Manikkoti* writer Ku.Pa. Rajagopalan defined literature in his 1934 essay in the journal as the “filtered out higher qualities of life” (translated in the second epigraph to this chapter), something that did not coincide with Kalki's “literature for society's sake” approach. Thus, while both Kalki's camp and the *Manikkoti* camp endorsed Gandhian ideals, the *Manikkoti* writers viewed literature's purpose not as a rallying call for the masses, but rather as an inspirational sound rising from within the individual (ibid., 1).³²

However, the *Manikkoti* project, while invested in the rights of individuals, could not align with the Self-Respect movement's championing of rights. Ramaiah gives two reasons for this. I quote Ramaiah's account at length here because it helps parse out the interconnections between literariness, Brahmin-ness, and nationalism that the *Manikkoti* movement congealed in the 1930s Tamil context:

தமிழ் நாட்டில் மனித புரட்சி ஈ.வெ. ராமசாமி நாயக்கரின் சுயமரியாதை இயக்கமாக உருவெடுத்தது, சாதி வேற்றுமையை ஒழிப்பதுதான் அவருடைய இயக்கத்தின் முக்கியத் திட்டம். இயக்கத்தை அவர் நடத்திய முறை பாமர மக்களிடையே நல்ல ஆதரவு பெற்றது. ஆனால் பிராமணர்கள் அல்லாத படித்தவர்கள்கூட அவருடைய இயக்கத்தை அதன் முக்கிய நோக்கத்துக்காக வெளிப்படையாக ஆதரிக்க முன்வரவில்லை. அதற்கு இரண்டு காரணங்கள்.

³¹ “பெருவாரியான மக்கள் படிக்கும் தரத்து எழுத்தைத்தான் வெளியிடுவது என்ற கொள்கையில்தான் ஆனந்த விகடன் அன்றும் நடத்தப்பட்டது. இன்றும் நடந்துவருகிறது. வாசன் மனத்தில் அந்தக் கொள்கை தெளிவாக இருந்தது.”

³² Interestingly, Ramaiah compares this internal call to the whistle of the rice pot: Just as a housewife drops everything to cook the rice when the pot whistles to indicate the water is ready, Gandhi's call arose within each individual. It is this sound, says Ramaiah, that *Manikkoti* attempted to sustain and enhance within each reader through literature (1-2). The use of imagery of the home and the figure of the housewife to express the literary internalization and domestication of activism was integral to the themes and political worldview of the *Manikkoti* writers, as I will demonstrate below.

ஒன்று: நாயக்கரின் எழுத்திலும் பேச்சிலும் இருந்த சுவைக்குறைவு அல்லது தரக்குறைவு. [...]

இரண்டு: படித்த பிராமணரல்லாதார் புதிய புரட்சியைப் பயன்படுத்தி அரசியல் லாபம் அடைய வழி வகுத்துக் கொண்டார்கள். ஜஸ்டிஸ் கட்சி பிறந்தது. கட்சியில் செல்வாக்குப் பெற்றிருந்தவர்கள் ராமசாமி நாயக்கரின் சுயமரியாதை இயக்கத்தை கட்சியின் ஒரு கிளை இயக்கமாக மாற்றிக் கொண்டார்கள். ஜஸ்டிஸ் கட்சி நாட்டின் விடுதலை இயக்கத்திற்கு முட்டுக்கட்டையாக அன்னிய ஆதிக்கத்தைத் தாங்கி நின்றது. [...]

“மணிக்கொடி” பத்திரிக்கையின் சமூகக் கொள்கையும் எல்லாரும் ஓர் நிறை, எல்லோரும் ஓர் விலை என்பதுதான்.

In Tamil Nadu, the people’s revolution took shape as E. V. Ramasami Naicker’s Self Respect Movement. The main goal of his movement was the eradication of caste. Because of the way he conducted the movement, it received a lot of support from the masses. But even [some] educated non-Brahmins did not come forward to support his movement due to its main goal. There were two reasons for this.

One: the lack of taste or quality in Naicker’s speeches and writing. [...]

Two: educated Non-Brahmins used the new revolution to pave the way for receiving political benefits. The Justice Party was born. Those who had influence in the party transformed Naicker’s Self Respect movement into a branch of the party. The Justice Party stood apart from the nationalist movement, as a hinderance wielding unpatriotic [*anniya*] power.

The *Manikkoti* group’s stance was [the same as Gandhi’s]: “everyone stands together, everyone is of the same worth.”

(Ramaiah 1980, 68-69)

Ramaiah’s account reveals here that the *Manikkoti* writers (eight out of ten of whom were Brahmins and the other two upper caste, educated Non-Brahmins) saw themselves as clearly opposed to Non-Brahmin politics and the Self Respect movement. This was not only because of the separatism the Justice Party advocated, which stood in the way of national unity and Independence, but also because of the lack of taste or quality that the Self Respect movement’s rhetoric conveyed. It was here that *Manikkoti* located the niche it would occupy: kindling the literary taste in individuals necessary for freedom. In this brief passage, Ramaiah partitions off the Self Respect and Non-Brahmin movements’ endeavors, dismissing entirely their literary and political worth. He defines these movements as a type of Other, an abject outside to Tamil literariness, the exclusion of which forms the underlying ground upon which Ramaiah’s further explications of Tamil literariness find articulation.³³ The memoir’s discussions on literariness thus revolve instead around the politics of Gandhi and Bharati and are oriented solely towards the differences between *Manikkoti* and the *Ananta Vikatan* writers, both of which had similar social origins and political goals. Non-Brahmin and Self-Respect literary endeavors, on the

³³ Butler demonstrates how “the forming of a subject” takes place through a process of othering, or in other words, “through a repudiation which produces a domain of abjection, a repudiation without which the subject cannot emerge. This is a repudiation which creates the valence of ‘abjection’ and its status for the subject as a threatening spectre” (1993, 3). Scholarship in the field of postcolonial studies has also interrogated the ways in which an other functions as a backdrop to the construction of the self. See, for example: Bhabha 1994 and Fanon 1967.

other hand, did not necessitate response due to their lack of literary taste and the unpatriotic politics they espoused.

The *Manikkoti* writers also defined themselves against the Pure Tamil Movement and other Dravidianist attempts to eliminate foreign words and classicize both the spoken and written language and literature. In 1933, the same year as both the inception of *Manikkoti* and the first *Ananta Vikatan* short story contest, the *Tamiḷ Anpar Mānaṭu*—or Tamil Devotees Conference—took place in Madras. It was organized to discuss the creation of new texts and terms in Tamil and attended by many great Tamil figures of the period.³⁴ Some were classicists such as U.V. Swaminatha Iyer and Thiru V. Kalyanasundaram; others were politicians such as the Congress activist S. Satyamurthy and the editor of the nationalist paper *Cutantira Caṅku Sangu* Subramaniam; and some were modern writers such as Kalki and Vai. Mu. Kothainayaki. The conference caused an uproar among Pure Tamil activists and Self Respect activists alike. Some Pure Tamil scholars, such as Maraimalai Adigal, had not even been invited to attend, while others broke off from the group, protesting the conciliatory stance of the attending classical Tamil scholars towards the Brahminical preference for Sanskrit (see Ramaswamy 1997, 197-198; Venkatachalapathy 2006, 146-149).

But Ramaiah, who recounts that he attended only to report on the event in the next *Manikkoti* issue, viewed the conference as expressing a fanaticism about Tamil that rigidified the language and literature, confining it within the past: “They demonstrated the wealth of our ancient literature and its special qualities. But that’s it. They didn’t say even a word about Bharatiyar, modern Tamil literature, [or] the new efforts to link the Tamil literary movement to the world literature movement [*ulaka iyyakka iyakkam*]” (Ramaiah 1980, 77-78).³⁵ In his memoir, he singles out Kalki’s participation in the conference’s consecration of ancient Tamil literature (77), which to Ramaiah fell in line with Kalki’s own view: “... Their [Kalki’s camp’s] ideas of Tamil literature—even what they accepted as [Tamil literature]—was created several

³⁴ The conference was incredibly contentious—even for how it was named: “The conference was bitterly attacked in both the Dravidian movement press and in journals like *Centamiḷc Celvi*, whose spirit was neo-Shaivite and contestory classicist. It was seen as a means through which, among other things, Brahmins tried to pass themselves off as ‘devotees of Tamil,’ to corner the publishing market, and to introduce more Sanskrit words into Tamil in the name of ‘improvement.’ Is it not revealing, critics asked, that these Brahmin enthusiasts called the conference by the Sanskritic word *makānāṭu* instead of the pure Tamil *mānāṭu*?” (Ramaswamy 1997, 197-198). Ramaiah uses the word *manatu* and *makanatu* interchangeably in his memoir when he discusses the conference. But when he calls it by its title, Ramaiah uses “*tamiḷ anpar manatu*,” indicating, I would argue, his perspective that the conference was dominated by Dravidianists and classicists, both of whom he considered conservative. As I will go on to show, Ramaiah sees Kalki’s views on classical Tamil literature and its relationship to the modern as aligning with this conservative camp, even though he acknowledges Kalki’s influential role in developing modern Tamil.

³⁵ “நம்முடைய பண்டைய இலக்கியச் செல்வங்களும், அவற்றின் சிறப்புக்களும் எடுத்துக்காட்டப்பட்டன. அவ்வளவுதான். பாரதியார், தமிழில் புதிய இலக்கியம், உலக இலக்கிய இயக்கத்துடன் தமிழ் இலக்கிய இயக்கத்தை இணைக்கும் புதிய முயற்சிகள் பற்றி ஒரு சொல்கூட கூறப்படவில்லை.”

centuries before [they themselves began writing]” (71).³⁶ In the context of the Tamil linguistic nationalism exemplified by the Tamil Devotees Conference, *Manikkoti* positioned itself as a counter-movement that would develop modern Tamil literature (80). Thus, it was precisely the adherence to the past against which *Manikkoti* defined itself. Unlike the rigid view of literature that *Ananta Vikatan* writers, Pure Tamil Dravidanists, and separatist Self Respecters held, *Manikkoti* refused to engage in polemics:

அது மரபு வழி இலக்கியம், புதிய இலக்கியம் என்று பிரித்துப் பேசவில்லை.
இலக்கியத்திற்கு விளக்கம் கொடுக்கவில்லை. இலக்கணம் வகுக்கவில்லை.
அதற்குப் பதில் புதிய துறைகளில் இலக்கியத்தரமான எழுத்துக்களை
வெளியிட்டது.

[*Manikkoti*] didn't make distinctions between traditional literature and modern literature. It didn't give explanations for literature. It didn't analyze grammar. Instead it published literary writing in new genres.

(Ramaiah 1980, 74)

For *Manikkoti* writers, not making distinctions between the ancient and the modern and publishing in new genres meant bracketing ancient Tamil altogether. They celebrated instead a literature that remained close to spoken Tamil: “The very thing that comes to the mouth and is spoken is literature,” as Rajagopalan (2001, 152) writes in the 1934 *Manikkoti* essay on *marumalarcci*, or renaissance, that I quoted in the second epigraph to this chapter.³⁷ The *Manikkoti* movement thus theorized the Tamil Renaissance as a break from the past through which a new movement for modern Tamil literature could take place.

The work of the *Manikkoti* writer Cho. Vrittasalam (1906-1948) best evidences this emphasis on the newness of modern Tamil.³⁸ Vrittasalam assumed the pen name “Pudumaipittan,” or “one who is crazy for the new,” early in his career, and wrote extensively about newness in *Manikkoti* and elsewhere—the newness of the Tamil language, Tamil prose (in particular, the short story), and the modern condition of Tamil individuals. In a 1934 essay called “Tamiḷaip Paṇṇi” [About Tamil] published in *Kānti* [Gandhi]—a journal which soon thereafter merged with *Manikkoti* (Kennedy 1980, 128)—Pudumaipittan highlights the problematic elevation of Tamil as a pure maiden and a goddess by the Pure Tamil Movement.

³⁶ “...அவர்கள் தமிழ் இலக்கியம் என்று கருதியவை, ஏற்றுக்கொண்டவையாவும் அன்றைக்குப் பல நூற்றாண்டுகளுக்கு முன்பு படைக்கப்பட்டவை!”

The *Manikkoti* group's critique of Kalki's view of the past also manifested in the 1935-1936 debates these writers had with Kalki over the interpretation of Subramania Bharati's role in modern Tamil literature. While Kalki viewed Bharati's influence as restricted to the Tamil context and his greatness questionable, the *Manikkoti* writers hailed him as a *mahākavi*, or great poet, whose stature existed on a world literary scale. For them, Bharati's work exemplified truly modern Tamil, which existed at the intersection of spoken Tamil, various world literatures, and modern-day usages of Sanskrit. Kalki, on the other hand, hailed the 12th century poet Kamban, who wrote the renowned Tamil version of the Ramayana, as the progenitor of Tamil literary production (see Kennedy 1980, 96-149). Kalki's later turn towards historical fiction also reflects his views on how the Tamil past informed modern literary production.

³⁷ “வாய்க்கு வந்ததைப் பேசுவது தானே இலக்கியம்.”

³⁸ I am indebted to Lakshmi Holmstrom's (2002) analysis of Pudumaipittan's life and work for directing me towards the essays I examine below.

Such actions, he wrote, take away from the development of modern Tamil prose, a necessary tool for giving voice to the nature and innermost feelings of individuals in modern Tamil society. He thus emphasized the relationship between spoken and literary Tamil:

வசனத்திற்கு ஒரு ஸ்தானம் கொடுக்க வேண்டுமானால், நமது துருப்பிடித்த அபிப்பிராயங்களைக் கொஞ்சம் ஒதுக்கிவைக்க வேண்டும். இலக்கியத் தமிழுக்கும் பேச்சுத் தமிழுக்கும் நெடுந்தூரம் இருக்க வேண்டும் என்று நினைத்துக்கொண்டிருப்பது பெருந்தவறு. அப்படியிருந்தால் ‘மெல்லத் தமிழினிச் சாகும்’ என்பதில் சந்தேகமில்லை. இலக்கியத் தமிழுக்கும் பேச்சுத் தமிழுக்கும் ஒரு சிறு வித்தியாசந்தான். இலக்கியத் தமிழ் கிரந்திகர்த்தாவின் செளந்தர்ய உணர்ச்சியில் மெருகு போடப்பட்ட சிருஷ்டி. பேசுந் தமிழ் உள்ளத்தின் துடிதுடிப்பை அப்படியே சொல்லும் பட்டை போடாத வைரம்.

If we are to give prose the status that it deserves, then we must put away our rusted modes of thinking. It is a huge mistake to think that a distance ought to be maintained between literary Tamil and spoken Tamil. If that situation should continue, there is no doubt at all that slowly and gradually, Tamil will die.³⁹ Between literary Tamil and spoken Tamil there is only one difference. Literary Tamil is the handiwork of the creative writer, polished by his aesthetic sense. Spoken Tamil is the uncut diamond which reflects the very heartbeat just as it is. (Pudumaipittan 2002 [1934]b, 85; trans. by Holmstrom in Pudumaipittan 2002a, 227)

For Pudumaipittan, the modern Tamil writer’s material is spoken Tamil and his literary work is the polished, aestheticized product of this language transformed through his creativity. It is thus in spoken Tamil that Pudumaipittan locates the newness of prose—which is rooted in the modern everyday uses of language and not in the rusted modes of thinking that Tamil revivalists (who ranged from modern writers like Kalki to pure Tamil activists like Maraimalai Adigal) glorified. Importantly, in this essay Pudumaipittan assigns this work to the venue of journals because the pundits controlling Tamil universities have imprisoned Tamil within the past (Pudumaipittan 2002 [1934]b, 86-87; Pudumaipittan 2002a, 229). This observation points to the now determinately separate literary spheres operating in the 1930s Tamil public sphere—on the one hand a more academic endeavor supported by Tamil revivalists interested in purifying Tamil and consolidating its classical roots, and on the other a more literary endeavor supported by Tamil literary journals interested in modernizing Tamil language and literature.

Thus, Pudumaipittan joined in *Manikkoti*’s project to renew modern Tamil, becoming one of the journal’s most well-known writers, and it is in Pudumaipittan’s writing that many scholars locate the full realization of the Tamil short story form.⁴⁰ Pudumaipittan not only wrote short stories, but also theorized the genre through essays. In “*Çirukatai: Marumalarccic Kālam*” [The Short Story: The Era of Renaissance] (1946), Pudumaipittan makes a distinction between the story (*katai*) and the short story (*çiru katai*): stories, says Pudumaipittan, are

³⁹ This line recalls a famous line from one of Subramania Bharati’s poems in which he warns that “Tamil will die a slow death” if the language is cut off from interacting with world trends in modern science and learning. See Bharati 1987, 531, and Ramaswamy 1997, 52.

⁴⁰ See for example Das 1995, Varadarajan 1988, and Zvelebil 1974. I discuss this view in relation to 1950-60s Tamil short story writers and critics in the following chapter.

narratives that have always circulated in epics like the *Ramayana*. But the short story is a new genre (*turai*) that has arisen anew in all world languages.⁴¹ In the Tamil context Pudumaipittan classifies the evolution of the form through three phases: a trial period starting with Selvakesavarya Mudaliar's (1864-1924) collection of stories *Abhinava Kadaigal*; an intermediate development phase beginning with V.V.S. Iyer's publication of his collection *Mangayarkkarasi's Love and Other Stories* (1917); and a final stage through which the genre achieves literariness in the 1930s with *Manikkoti*. Pudumaipittan viewed several of the *Manikkoti* writers, such as K.P. Rajagopalan, Piccamurti, B.S. Ramaiah, Mauni, and himself, as an integral part of this new literary phase (Pudumaipittan 2002 [1946]a, 235-238).

Like the other *Manikkoti* writers, Pudumaipittan spurned the didactic and political fiction, and he viewed the short story genre, as opposed to the novel, as the most suited to destabilizing existing moralistic and conventional ways of thinking. Thus, in "Kataikal" [Short Stories] he writes, "Short stories are little windows to life. The difference between them and a novel is that a novel tries to portray life—with its many complications and turbulences—just as it is. A short story utilizes one small event, an individual issue, that's all" (Pudumaipittan 2002 [1934]a, 112).⁴² The novel operates, for Pudumaipittan, like a mirror, portraying life "just as it is." In this way, it does not contain the radical possibilities for breaking away from older traditions and conventions; for, it is too caught up in the attempt to realistically portray life (*ibid.*, 113). It is, rather, the short story—a little window into one individual's life—that articulates newness.

If the main mode of the short story was not the realism novels portrayed or the idealism that polemical fiction such as Kalki's expressed, then for Pudumaipittan the newness of the literary short story lay in the depiction of *yatārttam*, or the reality of ordinary individuals' everyday experiences. According to Pudumaipittan, those short stories that achieve literariness illuminate "the feeling of emptiness that individual nature—that is to say ordinary individual nature—experiences initially in new things" (*ibid.*, 114).⁴³ The modern individual's feeling of emptiness stood opposed to the egalitarian utopias and crusading of ideologies articulated in the didactic literature. This was because although the individual had to depend on social structures for survival, he was also confined by them and controlled by power hungry leaders. Pudumaipittan's stories thus placed the individual before society (2002 [1946]b) and expressed what he saw as the individual's *nampikkai varatci*, or drying up of hope or belief (2002 [1942], 178; Holmstrom 2002, 246). As the dominant tone of most of Pudumaipittan's stories, *nampikkai varatci* took shape as glimpses of characters' experiences of exploitation and destitution and their overwhelming feelings of loneliness and estrangement from others.

Pudumaipittan's lonely, ordinary, individual protagonist offered a different perspective to the figure of Indian woman portrayed in the activist women's writing that Self Respect journals published (Sreenivas 2003, 2008; Srilata 2003). For, Pudumaipittan's *putumaippen*, or New Woman, neither embodied the ideal wife, nor did she pave the way for social change and

⁴¹ Premchand makes this same observation in one of his three essays on the short story (Premchand 1985a, 26-27), as do Rajendra Yadav (1965) and C.S. Chellappa (1974), whose perspectives I discuss in the following chapter.

⁴² "சிறுகதை என்பது வாழ்க்கையின் சிறிய சாரளரங்கள். இதற்கும் நாவலுக்கும் வித்தியாசம் நாவல், வாழ்க்கையை அதன் பல்வேறு சிக்கல்களுடன், கொந்தளிப்புக்களுடன் அப்படியே சித்திரிக்க முயலுகிறது, சிறுகதை ஒரு சிறு சம்பவத்தை, தனித்த விஷயத்தை எடுத்து ஆளுகிறது என்பதுதான்."

⁴³ "...புதிய விஷயங்களில் முதலில் வெறுப்பு ஏற்படுவது மனித, அதாவது சாதாரண மனித இயற்கை."

equality. And if—in contrast to Self Respect writing on women’s rights and independence—domesticity and the plight of women within the home were central concerns for the *Manikkoti* writers (Kennedy 1980, 171), then Pudumaippittan pushed the limits of these themes. For example, one of his most famous but also most controversial stories “Ponṅakaram” [The Golden City], published in 1934 in *Manikkoti*, depicts the hardships of Ammalu and her family, who live in a city. Ammalu is a mill coolie and her husband, a drunkard. The story ends with Ammalu slipping off with a strange man into the darkness by the well where she collects water in order to earn money: “They both disappear into the darkness. And Ammalu has earned three quarters of a rupee. Yes. So that she can give her husband his milk kanji. You keep hollering, Chastity, chastity. *This*, ayya, is Ponnagaram [*sic*]!” (Pudumaippittan 2002b, 41; trans. by Holmstrom in Pudumaippittan 2002a, 45).⁴⁴ With this ending, Pudumaippittan pits the practicalities of survival in the city against the ideals of wifely chastity and propriety. As Kennedy recounts, “Ponṅakaram” was controversial not because it mentioned prostitution, “for this was not an unusual literary topic even in the nineteenth century, but rather, first because the prostitute should be a married woman and second because the aim of the story was not necessarily to reform the woman” (1980, 171). In fact, the story’s ending underscores the impossible constraints of womanly ideals like chastity in the face of city dwellers’ modern urban circumstances.

Another well-known yet controversial story, “Cāpa Vimōcaṇam” [Deliverance from the Curse] (1943), picks up from the ending of Ahalya’s tale in the *Ramayana*, expressing the deep loneliness and dissatisfaction of a wife. In the *Ramayana* telling, Ahalya is hailed as the ideal *sati* and goodwife, who is married to the much older sage Gautama. One day when Gautama is out, Indra, the god of the heavens, visits Ahalya disguised as Gautama and tricks her into sleeping with him. Gautama is enraged when he discovers this and curses Ahalya to become a stone until the heroic king Rama touches the stone with his foot. Many years later, Rama happens upon the stone and liberates Ahalya, and in the tale she returns to and lives happily again with Gautama. Pudumaippittan’s short story begins with the moment of Ahalya’s liberation. Rama, in his version, is a young boy when he saves Ahalya. He immediately falls at her feet when she resumes human form, wondering what kind of world would punish an innocent woman so unjustly? Ahalya returns to Gautama, but the two no longer know how to live together: Ahalya worries constantly whether her actions will cause Gautama to doubt her again, while Gautama is overcome by guilt for having cursed the good Ahalya so harshly. In order to maintain some semblance of happiness, the couple hold king Rama and his virtuous wife Sita as their hopeful ideal, living near them when possible. But Ahalya later learns that Rama—despite knowing Sita was faithful during the period she was held captive by the demon king Ravana—still subjected Sita to a trial by fire to prove her faithfulness. Rama’s hypocrisy outrages Ahalya. In the end she hardens her heart and transforms again into a stone (Pudumaippittan 2002b, 554-568; Pudumaippittan 2002a, 128-145).

Pudumaippittan’s retelling thus shattered any investment in upholding the feminine ideal, which brings nothing but despair to Ahalya and Sita in his story. He uses the figure of woman to depict instead the lack of communication between men and women, and their insecurities and

⁴⁴ “இருவரும் இருளில் மறைகிறார்கள். அம்மாளு முக்கால் ரூபாய் சம்பாதித்துவிட்டாள். ஆம், புருஷனுக்குப் பால் கஞ்சி வார்க்கத்தான்! என்னமோ, கற்பு, கற்பு என்று கதைக்கிறீர்களே! இதுதான், ஐயா, பொன்னகரம்!

alienation, which they fail to overcome. The reason for this failure is their firmly entrenched belief in the feminine ideal, which, for him, embodies the hypocritical moralism of society. But, by turning herself back into a stone, Ahalya does not advocate changing this ideal, nor does she offer a vision of different type of woman. Rather, she relinquishes her place in the human social order, retreating to a state of consciousness where she needs to neither fulfill, nor resist any expectations or ideals. “Capa Vimocanam” thus evidences Pudumaippittan’s departure from the accepted norms of his time—his New Woman fell within no ideological camp and no social project, for she was neither particularly educated nor fashionable nor activist in her intentions. Rather, she was new precisely for the way she brought to light the modern binds of individuals and evaded the various politics that constructed these binds.

In this way, despite its focus on very real social conditions, Pudumaippittan’s work was not social realist or progressivist. This is because, as A.R. Venkatachalapathy points out, his stories convey not a hope in society, but instead a vivid skepticism of it. Furthermore, as the Ahalya retelling demonstrates, Pudumaippittan often wrote fantasies and reinterpretations of literary classics, legends, and folklore, which were “deeply introspective, even philosophical to the extent that they may be called in a manner of speaking ‘stories of ideas’” (Venkatachalapathy 2006, 76-77). But also, Pudumaippittan’s stories straddled a middle ground in two important ways. One, his work was not as contemplative or experimentally stream-of-consciousness as some of his *Manikkoti* contemporaries. For example, Pudumaippittan is often juxtaposed with his colleague S. Mani Iyer (1907-1985), better known as “Mauni,” or the silent one. Mauni’s stories tended to circle around the relationship of the individual to the universal and employed concepts, such as non-dualism, which were drawn from Vedanta philosophy (the ideological foundations of which Pudumaippittan himself spurned). The reality Mauni portrayed thus used Brahminical idioms to illuminate the “poignant states of mind” of the individual within the context of man-woman relationships (Swaminathan 1997, 34). Pudumaippittan’s stories depicted the same themes, but for the most part did not employ Brahminical terminology to do so. And two, Pudumaippittan did not restrict the content of his stories to Brahmin settings and characters, like many of his *Manikkoti* colleagues, such as Mauni, did. For these reasons, when the *Manikkoti* journal went under in 1939 and its writers dispersed, Pudumaippittan continued to command a wide readership. He published indiscriminately in popular, party-affiliated, and literary journals in Madras and his work remained in the limelight throughout 1940s and into the post-Independence moment after his death. His popularity evidences Pudumaippittan’s ability to speak across the 1930s Brahmin/Non-Brahmin divide while remaining unquestionably within the Brahminical production of modern Tamil literariness that *Manikkoti* espoused in this late colonial moment.

Self-consciously following in Pudumaippittan’s lineage, Tamil writers of the 1950-60s again took up the tropes, such as Ahalya and Sita, that Pudumaippittan engaged, reconsidering the feminine ideals these tropes represented. For example, Jeyakanthan explicitly noted Pudumaippittan’s influence, claiming Pudumaippittan as his mentor (Jeyakanthan 1980, 46; Kennedy 1980, 159). In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how Jeyakanthan reworks Ahalya’s tale differently than Pudumaippittan, in his case emphasizing not Ahalya’s loneliness, but her maturity and self-worth as an experienced woman. Chapter 5 examines how Chudamani not just critiques the self-sacrificing version of Sita, but also moves away from this understanding, envisioning

instead a more self-decisive and justice-oriented sense of feminine individuality. If in Pudumaipittan's depictions, these tropes were held back by their *nampikkai viratci*, or drying up of hope, in post-Independence *cirukatai* writers' work, they boldly expressed new visions for the future.

One Humanism is Not Like the Other

Pudumaippittan, in a manner similar to Premchand, rooted modern Tamil literariness within more mainstream debates about the function of literature. For him, as for the other *Manikkoti* writers, literariness was constituted by an "amalgam of the higher qualities filtered out of life" (Rajagopalan 2001, 153; see epigraph to this chapter) that took shape through the portrayal of the internal workings of the individual and his perception of the world around him. Like them, he felt that no genre was better suited to articulating such literariness than the short story, which operated as a window focusing narrowly on singular individuals, instances, and events. But if the content of the *Manikkoti* writers' stories appeared too Brahminical and apolitical, Pudumaippittan recontextualized their theorizations of literariness within broader public sphere debates about the individual's condition with regard to the social ills of the day. This was because whereas the other *Manikkoti* writers tended to portray Brahmin characters and express the individual's modern condition using Vedantic terms, Pudumaippittan's characters were largely lower middle class or poor and his philosophizing articulated a predominantly atheist orientation. The new literary awakening he sought to incite lay not in some notion of the divine, some political ideology, or some greater aesthetic sensibility. Rather, it existed within the individual and his keen sense of *nampikai varatci*, or loss of belief and hope, a feeling that, for Pudumaipittan, all modern Tamilians shared.

It is in the individual's drying up of hope that Pudumaippittan locates both literary humanism, as well as the *yatarattam*, or reality, that short stories portray, whether the events they examine are based in modern, ancient, or make-believe settings. For him, reality is the new, but recognizable, estranged human condition that short stories illuminate. Furthermore, that readers perceive this condition enables them to tap into a common understanding of reality, one that connects them to each other. This is why Pudumaippittan insists that individuals detach from the restrictions and constraints of society to reconnect as part of the human community. He writes:

கூட்டத்தின் முதல் மனிதன். [...] உண்மையைக் காண முயலும் தனிமனிதன் சமூகத்தின் விதிவிலக்கு; வாழ்க்கையின் பலிபீடம். உண்மை, மண்ணுலகத்தின் புழுதி படியாது இருக்கும்வரை அது மனித வர்க்கத்தின் உயிர் வாழ்வுக்கு தடை. சமூகம் மனிதக் கூட்டத்தின் பிணிப்பு.

The individual comes before the group [*kūṭṭam*]. [...] The individual who tries to see the truth is an exception to society; he is life's sacrificial altar. Until truth ceases to be covered by the dust of the world, it is an obstacle to the survival of the human race [*manita varkkam*]. Society is a constraint to the gathering [*kūṭṭam*] of men.

(Pudumaipittan 2002[1946]b, 223-224)

Pudumaippittan thus emphasized that by brushing off the tethers of society—the dust that covers truth—each truth-seeking individual gathers to form an alliance that overcomes the constraints of society. Through this emphasis on the individual, Pudumaippittan made a break with social reformist and Dravidian conceptualizations of community, establishing instead a literary renaissance unfettered by the past.

The newness of the Tamil short story coincided with a world literary movement, the interactions with which, for Pudumaippittan, were crucial to shaping modern Tamil literature. Translation into Tamil from other modern literatures was thus key. If, as Stuart Blackburn (2003) argues, translation played a crucial role in the shaping of a modern Tamil vernacular from its earliest stages of development, then its significance was renewed by the *Manikkoti* writers, who theorized translation strategies and published numerous short stories translated from French, Russian, and English.⁴⁵ Pudumaippittan himself translated fifty-five stories for the journal (Kennedy 1980, 167). As Ramaiah recounts, the greats of modern Tamil literature “saw a unity (*orumai*) that occurred in the construction of the literary forms of European, American, and various other languages,” and took up creating that same unity.⁴⁶ According to him, V.V.S. Iyer launched the Tamil short story genre because he was able to bring short stories from other languages into Tamil (Ramaiah 1980, 3). Pudumaippittan, too, listing various world literary influences, affirms that a primary characteristic of the short story is its unity (*onrāka irukka vēṇṭum*), something that is shared across literatures (Pudumaippittan 2002 [1946]a, 235; 2002 [1934]a, 112). That the *Manikkoti* writers attribute the development of the short story genre to world literary influences without hesitation or the inclination to indigenize its origins points not just to the historical development of the modern Tamil vernacular as against classical Tamil, but also to the dissociation the *Manikkoti* writers tried to effect between their literary project and social reformist and Dravidian ones. For these writers, it was both logical and natural that the Tamil short story comes into its own because of a world literary movement. It was the unity that this world story tradition—and the Tamil story, which belonged to it—established that enabled modern Tamil individuals to realize a sense of belonging outside the constraints of society, one that initiated them into the community of man.

Premchand, however, took a very different view. Although he, too, acknowledged world literary influences in creating the short story genre, he maintained a separation between the Hindi short story and other world story traditions:

⁴⁵ The 1937 December issue of *Manikkoti* included a long discussion on the differences between translation and adaptation of works from other literatures. Several writers participated in this discussion, including Pudumaippittan, K.P. Rajagopalan, B.S. Ramaiah, and others. Selections from this discussion are reprinted in Chitty, Ashokamitran, and Mutthukumarasami 2001, 157-159. See also Pudumaippittan 1937 and 2002a, 214-218.

⁴⁶ “ஐரோப்பாவிலும் அமெரிக்காவிலும் பல்வேறு மொழிகளிலும் இலக்கிய உருவு அமைப்பில் நேர்ந்து கொண்டிருந்த ஒருமையைக் கண்டார்கள்.”

The notion of the “unity” of the short story form has most often been attributed to Edgar Allan Poe’s concept of the “totality of effect or impression” of literary (as opposed to didactic) works (Poe 1850, 1). As I discuss in Chapter 3, *nayi kahani* writers also took up this notion in theorizing the Hindi short story, translating this concept as the *prabhāvānvati*, or unified effect, of the short story form.

...मोपासाँ, अनातोले फ्रांस, चेकाफ़ और टालस्टाय की कहानियाँ पढ़कर हमने फ्रांस और रूस से आत्मिक सम्बन्ध स्थापित कर लिया है। हमारे परिचय का क्षेत्र सागरों और द्वीपों और पहाड़ों को लाँघता हुआ फ्रांस और रूस तक विस्तृत हो गया है। हम वहाँ भी अपनी ही आत्मा का प्रकाश देखने लगते हैं। वहाँ के किसान और मज़दूर और विद्यार्थी हमें ऐसे लगते हैं, मानो उनसे हमारा घनिष्ठ परिचय हो।

Having read the stories of Maupassant, Anatole France, Chekov, and Tolstoy, we have established a spiritual connection with France and Russia. The range of our familiarity has crossed oceans and islands and mountains and extended up to France and Russia. We have begun to see the radiance of our own soul there, too. The agriculturalists and laborers and students from [these places] seem intimately close to us.

(Premchand 1985c, 44-45)

Premchand here notes that Hindi readers are, indeed, familiar with short story writing in other countries, so much so that, through these stories, they form intimate connections with the people of other countries despite vast distances. Premchand draws these connections, however, in terms of class politics, emphasizing that what binds readers across these literatures are the working class conditions in which they live and struggle; it is the agriculturalists, laborers, and students that reflect the radiance of the Hindi reader's soul. Premchand's attention to world literature thus corresponds to the literature-for-society's-sake perspective he upholds: the benefit of reading the short stories of other literatures brings to Hindi readers an awareness of their shared plight with others laboring across the world.

But juxtaposed to this shared connection is Premchand's discussion of idealistic realism, which situates the Hindi short story against foreign ones. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, while Western stories are either too realistic or too idealistic, Premchand holds that in truly literary Hindi short stories, even the most realistic portrayals of life included the glimmer of idealism—this, for him, was the very definition of the short story's literariness. Importantly, the idealism that modern Hindi literature carries forth is different from the “magical adventures, ghost tales, and romances” of the Middle Ages, linked instead to an idealism that existed in ancient Indian literature. This, he says, is something that literary short stories must strive to maintain. In this way, idealistic realism maintains individuals' proper relationship to not just any community, but specifically one that shares in the Indian past. With this turn away from world literature, Premchand thus reaches back to the nationalist constructions of the Hindi canon established by Dwivedi and Shukla.

But to Dwivedi's and Shukla's understandings of modern Hindi literariness, Premchand added an element of progressivist humanism. It was one that, rather than “giving prominence to our individual point of view,” sought to enlist readers in the PWA's vision for creating a better national society:

अतः हमारे पंथ में अहंवाद अथवा अपने व्यक्तिगत दृष्टिकोण को प्रधानता देना वह वस्तु है, जो हमें जड़ता, पतन और लापरवाही की ओर ले जाती है और ऐसी कला हमारे लिए न व्यक्तिरूप में उपयोगी है और न समुदाय-रूप में।

In other words, egotism, giving prominence to our individual point of view, is what pulls us down towards inertia, decadence and indifference, and this kind of art is useless for us, both as individuals and as a community.

(Premchand 1985e, 15; trans. by Orsini in Premchand 2004, Appendix)

Premchand's stories thus emphasized the place of individuals *within* the community. They were not "radically humanist" (Gopal 2005)—that is to say, centered wholly on the transformation of the individual—as were some of the other PWA writers' work. Rather, they remained close to the psychological and the social, emphasizing the implications of characters' actions for the present and future conditions of the community. Premchand's appeal to human connection lay in drawing readers towards their commitment to society through literature.

During this same time period, Pudumaippittan and the *Manikkoti* writers, while also invested in the human connection literary short stories established, recoiled from this type of didacticism. They defined their literary project against reified notions of community, which for them flagged the vicious fanaticism of Tamil nationalism. Literariness, in this context, took shape as an elevation of individual aesthetic sensibilities, in which the alliance of awakened souls resided in a realm free from polemics. Whereas Premchand maintained a separateness between the Western short story and the Hindi one, Pudumaippittan and the *Manikkoti* writers insisted upon the necessity of translation, which was an important tool for severing modern Tamil literature from the past. For them, translation brought the Tamil short story in proximity to Western literature and propped up their project of aesthetic awakening. In this way, their literary views stood in direct contrast to Premchand's idealistic realism, which he forged through theorizing the Hindi short story as a reworking of an ancient Indian tradition of idealism to address the modern context. These differing emphases on the role of translation and other world story traditions in shaping late colonial understandings of Hindi and Tamil literature highlight the non-aligning modern communities that Hindi and Tamil writers sought to fashion in this moment—the former based on placing the interests of the community before those of the individual, and the latter based on elevating individual experience above community values and traditions.

However, it is also important to note that both literatures expressed non-aligning forms of humanism through representations of the very same tropes of the feminine ideal. As I have demonstrated above, Premchand's short stories employed figures such as the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife to express the ideals of the Indian community. Alternatively, Pudumaippittan's stories used these figures to envision individuals detached from the rigidities of Tamil society. I have argued that on the one hand, the juxtaposition of these tropes in the Hindi and Tamil contexts reveals the divergent types of literary and political humanism these regional literatures espoused. For, the idealistically real figure of Indian woman through which Premchand developed the short story embodied a sense of the communal past that the newness of Pudumaippittan's new woman refused to bear. But on the other hand, my comparison also illuminates that in both these literary spheres these tropes had already begun to gain currency as pan-Indian symbols for expressing modern understandings of selfhood and communal belonging in the late colonial period. In Premchand's and Pudumaippittan's stories lie the nascent articulations of the question of Indian women's guardianship, which I discussed in Chapter 1. As I have demonstrated, the struggles of Premchand's ideal women characters to fit

into the moulds of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the good wife evoke the conflict between tradition and modernity, installing these figures as symbols of the tensions and reconciliations between individual and community desires. Similarly, Pudumaippittan's women characters mobilize these tropes to interrogate the terms on which individuals' actions should be evaluated, pitting community norms for widows, prostitutes, virgins, and goodwives against the travails of modern life. These already universally recognizable tropes and the tensions between individual and community that they embodied would continue to haunt Hindi and Tamil short story writers, realigning under the auspices of the post-Independence nation in new ways.

Part II
The Short Story and the Making of Indian Subjects

Chapter 3

Parallel and Separate Worlds: How Yadav and Chellappa Theorize the Short Story

कला-सर्जना, कलाकार की मानस-प्रक्रिया से ढलकर रूप लेती, इस संसार के समानान्तर स्वतन्त्र-सृष्टि ही तो है...स्वतन्त्र सृष्टि, अर्थात् निर्माण और संघटन के अपने नियमों, परम्पराओं से प्रेरित-परिचालित...कलाकार इसके लिए मिट्टी भले ही इस वस्तु-संसार से लेता हो; रूप उसका वह अपने ही स्वप्नों, स्मृतियों, आवश्यकताओं, दबावों, कुण्ठाओं और दृष्टियों के अनुरूप देता है। [...] प्रकृति और वस्तु का एक नया पक्ष, एक अनदेखा कोण, एक अपरिचित रूप खींचकर सामने रख देता है! हो सकता है यह सारा 'नयापन' पहले से ही प्रकृति और वस्तु में विद्यमान हो; लेकिन उसे वहाँ से खींचकर एक स्वतन्त्र सत्ता के रूप में सामने और सामानान्तर स्थापित कर देना, कलाकार को एक भिन्न प्रतिष्ठा और निष्ठा देता है।

An artistic creation takes shape as it spills out from an artist's mental processes, it is indeed an independent creation parallel [*sāmānāntar*] to this world...an independent creation—that is, inspired and motivated by the rules of its own structure and assembly...although the artist derives its grounding from this material world [*vastu-samsār*], he gives it form according to his own dreams, memories, necessities, compulsions, frustrations, and points of view. [...] He draws out nature and materiality through a new perspective, from an unexamined angle, and in an unfamiliar form and places it before [us]! It is possible that all this 'newness' was already present in nature and the material world, but drawing it out from there and establishing it before and parallel to us as an independent entity endows the artist with a unique prestige and dedication. (Yadav 1966, 17-18)

கதையில் காணும் சொற்கள், வரிகள் சுட்டிக் காட்டுவதற்கும் மேலாக ஒரு நிகழ்ச்சித் தொடர் எழுப்பி, ஒரு உணர்ச்சித் தீவிரம் எழுச்செய்து ஏராளமாக நம் யூகத்துக்கு இடம் வைத்து நம் உணர்வை அதில் கலக்கச் செய்து, நாமும் அந்த சோக நாடகத்தில் ஈடுபட்ட ஒரு கதாபாத்திரம் போல அந்த சமயத்துக்கு நம்மை மயங்க வைக்கிறது. மொத்தமாகச் சொல்லப் போனால் அந்த கதையின் வரிகள் மூலம் எழுப்பப்பட்ட ஒரு தனி உலகத்துக்கு நாம் கொண்டுபோய் விடப்படுகிறோம்—ஒரு பரவச நிலையில். அந்த பரவசம் ஏற்படச் செய்வது இந்த மாயம், சிறந்த படைப்பாளியால் சாத்தியமாகிற ஒரு சாதனை.

The words we find in the story establish lines, which evoke a sequence of events and give rise to an intensity of feeling [*unarcci tīviram*]. They create an expansive space for our conjectures and blend our feelings into it. We take part in the sorrowful drama [of the story] and lose [*mayanku*] ourselves during that time as if we were characters. In short, we are taken to a separate world [*tani ulakam*] awakened through the lines of the story—to a place of ecstasy. The spell [*mayam*] brought into existence by that ecstasy is an accomplishment made possible by a great writer.

(Chellappa 1974 [1964-1969], 29-30)

These passages are from two primary tracts on the short story written by Rajendra Yadav and C.S. Chellappa, who were principal theorists of the Hindi and Tamil short story genres, respectively, during the two decades following Independence. Yadav spearheaded the Hindi *Nayī Kahānī*, or New Story, Movement in the 1950-60s, the same period that Chellappa worked to revive the Tamil short story project of the pre-Independence *Maṇikkoṭi* writers I discussed in the previous chapter. Yadav and Chellappa wrote extensively on the genre and celebrated it for the newness it embodied, something they felt was necessary for addressing the changing context of the time. It was this newness—expressed through the unique artistic merit and sense of social responsibility Hindi and Tamil writers possessed—that shaped the literariness of the short story for both writer-critics. Thus, if, as I touched on in the Introduction to this dissertation, Bakhtin insisted that genres both represent and construct understandings of the world, then it was this very recognition that formed the basis of Yadav’s and Chellappa’s utilizations of the short story to envision and establish a better society, nation, and world.

However, despite their similar investments in the short story genre, Yadav and Chellappa diverged in their conceptualizations of how the short story relates to external reality. In first passage above, taken from his long essay *Ek Duniyā: Sāmānāntar* [A Parallel World], Yadav describes the nature of literariness in the *nayi kahani* as a parallel world, one configured by each writer’s unique dreams, desires, and perspectives, but ultimately based in and inspired by an external reality that both readers and writers share. In this way, the *nayi kahani* portrays the parallel worlds of diverse individuals who share a connection with one another through the common social context defining their lives. For Chellappa, by contrast, it is not reality that forms the foundation of literary creation, but rather the spell of ecstasy literature evokes in readers through which they are transported to a separate world of universally understood aesthetic feeling. In the second passage above, excerpted from his *Tamiḷ Cirukatai Piṛakkīratu* [The Birth of the Tamil Short Story], Chellappa uses the concept of a *taṇi ulakam*, or separate world, to describe the literariness of the Tamil short story: it is an affective world of shared sensibility kindled within readers. He gestures towards the words and sentences writers use, stressing the role of prose style in creating the short story and bracketing the importance of reality or realism altogether. This chapter examines the distinct literary histories and contexts shaping the parallel and separate worlds of story writing Yadav and Chellappa theorize, asking: in what ways did Yadav and Chellappa map out this difference in the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story forms while simultaneously adhering to the same conventions of genre? Furthermore, how did their distinct short story projects coincide with and diverge from the Sahitya Akademi’s liberal humanist efforts to establish “unity in diversity” through literature in this moment?

As I discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation, the Nehruvian administration established the Sahitya Akademi to channel regional literary production towards the development of a nationally circulating understanding of the common cultural and aesthetic sensibilities that Indian citizens shared across their regional differences. From the perspective of the central government and the Akademi, it was this shared understanding that formed the humanistic unity underlying the individual, communal, and regional diversity of the new nation. In this context, Yadav and Chellappa used their concepts of the parallel/separate worlds of story writing to express and shape the possibilities for post-Independence human connection in the Hindi and

Tamil literary imaginations. They did this in their theoretical writings, as well as their short stories, through linking the formal structure of the short story to the portrayal of new types of human connection arising as a result of the changing nature of man-woman relationships. In particular, in both Yadav's and Chellappa's work, new understandings of what a modern goodwife is or should be in relation to her husband becomes the occasion to structure and define the arc and narrative structure of the short story. If, as I argued in Chapter 1, the question of Indian women's guardianship and its representation through tropes of the feminine ideal framed the nature of post-Independence citizenship and national belonging, then Yadav's and Chellappa's writing sheds light on the regionally specific ways in which the guardianship question took shape in the very process of creating humanistic literary sensibilities intelligible at both the regional and national levels.

This chapter examines the intersection between representations of gender and theorizations of the short story genre in the work of Yadav and Chellappa and argues that despite their shared investments in nationally circulating tropes of the feminine ideal and conventions of genre to portray pan-Indian ideas of newness and modernity, their post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story projects were directed as much, if not more, towards regional literary concerns as they were towards national ones. As the passages above demonstrate and as I will show in further detail below, the distinct literary histories of their respective canons led these writer-critics to conceptualize the relationship between the short story form and reality differently from one another. Yadav situates the *nayi kahani* in relation to the well-known writer Premchand's definition of literariness as idealistic realism, which I discussed in the previous chapter. He highlights the same literary historical traditions and readership community as Premchand, but he alters the form of the story to address the new, tumultuous post-Independence context. Yadav does this by abandoning Premchand's idealism and emphasizing instead the *nayi kahani's* depiction of the relationship between *vyakti*, or individuals, and *parives*, or their shared external environment. It is this relationship that Yadav's concept of "parallel worlds" articulates. Here, the prevailing image is one of *yatharth*—a reality shaped by the combination of diverse internal desires with a shared external social structure—rather than Premchand's idealistic realism that combined a realist literary method with the principles and aspirations of social justice.

Chellappa, by contrast, locates the post-Independence Tamil *cirukatai* in the lineage of the pre-Independence *Manikkoti* writers group of which he was a part, viewing their literary endeavors—which I discussed in the previous chapter—as directive for post-Independence *cirukatai* writing. The *Manikkoti* writers defined the literariness of good *cirukatai* writing against the Tamil revivalist and social reform agendas of the Non-Brahman, Dravidian, and Self-Respect Movements and sought instead to create short stories that underscored the aesthetic function of literature: a good short story was that which elevated the literary tastes of Tamil individuals by heightening the shared aesthetic sensibilities they possessed by virtue of belonging to the community of mankind. Chellappa draws from this *Manikkoti* literary

worldview to emphasize the centrality of *urainatai*, or prose style, to good short story writing.¹ For him, a good short story wields a distinct, modern *urainatai* to evoke a separate world (*taṇi ulakam*) of emotion and sensibility within readers: it is through its prose style—one proximate to spoken Tamil and opposed to social reformist didacticism—that the short story distances itself from the rigidities of ancient Tamil, expressing both the disillusionment of modern Tamils, as well as their elevated sense of modern literary taste. In this way, Chellappa’s definition of the *cirukatai*’s literariness turns on the *Manikkoti* writers’ understanding of good short story writing that portrays not reality, but rather a shared affective world of literary taste expressed through post-Independence Tamil writers’ unique prose styles.

