



Exploring Resistance Against Socio-Political Crisis: A Comparative Perspective on Munshi Premchand and Paul Beatty

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Abstract: The purpose of the research paper is to examine the socio-political crisis of the marginalized communities through a comparative analysis of select works by Indian writer, Munshi Premchand and American writer, Paul Beatty. The proposed study focuses on positive mark-up of marginality, which helps to create rejected individual viewpoints and acts as a form of resistance against hegemony. Additionally, the goal is to empower marginalized groups to question the social and economic relationships in which they live and to share knowledge that challenges the existing quo. Through an analysis and critique of the selected works, the current paper focuses on the comparative picture of the excluded groups of Indians and African-Americans. Using methodology of Sandra Harding's 'Standpoint Theory', the paper examines Paul Beatty's *The White Boy Shuffle* and Premchand's *Karambhoomi*. The paper's ability to transcend historical and cultural contexts to provide a greater understanding of structural injustice, foster intercultural unity, elevate oppressed voices, and inform social justice movements is what gives it contemporary social relevance.

Keywords: Marginalization, Socio-Political Crisis, Resistance, Comparative Analysis, Munshi Premchand, Paul Beatty, Sandra Harding, and Standpoint Theory etc.

Introduction: An event or time that will cause a dangerous and unstable situation that affects an individual, a community, or society at large is called a crisis. Reinhart Koselleck and Michaela W. Richter defines Crisis as, "a state of greater or lesser permanence, as in a longer or shorter transition towards something better or worse or towards something altogether different" (Koselleck and Richter, p. 358). There are many dimensions of the crisis which includes economic factors; political factors; religious factors; cultural factors; psychological factors and so on. Vinod Kumar avers that, "deep rooted in the socio-political tribulations and influenced by religious prejudices, Premchand's *Karambhoomi* is a psychological analysis of human relationships in the adverse conditions of the human life" (Kumar, p. 85). The effects of social and political crises on excluded groups are extensive and complex. Sukhpal Singh has asserted the social significance of these crises in the modern world, saying, "A farmer returns homewards from his farm in a village in Haryana on March 5, 2021. The ongoing farmer protests at the Ghazipur border outside Delhi entered the 100th day on March 6...Multiple rounds of talks have failed to produce any breakthrough on the farmers' key demand to revoke the legislation" (Singh, 2021). The demonstrations bring to light the long-standing



dissatisfaction of farmers, especially those in Haryana, who perceive the new agricultural regulations as threatening and marginalizing. As a reflection of the socioeconomic circumstances and cultural conflicts of the early 20th century, Premchand's novel *Karambhoomi*, on the other hand, explores the intricacies of social and political upheavals in India. This frequently leads to the marginalization of groups that are already marginalized, including low-income people, members of racial or ethnic minorities, the elderly, and those with disabilities.

Marginalization is the process to relegate someone in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group. It occurs when certain groups of people get denied access to area of society. Peter Leonard in his book *Personality and Ideology* defines social marginality as, "Being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity. This include two groups, voluntarily marginal to the social order and group who are involuntarily socially marginal" (Leonard, p. 15). Leonard's framework helps to distinguish between different types of social marginality. Marginalization negatively impacts individual's physical, psychological and emotional health. Some of these consequences include feelings of anger, anxiety, fear, depression, sadness, alienation, mental health issues, low status and not having equal access to education. All society's disenfranchised groups have encountered oppressive structures in a similar way, albeit from various angles. Although marginalization is made worse by sociopolitical crises, marginalized communities frequently demonstrate incredible resistance through a variety of strategies, from mutual help and cultural expression to campaigning and political participation. Sandra Harding contends that "marginalized groups possess unique insights into social injustices due to their outsider status" (Harding, p. 134). In order to fight for their rights, advance social justice, and challenge and upend established power systems, marginalized populations take advantage of their special positions. In addition to reacting to tyranny, their resistance involves an active attempt to change laws and social mores while forging their own position.

