

The Cultural Dimensions of Gender and Patriarchy: A Comparative Analysis of Premchand's *Nirmala* and Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*

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Abstract:

The inquiry in this research paper is exploring the cultural construction and reinforcement of gender and patriarchy in the two novels *Nirmala* (1927) by Premchand and *Tender is the Night* (1934) by F. Scott Fitzgerald, which deal with the same themes of gendered power and control, focusing on their settings, which are vastly different. Using the feminist literary criticism, psychoanalytic theory and cultural history, the paper explores how the two writers depict masculinity and femininity in the contexts of patriarchal power structure. In *Nirmala*, Premchand attacks the suppressive culture of the early 20th century Indian culture, especially dowry, child marriage, and gagging of women, but also shows how they were all linked to class, caste and the influence of colonialism. A contemporary writer, Fitzgerald was writing during the interwar period in Europe, and his work argues modernistically about the roles of the genders of the high society and the psychological reliance of females and the downfall of men. With the help of these two stories, the paper focuses on the cultural particularity of the patriarchal system and the emotional, social, and structural bondage enforced by it on women and men. Finally, the analysis demonstrates that literature has the potential to become one of the most efficient instruments for uncovering and countering gendered injustice in any cultural and historical circumstance.

Keywords: Gender, Patriarchy, Social inequality, Masculinity, Femininity.

Introduction:

Gender and patriarchy are the terms that have been traditionally comprehended in cultural context of societies all over the world. Although majority of the individuals gain meaning of the term, gender, as the social construct that determines individuals into masculine and feminine behaviour and roles, it is an elusive construct. Patriarchy can be defined as in the case of Walby (1990, p. 20) is a society of social structure and assignment of power whereby men take the main commanding positions commonly over politics, connected with the moral allowance and social preference. This kind of systems do not exist as fixed systems and nor do they perform symmetrically but rather are configured differently within the cultural contexts of their historical, religious, economic, and ideological environments.

Culture involves values, norms, symbols and practices of a common society. According to this formation, the gender is culturally constructed not bio-determined. According to the theory of gender performativity, gender roles are performed by individuals based on the repetitive acts which encompass the determination of cultural expectations (Butler, 1990). In the case of the Indian woman wearing the saree and carrying out housework, perhaps what she is performing is more than a personal selection; it could be a kind of identity which has been shaped in her by culture. Case in point the vast majority of South Asian cultures promote the desire of families to have offspring of a male origin, which is a cultural tradition under the patriarchal system of succession. This not only falsifies demographic balances, but also adds to the second inferior position of women (Das Gupta et al., 2003). Through the cultural tradition, gender role is preserved as exhibited by such traditions.

The approach of Sylvia Walby conceptualised patriarchy as system operating or operating system of such structures including the state, the household, paid work and violence. This aids us in the comprehension of the ways in which cultural institutions are symbolically significant in the reinforcement of the male dominance (Walby, 1990, p. 21). The ownership of property among the women in a patrilineal society where inheritance and succession tend to be patrilineal is mostly locked out, strengthening the basis of economic

dependency among the women, besides gender inequality. Most of the Mediterranean and South Asian cultures mention the role of honour or izzat, which is related to the conduct of women and their sexuality. Lila Abu-Lughod, an anthropologist, has written of how mobility and expression were strictly controlled on Bedouin-tribe women; their personalities were exactly on par with all modesty and obedience when it came to family honour (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p.114). It is not simply something individual about family; it is a higher sociocultural system to perpetuate patriarchy. Within the international popular culture, the media serves as a carrier of the stereotypes of gender roles. To give an example, the roles of women conditioned by Disney princess movies have been historically defined as passive, beautiful, and waiting until they acquire some kind of male saviour, which is consistent with the idea of patriarchal reproduction (England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011). Although these films did not show any feminine leads as mere cartoon-like characters in the love story, they have swung in the direction of more elaborate stories. Even with such media, they work based on the gendered logic of cultural industries.

Quite the contrary, as patriarchy is not uniform. The concept of intersectionality was proposed by so-called black feminists, including Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), to show how complex relationships occurred between the three categories of race, class, and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Both U.S. middle-class white woman and the rural India Dalit woman encounter the problem of patriarchy through dissimilar culturally defined prisms. The first one concerns workplace sexism whereas the latter concerns gender violence and caste discrimination.