The first section of this chapter explores the differing, already established understandings of literariness upon which Yadav and Chellappa base their theorizations of the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai*, respectively. I demonstrate how the divergent literary histories to which Yadav and Chellappa speak explain the parallel/separate short story worlds they conceptualize, as well as how they use representations of the feminine ideal to shape the contours of their Hindi and Tamil story universes. In the second section, I link these parallel/separate story writing worlds and their distinct portrayals of the feminine ideal to the larger theoretical frameworks Yadav and Chellappa develop in their critical work on the short story. I elaborate, here, on the ways that Yadav’s “parallel world” articulates a literary humanism based on the realist portrayal of a shared social environment. Alternatively, Chellappa’s “separate world” establishes a literary humanism founded on the shared aesthetic sensibilities awakened by modern Tamil prose style. Based on these differing conceptualizations of literary humanism, I argue that the Hindi and Tamil short story forms that Yadav and Chellappa theorize demarcate regionally specific communal boundaries even as they resonate with pan-Indian liberal humanist efforts to consolidate a national community defined by “unity in diversity.” The third section examines two exemplary short stories by these writer-critics, focusing on how Yadav and Chellappa interlace the formal elements of the short story with the question of guardianship of the Indian woman. I show that, in both stories, it is representations of the feminine ideal that embody new types of human connection, as well as new standards for story writing; in other words, both stories simultaneously pose the question of what makes a good story as the question of what makes a goodwife. Through this goodwife-good story interconnection, Yadav and Chellappa position the genre as an ideal medium for imagining new ideas of regional and national identity and belonging. But while Yadav’s story articulates what makes a good story and a goodwife in the terms of his understanding of the internal “parallel worlds” of writers, readers, and characters who share the same external reality, Chellappa expresses the good story-goodwife correlation through his lens of the aesthetic “separate world” that writers, readers, and characters experience together. The concluding section briefly addresses the ways in which Yadav’s and Chellappa’s

¹ In common usage *urainatai* is a compound noun that usually means prose. *Urai* means a prepared speech or an explanatory prose commentary, and *natai* means style or speech (Cre-A 1992, 150, 606). I have chosen to translate *urainatai* as “prose style” for two reasons. The first is that Chellappa himself clarifies that when he uses the word *natai*, he means “style” by transliterating the English word in quotes beside the Tamil one in his main tract on the short story, *Tamil Cirukatai Pirakkiratu* (1974 [1964-1969], 22). Here, he uses *natai* to juxtapose what he sees as the more literary styles created through spoken Tamil (*pēccu naṭai*) with social reformist and Dravidianist prose (*urainatai*). The second reason is that in all of the essays I examine below, Chellappa is talking specifically about the narrative styles writers employ in short story fiction and not prose in general.

work dialogues with the Sahitya Akademi's project to create a national literature, underscoring how the post-Independence state's liberal humanist effort to create "unity and diversity" through literature must be understood through their regionally specific literary articulations.

Newness and the Story Form

What is the relationship between Yadav's and Chellappa's renewal of the Hindi and Tamil short story forms and the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil contexts? This section seeks to answer this question by linking these writer-critics differing literary worldviews to the histories of the short story within which they situate the *nayi kahani* and the *cirukatai*, respectively. As I touched on above, Yadav places the *nayi kahani* in the lineage of his predecessor Premchand. He reexamines Premchand's *samavedana dr̥ṣṭi*—his perspective on the shared sensibility evoked by the short story—and rearticulates it in terms of the *nayi kahani*'s use of *yatharth* (reality) to depart from Premchand's *ādarśonmukhī yathārthvād* (idealistic realism). In doing so, Yadav reassesses Premchand's portrayal of man-woman relationships, while simultaneously maintaining the same Indian/Hindi readership community to which Premchand directed his short story writing. It is precisely through this (dis)continuity that the *nayi kahani* makes new of the old. Alternatively, Chellappa situates the post-Independence *cirukatai* within the *Manikkoti* short story tradition, picking up on his *Manikkoti* predecessor Pudumaippittan's use of *urainatai* (prose style) and *nampikkai varaṭci* (disillusionment) to portray the interior reality of individual feeling and aesthetic taste. By building the *cirukatai* upon this continuity with Pudumaippittan and other *Manikkoti* writers, Chellappa renews the relevance of their particular depictions of man-woman relationships for the post-Independence moment. He thus also extends their stance against social reformist, didactic, and Dravidianist literature to the post-Independence *cirukatai*, reconfirming the boundaries of the middle class, upper caste, and Indianist readership community that the *Manikkoti* writers established. These divergent literary histories shape the contours of the parallel/separate short story worlds Yadav and Chellappa conceptualize and explain the reasons for the centrality they give to depictions of the feminine ideal in the post-Independence story form. In this way, their work offers insight into the diverse social and political projects that shaped popular understandings of post-Independence liberal humanist unity.

In his main tracts on the *nayi kahani*, Yadav (1965, 1966, 1968) traces the very same Hinduized history of Hindi literature and the Hindi short story as Premchand.² For both these writers, the post-Independence Hindi short story genre owes its evolution to two traditions: a long standing Hindu-Indian tradition and a more modern world tradition. Like Premchand, Yadav sees these two traditions as parallel as far as their impact on Hindi writing and hierarchizes them chronologically, subsuming the world tradition within an Indian one: "The story can be considered the originary genre (*ādi vidhā*)," he writes, for it underlies all poetry, songs, and folklore, and is the primary form through which man expresses his need for sociality

² See previous chapter for a discussion of Premchand's views. Similarly to Yadav, Premchand critiques the literary influences of the immediate (Islam-influenced) past and links the Hindi short story to a Hinduized "ancient Indian tradition" that expresses the type of idealism to which the modern Hindi story seeks to return.

(Yadav 1965, 1-2).³ Yadav tracks the evolution of this sociality through four stages of Indian storytelling tradition. *Prārambh*, in the first stage, the Vedas and Upanishads tell stories enabling the primary social interaction between speaker and listener, helping humans to expand their imaginations and contemplate basic human experiences such as death. In the *dūsrā mod*, or next turn, the Panchatantra stories think through human beings' relationships to nature. The Puranas and epics, such as the *Ramayana*, form a third stage in human development and recount human beings' *dharma*, the laws of duty and ethics they follow in order to maintain a productive and peaceful society. The fourth stage is represented by the *Baitāl Paccīsī* stories that recount the tales of King Vikramaditya and the decline of *dharmik* action among humans. Following this periodization, Yadav then lists two more types of stories circulating in the Indian context. These, however, are not listed as stages, but rather under the headings of “*Ek Pagḍaṇḍī Aur*”—another path or track—and “*Kalpna*”—imagination. The first category includes Arabi-Farsi tales such as that of Shaharazad, and the second, *tilismi kahāniyan*, or fantastical stories commonly associated with the Persian storytelling tradition. Yadav not only views these categories as parallel to the more established, long-standing Indian one he has just described, but also due to the influence of *tilismi kahaniyan*, “...the Indian story form arrives at this point and comes to a halt, and its soul mingles with the ongoing western tradition and takes new shape...” (ibid., 5; see also 1968, 4-11).⁴ In contrast to the *nayi kahani*, Yadav finds that the development of the post-Independence Urdu short story (as well as the Bengali short story) has taken a turn for the worse, having become more crude (*anagaḍ*), sentimental (*āmsū-ucchvās ke mukhauṭe kī āḍ mem*), and entertainment-focused (*‘pāṭ bālār’*) (1966, 59). In this way, he situates the *nayi kahani* within an ancient Indian tradition, while detaching it from the immediate past, which he views as an Islamic period of moral degradation and literary decline. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, this is the very same literary history Premchand outlines in his essays on the nature and development of the Hindi short story.

Yadav also acknowledges the import of the world story tradition in the development of the Hindi short story, listing the four main figures (Poe, O’Henry, Maupassant, and Chekhov) whose stories circulated in the early twentieth century Indian context and impressed upon the first Hindi short story writers, such as Guleri and Premchand.⁵ He insists (just as Premchand does) that while it is true that these Western writers have impacted Guleri’s and Premchand’s writing styles, the Hindi short story should be viewed within a specifically Indian cultural tradition. This is because not only is the influence of the West causing a decline in Indian culture, but also India has its own trajectory based on its colonial history and postcolonial conditions (1978, 101-102; see also 1968, 24). For this reason, Yadav stresses the specifically Indian tradition that shapes the themes of love and sacrifice in Guleri’s and Premchand’s stories, locating these as the origin of the *nayi kahani* project. For example, Yadav draws out these themes in Guleri’s “*Usne Kahā Thā*” [She Had Said], pointing out that while others have

³ “कहानी को साहित्य की आदि-विधा माना जा सकता है।”

⁴ “...भारतीय कहानीयों का स्वरूप यहाँ आकर एक विराम पाता है और उसकी आत्मा विदेशों की चली आती परम्परा से मिलकर एक नया स्वरूप ग्रहण करती है...”

⁵ See the previous chapter for more discussion on Guleri. Yadav marks Guleri’s “*Usne Kaha Tha*” as the first modern Hindi short story.

interpreted this story as the love and sacrifice of the hero, “I see it as a story about the great love and unshakeable faith of the squadron leader’s wife” (1965, 11-12).⁶ He goes on to describe the import of her role in the story:

पत्नी और माँ की भारतीय मर्यादा के बीच प्यार की यह सरस्वती कितनी गहराई में
सूबेदारनी के अन्तरतम में बहती रही होगी। उसकी ही निष्ठा से उसने निस्संकोच लहनासिंह
से उसका जीवन माँग लिया। लहनासिंह के बलिदान को रेखांकित करके, लेखक इसी प्यार
की गहराई और आस्था को सांकेतिक ढंग से उजागर करता है।

How deep within the inner soul of the squadron leader’s wife must this
Saraswati, [river] of love, have flowed, [caught] between the Indian moral
spheres of a wife and a mother. It was through [the wife’s] devotion that she
unhesitatingly asked for [the hero] Lehanasingh’s life. The writer symbolically
evokes the depth and faith of this very love, which frames Lehanasingh’s
sacrifice.

(ibid., 12)

Yadav locates the man-woman relationship in Guleri’s story within the particularly Indian moral universe in which it is set, which he here articulates as the Indian moral spheres of wifeness and motherhood. For him, it is this interconnection between the universal themes of love and sacrifice and the specificity of their meanings within the Indian context that substantiate the literary value of the Guleri’s story.

Importantly, Yadav’s interpretation of Lehanasingh’s relationship with the squadron leader’s wife establishes the centrality of the figure of the Indian woman to the development of the Hindi short story, for on his view it is her character and not the hero’s that drives the narrative progression and tone of Guleri’s story. In accordance with this perspective, Yadav focuses on the figure of the Indian woman in Premchand’s work, as well. He points out that in contrast to the *Chāyāvād* poetry movement’s portrayal of the Indian woman as an abstract ideal (1966, 32), Premchand uses the figure of *nārī*, or woman, to address the social condition of his time, one embedded in pre-Independence Gandhianism, socialism, and Hindu social reformism (1965, 14).⁷ Yadav notes that Premchand’s stories portray the Indian woman in a realist mode that combines both humanist and social progressivist values, expressing a special sympathy for women characters because “In the beginning, perhaps it was his idea that through the prestige of family ideals, many of society’s problems would be solved” (ibid.).⁸ It is thus via depictions of women and their relationships to family that Premchand articulates his humanist worldview. Specifically, Yadav observes that Premchand’s prostitute characters function as the ideal heroines of Premchand era realist stories, for she embodies the challenges that have emerged due to the changing family norms and ideals of the time.

⁶ “अभी तक इसे लहनासिंह के ही प्रेम और त्याग-बलिदान की कहानी के रूप में समझा जाता रहा है, लेकिन मैं उससे भी अधिक इसे सूबेदारनी के गम्भीर प्यार और अडिग विश्वास की कहानी के रूप में देखता हूँ।”

⁷ See the previous chapter for a discussion of the *Chayavad* movement.

⁸ “प्रारम्भ में शायद उनकी धारणा थी कि पारिवारिक आदर्शों की प्रतिष्ठा से समाज की अधिकांश समस्याएँ हल हो जाएँगी।”

But Yadav also marks a movement in Premchand's later stories away from idealism and towards the depiction of characters' feelings of dehumanization (*amānavīyakaraṇ*) and stupefaction (*stabdh-saṃvedanā*). Together, these feelings express what Yadav calls Premchand's *samvedana-drsti*—what might be translated as his literary sensibility—one more suited to the impossibility of maintaining any form of idealism in the post-Independence context (1965, 14-15; 1978, 23, 86-87). This is why in Yadav's stories, even though the family structure that Premchand's stories depict still forms the critical bridge between diverse individuals (*vyakti*), it can only find articulation in the faltering relationships that now comprise it. For this reason, Yadav places an emphasis on Premchand's stories that portray the breakdown of the joint family and the conflicting hopes, desires, and disconnections of a newly arising generation. It is this *samvedana-drsti* that Yadav believes Hindi writers have sought to convey in the era following Premchand (1966, 29-30).

According to Yadav, what these writers fail to understand, however, is the relationship between the internal struggles of individuals and their external reality that Premchand's later work depicts. On the one hand, experimentalist (*prayogvādī*) writers, such as Agyeya (1911-1987) and Jainendra (1905-1988), focus too much on the internal conflicts within characters, detaching them completely from their external reality. On the other hand, progressivist (*pragativādī*) writers such as Yashpal (1903-1976) use the short story to create an ideal society at the cost of flattening out modern individuals' internal perspectives and desires (see, for example: 1966, 42-44; 1978, 30-31). Yadav situates the *nayi kahani* against these two contemporary strands of Hindi writing, reaching back to Premchand's project in order to stress the social responsibility of the writer in addressing and shaping both individual life and external circumstance. It is this responsibility that affords the writer the unique prestige and dedication he possesses that Yadav speaks of in the first epigraph to this chapter. In addition, Yadav stresses that it is through new representations of the Indian woman that the *nayi kahani* undertakes this project. The *nayi kahani* struggles against the typical women characters that contemporary literary movements portray—who are either mysterious abstractions (as is the case with the experimentalist writers), or no more than ideal wives, widows, virgins, and prostitutes (as is the case with the progressivist writers). What it portrays instead is the desires and hopes of the new woman who stands equal to her male counterpart. In this way, the depiction of the new woman embodies the bridging of *vyakti* and *parives* (individual and external context) that the *nayi kahani* seeks to accomplish. For Yadav, it is, thus, through its representations of this figure that the *nayi kahani* most significantly departs from preceding, as well as contemporary, Hindi literary movements (1968, 59). In particular, its renewed representations of Premchand's older feminine tropes enable the *nayi kahani* to form a link with the Hindi-Hindu readership community Premchand addressed while simultaneously articulating the newness of the post-Independence story form.

Like Yadav, Chellappa, too, traces the history of the Tamil *cirukatai* in relation to both the world story tradition as well as preceding Tamil short story writing traditions. In the series of essays that comprise *Tamiḷ Cirukatai Pirakkiratu* [The Birth of the Tamil Short Story], which were first published in the mid-sixties in his journal *Eluttu*, he demonstrates how, beginning with V.V.S. Iyer's work, the Tamil short story began to incorporate a new *urainatai*, or prose style,

based on the integration of characters' stream of thought and spoken Tamil. Chellappa attributes this new prose style to the influence of Western writers (particularly Poe, Maupassant, O'Henry, and Chekhov—the same four that Yadav mentions), whom Iyer was the first to bring to the Tamil readership through translation. Chellappa praises Iyer because “he understood the features of new short story tradition through [his] familiarity with Western literature and wished to bring these to Tamil” (Chellappa 1974 [1964-1969], 23).⁹ It was this effort that, according to Chellappa and other writers in his circle, enabled Iyer to create a previously unknown genre of Tamil literature (see, for example: Subramanyam 1985, 2001).

In *Tamil Cirukatai Pirakkiratu*, Chellappa sees Iyer's prose style as distinct from the Dravidianist and Pure Tamil movements, which to varying extents sought to develop a Tamil literary style free of Brahminical words and concepts. The work of these Tamil enthusiasts poses an equally ominous threat to Chellappa in the post-Independence moment as it did to the pre-Independence *Manikkoti* writers, whom I discussed in Chapter 2. In two 1959 essays, one titled “Tamiḷ Urainaṭai” [Tamil Prose Style] and the other “Inṟu Tēvaiyāṇa Urainaṭai” [The Prose Style Necessary Today], Chellappa articulates his frustration with the insularity and conservatism of classical Tamil enthusiasts, largely made up of Tamil academics and scholars (*pulavar*) working in the immediate post-Independence period. He finds their work too caught up in recreating the past and classical rules of grammar to allow for the development of the Tamil language. In addition, says Chellappa, the disdain these scholars show towards foreign languages and outside literary influences prohibits the creation of new vocabulary that can suitably portray modern Tamil individuals' *maṇitappārvai*, or human perspective (1974 [1959]b, 136-137). By contrast, the unique prose styles of modern Tamil authors—such as Pudumaipittan, Ka. Na. Subramanyam, and La. Sa. Ramamritham—opens up the Tamil language to the newness of the modern age, and this is precisely what Tamil literature needs in order to progress (ibid., 142). Chellappa praises the way that these short story writers make use of *pēccu* (spoken) Tamil in their prose styles, thus enabling Tamil literature to serve as an effective medium of communication between writers and readers (1974 [1959]a, 149). Indeed, the use of *peccu* Tamil has been an integral literary technique of the modern Tamil short story since its beginning, as Chellappa points out in his analysis of Iyer's work.

In addition to the Tamil revivalists' position on language and literature, Chellappa (1974 [1964-1969]) also critiques the social reformist writing against which the *Manikkoti* writers defined their short story project. He thus pits what he sees as the more open-ended style of Iyer's writing against the social reformist writing of Iyer's contemporary A. Madhaviah (1872-1925), demonstrating that Madhaviah's stories fail to serve as a good model for Tamil short story writing because of their didactic content. Chellappa also finds didacticism to be a problematic aspect of Kalki's work, and for this reason, he locates the next critical stage of *cirukatai* development in the short story writing of B.S. Ramaiah, who shaped the *Manikkoti* short story

⁹ “...புது ரீதியான சிறுகதைப் பாங்கை அவர் வெளிநாட்டு இலக்கிய பரிச்சயம் மூலம் அறிந்துகொண்டு தமிழுக்கு அதைத் தர விரும்பினவர்...”

See the previous chapter for more discussion of V.V. S. Iyer's work on the short story. Chellappa and the other *Manikkoti* writers hailed Iyer as the father of the Tamil short story.

movement.¹⁰ Importantly, Chellappa demonstrates the difference between social reformist/didactic writing that Kalki supported and the more aesthetic work of Ramaiah through their contrasting depictions of the feminine ideal. He discusses a 1933 short story contest for which Kalki was a judge and in which two stories contended for first prize.¹¹ One was the writer Rali's "Ūmaicci Kātal" [The Love of a Dumb Girl], which according to Chellappa, is a didactic tale of a boy and girl who finally marry despite the girl's handicap and other unfavorable circumstances. The other contending story was Ramaiah's "Malarum Maṇamum" [Flower and Fragrance], which to Chellappa is the more aesthetically elevated tale of a widow who seeks to remarry, only to find that when she finally does, she still remains unsatisfied and unhappy. Whereas Rali's story is "not one that brings about an awakening in [our] mentality (*uḷappāṅku*)," Ramaiah's evokes *unarcci* in readers through the relationship between the widow and her new husband.¹² Chellappa writes:

[...] அவன் அவளை தனக்கு உறவாக்கிக்கொள்கிறபோது, அவள் எதிர்பார்த்துக் காத்திருந்து மனம் முறிந்து, காலம் கடந்து வந்து அந்த உறவு அவளுக்கு அர்த்தமற்றுப்போக மணமற்ற மலராக அவளை தன் கைகளில் ஏந்தி இருப்பதை உணரும் ஒரு நிலையை சித்தரிக்கும் துன்பமான திருப்பம், விளைவை வெளிடும் கதை. [...] உணர்ச்சி வெளியீடு காட்டப்பட்டுள்ள பிடிப்புள்ள கதை.

When [her new husband] forms a relationship with [the widow], the state of mind she had been expecting and waiting for is spoiled, as time passes [their] relationship becomes meaningless. [Ramaiah's] is a story that portrays the situation that falls into [the widow's] hands, which she experiences without fragrance or flower. It expresses a distressing turn of events and [their] result. It is a story in which the articulation of feeling [*unarcci*] is shown and captured.
(1974 [1964-1969], 12-13)

For Chellappa, the notable difference in Ramaiah's story is the *unarcci* it evokes, something Rali's story fails to do. Through the mental turmoil of a widow for whom remarriage is not enough to satisfy her hopes and desires, Ramaiah creates the more literary story, one that emphasizes the inner struggle of its characters over moral solutions or entertainment-oriented shock value.

The meaninglessness that Ramaiah's widow discovers in her relationship with her new husband resonates with the general feeling of *nampikkai varatci* (disillusionment or a drying up of hope) that Chellappa interprets as one of the main elements of Pudumaippittan's prose style. Of all the *Manikkoti* writers, says Chellappa, it is Pudumaippittan's work that expresses the most experimental form of prose style due to the way it conveys individuals' *nampikkai varatci* (1974

¹⁰ See previous chapter for more discussion of Kalki's and Ramaiah's work. Kalki was a contemporary of Ramaiah and the other *Manikkoti* writers, but he considered himself to be in a different literary camp than them, one that catered to popular Tamil taste. The *Manikkoti* writers viewed Kalki's work to be either too didactic, too entertainment-oriented, or too glorifying of the ancient Tamil past. They saw the *Manikkoti* short story movement in contrast to Kalki's work for its more literary portrayal of aesthetic pleasure and taste.

¹¹ The short story contest was held by the journal *Ananta Vikatan* and was the first contest of its kind. See previous chapter for more discussion of this contest and the role it played in the formation of the *Manikkoti* literary project.

¹² "உள்பாங்கு ரீதியாக தரப்பட்ட ஒரு விடிவிப்பு இல்லை அது."

[1957]b, 354).¹³ Just as Chellappa notices that Ramaiah’s widow conveys modern individuals’ disappointment and dissatisfaction, he observes that Pudumaipittan’s *nampikkai varatci* is very often expressed through the portrayal of women characters seeking to change the condition of man-woman relationships. Chellappa thus calls special attention to the women characters (in particular, goodwives) in Pudumaipittan’s stories, such as “Akalyai” and “Cāpa Vimōcaṇam,” through whom Pudumaipittan’s stories mix old ideas of morality with new ones, thereby highlighting the relativity of all morality.¹⁴ For him, it is Pudumaipittan’s women characters in particular who embody the general condition of disillusionment that individuals experience in their day to day lives. For example, discussing the moment in “Cāpa Vimocanam” when Ahalya turns back into a stone after not being able to restore her relationship with her husband Gautama, Chellappa writes:

[...] ‘அகலிகைக்கு ஒரு நீதி; அவனுக்கு ஒரு நீதியா?’ என்று பிரக்ஞை மருண்டநிலையில் கோதமன் கைக்குள் சிக்கி மனச்சுமை மடிய மீண்டும் கல்லான புதுமைப்பித்தனது அகலிகை, அன்றைக்கும் இன்றைக்கும் சேர்த்து கேள்வி கேட்டு நிற்பவளாக இருக்கிறாள்.

[...] [Ahalya] asked “Is there one morality for Ahalya and another for [Ram]?” In a frightened state of consciousness and caught in Gautama’s clasp, Pudumaipittan’s Ahalya folds under the weight of her mind and turns back into a stone. She stands before us asking [her] question of both yesterday and today. (1974 [1957]b, 370)

Ahalya’s question in the passage above refers to the scene in the classical epic of the *Ramayana* in which the noble king Ram asks his wife Sita to prove her faithfulness to him by undergoing a trial by fire. Learning of Ram’s demand, Pudumaipittan’s Ahalya wonders why there should be different moral standards for different individuals? As Chellappa points out here, her question articulates the disillusionment and internal struggle that cripple her, which are still recognizable in the post-Independence moment. For Chellappa, Ahalya speaks not just to husbands and wives, but also to the larger human predicament of individuals that Chellappa believes good stories convey.

In this way, Chellappa characterizes the sensibility (*unarcci*) of the post-Independence *cirukatai* and its unique depictions of the feminine ideal as belonging to a specific historical trajectory of the *cirukatai*’s development: these post-Independence *cirukatai* attributes originate in the *Manikkoti* short story project. Given the still-existing prominence of Tamil revivalist and social reformist rhetoric, Chellappa stresses the need for the post-Independence revival of the literary taste and humanist sensibility the *Manikkoti* short story project sought to instill in its Tamil readership. He demonstrates this continuity through his own short stories (such as the one I examine in this chapter’s final section), as well as through his short story theorizations and analyses, such as that of Pudumaipittan’s “Cāpa Vimocanam.” In both cases, the *cirukatai* articulates not a type of morality, but rather a particular feeling comprised by the combination of

¹³ Chellappa also uses the phrase *potu taṇimai varatci*, or the general disillusionment of individuals, for this sensibility that Pudumaipittan’s writing conveys.

¹⁴ See the previous chapter for more discussion on these stories.

literary taste (*ruci*) and the general sense of disillusionment individuals feel (what Chellappa sees as *nampikkai varatci* in Pudumaipittan's case, and *manita tolai nilai*—or the “human predicament”—in his own). Furthermore, both the pre-Independence *Manikkoti cirukatai* and Chellappa's post-Independence *cirukatai* use the figure of the Indian woman (as a character, as well as a subject of discussion) to mark the Brahminical limits within which the Tamil short story operates. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, *Manikkoti* representations of the feminine ideal were situated in contrast to the literary and social ideals of the Non-Brahmin, Dravidian, and other social reform movements in the South. Rather, these representations embodied the middle class, upper caste concepts, norms, prose style, and setting of the *Manikkoti* worldview. In his post-Independence work on the short story, Chellappa takes up this worldview in a similar effort to break away from the Tamil revivalist past, and he does so through a focus on the same tropes of the feminine ideal. In this way, Chellappa *cirukatai* invokes an already-established Tamil readership community defined by its middle class, upper caste, and Indianist politics.

Parallel Worlds of Form and Sensibility

I have just demonstrated how Yadav and Chellappa link the newness of the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* to the projects and readerships of their literary predecessors. In doing so, they also rethink their predecessors' engagement with tropes of the feminine ideal, offering their own reworked representations of these tropes towards the project of shaping the present realities and lifestyles of modern Hindi and Tamil readers. In this section, I situate Yadav's and Chellappa's evocations of the disparate Hindi and Tamil literary histories in relation to their critical writings on the post-Independence short story genre. Yadav and Chellappa give attention to comparable literary techniques in their theorizations on the short story, such as the use of dialogue and memory, the relationship between characters' internal and external lives, the role of shared feelings and experiences in evoking a bond between writers and readers, and the use of images and symbols to convey meaning with subtlety. They relate these techniques to the way that the short story embodies newness, which for both writers forms the basis for their post-Independence investment in developing the genre. In what follows, I will first elaborate the terms Yadav and Chellappa use for understanding these literary techniques in relation to the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* projects. I will then demonstrate how these writers connect these techniques to the parallel/separate worlds of new story writing that they seek to establish. I thus highlight how Yadav and Chellappa use the newness of the short story genre to convey different ideas of the literary humanism that forms the basis of good story writing. In Yadav's case, this humanism is shaped by readers' identification with the relationship between *vyakti* and *parives* (or the individual and his social context) that a short story depicts; whereas in Chellappa's case, it is configured through the shared aesthetic feeling roused in readers by a short story's uniquely modern *urainatai* (or prose style). Thus, while these authors recognize common formal attributes across the Hindi and Tamil story genres, their literary projects are expressed through different definitions of literariness, or what makes a good story. These differing definitions flag the distinct literary histories to which Yadav and Chellappa refer that I outlined above, as well as the regionally specific post-Independence contexts that these writer-critics seek to address through the short story genre.

In his essay “Samakālīn Hindī Kahānī” or “The Contemporary Hindi Short Story,” Yadav marks the change in story writing that the *nayi kahani* brings about in the decade following Independence through the new multi-layered quality of its language:

अपनी सचाई को उसे अपने परिवेश और अपने अनुभावों को माध्यम से ही पकड़ना था।

दृष्टिकोण के इस बदलाव ने कहानी को अनेक धरातलों पर बदलना प्रारम्भ कर दिया। अब कहानी की भाषा उतनी इकहरी नहीं रह गयी। उसमें ऐसे बिम्ब, प्रतीक और अर्थ ऊभरने लगे थे जो व्यक्ति की अपनी विश्वसनीय अनुभूतियों का भी चित्रण थे, लेकिन साथ ही व्यापक सचाइयों को भी पकड़ना चाहते थे। ये कहानियाँ अनायास ही दुहरे-तिहरे धरातलों पर चलने लगी थीं। [...] व्यक्ति और परिवेश के आपसी सम्बन्धों को सम्पूर्ण जटिलता में पकड़ने के प्रयास में थे, या इस तरह की कहानियाँ अधिक गहरी, कलात्मक और प्रभावशाली हो गयी थीं। उनसे अक्सर दो-दो, तीन-तीन अर्थ ध्वनित होते थे। वे सार्थक प्रयासों की उत्कृष्ट कहानियाँ हैं।

[The *nayi kahani* writer] had to grasp his truth through the very medium of his environment [*parives*] and experiences [*anubhav*].

This change in perspective [from previous short story writing] began to alter the short story on several levels. Now the language of the story did not remain so singular. It began to be fleshed out by image [*bimb*], symbol [*pratīk*], and meaning [*arth*] that depicted the believable experiences of the individual, but that in conjunction also sought to grasp larger truths. These stories began to operate on double and triple levels [*dharātal*]. [...] It was [engaged] in the effort to grasp the full complexity of the mutual relationship between the individual [*vyakti*] and the environment [*parives*], or [in other words] stories of this kind became increasingly profound, artistic, and effective [*prabhāvasālī*]. Often two or three meanings resounded in them. They were superior stories of meaningful [*sārthak*] effort.

(Yadav 1978, 98-99)¹⁵

¹⁵ In his preface, Yadav indicates that he wrote the essays in this collection (titled *Premchand kī Virāsat*, or *Premchand's Heritage*) between 1952-1977 and that the essays on the *nayi kahani* included here are ones that did not find space in his larger 1968 collection on the short story, *Kahānī: Svarūp aur Samvedanā* [The Story: Form and Sensibility]. “The Contemporary Hindi Short Story” was probably written around the same time or a little after the publication of the 1968 collection. Yadav and other *nayi kahani* critics (such as Namvar Singh, whose perspectives I briefly discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation) marked the late 1960s as the beginning of the decline of the *nayi kahani* movement. This is one possible explanation for why Yadav writes about the *nayi kahani* project above in the past tense.

Like Yadav, Namvar Singh also discusses the role of language in the *nayi kahani*. He describes the new style of language in the *nayi kahani* as ordinary, but powerful in effect. It reflects the spoken, everyday speech of individuals struggling to make sense of their new political and social environment (Singh 1998, 65; see also Dalmia 2006, 119).

This passage expresses that the change in language employed in the *nayi kahani* is embodied by several elements that Yadav and other *nayi kahani* writers and critics saw as integral to the new story form (see, for example: Kamleshwar 1963; Singh 1998 [1956-65]; Yadav 1965, 1966, and 1968): image (*bimb*), symbol (*pratik*), the multiplicity of levels (*dharatal*), effect (*prabhāv*), and meaningfulness or significance (*sarthaktā*).¹⁶ In evoking these story components, Yadav makes three important points above that he repeatedly stresses in all his work on the *nayi kahani*: one, the convergence of different images, symbols, and meanings in a story in conjunction with its effort to grasp larger truths enables the *nayi kahani* to operate on multiple levels. Two, these multiple levels are based in the examination of the *vyakti* (individual) and *parives* (environment). And three, it is this very examination that makes the *nayi kahani* artistically effective (*prabhavasali*) and meaningful (*sarthak*). The effectiveness and significance of the *nayi kahani*, made evident to readers by the non-singularity of its language, underscore the superiority of its form, which for Yadav is marked by both the newness of the *nayi kahani* as opposed to earlier short stories, as well as its relevance to the times.

The times of which Yadav speaks are characterized by the state of turmoil following Independence, which he points out is unique in the Indian context due to Partition: “A country’s becoming independent after ages of subjection is a great event in and of itself, and in our country, the partition of India was also coupled with this event” (1966, 19).¹⁷ Alongside the seemingly straightforward democratic philosophies (*prajātāntrik tarīqā*) and the socialist systems (*samājavādī vyavasthā*) put in place by the new Indian nation is the glaring violence of Partition that uprooted individuals from their families and homes, their pasts and their identities (19-20, 27). Yadav sees a gap between pressures (both national and international) to enhance progress and development—exemplified, for example, by the central government’s effort to implement its Five Year Plans (20)—and the shared struggles of individuals seeking to find a “sense of belonging” (40). This gap creates a contradiction between the individual’s internal state and his external world that manifests in individuals as the experience of confusion (*digbhrānt*) (1978, 91). The writer articulates this confusion as the individual’s search for identity through the *nayi kahani*:

विशिष्ट और विलक्षण व्यक्ति के स्थान पर सामान्यजन की स्थिति और बदलती हुई मानसिकता को पकड़ना ही इन कहानियों का मूल कथ्य है। स्वतन्त्र होने और जनतान्त्रिक व्यवस्था के आश्वासन ने एक ओर तो भारतीय जन में अपने-आपको राष्ट्रीय, अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय प्रभावों के बीच, एक खुली और वृहत्तर दुनिया में पाया था तो दूसरी ओर स्वयं चुनाव करके अपनी नियति और स्थिति को बदल सकने का नया विश्वास उसमें जागा था। मोटे रूप से इस सारे समय को अपनी अस्मिता (आइडेंटिटी) की तलाश और निरूपण का काल कह सकते हैं।

¹⁶ Kamleshwar and Namvar Singh define *sarthakta* as a way of sidestepping the question of whether a story is good or bad, thereby interpreting the *nayi kahani* on the basis of the meaning it expresses to readers. Particularly for Singh, the emphasis on *sarthakta* compels a close reading of a story’s style and content, as explicit moral aphorisms no longer flags accepted interpretations of texts in the post-Independence moment. See Kamleshwar 1963, preface; Singh 1998, 15-19.

¹⁷ “युगों की पराधीनता के बाद किसी देश का स्वतन्त्र होना ही अपने में बहुत बड़ी घटना है, फिर अपने यहाँ इस घटना के साथ ही देश का विभाजन भी जुड़ा है...”

Grasping the condition of ordinary people and [their] changing mentalities on the level of the particular and extraordinary individual is indeed the foundational utterance of these [*nayi kahani*] stories. On the one hand, the Indian population perceived within itself the assurance of an independent and democratic [social] structure among national and international powers in an open and expansive world. On the other hand, the new belief that it could make its own choices and change its circumstances and fate was awakened within [the Indian population]. We can generally call this entire period a time of search [*talāś*] and investigation for its identity (*asmitā*).

(1978, 99-100)

For Yadav, the search for identity characterizes the period following Independence and is comprised of the conflict between the broader circumstances of the new nation in a decolonized world and the desires and hopes of the Indian population. It is this search for identity—and not its resolution—that the *nayi kahani* depicts. It does so by portraying the unique attempts of the solitary individuals making up the Indian population to reach outside the limits of their individualities to understand others who share the same context (see also: Yadav 1968, 51). Thus, “The most important speciality of today’s story is seeing the ‘he’ through its similarity to the ‘I’ and assessing the ‘I’ through the objectivity of a ‘he’ ” (1966, 72).¹⁸ *Nayi kahani* characters try to voice their desires to communicate with and find solace and completion in each other, but their actions are always deferred or delayed (*sthaḡit*), caught as they are by their own despondency and disillusionments (1978, 108-109). For this reason, says Yadav, the symbols and images of the *nayi kahani* stories must be interpreted experientially rather than rationally (1966, 53). Here, experience (*anubhav*) forms the basis of the *saṃvedanā*, or shared sensibility, evoked by the *nayi kahani* between the writer and readers. By using symbols and images to depict characters whose struggles and desires resonate with readers’ own contexts (*parives*) and personal experiences, *nayi kahani* writers create a sense of shared human connection, one that enables readers to see themselves through a detached perspective while simultaneously identifying with the protagonists of the stories (1966, 69). For this reason, “Today’s short story writer believes not in *sahānubhūti* [sympathy], but in *sah-anubhūti* [shared feeling]” (1965, 27).¹⁹ It is through the shared sensibility it evokes that the *nayi kahani* articulates *sarthakta* (meaning), creating a *prabhāvānvati* (unified effect) that expresses post-Independence

¹⁸ “इस ‘वह’ को अपनी तादात्म्यता के साथ देखना, और ‘मैं’ को ‘वह’ की तटस्था से आँकना आज की कहानी की बहुत महत्वपूर्ण विशेषता है।”

¹⁹ “आज की कहानीकार सहानुभूति में नहीं, सह-अनुभूति में विश्वास करता है।”

fragmented individuality (*khaṇḍit-vyaktitva*) as the shared human condition of the present (1965; 27-28; 1966, 72).²⁰

For Yadav, the present forms the basis of the relationship between *vyakti* and *parives* (individual and environment) and characterizes the newness of the *nayi kahani* (see for example: Yadav 1968, 52). The commitment to depicting the present is, thus, precisely what drives the *nayi kahani* writer's work:

हर जगह से जला और हताश लेखक सोचता है: नहीं, वह किसी भविष्य और अतीत के प्रति प्रतिबद्ध नहीं है—वह प्रतिबद्ध है केवल अपने वर्तमान के प्रति, अपने उस सीमित यथार्थ के प्रति जो उसकी चेतना-परिधि में आ गया है। वह किसी समाज और व्यक्ति की ज़िम्मेदारी

²⁰*Prabhavanvati*, or unified effect, is a short story writing technique that Yadav self-consciously adapts from Poe's concept of unified effect. See Poe 1850, 1; Yadav 1965, 8.

Mohan Rakesh incorporates the notion of *prabhavanvati* with the function of the image (*bimb*) in the *nayi kahani*. For him, the unified effect of short story both exists in harmony with the image and is contained within the image:

आज के युग की साहित्यिक अभिव्यक्ति में हम एक चीज़ की प्रमुखता देखते हैं और वह है बिम्ब और विचार सामंजस्य—अर्थात् बिम्बों का ऐसा संगठन कि विचार उस के बीच से ही प्रस्फुटित हो, चरित्र और घटनाएँ कुछ ऐसे मूर्त चित्रों के रूप में प्रस्तुत की जायें वही लेखक के अभिप्राय: या संकेत को स्पष्ट कर दें।

We see one main thing in the literary expression of today's age and that is the harmony of image and thought—that is, the assemblage [*sangathan*] of images is such that it explodes from within thought, the characters and events are tangibly depicted in such a way that they elucidate the writer's intentionality or symbolic gesture [*sanket*].

(Rakesh 1975c, 38)

I translate *sangathan* as “assemblage” following Dalmia (2006, 125). In this passage, Rakesh uses “thought” to express the effect that the story conveys. This effect is made evident for him through the assemblage of images, or *bimb*, which elucidates the meaning of the story.

Namvar Singh, too, makes this connection between *bimb* and *prabhavanvati*. Speaking of the *nayi kahani* writer Nirmal Verma's short story “Parinde” [Birds], he writes:

[...] अपने प्रभाव के अलावा कहानी को ग्रहण करने का दूसरा कोई साधन नहीं है। निर्णय स्वयं कहानी के हाथ है क्योंकि वह केवल प्रभावित ही नहीं करती, बल्कि विशेष रूप में प्रभावित करना चाहती है और उस विशेष संकेत को जो पाठक पकड़ लेता है वह कहानी की आत्मा के सबसे निकट होता है, बल्कि रूपगत अन्तःसूत्रों को आपस में तुरन्त जोड़ भी लेता है और इस तरह उसके सामने कहानी के अधिक-से-अधिक करीब की प्रतिमा होती है।

[...] There is no other means to apprehend a story than its effect. [This] is an outcome that belongs solely to the story because [the story] is not simply effective, but rather it desires to effect in a particular way, and the particular symbols that a reader grasps are closest to the soul of the story; moreover, [the reader] immediately joins the formal inner threads [of the story] within himself, and in this way the most proximate image of the story lies before him.

(Singh 1998, 58)

Here, the symbol—the “most proximate image” to the reader—directly informs the story's effect. But also, this effect (which the reader grasps) is dictated by the story itself. In other words, the story governs what the reader apprehends through its unique construction and configuration of images. In this way, Singh—like Yadav and Rakesh—equates *prabhavanvati* with *sarthaikta*, or the unified effect of the story with its meaning.

नहीं ओढ़ेगा, वह जिम्मेदार है केवल अपने उस जीवित परिवेश के प्रति जो हम सबको बनाता है और हम सब मिलाकर बनाते हैं, स्वयं जिसके अंग हैं।

Everywhere the angry and despairing writer thinks: no, he is not committed [*pratibaddh*] to any future or past—he is committed only to his present [*varitamān*], to the reality [*yathārth*] that surrounds him, which has entered the realm of his consciousness. He will not take on a responsibility towards any society or individual, he is responsible solely towards his living environment [*parives*], that which creates us all and which together we create, of which we ourselves are a part.

(1966, 26)

The *nayi kahani* writer—angry and despairing due to the social and political circumstances of the post-Independence context with which he is unable to reconcile his individuality—detaches himself from his affiliations with the past or the future. His commitment and responsibility are directed solely towards articulating the present (*varitaman*) and its surrounding circumstances to the extent that they enter his consciousness.²¹ By their very nature, these circumstances exceed the writer’s perspective because they create and are created by all individuals who share in them. In this way, the *nayi kahani* writer taps into and portrays *yatharth*, or reality, which both writers and readers internalize. As I discussed above, this reality finds its roots in Premchand’s work on the Hindi short story, but breaks away from his social reformist moralism, which for Yadav is no longer relevant to the post-Independence present.

For Yadav, this portrayal of reality (individualized by each writer’s unique treatment) defines the specific type of literary humanism that the *nayi kahani* seeks to establish. Here, literary humanism is not the idealistic kind of the pre-Independence period, which sought to create a just and utopian society. Rather, what the *nayi kahani* stresses is *mānavatā*, or humanity, in all its diversity and lack of direction as it exists within its present time and circumstances. Yadav writes of the processes of writing and reading:

हम सबने अलग-अलग अपने यथार्थ को अपनी तरह भोगा और उसे वाणी दी है, इसलिए अभिव्यक्ति प्रयोग में कभी एक-दूसरे के बहुत पास आ गये हैं, तो कभी एकदम उलटी दिशाओं की ओर चले गये हैं। लेकिन इस विविधता के पीछे अनुभूति की प्रामाणिकता और उसके प्रति निर्वैयक्तिक, तटस्थ दृष्टि शायद सभी की समान रही है—क्योंकि यही तो वह आधारभूमि है, जहाँ नयी कहानी, पुरानी से अपने को अलग करती है। अंग्रेज़ी के घिस-पिटे मुहावरे में इसे ‘यूनिटी इन डाइवर्सिटीज’ कह सकते हैं।

All of us have experienced our different realities in our own ways and given them articulation; thus, sometimes we come very close to one another in our experiments of expression, and sometimes we go in completely opposite directions. But behind this diversity is the evidence of feeling [*anubhuti*], and

²¹ *Pratibaddh* usually means “restricted,” but Yadav coins this word to mean “committed” a few pages earlier in the essay: “Does his [the story writer’s] duty make him committed (*pratibaddh*) to anyone?” [*Uskā dharma āj use kiske sāth pratibaddh (kamīṭed) kartā hai?*] (Yadav 1966, 22). Here, Yadav translates *pratibaddh* as “committed” by writing the English word in Devanagari script in parenthesis beside the Hindi word.

in this regard perhaps there is a non-individualistic, objective perspective that is the same for us all—because this is the very foundational ground on which the *nayi kahani* distinguishes itself from the old. We can call this “unity in diversity” using the timeworn English expression.

(1968, 92)

Despite the diversity of perspectives and the multiple ways in which they find articulation, Yadav underscores the unity of feeling that brings all Hindi readers and writers embedded within the post-Independence context together. Indeed, the expression of this shared feeling is precisely that which distinguishes the *nayi kahani* from older story writing traditions, such as Premchand’s idealistic realism, Agyeya’s experimentalism, or Yashpal’s progressivism. The diversity of perspectives is founded upon this commonality of feeling that Yadav almost sardonically says can be understood through the hackneyed English idiom “unity in diversity.” However, he does not dismiss this interpretation, but rather goes on to qualify it through an emphasis on the individuality of each perspective, for “Without the individual touch where and what is the new?” (ibid.).²² Through defining the form of the *nayi kahani* as that which gives equal import to both *vyakti* and *parives*, individual and environment, Yadav qualifies and specifies the meaning of “unity in diversity.” In this way, the *nayi kahani* creates the *duniya samanantar*, or parallel worlds, that Yadav describes in the first epigraph to this chapter. On the one hand, the parallel worlds that the *nayi kahani* envisions are determined by the post-Independence turmoil that surrounds writers and readers on all sides, and on the other hand, they are shaped by their individual internal mentalities and the anger, defeat, and powerlessness through which these mentalities find expression in the world (1966, 17-18).²³ *Ek duniya samanantar* thus defines post-Independence literary humanism for Yadav: it is the post-Independence condition of a unified circumstantially-based feeling (*parives*) underlying the parallel worlds of diverse perspectives possessed by individuals (*vyakti*).

In his work on the Tamil short story, Chellappa uses an analogous concept to Yadav’s *duniya samanantar* to describe the *unarcci*, or feeling, that a well-written *cirukatai* evokes: a *tani ulakam*, or separate world. Chellappa, like Yadav, stresses that there is, indeed, an irreconcilability between the inner worlds of individuals and their external reality. But while Yadav’s parallel world gestures towards the effort of short story writing to portray the individual’s inner reality conjointly with the external reality of his environment, Chellappa’s *tani ulakam* emphasizes a different reality—that which is created by the *unarcci* (feeling) evoked by a story within readers. As the second epigraph to this chapter demonstrates, for Chellappa, the

²² “व्यक्तिगत स्पर्श के बिना नया कहाँ क्या है?”

²³ *Ek Duniyā Sāmānantar* is the title essay of one of the founding collections on the *nayi kahani* that Yadav compiled. While “Kahani: Nayi Kahani Tak” opens Yadav’s *Kathā Yātrā* [The Journey of the Story] (1965), his collected volume of historically important Hindi short stories, “Ek Duniya Samantar” precedes a series of exemplary *nayi kahani* stories. The latter volume, published in book form in 1966, functions as a sequel to the earlier one, setting the stage for a new era of Hindi short story writing.

Soon after he wrote “Ek Duniya Samantar,” Yadav, along with Mohan Rakesh and Kamleshwar (two other key figures of the *Nayi Kahani* movement), used the essay as a basis for their public announcement of the rise of *Nayi Kahani* movement and its philosophies. This occurred at a conference on the short story in December 1965 in Calcutta (see Bhandari 2007, 80-89).

cirukatai writer uses the short story not to depict reality per se (1972, 45; 1974 [1964-1969], 122-124), but rather to create shared *unarcci*, or feeling, through the literary techniques and prose style he employs in his short story writing. Thus, more important than plot are the story elements of *urainatai* (prose style), the depiction of characters' streams of thought (*manavōṭṭam*) and speech (*pēccu*), the conjuring of a literary illusion or spell (*piramai, māyam*), and the impressions (*pativu*) that arouse the reader's intensity of feeling (*uṇarvu cakti*) and literary taste (*ruci*). For Chellappa and other story writers in his circle, these elements do not establish a realist depiction of the world, but rather a *tani ulakam*, or separate world.²⁴

Chellappa very clearly states his position on the role of *yatārttam*, or reality, in his fiction:

முதலில் நான் இதை சொல்லி விடுகிறேன். ஒரு படைப்பாளியாகவே நான் இதை பார்க்கிறேன்—அதாவது நடைமுறை விவகார அடிப்படையில் இல்லாமல் கற்பனை அடிப்படையில் உருவான இலக்கியப்பிரிவுகளில் தன்னை ஈடுபடுத்திக்கொள்ளும் ஒரு எழுத்தாளனாக. இது என் எல்லையை குறுக்கிக்கொண்டதாக இருந்தாலும் பல அனாவசியமான, புறம்பான கேள்விகளுக்கு இடம் இல்லாமல் செய்து விடுகிறது. யதார்த்த பூர்வமான நடைமுறை உலக வாழ்வுக்குத் தேவையான வகையில் அறிவுர்த்தியாக விவகாரமாக சிந்திக்க வேண்டிய எழுத்துப் போக்கு ஒன்று. இவை அத்தனைக்கும் கற்பனைச் சாயல் ஏறி, ஒரு தோற்ற உலகில் சஞ்சரிக்கச் செய்யும் ஒரு எழுத்துப் போக்கு மற்றொன்று. இந்த வித்தியாசத்தைக் கொண்டு நான் பிந்தினதைத் தேர்ந்தெடுத்துக்கொள்கிறேன்.