Literature Review:

It is vital to evaluate the available literature before undertaking research. The knowledge and data supplied provide a clear picture of the level of study that has been accomplished.

Shikha Gupta, in her research paper "Social Conscience—An Alter Ego of Premchand," examines Munshi Premchand's profound impact on Hindi literature, particularly in addressing social injustices and advocating for reform. She highlights Premchand's portrayal of poverty,



systemic oppression, and the potential for social change through his characters (Gupta). His depiction of women reflects a contrast between traditional and modern identities, as seen in *Nirmala*, where he critiques the dowry system and mismatched marriages that victimize young women. Moreover, *Rangbhoomi* engages with critical socio-political issues such as untouchability, caste discrimination, and rural poverty, while *Karmabhoomi* exposes the injustices of the zamindari system and the marginalization of untouchables, particularly their restricted access to religious spaces due to systemic illiteracy and alcoholism. Gupta's analysis underscores Premchand's literary works as a tool for social critique and transformation, highlighting their enduring relevance in discussions of caste, class, and gender inequality.

Charu Gupta, in her paper "Portrayal of Women in Premchand's Stories: A Critique," critically examines the "representation of women in Premchand's short stories, emphasizing their social positioning and the gendered experiences they navigate within domestic and societal structures" (Gupta 45). Through an in-depth analysis of Premchand's women-centric narratives, Gupta explores how the author engages with prevailing social evils while simultaneously offering solutions that are embedded within the private sphere of the household.

Krupa Shandilya, in her research paper "The Widow, the Wife, and the Courtesan: A Comparative Study of Social Reform in Premchand's *Sevasadan* and the Late Nineteenth-Century Bengali and Urdu Novel," advocates for a comparative analysis of South Asian social reform novels across multiple linguistic traditions. She asserts that "such an approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which these texts articulate women's agency within their respective socio-cultural contexts" (Shandilya). Shandilya argues that Munshi Premchand's *Sevasadan* (1917) critiques the institution of marriage in a manner comparable to Bengali widow remarriage novels such as Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Krishnakanta's Will* (1878) and Sarachchandra Chatterjee's *Charit Raheen* (1913). While Bengali and Urdu reformist novels primarily engaged with the transformation of their specific socio-cultural milieus—namely, the *bhadralok* and *Ashraf* communities—*Sevasadan*, written during the height of the nationalist movement, extends its critique beyond Hindu caste hierarchies to interrogate their broader implications for the emerging Indian nation.

Harpreet Kaur Arora, in her paper "Premchand's *Karmabhoomi* in a Post-Colonial Eye," examines the novel's engagement with nationalist struggles and its intersection with human emotions, social justice, and colonial oppression (52). She highlights how



Karmabhoomi serves as a fusion of vision and reality, portraying the Indian freedom movement under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership.

Vijaya Ghose, in her book review "The World of Premchand", underscores the thematic depth of Premchand's short stories, which extend beyond the struggles of poor peasants to encompass the oppression of women across socio-economic classes (47). Ghose highlights that Premchand's portrayal of women is nuanced and multifaceted, representing individuals from diverse backgrounds—ranging from impoverished and illiterate women to those who are affluent and educated. His narratives intricately explore the psychology of women, capturing their resilience, generosity, loyalty, and sacrifices within the framework of traditional Indian society.

Dalwar, Lal Jagdish in his article "Representation of Popular Culture in Premchand's works", tries to explore the various strands of popular culture (1996). He points that Premchand did not present the popular culture as an autonomous one; rather he represents culture marked by a changing relationship between the privileged and the inferior social groups. He emphasized the ingenuity of the common man in coping with the ideas enforced on the poor by the rich and how they interpret these ideas in their own way.