The culture can also curtail the imposition of patriarchy a little, though, since it is also an avenue of resisting it, as indicated. The use of cultural symbols and practices enables indigenous and local feminist agitations to oppose mainstream gender ideologies. As an illustration, in Uttar Pradesh, India, there is an example of the Gulabi Gang that is combating domestic violence and corruption with collective force along with asserting traditional feminine functions by means of the colour pink (Sen, 2014). As well, behind the birth of the African womanist theories in the African context is the inability of Western feminism to embrace the Afro-centric dimensions. According to Nnaemeka, nego-feminism (negotiated feminism) is a criticism of patriarchy because it is prepared to listen, compromise and share community responsibility as ways of coming to grips with patriarchy based on cultural practices (Nnaemeka, 2004, p. 377).

Patriarchy Included in the definition here, patriarchy is traditionally defined as the system of social formations and practices contrary to which, men dominate and oppress women, and exploit women (Walby, 1990, p. 20) is both universal and international. It is articulated by Munshi Premchand, *Nirmala* and by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, starting both from entirely different socio-historical stations. The socio-historical background of the story of Premchand is that he is talking about colonial India where the system of gives and takes in the form of dowry as well as arranged marriages, set the social rules and orders. Fitzgerald, on the contrary, states that his story takes place after the World War I in Europe, full of abundance and decadence. Nevertheless, the two authors also unite in their arguments on the effects of the patriarchal traditions on the role of women in the family and in the society that leads them to the state of psychological deterioration, conflict within the family, and social alienation.

Historical and Cultural settings:

Besides portraying the heartbreaking saga of a woman trapped in a state of unfortunate events, the novel *Nirmala* by Premchand is a critique of different cultural influences that endorse patriarchy in colonial India. The book was written in a period full of political and social change, by Premchand, and looks at the clash between reform and tradition in the arena of women and their lives and choices. He did not only describe the women, but through the character of *Nirmala*, the main character, he represented the millions of other women who succumbed to the cause of a safe life offered by family. The social commentary of Premchand comes out through characters with their own tragic elements reflected in overall oppression (Shingavi, 2012, p. 47). He throws light upon *Nirmala*, as to the slight pain, which is typical of most of the lives of women in such societies, where men are dominant.

The setting of the novel in motion is marked by the death of the father in the life of *Nirmala*. The loss of the patriarch of the family is devastating to the family itself, more so because the vacuum created wrecks the probable marriage of *Nirmala*. *Nirmala* is sold swiftly into an economic marriage with a middle-aged widow Totaram, by no means out of love, because she has no dowry to offer. At the same time, the cultural logic dictates that this should be the way things are: women, who are especially daughters, are a cost and their value

lies in the amount of money they would bring to a marriage (Mehrotra, 2011). However, the tragedy is more in the story. *Nirmala* and Totaram, the emotional gap between them, the need to challenge this friction among her sons, especially son Mansaram, exemplify this poisonous environment of alienation and inequality in social resource distribution that results in such unions. The suspicion on the side of Totaram, based on his insecurities and social paranoia, provides a background of muffled cruelty within the home. It would be possible to remark that she is enslaved to the conditions of silence and sacrifice and obedience as demanded by silence. Premchand does not give a too melodramatic description of this world. His realism is modest yet very effective, and it reveals how patriarchy can apply violent means to implement its oppressions, but most often, patriarchy is more often defined as an obstruction of women's voices and experiences through oppression that is everywhere, difficult to see, and on the surface rather ordinary. It is not just the rejection of overt acts of injustice, but the exiling of voice, agency, and choices that nearly overcome *Nirmala*. The pain experienced is not an accident rather systematic (Shingavi, 2012, p. 52).