First of all, let me say this. I see this [what I'm about to say] as a writer—that is, as a writer who belongs to the literary group formed by a practice based not on issues, but on imagination. Even if this is a shorthand [definition] of my limits, [at least] it leaves no room for several unnecessary and contradictory questions. A completely realist practice [*yatārta naṭaimurai*], the kind that demands thinking about the necessities for worldly survival in a knowledgeable and issues-focused way, is one literary method. Another literary method is that which wanders in a world of appearance, where the cloak of imagination [*karpanai cāyal*] spreads over [*ēru*] all of these [realist elements]. With regard to this difference, I have chosen the latter [literary method].

(1972 [1962], 45)

²⁴ Chellappa and his contemporary Ka. Naa. Subramanyam were the two main and most notable Tamil literary critics in the two decades following Independence. They shared similar views on the short story genre, emphasizing individual prose style over pre-determined formal features and realism. Subramanyam outlines the same history of the Tamil short story as Chellappa (both of whom drew from the *Manikkoti* perspective), stressing both the place of the *cirukatai* within the world story tradition and the literary taste it sought to develop in readers. Although Chellappa and Subramanyam had a falling out over their views on the practice of literary criticism and parted ways, Subramanyam continued to publish articles on the short story in Chellappa's journal *Eluttu* throughout the 1960s. See, for example: Chellappa 1959, 1974e; Rajamartandan 2008; Subramanyam 1985, 2001 [1959]b.

Other major tracts on the history of the Tamil short story also follow the *Manikkoti/Eluttu* outline of this history, which has become the generally established view of development of the Tamil short story. See, for example: Sivathamby 1967, Sivapathasundaram 1984-1985, Sundararajan 2001 [1959], Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram 1989, and Subramanyam 2001 [1959]b. I discuss this history in the previous chapter, as well as the first section of this chapter.

Here, Chellappa outlines two literary methods, one based on the realist portrayal of social problems and another that emphasizes the role of imagination in creating literature. While the former method is concerned with practical issues of survival and knowledge, the latter one meanders through the realm of imagination, recasting reality in the terms of a world of appearance. This latter method is the one that Chellappa lauds and to which he adheres. For this reason, Chellappa underscores that good writing is not as concerned with suitably portraying a particular event or circumstance as it is with articulating the condition of *manita tollai nilai*, or what Chellappa translates as “the human predicament.” The purpose of writing, for Chellappa, is to articulate *manita tollai nilai* through the writer’s imagination (ibid., 46-48)

In this way, *manita tollai nilai* describes the type of *unarcci* (feeling) that the modern short story elicits from readers and is intimately connected to each author’s individual prose style (*tanittanmaiya urainatai*), through which his imagination finds expression. This is because *unarcci* can only be evoked in readers through the medium of language. Chellappa thus stresses that not only must each short story be assessed on the terms of its unique style (1959, 100), but also that it is the experimental (*sotaṇaikkāra*) nature of this style that makes a short story literary (1974 [1957]a, 396). For, it is precisely through its unique, experimental style that a good short story creates *unarcci*. Chellappa most extensively articulates the function of *unarcci* and its relationship to prose style (*urainatai*) in a long essay called “Nalla Cirukatai Eppaṭi Irukkum?” [What Makes a Good Short Story?] (1974 [1957]a). In it he examines the Tamil writer La. Sa. Ramamritham’s short story “Italkal” [Petals] by detailing Ramamritham’s prose style and literary techniques through a line by line analysis of the story.²⁵ Ramamritham’s story is about a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law—both widows—and recounts the way in which they ultimately overcome their sense of disconnection from one another.

From its very outset, the artistic quality of Ramamritham’s story is evident, says Chellappa, in the way that it begins *in media res* with a dialogue between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. He demonstrates that these characters’ words and actions subtly convey the context and backstory without the mediation of a narrator. After having closely outlined its opening passages, Chellappa then conveys what he finds to be this story’s unique prose style:

ஆக, கதாபாத்திரம் தனக்குள் பேசிக் கொள்ளும், மனதுக்குள் நினைத்துக் கொள்ளும் ரீதியில் ஆரம்பித்து, நடுவில் மாமியாரை பார்த்துச் சொல்கிற மாதிரி செய்து மறுபடியும் அவள் மனப்போக்காக தொடர்ந்து, மீண்டும் பக்கத்தில் உள்ள யாரிடமோ பேசுவதுபோல் பேசவைத்து மீண்டும் தன் மனப்போக்கு வழிக்கு திரும்ப வைத்து, மறுபடியும் ஒரு நேரடி வாக்கியத்தை புகுத்தி, இத்தனையும் ஒரு சிறு பாராவில் செய்யப்பட்டிருக்கிறது. நூதன வெளியீட்டு வழி, உத்திகையால் ஆகும்.

[...] இந்த நூதன வழியில், எண்ணங்கள் பிறக்கிற நிலையிலேயே, அவை போகிற போக்கிலேயே அப்படியே வாக்யங்களை எண்ணங்களுக்கு ஏற்ப அமைத்து, எண்ணத் தொடர் எப்படி எல்லாம் கால்கள் வகுத்துப் போனாலும் சரி அப்படியே அநுபவத்தை வெளியிட்டுக் காட்டுவதாகும். அதுக்கு பழக்கத்தில்

²⁵ La. Sa. Ramamritham (1916-2007) was considered one of the later additions to the *Manikkoti* writers circle who continued to write in the post-Independence period. His short story “Italkal” was published in his short story collection of the same title in 1960. “Italkal” was clearly in circulation earlier, as Chellappa’s essay on it was published in 1957. Chellappa does not include the publication details of the story in his essay, however.

உள்ள மொழிப் பாங்கும் சொல்லும் விதமும் போதுமானதாக இல்லாவிட்டால் தானே ஒரு தனித்தன்மையான சொல்லாட்சியை, நடையை வகுத்துக்கொள்கிறான் கதாசிரியன். அதில் உள்ள இன்னொரு விசேஷம் மனவோட்டத்துக்கும் பேச்சுக்கும் ஈடுகட்டி பயனாகிற அளவுக்கு எழுத்துப் பாங்கு அமைய வேண்டும். அந்த முறை இங்கே கையாளப்பட்டிருப்பது நாம் கவனிக்கத்தக்கது.

So, [the story] begins in a manner in which the character talks to herself and thinks internally; in the middle it looks at the mother-in-law and emulates her speech; once more it joins with [the heroine's] stream of thought; then again it portrays [the heroine] as if she is speaking to someone nearby; again it returns to her stream of thought; and again it interpolates [her thoughts] with a direct sentence—[the story] does all of this in one small paragraph. It is a new method of expression and use of [literary] technique.

[...] Through this new method, [the heroine's] experiences are expressed through the very condition in which [her] thoughts are generated and progress—the sentences are constructed according to thoughts, no matter which ways they they frame time. If the features of language and the type of speech usual [to the progression of thought] are not enough, the story writer himself [also] establishes a unique [*tanittanmaiya*] form of expression [*sollāṭci*] and method [*natai*]. Another notable matter with regard to this—the features of writing must be constructed to meet the needs of thought [*manavōṭṭam*] and speech [*pēccu*]. That such a method is employed here [in Ramamritham's story] merits our attention.

(1974 [1957]a, 399-400)

In this passage, Chellappa draws out the way Ramamritham's language moves between the *manavottam*, or internal stream of thoughts, of the daughter-in-law (who is the heroine) and her conversations with her mother-in-law. For Chellappa, the way Ramamritham's language represents the heroine's thoughts and integrates them with speech characterizes the new method of expression and literary technique that Ramamritham employs, which forms the basis of his unique prose style. Every story has been told before, Chellappa goes on to say, but what is new is each writer's prose style (ibid., 406). In particular, each successful story writer moves between characters' *manavottam* (internal stream of thought) and *peccu* (speech) in his own individual prose style. It is the distinct language through which the movement between internal and external speech is depicted in modern Tamil short story writing that Chellappa repeatedly analyses in his critical work on the *cirukatai* (see, for example: 1974 [1957]b, 1974 [1964-1969]). The experimental nature of this type of language and story writing opens up the narrative content to multiple interpretations, establishing not morality, but rather artistic taste (*kalai racanai*) within readers that resonates “like a song that resounds over and over in [their] ears,” (1974 [1964-1969], 5; see also 1974 [1957]a, 419).²⁶ In this way, good writing enables writers and readers to satisfy their souls, cultivate their minds and hearts, and create richness in human life (1972, 46-48).

²⁶ “ஒரு நல்ல கதையை படித்து உள்ளத்தில் அது குடைந்துகொண்டே இருக்கும்—ஒரு நல்ல இசையை கேட்ட காதுகளில் அது திரும்பத்திரும்ப ஒலிப்பதுபோல.”

Indeed, the *maṇita taṇmai*, or individuality, that a writer conveys through his *urainatai*, or prose style, is only successful to the extent that it evokes *unarcci* (feeling) or *uṇarvu cakti* (the intensity of feeling) in the reader through its artistic form (1974 [1957]a, 421). The writer does so through the series of impressions (*pativu toṭarcci*) he produces in a story:

ஒரு பொருளை பார்த்ததும் முதல் பார்வையில் பளிச்சென ஒரு பதிவு (Impression) நம் மனதில் ஏற்படுகிறது. [...] இரண்டாவது பார்வை மூலம் ஏற்படும் இன்னொரு பதிவு முதல் பதிவின்மேல் விழுந்து அதை அழுத்துகிறது. அல்லது அதை மாற்றுகிறது. அல்லது பழயதை அழித்து விட்டு புதுப் பதிவு உண்டாக்குகிறது. [...] இப்படி மூன்று நான்கு என்று அடுத்தடுத்து பார்வைகள் அந்த படைப்பு பொருள் மீது விழ விழ, மனப்பதிவுகள் பாதிக்கப்பட்டு இறுதியில் ஏற்படும் மனப்பதிவு மதிப்புள்ளதாகவும் கருத்தாழம் கொண்டதாவும் ஆழந்த அர்த்தம் கொண்டுள்ளதாகவும் சிற்றந்த ருசி உள்ளதாகவும் ஆகிறது. ஆகவே எழுதுகிறவனுக்குச் சமமாக வாசகனுக்கு இந்த உணர்வு சக்தி இருப்பது தேவையானதாகும்.

Upon our first view of a [story's] content, an impression brightly arises in our minds. [...] The impression that arises through the second view falls upon the first impression and deepens it. Or changes it. Or abolishes the old impression and produces a new one. [...] After having revisited [the story] three or four times in this way—our perspectives falling over and over upon the story's content and influencing the impressions in our minds—the final impression that arises brings value to the [preceding] impression[s] in our minds and evokes a depth of ideas, profound meaning, and the internalization of excellent taste [*ruci*]. Thus, it is necessarily [the case] that this intensity of feeling [*unarvu cakti*] is simultaneously the writer's and the reader's.

(1974 [1957]a, 422)

Unarvu cakti is here defined as a shared sensibility existing between both the writer and the reader. It arises through the series of impressions that the writer creates, which effect the reader's mind as he repeatedly revisits the story. The final impression with which the reader is left not only embodies the deeper meaning of the story, but also evokes literary taste. In this way, Chellappa likens literary taste to the intensity of feeling that the story expresses, shared as it is between writer and reader. It is this mutually understood feeling that provides the basis for the artistic quality that comprises the story's thematic essence (*kataikaru*). For Chellappa, the most important element of a short story is this artistic essence evoked through *unarcci*—in other words, the sensibilities of beauty (*alaku*) and wholeness (*orumaippātu*) that writers and readers share through the experience of good story writing (1974 [1957]a, 419; 1974 [1957]b, 356; 1974 [1964-1969], 22).²⁷

Chellappa thus equates the artistic beauty of good short stories with the shared *unarcci* (feeling) and *ruci* (taste) it arouses in readers. Moreover, artistic beauty is contingent upon the

²⁷ Chellappa and other writers of his *Eluttu* circle, such as Ka. Naa. Subramanyam, took the concept of *orumaippātu*—wholeness, completeness, unity—from earlier *Manikkoti* writers, such as Pudumaippittan, who in turn finds this concept based on Poe's idea of "unity of effect" (see, for example: Chellappa 1974e [1964-1969], Pudumaippittan 2002 [1934], Subramanyam 2001 [1959]b). In this way, *orumaippātu* can be thought of in a similar vein to Yadav's *prabhavanviti*.

way a writer's *tanittanmaiya urainatai* (unique, or individual, prose style) depicts characters' *manavottam* (stream of thought) together with their *peccu natai* (style of speech). In his essays on Ramamritham, Pudumaippittan, and the history of the Tamil short story, Chellappa uses a variety of terms to describe this beauty—such as *kalai alaku* (artistic beauty), *varṇajāl* (the artful pretense of description), *piramai* (illusion), and *mayam* (spell or illusion)—stressing the experimental ways it arises through *urainatai*, or prose style. Indeed, the most compelling aspect of good short story writing to Chellappa is the inextricability of its *kalai mayam* (aesthetic spell) with each author's unique use of language. For example, in his analysis of an early short story by V.V.S. Iyer, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, Chellappa pinpoints the particularly literary quality of the piece in the way it uses prose style to create an identification between readers and a peepul tree that thinks and speaks like ordinary individuals.²⁸ For Chellappa, the success of this story lies in Iyer's realization that a peepul tree would not express its thoughts in *centamil*, or classical Tamil, which was the more conventional way of writing that was rigorously promoted at the time by Dravidian Tamil revivalists and the "Pure Tamil Movement." Rather, this ordinary creature would more realistically use spoken (*peccu*) Tamil. Through his peepul tree character, says Chellappa, "[Iyer] put forth the opinion that one must write so that through the style of spoken Tamil the beauty of spoken sound resonates" (Chellappa 1974 [1964-1969], 31).²⁹ Chellappa views this style of writing in spoken Tamil not only as novel, but also as exactly that which embodies the literariness of the Tamil short story, for it is through this style, that readers are "able to experience the spell (*māyam*) that [Iyer] evokes" (ibid, 32).³⁰ It is in discussing Iyer's story that Chellappa writes in the second epigraph to this chapter that through the use of *natai* (style), *unarcci* (feeling), and *mayam* (spell), Iyer enables readers to lose themselves in a shared place of ecstasy, a *tani ulakam* or separate world.

Chellappa thus uses the concept of a separate world (*tani ulakam*) to define the literary humanism that the *cirukatai* conveys. Through this *tani ulakam*, the short story expresses a universally shared understanding of the human predicament (*manita tollai nilai*). It is one shaped by a range of diverse perspectives that are both new and old (as Chellappa's reading of Pudumaippittan's Ahalya demonstrates). Chellappa's separate world brings these diverse perspectives together through the shared sensibilities (of feeling and taste) that the short story successfully evokes. For him, it is not a new reality that takes precedence, but rather the novelty of individual prose style, through which both writers and readers partake in common aesthetic feeling. Whereas in Yadav's parallel world the commonality expressed by the short story is rooted in a shared external context, in Chellappa's separate world this "unity in diversity" lies in the universality of internal feeling that each short story enables to resound within individuals in its own unique way. In this way, the juxtaposition of these authors' work confirms Bakhtin's observation that questions of style are inseparable from questions of genre, demonstrating that

²⁸ Iyer's short story is called "Kuḷattiṅkarai Aracamaram" [A Peepul Tree by the Water Tank] and was most likely published 1915 in his first collection of short stories *Maṅkaiyarkkaraciyiṅ Kātal Mutaliya Kataikal* [Mankaiyarkkaraci's Love and Other Stories] (see Kennedy 1980). Chellappa and the other *Manikkoti* writers hailed Iyer as the father of the Tamil short story.

²⁹ "பேச்சு நடையாக, அந்த பேச்சு ஒலி நயம் தொனிக்க எழுதவேண்டும் என்ற கருத்தை கொண்டிருக்கிறார்."

³⁰ "இந்தவித நடை மூலம் அவர் எழுப்புகிற மாயத்தை நாம் உணரமுடிகிறது."

generic conventions, while seemingly universal, are deeply rooted in historically and geographically specific understandings of the world (see Introduction to this dissertation).

Good Stories and Goodwives

Alongside their critical work, Yadav and Chellappa also wrote a substantial number of short stories. In this section, I focus on two of these, one by each writer-critic, that exemplify the interconnections between Yadav's and Chellappa's critical writing and their story writing: Yadav's "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" [The Story of a Weak Girl] published in 1957, and Chellappa's "Alaku Mayakkam" [The Spell of Beauty] published in 1958. I have chosen these stories for the ways they envision the contours of the parallel/separate worlds Yadav and Chellappa theorize and the specific conceptualizations of literary humanism and literariness that these worlds convey. For example, in "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" Yadav makes use of the concepts of image (*bimb*), symbol (*pratik*), and layers (*dharatal*)—which I outlined above—to create the larger effect (*prabhavanvati*) and meaning (*sarthakta*) of the story. Through these literary features, this story establishes a human connection between readers and the characters based on their mutual understanding of their shared external context and reality. Chellappa's "Alaku Mayakkam," on the other hand, centers on the main character's stream of thought (*manavottam*) and his realization of the relativity of morality. The narrator's *manavottam*, in conjunction with a series of dialogues with other characters, expresses a spell (*mayam*) of beauty (*alaku*) that references both women's physical appearance, as well as elevated artistic taste. Through this spell, Chellappa's story connects readers to its characters. In what follows, I focus on how both stories link these new elements of narrative structure to the depiction of changing man-woman relationships. What I hope to demonstrate is that it is through the interrogation of what makes a modern goodwife that these stories articulate what makes a good story.

Yadav's "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" was published the same year as Bhandari's story of the same title, which I discussed in Chapter 1. Like Bhandari's story, it examines a love triangle between two boys and a girl and considers the implications of human desire for understanding the changing relationship between a husband and a wife. Whereas Bhandari's story makes a switch from third person to first person to reveal the conflicted choices of the female protagonist Rup, in Yadav's story this switch illuminates the controlling hand and intentionality of a male narrator. Through this change in narrative voice, Yadav's story explicitly brings the problem of form to bear on the short story's content, raising the question of the relationship between form and content from the very outset. In the first section of the story—"Bhūmikā" or "Introduction"—the narrator addresses readers directly, framing the story plot as a scenario he believes to be universally recognizable to and oft experienced among his readers:

पाठको, इसमें मैंने सुखान्त और दुखान्त दोनों प्रकार की रुचि वालों के लिए कहानी कही है। आपमें से बहुतों ने अपनी सच्ची लगन से किसी पड़ोसिन लड़की से अवश्य ही प्रेम किया होगा, और बहुत सम्भावना है—बहुत क्या निश्चय ही—उस लड़की की शादी आपके देखते-

देखते दूसरे के साथ हो गई होगी। तब आप रोए होंगे, मन-ही-मन घुले होंगे और अक्सर आत्महत्या की बात सोचा करते होंगे। लेकिन फिर सभी कुछ ठीक हो गया होगा। [...]

खैर, मैं कहानी यहाँ से शुरू करना चाहता हूँ कि प्रेमिका की शादी को हुए बहुत थोड़ा, लगभग दो-तीन साल का समय बीता है। प्रेमी, सुविधा के लिए उसका नाम प्रमोद मानिए [...]

Readers, I have recounted a story here for both those who like happy endings and those who like sad endings. Many among you must have undoubtedly loved some girl next door with all your affection, and it is very possible—not possible, absolutely certain—that she was married to someone else before your eyes. You must have wept then, melted away deep in your heart, and often considered the possibility of suicide. But eventually everything became all right. [...]

Well, I want to begin my story here: it has been a short while since the girl was married, about two or three years have passed. For the sake of convenience, take [her] lover's name to be Pramod [...].

(Yadav 2001 [1957], 15)

The unnamed narrator launches his story by setting up his relationship to his readers: he is a storyteller among ordinary people, writing to cater to their diverse literary preferences, whether for happy or sad endings. He establishes the common ground he shares with his readers by framing his story as a conventional one about childhood lovers presumably torn apart by the traditional norms for marriage. The readers he hails are marked as male by the perspective with which he calls upon them to identify: that of the boy who watches his lover get married off, mourns her loss, and then moves on with his life. The narrator then shifts from the general to the particular by giving this boy the name Pramod, through whom he will unravel the story of a weak girl. The weak girl to whom the narrator refers, we soon discover, is Pramod's childhood sweetheart, Savita. Pramod is now a politician, says the narrator, and he happens to be visiting the town where Savita lives to conduct some business.

Once the narrator has conveyed his intentions and set up the context, the story moves into its second section, entitled “Kuām aur Gūmjatī Āvāz” or “The Well and the Echoing Voice.” With the exception of a two-sentence paragraph, this part is written in the third person from the perspective of Pramod and weaves his present actions and thoughts with his memories of his past relationship with Savita. Pramod has just received brief note from Savita while working in his room. In it she chastises him for not making an effort to visit while in town and invites him to dinner. The note ends with a twist: “I’ll make today’s meal with my own two hands, it will be especially for you because it will be mixed with potassium cyanide. There is absolutely no joke in this. But you will simply have to eat it. How special! You must come at eight o’clock. You’re coming, aren’t you?” (ibid., 16).³¹ The note has a twinge of delightful irony to Pramod; he is both amused by it and willing to accept Savita’s challenge. He sings a song to himself as he

³¹ “आज का भोजन मैं अपने ही हाथों से बनाऊँगी, यह विशेष रूप से आपके ही लिए होगा, क्योंकि उसमें पोटेशियम साइनाइड मिला होगा। मज़ाक इसमें ज़रा भी नहीं है। लेकिन वह आपको खाना ही है। विशेष क्या! आप आठ बजे आ ही रहे हैं। आ रहे हैं न?”

drifts off into the echoes of the past (*atīt kī guñjalikā*): “Even poison becomes the nectar of the gods (*amṛt*) if fed to me by your hands...,” (ibid.) he hums to himself.³²

With this the story moves into the present of an earlier time, when a younger Pramod has just returned from his studies in England and has sat down to tutor Savita in his room. The two are engaged in an argument that lingers on flirtation: he is attempting to have her drink the coffee he has brought back from abroad, but she firmly resists, insisting that it is a vile drink that she, a Brahmin girl, would never consume in his inferior Kayastha caste home. Pramod mocks her superiority complex, and despite her efforts to turn Pramod’s criticism back on himself, he manages to force Savita to take a gulp. She purses her lips, retorting that the coffee tastes like bitter poison (*kaḍavī zahar*), and Pramod gleefully responds that to him it tastes sweet as the nectar of the gods (*amṛt*). Through Pramod’s memory of their conversation, the story gives significance to the love song Pramod hummed as he receded into his memory, revealing that the dinner Savita will feed him can indeed be seen as an ironic reversal of earlier events: a meal laced with cyanide fed by her hands in exchange for a depraved, foreign-brought (*milecch, vides*) coffee fed by his.

Here, the narrator intervenes: “Readers, I feel that this story is proceeding very lightly and childishly. Therefore it is necessary to give it a more serious hue” (ibid.).³³ With this gesture, the plot immediately turns onto the course the narrator has promised in his introduction. Pramod’s attention is requested elsewhere. He leaves, signaling meaningfully to his notebook. Once alone, Savita opens it to find a letter from Pramod in which he writes to his dear Savita that he is being pressured to get married. He refuses to allow this: “I know that if my marriage will be, *bas*, it will be with one person, or else it will not happen. Give me your hand, and I’ll not fear even the god of death! You are my inspiration, my guiding instrument, my strength. [...] Savita, you are my completion” (20).³⁴ The letter is an earnest appeal declaring Pramod’s love for and commitment to Savita. But before Savita can react, Pramod’s *bhābhī*, or sister-in-law, privately asks Savita to convince Pramod to marry as his family wishes, threatening to drink poison if he doesn’t. Savita half-heartedly concedes and approaches Pramod. Disheartened that Savita refuses to stand up for their love, he coldly responds, “I thought you were quite strong. Well...,” (23).³⁵ The story returns to the present. Pramod mutters to himself, “*Humh*, she’ll give me poison, I’ll see what kind of poison she’ll give me...Weak girl!” (ibid.).³⁶ He then sinks into himself once again.

The third section of the story, “Dorāhā, Bhamvar aur Digbhrānt” or “Crossroads, Whirlpool and Confusion,” is written entirely in the third person from Savita’s perspective,

³² “अमृत हो जाएगा विष भी, पिला दो हाथ से अपने...”

³³ “पाठको, मुझे लगता है कि यह कहानी बहुत हल्की और बचकानी चल रही है। इसलिए इसे थोड़ा गम्भीर रंग देना ज़रूरी है।”

³⁴ “मैं जानता हूँ कि शादी मेरी होगी बस एक के साथ, नहीं तो नहीं होगी। [...] तुम मेरा साथ दो तो मैं यम से भी नहीं डरता! तुम मेरी प्रेरणा हो, दिग्दर्शक-यंत्र हो, शक्ति हो। [...] सविता, तुम मेरी पूर्णता हो।”

Pramod’s letter resonates with Yadav’s theorizations of the *nayi kahani*, which I discussed in the first section of this chapter. There, I demonstrated that Yadav sees the *nayi kahani* as a medium that portrays individuals trying to communicate with and find solace and completion in one another.

³⁵ “मैं तुम्हें काफ़ी मज़बूत समझता था। खैर...”

³⁶ “हूँह, ज़हर देगी, मैं भी तो देखूँ कैसा ज़हर देगी...कमज़ोर लड़की!”

beginning with her state of turmoil as she awaits Pramod's reply to her dinner invitation. She is certain he has accepted and prides herself for still being able to intuit his reaction with authority (*sādhikār*)—the twisted, sarcastic smile he must have had when he read her letter and the lack of seriousness with which he must have taken the situation. The last words he said to her long ago ring in her ears: “Remember that your soul is forever virginal and cannot be married to anyone. It belongs to me and me alone (*us par to merā aur keval merā hī adhikār hai*)” (25).³⁷ She responds out loud that he does indeed possess her soul, and a line out of Victor Hugo about the happiness one feels in knowing someone loves her despite her weaknesses (*kamzorī*) crosses her mind. She takes Pramod's unopened reply to her husband Lokesh with a heavy heart: no matter what she feels inside, it is Lokesh who possesses the right over her actions now.

The story then flashes back to earlier in the day when Lokesh interrogates Savita about her relationship with Pramod. Lokesh suspects she once loved Pramod and asks whether she still does. She replies that in truth they did have a childhood romance, but now things have changed:

“जब लड़की घर से आती है तो अपने सारे सम्पर्कों और सम्बन्धों को वहीं छोड़ आती है, उसमें बहुत-से अच्छे हैं और बहुत-से बुरे; बहुत-से आवश्यक होते हैं, बहुत मधुर होते हैं, लेकिन उनमें कुछ को वह भूल जाती है, कुछ को वह भुला देती है। इस तरह ससुराल वह बिलकुल ही नई होकर जाती है, और ऐसा कौन लड़की कह सकती है कि उसके किसी भी तरह के कोई सम्बन्ध पहले थे ही नहीं?” [...]

“मान लो, तुम्हें उसे ज़हर देना पड़े तो?” [...]

“अब्वल तो ऐसा मौका आएगा नहीं, लेकिन अगर आया भी तो मेरा तो विश्वास है, मैं झिझकूंगी नहीं...लेकिन ऐसा मौका आएगा ही क्यों?”

“तो सविता!” इस बार बहुत ही दृढ़ और निर्णयात्मक ढंग से लोकेश बोला, “मेरी इच्छा है कि इस बार तुम उसे ज़हर दो, मेरे सामने। मैं देखना चाहता हूँ कि उसे ज़हर देते हुए तुम्हारा हाथ काँपने हैं या नहीं। तुम झूठ कह रही हो या सच। यह सिर्फ सुरक्षित आत्म-स्वीकृति का बहाना मात्र ही तो नहीं है?”

“जब चाहें...” सविता मुसकराई। इन मज़ाकों से वह डरने वाली नहीं है।

“जब का सवाल नहीं है। यह बहुत अच्छा मौका है। तुम आज ही उसे बुलाओगी। मैं बहुत ही गम्भीरतापूर्वक यह बात इसलिए कह रहा हूँ कि हमारा दाम्पत्य-सुख इसी घटना पर आधारित होने जा रहा है।”

“When a girl comes from her [natal] home she leaves all her connections and relationships there, many among them good and many bad; many among them necessary, many among them sweet. But some of them she forgets, some of them she makes herself forget. In this way, she goes to her husband's home

³⁷ “...याद रखना, तुम्हारी आत्मा चिर-कुमारी है और उसका किसी के साथ विवाह नहीं हो सकता। उस पर तो मेरा और केवल मेरा अधिकार है।”

Through her recollection of Pramod's words, Savita raises the question of Indian woman's guardianship, which—as I show below—Lokesh also brings up.

having become completely new, and which girl could say that she never had any kind of relationship prior [to going]?" [...]

"Suppose you had to give [Pramod] poison?"

"First, such an occasion shall never arise, but even if it did, then I believe I wouldn't hesitate...but why would such an occasion arise?"

"Then Savita!" This time Lokesh spoke in a very firm and decided manner, "I desire that this time you give him poison, in front of me. I want to see whether your hands shake as you give it to him or not. Whether you are telling a lie or the truth. Is this guarded agreement not just simply a pretext?"

"Whenever you wish..." Savita smiled. She wasn't one to fear these jokes.

"There's no question of when. This is a great opportunity. You will invite him today. I am saying this very seriously because our marital happiness (*dāmpatya-sukh*) has become dependent on this very event."

(ibid., 28)

When Lokesh confronts Savita, she rehearses the role she fulfills as a goodwife within her husband's family, qualifying it by explaining that of course women have relationships and connections before getting married. But as any goodwife would, she has left these behind and is now renewed and solely committed to her husband, she says. Lokesh, however, questions whether Savita has truly moved beyond her old relationship with Pramod. On his view, giving Pramod poison is the only way she can prove her complete surrender to Lokesh, which is the linchpin of their marital happiness. His request is an exercise of his husbandly right over her, which she accepts as both a challenge and a duty.

But inside, Savita is heartbroken, and Pramod's words from the past rise again before her: "Weak girl (*kamzor ladki*)!" (29). She bursts out sobbing, imagining herself crying on his shoulder:

अचानक उसके गले में बाँहें डालकर, उसके कन्धे पर लटककर सविता फूट-फूटकर रो पड़ी...
सिसकती साँसों में उसने सुना, "कमज़ोर लड़की..."

नहीं, वह कन्धा नहीं था, वह किसी का गला नहीं था; जिसमें बाँहें डालकर वह रोई थी...

कहानी का प्रारम्भ

पाठकों, मैं जानता हूँ कि मेरी कहानी दो लड़के और एक लड़की वाले पुराने त्रिकोण पर आ गई है, फिर भी मैं चाहता हूँ कि यह त्रिकोण कहानी की समाप्ति न हुआ करे।

Suddenly, Savita put her arms around [Pramod's] neck, clung to his shoulder and burst out crying. Between her sobbing gasps she heard, "Weak girl..."

No, there was no shoulder, there wasn't anyone's neck around which she had thrown her arms and was crying...

The Beginning of the Story

Readers, I know that my story has arrived at an age-old [love] triangle between two boys and a girl; nevertheless, I desire that this triangle should not conclude the story.

(ibid., 31)

Savita clings to Pramod in her mind's eye as she cries and realizes as she hears his voice that no one is actually there; the Pramod she imagines is of the past, and Savita is now the wife of another man. The narrator intercedes at this moment to assert that his story will not retread the same ground as previous stories that focus on love triangles; rather, he wishes his to end differently. He thus titles the fourth section of the story (which, structurally, is the conclusion) as "The Beginning of the Story," and it is through this turn that he permits his story about the desires of a husband, a wife, and a lover to continue.

This final section is brief. Pramod has arrived for dinner; Lokesh, Savita, and Pramod banter with one another as if nothing unusual lies between them; Pramod apologizes that he cannot stay long due to a meeting; and the three sit down to eat. In her mind, Savita pleads for some force to intercede, whether it be her own will-power or some external event. She feels as if she is Damocles sitting in Dionysius's throne with a sword tied by a strand of hair dangling over her head, or as if she is standing at a great precipice with Poe's pendulum closing in upon her (33). The fateful moment approaches; Lokesh asks Savita to serve Pramod pudding before he leaves; she feels as if she might scream.

But:

अनजाने ही तश्तरी प्रमोद की ओर बढ़ गई और काँपते हाथ को तश्तरी में से लेने में दिक्कत न हो, इसलिए एक हाथ नीचे लगाकर उसने चम्मच भर ली और तेज़ी से चम्मच होंठों की तरफ बढ़ाई।

दुखान्त कहानी के पाठकों के लिए मेरी कहानी खत्म हो गई और वे बिना आगे बढ़े, बड़े मज़े में सन्तोष कर सकते हैं।

Without knowing it, the plate moved towards Pramod, and so that she would have no difficulty removing her trembling hand from the plate, she grabbed the spoon, supporting it with one hand below, and quickly drew it towards the lips.

For those readers who desire a sad ending, my story has ended, and without proceeding they can feel satisfied with great relish.

(ibid., 33)

In this moment, despite Savita's internal protest and desire to stop herself from carrying out Lokesh's wishes, she acts mechanically, moving the plate of poisoned pudding towards Pramod and bracing her trembling hand by clutching a spoon. The spoon advances towards "the lips," without indicating whether they are hers or Pramod's, and the narrator stops the narrative here, leaving it ambiguous whether Savita succeeds in rescuing Pramod by poisoning herself or answers Lokesh's challenge by poisoning Pramod. What is made clear, however, is that someone has been poisoned (hence the sad ending) and that it is not Savita's will power, but the narrator's that controls the turn of events (hence the plate moves unknowingly). This sad ending that the narrator offers his readers confirms Savita's *kamzori* (weakness) while simultaneously evading the determination of what manner of *kamzor ladki* (weak girl) she is: on the one hand, she can be viewed as a weak girl for not standing up to Lokesh and staking claim to her love for Pramod, as she is unable to stop the plate and spoon from moving. But on the other hand, the narrator deliberately leaves open the question of whether Savita is weak because she poisons herself (thus

confirming her love for Pramod but denying herself the possibility of preserving it), or because she poisons Pramod (thus confirming her wifely loyalty to Lokesh and her ultimate rejection of Pramod). Furthermore, even if readers believe Savita has poisoned Pramod, has she still met Lokesh's challenge? For, he has asked her to prove her commitment to and love for him not just by poisoning Pramod, but also through the resolute, unwavering manner in which she does it. Her hand trembles before she grabs the spoon; does Lokesh catch this? Will her feelings for Pramod still come between the happy couple despite her poisoning him? These unanswered questions about what it means to be a weak woman are, in these ways, also questions about what it means to be a weak man who may or may not have complete *adhikar*, right or possession, over his wife.

But the narrator continues with a few more brief lines that end the story:

सुखान्त पसन्द करने वाले नीचे की पंक्तियाँ और जोड़ लें।
 अचानक प्रमोद की कलाई को लोकेश ने पकड़ लिया, भरे गले से बोला, “बस!”
 चौंकर प्रमोद ने उनकी ओर देखा। दोनों एकदम घबराकर उठ खड़े हुए, क्योंकि सविता कुर्सी से नीचे लुढ़क गई थी। उस ओर झपटते हुए लोकेश के मुँह से निकली, “कमज़ोर लड़की!”

Those readers who like happy endings may add the lines below.
 Suddenly, Lokesh grabbed Pramod's wrist and said in a full voice,
 “Stop!”

Startled, Pramod looked towards him. Both stood up abruptly, perplexed because Savita had toppled from her chair. As Lokesh sprung towards her, the words “weak girl!” slipped out of his mouth.

(ibid., 33)

This second ending clears up towards whose lips Savita's spoon advances: it is Pramod's wrist and not Savita's that Lokesh grabs and stops. Lokesh's action confirms whatever doubts Pramod may have had about whether he would actually be poisoned and establishes Lokesh as the one who controls Savita's and Pramod's fates. This is because in this final instance Lokesh decides both what Savita does and whether Pramod lives or dies. The second ending also rethinks the meaning of *kamzori*, or weakness: the words slip out of Lokesh's mouth as if he might have believed in Savita's commitment to him had she not fainted. In this way, the act of fainting reveals that Savita does indeed have feelings for Pramod, and she can be seen as weak not only because she has not stood up for her true desires, but also because she is incapable of controlling the emotion that has caused her to topple from her chair. But her fainting also pinpoints Lokesh's and Pramod's weaknesses. Lokesh's lies in the fact that he does not fully possess Savita's heart and consequently, his full husbandly rights over her. Pramod's weakness is marked when Lokesh calls Savita a weak girl; this statement echoes Pramod's earlier assessment of Savita while also reestablishing his inability to win Savita for himself or have control over his life and death.

This dual ending enables “Ek Kamzor Ladki” to depart from conventional stories about love triangles by expressing the newness of its story structure as a question of what makes a

modern goodwife. The narrator begins by appealing to readers' understanding of both the experience of love triangles, as well as conventional literary representations of them: his, too, is a timeworn story about a boy who loves a girl who marries another man. Then his story zeros in on the life of a particular man named Pramod and jumpstarts with a twist: a dinner invitation by his childhood sweetheart inviting Pramod to ingest poison by her hand. It is the explanation of this note and the resolution to which it will lead that drive the plot of the story. Through his first intervention in the narrative progression, the narrator directs the course of the story onto the path of decline he has guaranteed his readers, and he does so by exposing the conflict between Pramod and Savita as one based on their differing values about marriage. Pramod resists family norms and seeks a marriage in accordance with the desires of his heart, while Savita accepts these norms and breaks off her relationship with Pramod. This is the first instance in which we understand the meaning of *kamzori*, what we might call a conventional understanding because it establishes the basis for the love triangle that the narrator has led us to expect. Then, the narrative heightens the story's twist by explaining the events that have led to Savita's note. *Kamzori* is now posed as a challenge between a husband and wife joined by traditional marriage norms in which husbandly *adhikar* is at stake: who is the guardian of the Indian woman, the husband or the lover? The dual ending fails to answer this question straightforwardly, underscoring that "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" is no conventional story about a love triangle. For, the question of who is the guardian of the Indian woman is expressed as indeterminately as the conclusion. What we are left with is a new type of (love) story that raises more anxieties about the nature of storytelling and the relationships between men and women than it resolves.

Importantly, "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani" expresses the shared human condition of fragmented individuality through the use of images (*bimb*), symbols (*pratik*), and layers (*dharatal*). For instance, this short story's section titles (particularly "The Well and the Echoing Voice" and "Crossroads, Whirlpool, and Confusion") function both as images and symbols, due to the multiple layers—both rhetorical and psychological—on which they continually reappear in the story. Recall that in the first section Pramod remembers his past interactions with Savita through a song that "echoes of the past." Within the ulterior present of this memory resound images of poison and nectar that at times blend into each other in the context of the love Pramod and Savita share but cannot express. This inexpressibility takes shape as the recurring, or echoing, phrase "kamzor ladki," or "weak girl," which all three characters understand in their own ways, thereby structuring both the meaning of the story and the inconclusiveness of its ending. Another example of Yadav's use of symbols is the confusion (*digbhrant*) brought into focus by the title of the story's third section, which is shaped by the images of a "crossroads" and a "whirlpool." These function as symbols that express Savita's inner turmoil and conflict—the battle between her desire to firmly meet Lokesh's challenge and her deep love for and connection to Pramod. Confusion, in the story, is both a downward spiraling whirlpool of memory and emotions, as well as a theoretical crossroads: who has the moral right to possess Savita—Lokesh or Pramod?

The references in the story to outside texts (songs, poetry, and literature) add to the layeredness of these image-symbols, on the one hand contextualizing them within already established and recognizable frameworks of love and personal predicament, while on the other hand rewriting these frameworks through the particular circumstances (*parives*) of Savita, Pramod,

and Lokesh. Similarly, the interventions of the narrator create a dialogue between the “maim” and the “voh”—the “I” and the “he”—articulating an identification between the reader, the narrator, and Pramod, while simultaneously establishing an impassable distance between these three figures that can only be resolved insofar as the reader interprets the meaning of *kamzori*, or weakness. In this way, the story’s indeterminate conclusion conjoins the writer’s intentionality and the story’s meaning with the reader’s interpretation, recasting any abiding understandings of man-woman relationships in the terms of Savita’s, Pramod’s, and Lokesh’s fragmented realities of the present.

Chellappa’s “Alaku Mayakkam” also centers on the subject of Indian women’s guardianship, but it expresses the newness of the relationship between men and woman, as well as the story form, differently. In Yadav’s story, both what makes a good story (should it have a happy ending or a sad one?) and what makes a goodwife (does she belong to her husband or her lover?) are left open-ended. But in Chellappa’s story, the irresolvable nature of the guardianship question is depicted as the desired aesthetic and moral value shaping modern social life and individuality. The narrator of this story is also the protagonist, an unnamed elderly man traveling back to Chennai by train with his sister after attending a series of family weddings. The story begins by marking a shift in time from an age when everyone took time off to attend weddings and the present when work and responsibility limit such traditional celebrations. The subject of the narrator’s conversation with his sister stems from their having witnessed the grooms’ selections of their brides. It shifts between the nature of beauty on an abstract level and the more concrete level of physical beauty that these grooms should and did desire. The narrator’s sister jokingly brings up the qualities of her own facial features—perhaps her eyes are too close together, she says, but her nose is attractive, round as a dumpling. The narrator tries to imagine a face with a perfect nose and set of eyes:

‘கொழக்கட்டை’ மூக்கும் ‘மெச்சக்கொட்டை’ கண்ணும் சேர்ந்து உருவான ஒரு முகத்தை என் நினைப்பு கற்பனை செய்து பார்த்துக் கொண்டது. இரண்டும் சேர்ந்துவிட்டால் மட்டும் அழகு உருவாகிவிட்டதாக ஆகிவிட்டதாகக் கருது முடியுமா? நெற்றி, காது, வாய், உதடு, மோவாய் இதெல்லாம் சேர்த்துப் பார்க்கிறபோது, எல்லாம் ஏற்கையாக அமைந்த ஒரு முகத்தை நான் பார்த்திருக்கிறேனா? எனக்குள் கேட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தேன். என் மன ஓட்டத்தைப் பிடித்துவிட்டவள்போல அவள் கேட்டாள்.

“நீங்களும்தான் அரை டஜன் கல்யாணம் நமது சொந்தத்தில் நடந்ததையெல்லாம் பார்த்துவிட்டு வருகிறீர்களே? அழகு என்று ஒன்றை விரல்விட்டு மடக்குங்கள் பார்க்கலாம்—ஆண், பெண் எதானாலும். நமது கண்ணைப் பழிக்க வருகிறீர்களே, அண்ணாவும் தங்கையும்.”

“இதோ பாரு, நீயும் நானும் சாமுத்திரிகா லட்சணத்தின்படி அழகு என்று விரல் விட்டு மடக்குவது இருக்கட்டும். இந்த ஆறு ஜோடியும் எப்படியும் சேர்ந்து விட்டதிலிருந்து...”

“சேர்ந்து விட்டதிலிருந்தே அழகு என்று ஒப்புக்கொண்டு விட்டதாக சொல்ல வரவில்லையே நீங்கள்?”

“சொல்ல வரவில்லை. அவரவர் மனதுக்கு ஓரொரு விதத்தில் அநுமதிக்கக் கூடிய அளவுக்கு அழகின் அம்சம் ஏதோ இருப்பதாகப் பட்டதால்தான் மனது இணங்கி வந்திருக்கும் என்றுதான் சொல்ல வந்தேன்.”

My thoughts tried to imagine a face formed by the fusion of a nose like a sweet dumpling and eyes like hyacinth beans. Can one think that form and beauty are only achieved by the combination of these two [qualities]? Forehead, ears, mouth, lips, chin—have I ever seen a face with all of these [features] appropriately shaped? I asked myself in my mind. As if grasping my train of thought, she asked:

“You just attended the half dozen weddings of our relatives, too, didn’t you? Let’s see you take count of what beauty is one by one on your fingers—men’s or women’s. You’re critiquing our perspectives, a brother’s and sister’s.”

“Look here, forget you and I counting physical beauty on our fingers. From the matches made between these six couples...”

“From these matches we can agree on what beauty is, you’re about to say, right?”

“I’m not about to say that. I was about to say that a mind consents [to marriage] only to the extent that a beautiful quality worth accepting appears to each person’s mind in its unique way.”

(Chellappa 2004 [1958], 844)

In this way, the two go back and forth, the narrator insisting on the relativity of beauty and the sister insisting that there is a universally agreed upon definition for it. The sister brings up examples of match making situations in which she believes a standard of beauty was held, while the narrator maintains that beauty is specific to time and place, based on each individual’s opinion, and always changing. To the sister’s mind, matches made between couples in this age seem foolish—based not on any deep understanding of beauty, but rather on personal whim with which she doesn’t agree. When the narrator retorts that it is not for her to decide, his sister, nearly fed up, brings up one last example:

“உண்மையில் அழகு இன்னதென்று திட்டமாக வரையறுத்துச் சொல்லிவிட முடியாது என்றுதான் நம்புகிறேன்.”

[...] “ஆனால், ஒன்று. அழகு என்று பொதுவாகச் சொல்வதை வைத்துப் பார்த்தால், நமது மாடிக்குப் பின்னாலே குடி இருக்கிறார்களே, அந்தப் பெண்ணைச் சொல்லலாம். நீலா மாதிரி ஒரு அழகியை நான் பார்த்திருக்கிறேனா என்கிறதே எனக்குச் சந்தேகம்தான்.”

[...] நான் அவளோடு இவ்வளவு நேரம் வாதாடுவதில் காட்டிய தர்க்க ஞானத்திற்கு மீறி, அவள் அபிப்பிராயத்தை உள்ளூர் ஆமோதிக்காமல் இருக்க முடியவில்லை. மேலே அவளும் நானும் பிரஸ்தாபித்த மற்றவர்களிடம் அதிகபட்சம் சேர்த்துக் காணப்படாத சில நயங்கள், இந்த உருவத்திடம் காணப்பட்டதை ஒப்புக்கொள்ளத்தான் வேண்டும். ஆனால், அழகு என்று வரும்போது?

அவளுக்கு நான் பதில் சொன்னேன். [...] “அழகுக்கு மட்டும்தான் கவர்கிற சக்தி இருக்கிறது என்று கொண்டுவிட முடியது.”

ஏதோ லௌகீகமாக அவளுக்கு இசைந்து பேசிக் கொண்டு வந்தவன், சற்று ஆழமாகத் தத்துவ விசாரத்தில் இறங்கிவிட்டதை நான் உணருமுன்னரே அவள்

உணர்ந்துவிட்டதை சுவாரஸ்யம் குன்றி அவள் தன் கண்ணுக்கு விளையாட்டுக் காட்டுவதில் ஈடுபட்டுவிட்டது காட்டிக் கொடுத்தது.

“இதெல்லாம் உங்கள் கதைகளில் படிப்பது போதாதா?”

அவ்வளவுதான், அவரவர் சிந்தனைப் போக்கு தன் வழியே சென்றது.

“I believe that in truth one can't schematically define beauty,” [I said.]

[...] “But here's the thing. If one tried to generally describe what beauty is, we could talk about that girl who rents the place behind ours. I wonder if I've ever seen a beauty like Neela.”

[...] Despite the reasoning I'd expressed in our discussion so long, I couldn't but accept her opinion deep in my mind. Moreover, I had to agree that the few aesthetic merits she and I had mentioned that weren't evident in most others were manifest in [Neela's] form. But when it came to beauty?

I replied to her. [...] “It can't be concluded that beauty is the only thing with the power of attraction.”

Before I could feel like a man who'd immersed himself in a bit of deep philosophical inquiry and sweetly spoken some sort of wisdom to her, she lost any interest she had felt. It appeared that her absorption in this counting game was over.

“Isn't it enough to read all of this in your stories?”

That was it, each of our streams of thought drifted off in its own direction.

(ibid., 846-847)

In this passage, his sister disturbs the narrator's stance that beauty cannot be schematically defined by evoking an ideal beauty that he, too, recognizes. Even though he doesn't say it aloud, he agrees with her that their neighbor Neela is lovely, possessing all the physical traits of beauty that seem lacking in others. In his mind, the narrator remembers that he has often seen Neela from his window and that it would be impossible for one to overlook her beauty unless he were blind. But in the passage above, the narrator cleverly reinterprets Neela's beauty as superficial. It is not beauty, but something else (quite possibly sexual desire), that attracts others to their neighbor, he replies to his sister. To his dismay, his response is not convincing: the sister refuses to engage with the narrator any longer, dismissing his “philosophizing” as the same tired rhetoric he expresses in his short story writing. In this way, the moment of disconnection between the narrator and his sister over the nature of womanly and wifely beauty is raised simultaneously with the articulation of the narrator's identity as a writer, and the effort to resolve this disconnection, as well as the question of what beauty is, now becomes the driving force of the story.

The story then shifts gears: it enters a second section set in the recent past, in which the narrator recalls a conversation he had with the three bridegrooms—Ragu, Sadasivam, and Venkatesan—who have just joined his family. The narrator attributes the casual easiness of their discussion with him to his writerly identity, something he feels incites their curiosity and interest. After a brief focus on literature and politics, the conversation among the four men turns to why the young men chose the brides that they did. The narrator listens more than he participates, conscious of the generation gap between the grooms and himself. The narrative progression of this section takes shape entirely through dialogue and throws up different ideas of wifely beauty that to the narrator seem novel and indicative of the changing times.