In her article "Exploitation and Conscience in Premchand" (1996), Jesse Astbury explores the themes of exploitation and social isolation in Premchand's short stories, particularly *The Power of Curse* and *The Shroud*. Astbury argues that Premchand's characters, including Ramsevak, Ghisu, and Madhav, navigate a society that perpetuates rigid class structures and social stigmas. These characters, despite their desperate circumstances, exploit the sensibilities and vulnerabilities of the more privileged members of society in order to survive. Astbury suggests that Premchand's portrayal of such figures highlights the moral ambiguity of the human condition, where survival often requires a compromise of ethical values.

In his article "Life and Ideals of Premchand", Namwar Singh asserts that Premchand's literary vision was deeply rooted in the stark realities of his homeland, where the masses endured a prolonged period of social and economic stagnation (1996). Singh emphasizes that the author's intimate connection with these harsh realities, shaped by personal suffering, enabled him to poignantly convey the pain and struggles of the people.



In his research paper “Punked for Life in Paul Beatty’s *The White Boy Shuffle* and Radical Black Masculinities,” L.H. Stallings revisits and reinterprets the traditional concept of the black public sphere, offering critical updates that are vital for contemporary black communities. Stallings argues that Beatty challenges conventional black masculinities by acknowledging the queerness of black male bodies in the United States. He critiques past, present, and potential black agendas that might marginalize issues of class, gender, and sexuality. Through *The White Boy Shuffle*, Stallings posits that Beatty critiques and deconstructs traditional notions of masculinity, using the character of Gunnar Kaufman—the reluctant race-man protagonist—as a vehicle for exploring these themes. Beatty, Stallings suggests, uses the novel to advocate for black men to confront and embrace alternative gender models, emphasizing the importance of rejecting patriarchal structures that continue to manipulate and harm both individual black men and the larger black community.

In their research paper “Racial Discrimination and Stereotyping in Paul Beatty’s *The White Boy Shuffle*: A Critical Study”, Ahmed Gowher Naik and Sanjay Kumar analyze how Paul Beatty’s novel *The White Boy Shuffle* reflects the pervasive racial prejudice and stereotypes that persist in the United States. They focus on the protagonist, Gunnar Kaufman, an African American who endures racism, discrimination, demoralization, and abuse, which serve as a lens through which broader racial issues are explored. The paper critically engages with the stereotypical portrayals of black individuals and examines how these stereotypes are perpetuated by white society to demean and dehumanize African Americans. Furthermore, the authors highlight the tragic impact of this racial oppression, noting how the dehumanizing treatment of black people led some to contemplate suicide as a means of escape from their torment.

In his article “Third Space in Paul Beatty’s *The White Boy Shuffle*”, Robert P. Raj explores the reimagining of African American identity and the construction of a new vision of blackness in Paul Beatty’s novel. Raj examines the post-black liberation movement’s emerging sensibility, which emphasizes an authentic, untainted sense of blackness. The paper utilizes Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of the “Third Space” to analyze the novel’s thematic underpinnings. Raj notes that the protagonist, Gunnar Kaufman, along with his mother and sister, relocates from Santa Monica to a more impoverished neighborhood due to racial harassment, where Gunnar is exposed to the cultural complexities of black pride, including gang violence, the use of firearms, and rap culture.



In the article “Misrecognition and Struggle for Identity of Blacks: A Study of Paul Beatty's *The White Boy Shuffle* and *The Sellout*”, Ahmed Gowher Naik and Sanjay Kumar analyse the themes of racial degradation, demoralization, and the struggle for identity faced by African Americans in contemporary American culture, as depicted in Paul Beatty's works. They focus on how white society degrades, enslaves, and discriminates against black individuals, perpetuating a cycle of misrecognition and cultural alienation. Through the characters of Gunnar in *The White Boy Shuffle* and Me in *The Sellout*, the authors examine issues of racism, loss of cultural identity, and the psychological trauma that accompany these experiences.