Nirmala gains even more power in the fact that Premchand depicts the collusion between colonial rule and patriarchal society among natives in some subtle aspects. Although the colonial law, e.g. Age of Consent Act (1891) claimed to be in the interests of women, it did not do much to abrogate the well-ingrained cultural beliefs. In most cases, the colonial reforms remained close to the patriarchal conservative style of Hindu castes by simply recorrecting existing domination over female bodies and their choices instead of disrupting the same (Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras*, 2005, p. 127). The systems of law in *Nirmala* are the systems of moral abstraction with a court of public opinion, family honour, and an economy of survival. The more passive methods of protest also exist in this sorrowful world. *Nirmala* does not rebel by raising the volume loudly and so does not scream at all. The resistance of *Nirmala* is highly embedded on her ability to tolerate grief in her heart, her sense of morality amid injustice subjected to her, and her silent refusal to become a bitter and cruel individual even amid injustice. Such emotional opposition, instead of being celebratory political agent, turns into subtle revolt of Premchand against the world that has too little safe harbours where women might keep. As Priyamvada Gopal, much-fabled and widely read, writes, Premchand's writing is 'at the in-between', unlike that of many of his contemporaries. In-between moments in his authorial voice may be political (post-independence, or anything that has outlived earlier sovereignty) (Gopal P., 2005, p. 78). It is not just a nostalgic novel written in the past, but it is chillingly topical. It cautions about what we as a society would like to believe is not so, that sexism is not always screamingly, physically abusive and abhorrent, sometimes sexism is subtle, day to day, and soul-crushingly that it is normal.

Quite differently, one must mention *Tender is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, a too-traditional masterpiece that must be remembered, one tends to think, because of its luxurious allusions of the French Riviera, the slow deterioration of an American expatriate set, and the American Dream ... but at its most profound level, it is an indictment on gendered weakness, mental dominance, and the collapse of patriarchal modernity. Weaving the description of the 1920s, a couple of decades after the World War I, Fitzgerald brings us to Europe, drenched in hedonism, struggling with the lost generation. The main plot of the novel illustrates a psychologist Dick Diver and his wife, Nicole Warren, the heiress, who is in a state of schizophrenia. Their marital scene is both glamorous and tragic; it also becomes a microcosm of an unsymmetrical relationship that is sometimes recalled with gendered boundaries in a world re-arranged and remodelled. The identity of professional as a physician of Nicole is swallowed by his role as a physician of Nicole - a grotesque combination of medical dictatorship and a domineering marriage. The financial status initially enables Dick to climb up the same level of social ladder in addition to objectifying Nicole who becomes all the more vulnerable and incapacitated and is thus turned into a commodity. In regards to this issue, Nicole is the subject and object of psychiatric control as she is defined by her mental illness not only by her boundaries but also by the definition provided by male driven institutions which have pathology experts concerning such a subject matter (Joseph, 2003, p. 97).

Fitzgerald's Europe does not mean us as crudely traditional institutions, e.g., dowry, or arranged marriage: the Europe of Fitzgerald does not bear such a traditional-on-the-assumed-supremacy base, though it is so on a base. Nicole has capital, and a certain independence, but after all she is screened through the eyes of Dick, through Dick's judgments, Dick's prescriptions and Dick's loves. What is disproportionate psychologically and in relationships, is also the perpetuation of a cultural expectation of male epistemological and moral privilege, mainly in and around science, psychology, and the world. The most compelling part in

Fitzgerald's (the author) bucket list of masculine weakness critique in this instance (Dick) is the structural one: the structural part is the intra and interpersonal degradation of the subject, in this instance, Dick himself. As their joint life goes on through this novel, his purposelessness leads Dick to the breakup of the modern ideal of the man, who is controlled and reasoned, who is not just that in the workplace. The decline of Dick is in sharp contrast to Nicole, who is raised out of her seemingly frail dependent state to independence of sorts through leaving Dick in a figurative as well as ironic reversal; it is Nicole who ends up as the survivor of the once perceived vulnerable.

The question of female beauty objectification in the contemporary world is questioned in the novel, too. Nicole, and her future counterpart, Rosemary Hoyt, the young American actress who is having a relationship with Dick, are the resources or things that are more of the objects which have some aesthetic and sexual value. Sarah Churchwell (2007), a critic, says that the women in the works of Fitzgerald live in a world where beauty is a commodity and youth is a form of finance, and femininity is a resource to be ripped and not to be cultivated (Churchwell, 2007, p. 121). Women actually do live as mere decorations through being muses, patients, lovers, and never active choosers. Even in the world of Riviera which is liberated and bohemian, the role of women is ornamental.