The exchange begins with Ragu’s perspective. He volunteers the fact that his wife Lalita was the only woman he saw when he and his family started the process of choosing a bride for him. Ragu admits that even before he saw Lalita he had decided to marry a village girl because she would be less educated and inclined to take an office job, and because her appearance would be “less civilized” than city girls—that is, less concerned with makeup and modern ideas of physical appearance that Ragu finds unappealing. In fact, he would have married any woman who met these standards of modesty and decorum. When the others boyishly tease him that he has certainly found more qualities than this in Lalita, Ragu responds more seriously: “It seems to me that beauty is an illusion (*piramai*). We decide [upon it] based on what appears to us from some particular perspective. Later we don’t have the power to change it. That’s all” (850).³⁸

Sadasivam offers his perspective next, mentioning that his wife Sushila was the fourth woman he saw. This causes an uproar among the others, and they tease him because the previous woman rejected him for being too short, and not because he had any objection to her. This is true, Sadasivam concedes, but also declares that he is now happily caught in Sushila’s spell of beauty:

“அழகு என்பதே ஒரு மயக்கத்தோற்றம் என்றுதான் நான் நினைக்கிறேன். மயக்கத்தில் நாம் நடந்துகொண்டது, மயக்கம் தெளிந்ததும் நமக்குச் சரியாகப் படுவதில்லை.”

“அப்போது, சுசீலாவைத் தேர்ந்து எடுத்ததற்காக ஒரு வேளை இப்போது நீ வருத்தப்...” வெங்கடேசன் இழுத்துச் சொன்னான்.

சதாசிவம் அவனை இடைமறித்து, “மயக்க நிலையின் நீட்சிக் காலத்தைப் பொறுத்திருக்கிறது அந்தப் பின்புத்தி வருவதும் வராததும்” என்றான் சிரித்துக்கொண்டு. “அது ஏற்பட்டதும் உன்னிடம் நானே வலிய வந்து தெரிவிக்கிறேன்.”

“Beauty is a spell of appearance, that’s what I think. We live in [this] spell, and we don’t exactly realize it even when it wears off.”

“Perhaps you regret having chosen Sushila now...” Venkatesan slowly said.

Sadasivam interrupted him. “It depends on the duration of the spell whether or not that regret arises,” he laughed. “As soon as it happens, I’ll let you know myself.”

(*ibid.*, 850-851)

Like Ragu, Sadasivam approaches the topic of marriage choice lightheartedly, joking that he cannot say when or how the spell of beauty Sushila has cast over him might dissipate. But Sadasivam also offers a serious definition of womanly and wifely beauty. To him, beauty is not an illusion as it seems to Ragu, but rather a spell (*mayakkam*) under which Sadasivam has delightfully fallen. Neither is it possible for him to see outside of this spell, nor can he say when it will come or go. In this way, he both validates the enigmatic nature of beauty, while also gesturing towards its temporality and elusiveness.

³⁸ “அழகு ஒரு பிரமை என்றுதான் எனக்குப் படுகிறது. ஏதோ ஒரு கோணத்திலிருந்து பார்த்ததில் நமக்குப் பட்டதைக் கொண்டு முடிவு செய்துவிடுகிறோம். பிறகு அதை மாற்ற நமக்குச் சக்தியில்லை. அவ்வளவுதான்.”

Next, Venkatesan explains his view through an example: when it came to the question of his marriage, he told his parents that beauty did not matter to him and that they should see the girl and decide for him. They helped him realize, however, that the girl may place more importance in beauty than he does and may want to see him. “Only then did I realize there’s another side. So I went. I can’t really say that I’m the one who decided on Saraswati that day” (ibid.).³⁹ At this point, the narrator intercedes, summarizing that Venkatesan sees beauty as something that varies in importance depending on the opinions of each individual. But, says the narrator, in his time personal opinions carried no weight, and people married each other according to the norms of family tradition; parents chose their children’s partners at the moment of their birth. The grooms respond with surprise:

“அதற்குத்தானே அந்த காலத்தில் குறைந்தபட்ச மண வயதை நிர்ணயித்துச் சட்டம் போட்டது!” என்றான் சதாசிவம். [...]
 “பருவத்துக்கு வராததில் குறை இருப்பதாக நாம் மதிப்பிடுவதுபோலவே பருவம் கடந்ததிலும் இருப்பதைப் பார்க்க முடியும்” என்றேன்.
 “அப்படியானால் அழகையும் பருவத்தையும் சேர்த்துப் பார்க்க வேண்டும் என்கிறீர்களா?” என்று ரகு கேட்டான்.
 “பரவும்தான் அழகை நிர்ணயிக்கிறது என்று நினைக்கிறேன். அதன் மாறுதல் அழகை பாதிக்கிறது” என்றேன். [...]
 “சரி, முடிவு என்ன?” என்று ரகு கேட்டான். [...]
 “தனித்தனி பார்வையும் நினைப்பும் இருக்கும்வரையில் எந்த வாதத்திற்கும் முடிவு காண்பதாவது?” என்றான் வெங்கடேசன்.

“That’s why in those days they made a law that decided the minimum age for marriage!” said Sadasivam.
 “One can see that just as not having reached puberty was held as a flaw, reaching puberty was valued,” I said.
 “So, you’re saying that we have to look at maturity and beauty together?” asked Ragu.
 “I think that maturity was thought of as beauty. Changes [in the idea of maturity] have affected [the idea of] beauty,” I said.
 “So what’s the conclusion?” asked Ragu. [...]
 “There’s no conclusion to any argument as long as there are individual perspectives and thoughts?” said Venkatesan.

(ibid., 852-853)

With Venkatesan’s remark that the diversity of opinions and thoughts suggests the relativity of the concept of beauty, the discussion between the narrator and the three grooms comes to an end. Here, the narrator clarifies what he defines as beauty, stressing that his definition is no longer appropriate to the modern man-woman relationships of the day. He equates beauty with a woman’s physical maturity, but he also recognizes that this equation no longer holds due to changing social norms and laws. The narrator thus underscores the relativity of beauty without discrediting his outdated perspective. In this light, the spell-like quality of beauty the three

³⁹ “அப்போதுதான் மறுபக்கம் எனக்குத் தெரிந்தது. வந்தேன். சரஸ்வதியை நான் அன்று பார்த்தேனா என்கூடச் சொல்ல முடியாது என்னால்.”

grooms profess, one that casts its charm over both men and women, gains traction. It is a concept that varies both among individuals and over time, and in this current age, both husbands and wives offer contending definitions of it based on physical and abstract human qualities. In his mind, the narrator likens this diversity of opinion on beauty to the radical differences between Ravi Varma's famous realist images and surrealist paintings, laughing quietly to himself that deciding what beauty means even by comparing great works of art is truly impossible (853-853).

The story now switches back to the present. The narrator sits at his desk attempting to write a story but finds himself unable to come up with any ideas. But he is aided by his sister in an unexpected way:

“நாம் ரயிலில் பேசினது, நீங்கள் மாப்பிள்ளைகளுடன் பேசினது, அதெல்லாம் வைத்து ஒரு கதை எழுதி விடலாமே” என்று அறைக்குள் வந்து அவள், கருத்துப் பஞ்சத்துக்கு உள்ளாகிவிட்டதாக அவள் கருதிய ஒரு சிருஷ்டிகர்த்தாவிடம் ஏற்பட்ட அநுதாபத்துடனும், அதே சமயம் என் கைச் செலவிற்கு வழி செய்யும் அக்கறை காட்டியும் ஆலோசனை கூறினாள்.

You could take our train conversation and what you talked about with the grooms and write a story,” she suggested as she came into the room, demonstrating a writerly sympathy [*cirustikarttāviṭam ērpaṭṭa anutāpam*] that had taken [my] shortage of ideas to heart. At the same time, the concern she expressed enabled my hand to move forward.

(ibid., 854)

When the narrator's sister suggests that his next story focus on his recent conversations about ideal femininity, she helps him overcome his writer's block, expressing sympathy with him and illuminating the diversity of perspectives and feelings that motivate story writing. At this moment, the narrator notices a woman hanging clothes to dry on the verandah opposite his window. “Looks like someone new has moved in behind us,” he comments.⁴⁰ His sister responds with sadness the woman is the same Neela they had discussed, explaining that while they were traveling, Neela came down with an illness that has deformed her looks. Her entire body is now covered with pockmarks and will never be the same. In response, the narrator recedes into his thoughts, concluding the story:

மேலே அவள் என்ன சொல்லிக் கொண்டே போனாள் என்பது ஞாபகமில்லை. முதல் அதிர்ச்சி நீங்கியதும் என் நினைப்பு அழகுபற்றிய அந்த அத்தனை பார்வைகளையும் ஒருதடவை அசை போட்டது. சாமுத்ரிகா லட்சணப்படி அழகை நிர்ணயிக்கலாம். பார்க்கிற பார்வையப் பொறுத்தும் இருக்கக் கூடும். களை, கவர்ச்சியைக் கொண்டும் மதிப்பிட முடியும். இல்லை, பிரமை, மயக்க நிலையின் தீர்ப்பாகவும் சொல்லக் கூடும். தனி மதிப்புக்கு உரியதல்ல என்றும் கூறத் தக்கது. பருவத்தின் பாதிப்புக்கு உட்படக் கூடியதாகவும் தோன்றுகிறது. ஆனால்—? இந்த அத்தனை அளவு கோல்களின்படி அப்படி ஒன்று இருப்பதாகக் கொண்டாலும் அது நீடித்து நிலைத்து, அதற்கும் மேல் நிரந்தரமாக இருக்க கூடியதாக—

⁴⁰ “பின்கட்டுக்கு யாரோ புதிசாகக் குடி வந்திருக்கிறாப் போலிருக்கே.”

நீலாவின் இன்றையத் தோற்றம் அதற்கு அத்தாட்சியாக இருந்தது. அழகு பற்றிய ஆராய்ச்சிக்கு முடிவு கண்டு விட்ட மாதிரித் தோற்றிய நினைப்பினூடே, கதையும் பிறந்தமாதிரி பட்டது.

I don't remember what [my sister] said after this. Once my initial shock ceased, I considered once-over all those perspectives on beauty. We could decide what beauty is based on physical attributes. Or base it on the perspective of the beholder. It could be evaluated by [one's] radiance and attractiveness. Or, decided under the charm of an illusion or a spell. It was also appropriate to say that it isn't fixed to individual values. It also seemed connected to the effects of maturity. But—? Even if there were one [definition of beauty] based on these measuring sticks, that it could be extended and remain over time and, moreover, become permanent...

Neela's appearance today was proof of this. Amidst the thought that [my] investigation of beauty had come to a conclusion was the feeling that a story, too, was born.

(ibid., 854-855)

In these final paragraphs, the narrator conjoins the thoughts on beauty he has been contemplating with the physical sight of Neela before him. Beauty, he decides, can be defined in any of the ways he and the other characters in the story have suggested. It is physical yet relative, illusory yet material, individually experienced yet greater than individual taste. Here, the narrator accepts these seemingly contradictory attributes of beauty, offering them to readers as feasible approaches to understanding beauty based on individual preference and belief. But what Neela's physical appearance brings to these is an understanding of the impermanence of beauty, no matter how it is defined. Thus, neither is there one way of looking at beauty, nor does any manifestation of it last forever. It is this realization about beauty that begets the story the narrator offers his readers, one that creates a sense of wholeness and conclusiveness out of various individual perspectives and experiences. In this way, the narrator both resolves the mystery of the spell of beauty, while also preserving its individualistic and contingent nature.

Importantly, the multiple definitions of beauty that the narrator offers here arise in relation to the changing social nature of the question of Indian women's guardianship. The anxieties he and his sister express over beauty in the first section of the story frame the conflict of the story as one between tradition (embodied by the sister's viewpoint) and modernity (embodied by the narrator's). The sister insists upon established, community-oriented norms for wifely physical beauty, while the narrator tries to open up her perspective to values of beauty that the younger generation might hold for finding partners (which are, importantly, still situated within the already established custom of arranged marriage). But, the sister trumps the narrator with her example of Neela, whom both admit is universally beautiful. Through his memory of his conversation with the three grooms, the narrator tries to resolve this tension over the nature of beauty, linking it to the question of guardianship even further. In this scene, Ragu expresses beauty as an illusion by framing guardianship in terms of wifely duty to her husband: he underscores a wife's domestic role (she should be less educated and not seek office work) and her modest appearance and decorum (she should not wear makeup), which form the illusory perspective of beauty he upholds and does not have the power to change. In defining beauty as a spell, Sadasivam adds the element of feminine choice and desire to the understanding of beauty:

one possible wife rejected his physical appearance (he was too short), while the wife he has now chosen casts a spell of beauty under which he willingly lives. Venkatesan further emphasizes this role of feminine choice and desire in considering beauty: he suggests that it was his wife who chose him and not the other way around. The question of guardianship in this case is defined more by a wife's preferences for husbandly beauty than a husband's for a wife. In contrast to these younger men, the narrator reveals that his definition of beauty is based on an older understanding of the question of guardianship: it is not personal opinion that was at stake in the narrator's time, but rather the physical maturity of a wife in conjunction with a social structure that emphasized parental choice. He refers directly to popular debates and laws determining the minimum age of marriage, pointing out that changes in these laws have also brought about changes in the definition of beauty.⁴¹ For him, the question of Indian women's guardianship and the nature of beauty have evolved based on new understandings of the role of individual preference (both men's and women's) in establishing conjugal relationships. Indeed, I would argue that the fact that it is the narrator's sister who serves as his interlocutor and not a wife figure is indicative of these changing understandings of conjugality: they are so new that the narrator cannot imagine his own conjugal relationship on their terms.

Thus, shifting senses of beauty (*alaku*) and the spell (*mayakkam*) they create form the basis of what guardianship entails while simultaneously reworking the norms for what makes a good short story and how it is received. The narrator in "Alaku Mayakkam" shows not only that the diversity of opinion on the question of guardianship is the same as the diversity of artistic creation (whether realist or surrealist), but also that this diversity gives impetus to the aesthetic feeling that produces short story writing. Furthermore, the impermanence of beauty that his vision of Neela brings to the story's variety of viewpoints on beauty and guardianship expresses both the certainty with which individuals adhere to their personal definitions of beauty, as well as spell-like quality of beauty that envelopes individuals while simultaneously eluding them. The narrator produces his story through the process of conveying this *mayakkam*, the tangible indefinability of beauty. In this way, Chellappa's "Alaku Mayakkam," in contrast to Yadav's inconclusive ending in "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani," reflects changing ideas of Indian women's guardianship in the very act of revealing how the story form gives shape to the relativity of modern aesthetic tastes in a new and changing environment.

The title of the story itself embodies Chellappa's literary worldview: *alaku* gestures towards beauty in both its physical and literary senses, while *mayakkam* is cognate with *mayam* (illusion or spell) and *mayanku* (the action of losing oneself that appears in the second epigraph to this chapter). From its outset, thus, the story establishes that it will examine both what the spell of beauty entails and how readers might engage in this spell. The story uses prose style to undertake this project through a constant movement between the narrator's *manavottam*, or stream of thought, and his conversations with the other characters, which are depicted in spoken Tamil. In this way, the story conveys the setting, as well as the backgrounds and the internal perspectives of the characters, without authorial mediation: we are made privy to who the characters are by what they say and the dialects in which they speak.

⁴¹ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of these debates and laws.

Furthermore, the dialogues in the story in conjunction with the narrator's internal stream of thought convey the very relativity of beauty, considering it in several possible forms (as ideal appearance, illusion, spell, and individual preference). By presenting these definitions of beauty through the characters' own voices, the narrative maintains and validates the distinctions between their individual perspectives. In this way, each character's individuality articulates the uniqueness and diversity of beauty itself. This is confirmed by the narrator's reference to the difference between Ravi Varma's realist images and surrealist art, each one portraying artistic merit in its own way. What the narrator expresses in the end is, thus, not one particular definition of beauty, but rather the shared feeling that something beautiful evokes, which he makes manifest by the story he self-consciously leaves his readers. In this way, "Alaku Mayakkam" imagines the form of the story itself as a separate world, one that envelops the diverse experiences and feelings of its characters in a larger, albeit temporal, sense of aesthetic *orumaippatu*—unity or wholeness.

Thus, although both Yadav and Chellappa raise the problem of guardianship concurrently with the question of genre, their stories present very different prose styles and literary sensibilities. The concepts of *kamzori* (weakness) and *mayakkam* (a spell or charm), for example, embody non-aligning aesthetic universes. In Yadav's story, *kamzori* is a mental struggle that gives structure to the desires of men and women within conjugal relationships. Through *kamzori*, Yadav's characters express the disconnections and conflicts they feel with their surrounding circumstances. Alternatively, in Chellappa's story *mayakkam* is the ever-changing spell of physical appearance under which husbands and wives fall. Chellappa's characters evoke the concept of *mayakkam* to confirm their perspectives of the changing world around them. The rest of this dissertation traces these contrasting emphases on mental and bodily experience, demonstrating how the distinct sensibilities they convey characterize larger trends of difference in post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writing.

Another important difference, one related to the problematics raised by *kamzori* and *mayakkam*, is the role caste and community play in shaping the settings and plots of Yadav's and Chellappa's stories. In the beginning, Yadav's story marks the caste difference that separates Savita and Pramod (she is Brahmin and he is Kayastha), which is arguably one explanation for why Savita and Pramod break off their relationship. However, the story never explicitly considers this explanation. Rather, it employs these characters' caste difference as an implicit challenge to caste structures while continuing to move within *savarna*, or upper caste, categories. The narrator emphasizes not the cause of Savita's and Pramod's estrangement, but rather the irony, conflict, and confusion that Lokesh, Savita, and Pramod experience in the present. It is these mental feelings—shared by three individuals living modern lives within nuclear families, and who now eat at each other's tables despite caste norms—that enable the story's departure from older stories about love triangles and brings about "The Beginning of the Story" with which the narrator leaves his readers. Chellappa's story, by contrast, is firmly situated within a Brahminical community context. The narrator, his sister, and the three grooms all belong to the same family, speak in the same dialect, and situate themselves in relation to the same traditions. In this way, the relativity of beauty and the spell it creates are limited to a specifically Brahminical cultural sphere despite the openness and contingency these ideas convey. In other words, the range of what is considered aesthetically and physically beautiful is here coterminous

with the Brahminical. Yadav's and Chellappa's cultural and aesthetic worlds thus speak to specific regional contexts and literary histories even as they seek to establish the newness of the same generic form. If, as I discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation, the styles and sensibilities that shape genres signal their centralizing tendencies, then what Yadav's and Chellappa's work illuminates are the traces of the non-aligning centering processes of the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil story forms.

Literary Worlds Apart

Both Yadav and Chellappa invest in the short story genre to address the conditions of disillusionment and generational change in their distinct post-Independence contexts—in Yadav's case, a context defined by the turmoil and violence of Partition and the exigencies of nation-building and in Chellappa's case, a context still in the throes of linguistic and caste-based political struggle. For this reason, although both writers emphasize the newness of the short story form, neither are these newnesses identical, nor are they based on the same understandings of reality or human connection. In Yadav's conceptualization, the newness of the short story form lies in the conjoining of *vyakti* and *parives* (individual and environment) through which it imagines the parallel internal worlds of individuals seeking to communicate with one another within their common external environment. Here, it is *parives*—the external reality of individuals—that forms the basis of the human connection that the *nayi kahani* seeks to establish. The parallel worlds of internal confusion and struggle that all individuals belonging to the post-Independence moment experience are bridged by readers' understanding (*samvedana*) of this shared contextual reality. This connection between the writer and his readers is precisely what Yadav conveys in "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani." He thereby defines the literariness of the *nayi kahani* as its newness—the newness of the connection it makes between the individual and his present reality, as well as the newness of the common *samvedana* arising in readers through their connection with this reality. Alternatively, on Chellappa's view, the newness of the story form is exemplified by the individual prose styles (*urainatai*) of *cirukatai* writers, which move in and out of characters' internal streams of thought and their dialogues with others using experimental language and spoken Tamil word forms. Through these new prose styles, the *cirukatai* evokes shared feeling (*unarcci*) and literary taste (*ruci*) in readers, transporting them to a separate world of aesthetic experience. As the narrator in Chellappa's "Alaku Mayakkam" demonstrates, this separate world of shared sensibility articulates the literariness of the *cirukatai*; for it is this sensibility that first and foremost inspires and gives shape to the short story. Here, the newness of human connection is based on the shared reality of aesthetic sense rather than that of common environment.

Thus while both Yadav and Chellappa insist upon the short story form for the ways in which it establishes post-Independence human connection, it does not establish the same kind of human connection in the Hindi and Tamil contexts, or address the same communities in which it envisions this human connection takes shape. Their distinct stances on the role of outside literature in shaping the Hindi and Tamil canons illustrates this difference. Yadav sees the modern Indian/Hindi short story tradition as separate from and parallel to a Western world story tradition, while Chellappa emphasizes the integration of the Tamil and Western short story

traditions through the role of translation. Their views can be explained in terms of the discrete readership communities these writers sought to address: as I have demonstrated in this chapter, Yadav is interested in breaking away from other literary and cultural traditions and uses the concept of *parives* to shape the limits of the Hindi/Indian community, whereas Chellappa is interested in breaking away from the classical Tamil tradition and uses the concepts of *urainatai* and shared *unarcci* to demonstrate the modernity and aesthetic elevation of Tamil language and literature. This is a particularly salient dissimilarity with regard to the understanding of Indian literature that the Sahitya Akademi put forth in the first decade following Independence. As I demonstrated in the Introduction to this dissertation, the Sahitya Akademi held the view that regional Indian literatures could and should be brought under the umbrella category of Indian literature given the common cultural and historical backgrounds that these regional literatures share. Radhakrishnan, the vice-president and then president of the Sahitya Akademi in the first years after its establishment, saw the influence of world literature as the main unifying factor of Indian literatures in the post-Independence moment due to the current lack of dialogue between them, and it was this lack of dialogue that the Sahitya Akademi sought to remedy through translation. The difference between Yadav's and Chellappa's views on the role of world literature and translation in shaping the Hindi and Tamil short story forms rethinks the Sahitya Akademi's perspective, highlighting not only that world literature did not enter into regional literatures in the same way, but also that these regional literatures did not refer to the same cultural and historical backgrounds to define their literary ambitions. For these reasons, the parallel/separate worlds of human connection the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* establish do not refer to the same liberal humanist understandings of "unity in diversity" as each other or the Nehruvian state. As I have demonstrated, Yadav's and Chellappa's generic sensibilities unify the diverse in non-aligning ways. It is these sensibilities that articulate the new understandings of identity and belonging through which these short story writers sought to shape post-Independence culture and community.

But this is not to say that Yadav's and Chellappa's short story projects cannot, or should not, be understood as sharing in the larger, pan-Indian conversation about identity and belonging that characterized the post-Independence moment. To the contrary, and as I have been suggesting throughout this dissertation, it is precisely because these writers—and the regional short story endeavors they spearheaded—took up themes of human connection that they give us insight into how the national framework of liberal humanism took concrete shape across India. In particular, I have underscored that it is not just these writers' articulations of human connection, but more specifically the means through which they articulate it, that reel them into the Sahitya Akademi's enterprise to create a national literature: both Yadav and Chellappa mobilize nationally circulating understandings of the guardianship question to offer renewed short story portrayals of human connection between modern men and woman. What I am thus arguing is that if the central government sought to achieve national integration through the production of a pan-Indian liberal humanist literary aesthetic, then we can see how this production was successful insofar as it was inflected through regionally specific representations of the feminine ideal that also expressed nationally recognizable understandings of Indianness. In other words, in post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writing, these feminine tropes embody a crossroads between regional and national articulations of identity.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, both Yadav and Chellappa launch their short story projects through renewing earlier representations of ideal feminine tropes, which were already deeply intertwined with the politics of pan-Indian nationalism and debates on individual and community rights. For Yadav, Guleri's and Premchand's pre-Independence depictions of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife serve as symbols of the literature-community nexus on which he bases his post-Independence ideas of Hindi literariness. Through his interrogation of the role of the goodwife, Yadav self-consciously reworks the generic conventions of the story form in "Ek Kamzor Ladki ki Kahani," situating this form against both older story telling traditions, as well as older understandings of man-woman relationships. The resulting human connection between readers and characters that he offers, here, is simultaneously specific to the *digbhrant* (confusion) of the present Hindi context and generalizable to the liberal humanist view of national community sanctioned by the post-Independence state. In a parallel move to Yadav, Chellappa points to the literary work of his predecessors Ramaiah and Pudumaippittan, demonstrating how their depictions of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife symbolize the aesthetic elevation of a general feeling of disillusionment that characterizes modern Tamil individuality and society. For all three writers, it is this aesthetic elevation that defines the literariness of the *cirukatai*. Based on this view, Chellappa uses the figure of the goodwife in "Alaku Mayakkam" to reconsider what makes good stories, as well as what comprises modern man-woman relationships, in the post-Independence moment. This story thus articulates a human connection between readers and characters that is on the one hand specific to the *unarcci* (feeling) and *ruci* (literary taste) Chellappa seeks to establish in his present Tamil context, and on the other hand more broadly aligned with post-Independence ideas of liberal humanist national belonging.

Furthermore, both stories use the figure of the goodwife to express different regionally specific breaks from the past, while at the same time retaining (if also reworking) community-based norms for marriage. Neither Savita, Lokesh, and Pramod in Yadav's story, nor the narrator, his sister, and the young bridegrooms in Chellappa's story, seek to abandon the Hindu-based social structures underpinning post-Independence conjugal relationships. Rather, these characters seek to negotiate the tensions between individual desire and community values, expressing how their affiliations towards the self remain irrevocably tied to their affiliations to community. It is these negotiations that Savita's struggle to retain her relationships to both husband and lover, and the narrator's efforts to integrate the bridegrooms' views on marriage with his own, exemplify. If, as I argued in Chapter 1, we must understand nationally circulating ideas of post-Independence citizenship and subjectivity through the question of Indian women's guardianship, then what I have demonstrated here how Hindi and Tamil short story writing mobilized this question to imagine the relationship between individuality and cultural belonging in everyday ways. For, the question of what makes a goodwife—or good widow, good prostitute, or good virgin—is the primary means through which *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* writers articulated their contribution to pan-Indian debates on human connection, while simultaneously defining notions of Hindi and Tamil literariness and communal belonging on their own terms.

Chapter 4
The Feminine Ideal and the Newness of Human Desire:
How Rakesh and Jeyakanthan Make Human Connection

मगर कई बार [मिस पाल] हमें बहुत उदास मिलती और ठीक ढंग से बात भी नहीं करती। मेरी बहनें ऐसे मौके पर उससे चिढ़ जातीं और कहतीं कि वे उसके यहां फिर से नहीं जाएंगी। मगर मुझे ऐसे अवसर पर मिस पाल से ज़्यादा सहानुभूति होती।

But often Miss Pal received us with great sadness and couldn't even converse with us properly. My [cousin] sisters would get irritated with her at such moments and say they would never again visit her. Yet, it was at these times that I felt the greatest sympathy for Miss Pal.

(Rakesh 2004 [1961]b, 11)

கண்களில் என்ன அமைதி! என்ன சோகம்!...இவள்...இவளா?
ரிக்ஷாக்காரன் சொன்னானே... 'என்னமோ அந்தக் கொந்தை தலை எய்த்து...'
ஆமாம் அவள் முகம் குழந்தை மாதிரிதான் இருந்தது. அவள் தலை எழுத்து
அந்தக் கண்களில் தெரிந்தது.

Such peacefulness in her eyes! Such sadness. She...is she the one?
"Somehow it's the child's fate," the rickshaw driver had said, hadn't he? Yes,
her face was like a child's. I saw her fate in those eyes.

(Jeyakanthan 2001 [1960], 649)

It is in these instances—when Mohan Rakesh's narrator experiences great sympathy for Miss Pal and D. Jeyakanthan's finds peaceful, sad fate in the prostitute's eyes—that the affinities of the human bond are established between the narrator and characters in their stories. These moments reveal not only that the human bond is tenuous, but also that in its new post-Independence form, it is rare and fleeting. As such, Rakesh and Jeyakanthan—two of the most widely read Hindi and Tamil authors of the 1950-60s—use the short story to capture human connection. Only the written word, they insist, can evoke the desire for the new, non-kinship based ties that motivate modern selfhood. Their humanist emphasis on the shared bonds between individuals resonates with the postcolonial state's, as well as the Sahitya Akademi's, policy of "unity in diversity," which I discussed the Introduction to this dissertation as the Nehruvian administrations's liberal humanist philosophy for achieving national integration following Independence. But, if liberal humanism, with its focus on a shared human essence, was a dominant discourse in both the state and literary spheres, Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's stories show that its literary expressions in this period complicate any easy definition of this philosophical and political orientation.

In this chapter, I juxtapose Rakesh and Jeyakanthan's short story writing to interrogate two regional instances of humanist discourse in the post-Independence context. I seek to demonstrate not only how liberal humanism, as a political and philosophical worldview, encompasses these authors' disparate conceptualizations of desire and morality, but also what these differences entail for the way humanism functions in the post-Independence moment. I

suggest that through linking self-reflection with morality via disparate conceptualizations of desire, Rakesh and Jeyakanthan fill the liberal humanist subject with content unique to their regional literary traditions.

In his stories Rakesh formulates desire as the desire for communication between individuals for whom the world can only be approached through the inner self. Thus, he expresses the ideal of human connection through intimate, but transient moments of understanding between characters that are conveyed either verbally or through gesture. The resulting moral landscape is one of irresolution—communication between individuals is never sustained or sustainable, even as human connection in his stories is vividly imagined and thereby established. That is, the human connection Rakesh establishes stops short of imagining a resolved moral future. Or rather, this future is possible only in terms of the ever-changing present.

Desire in Jeyakanthan's stories works conversely; not only is it corporeal rather than mental, but also it references a very specific moral future. For Jeyakanthan, desire manifests in detailed descriptions of individual bodies that express characters' new, often sexualized, ways of being in the world and establish their affinities with others. This newness imparts a vision of the moral future, one in which human beings connect with one another through mutual appreciation for and understanding of the common desires that human bodies bear. In imagining bodily desire and its human universality, Jeyakanthan's stories conceive a moral landscape defined on the one hand, by liberal acceptance of the body and on the other, by the material lessons that this acceptance entails.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the modern Hindi and Tamil canons defined themselves in response to different regional processes, namely Hindu-Muslim religious politics in the North and social reform, language, and caste politics in the South. In the post-Independence Hindi context, the newly rising generation of *nayī kahānī* writers wrote in response to the repercussions of Partition violence in the North. Rakesh's characters—whose moments of connection are transient and their futures, uncertain—reflect the sense of loss, disillusionment, and uprootedness these writers' expressed, as well as their open rejection of the caste markers that fueled Partition violence. On the other hand, the corporeal desires through which Jeyakanthan's characters form human connection express one way of mediating the rigid social divisions of caste and class in the South, a shared concern among Tamil *cirukatai* writers of the immediate post-Independence moment in the wake of the Dravidian and non-Brahmin movements and the impassioned anti-Hindi protests of the 1950s. Through the differing ways that Rakesh and Jeyakanthan establish human connection, their literary humanisms maintain legibility on regional scale, while simultaneously echoing state forms of cultural humanism of this period in its efforts to accommodate difference. What my juxtaposition of their non-aligning idiomatic expressions of generic style illuminates, thus, is the distinct, but intersecting centering processes of Hindi, Tamil, and Indian literature in the post-Independence moment.

In the first two sections of this chapter, I examine three short stories by each author to map the relationship between desire and the articulation of a moral imaginary. I use two thematics to organize the resonances and dissonances between Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's writing: 1) the relationship between landscape and self and 2) the relationship between men and women. The following section examines several essays by Rakesh and Jeyakanthan through

which I derive these authors' definitions of humanism in relation to that which I theorize from their stories. These essays demonstrate how each connects what he sees as the humanist project of writing with a moral vision—for Rakesh, one that is ultimately present and for Jeyakanthan, one that produces the future.

In the final section of this chapter, I attempt to locate Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's perspectives on humanism in relation to the liberal humanist conception of the subject as an agentive actor. If, as Saba Mahmood argues, liberal humanism assumes that "all human beings have an innate desire for freedom" and that "human agency consists primarily of acts that challenge social norms..." (2005, 5), then how do Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's humanist notions of desire fit into or challenge this framework? By taking up Mahmood's call to examine how "the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity" (14-15), I attempt to show the precise ways in which Hindi and Tamil literary discourses link agency contingently to resistance through the specific instances in which Rakesh and Jeyakanthan couple desire with self-reflective morality. I showed in the previous chapter that in the post-Independence moment both the Hindi and Tamil canons rejected political resistance as an aim of literature, valuing instead the nonpartisan, universal appeal of "the literary." But even as the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres of which Rakesh and Jeyakanthan are a part defined themselves in opposition "the political," the nature of desire in both Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's work relies on a concept of resistance in order to express an understanding of self-reflection. This is because the portrayal of the newness of desire in their work is always pitted against what has come before.

Both this newness and the old it opposes are disclosed through Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's reworking of popularly and historically recognized tropes of the feminine ideal. Specifically, Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's stories conceive of humanistic morality-as-desire through recalling historically established cultural tropes—such as that of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife—while simultaneously depositing them with new understandings of being. This chapter thus argues that these feminine tropes inhabit regionally specific forms of liberal humanist selfhood that also express the universally recognizable desire for freedom as a rejection of the past. In this way, Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's short stories simultaneously embrace and resist post-Independence efforts to produce a pan-Indian liberal humanist subject-citizen.

Inertia and Indecision

In Mohan Rakesh's "Suhāginen" [Auspicious Married Women], Manorama, the head mistress of a girl's school, walks the grounds alone after a day's work to clear her head.¹ This first scene, which depicts her interaction with the landscape around her, sets the tone for understanding both Manorama's character, as well as her interactions with Kashi—her maid servant—and Kashi's children.

¹ "Suhāginen" was originally published in Rakesh's 1961 collection of short stories, *Ek Aur Zindagī* [Another Life].

निकली यह सोचकर थी कि घूमने से मन में कुछ ताज़गी आएगी, मगर लौटते हुए मन पर अजब भारीपन छा गया था। क्वार्टर से आधी मील दूर थी जब सूरज डूब गया था। तब कुछ क्षणों के लिए उसे अपना-आप हल्का-हल्का-सा लगा था। हवा, पेड़ों के हिलते पत्ते और अस्तव्यस्त बिखरे बादलों के टुकड़े, हर चीज़ में एक मादक स्पर्श का अनुभव हुआ था। सड़क पर फैली संध्या की फीकी चांदनी धीरे-धीरे रंग पकड़ रही थी। वह साड़ी का पल्ला पीछे को कस कर कई कदम तेज़-तेज़ चल गई। मगर टैंकी के मोड़ तक पहुंचते-पहुंचते सारा उत्साह गायब हो गया। जब स्कूल के गेट के पास पहुंची तो अन्दर पैर रखने को भी मन नहीं था। मगर उसने किसी तरह मन को बांधा और लोहे के गेट को हाथ से धकेल दिया। गर्ल स्कूल की हेड मिस्ट्रेस रात को देर तक सड़कों पर अकेली कैसे घूम सकती थी?

She thought when she left that walking would clear her mind, but as she returned a strange heaviness overshadowed her heart. She was a quarter mile from her quarters when the sun set. She felt light for a few moments. The wind, the trembling leaves, and the untidily scattered bits of clouds, she experienced each object as if it were touched by exhilaration. The dim moonlight of the growing evening slowly took hold of the road. She gathered up the bottom of her sari and took a few quick steps. But her excitement vanished as she approached the turn at the tank. By the time she had approached the school gate, she had no desire to step in. Somehow she gained control of herself and pushed the gate open. How could the headmistress of a girls' school wander the road alone so late in the evening?

(Rakesh 2004 [1961]c, 151)

The freedom Manorama experiences as she walks along the road encircling the school compound is marked by the exhilaration she feels as she notices the wind, leaves, clouds, and moonlight. These natural elements seem to enter into her and unburden her to the extent that she literally picks herself up and runs. However, this outside space comes into clear contrast in this passage with the confinement of the girls' school compound, which signals for Manorama a need to limit herself to the rules of propriety she must necessarily enforce in her role as headmistress.

Again and again throughout the story, Manorama loses herself to her surroundings, but the following moments all occur within the school compound. Significantly, the strange heaviness that overshadows her on her return to her quarters takes on ghostly apprehension as it manifests within the walls of the compound:

लकड़ी के बरामदे में अपने पैरों की आवाज़ से शरीर में कंपकंपी भर गई। उसने मुंडेर के खम्भे पर हाथ रख लिया। अहाते में खुली चांदनी फैली थी। ईंटों के फर्श पर सीमेंट की लकीरें एक इन्द्रजाल-सी लगती थीं। स्कूल के बरामदे में पड़े डेस्क-स्टूल और ब्लैक-बोर्ड ऐसे लग रहे थे जैसे डरावनी सूरतोंवाले भूत-प्रेत अपने ग़ार के अन्दर से बाहर झांक रहे हों। देवदार का घना जंगल जैसे ठण्डी चांदनी के स्पर्श से सिहर रहा था। वैसे बिलकुल सन्नाटा था।

Her body shook from the sound of her feet on the wooden verandah. She rested a hand on the bar of the parapet. Moonlight spread expansively across

the compound. The lines of cement on the brick floor seemed an illusion. A desk stool and blackboard lay on the school balcony as if dens with dreadful spirits peaking out. The dense forest of firs trembled, touched by cold moonlight. Otherwise there was complete silence.

(ibid., 152)

The surrounding objects Manorama sensed earlier as lightness outside the compound here manifest as strange heaviness turned to dread. Despite its expansiveness, the moonlight is now cold, and rather than touched by exhilaration, the stool and blackboard enclose frightening spirits. The dissonance in Manorama's relationships to landscape between these two scenes expresses the conditions of Manorama's internal state—on the one hand, desirous of light-hearted, unbounded freedom and on the other, plagued by the ghostly specters of her confining daily existence.²

The dread Manorama locates in the landscape surrounding her quarters resonates within her as loneliness. Thus, as the story progresses, each time she notices the trembling firs, she dwells on her own solitude: "There was a forceful gust of wind. The rustling of the firs crossed several valleys and disappeared into the distant sky... She felt much lonelier than usual" (155).³ We learn that her loneliness is due partly to her husband Sushil's departure shortly after their marriage and partly to his resistance to her desire to have children. This feeling becomes compounded by her inability to feel his love for her through the letters he inconsistently writes or to return it through hers with any true feeling. The only characters that are physically present in Manorama's life are her maid servant Kashi and Kashi's three children.

Thus, while her surrounding landscape underscores her estrangement from others, Manorama's interactions with Kashi indicate points of contact, moments when human connection becomes possible. In the beginning, these interactions are ones of utter disconnection. As the story opens, Kashi sits at Manorama's dressing table trying on makeup. "The moment she saw her, Manorama was beside herself..." She screams at Kashi, enraged: "You steal ghee, flour, sugar, and I don't mind even as I notice you...and you return my favor like this? Base woman [*kamīnī*]!" (150-151).⁴ Not only does Manorama lose control of, and in this way dissociate from, her own self in this moment, but also she deliberately distinguishes herself from Kashi by pointing out her own class and moral superiority as against Kashi's lowborn baseness.⁵

² The interior spaces of her living quarters and Kashi's also take on meaning as Manorama grows more sympathetic of Kashi's relationship with her husband. The beginning of scenes of the story focus exclusively on Manorama's quarters and the view of the school compound and forest from her balcony. But by the end of the story, Manorama ceases to watch Kashi's hut from a distance. She enters without hesitation and caresses Kashi's unclean children without the aversion she previously expresses. Instead, she compares its dilapidated status against the orderliness and cleanliness of her own quarters and determines to have Kashi's painted. This shifting relationship to domestic landscapes reflects Manorama's internal state just as much as her reverie of the trembling firs from her balcony does.

³ "हवा का तेज़ झोंका आया। देवदारों की सरसराहट कई-कई घाटियां पार करती दूर के आकाश में जाकर खो गई। ... वह अपने को उस समय रोज़ से ज़्यादा अकेली महसूस कर रही थी।"

⁴ "मनोरमा उसे देखते ही आप से बाहर हो गई।... 'घी, आटा, चीनी चुराकर ले जाती है, और मैं देख कर भी नहीं देखती।... और उसका तू मुझे यह बदला देती है? कमीनी कहीं की!'"

⁵ In Hindi the expression is "*Manoramā...āp se bāhar ho gai*"—literally, "Manorama became outside herself."

Manorama acknowledges, though, that the two women do share one important similarity, that which is signaled by the title of the story, “Suhaginen.” Both are in name married women, fortunate to have living and healthy husbands. However, neither Manorama’s Sushil nor Kashi’s Ajudhya is present; in both instances it is the women who are the breadwinners and caretakers. Upon Sushil’s insistence, Manorama goes to work and saves her salary to the point of starvation in order to pay for some of his sister’s wedding expenses, and upon Ajudhya’s disappearance, Kashi cleans and cooks for Manorama to raise and feed her own children. Thus, when Manorama realizes Kashi was trying on her makeup in preparation for Ajudhya’s sudden return, her anger subsides immediately and is replaced by concern. She inquires about his arrival, and when Kashi tells him he’s only returning to pick up his rent, she replies:

“अजीब आदमी है!” मनोरमा हमदर्दी के स्वर में बोली, “अगर सचमुच तू कुछ पैसे भी ले तो क्या है? आखिर तू उसी के बच्चों को तो पाल रही है। चाहिए तो यह कि हर महीने वह तुझे कुछ पैसे भेजा करे। उसकी जगह वह इस तरह की बातें करता है।”

“बहनजी, मर्द के सामने किसी का बस चलता है?” काशी की आवाज़ और भीग गई।

“तो तू क्यों उससे नहीं कहती कि...” कहते-कहते मनोरमा ने अपने को रोक लिया। उसे याद आया कि कुछ दिन हुए एक बार सुशील की चिट्ठी आने पर काशी उससे इसी तरह की बातें पूछती रही थी जो उसे अच्छी नहीं लगी।

“What a strange man!” Manorama said in a sympathetic voice, “So what if you actually did take some money? You’re raising his kids, after all. He should be sending you money each month. Instead he talks like this.”

“Sister, does anyone have power over [her] man?” Kashi’s voice became even more sodden.

“But why don’t you just tell him...” Manorama stopped herself from saying more. She remembered a few days before when, upon the arrival of Sushil’s letter, Kashi had asked her similar questions, and she hadn’t liked them.

(ibid., 153-154)

It is here, in Manorama’s halted speech, that a human connection between Manorama and Kashi is established; not only does Manorama take Kashi’s side against Ajudhya’s unfair actions, but also, she does not push Kashi to resist. Rather, she comes to understand why Kashi does not and views her own inability to respond to Sushil’s demands in the same light. Later, in another moment of inertia, Manorama distracts herself from the anger that rises within her as she hears Ajudhya beating Kashi instead of intervening to stop him.⁶ Her reaction to Kashi’s cries is bounded by her sensibility of self-as-headmistress, who cursorily thinks to herself that she should enforce the rule of the school compound that no men should enter after nightfall! Even as Manorama sympathizes with Kashi’s situation, she simultaneously remains a unique individual dictated by her discrete lived perspective of the world. In this way, the human connection between them is ephemeral; it comes and goes throughout the story, leaving Manorama with a

⁶ In all three of Rakesh’s stories that I examine in this chapter, he uses the word *jadatā*—inertness or senselessness—to indicate inertia.

ghostly, dream-like, and inconclusive vision of a child at the end that coincides with and confirms her realization that Kashi and Kashi's children, not her husband, come closest to fulfilling her desire for a family and connection with the world.

If Manorama's and Kashi's characters are defined by their unfitting identity as married women, Miss Pal's is constructed by her equally agonizing maidenly status. "Mis Pāl," perhaps Rakesh's most well known story, examines the lonely life of its eponymous character through the eyes of the narrator, Ranjit—a friend and former colleague who runs into her after she has left her Delhi job to live in a hill station near Manali.⁷ Ranjit sees Miss Pal as a distinct misfit in every way: she is fat and flamboyant in style, socially awkward and depressed, unmarried, without family or friends, incapable of self-care or organization, unmotivated, and sometimes hypocritical and irritating. Despite all these qualities, however, Ranjit feels some connection with Miss Pal, as the first epigraph to this chapter demonstrates. His curiosity to understand how she lives and what she will do now that she has left Delhi drives him to return to find her after his bus passes her by in the mountains.

Like in "Suhaginien," the contrast between internal and external landscape plays an important role in conveying Miss Pal's and Ranjit's characters and their understandings of each other. It is the view of the mountains and the clouded horizon, for instance, that fills in the gaps and silences in the awkward conversations between them. After dinner, the two sit outside Miss Pal's cottage.

वह सिर के पीछे हाथ रखे आकाश को देख रही थी। बारहीं या तेरहीं की रात होने से आकाश में तीन तरफ खुली चांदनी फैली थी। ब्यास की आवाज़ वातावरण में एक गूँज पैदा कर रही थी। वृक्षों की सरसराहट के अतिरिक्त मैदान की घास से भी एक धीमी-सी सरसराहट निकलती प्रतीत होती थी। हवा तेज़ और सामने पहाड़ के पीछे से उठता हुआ बादल धीरे-धीरे चांद की तरफ सरक रहा था।

She gazed at the sky with her hands behind her head. It was nearly a full moon and moonlight spread across the sky in all directions. The sound of the Byas River created a roar in the atmosphere. Apart from the rustling trees, a dim rustling also arose from the grassy field. The wind was fierce and the clouds rising behind the mountains ahead glided slowly towards the moon.

(Rakesh 2004 [1961]b, 22)

As if instigated by this sonorous, peaceful setting—a magical world expanding before the two interlocutors—Ranjit asks Miss Pal why she seems so contemplative. "Miss Pal looked into the misty line mountains, as if she were looking for something. 'I think, Ranjit, my life has no meaning,' she said" (22).⁸ She continues to talk, however—about her past, her fate, and her hopes for the future—stressing the feelings of estrangement she has felt in her relationships with her parents and office mates in Delhi. Her parents discouraged her interest in dance and music, exclaiming that their home was not *whorehouse* (*raṇḍīkhāna*) in which women perform such

⁷ "Miss Pal" was originally published in Rakesh's 1961 collection of short stories, *Ek Aur Zindagi*.

⁸ "मिस पाल सामने पहाड़ की धुंधली रेखा को देखती रही, जैसे उसमें कोई चीज़ खोज रही हो। 'मैं सोचती हूँ रणजीत कि मेरे जीने का कोई अर्थ नहीं है।' उसने कहा।"

activities, and her office mates continually teased her for being a fat, single woman. “Only I know all difficulties I’ve had all this time preserving my um...uh...purity [*pavitratā*]” (22), she sighs, delicately acknowledging that the estrangement she has faced is in large part due to her virginal and unmarried status.⁹ Ranjit’s reactions, mainly internal, punctuate the changing subjects of her monologue. Eventually, he redirects the conversation, encouraging her to focus instead on making and showing her art. No, she responds dejectedly, she doesn’t want to get into the politics of all that. Rather, she says:

“मेरे पास अभी तीन-चार हज़ार रुपये हैं, जिनसे मेरा काफी दिन गुज़ारा चल जाएगा। जब ये रुपय चुक जाएंगे, तो...” और जैसे कुछ सोचती हुई चुप कर गई।

मैं आगे की बात सुनने के लिए बहुत उत्सुक था। मगर मिस पाल कुछ देर बाद कंधे हिलाकर बोली, “...तो भी कुछ हो ही जाएगा। अभी वह वक्त आए तो सही।”

बादल ऊंचा उठ रहा था और वातावरण में ठण्डक बढ़ती जा रही थी। जंगल की तरफ से आती हुई हवा की गूंज शरीर में बार-बार सिहरन भर देती थी। साथ के काटेज में रेडियो पर पश्चिमी संगीत चल रहा था। उससे आगे के काटेज में लोग खिलखिलाकर हंस रहे थे।

“I have three or four thousand rupees, which will sustain me for some time. When that money runs out...” and she fell silent as if she were thinking about something.

I was very curious to hear what she would say next. But after some time, Miss Pal shrugged her shoulders and said, “Well, something else will work out then. It’ll be all right, but let’s wait till that happens.”

The clouds were rising and the air grew colder. The roar of the breeze coming from the jungle caused us to tremble over and over. Western music played in the adjacent cottage. People laughed loudly in the cottage beyond it.

(*ibid.*, 22-23)

As Miss Pal fails to answer Ranjit’s curiosity, the mood of the environment begins to shift. Suddenly, they seem barraged by human sounds, and the gentle sound of the river is usurped by a roaring breeze that causes them to shiver. Soon afterwards, the clouds eventually cloak the moon and the nearby cottages promptly extinguish their lights, bringing their conversation to an abrupt end. The changing landscape, here, inscribes the intimate beginning of a heartfelt conversation between friends, spurred by Ranjit’s recognition of Miss Pal’s internal rumination, and resolves it in their inability to sustain peaceful, sonorous connection.