In the paper “Paul Beatty's *New Ghetto: Aversion to Ghetto*”, Rohini Maheswari explores the representation of ghettos in Paul Beatty's works, particularly *The Sellout*, *The White Boy Shuffle*, and *Tuff*. She traces the historical origins of the term “ghetto”, which was coined in 1516 to describe the Jewish quarter in Venice, originally situated on the site of a copper foundry. This term has since evolved to encompass areas of urban segregation, often associated with poverty and racial marginalization.

Research Methodology:

The present research employs the Standpoint Theory by Sandra Harding. It promotes attitudes of resistance and cherishes the experiences of downtrodden and underprivileged individuals of Indian and Afro American society. The research methodology includes qualitative analysis and comparative method. Through the qualitative analysis, researcher aims at descriptive evaluation of the writings of Premchand and Paul Beatty while through the comparative approach, researcher has instituted a comparison between their writings and has tried to find out the similarities and dissimilarities between them. Further, Textual analysis of the research aims to examine the subjugation, sufferings, and exploitations of Indian as well as Afro American society and how they forge a strong standpoint to challenge white hegemony, caste system, socio-political oppression and class system. To substantiate the research, critics like bell hooks, Nancy Hartsock, Foucault will be taken in consideration. Primary sources include *Karmabhoomi* of Munshi Premchand and *The White Boy Shuffle* by Paul Beatty. An elaborated study and analysis of the secondary sources comprising Journals, Review Articles, E-resources, JSTOR, interviews, Academia, reference books are also done.

Theoretical Framework:



Munshi Premchand's work *Karambhoomi* (The Land Where One Works) portrays social and political difficulties that were common in India at the time. The novel, which takes place in 1930s Uttar Pradesh, is heavily influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha movement. The protagonist of the book, Amarkant, is married to Sukhda, a wealthy widow's daughter, at the age of 19, but their marriage was unhappy because their perspectives and actions were diametrically opposed. An example of British oppression in which three white troops brutally rape a woman named Munni is used to illustrate human catastrophe. To bring this woman's case to justice, Amarkant, his friend Saleem, and Dr. Shanti Kumar demonstrate resistance. Furthermore, Amarkant expresses his disillusionment and establishes his standpoint by stating that he is prepared to renounce both religion and society in order to wed Sakeena, a Muslim woman, and convert to Islam. On the other side, Sudhir Chandra discusses Amarkant's condition in the following lines:

In *Karambhoomi*, Amarkant goes to work among villagers in British India. What is more significant without managing to declass himself in a way that would be consistent with his intellectually held principles, he does succeed in.... He establishes a degree of rapport with the village men and women. (p. 611)

Amarkant's ability to successfully labour among the villagers while preserving his class identity is what makes him significant in *Karambhoomi*. Characters who battle with rage and frustration, such as Vinay and Chakradhar, are in opposition to his method. Amarkant develops his perspective and exemplifies a more complex and compassionate style of social reform by controlling his class emotions and building rapport. Dr. Shanti Kumar stands up for them, promotes them, and assists in the founding of *Karambhoomi*. He says that "Man's arena for work is his character. The basis of religion is truth and a good character. None can be separated on the basis of religion" (Premchand, p. 79). In order to prepare the untouchables to revolt against untouchability, Dr. Shanti Kumar creates a Seva Ashram for them, gives them self-confidence, and teaches them the importance of valuing themselves. Additionally, Amarkant expanded his viewpoint by establishing a school for the poor in his community to better the lives of his brothers. According to Shailendra Kumar Singh, "Bhumi also serves as a site for civil resistance aimed at rehabilitating Banaras' displaced workers. However, the nationalist fight in this book is not only presented without any explicitly allegorical frameworks, but it is also completely separated from the rural landscape" (Singh, p. 183). It highlights how the book focuses on urban issues rather than rural ones and handles land and resistance in a direct, literal way devoid of symbolic representation.