Patriarchal marriage institution:

Marriage is used as basis of legitimizing the supremacy of men, which is depicted in both books. In *Nirmala*, the idea of a marriage alliance comes up in the first two paragraphs itself, thereby initiating the debate on the commodification of women by the patriarchal economy. *Nirmala* is a smart young lady who is very well educated and will be given in marriage to a boy of her age, a boy of her stature, Bhuvanmohan. The engagement is cancelled at the time of the death of *Nirmala* when the father finds out that *Nirmala* lacks dowry as she was not a girl who could sell well. This informs us of the economic determinism of the marriage in the Indian patriarchy. To the extent, a girl was not only undesirable but practically untouchable without dowry as Premchand puts it (Chand, 1999, p. 5). The difference of age and authority between Totaram and *Nirmala* is also indicative of reps to work around any agency or authorization on the part of *Nirmala*. This process of selling the future and humanity of *Nirmala* is to convey the premise of Gayatri Spivak who is the subaltern woman who is spoken yet cannot speak (Spivak, 1988, p. 287). She does not matter, her agency, consent, and feelings are afterthoughts when it comes to purely patriarchal contract between men. Totaram does not trust his son, in particular, because of the youth and beauty of *Nirmala*, who contribute to tragic incidents when family is devastated by the fatherly envy of the family of Bhuvanmohan, and this is aggravated by *Nirmala* obedience and silence. The fact that *Nirmala* complies, agreeing and remaining silent does not mean that there is happiness, but rather an internalization of someone who is oppressed. Kumari (2017) asserts that the strength of *Nirmala* is manifested through her silence that speaks about how women are subjected to bracketing (said a lot) (Kumari, 2017, p. 88) or, the privilege of being in silence is a burden that stereotypes women who have been oppressed.

The marriage of Dick and Nicole in *Tender is the Night* also assumes another form and is equally lopsided. Dick Diver is the parental identikit of authority, sanity, paternalism. He also shows the development of high and charismatic authority of judging as a psychiatrist, husband and social host canceled out professional ethics and limits of marriage, which ultimately on the other hand makes dependence of Nicole institutionalized, an order which ultimately begins to unravel throughout the novel. Initially, Dick appears to be successful in performing the duty of the kind patriarch. He supports a weak man who also experience her mental illness and he provides to her a civilized, whetthered lifestyle as a lifestyle of expatriate living (Fitzgerald, 1934, p. 27). Behind Dick and the fact that he does not stand a chance against Nicole, is because Nicole utilizes his patriarchal identity that he has built himself in order to form his ego and self esteem. Although in the end Nicole comes out of the supervision and control of Dick, in this marriage she is a compromised and manipulated woman. Although the money Nicole receives upon the death of the first husband seems to be the sign of freedom, it has locked her in marriage even more. In the words of Cowley (2004), the marriage was a therapeutically generated romantic contract in the life of Nicole which reconstitutes the imbalance of gender, race power (Cowley, 2004, p. 211). Moreover, recently during the panel in the Modern Language Association Brucoli (2002) stated that the power that Dick holds in the story does not suffice by itself; it is rather performative and founded on external acclaim. There is a loss of the constructed masculine protection in allowing himself gendered power as his profession and marriage collapse. The slow fall of

sobriety and relevance of Dick is described as that of patriarchal crisis, which is criticised by implicit praise of the author, that self-destructive and debilitating men render themselves irrelevant, and by extension, weak enough to not be able to manipulate the lives of the women (Brucoli, p. 314).

Gendered Subjectivity as Mental Health:

Two novels where mental health yields its rich soil, where it is the metaphor of the power-plant and its debate, two books where, when it is taken down to the essentials, it is an analysis of a world of the mind, where women and men are pelted into intimate relationship. The schizophrenia that Nicole displays, is not a medical condition per se, but more of a narrative device that allows spelling out female subjectivity especially in the context of patriarchy. Literature about hysterics and schizophrenics, as argued by Elaine Showalter, commonly act as a metaphor of social conditions in which women are repressed (Showalter, 1985). The fact that Nicole has an illness allows Dick both professionally and as a person to have superiority over her and make her a patient, not a partner. The figure of Nicole Diver is the brightest illustration of this fight of the objectification and autonomy in patriarchal society. Presented as the always haunting and beautiful wife of Dick, we first see her the way men do. She has the value of beauty and meaningless representation, she is an idealized hot girl, a creature made out of money and charm and idleness. This trauma that Nicole experiences due to the sexual abuse by her father makes her in space, subject to permeation and occupation by masculine aggression (Fitzgerald, 1934, p. 133). In her view, Nicole is insane not only physically but also the metaphor of repressive gender patterns (Showalter, 1985, p. 215). Her illness, which Dick heals, is a place where manly mastery and female helplessness can be united. The interconnection between females and the psychotherapists turns into the paternalistic marriage, which means women are patched-up by the society of patriarchy that silences them and trains them into being in the subservice to a man.