Similarly, domestic landscape functions in “Miss Pal” to bring to light the nature of Miss Pal’s character. Here, just as Manorama’s relationships with the school compound and her quarters reflect her internal state, Miss Pal’s Delhi home and mountain cottage function to chart the interiority of her self. But whereas, Manorama’s orderly quarters and rule-inscribing school compound close in on her uncanny loneliness in the world, it is Miss Pal’s disarrayed lifestyle that exposes her eccentric relationship with it. Miss Pal seems unable to fit, though she continues to try. Ranjit expresses frustration as he describes his visit to her cottage, filled as it is

⁹ “मैंने आज तक कितनी-कितनी मुश्किल से अपनी अम्...अ...पवित्रता को बचाया है, यह मैं ही जानती हूँ।”

with heaps of clothing and junk such that he can never find a place to sit. He notes her lack of cooking supplies as well as her earnest but unsuccessful attempts to be a good hostess to him. At the end of the story, when he attempts to persuade Miss Pal to join him on his bus ride to Kullu to buy the art supplies she needs to work, she evades him by wandering from room to room carrying clothes and articles from one heap to another without reason. It is as if the iterated transference of objects (reflected also in her move from Delhi to Manali and in her attempts to cook trout and make bohemian chai) charts both Miss Pal's desire to be legible to others, as well as the inertia resulting from her peculiar irrationalities that prohibits this desire from realizing itself. Thus, Ranjit leaves her standing at the bus stop in Kullu, blinking away tears, empty tins swinging from her hands.

Domestic disarray also characterizes the repeated paralysis of Rakesh's narrator in "Ek Aur Zindagi" [Another Life].¹⁰ But whereas Miss Pal never attempts to enter into relationships, Prakash has tried and failed. Divorced and then remarried, he has now impetuously left his second wife and is staying in an upper floor flat overlooking the ocean and mountains in a small town. In the opening scene of the story, while Prakash is passing time by watching the landscape and passersby from his balcony, he suddenly and fortuitously spots his ex-wife Bina and his son Palash, who is now five years old. He sees them almost as if in a dream:

कोहरे में से गुज़रकर जाती हुई आकृतियों को उसने एक बार फिर ध्यान से देखा। क्या यह सम्भव था कि व्यक्ति की आंखें इस हद तक उसे धोखा दें? तो जो कुछ वह देख रहा था, वह यथार्थ ही नहीं था?

कुछ क्षणों पहले जब वह कमरे से निकलकर बालकनी पर आया था, तो क्या उसने कल्पना में भी यह सोचा था कि आकाश के ओर-छोर तक फैले हुए कोहरे में, गहरे पानी की निचली सतह पर तैरती हुई मछलियों जैसी जो आकृतियां नज़र आ रही हैं, उनमें वे दो भी होंगी? ...परन्तु एक क्षण सहसा वे आकृतियां इस तरह उसके सामने स्पष्ट हो उठी थीं जैसे जड़ता के क्षण के अवचेतन की गहराई में डूबा हुआ कोई विचार एकाएक चेतना की सतह पर कौंध गया हो।

He looked at the figures passing by again carefully. Was it possible one's eyes could deceive him to such an extent? Such that what he saw was not even reality?

Could he have imagined when he stepped out onto the balcony a few moments earlier that he would glimpse those particular two figures in the expansive fog among the rest as if among fish swimming on the surface of deep water? ...But all at once they became clear to him as if some thought buried in the depths of his subconscious in a moment of inertness [*jaḍatā*] suddenly leaped to the conscious surface.

(Rakesh 2004 [1961]a, 275)

The quick, fluid movements between external landscape and Prakash's internal reality, like the one depicted here, continually throw Prakash into a state of indecisive inertia. At first, he is uncertain whether his desire to see Palash has caused this vision to materialize before him, or if it

¹⁰ This story is the title story of Rakesh's 1961 collection of short stories, *Ek Aur Zindagi*.

is a real event. Having spotted Bina and Palash, Prakash tries, but is unable to make himself call out to his son. Unsure of what to do, he runs inside, only to become flustered and lost (*khoyā-sā*) by the disorder (*asvyast*) of his flat. Eventually, he leaves his flat in a rush and without thinking, realizing too late that he has forgotten to put on shoes. When he finally catches up with Bina and Palash, his voice escapes him unintentionally. The interaction results in Prakash's convincing Palash to come visit him in his flat, but in this first meeting, Bina refuses not just to interact with him, but even to look in his direction.

The movement of the story lies in Prakash's attempt to come to terms with his estranged relationships with his son and his ex-wife, as well as the new wife on whom he has recently walked out. As he gets to know Palash further, Prakash also grows to understand Bina and his previous relationship with her. He recounts that as two educated, professional adults forced together by arranged marriage, the two had never sought to understand each other, had never even lived in the same place together so that they could pursue their separate careers. Their accidental pregnancy and stubborn refusal to communicate coupled with Prakash's denial of fatherly responsibility (while inconsiderately insisting on his fatherly rights) led to a complete break between Bina and Prakash. It is thus that Prakash lives in constant rumination about what went wrong and yearning to see his son and thus that he is utterly surprised to come upon his vision of them passing by in the fog before him. Throughout the story, these ruminations and desires are spurred by descriptions of the dense fog, torrential rain, and distant mountains, which seem, like in the opening scene, to reflect Prakash's lack of clarity about his past or his present.

Prakash recalls that it was in reaction to Bina's arrogance (*ahamkār*) and independence—both economic and intellectual—and the loneliness of his regret and loss that he decided to remarry a more traditional woman, Nirmala. As the story progresses, the story slips into the recent past, and we learn of the catastrophic failure of this marriage to fulfill Prakash's wish for a more wifely companion. Before he even weds her, Prakash views Nirmala as Bina's antithesis in nearly every way: though schooled, she does not have college education (and later refuses Prakash's attempts to get her to read more). She seems younger than her twenty-nine years, desirous of marriage, and in need of care. And most importantly, she wants to perform her domestic duties towards her husband.

But almost immediately, it becomes clear that Nirmala is crazy: she laughs uncontrollably and at inappropriate times, and when Prakash scolds her, she loosens her hair, curses, tears at her clothes, and cries unceasingly. At the end of these episodes, instead of returning to some semblance of maturity, she sucks her thumb like a child pacifying herself. Prakash leaves the house in these moments, cloaked in a fog of uncertainty, setting out aimlessly to wander the streets. For when he tries to confront her:

वह बाल बिखरकर 'देवी' का रूप धारण किए हुए कहती, "तुम बीना की तरह मुझे तलाक देना चाहते हो? किसी तीसरी को घर में लाना चाहते हो? मगर मैं बीना नहीं हूँ। वह सती स्त्री नहीं थी। [...] मैं सती स्त्री हूँ, तो इस घर की ईंट से ईंट बजा दे। आ, आ, आ!"

[प्रकाश] उसे शान्त करने की चेष्टा करता, तो वह कहती, "देखो, तुम मुझसे दूर रहो। मेरे शरीर को हाथ मत लगाओ। मैं स्त्री हूँ। देवी हूँ। तुम मेरा सतीत्व नष्ट करना चाहते हो? मुझे खराब करना चाहते हो? मुझे तुमसे ब्याह कब हुआ? मैं तो अभी कंवारी हूँ। छोटी-सी

बच्ची हूँ। संसार का कोई भी पुरुष मुझे नहीं छू सकता। मैं आध्यात्मिक जीवन जीती हूँ। [...] मगर मैं यहां से नहीं जाऊंगी। तुम्हें मुझे अपने पास सुलाना पड़ेगा। मैं विधवा हूँ जो अकेली सोऊंगी? मैं सुहागिन स्त्री हूँ। कोई सुहागिन क्या कभी अकेली सोती है? मैं भावरें लेकर तुम्हारे घर में आई हूँ...

She would loosen her hair like a 'goddess' and say, "You want to divorce me like you did Bina? Bring a third one into your house? But I'm not Bina. She wasn't a goodwife [*satī strī*]. [...] I am a goodwife, I will unsettle this house brick by brick. Come, come, come!

If Prakash tried to placate her, she would say, "Look, stay away from me. Don't touch me. I am a wife. I am a goddess. Do you wish to destroy my wifehood [*satitva*]? Do you wish to defile me? When did I marry you? I'm still a virgin [*kaṁvārī*]. I'm a small child. No man in this world can touch me. I live a divine life. [...] But I won't leave here. You must let me sleep beside you. Am I a widow [*vidhavā*] who should sleep alone? I am an auspicious married woman [*suhāgin*]. Does any married woman sleep alone? I took the sacred vows of wifehood when I circled the fire with you and came to your house..."

(ibid., 282-283)

Nirmala's perverted mobilization of traditional understandings of wifehood could not be more striking, for even as she completely and intentionally embodies prescribed womanhood, Nirmala exceeds its boundaries. On the one hand, because she defines her selfhood in terms of her wifely responsibility to care for her husband, she fulfills Prakash's desire to possess a traditional goodwife as his life partner. But, on the other hand, her excessive adherence to these wifely norms exposes their horrifying irrationality and impracticality for suiting Prakash's needs and desires as a modern man. Thus, although Nirmala represents everything Prakash wants that Bina is not, she simultaneously razes any possibility of fulfilling her role as his womanly companion. This ironic contradiction leaves Prakash at a loss. Rather than take any decisive action, he begins to roam the streets and eventually runs away.

And thus, it is with Bina that Prakash finds a brief and unsustainable moment of human connection. In their last meeting in the story, the sky has cleared, and the two are finally able to hold each others' gaze without looking away. Prakash reads her expression for an instant, something he found indecipherable in their earlier encounters: "Bina looked at him until she blinked. There was some kind of intense, stricken emotion in that gaze. But with the flicker of her eyes it faded and she recomposed herself" (292).¹¹ Fleeting though it is, Prakash begins to glimpse Bina's perspective of their circumstances, and as a result, Bina awards him a small token of acknowledgement of Prakash's fatherly role in Palash's life, where in every other instance she has outrightly and vehemently denied it. She notes the money she found slipped in Palash's pocket and asks Prakash on what he would like her to spend it. A coat, he says, and when she asks, he mentions it should be blue, remembering immediately afterwards that this is a color Bina doesn't like. The exchange closes down with this realization; Palash beckons his mother to

11 "बीना ने आंख झपकने तक उसकी तरफ देख लिया। उस दृष्टि में एक तीखा चुभता-सा भाव था। मगर आंख झपकने के साथ ही वह भाव धूल गया और उसने अपने को सहज लिया।"

leave, Bina takes his hand without looking back, and Palash comments loudly about Prakash's untidy, unsettled living arrangements, his voice echoing as they vanish down the stairwell. The story ends with the return of torrential rains and the image of a drenched, drunken Prakash wandering the dark streets, followed by an equally sodden, silent, and introspective stray dog.

Thus, the future in "Ek Aur Zindagi" remains unimagined; the hopeful human connection Prakash momentarily establishes with Bina settles as an impossible possibility for Prakash's future. This is especially the case given Nirmala's letters, which lie crumpled in his pocket as he walks away, and in which Nirmala curses his negligence of his husbandly duties and re-evokes his resentment towards her and the trapped life he now lives. The story expresses Prakash's desire for human connection (with a woman, with his son) by on the one hand, tracing it through his lived experiences of his surrounding landscape and on the other, pitting it against his memories of his unfortunate relationships with Bina and Nirmala. Indeed, this desire, as that which motivates his continuing existence, cannot even be understood in this story without the nuances landscape brings to Prakash's interactions with Bina and Nirmala. His contemplation of the scenery from his balcony and his crazed street loitering come to replace direct confrontation with these women. In this way, these actions define his relationships with these women and with humanity at large.

Further, it is via landscape that the main characters in all three stories interact with and rethink well-established tropes of the feminine ideal. For it is through the mapping of external landscape onto these characters' internal states that the new forms these tropes come to embody are acknowledged and tussled with. Bina, Nirmala, Miss Pal, Manorama, and Kashi all inhabit *satitva* (wifedom) in contentious ways: Bina as educated, independent, wage-earning bad wife turned divorcee; Nirmala as crazed not-widow, *kamvara sati* (virgin goodwife); Miss Pal as educated, virginal, eccentric modern woman; and Manorama and Kashi as lonely, uncared for, struggling *suhaginen* (auspicious married women). But as Rakesh's stories demonstrate, the implications of this contentiousness for the future is not yet clear. Instead, contentiousness remains fundamental to these characters' experiences of the present.

The Self-Knowledge of Maturity

While Jeyakanthan's stories invoke the same feminine tropes as Rakesh's and in a similar way—through a focus on landscape and man-woman relationships—here, these tropes take shape as transactions between individuals that educe desire. And whereas in Rakesh's writing, newness materializes as the indecisive inertia that fills these tropes with content, Jeyakanthan's newness lies in his demonstration of the way in which desire somehow exceeds the baseness of the exchange that fuels it. Such an exchange happens most straightforwardly in Jeyakanthan's story "Pattini Paramparai" [The Tradition of Wifedom], which recounts the events surrounding an unnamed narrator's first visit to a prostitute.¹² In its opening passage, this transaction is pared down to the most basic units of exchange: money for the fulfillment of sexual desire:

¹² "Pattini Paramparai" was originally published in 1960 in the journal *Tāmarai*.

அந்த விவகாரத்துக்கு நான் புதியவன். வயசும், வயசுக்கே உரிய வெறியும்—
 ஊர்ப்பெண்களைப் பார்த்துப் பார்த்து மனசில் விளைந்த தினவையும், ஸ்திரீயின்
 ஸ்பரிசுக் கற்பனைக்கே பலியாகிக் கொண்டிருக்கும் உடலின் எழுச்சியையும்
 தீர்த்துக் கொள்ள ஒரு சந்தர்ப்பம் கிடைக்கிறதே என்ற சபலசித்தமும்—'இது
 வேறு ஊர், அதிலும் நகரும்' என்ற தெம்பும் அந்த ரிக்ஷாக்காரன் துணையும்
 இருக்கின்ற தைரியத்தால் நான் அரைகுறை மனத்துடன், கொஞ்சம் பயத்துடன்
 ஒப்புக் கொண்டேன்; ஒப்புக் கொண்ட காரியத்தில் இறங்கிவிட்டேன். அதாவது
 ரிக்ஷாக்காரனின் வேண்டுகோளுக்கு இணங்கி வண்டியில் ஏறி உட்கார்ந்தேன்.

I was a new customer to the profession. I was tempted by this chance to
 quell the sexual appetite of my youth, the nagging urge in my mind roused by
 the village girls I constantly watched, the fervent awakening of my body to the
 fantasy of a woman's touch. I was encouraged knowing it was an unfamiliar
 town, and not just any town but the city; I was emboldened by the auto driver's
 companionship. So with half a mind and a little uneasiness, I conceded and
 plunged into the deed. That is to say, I took up the rickshaw driver's offer and
 climbed into the rickshaw.

(Jeyakanthan 2001a [1960], 646)

This paragraph frames the narrator's visit to the prostitute entirely in terms of sexual desire, leaving no room to question the narrator's intentions lying behind his actions. Thus, right away, a significant difference between Jeyakanthan's narrator and Rakesh's characters becomes evident: in contrast to Rakesh's characters, who are compelled by indecision and inertia; here, even before he recounts his story, Jeyakanthan's narrator has clearly stated his desire and made a decision about how to attain it. Further, the paragraph makes the link between the realization of this desire and landscape, as it is his anonymity in the city that incites the narrator to seek sexual satisfaction. In this way, the urban landscape and its anonymity awards him a sense of freedom he would not have otherwise assumed.

As he is driven through the city towards the prostitute Kulu's place, we are given a tour of its landscape, in particular of its most squalid neighborhoods, where blackened children play in the streets, gangs of boys walk around cursing and teasing hookers, and vendors sell savories under the municipal corporation lamps. His comments indicate that the narrator sees himself as not just different from, but also superior to the people he observes in the passing scenery. He is disgusted by the face of a prostitute leaning against her hut and irritated when the driver leaves him waiting in a slum (*cēri*) while buying lamp oil, nervous of those who might notice him. He even expresses disapproval of the low class, city-dwelling rickshaw driver, whom he finds annoyingly garrulous.

Upon his arrival at Kulu's house, his description of the bedroom to which she takes him coincides easily with our expectations of what a poverty-stricken prostitute's room might look like: it is sparse and small and sultry (*puḷukkam*). The narrator expresses impatience and irritation with Kulu's disabled, drunken, stupid husband instead of sympathy for Kulu's circumstances, an opinion in line with his view of the street dwellers. And when Kulu speaks to him using informal pronouns rather than terms of respect, he is taken aback and expects explanation.

Thus, while Jeyakanthan's epigraph from this story that begins this chapter flags a connection the narrator feels to Kulu, it is not one framed by compassion as it is in Rakesh's stories. Precisely because of his sexual appetite, he is immediately drawn to Kulu; even before seeing her, her voice arouses him. The fate he sees in her eyes repeatedly gestures toward something else, something he cannot understand at first, but comes to perceive by the end. As the passages below demonstrate, this something is an unnamed connection that revolves around but cannot be pinned down to both sexual desire and the issue of money.

நான் உள்ளே நுழைந்ததும் சட்டையைக் கழற்றினேன். சட்டைப் பையிலிருந்து பர்ஸ் விழுந்தது, அவள் அதை எடுத்து என்னிடம் நீட்டினாள். நான் அவள் கண்களைப் பார்த்தேன்; அதில் அவள் தலை எழுத்து தெரிந்தது.
 “நீ வெச்சிரு. போகும்போது வாங்கிக்கறேன்.”
 ... “என்கிட்டெ நம்பி குடுக்கறியே.”
 ... நான் சிரித்தேன். “என்னையே கொடுத்திருக்கிறேனே,” என்றேன்.
 சொல்லி முடிந்தவுடன் நான் காதல் வசனம் பேசியது போல் இருந்தது எனக்கு.

I took my shirt off as soon as I entered. My purse fell from the pocket. She picked it up and held it out to me. I looked in her eyes. I saw her fate in them.

“Keep it. I'll take it when I leave.”
 ... “You trust me?”
 ... I laughed. “I give you myself.” As soon as I said it, I felt I'd spoken some sort of love colloquy.

(ibid., 650)

In this first conversation between them, the narrator verbalizes a trust he feels towards Kulu that seems spurred by the fate he sees in her eyes. When he tries to explain it, however, it becomes a cliché, like a dialogue spoken in a romance novel or play.¹³ He realizes that at this moment his trust can only be articulated in the terms of his attraction towards Kulu.

But Kulu seems to understand and tries to explain:

“உங்களை எனக்கு புடிச்சிருக்கு.”
 “ஏன் பிடிக்கணும்.”
 “என்னமோ?” என்று கொஞ்ச நேரம் கூரை முகட்டைப் பார்த்திருந்துவிட்டுச் சொன்னாள், “உம்...பணம் தானே, பணத்தைக் குடுத்தினாலேதான் இவளோடே நாம் இருக்க முடியுதுன்னு நெனைக்கறீங்க, இல்லே? ஆமா பணம்தான் முக்கியம், பணமங்கற விஷயம் முடிஞ்சவுடனே வேறே என்னமோ ஒரு ஆசை உண்டாகுதே...அது எல்லார்க்கிட்டேயும் எல்லாருக்கும் உண்டாகாது.” அவள் என்னமோ சொல்லிக் கொண்டிருந்தாள். எனக்கு ஒன்றும் புரியவில்லை. நான் இந்த வியவகாரத்துக்கு புதிசு.

“I like you.”
 “Why should you like me?”

¹³ The narrator hints at his knowledge of drama more than once in the story: later he refers to Shakespeare's Othello to describe Kulu's husband.

“Who knows.” She looked at the ceiling awhile and then said, “You’re thinking it’s the money, right? She’s with me because I gave her money. Yes, money’s important. But as soon as the money issue was taken care of, I felt something, desire [*ācai*]. It doesn’t happen with everyone.” She kept on talking. I didn’t understand a thing. I was new to the profession.

(ibid., 652)

Not only does Kulu indicate here that she is herself attracted to the narrator, but also she acknowledges that this desire is something more than an attraction that follows from remuneration. While it is, of course, possible that her words here indicate her savviness in her trade, in the closing lines of the story, the narrator reads them differently:

“எதுக்குக் கோவிச்சிக்கிட்டுப் போறீங்க...அதுக்காக நீங்க போர்தானா உங்க பணத்தை வாங்கிக்கிட்டுப் போங்க.”

பணம்! என் கை சட்டைப் பையைத் தொட்டது. பர்ஸ்தான் இருக்கிறதே...அவள் சொல்வது அந்த இருபது ரூபாயையா?

“நான் உன்கிட்டே கோவிச்சிக்கிட்டுப் போகல்லே...அந்தப் பணத்தைதான் உனக்கு கொடுத்துட்டேனே,” என்று நான் திரும்பி அவள் முகத்தைப் பார்த்துச் சொன்னபோது அவள் கண்களை கண்டேன். அதில் அவள் தலை எழுத்துத் தெரிந்தது.

அவள் என்னைப் பார்த்து உதடுகள் துடிக்கப் புன்முறுவல் காட்டினாள். அது கேவலம் ஒரு விபசாரியின் வலை வீசும் சிரிப்பாக இருந்திருந்தால் அதில் இருந்து நான் தப்பி வந்திருப்பேன்.

“Why’re you angry and leaving? If you’re leaving because of him [my husband], at least take your money back and go.”

Money! My hand touched my shirt pocket. The purse was there, of course. Did she mean her twenty-rupee fee?

“I’m not leaving because I’m angry with you. I gave that money to you.” When I turned to look at her, I met her eyes. I saw her fate in them.

She looked at me and smiled with trembling lips. Had it been just a prostitute’s [*vīpacāri*] net, I might have escaped.

(ibid., 654)

At last the narrator has understood a dimension of desire not attached to money. The fate he sees in her eyes, that which drives him to stay (and to satisfy his sexual appetite), entails a mutual desire that transcends the money-sex relationship, that net particular to prostitution. Importantly, the connection this desire establishes between Kulu and the narrator slightly shifts the terrain of morality because it fits neatly neither into the category of human beings’ pure sexual attraction for one another, nor into that of their shared compassion or sympathy. Rather, their connection functions as the validation for both the narrator’s and Kulu’s attractions for one another (and the story does not posit that these are commensurable) that facilitates their more basic money-sex relationship.

While “Pattini Paramparai” presents desire in a light-hearted tone that satirizes all its characters, including the narrator, “Akkini Piravēcam” [Trial by Fire] interrogates it more

seriously by examining the causes and repercussions of sexual assault.¹⁴ The two main characters of this story, a young woman and a young man, remain unnamed throughout. Like “Pattini Paramparai,” its setting is also the city (presumably Chennai), but this time the landscape is demarcated by wide roads, plush trees, and bungalows. The opening scene filmically zooms in on the girl, who is waiting in the pouring rain at the bus stand outside her college with a flock of other students. She is an exception (*vitivalakku*) among them—standing apart and conversing with no one; younger than the rest; clearly of a different class as she is dressed in torn, mismatched hand-me-downs. Her most differentiating feature, however, is her beauty; the third person narrator describes her as a goddess, flower-like, with beautiful child-like eyes and a face that needs no adornment. Indeed, as the description continues, it becomes highly sexualized:

அதுவும் இப்போது மழையில் நனைந்து, ஈரத்தில் நின்று நின்று தந்தக் கடைசல் போன்ற கால்களும் பாதங்களும் சிலிர்த்து, நீலம் பாரித்துப் போய், பழந்துணி தாவணியும் ரவிக்கையும் உடம்போடு ஒட்டிக் கொண்டு, சின்ன உருவமாய்க் குளிரில் குறுகி, ஒரு அம்மன் சிலை மாதிரி அவள் நிற்கையில், அப்படியே கையிலே தூக்கி கொண்டு போய் விடலாம் போலக்கூடத் தோன்றும்.

And, standing there now drenched by the rain, her shapely ivory legs turned blue and trembling, her worn blouse and *tāvini* glued to her body, her tiny figure shrunken in the cold; she is poised like the statue of a goddess, and one feels like simply carrying her away.

(Jeyakanthan 2000 [1966], 98)

As this description indicates, what makes the girl exceptional is that she embodies an idealized woman, one that is sexualized (even without adornment), but also virginal, goddess-like, and child-like all at once.¹⁵ And as such, she compels our attraction, much like the prostitute in “Pattini Paramparai,” who by virtue of being a prostitute rouses the narrator’s desire. The passage foreshadows what will happen to the girl—moments later, once the rest of the college girls have left, she does, in fact, get carried away.

The culprit is a young man, who stops to rescue her from the rain by offering her a ride home. Even before he gets out of the car, her interest is peaked—not by him, but by the car itself: “She ogles that beautiful car from the rear all the way up to the driver seat, staring at it as if astonished.”¹⁶ In return, “the young man looks at her through his big eyes with the same astonishment with which she stares at the car” (99).¹⁷ Their mismatched desires become clear in this first exchange; her attraction is for the car—for its newness and magnificence that she has not before experienced firsthand, and his is for her—presumably for her ideal looks, an image of which the narrator has just given.

¹⁴ “Akkini Piravecam” was originally published in 1966 in the journal *Ānanta Vikaṭan*.

¹⁵ Though the Tamil word *peṇ* indicates both girl and woman, I use the word “girl” instead of young woman to indicate this character because the narrator, too, portrays her as not yet matured, while the young man is delineated as older by virtue of his sexual prowess and suggested experience.

¹⁶ “அவள் அந்த அழகிய காரை, பின்னால் இருந்து முன்னேயுள்ள டிரைவர் ஸீட் வரை விழிகளை ஒட்டி ஓர் ஆச்சரியம் போலப் பார்க்கிறாள்.”

¹⁷ “...தனது பெரிய விழிகளால் அவள் அந்தக் காரைப் பார்ப்பதே போன்ற ஆச்சரியத்தோடு, அவன் அவளைப் பார்க்கிறான்.”

Landscape serves in this story to compel the girl to let herself be carried away; she declines his insistent offers to give her a ride, but the torrential downpour begins anew, and she sees no other option. And as he drives her through the upper class neighborhoods of the city, the landscape she observes from the car window gives us a sense of just how much the girl is out of place; not only is she repeatedly fascinated by the car's various gadgets and lights, but also she is struck by the beautiful bungalows and gardens they pass by. The newness around her vies with her concern that the young man seems to be taking her away from her home and out of the city, so much so that it is not until they enter the desolate outskirts that she says something. Instead of giving her an answer, he drives into an isolated field. Lightening flashes and thunder roars; darkness falls and the wind turns violent. Everything surrounding the girl bears portent.

However, even as she is afraid, the girl is exhilarated (*kutūkalam*) by her new experience. As they sit silently in the field, she observes him without worry:

அவன் அழகாத்தான் இருக்கிறான். உடலை இறுகக் கவ்விய கபில நிற உடையோடு, 'ஓட்டு உசரமாய்!' அந்த மங்கிய ஒளியில் அவனது நிறமே ஒரு பிரகாசமாய் திகழ்வதைப் பார்க்கையில், கொடிய சர்ப்பத்தின் கம்பீர அழகே அவளுக்கு ஞாபகம் வருகிறது. பின்னலிருந்து பார்க்கையில், அந்தக் கோணத்தில் ஓரளவே தெரியும் அவனது இடது கண்ணின் விழிக்கோணம் ஒளியுமிழ்ந்து பளபளக்கிறது. எவ்வளவு புயலடித்தாலும் கலைய முடியாத குறுகத் தரித்த கிராப்புச் சிகையும் காதோரத்தில் சற்று அதிகமாகவே நீண்டு இறங்கியகரிய கிருதாவும்கூட அந்த மங்கிய வெளிச்சத்தில் மினுமினுக்கின்றன. பக்கவாட்டில் இருந்த பார்க்கும்போது அந்த ஒளி வீசும் முகத்தில் சின்னதாக ஒரு மீசை இருந்தால் நன்றாயிருக்குமே என்று ஒரு விநாடி தோன்றுகிறது.

He is pretty good looking. Tall, and a body dressed in tight fitting brown attire. His skin glows in the dim light; she is reminded of the beauty of a magnificent, deadly serpent. From her viewpoint from behind, she can only see his left eye. It draws light and sparkles. Hair worn cropped, so short that no wind could dishevel it, and longish sideburns that glimmer in the diminishing light. When he looks back in the rearview mirror, she thinks for a moment it would be nice if that bright face had a small mustache.

(*ibid.*, 102)

This passage, narrated entirely from the girl's point of view, charts her attraction to the stranger before her. Though it is bracketed by an encroaching fear—reflected by both her thoughts and the landscape—this desire is unhindered and unmediated. The girl even takes the liberty to fantasize about him further, by imagining what he might look like with a thin mustache.

He climbs into the backseat alongside her and begins to charm her by offering her chocolate and gum. He brushes her lips with the gum wrapper, sending shivers through her: "She feels her head aflame and a pleasant burning throughout her body" (103).¹⁸ Her desire remains firm though he begins to encroach upon the forbidden spaces of her body. Even in the fatal moment when he assaults her, a trace of her burning desire lingers:

¹⁸ "அவளுக்குத் தலை பற்றி எரிவது போல் உடம்பெங்கும் சுகமான ஒரு வெப்பம் காந்துகிறது."

திடீரென்று அவள் காதோரத்திலும் கன்னங்களிலும் உதடுகளிலும் தீயால் சுட்டுவிட்டதைப்போல் அவனது கரங்களில் கிடந்த அவள் துடிதுடித்து, ‘ப்ளீஸ் ப்ளீஸ்,’ என்று கதறக் கதற, அவன் அவளை வெறிகொண்டு தழுவித் தழுவி...

அவளது கதறல் மெலிந்து தெய்ந்து அடங்கிப்போகிறது. அவனைப் பழி தீர்ப்பது போல் இப்பொது அவளது கரங்கள் அவனது கழுத்தை இறுகப் பின்னி இணைந்திருக்கின்றன.

வெளியே...

வானம் கிழிந்து அறுபட்டது! மின்னல்கள் சிதறித் தெறித்தன! இடியோசை முழங்கி வெடித்தது!

Suddenly, shuddering in his arms, she screams, “Please, please!” as if trying to stop him from setting fire to her ears and cheeks and lips. He seizes her with fury.

Her screams are muffled and die out. Then as if determining his final verdict she clasps her hands together around his neck.

Outside...

The sky is needlessly torn apart! Lightening scatters and thunder roars!

(ibid., 104)

His violent embrace is the only direct indication the story gives of his assault; however, the description of the sky, lightening, and thunder that immediately follows give us a sense of the abominable nature of his actions. The girl resists vehemently, but as the passage records, her screams die out, though it is unclear whether the young man suppresses them, the sound of the rain carries them away, or she simply stops resisting. The key moment seems to be that in which she clasps her hands around his neck, judging him for his actions. It is a moment of action on her part—an indication that she retains some control of her body, and most importantly, it is astonishingly proximate to a reciprocating embrace. This is not to say that her response is one of roused sexual passion, or even one of acceptance, but rather to point to the ambivalent choice of the narrator’s words such that it is not through the girl’s outright declaration, but instead through the surrounding context—her preceding screams and the following descriptions of the environment—that the content of that judgement is suggested.

The story immediately shifts to the aftermath of their encounter, chronicling the girl’s pathetic, tear-ridden pleas to be taken home, and the young man’s unsympathetic, abrupt, and laconic responses. It is only when he drops her off that he feels momentary regret:

அந்தச் சிறிய தெருவில், மழை இரவானதால் ஜன நடமாட்டமே அற்றிருக்கிறது. தூரத்தில் எரிந்து கொண்டிருக்கும் தெரு விளக்கின் மங்கிய வெளிச்சத்தில் தன் அருகே குள்ளமாய்க் குழந்தை மாதிரி நின்றிருக்கும் அவளைப் பார்க்கும்போது அவன் தன்னுள்ளே தன்னேயே நொந்து கொள்கிறான். தனக்கிருக்கும் அளவிறந்த சுதந்திரமே தன்னே எவ்வளவு கேவலமான அடிமையாக்கி இருக்கிறது என்பதை எண்ணிப் பார்க்கிறான்.

‘ஆம். அடிமை!—உணர்ச்சிகளின் அடிமை!’ என்று அவன் உள்ளம் உணருகிறது. அவன் அவளிடம் ரகஸியம் போல் கூறுகிறான்: “ஐ ஆம் ஸாரி!”

Because of the rainy darkness, there are no people on that small street. He feels regret as he looks at her standing beside him, dimly lit by a distant street lamp, brimming with tears like a child. He thinks to himself that the extent to which he enjoys his freedom has made him a slave to depravity.

‘Yes, depravity—the depravity of feeling!’ it occurs to him within. He tells her, as if in secret, ‘I’m sorry!’

(ibid., 105)

The young man associates his sympathetic regret with both his freedom as a man and his nature as a man. He apologizes, but only in secret, and immediately afterwards stops himself from saying anything more. The scene ends here as if to confirm the helplessness of man to his sexual urges (and becomes axiomatic when juxtaposed with those of the narrator in “Pattini Paramparai”), which comprise the underbelly of modern freedom.

The girl’s mother, too, confirms man’s enslavement to his desires by on the one hand, cursing herself for not educating her daughter against it and on the other, blaming her daughter for letting herself be ravaged and spoiled. Despite her heart-wrenching mother’s empathy, she beats the girl in disgust (*aruvaruppu*) for the pollution she has brought upon the family. But in a sudden change of heart, she looks at her daughter closely, pulls her into the bathroom, strips her, and bathes her with bucket after bucket of cold water. As she does so, she cries, “You’re clean now, child. Clean. The water I’ve poured on you isn’t water. Think of it as fire. There are no blemishes upon you now” (108).¹⁹ This is because, as her mother points out later, the ritual cleansing the girl has successfully endured coincides with the purity of her innocence that led her astray. Thus, we witness the proverbial trial by fire carried out in its most literal expression, in which the girl—guilty, like goddess Sita, by virtue of being a woman—proves her purity by her moral fortitude.

But also, the fire that purifies her here recalls the fire she experiences in the car, as a pleasant burning throughout her body when he touches her and then with greater intensity upon her ears, cheeks, and lips. This fire, also fueled by water—by the near deluge raging outside—underlies the new mature light in which her mother sees her after having performed her bath. Now, her mother compares her daughter to the mythical Ahalya, who even after her adulterous act is proven pure by her loyalty.²⁰ In this way, the girl is re-instated into goddess-hood. After her trial, she is even more goddess-like, one whose eyes now reflect the “light of maturity and womanhood (*peṇmai*)” (109).²¹ The fire of sexual desire shown to be the underbelly of manhood is, thus, also that which enables the girl’s initiation into full-fledged womanhood. That is to say, in the aporia that stands in for her judgement of the young man in the rape scene lies the repositioning of the girl’s desire in terms of her newly-attained maturity.

Maturity takes a different form in “Yuka Canti” [The Meeting of Ages].²² Here, it is embodied by Gowri Patti (*pāṭṭi* meaning grandmother) who recognizes the changing demands of the modern world upon human beings. Thus, the location of desire in relation to exchange, too,

¹⁹ “நீ சுத்தமாயிட்டேடி கொழந்தே. சுத்தமாயிட்டே. உன் மேலெ கொட்டினேனே அது ஜலமில்லேடி, ஜலம் இல்லே. நெருப்புன்னு நெனைச்சுக்கோ. உன் மேலெ இப்போ கறை இல்லே.”

²⁰ See Chapter 2 for a brief recounting of the Ahalya and Sita myths.

²¹ “முழு வளர்ச்சியுற்ற பெண்மையின் நிறைவு பிரகாசிப்பு”

²² “Yuka Canti” was originally published in 1963 in the journal *Ānanta Vikaṭan*.

takes a distinct shape in this story: whereas exchange in both “Pattini Paramparai” and “Akkini Piravecam” is one of sex between men and women, in “Yuka Canti” the transaction—still between man and woman—revolves around Gowri Patti’s client-proprietor relationship with her barber. In this case, the relationship is rejected in its renewal, as Gowri Patti realigns her own practices of being with those of her modern granddaughter.

In fact, it is not so much the maturity that Patti attains—due to her life experience this is something that for the most part, she already has—but rather her further commitment to it that propels the momentum of the story. Accordingly, landscape in “Yuka Canti” reflects Patti’s grounded-ness and stability of her character rather than its dissonance with the environment. For instance, the narration lingers on descriptions of her as the sole, slowly moving creature walking alongside the road, enduring the dry heat of the day as she walks towards her son’s house. She has rejected offers for a ride as she steps off the bus in the opening scene of the story, and now she traverses deliberately, “bag at her hip, feet pushing into the sizzling dusty earth with each step. She slumped to one side as she went” (Jeyakanthan 2001b [1963], 107).²³ She notices her singularity; not only is she older than everyone else and has borne more hardship, but also she is unhurried while everyone else rushes by in their modern day vehicles. She, on the other hand, is unaffected by the heat, and her tolerance for it signals the strength of her character.

Even when she stops to rest, her strength is echoed by the landscape:

வழியில் சாலையோரத்தில்—நான்கைந்து மனிதர்கள் நின்று சுகம் காண
வாகாய் முளைத்த பெருங்குடைபோல் நிழல் பரப்பிக் கொண்டுருந்தது ஒரு சிறிய
வேப்பமரம். அந்த நிழலில் ஒற்றையாய் சற்றே நின்றாள் பாட்டி. எரிந்து தகிக்கும்
அவ்வெம்மையின் நடுவே சுகம் தரப் படர்ந்த அந்த நிழல் போலும்,
யந்திரங்களைத் தவிர எதையுமே நம்பாத இவ்விருபதாம் நூற்றாண்டில், சென்ற
நூற்றாண்டின் சின்னமாய்த் தன் சொந்தக் கால்களையே நம்பி நிற்கும்
காண்பதற்கரிதான அந்தக் கிழவின் பிரசன்னம் போன்றும் மெல்லென வீசிய
குளிர்காற்றில் வேப்பங் குழைகள் சிலிர்த்தன.

At the edge of the road, a small neem tree like a sprouted umbrella spread its cover offering relief enough for four or five people. But only Patti stopped awhile beneath it. Its branches trembled in a soft cool breeze. The shade gave solace in the middle of the burning heat, rare as the presence of this old woman who relied on her own legs—an emblem of a century passed in the midst of the twentieth century which trusts nothing but machines.

(ibid., 108)

Patti’s character is sturdy and long-lasting like that of the neem tree and just as reliable despite the harsh environment surrounding them both. Partly, this self reliability comes from her rootedness in a past century that awards her tenacity in the new one. But partly, it is a result of her sense of self, something the narrator points out is as rare as the shade-giving neem amidst the scorching heat.

²³ “...இடுப்பில் ஏற்றிய சமையுடன் வறுத்துக்கொட்டிய புழுதி மண்ணை அழுந்து மிதித்தவாறு ஒரு பக்கமாய்ச் சாய்ந்து நடந்தாள் பாட்டி.”

It is this sense of self that enables this emblem of a past century to insist to others upon the necessity to change with the times. Thus, when Patti runs into her barber Velayutham on her walk and learns his wife has just given birth to a son, she goads him to educate his new child. The days when barbers traveled door to door to provide services is gone, she says, and “as the times change, men must also change” (109).²⁴ At this juncture in the story, however, there is an inconsistency between what Patti says and her own practices. As a widow (*vitavai*), she adheres strictly to the brahminical prescriptions for widowhood (*vaitavyam*). This is why she still patronizes Velayutham, for he is her family barber, who has always maintained her widow’s shaved head for her. It is for her monthly shave that she makes the cumbersome trip to her son’s home each month, though she lives in the city with her granddaughter. Although Patti insists to Velayutham that he should consider opening a shop instead of traveling door to door, both know he will turn up at her son’s house the next day to give her her ritual shave. “It was,” as Patti thinks, “a proprietor-client relationship” (111).²⁵ The relationship she has with Velayutham signals a contradictoriness: Patti is accommodating of the changing world around her, though she herself continues to live according to the prescriptions of her own era.

Patti’s generational difference comes to the fore in her interactions with her son Ganesh Iyer, as well. He repeatedly makes assumptions about his mother’s traditional worldview, and as a result, he is repeatedly surprised to find she is open to new things. For example, he tries to hide the fact that he has allowed his teenage daughter Meena to go to the movies, even if with her brother as a chaperone. When he finally does come out with it, Patti seems to know more than he does about the film Meena has gone to see and admonishes him for looking down upon the younger generation’s fascination with movie-watching. Neither Ganesh Iyer, nor Patti, however, realizes the vast difference in their worldviews until they read Geetha’s letter.

Geetha is Ganesh Iyer’s eldest daughter, married and widowed at a very young age, with whom Patti now lives in the city where Geetha works. Geetha has sent home a letter with Patti to give to her father. When Ganesh Iyer and Patti read it, they discover that Geetha has decided to remarry a man of her own choice, despite her widow status. Though the choice is a difficult one, she writes that she is decidedly set upon this course because, as she writes:

நான் தவறு செய்வதாகவோ இதற்காக வருந்த வேண்டுமென்றோ கூட
எனக்கு தோன்றவில்லை, எனினும் உங்கள் உறவை, அன்பை இழந்து
விடுகிறேனே என்ற வருத்தம் சில சமயங்களில் அதிகம் வாட்டுகின்றது.
இருப்பினும் ஒரு புதிய வாழ்க்கையை புதிய வெளிச்சத்தைப் பெற்று, ஒரு புது
யுகப் பிரஜையாகச் சஞ்சரிக்கப் போகிறேன் என்ற லட்சிய நிறைவேற்றத்தில்
நான் ஆறுதலும் மட்டமற்ற ஆனந்தமும் கொள்கிறேன்.

I don’t feel I’m making a mistake or that I should regret this. At times I am tormented by great sadness that I may be losing you and your love. But be that as it may, I find not just consolation, but boundless happiness in knowing I will receive a new light and life and fulfill my ambition to live as a citizen [*prajai*] of this new age.

(*ibid.*, 114-115)

²⁴ “காலம் மாறும்போது மனுஷானும் மாறணும்.”

²⁵ “அது வாடிக்கை.”

Just as Patti understands herself to be a representative of an old age, Geetha sees herself as a citizen of the new one, and as such, she sheds any regret she might have that is associated with disregarding the rules of a time not her own. As a modern, educated, independent woman her choice is obvious to her, even if it means completely breaking with her family, tradition, and the past. Ganesh Iyer, conversely, is shocked, and when he finally comes to his senses, his immediate response is to disown his daughter. Geetha's decision, thus, not only confirms his adherence to the prescribed norms of his society, but also reveals that he, too, is willing to break from his family and upbringing in the name of his principles. That is to say, in this moment Ganesh Iyer vehemently departs from the perspectives of his mother—he concedes his regard for traditional norms of respect and obeisance to his elderly mother to uphold his belief in the prescriptions for Brahminical widowhood.

Patti's immediate response, however, is an introspective one. She stays awake all night mulling over the last line of Geetha's letter: "Yes, what a selfish decision. But who, other than Patti, has ever sacrificed their own well being? And why should you?" (115).²⁶ Driven by her love for Geetha to understand her actions, she begins to see the resonances in their lives—their status as outcasts and the tyrannical rule of fate and tradition upon them. Further, she realizes it is the sacrifices she has made by virtue of being a widow and all the experiences those have entailed that enables her to draw affinities with Geetha beyond the ties of family.

Patti's desire to support and love her granddaughter, here, begins to exceed her previous understanding of it in terms of on the one hand, love for family and on the other, compassion and tolerance for human kind (exemplified by her gentle acceptance of Velayutham's simple adherence to his profession and of the rushing youth driving by while she walks along the road). Instead, she begins to think of herself and her own desire to maintain a connection with Geetha as valid motivations for her actions. Thus, the next morning she tells her son, "Forgive me, Ganesh, I need her! ...I'm going with Geetha. You should feel satisfied by this. ...Think about it. And if not, relinquish me, too" (121).²⁷ The selfishness Geetha embraces is now something Patti does too, so much so that when she runs into Velayutham as she walks out of Ganesh Iyer's house, she dismisses him, telling him he no longer needs to come by. Patti's actions are, now, no longer inconsistent with her ability to accommodate the changing new age, and it is in the harmony she creates within herself—a new kind of self-knowledge based on an attention to her own needs and desires—that the meaning of desire becomes located.

The last line of the story indicates that Patti's ability to come to this realization and the changed meaning of self it entails is due to her maturity: "And what if a calmly swaying, slowly advancing representative of an old age tries to welcome and embrace the quickly approaching, frenzied new one? Oh! One needs maturity for that!" (122).²⁸ Though Patti retains her swaying, steady pace on her way home, there is now a morning coolness in air. Her sturdy body

²⁶ "ஆமாம்: ரொம்ப சுயநலத்தொடு செய்த முடிவுதான். எனக்காகப் பாட்டியைத் தவிர வேறு யார்தான் தங்கள் நலனை துறந்து 'தியாகம்; செய்துவிட்டார்கள்? ஏன் செய்யவேண்டும்?"

²⁷ "எனக்கு அவ வெணும்! ...நான் போறேன். கீதவோடேயே போயிடறேன். ...அதுக்காக நீ திருப்திப் படலாம்—யோசிச்சுப் பாரு. இல்லேன்னா அவலோட சேத்து எனக்கும் ஒரு முழுக்குப் போட்டுடு!"

²⁸ வேகமாய் ஆவேசமுற்று வருகின்ற புதிய யுகத்தை, அமைதியாய் அசைந்து அசைந்து நகரும் ஒரு பழைய யுகத்தின் பிரதிநிதி எதிர் கொண்டழைத்துத் தழுவிக்கொள்ளப் பயன்படுவதென்றால்? ஓ! அதற்கு ஒரு பக்குவம் தேவை."

movements and the selfhood it reflects are maintained even as they have evolved, much like the girl's goddess-status in "Akkini Piravecam," which only heightens due to the maturity and confidence she has gained. Patti's transformation is also recognizable in the narrator's interpretation of the prostitute's smile in "Pattini Paramparai," which enables him to come to gratifying terms with both his sexual desire and his relationship with her.

In each story, desire gains saliency through its juxtaposition with landscape—be it the passing cityscape, the torrential rains, or the dusty scorching heat—for it is against landscape that each character's bodily desire is defined: for the narrator of the first story it is his repulsion toward the lower classes; for the girl it is an attraction for the glamour of upper class lifestyle and aesthetic; and for Patti it is the steadfast rootedness of an older era. These juxtapositions, in turn, fill old tropes with new content. Widow, prostitute, virgin, and goodwife are newly reinforced ideals in these stories precisely for the future they now represent, one in which bodily knowledge and desire direct individuals' actions and connections to one another.

Why I Write, or The Nature of the Humanist Project

Both Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's stories articulate a common understanding of humanism—as a worldview based upon a fundamental belief in the connection between human beings. As I have demonstrated above, it is the examination of this connection that motivates their characters and drives their narratives. Moreover, both writers demonstrate through their fiction that human desire—whether stable or tenuous, corporeal or mental—enables this connection even as it is limited by the boundaries of the self. As a result, their stories focus on individuals and the meanings of their unique actions.

It is no surprise, then, that Rakesh and Jeyakanthan view their writerly actions, too, as falling within the scope of humanism. Both, in strikingly similar essays—Rakesh's entitled, "Why Do I Write Stories?" (1975) and Jeyakanthan's entitled almost identically, "Why Do I Write?" (1972)—express not only why they have come to writing, but also what, in their view, the purpose of writing is.²⁹ The two essays begin by offering a simple and direct answer to the question their titles raise: Rakesh and Jeyakanthan write because it is natural. For Rakesh it is like the wind that moves the leaves: "If you ask a man why [the leaves] rustle like that, what can he say? Just that we're all made that way; we move with the touch of the breeze."³⁰ Writing, for him, is an essential part of his reaction to the world: "It is my nature to express my reactions to life through writing so I write" (Rakesh 1975d, 51).³¹ Similarly, Jeyakanthan says asking a man why he writes is like asking him why he has a name—so integral to his being is writing (Jeyakanthan 1972, 10). Both thus view writing as a way of making sense of and in the world, and it is through this connection between writing and being that Rakesh and Jeyakanthan reach out to their readers.

²⁹ Rakesh's essay "Kahānī Kyon Likhtā Hūm?" was published after his death in 1972 in a 1975 collection entitled *Sānskritik aur Sāhityik Dr̥ṣṭi* [Perspectives on Culture and Literature]. Jeyakanthan's essay "Etaṛkkāka Eḷutukirēn?" was first published in Chellappa's journal *Eḷuttu* in 1962.

³⁰ "यह पूछने से कि भाई इस तरह क्यों हिलते हैं, वे क्या उत्तर देंगे? यही कि हम बने ऐसे हैं कि हवा का स्पर्श हमें चंचल कर देता है।"

³¹ "मुझे जीवन के सम्बन्ध में अपनी प्रतिक्रियाओं को लिख कर व्यक्त करना स्वाभाविक लगता है इसलिए मैं लिखता हूँ।"

However, the distinct readerships Rakesh and Jeyakanthan address, as well as the literary humanisms they espouse, are shaped by regionally specific literary politics: Rakesh's based in the effort to imagine a Hindu/Indian national community in the aftermath of Partition, and Jeyakanthan's based in the effort to map the boundaries of a middle class, Indianist community set apart from Tamil language and caste politics. In what follows, I first examine how Rakesh's critical writing on the short story coincides with the literary worldview of his fellow *nayi kahānī* writer Rajendra Yadav, whom I discussed in the previous chapter. I show that Rakesh's work on the *nayi kahani* shares an emphasis on the same present and Hinduized Hindi readership community with Yadav's. I then outline how Jeyakanthan's critical writing echoes the views of his literary contemporary, C.S. Chellappa, whose work I also treated in Chapter 3. Both these writers stress the importance of the prose style of the *cirukatai*, which they position against the social reformist didacticism and linguistic puritanism they attribute to Tamil revivalist politics.