Since Premchand's time, crises have continuously transformed societal structures, economic situations, and personal lives, impacting human life. Even if these crises have changed in nature, they nevertheless have a significant impact on human experience, causing both misery and resiliency. His writings frequently highlight problems like poverty, exploitation, and social injustice while capturing the brutal realities of Indian rural life. A lack of income is only one aspect of poverty, according to the editorial analysis “Problem of Poverty in India”, poverty encompasses more than just a lack of income; it includes issues like hunger and limited access to education (Problem of Poverty in India, 2024). Poverty remains a significant issue that requires attention. In order to guarantee sustainable livelihoods, it involves more than just a lack of revenue and productive resources.

The most pervasive social problem that is responsible for the crisis of human existence is class division. Although the capitalist system is more of a feudal system in *Karambhoomi*, Karl Marx's groundbreaking theory of class struggle opened the door for a thorough examination of its operation. Karl Marx in his book *The Communist Manifesto* talks about class struggle as, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Marx claimed were arising in the clashes of interest between the bourgeois (the wealthy capitalist class) and the proletariat (the industrial working class)” (Marx, p. 5). In contrast, Sandra Harding avers that, “Some uses of standpoint theory have been based in Hegelian and Marxist theory, such as Hegel's study of the different standpoints of slaves and masters in 1807” (Harding, 1986). According to standpoint theory, a person's social position affects their knowledge and comprehension. According to Harding, this idea has historical roots in Hegel and Marx, who studied how various social positions result in disparate viewpoints and perceptions. Similarly, social difficulties of class oppression are depicted in Premchand's work *Karambhoomi* (1932). The British monetary system's shortcomings in relation to Indian sensibilities are highlighted in the novel. During this crucial procedure, everyone appears to be spending their whole wage on education. Even the main character of the book, Amarkant, is forced to leave the school due to a lack of money to pay for attendance. The lines that depict class division in the same book are:

Even land taxes are not collected as ruthlessly as school fees collected in our schools and colleges... borrow money, sell household pots, steal- but fees you must pay; or pay double fees. Money rules in courts...schools. There is fine if you are late; if you don't show up in a classroom...if there is any offence... not



institutions for education but for fines; ... ideal of our much-touted western education. (p. 1)

The brutal method of collecting school fees, which forces families to borrow money, pawn their possessions, or even commit theft in order to pay for their children's education, is criticized in the statement. This highlights the financial barrier that keeps impoverished populations from having access to education. The declaration views educational institutions as “institutions for fines” (Premchand, p. 1) rather than as places for learning, accusing them of putting profit before education. “The prevailing western thought about education is business-oriented and they consider the Indian education system to be a sector worth USD 3 trillion,” claims Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (Bhagwat, 2022). This indicates that Western models put profit ahead of holistic learning, reflecting a critical stance against the commercialization of education. He suggests that the cultural and ethical aspects of the Indian educational system are undervalued by this way of thinking.

Discrimination based on caste causes some groups to be excluded from social, political, and economic arenas. Mason Olcott in his paper claims about caste system as, “the Caste system is a hierarchy of endogamous groups that individuals enter only by birth.... It differs from a class in its strict enforcement of permanent endogamy within caste groups” (Olcott, p. 648). This exclusion deprives people of their fundamental rights and dignity while sustaining cycles of poverty and marginalization. According to Thange Vijay Chandrabhan, “Sevasadan clearly depicts the division of Indian society into multiple castes and sub-castes.” Premchand clearly portrayed the harsh reality of rural life, and caste is a fundamental aspect of Indian sociocultural life (Chandrabhan, p. 48). In a similar vein, untouchability, in the work Karambhoomi, has long been a feature of Indian society and culture. Recently, Yudhvira Rana declares that, “Activist Lala Chaman Lal reported multiple instances of religious discrimination, claiming that Hindus were often denied access to glasses and utensils used by Muslims” (Rana, 2024). On the other hand, there is an example in the book where Pandit Madhusudan's Katha had been going on for a month at the Thakurdwara. One example of how religious organizations reinforce social boundaries is the way lower-caste people like Amarkant, Renuka Devi, and Naina Devi are treated as undesirable or improper in religious settings. The priest, also called Brahmachari, becomes enraged and starts shouting, dragging them violently to stand up and leave the temple. These lyrics accurately describe the priest's ferocious outburst and explosive, wrath-filled eyes:



Do these people come to listen to Bhagwan's Katha or to soil our religion; Sweeper, Chamaar, whosoever, comes barring in-is a temple for Thakurji or is it an Inn? Samarkant also said harshly throw them all out, by force if necessary. One old man, folding his hands in respect, said, 'we are sitting here at the door', Sethji, where shoes are kept, we are so ignorant as to come and sit amongst you. (p. 172)

The text clarifies the structural basis of caste-based exclusion as well as the difficulties lower-caste people encounter in obtaining respect and acceptance in settings that have historically been controlled by higher castes. This powerfully projects the intersectionality of caste and class. The author deftly illustrates how the oppressed, poor, weak, and untouchables are dehumanized by the upper caste. They receive absolutely no mercy from the priest. "In God's temple, by the hand of God's devotees... were being beaten with shoes. You scoundrel; why did you come here? See this carpet...sitting for the upper-caste? ... (Premchand, p. 172-173). The Brahamchari declaration is a scathing indictment of the treatment of the weaker, lower-caste members of society in the name of religion, orthodoxy, and superiority. According to recent article by Amisha Rajni, "In Hyderabad, the principal and two teachers of a girls' government residential school on the city outskirts have been suspended for alleged caste-based discrimination against SC/ST students" (Rajni, 2024). Students claimed that not even the parents were exempt. Even at parent-teacher conferences, they were not allowed on school property. "Our parents received untouchable treatment. Another student claimed that while parents of other students were free to enter, they were not let past the main gate" (Rajni, 2024). This demonstrates how caste-based discrimination and associated social problems remain major problems in modern society, especially in India. Mason Olcott, on the other hand, asserts in his paper that "the caste system recognizes an indefinite number of groups of different ranks, each one standing on the shoulders of the castes below it" (Olcott, p. 648). By keeping the lower castes in inferior roles, higher castes continue to profit from and uphold their standing in the modern era. The caste system experiences of the characters in *Karambhoomi* show how people from various castes view and negotiate social institutions. Ritika Khatri asserts that, "Caste in India is inescapable...Just like air, caste system is an integral yet often invisible component of our social fabric". "For those who benefit from its hierarchical structures, caste may remain a subtle backdrop, but for those marginalized by it, its oppressive presence is acutely felt" (Khatri, 2024). It draws attention to how widespread the caste system is in Indian culture. Similar to this, Premchand's novel *Karambhoomi* explores caste, class, and gender via



the protagonist's hardships, offering a wealth of context for examining how these underrepresented viewpoints might disclose more profound social realities. In contrast, Sandra Harding in her book highlights the views of intersectionality of class and caste by Nancy Hartsock as, "In the Marxian analysis, this power exercised in both control of ideological production, and in the real participation of the worker in exchange. The worker as well as the capitalists engage in the purchase and sale of commodities..." (Harding, p. 39). It implies that underrepresented groups are able to provide information that exposes the shortcomings of prevailing viewpoints.