Although *Nirmala* is not involved directly with psychiatric materialism, we can see the psychological loss of her characters with some dissipation, especially *Nirmala* herself and the son of Totaram, Mansaram. The mistrustful nature of Totaram to the illicit sexual affair of *Nirmala* with his eldest son Mansaram, in that regard reveals the venomous nature of patriarchal fears and worries about female sexuality. *Nirmala* is demonized as well as infantilized instead of being treated as a reasonable adult. In detail, Premchand crucially replicates the mechanism by which and when the patriarchal systems of mistrust install irrational violence: namely; on condition of being conditioned by patriarchal systems of mistrust, the destruction of his house by Totaram is preferable to the threat of his impotence (Chand, 1999, p. 102). The thread reverberates with the idea of Michel Foucault of sexuality as the centre of social and political power and control (Foucault, 1980). The body of the woman is built in the patriarchal imaginary as an object of fear and worship, its permanent surveillance is therefore endless. One of the forms of gendered violence that ruins Mansaram and isolates *Nirmala* is the possessiveness of Totaram. Shades of agony experienced by *Nirmala* are also in the language of muted colour indicating the lack of balance in the number of victims when it comes to Indian women in case of any marital crisis, and the impossibility of medical/social assistance (Mukherjee, 2015).

The gender politics in the novel were based on the historical times. It was a time of the sexually liberated, the new woman, a cultural concern related to altered gender roles, in the 1920s. The author of the biography of Fitzgerald, Mizener, describes his work thus: it made come alive to lurid life the fact that so many of his contemporaries were as powerfully attracted and perplexed by the increased freedoms, as were his heroes (Mizener, 1960, p. 232). In one way or another, Nicole and Rosemary represent the paradoxical ideals of the decade, yet they are victims. Nicole is an invalid, and at the same time a rich young heiress. Rosemary is an innocent vulnerable girl and also a mature player. In both the cases women are either labeled as available or unavailable to the male desire.

Women Agency and Resistance:

Nirmala and Nicole both control occasional acts of agency despite being subjected to suppressive institutions. *Nirmala* tends to be obedient and yet she cannot have her morals compromised. It happens that she is custodian of her stepsons and despite her world falling off her feet, she manages to lift her head. Her stoniness is a silent form of resisting against a society that strives at making everybody follow.

Gender and power are central to the relationships in *Tender is the Night* whether romantic or sexual. The example of a backwards fantasy of men governing the purity of women is the relationship of Dick with Rosemary Hoyt who is a young American actress. On Dick, all the masculinity and authority that he gains in the office are dying, and he tries to restore them through Rosemary (Fitzgerald, 1934, p. 59). Marcus observes that the affair is an indication of the way Dick withdraws into a masculine fantasy that simply cannot stand

up to the truth (Marcus, 1994, p. 92). Rather than being made stronger because of these relations, Dick is shown to be an emotionally weak and impotent man who is not living up to the requirements of the patriarchal authority as confused because of modernity. Nicole proceeds with the more dramatic assertion of agency. She chooses to lead a relatively independent life and separates from Dick at the end of the book. Although it is complex, such a decision is a change of habit in the dependency cycle. Her autonomy is circumstantially set in the context of social stature and finances, however, as criticised by academics such as Brucoli (2002), this only makes it a half-hearted triumph (Brucoli, 2002).