In "Why Do I Write Stories?" Rakesh envisions a readership that shares similar life experiences to himself. He views himself as the most ordinary of men, and his writing as an expression of this ordinariness. Art that expresses the ordinary, he says, is not only the most popular but also the most appreciated. This is because although our minds soak in what we see and the things that impact us, the words with which we express this often and easily fail us. And this is why Rakesh himself writes: because he (despite his ordinariness) finds it natural and inherent to his nature to chronicle everyday life, he is able to touch upon a commonality among people that they themselves are often unable to articulate (Rakesh 1975d, 53). This ability is what distinguishes Rakesh as a writer (as opposed to other individuals) and enables him to take on the responsibility to make sense of the everyday world through short story writing.

In this way, Rakesh, like Yadav, highlights the special (and in this way, extraordinary) task of the writer to articulate and shape the post-Independence social landscape and individuals relationships to one another.³² For both, this task is one based specifically in the writer's own sphere of experience (*anubhav-kṣetra*) and directed towards the Indian (as opposed to the developing world, or global) context (Rakesh 1975c, 35; see also 1975e). As I discussed in the previous two chapters, Yadav situates the *nayi kahani* in the lineage of his literary predecessor Premchand and delimits its literary scope and content to the Hindu/Indian community that Premchand established in the pre-Independence moment. For this reason, Yadav sees the *nayi kahani* as parallel to and separate from the larger world story tradition with which it dialogues. Rakesh makes this same move in his critical writing on the *nayi kahani*. Not only does he envision the *nayi kahani* as a form particular to the Indian context, but also he establishes Premchand as the forefather of the modern Hindi short story. Furthermore, he criticizes Premchand's successors Agyeya, Jainendra, and Yashpal in the same way as Yadav—in Rakesh's view, the short stories of these writers overlook either the internal conflicts of individuals, or the external uncertainties of their social context (1975a, 42-43; 1975b, 32; 1975c, 37-38). Contrary to these writers, he highlights that the *nayi kahani* writer directs his work solely towards

³² Rakesh and Yadav both hold that the *nayi kahani* writer shapes the social landscape by creating a sense of human connection between the writer, readers, and the characters of the story that enables individuals to understand both their present external circumstances, as well as their troubled relationships with one another.

depicting the present, giving direction to individuals' shared struggles in society, and in this way, constructing a unified form out of their diverse emotional experiences and desires (1975b, 33).

For Rakesh, the writer grasps the unified threads running through individuals' experiences of everyday life through the way in which the *nayi kahani* uses language:

कहानी छोटी भी लिखी जा सकती है और बड़ी भी, मगर बात उस नुक़्ते को पकड़ने की है, जीवन के उस व्यंग्य, संवेद, विरोध या अन्तर्विरोध को शब्दों में उतारने की है जो कई बार अपनी सूक्ष्मता के कारण पकड़ में नहीं आता। बात वही साधारण होती है। वही जीवन हम सब जीते हैं।

A story can be short or long, but its content must grasp that point, must put into words life's ironies, sentiments, oppositions, or inner contradictions, which often are difficult to grasp because of their subtleties. Such is the ordinariness of its content. Such is the life we all live.

(1975d, 52)

In other words, Rakesh's *nayi kahani* writing seeks out the subtleties of everyday living and charts them through language in the form of the story. Crucial to his conceptualization of the task of the story is its content's relationship to humanity, "to the life we all live." Herein lies the leap from his individual writerly actions to its repercussions in society; not only does Rakesh's writing give verbal meaning to everyday living, but also it expresses the nature of this ordinary living as one of shared experience. In his view, a writer establishes a sense of human connection within his readers through the way in which they identify with the language and content he conveys in the *nayi kahani*. The *kahani's* content is utterly of the present because the shared experience Rakesh struggles to understand through his writing is of the present, of the ordinary events to which he responds in written word.

The role of the present in shaping the short story that Rakesh theorizes coincides with the concept of *vartamān* (present) that Yadav, too, discusses, and is one defining marker of Rakesh's participation in and influence upon the *Nayi Kahani* movement.³³ As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Yadav underscores that the *nayi kahani* writer is committed only to the present time, one defined by the relationship between a writer's perspectives as a *vyakti*, or individual, and his *pariveś*, or external surroundings. The present that the *nayi kahani* depicts is thus shaped by both the internal emotional life and experiences of the individual, as well as the social and political tumult of the larger post-Independence moment. In a similar gesture to Yadav, Rakesh, too, recognizes the chaotic circumstances defining the present that are integral to shaping the tone and direction of the *nayi kahani*:

यदि सतह से देखा जाये तो भले ही यह जीवन शिथिल और गतिहीन प्रतीत हो, परन्तु बारीक निगाह से देखने पर शायद उसमें इतनी हलचल देखी जा सकती है, जितनी पहले कभी नहीं रही। इस का कारण है राजनीतिक और आर्थिक परिस्थितियों और उन के साथ

³³ For Rakesh's views on the role of the present in his dramatic work, see Dalmia 2006, Dharwadkar 2008, Sawhney 2004.

सम्बद्ध मूल्यों का जल्दी-जल्दी बदलना। जिस काल में परिस्थितियाँ हर तीन-चार वर्ष में जीवन को एक झटके दे जाती हों और एक साधारण सामाजिक व्यक्ति किसी निश्चित सूत्र को पकड़ कर अपना संतुलन बनाये रखने में असमर्थ हो गया हो, जब कि व्यक्ति की योग्यता और जीवन में उस की उपलब्धि का सम्बद्ध टूट गया हो, जब कि हर एक भविष्य की खोज अन्धी गली में हाथ मारने की तरह हो, उस समय को छोड़ कर एक लेखक के अध्ययन और चित्रण के लिए उपयुक्त और कौन समय हो सकता है?

Although this life may appear slack and inert when viewed from the surface, upon a careful look perhaps such chaos can be seen in it, such as was never before there. The reason for this is [our] political and economic circumstances and the quickly changing values related to these. At a time when circumstances have within three or four years given a jolt to life, and the ordinary social individual is incapable of grasping any certain philosophical thread in order to gain balance; when an individual's worth and the achievements associated with life are demolished; when each search for the future is like striking upon a blind alley—what other time is appropriate than this one for a writer's study and portrayal?

(1975a, 44-45)

Here, Rakesh pinpoints the same *parives* as Yadav does—one defined by the political and economic conditions arising in the aftermath of Partition and decolonization. It is the social and political uncertainties of this period and individuals' lack of direction, morality, or philosophy that form the basis of the *nayi kahani* writer's work.³⁴ This is why Rakesh holds that the *nayi kahani* expresses no moral stance and espouses no political or social credo; the times are such that individuals are constantly jolted by their changing circumstances and are thus unable to imagine their own significance or the future. For him, the chaos of the post-Independence *parives* (environment) shapes the reality (*yathārth*) that the *nayi kahani* portrays, one defined by individuals' external and internal struggles. Through such depictions, says Rakesh, the *nayi kahani* creates a symbolic unity of effect (*sāṅkentik prabhāvānviti*) that impresses upon readers and forges a human connection between them (1975b, 32; 2009 [1967], 162; see also 1975c, 38-39).³⁵ Rakesh thus espouses a literary humanism similar to Yadav: for both *nayi kahani* writers, the *nayi kahani* expresses a unity of effect (*prabhavanviti*), or a shared sensibility, that enables writers and readers to identify with one another. Furthermore, the *nayi kahani* creates this unified effect through the interconnections it makes between the struggles of individuals (*vyakti*) and the common external environment (*parives*) in which they live.

Like Rakesh, Jeyakanthan, too, sees good short story writing as opposed to moralistic didacticism and social reformist jingoism. For example, in his preface to his 1965 short story

³⁴ Rakesh, like Yadav, also uses terms such as *ākulatā*, or distress, and “*kanfjūzan*,” or confusion (which he transliterates from English), to describe this period. See Rakesh 2009 [1967], 159-161. Cf. Yadav 1966, 26-27; 1978, 91.

³⁵ In the context of his playwriting, Dalmia (2006) describes this quality of Rakesh's writing as an effort to simultaneously represent reality and extra-reality, or his characters' external circumstances alongside that comprised by the reality, struggle, and conflict within his characters. She demonstrates that his effort to bring these two realms together takes form in his work as a breakdown of communication between characters.

collection *Piralayam* [Flood], Jeyakanthan expresses disappointment with readers who criticize him for not offering solutions to social problems in his stories (2000 [1965], 186). He goes on to say it is not moral didacticism that his stories evoke, but rather a sense of maturity (*pakkuvam*):

ஆழ்ந்து ஆழ்ந்து பார்க்கின்ற ஒரு பக்குவம் பெற்று விட்டால்
எல்லாவற்றுள்ளும் ஒரு மகத்துவம் துயிலுவதை - மறைத்திருப்பதைத் தரிசிக்க
முடியும்.

எழுத்தாளன் ஒரு சட்டத்தின் துணை கொண்டு இது சரி, இது தப்பு என்று
தீர்ப்பும் தண்டனையும் அளிக்கும் ஒரு சாதாரண நீதிபதியல்ல.

[...] அவன் சத்தியத்தைப் பேசுகிறான். மேலோட்டமான வாழ்க்கை பல
வழிகளில் சத்தியத்தினின்றும் முரண்பட்டு நிற்கிறது. எனவே, பல சமயங்களில்
அவனே தண்டிக்கப்பட்டு விடுகிறான்.

As one looks deeper and deeper [into my stories], if maturity [*pakkuvam*] is
begotten, one can glimpse a sleeping - hidden greatness.

A writer is not an ordinary judge who supports laws [by] saying this is
right, and this is wrong, meting out solutions and punishments.

[...] He speaks the truth. In general, life stands in contradiction to the
truth in many ways. As it is, many times [the writer] himself is punished.

(ibid., 186)

In this elusive passage, Jeyakanthan indicates that he views the writer's role as one that arouses maturity in readers.³⁶ This maturity is not based in questions of right or wrong, for this is not what a good writer seeks to convey. Rather, the writer faces judgement just as other ordinary individuals do. Building upon these experiences, he writes the truth, based though it might be in contradictoriness. That is to say, the truth that the writer expresses is that of the relativity and diversity of truth, the same message Chellappa conveys through his examination of women's physical maturity (*pakkuvam*) in his short story "A_laku Mayakkam," which I discussed in the previous chapter. For Jeyakanthan, this realization is something with which all individuals come to heads at some point in their lives.

Thus, in a manner similar to Rakesh, Jeyakanthan emphasizes the unique position of the writer in expressing and shaping the ordinary experiences of individuals in society in non-didactic ways. However, while Rakesh focuses his writing solely on expressing the present context, for Jeyakanthan, it is not just the conflicts of daily life that writing illuminates, but also their resolution:

வாழ்க்கை போராட்டம் என்பதை வெறும் வாசகமாக, ஒரு சொற்றொடராகக்
கொள்ளாமல் அதன் பூரணமான அர்த்தத்தோடு நான் பார்க்கிறேன். நாம்
அனைவரும் போராடிக் கொண்டிருக்கிறோம்.

...அரசியல்வாதியும் விஞ்ஞானியும், கலைஞனும் இந்த உலகத்தை
நிர்ணயிக்கிறார்கள். இதன் தன்மையை மாற்றியமைத்து வளர்க்கிறார்கள்.

³⁶ Recall that Chellappa, too, invokes the idea of maturity [*pakkuvam*] in his story "A_laku Mayakkam" [The Spell of Beauty], which I discussed in the previous chapter. In this story, Chellappa's narrator finds that a woman's bodily maturity can serve as an analogy for aesthetic beauty and literary taste. This is precisely what Jeyakanthan's narrator expresses through his depiction of the unnamed heroine in "Akkini Piravecam."

இவர்கள் போராட்டத்தில் நான் எனது கடமையைச் செய்கிறேன். இதை மறுத்தால் நான் வாழும் காலத்திற்கும், எனது உடன் பிறந்தோர்க்கும் நான் துரோகம் செய்தவனாவேன்.

I don't think of the meaning of "life struggle" as simply one contained in words. I see it in its fullest sense. Every one of us struggles.

...The politician, the scientist, and the artist establish this world. They construct and develop its nature. I am fulfilling my part in their struggle. If I refused to do so, I would be a traitor to this era and to my generation.

(1972 [1962], 15)

The contrast between Jeyakanthan's writerly project and Rakesh's is stunning. While adhering firmly to a commitment to writing towards illuminating the struggles of human life, he seeks to do something completely different than give expression to life's subtleties, as Rakesh seeks to do. Jeyakanthan, instead, writes "to construct and develop" the nature of the world in which human beings of his generation live. In other words, as a writer, Jeyakanthan looks towards the future, rather than the present. He links this vision of the future to the progress of humanity that a good writer seeks to develop: on his view, the writer is a progressive individual (*muṟpōkkuvāti*) who works towards the development of humanity (*maṇita kuḷattiṅ vaḷarcci*) (2006 [1963], 183). That is to say, the writer does not simply illuminate the conditions of reality; he also imagines the path through which these conditions may be changed.

Jeyakanthan ties this sense of progress to his emphasis on prose style, or *urainatai*, which I discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Chellappa's short story criticism. In a 1964 essay entitled "Tamiḷum Tanittamiḷum," or "Tamil and Pure Tamil," Jeyakanthan makes a similar move to Chellappa: Jeyakanthan criticizes the Tamil revivalists for their emphasis on ancient language, which he finds to be detached from everyday life. Literature, he writes, must be expressed in a unique *urainatai* (prose style) that addresses ordinary life, for only in this way can it dialogue with the new and changing world (2000 [1964], 158). Jeyakanthan attributes his emphasis on *urainatai* and its depiction of new understandings of the future to the influence of his literary predecessor Pudumaippittan, whose work I examined in Chapter 2. For example, in the preface to the 1967 collection that included "Akkini Piravecam," Jeyakanthan pinpoints the change that the unnamed heroine undergoes in relation to Pudumaippittan's character Ahalya in "Cāba Vimōcaṇam" [Deliverance from the Curse].³⁷ While Pudumaippittan's Ahalya explores the possibility of freeing herself from the blemish upon her wifely chastity, Jeyakanthan highlights that his own "Ahalya" character not only successfully washes herself clean, but also enables readers to imagine the possibility of her becoming a modern goodwife (2000 [1967], 188-189). In this way, Jeyakanthan sees his story writing as stemming from and advancing Pudumaippittan's literary project (see also Jeyakanthan 1980, Srinivasan 1999). Furthermore, he situates his own engagements with tropes of the feminine ideal, such as Ahalya, in response to Pudumaippittan, highlighting the particular ways in which he reworks and renews Pudumaippittan's earlier depictions.

³⁷ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this Pudumaippittan story and Chapter 3 for Chellappa's assessment of it with regard to the post-Independence *cirukatai*.

However, Jeyakanthan departs from Pudumaippittan in that he is even more explicit than his predecessor in marking the Brahminical hues of the *cirukatai*. Unlike Rakesh's characters who are seldom marked by caste, Jeyakanthan's are to a overwhelming extent Brahmin. The Jeyakanthan heros and heroines I have examined above give away their Brahmin identities through the dialects they speak (for example, the difference between the rickshaw driver's and narrator's speech), the customs they follow (for example, the mother's bathing ritual of her daughter and Gowri Patti's tonsure ritual), and the settings in which they live (for example, Ganesh Iyer's home with its front grill and courtyard).³⁸ On Jeyakanthan's view, it is precisely because these characters are Brahmin that they embody the mixing of the old ideas with a newness through which the writer initiates development and progress (2006 [1963], 184). As C. Srinivasan writes, "It was [Jeyakanthan's] conviction that a Brahmin is not a caste name and that 'Brahminism' is not the monopoly of one community, [*sic*] instead it is the hereditary property of any Indian practicing Brahminism" (Srinivasan 1999, 16). For Jeyakanthan, thus, the depiction of Brahminism is a literary tool—one reflecting the larger trends of the *cirukatai* in the post-Independence moment—through which the writer imagines and realizes social progress.

In this way, whereas Rakesh's characters endure in the chaotic post-Partition present and seem permanently caught between their inner turmoil and larger external forces, Jeyakanthan's characters look toward the future, imagining a middle class moral landscape that emerges through a process of modernizing their Brahmin identities. It is no wonder, then, that the narrator, the girl, and Patti emerge from their stories declaring their self-maturity, while Manorama, Miss Pal, and Prakash adhere firmly to the present moment, lingering between their experiences of the world and their capacity to express them to others. These characters, as well as Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's theoretical writings on the short story, demonstrate that although both writers establish the centrality of human connection in their story writing projects, they adhere to differing understandings of the short story's literary humanism based on the regional literary worldviews with which they dialogue.

Humanism as Resistance

While Rakesh and Jeyakanthan broach the notion of human struggle in describing their literary projects above, they both adhere to the tenet that literature should not be political; as I demonstrated above, they assert that the very aesthetic nature of literature is universal and thereby transcends political divides. If not political struggle, then what exactly does struggle mean for these authors and the human life they examine? Saba Mahmood (2005) takes up a similar question in her work, but she approaches the interrogation of struggle from a perspective somewhat counter-posed to Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's: while Rakesh and Jeyakanthan seek to instantiate liberal humanist human connection, hers is a critique of the assumptions of liberal humanism, which have come to constitute our understanding of subjectivity.

In her view, the universality of desire central to liberal thought presupposes an intentionality at the heart of agency and resistance that we cannot presume. Rather, we must

³⁸ Indeed, scholars have noted that "Akkinir Piravecam" created a controversy when it was published not because of its absolution of rape, but rather because it depicted the rape of an orthodox Brahmin girl (Srinivasan 1999; see also Lakshmi 1984).

question the coupling of subjectivity with the innate desire for freedom. Freedom, she demonstrates, is viewed in liberal humanist thought in two senses—positively and negatively. In its positive conception, freedom elucidates the self-directed action of the individual, and in its negative sense, it “refers to the absence of external obstacles to self-guided choice and action” (10-11). These two senses characterize the spectrum of feminist analyses of subjectivity. On the one hand, they attempt to recount “her-story” by examining the unique contours of female subjectivity as that which is set apart from patriarchal norms. Narratives of “her-story” examine freedom in its positive sense to put forth alternative representations and experiences of the female self-directed action that cannot be subsumed by a masculinist rationale. Conversely, the strain of feminism that investigates freedom in its negative sense defines subjectivity “as a sign of the abject materiality that discourse cannot articulate.” In other words, in this view there is no ontological “thereness” to women’s experience outside discourse. Any understanding of female subjectivity, therefore, is always as against a normative masculine one, and the agency of the female subject can only be formulated as “doing” or “undoing” social norms, as inhabiting or resisting them (12-13, 158-159). Thus, if positive freedom (self-directed action) is contingent upon negative freedom (the freedom to will), then negative freedom presupposes a theory of resistance.

For Mahmood, because the liberal humanist conception of freedom in both its positive and negative manifestations is predicated upon a theory of resistance, it forecloses conceptions of selfhood in which “submission to certain forms of (external) authority is a condition for achieving the subject’s potentiality” (31). She thus asks: “Does the category of resistance impose a teleology of progressive politics on the analytics of power—a teleology that makes it hard for us to see and understand forms of being and action that are not necessarily encapsulated by the narrative of subversion and reinscription of norms (9)?” In other words, is it possible to understand the subject outside the coupling of agency with resistance—that is, to conceive of agency outside the liberal humanist emphasis on individual choice and desire? And if so, what are the terms in which we may do so? In response, Mahmood proposes to examine the “docility of the body,” or its teachability, where “outward behavior of the body constitutes both the potentiality and the means through which interiority is realized” (27-29, 159, 166). Close attention to the bodily acts that train subjects to be and desire in historically and culturally specific modes, she insists, enables us to avoid fixing agency in advance (15).

This chapter takes up Mahmood’s call to examine the particular concepts that enable subjects to inhabit norms by reframing her question in terms of Rakesh’s and Jeyakanthan’s literary—and what I have demonstrated as humanist—projects: in other words, what, then, are the particular culturally and historically specific concepts that enable humanism to fix agency to resistance in advance? What are the bodily acts in Rakesh’s and Jeyakanthan’s short stories that enable their characters to inhabit the pan-Indian norms of human connection expressed by the state’s effort to create “unity in diversity”? For both writers, the answer lies in their use of feminine tropes to convey new meanings of desire.

In Rakesh’s stories, the moral scape is one defined by desire for communication between individuals. Manorama, Miss Pal, and Prakash tussle with their inability to properly inhabit the prescribed norms for the man-woman relationships that established feminine tropes such as that of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife prefigure. For example, the title of

Rakesh's story "Suhaginen" immediately signals the trope of the auspicious married woman in relation to which Manorama and Kashi define the nature of their existence. Despite never once being named *suhaginen* in the story—even ironically—the import of these characters' actions and choices derives in large part from the new meanings they bring to this trope. Similarly, Miss Pall struggles to create a space for her lifestyle as a single woman by pushing back against conventional understandings of the virginal unmarried woman, who is repeatedly judged by her threatening proximity to the figure of the prostitute. Nirmala's angry tirades expose this slippery proximity, as well—in these crazed moments, she posits her virgin purity and decorous wifhood against the tropes of the widow and the prostitute, which she feels she is in danger of being understood as due to Prakash's ill treatment of her. Conversely, Bina's educated outlook and economic independence make her nearly incapable of inhabiting the conventional wifhood Prakash desires her to inhabit. It is these figures' *resistance*, while at the same time conforming, to older understandings of these tropes that defines their selfhood, or interiority, in the present. In other words, Rakesh conjoins agency and resistance through his attention to the historical burden of traditional ways of being that his characters bear. Resistance to this burden is precisely the meaning of struggle Rakesh raises in the context of his literary project.

Morality in Jeyakanthan's stories, while also interrogated through man-woman relationships, is designated by bodily desire. The narrator, the girl, and Patti reject older configurations of desire associated with feminine tropes such as the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife through their new ways of bodily being. For instance, Jeyakanthan's title "Pattini Paramparai" [The Tradition of Wifhood] operates similarly to Rakesh's "Suhaginen." In this story, the prostitute who unabashedly expresses her sexual desire is, here, also a goodwife who sacrifices everything to care for her husband. This character thus rewrites "the tradition of wifhood" by exposing the depraved and contradictory positions in which it places women, while simultaneously opening up this tradition to include a space for non-traditional ways of being and expressions of sexual desire and fulfillment. In a similar fashion, the girl in "Akkini Piravecam" unhesitatingly expresses the sexual attraction she feels towards the man who picks her up. Through undergoing and emerging from her mother's purification ritual, she legitimizes this attraction even after she is raped, possessing it as the basis of the momentous life experience that undergirds her newfound status as a pure and mature woman. This renewal enables her to regain her virgin status, as well as the possibility of becoming a future goodwife, in this way rewriting older understandings of these tropes. And in "Yuka Canti," Patti and Geetha together re-envision widowhood by insisting that this figure can also be a modern goodwife who is economically independent and free to choose her own partner. Through these characters, Jeyakanthan articulates his definition of human struggle as that which seeks to establish a human connection between bodies and is based on a welcoming recognition of individuals' maturity and "selfish" desires. Maturity and selfish desire, thus, entail new ways of inhabiting established feminine tropes that are simultaneously and inherently in resistance to older understandings of them. We can think of these themes as comprising two important stylistic and idiomatic techniques—to use Bakhtin's terminology (1986; see also Introduction to this dissertation)—through which Jeyakanthan shapes the *cirukatai* genre and its worldview, just as mental turmoil comprises one of the stylistic and idiomatic techniques through which Rakesh shapes the *nayi kahani* genre and its worldview.

For these post-Independence authors, then, to be is to be in resistance. But also, even as this liberal humanist maxim frames both Rakesh's and Jeyakanthan's projects, it fails to produce a singular moral vision, for Miss Pal's awkward sociability is nowhere proximate to the prostitute's eyes, so full of fate (see epigraphs to this chapter). The theme of intersubjective communication in Rakesh's stories and of bodily contact in Jeyakanthan's are based on their different Hindi and Tamil literary and cultural contexts and gendered ways of being. Both, however, coalesce around a liberal humanist project that articulates with and contributes to the broader project of nation building I outlined in the Introduction to this dissertation. Thus, although Mahmood offers a useful caution not to presume a core of resistance in all forms of agency, this warning might also be understood as an effort to trace the particular ways that the pairing of agency and resistance is brought together. For in the cases of Hindi and Tamil short stories, it is the cultural specificities of the conjoining that allow us to interrogate its limits and potentialities for change.

Chapter 5
Justice Talk and the “Truth” of Feminine Desire:
How Bhandari and Chudamani Authorize Canonization

और संजय सोचता है कि आज भी मेरे मन उसके लिए कोई कोमल स्थान है! छिः! मैं उससे नफ़रत करती हूँ। [...] संजय, यह तो सोचो कि यदि ऐसे कोई भी बात होती, तो क्या मैं तुम्हारे आगे, तुम्हारी हर उचित-अनुचित चेष्टा के आगे, यों आत्मसमर्पण करती? तुम्हारे चुम्बनों और आलिंगनों में अपने को यों बिखरने देती? जानते हो, विवाह से पहले कोई भी लड़की किसी को इन सबका अधिकार नहीं देती। पर मैंने दिया। क्या केवल इसीलिये नहीं कि मैं तुम्हें प्यार करती हूँ, बहुत-बहुत प्यार करती हूँ? विश्वास करो संजय, तुम्हारा-मेरा प्यार ही सच है।

Sanjay thinks that I still have a soft spot in my heart for him [Nishit]. *Chi!* I hate him [Nishit]. [...] Sanjay, think about this: if such a thing were the case, would I have surrendered myself like this to you, to your every proper, and improper, gesture? Would I have let myself dissolve in your kisses and embraces? You know that no woman gives someone all these entitlements [*adhikār*] before marriage. But I’ve given them. Isn’t it only because I love you, I love you very very much? Have faith, Sanjay, that our love is the truth. (Bhandari 2008 [1966], 264)

மெல்ல அவள் கையோடு தன் கையை இணைத்துக்கொண்டான். அந்த அன்பில் உரிமையுணர்ச்சி, இவள் என் சொந்தம் என்ற நினைப்பின் அதிகாரத்தில் ஊறிய இறுமாப்பு.

[...] கையின் பிடியில் புத்துணர்வின் ஆழம் அழுத்துகிற இதம். அவளுக்கும் மன நெகிழ்ச்சியில் கன்னங்கள் சிவந்து ஒளிர்ந்தன.

[...] அன்பின் ஆழத்திலும், அவள் தனக்கு அடங்கியவள் என்ற எண்ணத்தில் ஒரு கர்வம்.

He gently joined his hand with hers. There was a feeling of entitlement [*atikāram*] in [his] desire, a pride steeped in his right to think, “she’s mine.” [...] Pleasure bore upon her from the invigorating depth of his grasp. She, too, was moved; her cheeks reddened and shone. [...] She took pride in the thought that she, too, had given herself to the depth of desire.

(Chudamani 1964, 81)

Both passages, written in the early 1960s—about fifteen years after Indian Independence, are remarkable for the way they depict women’s desires. In the first passage from Mannu Bhandari’s Hindi short story “Yahī Sac Hai” [This is True], the main character Deepa openly discusses not only a past lover, but also the physical relationship she willingly has with Sanjay, despite not yet being married to him. In the second passage from R. Chudamani’s Tamil short story “Maṇitaṇāy Māri” [Becoming Human], the main character Vanita blushes in response to

Shekar's touch and feels prideful pleasure at giving in to her desire for him. Despite the social taboos entrenched at this time against open discussion of female desire, these stories circulated widely in the public sphere—Bhandari's story, the title story of one of her collections, became an instant favorite, was written about in Hindi popular magazines, and made into an award-winning film (Bhandari 2007, 47). And Chudamani's story was published in one of the most popular Tamil magazines of the immediate post-Independence period and written about in studies of her work afterwards (Lakshmi 1984).

Explicit expressions of female desire such as these, by women or men, were exceptionally rare at the time. Those that have been noted either in periodicals of the time or by scholars, have usually been read in one of two ways. Either they were considered derivative of social progress debates.¹ Or, they were labeled as radical or subversive, that is to say, outside the mainstream (see for example: Mohanty and Mohanty 1990, Tharu and Lalita 1993).² Surprisingly, however, Bhandari's and Chudamani's stories fit in neither of these camps—the one advocating social reform and progress, or the one advocating resistance and subversion. Rather, these women writers are two of the very few that have consistently been viewed as highly respected and established within the Hindi and Tamil literary canons, respectively (see for example: Roadarmel 1979 and Lakshmi 1984). For instance, as Bhandari recounts in her memoir, she was the only woman writer to be present during the early *nayī kahānī* discussions on the movement's literary techniques and philosophical outlooks and the only woman writer to critically discuss the *nayī kahani* project at all (2007; see also Bhandari and Gupta 2006, Bhandari and Singh 1975). And in my analysis of Chellappa's journal *Eluttu*, which ran from 1959-1972, I discovered that Chudamani was the only woman writer to ever be published or have her *cirukatai* writing and techniques reviewed and analyzed in it (see, for example: Chudamani 1959a, 1959b; Sundararajan 1960). Since they began writing, thus, both writers have remained well-known, and they, as well as their writing, have often been called upon to represent women's experiences in post-Independence India.³ It is in an effort to negotiate their canonical role as short story writers on the one hand, with their status as women writers on the

¹ An example of this is the Tamil writer Jeyakanthan's 1950s story "Agni Piravecam," which I examine in Chapter 4. This story rewrites the stigma attached to rape by portraying the renewed femininity a young woman acquires in overcoming its trauma. The story caused a long-standing controversy in the pages of Tamil periodicals after it was published. For a brief discussion of this controversy, see Lakshmi 1984, 169-170.

² For example, obscenity charges were leveled against Ismat Chughtai's Urdu short story "Lihaf" [Quilt] in the 1940s, a story about a love affair between two women. For a discussion of Chughtai's work and these charges, see Kumar and Sadique 2000 and Gopal 2005, especially pages 64-88.

Several scholars grapple with the ways in which women's writing in different regions across India has been located as either belonging to a social reform discourse, or as resistance to the mainstream. See, for example: Banerjee 1989, Gopal 2005, Lakshmi 1984, Nijhawan 2004, Orsini 2002, Tharu and Lalita 1991 and 1993, and Thorner and Krishnaraj 2000. Others have noted the problem of representation this binary raises when Indian women's writing is translated for Western audiences. In the case of translation, women's writing is often anthologized as representations of "women's experiences," "women's inner worlds," or "women's struggles." See, for example: Alexander 1986, Holmstrom 1990, Mohanty and Mohanty 1990, Spivak 1988, Sundar Rajan 1993a, and Tharu and Lalita 1993.

³ Both Bhandari and Chudamani touch on the ways their writing is called upon to represent women's experiences and dilemmas in prefaces to their work and interviews. See Bhandari 2007, Bhandari and Gupta 2006, Bhandari and Singh 1975, Chudamani 1967, and Lakshmi 1984. Scholars and anthologizers, too, have often located these two authors' work within the category of "women's writing in India." See, for example: Gupta 2006, Lakshmi 1984, Mohanty and Mohanty 1990, Narayanan and Seetharaman 2005, and Tharu and Lalita 1993.

other, that I take up their work in this chapter: how did Bhandari and Chudamani gain authority within their largely male canons while simultaneously expressing feminine desires that were otherwise not sanctioned?

The answer, I suggest, has to do with the language of justice that both Bhandari and Chudamani use. Recall that in the passage from Bhandari's story I quoted above, Deepa writes, "I have let myself dissolve in your kisses and embraces. You know that no woman gives someone these entitlements before marriage. But I've given them." The word she uses for "entitlements," which is also the word for "rights," is the Sanskrit-derived word *adhikār*. It is the very same word Chudamani uses in the passage I quoted above to describe Vanita and Shekar's relationship (in Tamil the word becomes *atikāram*): "There was a feeling of entitlement in his desire, a pride steeped in his right to think, 'she's mine.' ...She took pride in the thought that she, too, had given herself to the depth of desire." What is striking about these two stories, as well as several others by both Bhandari and Chudamani, is the way they depict their characters as possessing rights or entitlements to their bodies which they then willingly and with desire give to their partners. The Bhandari and Chudamani short stories I examined in Chapter 1 express the same concerns with women's rights/desires and how they fit into man-woman relationships. There, I discussed this thematic as a question of guardianship of the Indian woman: Rup, the main character of Bhandari's "Ek Kamzōr Laḍkī kī Kahānī," weighs the choice between giving in to her desire for her childhood sweetheart, or staying with her husband and fulfilling her wifely role. And Buvana, the protagonist of Chudamani's "Piṛappurimai," demands her womanly right to receive a man's recognition, but distinguishes this recognition from her choice to be with that man or not. In this chapter, I reframe the question of guardianship, demonstrating how these authors' focus on rights/entitlements is situated within a shared larger concern in their work with justice.

It is their use of the language of justice to portray feminine desire, I will argue, that legitimizes these women to author such novel desires within the largely male Hindi and Tamil canons. And the reason their language of justice is legitimizing, I hope to show, is because it draws from liberal humanist conventions of the time to define literariness in the same way as the other canonized Hindi and Tamil authors this dissertation examines. I suggest that by adhering to these conventions of literariness, Bhandari and Chudamani gained the authority to express unconventional freedoms within the Hindi and Tamil canons.

As I demonstrated in my earlier chapters, in the post-Independence moment both canons began to define literariness as the quality of good writing that evokes a shared sense of human connection through the short story genre. This definition coincided with the central government's liberal humanist goal to unite Indians across different regions in the aftermath of decolonization. In the Introduction to this dissertation, I showed that the main aim of the Sahitya Akademi, which was set up by the new state, was to create a national canon of "Indian literature" through coordinating literary activities in all Indian languages. Both Bhandari and Chudamani were recognized by the Sahitya Akademi, and like the other authors I have examined in my dissertation, the definition of literariness as human connection that Bhandari and Chudamani put forth in their fiction aligned with the Sahitya Akademi's liberal humanist mission to promote unity in diversity. Here, however, I want to consider how their novel expressions of feminine desire were able to gain expression within this seemingly universalizing framework.

I will do so by focusing on three short stories by each writer in order to trace how the language of justice 1) raises the question of authorship—who is entitled to write?—which is also an effort to define literariness, and 2) articulates both the feminine ideal and feminine desire on the same terms. I will do this by tracking what I see as three important rhetorical moves Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s stories perform to enable the authorship of feminine desire. The first rhetorical move these stories make is their exploration of justice as that which attaches humanism to literariness: what makes a good story is not only that which justly recounts true life experience, but also that which establishes human connection. In other words, these stories convey that what is truthfully recounted is precisely what is just, and that justice is what a true writer is able to tap into to express human connection. Both writers express their concern for justice through their use of the Sanskrit derived word *nyāy*, or justice (*nyāy* in Hindi, and *nyāyam* in Tamil), and in this way, bind literariness to humanism through a type of “justice talk.” It is justice talk that allows Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s writing to resonate with the definition of literary humanism as shared connection circulating extensively in both the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres after Independence.

Justice talk is also the rhetorical means by which Bhandari and Chudamani grapple with tropes of the feminine ideal—such as the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife. In Chapter 1, I traced the nineteenth and twentieth century debates surrounding the legislation of these tropes and showed that they were 1) specific legal categories within the colonial state that also served as commonly used tropes for expressing Indian ways of being, and 2) were the focus of the post-Independence state’s constitutional and legal efforts to define the man-woman relationships that would establish the terms of pan-Indian citizenship. I juxtaposed the postcolonial state’s juridical preoccupation with these tropes of the feminine ideal with Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s similar concern with man-woman relationships in their short story writing. I argued in Chapter 1 that whereas debates surrounding tropes of the feminine ideal in the state sphere pitted individual rights against community rights, Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s work demonstrates that literary representations of the feminine ideal negotiated this divide by renewing existing tropes to include a non-oppositional understanding of the individual’s relationship to community. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that for these women authors, it is through justice talk that the renewing of these tropes occurs.

The second rhetorical move is idiomatic, and manifests differently in each author’s work. Bhandari’s characters operate within an idiom of *hār*, which means loss or defeat, to express the justness of desire, literariness, and humanism. Chudamani’s characters, on the other hand, maneuver within the idiom of *cīṛṛam*, or wrath, to make these connections. Thus, Bhandari’s characters talk justice through an absencing of voice, an incapacity to be entirely heard. The idiom of *har* constrains Bhandari’s characters—they are continuously silenced and diminished, their voices dissolved by their interlocutors. Chudamani’s idiom of *cirram*, conversely, articulates in the body; it is a burning material presence. Here, justice takes shape through the experience and eventual overcoming of a rage that boils her characters’ skin, screws up their foreheads, or clenches their teeth. The idiomatic difference in Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s stories points to the different ways of being within the post-Independence liberal humanist framework, one defined by a focus on human connection and freedom. Thus, in response to claims that the universalizing project of liberal humanism is a singular one (see Mahmood 2005),

these stories show that what matters is not just the link between human connection and freedom, but also the way in which that link gains expression. That is to say, if the force of 1950s-60s liberal humanism lay in its universalizing tendency—its ability to assimilate difference, or to create unity in diversity—then what Hindi and Tamil short stories of this period show is that this universalizing gesture could only be accomplished to the extent that it was taken up and made meaningful regionally. The idioms of *har* and *cirram* allow us to see, then, how new expressions of feminine desire emerged in each literature, as well as how liberal humanism was adopted and in turn shaped by regional literary projects.

I use the term “idiom” similarly to Bakhtin’s notion of speech genre—a linguistic model-representation that both reflects and shapes the world, that both stratifies and unifies language, and that mediates between singular utterances and social reality (Bakhtin 1986; see also Introduction to this dissertation). Thus, on the one hand, *har* (loss, defeat) and *cirram* (wrath) reflect individual stylistic choices put forth by these authors, but on the other hand they evidence the larger concerns and conventions of their regional contexts. If, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, literariness in the Hindi context took shape in response to Hindu-Muslim religious politics and violence of Partition, then Bhandari’s idiom of *har*—located mentally—articulates with the sense of loss and disillusionment with which *nayī kahānī* writers responded. On the other hand, Chudamani’s *cirram*—located bodily—shares in the project of post-Independence Tamil short story writers, which was embedded in a context tinged by political struggles over caste, class, and language that spanned the 1930-50s.

In addition to these two rhetorical moves—justice talk and the idioms of *har* and *cirram*—the third rhetorical move I want to flag is that of authorial voice. Two of the stories I discuss below, one by Bhandari and one by Chudamani, are the main texts in which these authors discuss the meaning of literariness. Yet both Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s stories take on authorial voice and the question of authorship through male characters. To me the relationship between gender and canon is what is at stake in the question of authorship these stories evoke. Does Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s use of the voice of a male character to claim authorship explain why they have been canonized in an otherwise male canon? For, these male voices express the very same concepts of justice in the very same idioms of defeat or wrath that Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s women characters take up. This suggests that 1) the way that justice talk grants Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s women characters the right to express feminine desires is also the way that these women writers gain legitimacy within the male canon, and 2) justice talk situates their expressions of feminine desire squarely within the post-Independence liberal humanist project.

I will proceed in this chapter in four parts. In the first part, I study a story by each author to demonstrate the nature of justice talk in Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s short story writing and how they use it to enable their characters to inhabit the feminine ideal in new ways. I then return in the next section to the two stories I quoted at the beginning of the chapter and show that in rewriting the feminine ideal through justice talk, these authors also introduce new understandings of feminine desire. In the third part, I look at Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s stories on authorship; here, justice talk enables these women writers to assume authorship by linking literariness to human connection. I dwell in all three sections on the ways that Bhandari’s idiom of *har* and Chudamani’s idiom *cirram* take shape their respective stories, thereby providing the rhetorical means through which these authors talk justice. I conclude in the final section by touching on

the implications of Bhandari's and Chudamani's short story writing for understanding the category of women's writing, as well as the postcolonial canons of Hindi, Tamil, and Indian literature.

Desire, Justice, and the Feminine Ideal

और जब पलंग पर लेटी उस कृशकाय नारी की निस्तेज आंखें मेरे शरीर पर ऊपर से नीचे घूमने लगीं, तो मेरा रोम-रोम काँप उठा।

तो ये हैं मेरी दर्शना मासी! और तभी मेरी आंखों के सामने आज से कोई सात साल पहले मेरे घर के ड्राइंग-रूम में लटकी, मासी की वह तस्वीर घूम गई, जिसमें मासी नवविवाहिता वधू के रूप में शरमाई-सी मासाजी से सटकर बेठी थीं। पर उस रूप में और इस रूप में तो कोई साम्य नहीं है। यह कैसे हालत हो गई मासी की?

And when the spiritless eyes of that wasted woman lying on the bed swept across my body from top to bottom, my every hair stood on end.

So this was my Darshana Masi! Suddenly the photo [*tasvīr*] of Masi that hung in our drawing room some seven years ago floated before my eyes. In it she sat shyly nestled by Masaji as a newly married bride. But there was no resemblance between that form and this one. How did this become Masi's condition?

(Bhandari 2008 [1958], 124)

In this opening scene from Bhandari's "Tīn Nigāhon ki Ek Tasvīr" [A Picture of Three Perspectives] (1958), Naina sees Darshana—who is her Masi, or aunt—for the first time after many years. She is taken aback by the discrepancy between her mind's image of her aunt as a shy, new bride and the forsaken, sickly woman lying before her. Naina is the main character of the first of three parts of this story, each written from the perspective of a different character.⁴ She has just nervously ventured into a seedy neighborhood to see her dying aunt against her parents wishes. The questions that arise with this meeting propel the story's progression: what terrible thing could Darshana have done to have been rejected by her family with such finality? How could the beloved young bride residing in Naina's memory have turned into such a dejected creature? In this way, the story immediately presents its readers with not just an image of the feminine ideal (the photo of Darshana as a goodwife), but also an interrogation of what this ideal entails (why couldn't Darshana fulfill this role?).

At every turn, Naina confronts both her own incapacity to ask questions, as well as the reticence of Darshana and her women companions, and she expresses this incapacity in the idiom of *har*, resignation or loss. From the moment a strange old woman meets Naina at the door to

⁴ *Tasvir*, which I have translated as "picture" in the story's title, can also be used for "photograph," "portrait," "painting," and "drawing" (McGregor 1993, 445). It is the same word Naina uses in the quote above to talk about the picture of Darshana hanging in her family drawing room. Relatedly, *nigāhon*—which I have translated as "perspective"—can also mean "look," "glance," or "judgement" (559). Bhandari's character names also play with sight and vision: "*nainā*" means "eye" and "*darśanā*" means "seeing," "observing," "sight," "having sight of/ audience with," and "meeting" (482). Through the use of words such as these, this Bhandari short story mediates on different ways of seeing and knowing.

take her to her aunt, Naina finds herself speechless. She describes herself as dragged along mechanically behind the woman, unable to decipher where she is, her senses having abandoned her. And when she sees Darshana, she becomes paralyzed by Darshana's refusal to speak to her (124-125).⁵

Stunned, Naina retreats to another room, thinking she will try again later. She looks around for clues that might reveal some indication of the trajectory Darshana's life has taken, and everywhere sees signs of prostitution: the bad neighborhood in which Darshana lives, the front door stained with the juice of betel leaf, the home's dark corridors leading elsewhere, and a room filled with the musical instruments and anklets used by courtesans. These signs, combined with Naina's recollection of the way Darshana's husband and the rest of the family disowned Darshana, lead Naina to believe that Darshana has been living an illicit life:

जब दर्दस्ती दबाई हुई मन की आशंका पूरे वेग से उभर आई। देखते-ही-देखते कमरे के कोने में रखे वे वाद्य-यन्त्र झनझना उठे, तबला ठनकने लगा, घुँघरू झनकने लगे और कहकहों की गूँज से कमरा भर गया। मुझे लगा, मेरा सिर चकरा जाएगा। इस सबके बीच माँ की क्रोध-भरी मूर्ति दिखाई देने लगी, “देख नैना! उस छिन्नाल के घर तू मत जा! वह मर रही है तो मरने दे। मैंने तो सात साल पहले ही उसे मरा समझ लिया था। ज़िद करके तू वहाँ चली गई तो समझ लेना, माँ तेरे लिए मर गई।”

मैं पसीने से तर-बतर हो गई। मैंने अपने को ही समझाते हुए कहा, नहीं-नहीं, मेरी दर्शना मासी ऐसी नहीं हो सकती। यह सब ग़लत है। और मैंने उस अदृश्य नाचती नारी के स्थान पर मासी की वही छवि ला बिठाई, जिसमें वह नवविवाहिता वधू बनकर बैठी थीं।

The firmly suppressed doubt in my mind arose with full force. As I looked around, the instruments in the corner of the room began to resound; the tabla began to beat, the ankle bells to jingle, and the room was filled with echoes of laughter. I felt my head would start spinning. The angry figure of my mother appeared amongst all of this: “Look, Naina! Don't you go to that whore's [*chinnāl*] place! She's dying, let her die. I considered her dead to me seven years ago. If you insist on going there, then consider your mother dead to you.”

I became drenched in sweat. I said to convince myself, No, no, my Darshana Masi couldn't be this way. All of this is wrong. And in place of that invisible dancing girl, I called forth the photo of Masi in which she sat as a newly wed bride [*navavivāhitā vadhū*].

(*ibid.*, 125)

⁵ Naina indicates her incapacity through phrases such as “*avāk*” (speechless), “*yantravat uske pīche khiñcī calī jā rahī thī*” (I was dragged along behind her mechanically), “*na mujhe kuch sunāī de rahā thā na dikhāī*” (I could neither hear nor see anything), and “*jadavat*” (inert). Recall that Rakesh, too, repeatedly uses the word *jadata* to describe his characters' feelings of inertness and incapacity.

Here, despite all indications to the contrary, Naina insists on Darshana's respectability, which for her is symbolized by Darshana's photo.⁶ She has ignored her mother's threat to disown her in order to understand what happened to Darshana, in part out of love and in part out of curiosity. She, thus, gathers up her courage again and tries to approach Darshana in the middle of the night. But it is too late; she finds Darshana dead. Naina is now completely at a loss: "Yes, all I remember is that a few rites were performed by me, as well, because I was her closest relative and I went along mechanically doing [them]" (127).⁷ She thus expresses the state of incapacity, or *har*, that she experiences upon Darshana's death.

When she asks permission to leave after the funeral rites occur in a blur, the old woman throws a set of keys in Naina's face and says, "She remembered only you, so you're the one responsible for her things now," (127).⁸ For what I translate here as "the one responsible," the old woman uses the word "*adhikāriṇī*"— "*adhikār*" (right, responsibility, duty) combined with "*-inī*," a feminine suffix meaning "one who has/possesses." Naina accepts this charge silently and ruffles through Darshana's boxes, hoping to find something revealing Darshana's past. And she does: in a pile of papers is part of a short story about Darshana written by a man named Harish, as well as a few diary entries by Darshana herself. At last, Darshana's story! In this moment, the old woman's use of *adhikar* marks Naina's rightful possession of Darshana's story, which Naina assumes through the idiom of *har*—her silent acceptance of Darshana's things, a sign of her unvoiced anguish at the loss of her aunt. As the story's *adhikarini*, or bearer, Naina conveys Darshana's transformation from goodwife to widow and prostitute to her readers through two following sections, the first written from Harish's perspective and the second, from Darshana's.

Harish's section is his short story about Darshana. It is written in first person from the viewpoint of a young bachelor, Harish, who rents a room in a young couple's flat. Darshana is the mistress of the place and her husband is an invalid dying of tuberculosis and confined to his room. Harish befriends Darshana, giving her companionship and respite from her caretaking responsibilities. He feels sympathy for her: a young, new wife struggling unsuccessfully to bring her husband back to health with no opportunity to experience life's pleasures: when she talked of her husband, "the heavy shadow of sadness fell upon her face and her eyes unwittingly filled

⁶ Naina recalls this photo of Darshana several times in her section of the story, contrasting Darshana's present condition with her past. For example, in a following scene when Naina recounts her childhood memories of Darshana, she remembers:

कभी-कभी घंटों उनकी उस तस्वीर को (जिसे मैंने अपने पास सँभालकर रख लिया था) देखकर मैं यही सोचा करती थी कि सामने बैठी यह सीधी-सादी, भोली-भाली युवती आखिर छिन्नाल कैसे बनी?

Sometimes I would look at her photo (which I had carefully kept with me) for hours thinking: How could the innocent, naive young woman before me have become a whore?

(*ibid.*, 126)

Here, like in the quote above, Naina insists upon Darshana's goodness, something she sees as opposed to her aunt's present condition.

⁷ "हाँ, इतना याद है कि निकटम सम्बन्धी होने के नाते मुझसे भी कुछ-कुछ करवाया गया था और यन्त्रवत किए चली जा रही थी।"

⁸ "वह बस तुम्हीं को याद करती थीं, इसलिए उनके सामान की अधिकारिणी तुम्हीं हो।"

with tears,” (128) he writes.⁹ But, as time passes, he also starts to feel unnerved by the way she stares unabashedly at his bare chest peeking through his open collar: “Whenever [she] entered, my chest hair would peak out [of my jacket] no matter how I tried to conceal it, and I would get embarrassed by her staring” (128).¹⁰ And he is puzzled by her possessiveness of him, especially when he brings home friends, and finds himself unable to understand her “excessive anger” at these times (129).¹¹ In these ways, Harish insinuates that Darshana desires him in improper ways.