When a person's view of themselves differs from the roles, labels, or stereotypes that society has placed on them, identity crisis results. As Saadawi states that, "identity is a discourse, and it is essential to know who is using it, who decides, who labels me, what all this interest in 'cultural identity' means, where does it lead ... we are so engrossed in defining our identities when they are changing all the time" (1997, p. 118-126). In the same way, the protagonist, Amarkant, in the book *Karambhoomi*, struggles with identity crisis. As he makes his way through the unstable political climate of British India, this young and idealistic lawyer struggles with issues of identity, morality, and social expectations. Lala Samarkant, a self-made person, will do whatever it takes to be successful in business. He makes his son follow in his father's footsteps and assists him in his money-lending schemes and dealings. But he despises this business and refuses to do it. "Whatever Lalaji did, his son would reject; he loved cream, he disliked it; he would assiduously pray and read scriptures, his son considered it hypocrisy; his greed knew no bounds, his son despised money" (Premchand, p. 6). Amarkant's father and stepmother expel him from the family because he rejects the idea of money and acts in opposition to his father. He became stubborn, and the father-son bond deteriorated as well. Vinod Kumar, however, claims that, "Lala Samarkant is a self-made person who tries to make money in business by any means, fair or foul. The departure of Amarkant from his house serves a turning point in his and it leads him into despair" (Kumar, p. 85). The protagonist stresses the importance of oppressed people standing together throughout the entire book. Sandra Harding emphasizes the importance of collective identities in resistance against oppression. She avers that, "Marginalized groups often create collective identities that enable them to resist and challenge systemic oppression." (Harding, p. 45). It underscores the importance of collective action and solidarity in resisting systemic injustices.

The theme of identity crisis depicts the Soordas struggle to reconcile his inner sense of self with external pressures and expectations is depicted as, "Though he faces several problems,



yet he wants to live a farm holder and die like one. Every hair on his body may be mortgaged, but he considers himself fortunate if he has three or four oxen tied at the door....” (Premchand, p. 249). he Amarkant's wish to live as a modest farmer despite many obstacles reflects a long-standing conflict between societal expectations and personal fulfilment. Heinz Lichtenstein declares, “loss of identity is a specifically human danger, and maintenance of identity a specifically human necessity” (Lichtenstein, p. 78). In a same vein, Amarkant's identity as a farmer gives him strength and tenacity, allowing him to bear his terrible situation. According to Harding, recognizing one's identity entails having a moral obligation to promote fairness. Readers are prompted to consider their own identities and duties in the face of social injustice by Premchand's characters, who frequently struggle with their moral places within the power structure. According to a recent post, “a man in Bengaluru was denied entry to a mall for wearing a dhoti, and a woman was turned away from a pub in Gurugram for wearing a sari. These incidents expose a more profound cultural gap in modern-day India...” (Shukla, 2024). Reflection on identity, belonging, and cultural pride is prompted by Shukla's observations, which highlight an ongoing conflict in India between embracing modern lifestyles and respecting ancient cultural customs.

Gender inequality is made explicit in the novel *Karambhoomi* with the vicious rape of a woman named Munni by three white troops. Because rape causes mental anguish, Munni starts acting abnormally. However, in a statement, Equality Now and the South Asian Movement for Accessing Justice (SAMAJ) condemned the heinous rape and killing of a female trainee physician in Kolkata, India, as well as other instances of sexual assault in the nation (SAMAJ and Equality Now, 2024). This demonstrates how sexual assault is still prevalent in society today and the consequences it has. The horrifying murder and rape of the 31-year-old medical student is a reflection of long-standing social problems that still impact women in modern society. She avers that,

I am a married woman, have a child. Can I ever call that child mine? Never...to lower his arms to be picked up and turn away my face tearfully. My husband forgives me, ...but I can't face him... can't forget I am impure; untouchable...I beg...to pray to God for redemption of that society that produces such animals.
(p. 54)

Munni's emotional distress and sense of isolation highlight the negative consequences of strict gender norms and the necessity of social change so that women can recover their identities and



relationships without being subjected to unfair moral judgments. Andrey Shastri claims about gender discrimination as, “Gender discrimination is not a very new phenomenon in this modern time in India, but it was also prevailing in the ancient time. Women are deprived from the basic facilities like education” (Shastri, p. 28). The necessity of thorough and ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality is highlighted by the persistence of discrimination, which is impacted by cultural conventions and traditions.