Despite her suffering, *Nirmala* has an innate strength that cannot be completely sapped off. Indeed, she is the moral agency, as she does not want to leave the home of Totaram and seek revenge. *Nirmala* does not rebel clearly, but her sense of moral right is a loud critique of the very system trying to kill her. Her endurance is transformed into an inactive resistance process. This moral arm is in line with the 'philosophy of satyagraha' that Gandhi was fast winning popular support to, as films, such as those of Premchand, were being written. Rather, she says that non-violent resistance should be seen as an active process of claiming moral superiority (Priyamvada Gopal, Gopal P., 2019, p. 122). The patriarchal system is challenged by the moral strength that comes out as *Nirmala*.

On the one hand, Fitzgerald has provided his ladies with depths that touch the psychological world of the female characters, but the structure of the narrative does not allow the ladies any full self-agency. Although, Nicole does become independent at the end of the book, her interiority remains obscure, since her voice is interpreted through the perspective of Dick. This writing method corresponds to what Gilbert and Gubar call the silencing of the female in the works of men (Gilbert & Gubar, 2020, p. 73). It is, however, in certain instances that Nicole demonstrates her subjectivity, especially when she resolves to divorce Dick so that she can remarry again. This act breaks the patriarchal script because it claims that women can also choose to shun the roles assigned to them. But, even a happy connotation to the liberation of Nicole is marred by the lack of certainty of Fitzgerald in relation to her future happiness.

Plot and Sexuality:

Like in the realist tradition of Indian and European literature, Premchand has employed the use of a third-person omniscient narrator in *Nirmala*. Not only does the narrator give the background about the past of the characters but also makes a direct moral commentary, and indeed, she often cuts to the point and brings focus to the social injustices especially those that are perpetrated against women in things such as marriage, dowries and silence. It is didactic with a sympathetic tone. As an example, the narrator shows Totaram in a negative light, he decided that *Nirmala* was cheating on him and he was jealous and it was an unhappy consequence of a patriarchal mindset and not a defect of character.

Instead, *Tender is the Night* by Fitzgerald consists of a dislocated narrative in a modernist form, switching time and perspective. The background story of Dick and Nicole Diver is gradually developed in the book, which begins in media res, in the perspective of Rosemary Hoyt. Consequently, the story is more psychological and ambiguous one. Such aspects of the novel as mental illness, repression, moral decay mirror the reader constantly being unsure who to believe, or what to trust in. Unlike the narrator of Premchand, the one of Fitzgerald is unemotional and does not judge his characters instead, he allows contradictions in the characters to be revealed by interior monologue and dialogue. The elliptical organization of the story by Fitzgerald makes the reader work out the emotional reality of the characters giving an impression of the psychological digging (Brucoli, 2002, p. 215).

Nirmala is developed in a linear form and it follows the life of the protagonist as it stood when her father died up to the moment of collapse of her family life. Such linearity is an indication of such deterministic worldview which lies in the foundation of Premchand realism where every tragedy can be causally linked to social practices such as dowry or economic dependency. The structure underlines the idea of cause and effect: the destiny of *Nirmala* is not a secret or a surprise it is gradual, unavoidable, and overwhelming.

Tender is the Night, in its turn, follows a non-linear structure in time using the traditional focus on action and then moving backwards in time to recreate the environment in which the characters found themselves frozen on an emotional level. This time play by modernist authors encourages a reader to view characters as multidimensional human beings who are not a type. The evolution of Dick as an idealist to a failure and Nicole as a patient to an independent young woman is more of a chain of epiphanies than a cause and effect chain. The time in the novel by Fitzgerald reflects the psychological distortion of his characters and

the time the novel is broken into memory remorse and guilt weaken the reality itself that is the time of the novel (Churchwell, 2007, p. 137).

The social roles have a greater effect on the characters as constructed by Premchand in *Nirmala*, than they have on their inner thoughts. It is all about social institutions like caste, marriage, family duties and class although we get occasional impressions of what they are thinking like how Totaram suspects and Nirmala gives up. Systemic violence of patriarchy is more evident than individual psychological, and everybody experiences the pain. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, descends into psychological depth. According to Wagner-Martin (1996), the novel resembles Wagner-Martin (1996, p. 94) the psychological fragmentation of the characters who especially Nicole, is subjected to such fragmentation. It is through the thinking process of Dick, the self-deception, and his unravelling moments of disillusionment that the author details the process of his gradual unravelling. Instead of a moral voice outside (or with the help of), changes in behaviour, speech, and silence are small evidence of Nicole in her recovery. This stream-of-consciousness style of writing, though not as dramatic as that of Joyce or Woolf, is still far removed to traditional realism.