One night Harish comforts Darshana in his room when she receives news that her husband doesn’t have long to live. Darshana eventually leaves, but he can’t get the image of her out of his mind: “I lay down but I couldn’t sleep. [Her] helpless, despondent face rose before my eyes over and over again” (130).¹² He imagines wrapping his arms around her to console her as she cries, quickly realizing the inappropriateness of this desire. He doesn’t act on it, but later, Harish is roused from his sleep to find Darshana leaning over him, an unreadable expression in her eyes. Harish’s story ends here.

If the implications of this final scene are at all unclear, Darshana clarifies them through her diary entries, which comprise the final section of the story. These entries span a six-year period from 1947 to 1952 and convey her worry at her husband’s failing health, her inability to help him, her hopelessness and fear of death. She articulates this through descriptions of her surroundings expressed in the idiom of *har*, for example, the way she is haunted by the skeleton in the doctor’s office, from which she feels unable to escape (131). She is also saddened as she watches her neighbor’s dog, that falls sick and is consequently rejected by its master:

इस गन्दी बीमारी को लेकर मेम तक जाने का उसे अधिकार नहीं है, यह बात भी जैसे वह समझता है। [...] पर [...] मेरे गले नहीं उतर पा रही है। जिस कुत्ते को मेम इतना प्यार करती थी, उसे अब शूट करवा दिया जाएगा। क्या यह ठीक है? कभी लगता है ठीक है, कभी लगता है ग़लत है।

That dirty, sick [dog] had no right [*adhikar*] to approach his madam, and it seemed as if it understood this [...] but [...] I couldn’t swallow it. The woman who loved the dog so much is now going to have it shot. Is this right? Sometimes it seems right, sometimes it seems wrong.

(*ibid.*, 131-132)

Darshana feels unable to understand the dog’s fate. But also, she is engrossed by its dog circumstance. She sympathizes with its longing to be loved and contemplates its fate in the language of justice: “Is this right? Sometimes it seems right, sometimes it seems wrong.” It is as

⁹ “...उनके चहरे पर दुख की घनी छाया उतर आती थी और आँखों अनायास ही भर-भर आती थीं।”

¹⁰ “पर भाभी आतीं तो बहुत ढँकने पर भी मेरे सीने के बाल इधर-उधर से झाँका करते और वह उन्हें घूर-घूरकर मुझे संकुचित करती रहतीं।” Harish notices that every time his shirts return from the washerman, the buttons are missing. He feels they have been removed intentionally, and suggests that it is Darshana, not the washerman, who keeps cutting them off.

¹¹ “मुझे उनका अत्याधिक क्रोध समझ में नहीं आ रहा था।”

¹² “लेटा तो नींद नहीं आई। बार-बार भाभी का बेबस, मायूस चेहरा आँखों के आगे उभर आता।”

if the dog's situation exemplifies her husband's, for he, too, is incurably sick. In deliberating over the dog's plight, Darshana seems also to be ruminating on whether her husband has the right — *adhikar*—to burden Darshana with his illness, and whether it is right or wrong for her to abandon him.

Immediately following her descriptions of the sick dog, Darshana's diary entries reveal what happens to her after her fateful night with Harish: her husband beats her and kicks her out of her house and her family disowns her. But Darshana never mentions what she has done, nor does she regret it. And neither does she explicitly mention having any sexual desire for Harish, as Harish's story does.¹³ She only writes: "...I don't feel bad about either what I did, or its punishment! After everything, I would have left home anyway...But what'll happen to [my husband]?...How else could an incapacitated person, who simply wants and wants, end up?" (132).¹⁴ With this she clinches the question *adhikar*, which had just before puzzled her in her consideration of the dog: she does indeed have a right to leave her husband, for how else could an incapacitated person who simply wants and wants end up? She offers no more explanation than this. Only a few short entries follow this one. They recount that Darshana receives word of her husband's death, has found a music teacher and a job, and at last feels she will survive on her own, despite not having anyone to help her.

Then the story ends abruptly with a short entry admonishing Harish for having psychologized the story he wrote about her:

2-6-52

हरीश ने मुझ पर कहानी लिखी। पर लिखकर इतना मनोवैज्ञानिक बनाने की क्या आवश्यकता थी? यों भी कह देता तो मैं उसे दोष नहीं देती। मूर्ख कहीं का!

2-6-52

Harish wrote a story about me. But why was it necessary to psychologize it so much when he wrote it? If he had just told it, I wouldn't have found him at fault. What a fool!

(ibid., 133)

Darshana rejects Harish's story for its psychologizing interpretation of her actions—an interpretation that can only be guessed since she has ripped apart the end of Harish's story. Harish's sympathy for Darshana, which later blends with his desire for her, suggests that he explains Darshana's act as driven by a lack of freedom or choice: not only does she have no one to whom she can express her feelings (both her emotional, as well as her sexual ones), but also

¹³ Darshana mentions Harish three times in her diary entries, each time very briefly. The first time she notes that she feels he's immodest for baring his chest and that it makes her body prickle when she looks at it. The second time she records that he feels sorry for her when her husband beats her. And the third time she rejects his story and calls him a fool (I touch on this below). Darshana's discomfort at Harish's open collar does suggest her sexual attraction towards him and in this way corroborates Harish's story. The expression of Darshana's feminine desire, here, is refracted through Harish's story—that is to say, we are able to read her body "prickling" as a sign of her desire through his male voice narration—mirroring the authorship move the narrator makes through the Pandit's voice in Bhandari's story "Pandit Gajadhar Sastri." I discuss this story in the third section of the chapter.

¹⁴ "...मुझे न अपने किए का दुख है, न इस का दंड का! इस सबके बाद मैं स्वयं ही घर छोड़कर निकल जाती। ... पर इनका क्या होगा? ... जो मनुष्य बिना क्षमता के केवल चाहना-ही-चाहना करता है, उसका अन्त इसके अतिरिक्त और हो ही क्या सकता है?"

her duties to her dying husband offer her no future.¹⁵ As he himself writes towards the end of his section, “I wanted to run to that tearful, helpless woman and wrap her in my arms, not for me, but for her happiness, to console her...” (130), expressing that his desire is motivated by Darshana’s need, which only he is in a position to fulfill.¹⁶

Darshana, however, takes full responsibility for her act. She describes it not as inevitable, but simply as something she has done. She takes away Harish’s right to tell her story, calling him a fool for explaining away her actions, however compassionately he may have done so. Darshana thus undermines Harish’s writerly authority, revealing instead that the feminine desire motivating her act is no more or less than what it is: feminine desire. In other words, this

¹⁵ Naina’s section of “*Tin Nigahon Ki ek Tasvir*” ends with Darshana’s words, which Naina finds scribbled at end of Harish’s story in Darshana’s box of belongings. Here, too, Darshana notes and vehemently rejects Harish’s compassion, because of which, she says, he interprets her actions wrongly. These are the words that Naina finds:

यहाँ तक मेरी ही कहानी है। मैं जानती थी कि तुम कहानीकार हो तो अवश्य ही किसी दिन मुझे अपनी कलम से हलाल करोगे, पर इसके बाद का सारा किस्सा ग़लत है, इसलिए मैं उसे फाड़ दे रही हूँ। तुम मनोवैज्ञानिक विश्लेषण देकर, मेरे कुकृत्य पर परदा डालकर सारी दुनिया को धोखा दे रहे हो, पर मैं अच्छी तरह जानती हूँ कि तुम झूठ बोल रहे हो। अपनी कलम के करिश्मे दिखाकर वाह-वाही लूटने की लालसा ने ही तुमसे यह सब लिखवाया है। तुम सोचते हो, तुम्हारी इस दया से मैं कृत-कृत्य हो जाऊँगी। नहीं, मुझे किसी की दया नहीं चाहिए...

Up to this point this is indeed my story. I knew that you are a writer and would someday sacrifice me to your pen, but the entire story after this is wrong, so I’m tearing it up. You’ve given a psychological explanation and cast a veil over my wrong deeds; you’re deceiving the whole world, but I know well that you’re lying. It is your desire to demonstrate the charms of your pen and steal praise that have driven you to write all this. You think I’ll be grateful for your compassion. No, I don’t need anyone’s compassion.

(*ibid.*, 127)

In this passage Darshana draws a clear link between Harish’s story and the compassion that has motivated him to write it. For Darshana, this compassion leads Harish to misinterpret and thus falsify her actions. Darshana herself does not try to explain her unfaithfulness to her husband, leaving open the question of whether it is indeed a wrong deed.

¹⁶ “...इस रोती, बेबस नारी को जाकर अपनी बाहों में भर लूँ; अपने लिए नहीं, उसके सन्तोष के लिए, उसकी सान्त्वना के लिए...”

desire is not a sexual or emotional need to be fulfilled by the compassionate Harish or a character flaw to be understood by a loving niece.¹⁷

As its bearer, Naina presents this desire to the reader unfiltered; she relinquishes her voice when she accepts Darshana's possessions and conveys Harish's and Darshana's perspectives in their own words, as she has found them. In this way, Naina allows their perspectives to inscribe feminine desire into the idealistic picture of the young bride she holds in her memory. This desire traces a relationship between the picture of the bride and the figures of the widow and the prostitute, which Darshana also embodies. That is to say, it explains how Darshana could have become these figures despite appearing to be a goodwife. The human connection Naina sets out to establish with Darshana at the beginning of the story is by the end no longer determined by a child's love for an ideal young bride (Naina's memory), or a bachelor's compassion for that bride's sexual and emotional needs (Harish's interpretation). Rather, human connection is made by the combination of these perspectives with Darshana's own insistence that she has acted simply and without regret. The idiom of *har* through which Naina and Darshana experience the world thus expresses more than a sense of defeat—it also conveys the wider senses of surrendering or giving in to the force of their emotional life, through which these characters together question existing understandings of women's *dharma* and place in the world.

Like Bhandari's "Tin Nigahon Ki ek Tasvir," Chudamani's story "Cītaiyai Teriyumā?" [Do You Know Sita?] (1969) is also written in three parts, each from the perspective of a different character.¹⁸ In the first section, Kamalam sits on the porch reading from the *Ramayana*, the epic tale of the heroic prince Rama and his virtuous wife Sita. Kamalam reflects

¹⁷ In an interview conducted in the late 1990s or early 2000s, the interviewer asks Bhandari about the implications of Darshana's actions in "Tin Nigahon Ki ek Tasvir." Bhandari's reply is brief:

शोधार्थिनी: क्या आपकी दृष्टि में दर्शना का विवाहेत्तर प्रेम उचित है? अगर उचित है तो पातिव्रत्य धर्म व्यवस्था का क्या होगा?

मन्नु भंडारी: आकर्षण और प्रेम में अन्तर है। क्योंकि यदि आकर्षण अभिव्यक्ति को जन्म दे दे, तो वह प्रेम होगा परन्तु दर्शना अभिव्यक्ति नहीं करती।

Researcher: In your opinion is Darshana's extramarital love acceptable? If it is acceptable, then what becomes of the institution of wifely allegiance and duty [*pātivratya dharma*]?

Mannu Bhandari: There's a difference between attraction and love. Because if attraction gives rise to expression then it would be love but Darshana doesn't express it.
(Gupta 2006, 284)

Bhandari's response is striking for the way it changes the terms of the question from whether or not Darshana's actions are acceptable to what it is that Darshana has actually done. It isn't love—extramarital or otherwise—that Darshana feels, Bhandari says, but rather attraction. Bhandari doesn't elaborate further to explain what the roots of Darshana's attraction are or how it should be understood. Thus, she insists here, as Darshana herself does in the story, that Darshana's feminine desire is no more or less than what it is: feminine desire.

¹⁸ The word *teri*, the present tense form of the verb meaning "to know/see," is used in the title of this Chudamani story ("*teriyuma*," or "do [you] know") to gesture towards the way the story interrogates ways of knowing and seeing through multiple perspectives/voices, much like Bhandari's "Tin Nigahon ki ek Tasvir."

on the story, thinking that it is not Rama that continually draws her to the epic, but Sita, who has served as a role model for her through all the stages of her life:

சிறுமியப் பருவம் முதல் தாயும் பிற மூதாட்டிகளும் அவளுள் வளர்த்திருந்த பெண்மையின் தூய இலட்சியத்துக்கு சீதை ஒரு நிறைவு பெற்ற வடிவம். கணவர் மனம் மகிழும் இல்லத்தரசியாக வாழ்ந்து வரும் இத்தனை ஆண்டுகளில் அந்தப் பெண்மையின் ஒவ்வொரு காணிக்கைச் செயலிலும் லட்சிய வடிவமான சீதை பிராட்டின் ஆமோதிப்பைப் பெற்ற முத்திரை இலங்குவதுபோலத் தோன்றும்போது வாழ்வு பொருளுடையதாகி விட்டதாக அவள் இன்புறுவாள்.

Through childhood to motherhood, and then to old age, Sita was the ultimate form of the pure ideal of femininity [*peṇmai*] that grew within [Kamalam]. She took pleasure that her life acquired meaning with each deed, each offering of that femininity [*peṇmai*], by which she had, as a housewife [*illattaraci*], made her husband happy for years. It was as if each [of these] deed[s] had received the exemplary goddess Sita's seal of approval.

(Chudamani 1969, 175)

This passage demonstrates that from the outset Chudamani's story, like Bhandari's, is explicitly concerned with tropes of the feminine ideal. Kamalam views Sita as the quintessential goodwife, a paragon of womanhood, upon which she has based her actions as a girl, wife, mother, and now old woman. She is proud of her virtuous adherence to the principles of wifedom (*pattini kolikai*), as well as of her eldest and youngest daughters who are admirably loving and faithful towards their husbands.¹⁹

But Kamalam's middle daughter concerns her. Kamalam has named this daughter after Nalayini, whose story is told in the *Mahabharata*.²⁰ In that story Nalayini is the wife of the temperamental sage Maudgalya. Maudgalya, deciding to test Nalayini's chastity, turns himself into a leprous old man. But good Nalayini remains devoted to Maudgalya, fulfilling his every desire without complaint, including his wish to sleep with a prostitute. She carries him to the prostitute's home and back in a basket on her head. When they are returning home, the basket accidentally bumps the feet of a rishi hanging in mid-air, who becomes angered and curses Nalayini to become a widow at sunrise. But Nalayini, calling on her powers as a *pativrata*, a faithful and devoted wife, orders the sun never to rise until the rishi retracts his curse. The sun does not, indeed, rise, and the gods rush to appease the rishi so that he takes back the curse and

¹⁹ Kamalam has named these daughters Sita and Savitri, in reference to two mythological characters well known as *pativrata*, or faithful wives. In the *Ramayana*, Sita accompanies Rama when he is exiled to live in the forest for fourteen years. While there, Sita is kidnapped by the demon king Ravana and kept in his garden until Rama rescues her. When they are reunited, Rama asks Sita to undergo *agni parikṣā*, or the test of fire, to prove her chastity. She steps into a burning fire and escapes unscathed, so great a *pativrata* is she.

The tale of Savitri and her husband Satyavan is recounted in the epic *Mahabharata*. The princess Savitri chooses to marry the prince Satyavan even though he is destined to die a year later. She dutifully attends to him, and on the day of his death, she follows Yama, the god of death, when he carries away her husband. She impresses Yama with her prayers and receives several boons from him, one being the life of her husband. Savitri is praised for remaining steadfast in her faith in and loyalty to her husband, for it is this quality that enables her to save him.

²⁰ The *Mahabharata* tale of Nalayini is not recounted in Chudamani's short story, but referred to as if the reader is already familiar with it.

allows the sun to reappear. Maudgalya is pleased that the power of Nalayini's faithfulness has come to the attention of the gods and resumes his original form.

Kamalam hopes Nalayini's story is instructive and inspirational to her daughter. But she begins to wonder whether her daughter feels as she does:

இரண்டாம் மகள் நளாயினிதான் அவளுக்குச் சிறிது தடுமாற்றத்தை அளித்தவள்.
“நளாயினி என்று எனக்கு ஏன்மா பெயர் வைச்சே? அதுதான் அவர் இப்படி
அலையறார் போலிருக்கு?” என்று துக்கத்தை சிரிப்பாய் விரித்து அவள்
பேசுகையிலே கமலத்தின் வயிற்றில் தேள் கொடுக்காக ஏதோ கவ்வும். மகளுக்கு
அப்படி ஒரு நிலையை எந்தத் தாயார்தான் விரும்ப முடியும்? ஆனால் நாளடைவில்
நளாயினியின் பார்வையில் வேதனையோடு ஒரு விரக்தி, சஞ்சலத்தோடு ஓர் உறுதி,
பளிச்சிடத் தொடங்கியபோது தாயுள்ளம் துணுக்குற்றது. பழம் புளிப்பு என்று
மரத்தையே சாய்த்து விடுவாளோ மகள்?

It was her second daughter, Nalayani, who gave [Kamalam] a bit of trouble.
“Why did you name me Nalayani, Amma? That's why he [my husband] strays
like this, isn't it?” The way Nalayini openly joked about her sorrow seized
Kamalam's stomach like a scorpion's sting. What mother could ever wish such
a circumstance on her daughter? But as the days passed, the disinterest that
began to glimmer alongside the sadness in Nalayini's glance, and the resolve
alongside the restlessness, alarmed her mother's heart. Would her daughter fell
the whole tree just because the fruit is sour?

(ibid., 175)

Kamalam expresses dismay that Nalayini sees her husband's unfaithfulness as a burden and strays from the example of her namesake. For Kamalam, Nalayini's attitude threatens the whole institution of marriage—the tree, through which a woman acquires the power of femininity. The disinterest in Nalayini's eyes, the resolve in her mind frighten Kamalam. She pleads with her daughter to adhere to the strength of the mythological Nalayini's character to willingly carry her husband to a prostitute: “This is exactly why Nalayini is more special [than Sita and Savitri], isn't she? She helped her husband, who desired another woman. What a wifely goddess [*pattinī tēvam*] ! ... Just don't give up your love for him. My daughter, too, should have the unprecedented greatness of Nalayini in her heart... That is my desire” (176).²¹ The question for Kamalam, here, is not what her daughter should do about her philandering husband but whether or not she will properly bear his desire for other women so she may rise to the ideal established by her namesake.

The sounds of Chinni, the garbage woman (*kuppaikkāri*) who is collecting trash in the back, interrupt the two women's discussion, and Kamalam walks out to check on her, her well-worn *Ramayana* book still in her hands. Chinni is glaringly pregnant and scrubbing away uncomfortably at the dirt collected in a drain. Kamalam disapproves of Chinni; she thinks to herself that she's never known a time when Chinni isn't pregnant or nursing, and feels she must

²¹ “அதனாலேயே நளாயினி இன்னும் அதிகச் சிறப்புள்ளவள்தான் ஆகலையா? பிற பெண்ணை நாடிய கணவனுக்கு அனுசரணையாய் நடந்தவள் அவள். எப்படிப்பட்ட பத்தினித் தெய்வம்! ... அவர்க்கிட்டே உன் அன்பை மட்டும் இழந்துவிடாதே. மனசுள்ளிலே நளாயினியின் அப்பூர்வ உயர்வு என் மகளுக்குமே இருக்கணும்... அதுதான் என் ஆசை.”

scold Chinni before she will do her work thoroughly (177). Just then Chinni asks Kamalam what book she is carrying with her.

“அது இன்னா பொஸ்தகம்மா கையிலே? எப்பவும் படிச்சுக்கிட்டே இருக்கீங்களே?”
“ராமாயணம்”
“அப்படின்னா?”
“என்னடி இது! ராமாயணம் தெரியாது? ராமரும் சீதையும் வருவாங்களே அதுடி!”
“தெரியாதும்மா.”
[...] “சீதையத் தெரியாது? சீதையத் தெரியாத ஒரு இந்தியப் பொம்புளையா!”

“What’s that book in your hand, Amma? You’re always reading it.”
“It’s the *Ramayanam*.”
“What’s that?”
“What is this, *di*? You don’t know the *Ramayanam*? You know, *di*, the story of Rama and Sita.”
“I don’t know it, Amma.”
[...] “You don’t know Sita? An Indian girl who doesn’t know Sita?”
(ibid., 178)

Just before, Kamalam was distraught that her daughter disregarded the example of wifehood set by Sita and other mythological women like her. But here, Kamalam can’t believe that Chinni doesn’t know of Sita, whom she understands as the ideal of all Indian women. “An Indian girl who doesn’t know Sita?” she asks, implying that Chinni is not an Indian woman, for neither does she know of Sita, nor does she emulate her. To Kamalam, Chinni is, conversely, always pregnant and never works properly. This exchange, together with the one Kamalam has just had with Nalayini, raises questions about the feminine ideal, which the story will go on to answer: Is the feminine ideal the only admirable ideal to embody? And if so, who can embody it and how?

Kamalam’s conversation with Chinni leads directly into the second part of the story, Chinni’s section, in which Chinni worries about a series of arson incidents in her slum (*cēri*). She stays home to watch over her children, constantly fearful that a fire that might suddenly arise in their vicinity. Her mother comes to visit and begs Chinni to bring her family to her own home, just until the arsonist is caught, but Chinni refuses to leave her husband behind. At least send your children then, her mother entreats. At first, Chinni shrugs her shoulders and says, “What can you do, Amma? If it’s fate...” (182).²² But then she reconsiders:

பிறகு தன் மக்களைப் பார்த்தாள். அரும்பு உயிர்கள். அவர்களுக்காகத் தீர்ப்புக் கூற அவளுக்கு ஏது அதிகாரம்? எல்லாக் கனவுகளும், எல்லா நனவுகளும் அவர்கள் பிறப்புரிமை. [...] மாரிசாமியின் மீது அவள் பார்வை சென்று நிலைத்தது. இது அவள் பிறப்புரிமை. இதில் தலையிட அவளைப் பெற்றவர்களுக்கோ, அவள் பெற்றவர்களுக்கோ அதிகாரம் கிடையாது.

²² “அதுக்கு இன்னாம்மா செய்யது? தலைவிதியின்னு இருந்தா...”

“பிள்ளைங்களைக் கூட்டிக்கிட்டு நீ போம்மா. ஆனால் நான் வரமாட்டேன். ஆம்பள்ளையை விட்டுட்டு வர எனக்கு இஷ்டமில்லை. அவருக்கில்லாம எனக்கு மட்டும் என்ன சாக்கிரதை? அவருக்கு என்ன ஆகுதோ அது எனக்கும் ஆயிட்டுப் போவட்டும்” என்று விடையிறுத்தாள். ஆவளுக்கு சீதையைப் பற்றி எதுவும் தெரியாது.

Then she looked at her children. Darling souls. What right [*adhikaram*] did she have to make decisions for them? All their dreams and realities were their birthright. [...] Her eyes rested upon [her husband]. This was her birthright [*pirappurimai*]. Neither her parents, nor her children had a right to interfere with this.

“Take the children, Amma. But I’m not coming. I don’t wish to leave my husband. Why should I have safety when he doesn’t? Let whatever happens to him happen to me,” she said and bid them farewell.

She didn’t know a thing about Sita.

(ibid., 182-183)

Chinni chooses to stay behind with her husband, despite the danger of a possible fire. She sees her allegiance to him as her birthright with which no one else can interfere, just as she cannot interfere in her children’s right to their future. Chinni does not leave matters entirely to fate in this moment, but rather thinks through her situation in the language of justice and sides with what she believes is rightfully her choice: her *pirappurimai*, or birthright.²³ This faithful support for her husband vies against Kamalam’s assumptions about who can inhabit the feminine ideal, for here, Chinni values the same type of wifedom as Kamalam despite not knowing who Sita is. Thus, Chinni’s section ends with the ironic statement, “She didn’t know a thing about Sita,” written from the perspective of not Chinni, but an omniscient narrator responding to Kamalam’s criticism.

The final section of the story is written from Nalayini’s perspective. As it opens, Nalayini listens to Chinni talk about Kamalam. She finds it amusing both that Kamalam thinks Chinni should know who Sita is, and that Chinni can’t understand why Kamalam looks at her strangely for not knowing. But Nalayini doesn’t want to get involved and so instead offers Chinni some sweets from the gathering she held the night before. When Chinni refuses them and asks Nalayini to wrap them up for her children and husband, Nalayini doesn’t understand this self-sacrificing attitude. She tries first to convince Chinni to take care of her own pregnant body before thinking of others, and then to start using birth control so that she won’t burden herself with more children than she already has. This conversation only leads Chinni to express her sympathy for Nalayini because she is childless. Nalayini doesn’t feel the same, however:

சோர்ந்து உட்கார்ந்த சின்னியை அவள் ஒரு தரம் முடிய நோக்கினாள்.
உயிரினுள் உயிரைத் தாங்கிக்கொண்டிருக்கும் பூதாகார வடிவம்...

²³ *Pirappurimai*, or birthright, is also the concept that Chudamani’s character Bhuvana wrestles with in the short story “Pirappurimai,” which I discuss in Chapter 1. (*Urimai* is a synonym for *adhikaram*, right or entitlement.) Bhuvana acquires *penmai*, or femininity, which she sees as her birthright, through her interaction with Thangadurai, a young man who tries to woo her. Bhuvana’s conceptualization of birthright coincides not with Chinni’s understanding of it, but with Nalayini’s. Both Bhuvana and Nalayini grapple with the notion of rights through justice talk and not in terms of wifely duty. I discuss Nalayini’s understanding of her rights below.

தனக்கு மகப்பேறு இல்லை என்பது பற்றி அவள் வருந்தவில்லைதான். குழந்தைகள் இருந்திருந்தால் இப்போது அவள் செய்துள்ள முடிவுக்கு வந்திருக்க முடியாது. அநியாயத்துக்குத் தலைவணங்க மறுக்கும் நேர்மையின் எளிய பார்வை அப்போது புகையுண்டிருக்கும். தெளிவு என்ன என்பது தெரிந்திருந்தாலும் நாசக்கான தடுப்புக்கள் திரை விரித்திருக்கும். இப்போது பங்கீடு ஏதுமில்லை. முறை என்பதை உணரும் மனமும் அதை நோக்கி நடக்கும் பாதங்களும் இணைந்து செயலாற்றுவது இப்போது சாத்தியம்.

[Nalayini] looked once with finality at Chinni sitting exhaustedly. A huge figure bearing a life within a life...

It wasn't just that [Nalayini] didn't regret not having children. If she had had them, she wouldn't have been able to come to the decision to do what she was about to do. And her lucid, straightforward perspective [*pārvai*], which refused to bend to injustice [*anyayam*], would have become foggy. Even if she could have seen [*teri*] clearly, small obstacles would have spread screens [before her]. But presently, there was nothing else involved. Now that [her] mind and emotions were moving on the right path [*murai*], it was certain that [her] feet would follow accordingly.

(ibid., 185-186)

Nalayini thinks to herself here how, unlike Chinni and other married women, she does not really want children. Moreover, if she had them, they would have inhibited her from doing what she is about to do (which she has not yet revealed to the reader), something she feels is honest, right, and opposed to injustice.²⁴ Nayalini uses the language of justice to emphasize these values above wifely loyalty and self-sacrifice. These are the terms upon which she views the man-woman relationship designated by marriage, and not those in which Kamalam and Chinni invest.

For, Nayalini desires a man equal to herself in self-worth. She recounts how tried at first to change her husband's behavior through anger and imploring, but gave up on these efforts when her husband refused to change.²⁵ Now she has overcome her *cirram*, or wrath. "Life is such a precious thing," (186) she thinks, not to be wasted on someone unworthy.²⁶ The decision she has calmly resolved upon is to leave her husband, for "Not opposing a harmful habit after having discovered it was a blemish upon not just wifedom [*manaivittuvam*], but humanity [*manitattanam*], wasn't it?" (187).²⁷ Nayalini feels that she acts for more than womanhood or wifedom by leaving her husband; in opposing his wrongdoings, she acts on behalf of humanity.

²⁴ Several of the words Nayalini uses here to invoke justice are the same ones that Thyagarajan, the main character of the Chudamani story "Katai Porul" that I examine in the third section of this chapter, uses to criticize his friend Patanjali, words such as *murai*—morality, right path, or good conduct— and *anyayam*—injustice.

Notice, too, how Nayalini's account of her decision revolves around her being able to see and perceive. Through these words, she authorizes her perspective over those of the other characters in a move parallel to Darshana and Naina, whose names authorize their perspectives over Harish's.

²⁵ The words Nayalini uses to express her anger are "*cinnam*," a synonym for *cirram*, and "*veku*" a verb meaning "to be enraged."

²⁶ "உயிர் எத்தனை உயிர்ந்த பொருள்! அதை ஒருவருக்காக விடுப்பதானால் அந்த மகத்தான கொடையை ஏற்பவரிடம் அதற்குரிய தகுதி அமைந்திருக்க வேண்டும்."

²⁷ "ஒரு தீய இயல்பைக் கண்ட பிறகும் எதிர்க்காமல் இருப்பது மனைவித்துவத்தைக் கடந்த மனிதத்தனத்துக்கு இழுக்கல்லவா?"

Thus, up to this point in the story, Nalayani views herself differently than both Chinni and Kamalam, as she does not subscribe to the feminine ideal in the ways they do. But at the end of the story, she suddenly has a change of heart. As she watches Chinni walk home, she thinks to herself:

இதோ ஒரு சீதை தள்ளாமையை மீறும் ஆர்வத்துடன் வீடு நோக்கி நடக்கிறாள். இது பத்தினிகளின் நாடு என்பதில் ஐயமென்ன? இங்குள்ள ஒவ்வொரு பெண்ணும் ஒரு சீதை தான், ஒரு நளாயினிதான்...

“நானும் நளாயினிதான்!” அவள் உள்ளம் திடீரென்று ஒரு பெருமிதத்தில் விகசித்தது. “என் நெஞ்சிலே அவர்கிட்ட அன்பு அழிஞ்சு போயிடலேம்மா!” என்று அன்னை கமலத்திடம் அவள் மானசீகமாய் உறுதி மொழிந்தாள்.

புராண நளாயினி கணவனை மாற்றாளிடம் அழைத்துப்போய்ப் பத்தினிப் பதம் எய்தினாள். ஆனால் கணவனிடம் மனைவிக்குள்ள கடமைகள் உடற்போக்கானவை மட்டம்தானா? அவனுடைய குண வளர்ச்சியில் அவளுக்குப் பொறுப்புக் கிடையாதா? மனைவி என்பவள் மந்திரியாகவும் இருக்க வேண்டும் என்று நீதி சஸ்திரம் கூறவில்லையா! அரசனின் பிழை காணுமிடத்து இடித்துக் கூறுபவனன்றோ நல்லமைச்சன்?... பழைய நளாயினியைப்போல் கணவனின் பிழைக்கு உறுதுணையாக இருந்து தன்னளவில் பதிவிரதாப் பட்டம் சம்பாதித்துக்கொள்ளாமல், பிறரின் ஏசலைத் தான் வகித்துக்கொண்டு கணவனைப் பாப வழியினின்று மீட்க முயலப் போகிறாள்.

“அம்மா...அந்த நளாயினியை விடவும் சிறந்த பதிவிரதையாய் நான் திகழ்வேனம்மா! நீ ஆனந்தபடலாம்!”

There [Chinni] went towards home with an enthusiasm that would supersede Sita's [wifely] burden. Was there any doubt that this was a nation [*nāṭu*] of goodwives [*pattinika!*]? Every woman in this country is a Sita, a Nalayini...

“I, too, am Nalayini!” Her heart suddenly brightened with joy. “I haven't given up the love for him in my heart, Amma!” she said assuredly in her mind to Kamalam, her mother.

Nalayani of the Puranas earned the title of goodwife [*pattini*] for taking her husband to a prostitute [*mārṛāḷi*]. But are a wife's duties only to follow her husband's orders? Doesn't she have a responsibility to foster his character? Doesn't the *Nītisāstrām* say that she who is called a wife must also be an advisor! Isn't he the king's excellent minister, who points out the king's faults and destroys them?²⁸ ... She wouldn't be given the name *pativrata* for supporting her husband's faults like the old Nalayini; instead she would withstand the scorn of others by trying to rescue her husband from a sinful path.

“Amma!... I'll shine as even more great a *pativrata* than that [Puranic] Nalayini! You will be happy!”

(ibid., 188)

Nalayini sees Chinni in the image of Sita, as a wife who enthusiastically sacrifices her well-being and happiness for her husband. But Nalayini questions Chinni's acquiescence to this lifestyle. To Nalayini's mind, how could a woman who is perpetually pregnant, living in unsafe

²⁸ Notice how Nalayini emphasizes, here, her duty to point out her husband's faults, similarly to Darshana, who exposes Harish's.

conditions, and constantly working to provide for her many children desire to remain in such a life? This is why she earlier instructs Chinni to take care of herself—to eat and to use birth control. Seeing no change in Chinni’s perspective, Nalayini here thinks to herself in an almost sardonic tone: my mother is wrong; here goes another Sita in this country where all women are Sitas! But then suddenly, in a surprising burst of joy, she comes to see herself in the same light as Chinni, as one of India’s ideal women: “I, too, am Nalayini!” she exclaims, as if realizing she had been denying herself of this identity until this moment.

Nalayani is only able to inhabit this trope, however, by redefining what it entails. She does not embody the same type of ideal represented by the Puranic Nalayini, who simply did what her husband wished; this Nalayini will not blindly support her husband’s offenses. She will, instead, side with justice, which is here invoked by her reference to the *Nītiśāstram*, the collective of ancient texts on the principles of justice and law. She uses this reference to expand the meaning of the role of the goodwife—a goodwife must also serve as a supportive advisor, a champion for the good of her husband’s character. Through this interpretation of who a “goodwife” is, Nalayini enables herself to take on the ideal represented by her name. She will sacrifice her good name and endure the scorn of others by doing what is best for her husband’s character. But also, as she earlier says, in leaving him she acts not just for wifehood, but also humanity. She thus extends what the feminine ideal stands for so that it now includes a more equal relationship between husband and wife, one in which she relies on her own principles and values to judge what is right and wrong. It is in the capacity—not of a wife obeying her husband—but that of an equal partner seeking to rid her husband of his character-blemishing habit that she will leave him.

In doing so, Nalayini makes it clear that she is developing her own selfhood and not just benefiting her husband or pleasing her mother. At the very end of the story, when Chinni is surprised to hear Nalayini say she is leaving, she asks Nalayini where she will go:

“பொறந்த லுட்டுக்குங்களா?
 “இல்லை.” பெற்றோருக்கும் அவள் பாரமாக இருக்க மாட்டாள். மேலும்
 அவள் அங்கு சென்றால், ‘தான்’ என்ற மனிதத் தனிமுறையில் அவள் இயற்றும்
 எதிர்ப்பே பொருளற்றதாகிவிடும். நளாயினி பதில் சொல்லவில்லை.
 “பின்னே எங்கே போறீங்க? சீக்கிரம் திரும்பி வந்துவிடுவீங்களில்லே?”
 அவள் முகம் யோசனையில் கூம்பிகொண்டது. தலை உயர்த்தி மேலே
 நோக்கினாள். விண்வெளியெங்கும் அந்தக் கேள்வியே வியாபித்திருந்தது.

“To your parents house?”
 “No.” [Nalayini] wouldn’t burden her parents. And besides, if she went
 there, the resistance she had undertaken through her humanist philosophy
 [*manitat tanimurai*] of the ‘self’ [*tān*] would become meaningless. Nalayini
 didn’t reply.
 “So where are you going? You’ll return soon, right?” [Nalayini’s]
 expression receded into her thoughts. She raised her head and looked up. The
 question was spread out across the entire atmosphere.

(ibid., 189)

These last lines of the story are remarkable for the way they reinscribe the self into Nalayini's decision to leave her husband: it is her commitment to the humanist understanding of the self that both compels and enables her to take up the name "Nalayini" instead of dissociating herself from it and the ideal it represents. She embarks into the unknown—spread out like the sky above her—to explore and inhabit the figure of a wife willing to sacrifice her security and reputation to make both her husband and herself self-defined, just people. In doing so, she does not reject marriage or man-woman relationships, but rather affirms her connection to both Kamalam and Chinni, as well as her husband. She becomes Nalayini, an "Indian woman," in the very act of installing herself as a human being, her husband's equal, and someone who fights for a wifehood that is no different than humanity.

In Nalayini's case, her taking up the feminine ideal depends upon the ignorance of Chinni, who serves as the "other" or "outside" against which Nalayini defines the feminine ideal at the end of the story. Chinni is a garbage woman, most likely Dalit, and the dialect she uses when she talks—for example, the way she conjugates verbs—and her class—marked by the slum in which she lives, her lack of education, and her laboring lifestyle—coincide with this identity. Kamalam and Nalayini are, however, upper caste and most likely Brahmin. Their caste and class are signalled by their typically Brahmin names, Kamalam's textual affinity to the *Ramayana* and Nalayini's reference to the *Nitisastram*, the layout of their home (which has a *murram*, or inner courtyard, in which Kamalam reads in the opening scene, and a *kollaipuram*, or backyard, both common features of upper caste Tamil homes), and the dialects they use when they speak. It is precisely because of the caste and class difference between Nalayini and Chinni that Nalayini is able to redefine the feminine ideal at the end of the story through Chinni; it is when she realizes that Chinni, too, is a Sita in a nation full of Sitas that she finally sees herself in the same category. Nalayini expresses how she has overcome her *cirram*, or wrath, to leave her husband in response to—and as a critique of—Chinni's self-sacrificing approach to wifehood and motherhood. In this way, the story must "pass through" Chinni's perspective in order for Nalayini to redefine the feminine ideal as something more open-ended and humanistic than Kamalam understands it to be in the opening section.

Similarly, in Bhandari's "Tin Nigahon Ki ek Tasvir," the story must pass through Harish in order to reconfigure the tropes of the widow and prostitute, for it is in the act of opposing Harish's interpretation that Darshana inhabits these tropes in her own way. Like Chinni, Harish is an outsider. Whereas Naina describes the connections she has with Darshana—their memories, their experiences as women, their familial ties, and the uncanny love they feel for one another across time and space—Harish possesses none. He is not a woman but a man, and not a relative but a stranger. Furthermore, both Naina's and Darshana's names (*nainā*, *darśanā*) are common words used for "eye," "sight," or "vision," and suggest the import of these characters' perspectives in sketching the contours of the "picture" invoked in the story's title. But the story gives Harish no authority in this regard, and Darshana questions what other authority he might carry as a person and a writer.²⁹ Nonetheless, Darshana's humanistic interpretation of the feminine ideal—one which configures the goodwife, the widow, and the prostitute as possessing rights and desires—can only be expressed in juxtaposition with Harish's story. For it is this

²⁹ The name "Harish" is an epithet of Lord Vishnu.

juxtaposition that allows the reader to trace a path from the “goodwife” image of Darshana in Naina’s memory to the dying widow-prostitute Naina finds in the opening scene.

The Truth about Feminine Desire

Both Darshana and Nalayini use justice talk to establish human connection, and they do so by reconfiguring the feminine ideal in newly inhabitable ways. Darshana does not deny or regret her destitute status as a widowed prostitute in her diary entries; instead, she affirms these identities by staking her right to independence from her husband and his family, as well as Harish. She thus reconnects with Naina—the bearer of her story, not as Naina’s beloved aunt, but as a desiring woman seeking to be justly represented. Similarly, Nalayini reconnects with Kamalam and Chinni by embracing her name, though she comes to see herself as an different type of ideal wife than them. She insists, instead, on her right to be an independent self, who makes her own judgements about what is right and wrong.

In this way, these stories imagine women who are fiercely self-defined, but both stories leave open the question of what constitutes these women’s feminine desire: for Darshana this question manifests at the end of her story not as an affirmation of her desire, but as her refusal to be seen as a helpless wife; and for Nalayini, her desire is deflected into her unknown future spread out before her. Thus, in this section I return to the two stories with which I began the chapter in order to show how Bhandari and Chudamani explicitly articulate the feminine desire that enables their characters to newly inhabit the feminine ideal.

Bhandari’s story, “Yahi Sach Hai,” or “This is the Truth,” (1966) is narrated by Deepa, a young woman living alone and studying to complete a postgraduate degree. The story begins with her waiting for her lover Sanjay. She’s particularly excited for his arrival this day so she can tell him about her upcoming job interview in Calcutta, a city far away from their more provincial city of Kanpur. The “truth” that Deepa conveys throughout the story is that of vacillation, or rather the ability of her strong feelings of love and desire to suddenly shift back and forth between Sanjay and an old lover, Nishit, whom she meets again after many years in Calcutta. For example, in the passage I quoted at the beginning of the chapter, Deepa writes vehemently to Sanjay that her relationship with Nishit is completely over and that she now despises him.

But after arriving in Calcutta, she is once again drawn towards Nishit:

सीढ़ियों पर निशीथ हल्की-सी मुस्कुराहट के साथ कहता: “इस साड़ी में तुम बहुत सुन्दर लग रही हो।”

मेरा चहरा तमतमा जाता है; कनपटिया सुर्ख हो जाती हैं। मैं सचमुच ही इस वाक्य के लिए तैयार नहीं थी। [...]मुझे ऐसी बातें सुनने की ज़रा भी आदत नहीं है। संजय न कभी मेरे कपड़े पर ध्यान देता है, न ऐसी बातें करता है, जब कि उसे पूरा अधिकार है। और यह बिना अधिकार ऐसी बातें करे? [...]

पर जाने क्या है कि मैं उस पर नाराज़ नहीं हो पाती हूँ; बल्कि एक पुलकमय सिहरन महसूस करती हूँ।

On the stairs Nishit said with a smile: “You look so beautiful in that sari.” My face became flushed; my temples reddened. Truly, I wasn’t prepared for this statement. [...] I wasn’t at all in the habit of hearing such things. Sanjay never noticed my clothes, nor did he talk this way, even though he had every right [*adhikar*] to. And [Nishit] said such things without any right [*adhikar*]?... But I don’t know why, I couldn’t get angry at him; rather I felt a delightful thrill. (Bhandari 2008, 269)

The same shivers she earlier felt at Sanjay’s touch now arise with Nishit’s words. Slowly it is this feeling towards Nishit that becomes true, true as Deepa’s love for Sanjay was earlier, and Nishit to whom she gives the right to be physically intimate with her. She is unable to talk frankly about this with him during their time together in Calcutta, and is continuously left speechless by the insinuations in his subtle glances. When she returns to Kanpur, Deepa writes Nishit a letter explaining that she had been so angry when he left her the first time. Yet, the way he treated her as his own during her recent visit to Calcutta has drawn her to him again: “As soon as I saw him, it was as if all my anger melted away. In [his] possession how could my anger possibly remain?” (275).³⁰ The word Deepa uses for “possession” is *apanatva*; and through it, she refers to the intimate way Nishit has treated her during her visit. Deepa sees this intimate possessiveness as an entitlement that exists between partners, which she has given him when she is unable to sustain her anger.³¹

In his reply, Nishit rejects this *apanatva*, or entitlement, to be intimate with Deepa. But just as she finishes reading Nishit’s disappointing reply, she looks up to see Sanjay standing at her door with the flowers he brings her daily without fail. She is overcome by joy as she realizes another truth: that along with physical intimacy, she also needs emotional stability and support, something Sanjay provides. Thus, she comes back to the “truth” of Sanjay.

मुझसे कुछ नहीं बोला जाता। बस, मेरी बाहों की जकड़ कसती जाती, कसती जाती है।
रजनीगन्धा की महक धीरे-धीरे मेरे तन-मन पर छा जाती है। तभी मैं अपने भाल पर संजय
के अधरों का स्पर्श महसूस करती हूँ और मुझे लगता है, यह स्पर्श, यह सुख, यह क्षण ही सत्य
है, वह सब झूठा था, मिथ्या था, भ्रम था..।

I couldn’t speak. I simply clasped my arms tightly, more tightly. The scent of the *Rajnigandha* flowers slowly washed over me. Just then I felt Sanjay’s lower lip brush my forehead, and it seemed to me that this touch, this happiness, this moment, this is the truth, all of that was a lie, it was false, it was a confusion. (ibid., 277)

³⁰ “उसे देखते ही जैसे सारा क्रोध बह गया। इस अपनत्व में क्रोध भला टिक भी कैसे पाता?”

³¹ *Apanatva* has a similar meaning to the word *sontam* that Chudamani uses in the passage I quoted from her story in the second epigraph to this chapter. Recall that Shekar feels a pride in the thought that Vanita is his. The right to possess one’s partner, whether one is a man or a woman, is an equalizing move that redefines man-woman relationships in many of both Bhandari’s and Chudamani’s stories.

These passages raise three important points. One, in this passage and the one I quoted just before, Deepa writes in the idiom of *har*. She feels unable to get angry at Nishit when he oversteps the boundaries of their relationship and tells her she looks beautiful; she finds herself speechless when she sees Sanjay standing at her door with flowers. Two, it is precisely in these moments of *har* (defeat) that she gives her lovers the *adhikar*, right or entitlement, to be intimate with her. But similar to Naina's and Darshana's cases, *har* for Deepa is more than defeat. It is also a surrendering to the force of her emotions, and it is through this surrendering that she conveys the truth of her love for both Sanjay and Nishit. The idiom of *har* thus enables Deepa to push the boundaries of traditional man-woman relationships, both articulating and claiming her womanly right to experience multiple loves and fidelities that are situationally specific and continuously in flux. And three, the truth she realizes over and over throughout the story—which occurs through the exchange of rights to intimacy between Deepa and Sanjay and Deepa and Nishit—seals the human connection she feels with these men. It is thus that she feels washed over by reassurance and happiness at the end.

Chudamani's story, "Manitanay Mari," or "Becoming Human," (1964) depicts the exchange of entitlement between men and women similarly. In this story, the main character Vanita struggles to maintain her household while also working to support her sick parents. Her husband Shekar is resentful of her financial independence and her responsibilities to people other than him. And while Vanita proudly gives in to her sexual desire for Shekar (as the second epigraph illustrates), in a scene just preceding it, she is enraged by his disrespect for her responsibility to work. On that morning, Shekar forbids her to go to work, but Vanita quietly gets ready anyway. Shekar says angrily:

“எத்தனை அலட்சியம் உனக்கு?”
 “உங்களுக்கு இல்லையா?”
 “நாளைக்கு உனக்கு குழந்தை பிறக்கும் சந்தர்ப்பம் வருகிறதென்று வைத்துக்கொள். அப்போது வேலையை விடத்தானே வேணும்?”
 “மெடர்னிடி லீவ் கிடைக்கும். பிறகு மறுபடியும் வேலைக்குப் போகலாம்.”
 அவளுக்கு சீற்றம் கனன்றது; தான் அன்பு வைத்த ஒரு பொருள் அழுக்குறுவதைக் காணச் சகியாத சீற்றம். அவனும் கோபத்தோடு எழுந்து போய்விட்டான்.

“How much disrespect have you got?”
 “Aren't you the one who has it?”
 “Suppose tomorrow you're in a situation where a child is about to be born. Then you'll have to quit work, won't you?”
 “I'll get maternity leave. Then I'll go back to work.” She burned with wrath [*cirram*]. Seeing something she loved become rotten made it an unbearable wrath [*cirram*]. He got up and left in anger, too.

(Chudamani 1964, 81)

This wrath—*cirram*—that Vanita feels conflicts again and again with her feelings of love and desire for Shekar. But when he puts his foot down for the last time, saying she must quit work or

else, Vanita overcomes her rage and realizes she must leave, which she does. She leaves Shekar a letter in which she chastises him for disregarding her financial duty to care for her sick parents:

“அநாதைகளான என் பெற்றோர்கள் எக்கேடு கெட்டுப் போனால் என்ன என்று நீங்கள் இதயமற்றுச் சொன்னபோது என் அன்பினால்கூட அந்த அதிர்ச்சியைத் தாங்க முடியவில்லை. தாய் தந்தையைக் காப்பாற்ற வேண்டியது என் கடமை. நான் அங்கே போய்விடுகிறேன். உங்களிடம் கணவன்-தன்மை நிறைய இருக்கிறது; ஆனால் மனிதத் தன்மையைக் காணவில்லை.”

“When you heartlessly said so what if my abandoned parents are ruined and destroyed, I couldn't bear the shock, despite my love for you. It's my duty to take care of my parents. I'm going there. You've got a lot of the qualities of a husband, but I don't see the qualities of a human being [*maṇitat taṇmai*] in you.” (ibid., 82)

Vanita's letter clenches the relationship between wrath, justice, and humanism. Earlier in the story when Shekar dismisses her parents, she responds with deep anger and distress, but here, her letter expresses a moment in which she has overcome her wrath, and in doing so she more fully commits to her duty (the word she uses for duty is *kaṭamai*, a synonym in Tamil for *adhikaram*). In this moment, she discovers what it means to be human: it is a heart-fullness (as opposed to Shekar's heartlessness), a willingness to have compassion for others, alongside a commitment to one's responsibility to others that makes someone human. In the final lines of the story when Vanita's parents ask her worriedly if she's had a quarrel with Shekar, Chudamani ends the story with these words: “‘What fight? No, it's nothing like that,’ Vanita said calmly. ‘One day for sure he'll become human [*maṇitaṇāy māri*] and come here to take me home.’” (82).³² Here, in Vanita's overcoming of wrath is the explication of justice as human connection: when Shekar realizes the responsibilities one has towards others, he'll become human and re-establish his connection with his wife. Deepa realizes a similar truth—the shared commitment and connection she and Sanjay have for one another. Moreover, it is precisely this human connection that defines literariness in both Bhandari's and Chudamani's work, as well as in that of the other post-Independence authors I examine in this dissertation.

Human Connection and the Assumption of Authorship

The two stories I discuss below—one by Bhandari and one by Chudamani—explicitly attempt to define craft of writing and literariness, or what comprises a good story. I have chosen these stories because these are two of the very few places I have found where Bhandari and Chudamani have written on their philosophy of writing. What stands out in these stories, and is the case in almost all of their writing (fiction or otherwise) on the question of authorship, is their

³² சண்டை என்னம்மா? அதொன்றுமில்லை.” வனிதா சாந்தமாக கூறினாள்; “அவராக ஒரு நாள் மனிதனாய் மாறி என்னை அழைத்துப் போக இங்கே கட்டாயம் வருவார்.”

use of the male voice.³³ As I show below, Bhandari and Chudamani use the the male voice in these stories to affirm their investment in humanist conventions for defining what is considered true writing, what a good author does, and what it means to be literary. I suggest for this reason that their use of the male voice allows us to track how Bhandari and Chudamani imagine the authorization of their idiomatic expression through which they advance new forms of human experience and freedom, such as those Darshana, Nalayini, Deepa, and Vanita explore.³⁴

Mannu Bhandari's "Pandit Gajadhar Śāstrī" (1957) is about a young man, a writer, who is vacationing alone at a hotel near the beach in Puri (a city outside the Hindi-speaking region). It is narrated in first person, and we are never told the narrator's name. Almost immediately after he arrives, the narrator meets his neighbor—Pandit Gajadhar Sastri—the other Hindi speaking guest at the hotel. The two share more than language; the narrator discovers that the Pandit, too, is a Hindi literature expert and short story writer like himself. But each time the two men meet, the Pandit dismisses the narrator's writerly talent and talks incessantly. Through short repeated phrases such as, "Defeated in the end..." (54), the narrator expresses that he can hardly get in a word edgewise.³⁵ The Pandit continuously cuts off the narrator's attempts to converse by recounting his own successes as a Hindi short story writer and his theories on the meaning and production of literature.

³³ Apart from a few interviews and, in Bhandari's case, autobiographical reflections, everything these women authors have written on their philosophy of writing is both in fiction and in a male voice.

Of all Bhandari's short stories, only three (including "Pandit Gajadhar Sastri") talk about the philosophy of writing, and they all grapple with and attempt to take on a male voice. The other two are the very first story she published, "Maim Hār Gāī" [I Lost] (1957), and "Caśme" [Spectacles] (1958). The protagonist of "Maim Har Gai" is a young woman who feels insulted by a poet, who publicly recites a poem about the corrupt leanings of all politicians, such as her father. She vows to take revenge by creating the perfect politician through the short story form. She tries more than once. Each time, she enters into an ideological conversation with the male character she writes, whom she orders and then pleads to assume just and honorable leadership, but each time, her protagonist takes the story in his own hands and acts according to his own will. It is for this reason that at the end of the story the narrator says "I lost," and hands over authorship to her male protagonists. As in "Pandit Gajadhar Sastri," the story I discuss below, this narrator, too, assumes authorship through allowing her male characters to tell the story.

"Casme" has two main protagonists, Mr. and Mrs. Verma. Mr. Verma refers to Nirmal Verma, the famous *Nayi Kahani* movement writer and Bhandari's contemporary. In the story, Mrs. Verma attempts to recount a love story she has just written to Mr. Verma, but each time she begins to tell it, Mr. Verma slips off into a day dream about a past lover. Thus, it is his story that gets recounted and not Mrs. Verma's. In this way, it is Mr. Verma's voice, and not his wife's, that narrates the story.

"Katai Porul" is the only piece of writing, fiction or otherwise, that I could find where Chudamani explores her philosophy of writing. For this reason, the choice to use a male voice to explore authorship here seems to me a revealing rhetorical move. A great deal of Chudamani's short stories are written from the first person perspective of a male narrator. These narrators often grapple with the same themes as her female narrators (almost all of which are, by contrast, written in third person). These themes include the nature of love, desire, equality, and fidelity in man-woman relationships, particularly in opposition to a fascination with divine beauty and otherworldly experience.

³⁴ The effacement of the feminine voice that Bhandari's and Chudamani's stories on authorship enact can be observed in other non-literary discourses, as well. For example, Paola Bacchetta (2004) has carefully demonstrated the ways in which the rhetoric of the Rashtra Sevika Sangh, the women's wing of the Hindu nationalist organization the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, both coincides with and diverges from its male parent organization in order to negotiate space for women's actions and worldview. The Samiti's concessions to its male parent organization's discourses "also disguises a non-concession by the Samiti to the Sangh" (8). Here, like in Bhandari's and Chudamani's cases, the assumption of a male voice serves as a strategy to open up spaces for feminine perspectives, desires, and actions.

³⁵ "आखिर हारकर..."

Despite the Pandit's one-sided speech, the narrator manages to discredit the Pandit's expertise through a private dialogue with the reader. He often inserts his own thoughts within the Pandit's words parenthetically. For example, as the Pandit is lecturing to the narrator about what makes a good writer, the narrator interjects the Pandit's speech in an aside to the reader. The Pandit says, "Undoubtedly, my ideas, my emotions, my literature (by which he means a single story), and my life are synonyms" (58).³⁶ In such asides, we, as readers, are made privy to the irritation and skepticism the narrator feels each time the Pandit asks him a question without letting him answer or holds forth about what makes him a good writer (which is hardly worth mentioning in the narrator's view, not only because the Pandit has only written one story, but also because it's bad!).

Several times in the story the Pandit explains his main writing philosophy to the narrator that writing and life are inseparable: "Simply understand that for me life itself is for the story, the story itself is for life; life itself is the story, the story itself is life" (57).³⁷ But, as the narrator allows us to listen to and watch the Pandit further, he underscores the enigma of this chiasmic aphorism: neither does life fit within the bounds of the story, nor does the story exactly match up with life. This is because even as the Pandit himself insists that he writes according to this philosophy, the narrator reveals the Pandit's failure either to represent himself truthfully, or to write successfully. For example, in one scene the narrator finds the Pandit standing on the beach observing a young woman splashing in the water. The Pandit claims he's watching her to glean new material for a story, but it's clear to the narrator the Pandit is ogling her: "[the Pandit] was savoring the sight of her with large desirous eyes" (57).³⁸ And in another scene, the Pandit lectures to the narrator that a true writer must have compassion for thieves who steal because of their dire straits. But the very next day, the Pandit ruthlessly beats the servant boy clearing away dishes in his room, whom he mistakes for a thief (59-60).

The narrator thus shows the impossibility of any easy identification between writing and life. But also, the narrator himself writes his experience truthfully in the form of the story of his interaction with the Pandit to which we, as readers, now have access. The narrator ends the story by saying, "Unwittingly indeed, he [the Pandit] has become the primary character of my story. He was a great soul—it simply wouldn't have been just [*pūrā nyāy bhī nahīm hotā*] not to give him the position of main character!" (60).³⁹ If there is any correlation between writing and life—if indeed life is the story and the story, life—it is in the narrator's rehabilitation of the Pandit through his own ascendancy to the position of short story writer. This rehabilitation—the justness that gives the Pandit his due position—is a gesture of compassion that does not simply do away with the Pandit's philosophical expositions. Rather, this humanist gesture—the creative impetus of the story—is simultaneously the realization of the Pandit's writerly project, as well as the narrator's assumption of the authorial position. *Har*, a defeated interaction, enables the story.

³⁶ "बस मेरे विचार, मेरी भावना, मेरा साहित्य (जिसके नाम पर मात्र एक कहानी) और मेरा जीवन सब पर्यायवाची शब्द हैं।"

³⁷ "मेरा तो बस समझिए जीवन ही कहानी के लिये, कहानी ही जीवन के लिये, जीवन ही कहानी है, कहानी ही जीवन है।"

³⁸ "...बड़े सतृष्ण नेत्रों से उसी दृश्य का रसास्वादन कर रहे थे।"

³⁹ "...अनजाने ही वे मेरी कहानी के मुख्य पात्र बन बैठे। महान आत्मा थीं—बिना मुख्य पात्र का स्थान दिए उनके साथ पूरा न्याय भी नहीं होता।"

And it is precisely through this idiom that the relationship between literariness and human connection is established.

Chudamani's story "Katai Poru!" [The Meaning/Content of a Story/Fiction] (1965) establishes this very same relationship, but in this story is is the idiom of *cirram*, wrath, that expresses it. The story opens with the main character Thyagarajan asking himself angrily, "Does being a writer mean one should write whatever he feels like?" (100).⁴⁰ Thyagarajan has just opened the latest issue of a literary magazine to find that his friend Patanjali has written a story about Thyagarajan and his brother's death. Thyagarajan is seething with anger that his writer friend, someone who consoled him when he lost his brother, should now so casually and publicly display Thyagarajan's profound sadness and loss:

தியாகராஜனின் உடல் கோபத்தால் ஆடியது... ஆமாம், அவரைப்பற்றித்தான் அந்தக்கதை. நெற்றியில் இருக்கும் திருமண் வளைவும், அதன் நடவிலுள்ள குங்குமப் பொட்டும், அடிக்கடி நெற்றியைச் சுருக்கிக்கொள்வதால் மேலும் கீழுமாக போய்க்கொண்டிருக்கும் என்ற விவரம் வரைவில் அது அவருடைய சித்திரம்தான். [...] என்ன இரக்கமற்ற தன்மையோடு அவரது அண்ணனுடய மரணம் உள்ளது உள்ளபடியே கதை வடிவில் வர்ணிக்கப்பட்டிருந்தது! இந்த அநியாயம் எங்கேயாவது உண்டா?"

Thyagarajan's body shook with anger... Yes, the story was about him. The Vaisnava Brahmin lines on his forehead marked in the center by *sindhur*, his tendency to screw up his forehead, each description from top to bottom was of him. [...] With what unsympathetic selfishness [Patanjali] had detailed as fiction the truth of his brother's death! Who could be so unjust [*aniyāyam*]? (ibid., 100)

He thinks to himself further: "What else was this but treachery? What kind of morality [*murai*] uses an intimate friend's profound sadness, his sacred inner feelings, as content for a story [*katai poru!*]?" (103).⁴¹ For Thyagarajan, it's the veracity of Patanjali's writing, the realistic descriptions he's given of Thyagarajan's appearance and emotions that are unjust and immoral. He immediately sets off, boiling with rage, to confront his callous friend for this exploitation.

On route, Thyagarajan is stopped by a neighbor, who excitedly tells him the newest neighborhood gossip: the writer Patanjali's wife has left him for another, younger man! Thyagarajan ignores the neighbor—he can't bring himself to contain his anger—and marches off to see the writer any way. He finds Patanjali distraught, lying on the floor in the dark, similar to the way he himself felt during his brother's death. But even as he recognizes, and can even sympathize with, Patanjali's loss, Thyagarajan's rage keeps him from embracing and consoling his friend. He clenches the magazine in his fist and looks at his friend through tears of anger. He walks away without a word, wondering whether the writer, who had assumed it was his right (*tan*

⁴⁰ எழுத்தாளரென்றால், எதை வேண்டுமானாலும் எழுதி விடுவதா?"

⁴¹ "இது துரோகம் இல்லாமல் வேறென்ன? ஆப்த நண்பன் ஒருவனின் ஆழந்த துயரை, பவித்திரமான அந்தரங்க உணர்ச்சிகளை, கதைப்பொருளாகப் பயன்படுத்துவது முறையா?"

urimai poruḷāka eṭuttu) to use others' feelings to create fiction, now finally understands the deeply private sadness of loss (108).

A month passes. The two men do not meet. One day Thyagarajan opens a new issue of the literary magazine to find Patanjali's own story—a writer's loss of his young wife—published in all its veracity! The author is none other than Patanjali himself. Thyagarajan wonders: "Are his own sadness and insult—are even these simply materials for stories for Patanjali?" (111).⁴² At first, Thyagarajan feels Patanjali will go to any length to write a compelling story. But immediately afterwards, he overcomes his anger, ending the story with this thought:

அவர் கல் நெஞ்சுர்தானா? அல்லது.....?
அல்லது அனுதாபம், துயரம் முதலிய எல்லா உணர்ச்சிகளையும் கபடின்றி
மனபூர்வமாய் வெளியிட்டு ஆறுதலடைவதற்குச் சாதனமாக எழுத்து ஒன்றையே
உடைய உண்மையான எழுத்தாளரா?

Was he [Patanjali] stone-hearted? Or...?
Or was he a true writer, for whom writing was the sole means by which he
could whole-heartedly and without guile express sympathy, sadness, and other
emotions in order to receive consolation [from others]?

(ibid., 112)

The *cirram*, or wrath, that has driven Thyagarajan throughout the story now culminates in an epiphanic understanding of both what makes a true writer and how the necessity to write connects a writer to others—a true writer is one for whom writing is the only means by which he can fully and truthfully express himself to others and thereby receive consolation, or in other words establish human connection. Furthermore, this realization validates both the story Patanjali wrote about Thyagarajan, as well as Thyagarajan's own story; it reveals the justness, or writerly morality, that compels Patanjali's truthful chronicling of these men's private emotional lives. Thyagarajan thus conveys that Patanjali does indeed have the right to write, to make these inner truths the content of fiction, and as a result, he produces "Katai Porul," the story to which we—as readers—now have access. That is to say, Thyagarajan truthfully expresses his deep inner emotions (what we experience as his wrath), thereby justly making a human connection (with Patanjali) and successfully assuming authorship.

Short Story Writing, Women's Writing, and the Canon of Indian Literature

Let me now return to the interconnections I made in the beginning of the chapter between idiomatic expression and the intersection of literariness, humanism, and justice and reiterate them in more concrete terms. Bhandari and Chudamani use the idioms of *har* and *cirram* to talk justice, or in other words engage with questions of authority, in a few different ways. In the first section, I showed how Darshana and Nalayini question older understandings of the feminine ideal and reconfigure this ideal in the language of justice so that its tropes become inhabitable in new ways. Naina's *har*, the silence through which she comes to possess Darshana's story,

⁴² "...பதஞ்சலிக்குத் தம் சொந்தத் துயரம், அவமானம்—இவை கூடவா வெறும் கதைப் பொருள்கள்."

launches Darshana's interrogation of conventional understandings of the feminine ideal. Darshana rejects the compassion Harish extends to her in characterizing her as a helpless wife and disallows the two-dimensional image of a goodwife Naina remembers her to be. Instead, Darshana confirms her identity as a wife, widow, and prostitute, showing how she inhabits these identities by insisting on her rights to be unburdened, desiring, and justly represented. Similarly, Nalayini overcomes her *cirram*, her anger at her philandering husband, in order to fight for a more just partnership between men and women, one in which a wife is an individual, an advisor, and her own arbiter of right and wrong. Furthermore, by situating themselves as rights-bearing individuals through justice talk, both Darshana and Nalayini define how they will inhabit the feminine ideal on their own terms, thereby realigning their human connections to others. In Darshana's case, this means reconnecting with Naina not by affirming their kinship ties or Naina's memory-image of Darshana, but rather by expressing her own life story and desires. And in Nalayini's case, she establishes human connection with Kamalam and Chinni by joining them in the ranks of Indian womanhood while simultaneously changing the terms of her membership to include a space for her exploration of individuality and selfhood.

In the next section, I demonstrated how justice also confers authority on Deepa and Vanita, allowing them to express their feminine desires within the discourse of humanism. The truth Deepa finally comes to is the truth of human connection, the truth of the terms of entitlements women and men have over one another. Not "yah sach hai," but "yahi sach hai," or "This is the truth," she says at the end, defining that truth while also closing the story, thereby taking up the right to be the one who defines that truth. Deepa conveys truth and justice in moments when she experiences *har*, when she is overcome by emotion and willingly gives Sanjay or Nishit the right to be intimate with her. *Har*, for Deepa, is a teetering or surrendering, a giving up, a defeat. But it is also a partial victory, a way of subtly subverting her womanly place in the world. *Har* is thus Bhandari's idiomatic strategy—we might call it one of self-

effacement—through which her characters couch their authority and their feminine desire in the discourse of humanism.⁴³

Likewise, Chudamani's idiomatic strategy—*cirram*, or we might call it a strategy of self-revelation—allows Vanita to possess the authority to define what counts as “human” with her closing line at the end of the story.⁴⁴ When Vanita overcomes her wrath, she realizes that humanity takes shape through the human connections one responsibly maintains with others. Chudamani's idiom of *cirram* places Vanita's and Shekar's physical desires for one another on equal terms and presses their relationship to also include equal terms of respect and responsibility towards one another. Here, it is *cirram* through which her characters couch their authority, as well as their feminine desire, in the discourse of humanism.

Thus, for Bhandari and Chudamani, it is precisely the idioms of *har* and *cirram* that enable short story authorship. In the third section, I examined how Bhandari's narrator assumes the authorial position via the idiom of *har*: he is incapable of speaking back to the Pandit, defeated at every turn by the Pandit's expositions on storytelling. But it is through this defeat that the narrator demonstrates the meaning of literariness—his connection with and just representation of the Pandit. Chudamani's main character Thyagarajan confers authorship upon both himself and Patanjali through the idiom of *cirram*: via anger and his overcoming of it

⁴³ Interestingly, Rajendra Yadav interprets Bhandari's idiomatic strategy in “Yahi Sac Hai” not as the expression of feminine desire but rather on the terms of the *Nayi Kahani* Movement's efforts to depict individuals' inner turmoils and their external circumstances in the present:

जब मैंने मन्नू की कहानी “यही सच है” की एक और ढंग से व्याख्या करते हुए बताया कि यह प्यार और भावनात्मक अन्तर्द्वन्द्व की या दो प्रेमियों को स्वीकारती लड़की की कहानी नहीं, सन् '५०-६०' के बीच की खण्डित मानसिकता की कहानी है जहाँ भारतीय मन अपने को दो मनःस्थितियों में एकसाथ बँटा पाता था; एक ओर उसका अतीत था (कहानी में पहला प्रेमी) जो आज भी उसके लिए सच था और दूसरी ओर था उसका वर्तमान—दोनों उसके लिए समान सच थे और उसे एक चुनना था; तब इस व्याख्या को मन्नू ने ‘दूर की कौड़ी’ कहकर मेरा मज़ाक उड़ाया था; लेकिन मुझे अपनी बात में आज भी सचाई दीखता है।

When I expressed another type of interpretation of Mannu's story “Yahi Sac Hai”—that it wasn't a story about love and emotional contradiction or a girl who accepts two lovers; that it was a story of the fragmented mentality of the 50-60s, when the Indian mind perceived itself as divided in two mental states at the same time, on the one side was her past (the story's first lover) who still today remained true to her, and on the other side was her present [*vartamān*]; both were true to her and she had to choose one—at that time Mannu said this interpretation was “a long shot” and made fun of me. But to me my interpretation seems true even today.

(Yadav 1978, 107)

Yadav's insistence upon his *Nayi Kahani* Movement inflected interpretation is one example of how Bhandari's work made sense of through the lens of the *nayi kahani* project even as she expressed new understandings of feminine choice and desire.

⁴⁴ In his *Eluttu* review of Chudamani's collection of 1960 collection of short stories, Sundararajan (1960) describes the resistance to tradition and societal norms that her women characters express not in terms of feminine choice or desire, but rather in terms of the feeling (*unarcci*) evoked in readers by these characters' actions and Chudamani's prose style (*urainatai*). He thus reads Chudamani's idiomatic strategy to articulate novel expressions of femininity in terms of the post-Independence *cirukatai* project.

Thyagarajan reveals that literariness is the just and truthful expression of both Thyagarajan's and Patanjali's losses through which human connection is made.

My juxtaposition of Bhandari's stories with Chudamani's operates on several levels of comparison. First, at the level of justice talk, I am comparing Bhandari and Chudamani both to the other male writers of the 50s-60s within their respective canons, as well as to other non-canonical women writers of this period. Of all the canonical writers I have examined in the immediate post-Independence Hindi and Tamil literary spheres, I find justice talk and the way it is used to elucidate liberal humanism unique to Bhandari's and Chudamani's fiction. For example, I showed in Chapter 3 that Rajendra Yadav and C.S. Chellappa, the main theorizers of the short story genre in Hindi and Tamil respectively (who are both male), express their liberal humanist outlook not through justice talk, but rather through stressing the internationality of Hindi and Tamil short stories—the ability of short stories to reflect humanity across the world and not just the regional concerns of these two languages. And in Chapter 4, I demonstrated how the male writers Mohan Rakesh and D. Jeyakanthan establish human connection in their short stories through the interweaving of landscape with character development. Bhandari and Chudamani, conversely, employ justice talk to articulate a liberal humanist worldview. It is in this way that they assume authorship, or entitle themselves, to speak on equal terms as their male contemporaries.

But also, their justice talk sets them apart from other women writers—those who were sidelined either for their explicitly social reformist agendas—seen as not “literary” enough—or for their explicitly radical or subversive agendas—seen as intentionally incendiary and thus also not literary enough. The former categorization of women's writing has stemmed from criticisms of literary scholars in regional Indian languages (see Gopal 2005, Lakshmi 1984, Orisini 2002, Radhika 2006, Tharu and Lalita 1991), while the latter has been a particularly prevalent characterization within scholarship on women's writing, which has tended to view it as “feminine writing,” “writing in resistance,” or “community-oriented.”⁴⁵ However, as several

⁴⁵ For literature on feminine writing see, for example: Cixous 1981, Irigaray 1985, and Kristeva 1986. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (1998) provide an overview of scholarly perspectives on women's writing in their “Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices.” See also Moi 2006.

The focus of scholarship on women's writing—much of it groundbreaking—has centered on the characterization of women's writing as in-resistance or outside the mainstream. A few examples of this literature include Boehmer 2005, Gilbert and Gubar 1979, and Showalter 1977. Spivak (1988, 1993, 1999) approaches the problem of women's writing through the concept of the “subaltern” and the “native informant” and thinks through its categorization as either “representative” or “in resistance” in relation to the dynamic between the reader/critic/translator on the one hand, and the woman-author/text on the other. Trinh (1989) explores women's writing as a negotiation of different categories such as market-based, Third World, and Woman. Tharu and Lalita (1991) look closely at the Indian context and interrogate the way in which western scholarship has viewed women's writing as “in resistance,” critiquing it for relying on the assumption that “Literary texts...express the author's experience and reveal the truth about his or her world, and as they do, they provide us with access to the universal dimensions of human nature” (28). Tharu and Lalita thus seek to move away from conceptualizing women's writing as revealing women's true experiences in opposition to what scholars such as Gilbert and Gubar and Showalter define as untrue, patriarchal depictions of women. They propose instead to present women's writing as “documents that display what is at stake in the embattled practices of self and agency, and in the make of a habitable world, at the margins of patriarchies reconstituted by the emerging bourgeoisies of empire and nation” (36). Rajeswari Sundar Rajan (1993a) finds that Tharu and Lalita are “nevertheless obliged to privilege something that has to be designated as ‘women's experiences’...as the invariant ‘other’ of male history, literary tradition, form, and ideology, in order to make women's writing resistant by definition” (3).

Two examples of women's writing as community-oriented writing are Friedman 1988 and Djebbar 1992.

scholars of the Indian context have demonstrated (Nijhawan 2004, Radhika 2006, Orsini 2002, Sreenivas 2003, Srilata 2003, and Tharu 1998), women's writing has been both extremely visible in public spheres across the different regions, as well as absolutely critical in shaping them. As part of this lineage of women's writing in India, Bhandari and Chudamani were two women writers whose voices were influential in the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil public spheres. Through the idioms of *har* and *cirram*, these writers question, rethink, and undermine traditional understandings of women's *dharma*, and in this way, their work engages with and expands upon the themes and problematics of the category of women's writing. But, what is unique about Bhandari and Chudamani is that not only did their writing find space within mainstream public culture through popular journals, but also it was situated within the Hindi and Tamil literary canons through recognition by the Sahitya Akademi and regional literary awards. Thus, in this chapter, I have examined how these two women writers contributed not just to women's writing and the expansion of voices in the Hindi and Tamil public spheres, but more specifically to canonical constructions of authorship in the post-Independence moment. I have suggested that it is through their use of justice talk to appropriate authorship that these women authors are able to inhabit their authorial positions within the Hindi and Tamil literary canons. The narrator of "Pandit Gajadhar Sastri" and Thyagarajan in "Katai Porul" lay out the terms of this appropriation, while Darshana, Nalayini, Deepa, and Vanita wield this language to authorize their subjectivities and desires.

At the level of idiom, I am comparing 1) Bhandari and Chudamani to each other, 2) Bhandari to her male contemporaries within the Hindi canon and Chudamani to her male contemporaries within the Tamil canon, and 3) the Hindi and Tamil canons to each other. As I hope their stories have demonstrated, the idioms of *har* and *cirram* are not parallel to each other. Whereas *har* maintains an element of vacillation at the conclusion of Bhandari's stories, *cirram* resolves in Chudamani's stories—in Bhandari's stories the truth is always changing, but in Chudamani's stories it's the overcoming of wrath that gives them their moral force. And whereas *har* expresses the mental dilemmas in which Bhandari's characters find themselves, *cirram* articulates physically for Chudamani's Nalayini, Vanita, and Thyagarajan.

But while these idioms are unique to these two women authors and in this way, mark their distinctness within the Hindi and Tamil canons, they also coincide with the broader aesthetic trends of these canons. For example, Bhandari's *har* resonates with the short stories of her contemporary Mohan Rakesh (as discussed in the previous chapter), which portray characters plagued by mental indecisiveness and an incapacity to imagine a moral future. Furthermore, neither Bhandari's nor Rakesh's characters possess caste markers. Conversely, Chudamani's *cirram* resonates with the short stories of her contemporary Jeyakanthan (see previous chapter), which portray Brahmin characters driven by the physical demands of their bodies. Neither Chudamani, nor Jeyakanthan, refrains from expressing the values of liberal humanism through Brahminical religious concepts and tenets. As I demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, the use of mental abstraction in Hindi and physical, bodily expression in Tamil emerge and relate to conceptualizations of literariness in these authors' respective literary canons.

And finally, with regard to the canon of "Indian literature," the stories I have examined in this chapter demonstrate not only how the broader discourse of 1950s-60s liberal humanism took specific shape in Hindi and Tamil short story writing, but also how deliberate attempts to

construct an Indian literature canon in the name of liberal humanism incorporated and were thus shaped by the troubled regional histories of Hindi and Tamil literature. Scholars of Indian literature have noted shared trends across regional literatures, such as the rise of printing presses and genres like the novel or the emergence of new ideas of modernity. However, equally important are the ways that regionally specific political, historical, and cultural processes shape these nation-wide trends. For in the cases of Bhandari and Chudamani, the truth of feminine desire that justice talk tells is not the same liberal humanist story as everybody else.

Concluding Remarks: The Idea of Indian Literature Revisited

हिन्दी कहानी के आज तक के विकास को दो परम्पराओं के साथ रखकर समझने की आवश्यकता है: भारतीय और विश्व-कहानी की परम्परा। हमारे सामने आज कहानी जो है, उसका विकास पिछले साठ-पैंसठ वर्षों से विश्व-कहानी की परम्परा के साथ ही हुआ है, उसी से कहानी का स्वरूप और शिल्प निखरे हैं। भारतीय परम्परा इस शताब्दी के प्रारम्भ तक कहानी के साथ रहती है। सच पूछा जाये तो प्रथम-महायुद्ध की घटना कहानी को ही नहीं, सारे भारत को विश्व के मानचित्र के बीच रख देती है और हमारा जीवन केवल हमारा ही नहीं रह जाता, उस पर विश्व के अन्य प्रभाव पड़ने लगने हैं।

It is necessary to understand the development of the Hindi short story up till now in relation to two traditions: an Indian [tradition] and a world tradition. Indeed, for the last sixty to sixty-five years the evolution of the short story we are met with today occurred alongside the world story [*viśva kahānī*] tradition; it is through this that the form and craft of the story have been refined. Until the beginning of this century, Indian tradition remained [one] with the story. But if truth be told, the event of the first World War places not just the short story but all of India upon the map of the world and our lives are no longer just ours; other world influences have begun to affect them.

(Yadav 1965, 1)

எட்கர் அலன் போ என்ற அமெரிக்கப் படைப்பாளி தான் தற்கால சிறுகதைகளின் பிதாவா, இல்லை, சங்க காலத்து கவிதைகளிலே சிறுகதை இருக்கிறதா, இல்லை, பஞ்சதந்திரக் கதைகளிலிருந்து போக்காஷியோவின் கதைகள் பிறந்தனவா—இது மாதிரியான ‘எரிந்த கட்சி - எரியாத கட்சி’ வெட்டி விவாதங்களை எல்லாம் ஒதுக்கிவிட்டு சிறுகதை என்பது ஒரு தனி குண, உருவம் பெற்றுள்ள இலக்கியத் துறை இன்று, என்பதை அடிப்படையாக வைத்துக்கொண்டு மேலே சிறுகதையைப் பற்றி பேசுவதுதான் பார்க்கப்பட வேண்டிய காரியம். [...] உலக சிறுகதை இலக்கியத்தின் சில முன்னோடிகளை மட்டுமே குறிப்பிட்டு நிறுத்திவிடாமல் நம் தமிழ் சிறுகதையாளர்கள் வளப்பட்டுத்தினதையும் குறிப்பிடுவோம்.

Was the American writer Edgar Allen Poe the father of the short story, or does the short story lie in the [classical] poetry of the [ancient Tamil] Sangam age, or did it originate from the *Pañctantra* stories or in Boccaccio—we must put aside useless debates like these about whether one side is right or the other. The short story is a literary genre [*turai*] with unique characteristics and form. The task we must attend to is a discussion of the short story that takes this as its basis. I won't stop after mentioning some of the pioneers of world story [*ulaka katai*] literature, but will also talk about the greatness of our Tamil short story writers.

(Chellappa 1974 [1964], 1-2)

In launching their mid-1950s tracts on the short story genre with these opening passages, Rajendra Yadav and C.S. Chellappa placed the modern Hindi and Tamil short story genres within

the lineage of their regional literary traditions, as well as within what they considered pan-Indian, Hindu traditions such as the ancient *Panchatantra* fables. Moreover, as the passages above demonstrate, both viewed their regional genres as belonging to a larger world story tradition, with which Hindi and Tamil short stories commingled. For these and the other short story writers this dissertation has examined, it was this commingling of regional, Indian, and world literatures that composed the modern condition of their Hindi and Tamil readers. In this way, their literary aspirations coincided with the Sahitya Akademi's vision of Indian literature as a canon that shaped the cultural unity of the nation while simultaneously placing India on the world literary map. If the Sahitya Akademi emphasized the ideological duty of regional writers in establishing a nationally and globally resonating humanistic unity, just as I have argued in the Introduction to this dissertation, then the passages above highlight some of the concrete ways in which post-Independence Hindi and Tamil short story writers took this duty seriously through their regional literary production. For, while these authors considered it necessary to embed their short story writing within their regional literary and social contexts, this was not sufficient to define the truly literary nature of the work they undertook to shape the post-Independence condition. For this reason, they used the overarching theme of human connection to forge new understandings of the short story genre that could reach beyond their geographically specific locations to also speak to national and world literary movements.

Based on this shared refrain of human connection across state discourses (such as the Sahitya Akademi's) and Hindi and Tamil short story writing, I have thus stressed that the literary responsibility that Hindi and Tamil writers took on in the immediate post-Independence context must be understood both as participating in and practically actualizing the postcolonial state's project for establishing "unity in diversity" with its focus on progress and individual freedom. With this in mind, this study has been motivated by the question: if the post-Independence state required that regional communities align with a pan-Indian identity, then how did the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil literary spheres reflect, substantiate, and answer these demands through regionally specific notions of literariness? In other words, in what ways did these literatures facilitate the cohering of a national unity and a national literature in the post-Independence moment?

I have argued that answering this question requires careful attention to formations of gender and genre. On the one hand, I have shown that a shared focus on tropes of the feminine ideal provided a common representational language across post-Independence Hindi and Tamil literature for discussing pan-Indian ideas of human connection: these tropes served as the humanistic medium through which Hindi and Tamil short story writers dialogued with the state's unifying project. We can thus think of these tropes as the humanistic "unifying" literary technique substantiating the state's "unity in diversity" project. In particular, I have shown that Hindi and Tamil short stories conveyed ideas of human connection through their examination of who should be installed as the guardian of the Indian woman, a question that epitomized the tensions between state and popular understandings of Indian subjectivity and citizenship in the post-Independence moment. In an effort to make literature socially relevant, all the writers I have examined in this dissertation took up this question, expressing it in their stories through their depictions of nationally circulating tropes of the feminine ideal. These writers used these tropes to explore the changing parameters of female desire and individual choice, while

simultaneously employing them to reshape the generic conventions of the short story to envision new forms of human connection and belonging. For instance, all the stories I have examined depict older understandings of the widow, the prostitute, the virgin, and the goodwife that take on new meanings and imply different conceptions of selfhood through the ways Hindi and Tamil authors use them to investigate the modern forms of authority men and women have over one another. Importantly, Hindi and Tamil writers fashioned their renewed representations of these tropes through their use of new generic conventions of idiom, style, and narrative technique that were both particular to each author, as well as generalizable to the larger (regional, national, and world) literary traditions of which these authors saw themselves a part.

On the other hand, I have shown that the Hindi and Tamil short story genres supplied these ideal feminine tropes with distinct meanings that were based on longer standing ideas of literariness in the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres. In particular, both literatures defined the social and aesthetic function of the short story through their engagements with regionally specific politics of identity. In the Hindi context these politics arose out of the historical tensions between Hindi and Urdu, Hinduism and Islam. The *nayi kahani* writers tried to establish a literary project that moved beyond these tensions, which had so unsettled North India following Partition. They did so by defining truly literary works on the basis of their ability to abandon the religious and social structures of the past and focus solely on the tumultuous conditions of the present. For this reason, they theorized the short story's unique generic ability to provide imagistic glimpses that could highlight the moral relativism of the present and aestheticize the individual's sense of modern alienation above his or her caste and religious affiliations. As I have demonstrated in the Hindi stories examined here, the *nayi kahani* writers constructed these ideas of literariness through a stylized and idiomatic language of mental turmoil and loss that depicted ideal feminine figures which bore no caste or religious identity markers. While the *cirukatai* writers also stressed the ability of the short story genre to express the moral relativism of the present, they theorized this relativism in response to a post-Independence Tamil environment shaped by the politics of social reformism, linguistic revivalism, and regional caste and class struggle. In their short stories, these writers thus inflected nationally circulating tropes of the feminine ideal through an upper caste, middle class lens—one often inflected through Brahmin characters and settings—and a spoken prose style that highlighted the corporeal physicality and maturity of these figures. In these ways, although the post-Independence Hindi and Tamil literary spheres gave preeminence to the same feminine tropes and conventions of genre, they directed their mobilizations of nationally circulating formations of gender and genre towards regional literary, social, and political concerns as much as national ones.

On the basis of this two-part argument about the intersecting uses and divergences in gender and genre in the national “diversity of unity” project, I have also argued for a reconsideration of how we understand post-Independence citizenship more generally: if the figure of the Indian woman stood in for the ideal abstract, universal Indian citizen-subject whose rights the post-Independence state sought to protect, then Hindi and Tamil short stories demonstrate that this gendered citizen-subject is marked in regionally specific ways. Through their depictions of ideal feminine tropes, these stories thus offer insight into the complex ways in which a liberal humanist Indian subjectivity was instantiated in the post-Independence context. In particular, my juxtaposition of these stories demonstrates, firstly, that different regionally

identities (a Hindu upper caste, or *savarṇā*, identity in the Hindi context and a Brahmin one in the Tamil context) were able to assume abstract, universal status under the auspices of the nation. In other words, in their efforts to craft a national Indian identity, the humanist projects that Hindi and Tamil short story writing undertook ended up privileging particular regional constructions of identity. These constructions resonated nationally and were able to fit into a humanist canon of Indian literary works, but they elided complex regional tensions and differences, not transcending them, but rather supplanting them. This has meant that in the following decades, the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* projects have become more and more dissociated from regional popular culture. While these projects continue to be studied in university curriculums, translated and anthologized, and recognized nationally, they speak to contemporary regional concerns in lesser and lesser degrees. The current regional reception of these projects highlights one way that literature, once a preeminent national form and medium for cultural constructions of identity, has receded into the ivory tower of high culture (see Eagleton 1984), while become increasingly “minor” in the broader cultural sphere.

Secondly, my comparison of Hindi and Tamil depictions of ideal feminine tropes shows that the regional identities these tropes embodied were imbued with differing problematics of liberal humanist individual desire and choice (ones shaped by mental turmoil in Hindi and corporeal physicality in Tamil). This observation is important for understanding how regional identities coincided with and departed from the broader understandings of modern Indianness in the immediate post-Independence context, as well as in the decades that have followed. The possibilities for regional and national understandings of subjectivity that 1950-60s Hindi and Tamil short stories articulated has helped to create a fertile ground for considering the relationship between individual and community rights in post-Independence India, an issue that was explored with renewed fervor following the rise of feminist and minority movements in the early 1970s.

Simultaneously, this dissertation has also suggested that the regionally specific intersections of gender and genre in Hindi and Tamil short story writing compel us to reconsider how we understand the broader category of Indian literature. In the Introduction to this dissertation, I proposed that the study of Indian literature be understood as a centering process—as a cohering or congealing action that enables and is enabled by the circulation of literary value. On this view, the portrayal of nationally circulating feminine tropes to express the theme of human connection serves as a centering process that marshals Hindi and Tamil short story production into the consolidation of Indian literature. In other words, through their depictions of these pan-Indian feminine tropes, the *nayi kahani* and *cirukatai* writers articulated a more universally recognizable literary value that reached beyond their regional contexts to speak to national and world literary canonization processes. Through attention to the common tropes and themes arising in Hindi and Tamil short stories, my comparative study has sought to track precisely this more universally recognizable literary value as it travels across regional genres.

But, as I have been arguing, that these writers constructed their renewals of ideal feminine tropes in response to regionally specific literary debates and in regionally specific idioms reveals that more than a national canonization process was at work in shaping their short story production. The aesthetic terms on which they defined the communal boundaries of their readerships also embodied the regionally specific understandings of literary value—or in other

words, the parallel but separate centering processes—consolidating the Hindi and Tamil canons in the post-Independence moment. In Hindi this centering process entailed expressing renewed ideal feminine tropes in relation to an already established Hindi-Hindu literary tradition, while simultaneously situating these tropes in opposition to other preceding and contemporary Hindi literary movements that were deemed unsuitable for addressing the circumstances of the present. In Tamil this centering process entailed renewing depictions of ideal feminine tropes to align with the Brahminizing trend of the 1930s *Manikkoti* literary tradition and thereby in contrast with earlier and contemporary strands of social reformist and Tamil revivalist literary production, both of which were seen as aesthetically bankrupt. As the above epigraphs and preceding chapters demonstrate, some writers, like Yadav and Chellappa, explicitly theorized these regional centering processes in their short story writing and criticism, while other writers, like Bhandari and Chudamani, enacted them through their individual idiomatic styles, which eloquently resonated with the broader goals of the Hindi and Tamil story projects in which they participated. My analysis of commonly shared tropes of the feminine ideal across Hindi and Tamil short story writing thus exposes the discrete and sometimes competing literary processes through which understandings of regional and national literature were established in post-Independence India.

Here, viewing the Hindi, Tamil, and Indian literary canons as centering processes thus serves as a comparative methodology for parsing out the varied, yet deeply entwined regional and national politics of canonization without circumscribing any one of these within any other. As scholars of Indian literature themselves have insisted, the study of this national canonizing process must be understood as more than just an “aggregate of [regional] literatures” (Das 1991, 8). This is not only because these literatures engage common tropes, themes, and literary techniques across historical and social contexts. But also, as I hope to have demonstrated, these common tropes, themes, and literary techniques perform literary and identity-based erasures and exclusions that bolster the drawing of literary boundaries, the hardening of generic forms, and the elevation of existing literary norms at both the regional and national levels. These actions are precisely what attention to the centering processes of literary trends enables us to understand. If, today, the Hindi and Tamil literary spheres still remain parallel and separate—with just as minimal cross regional dialogue as in the post-Independence moment—it is because they have been and continue to be comprised of distinct and separate centering processes that sometimes intersect and sometimes depart.

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Glossary

Although unfamiliar terms are generally explained in the text when they are first used, the following glossary contains a list of recurrent words for quick reference. H = Hindi, T = Tamil.

<i>ādarśonmukhī yathārthvād</i> (H)	idealistic realism
<i>adhikār</i> (H, T)	authority, right, entitlement, possession/proprietorship over
<i>aḷaku</i> (T)	beauty
<i>anubhav</i> (H)	experience
<i>anyāyam</i> (T)	injustice
<i>apanatva</i> (H)	possession, one's own
<i>Bhāratvarṣa</i> (H)	India
<i>bimb</i> (H)	image, reflection, mirror
<i>chinnāl</i> (H)	prostitute, loose or adulterous woman, whore
<i>ciṛukatai</i> (T)	short story
<i>cīṛṛam</i> (T)	wrath, anger, rage, fury
<i>digbhrānt</i> (H)	confusion
<i>dharātal</i> (H)	level, layer, surface
<i>deś hitaiṣī</i> (H)	patriot
<i>devadāsī</i> (H, T)	literally meaning woman servant of god; a woman who, according to Hindu religious practice was “married” and dedicated to a deity and earned her livelihood by temple dancing
<i>duniya samānāntar</i> (H)	parallel world
<i>hār</i> (H)	loss, defeat, surrender

<i>kaṭamai</i> (T)	duty
<i>kamzorī</i> (H)	weakness
<i>jaḍatā</i> (H)	inertness, senselessness
<i>maṇaivi</i> (T)	wife
<i>maṇaivittuvam</i> (T)	wifehood
<i>manavōṭṭam</i> (T)	internal stream of thoughts
<i>maṇitattanam</i> (T)	humanity, humanness
<i>maṇita tollai nilai</i> (T)	human predicament
<i>mātrī bhāṣā</i> (H)	mother tongue
<i>maṇimalarcci</i> (T)	renaissance
<i>māṇṇāḷi</i> (T)	prostitute
<i>mayakkam</i> (T)	spell, charm
<i>muṇai</i> (T)	morality, right path, good conduct
<i>nampikkai varaṭci</i> (T)	drying up of hope or belief
<i>nārī</i> (H)	woman, wife
<i>nayī kahānī</i> (H)	new story
<i>nij bhāṣā</i> (H)	one's own language
<i>nyāya</i> (H, T)	justice
<i>orumaippātu</i> (T)	wholeness, completeness, unity of effect
<i>pativratā</i> (H, T)	faithful wife
<i>pattini</i> (T)	wife

<i>pariveś</i> (H)	environment, surroundings, atmosphere
<i>pēccu</i> (T)	speech
<i>peṇmai</i> (T)	femininity
<i>peṇṇurimai</i> (T)	feminine right
<i>prabhāv</i> (H)	effect, influence, impression
<i>prabhāvānvati</i> (H)	unified effect (the <i>Nayī Kahānī</i> movement’s translation of Poe’s notion of the “unified effect” created by effective writing)
<i>prabhāvaśālī</i> (H)	effective, influential, impressive
<i>pratīk</i> (H)	symbol
<i>putumaipen</i> (T)	new woman
<i>sahānubhūti</i> (H)	sympathy
<i>sāhitya</i> (H, T)	literature
<i>saṃvedanā</i> (H)	sympathy; (in the case of the <i>nayī kahānī</i>) shared sensibility
<i>sankrāntikāl</i> (H)	period of transition
<i>sārthak</i> (H)	meaningful, significant
<i>sārthaktā</i> (H)	significance
<i>satī</i> (H, T)	goodwife; the act of a wife’s self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband
<i>satitva</i> (H)	wifhood
<i>sindūr</i> (H, T)	vermillion powder applied by married Hindu women to the hair-parting to indicate her married status
<i>sontam</i> (T)	possession, one’s own, a relative

<i>suhāgin</i> (H)	auspicious married woman, wife
<i>taṇi maṇitan</i> (T)	individual
<i>taṇi ulakam</i> (T)	separate world
<i>turai</i> (T)	genre, field, discipline, (academic) department
<i>uṇarcci</i> (T)	feeling, emotion, sentiment
<i>urainātai</i> (T)	prose style
<i>urimai</i> (T)	right, entitlement
<i>vadhū</i> (H)	bride
<i>vaitavyam</i> (T)	widowhood
<i>vartamān</i> (H)	present (time)
<i>vidhā</i> (H)	genre
<i>vidhvā</i> (H)	widow
<i>vipacāri</i> (T)	prostitute
<i>vitavai</i> (T)	widow
<i>vyakti</i> (H)	individual
<i>yatārttam</i> (T)	reality
<i>yathārth</i> (H)	reality
<i>yathārthvād</i> (H)	realism

Appendix

Important nineteenth and twentieth century colonial legislative acts:

- 1829 **Sati Regulation Act** makes a distinction between “good” and “bad” satis, the latter being those who are coerced to “commit” sati and thus, illegal.
- 1856 **Widow Remarriage Act** allows widows to remarry. However, it requires that they must forfeit any property they have inherited from their previous marriage.
- 1860 **Age of Consent Act** fixes the consummation of marriage age at ten for women.
- 1868 **Contagious Disease Act** makes the registration and medical examination of prostitutes necessary. It also confines their business to particular neighborhoods of cities.
- 1865 **Indian Succession Act** grants equal inheritance rights to daughters and sons of those who enter into civil union under the Special Marriage Act. It is re-enacted in 1925.
- 1869 **Indian Divorce Act** grants statutory recognition to restitution of conjugal rights, judicial separation, and annulment. These are designed to provide spousal relief.
- 1870 **Special Act of 1870 (Prohibition of Female Infanticide)** puts in place extensive surveillance measures to record populations through a comprehensive census. This legislation was aimed mainly at the North West Provinces. Further, it requires the monitoring of pregnant women and registration births and deaths in order to prohibit female infanticide. It also imposes imprisonment if upon conviction of infanticide.
- 1872 **Special Marriage Act** provides the guidelines for civil unions. Marriages must register under this act in order to fall within its scope. It allows for divorce by mutual consent under the Indian Divorce Act; however, divorce is still defined in terms of spousal relief (eg. Restitution of conjugal rights, judicial separation and annulment of marriage). This act is re-enacted in 1954.
- 1890 **Guardians and Wards Act** enables the court to appoint guardians for minors.
- 1891 **Age of Consent Act** raises female’s age for consummation of marriage to twelve.
- 1896 **Malabar Marriage Act** deems the practice of sambandham unions between Nambudiri Brahmin males and Nayar females to be equivalent to marriage.

- 1923 **Suppression of Immoral Traffic Acts** passed in Calcutta and Bombay impose penalties to suppress prostitution from continuing within the public view, but they do not outlaw prostitution. Similar acts are passed in UP in 1929 and Mysore in 1937.
- 1928 **Mapilla Wills Act** deems that the Mapilla community falls under the scope of Islamic law.
- 1929 **Child Marriage Restraint Act (also known as the Sarda Act)** raises age for consummation of marriage to fourteen for females and eighteen for males for all communities and not just the Hindu community.
- Prevention of Devadasi Dedication Bill** is passed in order to prevent the practice of dedicating females to temples as devadasis. This bill does not become law until 1947.
- 1933 **Malabar Matriliny Act** grants inheritance rights of father's property to his children (and not his widow).
- 1937 **Hindu Women's Right to Property Act** grants widows limited inheritance through the notion of a "widow's estate." However, daughters were excluded and married women's property inheritance continues to fall solely within the scope *stridhana*.
- Application of Shariat Act** deems all Muslims to fall under the scope of Shariat law.
- 1939 **Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act** grants Muslim women the right to divorce within the scope of Shariat law.
- 1954 **Special Marriages Act** is re-enacted. It defines marriage as a civil and secular contract for those who register to fall under its scope and allows for divorce by mutual consent. It also allows spouses to re-register sacramental marriages under its scope. Once spouses register under this act, they are governed by the Indian Succession Act of 1925 in matters of succession.

The Hindu Code Bill passed by the first Parliamentary Legislature of India:

- 1955 **Hindu Marriage Act** abolishes bigamy, fixes age of marriage to 15 for women and 18 for men, and makes divorce permissible for extreme circumstances.
- 1956 **Hindu Succession Act** permits Hindu females to hold her absolute property with full power to dispose of it, entitles widow to succeed to the property of her husband and daughters to claim a share in the father's property (but this share is unequal and meager compared to son's).

Hindu Maintenance and Adoption Act entitles Hindu female who is single to adopt a child for herself and in her own right and makes provisions for the maintenance of an estranged wife and support for illegitimate children from the father.

Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act recognizes father as the natural guardian of legitimate children and the mother as the natural guardian of illegitimate children.