Patriarchal and Class Capital:

In both novels, the issue of patriarchy is strengthened through the roles of class. *Nirmala*, based on economic exchanges, the dowry economy turns women into commodities and brings the class structures to be fixed (Sharma, 2013). The authority of Totaram is based to a certain sexuality but it also consists not in the financial resources of Totaram. In *Tender is the Night*, Nicole had a mixed blessing when it comes to money. As even though it provides her with some position of power, it also becomes an instrument of manipulation. Dick marries Nicole because she has money to some extent and the family controls how she is treated with using their own riches. Convergence of class and gender is therefore a strengthening of patriarchal social structures as opposed to deconstruction (Miller, 1994).

Although the cultural practices in the two novels are different, it indicates that patriarchal oppression is universal. Each of them, Premchand and Fitzgerald, using their cultural frame of reference, reveal the process of building and codification of gender status by rules of society and financial pulls, family demands. Nevertheless, their descriptions also show the specifics of their cultural background. The dowry system and forced marriage are culturally unique means of manipulation in *Nirmala*. Medicalization and romantic idealism in *Tender is the Night* play the same roles. Such cross-cultural variation shows the malleability of patriarchy; it takes various forms but attains the same results; subduing of female agency. Gender is a performance that is perpetuated by societal norms, and both Nirmala and Nicole are made to play roles that have been predefined by the society they live in, and their sad plight is basically caused by the clash between a role as written by the society and one as written by themselves (Butler, 1990). The dowry system does not just appear in the background of the novel *Nirmala*; it is what causes the tragedy of the novel. The dowry is an aspect that Premchand has gone over and beyond to criticize it as a tradition and ventilate the concept of economic patriarchy. When *Nirmala* is to be married off, but with the death of her father the deal is off, and since dowry can be no longer paid, her prospective husband sets out shutting her eyes, but pursuing her, not my daughter in law potential but my bank account. In this regard dowry is not just a financial burden but also a coercive measure. Following the arguments made by Vasudha Dalmia, Dowry is a legal mechanism and social procedure in which female bodies are sold and controlled (Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*, 2005, p. 153). This involvement of being bartered down in this patriarchal trade is the direct cause of how *Nirmala* later suffers. The recent feminist criticism has provided more subtle interpretations of *Tender is the Night* the deconstruction of the previous vestiges of Dick as a tragic hero. Linda Wagner-Martin, and other critics, claim that the novel is not a story of how a man loses grace but the structural disproportions that allow his ascendancy and demands his decent (Wagner-Martin, 1996, p. 147). Psychoanalytically, one can also view Dick's paternalism as a line of defence against his emotional immaturity. Instead, Nicole experiences a psychological transformation evoking the ideas of resilience and adaptability, regardless of the gender and class boundaries imposed on her.

Nirmala falls in the school of realists, but it pre-fetches the issues of the feminist literature. Premchand has been known to focus on the lived lives of women, and it can be termed as an initial contribution in the Indian literature to make gender an important thematic subject. His compassionate treatment of *Nirmala* makes him neither a feminist in the contemporary context, but a social reformer who realized the gendered aspects of suffering. According to the argument of Meenakshi Mukherjee, the realism of Premchand is not only the mere mimetic but ideological, a manner of showing invisible and intangible structures of power (Mukherjee,

2015, p. 66). Situating gender in the core of his criticism, Premchand provides literature that allows the redefinition of Indian womanhood outside of patriarchy.

Conclusion:

The short stories written by Premchand, *Nirmala* and Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, are revealing and full critique of the patriarchal societies that women are trapped in, intimately written about. Even though the context of their culture is different, both authors show the psychological, emotional, and social expenses of gender-based expectations. In reviewing themes of marriage, mental health, and female agency, this paper highlights the ubiquities of patriarchal oppression in admiring specificities of the same as a cultural phenomenon. These works are timely even now and remind its readers that fight for gender equality should consider both its explicit and implicit means through which patriarchy still prevails up to date. Such writings, as shown in these texts, are literature, which acts as a projection and reflection of the society it came out of.

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