Parallel to this, bell hooks, in her 1984 article observed that, “while feminist theorists were writing on being oppressed by virtue of their sex or by simply being women, and while the feminist movements were fighting for rights that only men had access to, these same feminists neglected the plight of other women themselves” (hooks, p. 13). By providing a more thorough examination of the ways in which various facets of social identity and power relations interact to influence women's experiences, intersectional feminism has attempted to address this shortcoming. In a recent article, Garima Ranjan makes the case that “experts at a panel discussion organized recently by the National Human Resource Development's Pune chapter stated that gender-based inequalities in the workplace are prevalent even today and are often perpetuated by unconscious biases” (Ranjan, 2023). The article highlights that gender disparities in the workplace still exist today and are not a thing of the past. Harding avers that, “The intersection of caste and gender, for instance, reveals unique struggles faced by women from lower castes, further complicating their experiences of oppression” (Harding, p. 145). Disability rights activist Aiswarya Rao also emphasizes “the complex interplay of disability, gender, and caste, emphasizing the urgent need to address these intersecting barriers” in a recent talk at the Prajnya Equality Colloquium Series (Rao, 2024). Rao highlights the power dynamics at work by telling the tale of a crippled Dalit lady who was beaten for requesting that her superior wear a mask during the lockdown.

By fostering identity, cultural expression, political activism, and community solidarity marginalized groups challenge dominant narratives and power structures, asserting their own standpoint and advocating for social justice. In addition to giving people more power, this opposition has the capacity to forge a meaningful position and influence social change. The marginalized people from both Indian and African-American nations use marginalization as a means of expressing their resistance and standpoint in the suggested study. bell hooks, a renowned feminist theorist and cultural critic, avers that, “margin is a site of creativity and power, where we recover ourselves, where we meet in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as



liberators (hooks, p. 343). Hooks' remark is an appeal to question and disrupt prevailing narratives and power systems, especially those pertaining to gender, race, and class. Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson comments that, “resistance is an oppositional act. Like all acts, resistance is situated in certain time, space and relations, and engages with different (types of) actors, techniques and discourses” (Vinthagen and Johansson, p. 1). Marginalized groups assert their position and regain agency through resistance. Their marginalization is changed from a passive state to an active fight for justice by this act of resistance.

Characters such as Amarkant, Shanti Kumar, and Naina in Munshi Premchand's *Karambhoomi* demonstrate resistance to social injustices and establish their individual points of view. Shanti Kumar actively opposes the caste system and the exploitation of the lower classes and asserts his point of view, determined to uplift the marginalized and critical of the social hierarchy that sustains their suffering. ShantiKumar said, “A temple does not belong to any one man or a group of people, it is symbolic of the Hindu religion itself. If someone stops you from entering, he is being highhanded, stay firmly at the door of the temple, and don't move even if you are shot at.... (Karmabhoomi, p. 177). It highlights that, despite feelings of helplessness, people assert their viewpoint or moral and religious rights by standing firm against oppression. It encourages people to stick to their convictions and to oppose unjust actions with dignity, even in the face of dire consequences. Further ShantiKumar asserts, “we will see who stops us; Our God is not the property of any single individual or a group that he can be kept under lock and key” (p. 178). It highlights that no person or organization has the right to control or limit spiritual and communal identities. One of Michel Foucault's most famous statements is that “where there is power, there is resistance” (1978, p. 95–96). Foucault asserts that resistance is useful for comprehending authority. Sandra Harding emphasizes that, “marginalized groups, including lower castes, possess unique knowledge based on their lived experiences. This perspective is crucial for understanding the complexities of oppression and social dynamics” (Harding, p. 134). In cultures like India, people from lower castes have knowledge and experiences that contradict popular conceptions of caste hierarchy.

Communities everywhere, not just in India, are impacted by the widespread problem of marginalization. It can appear in a variety of settings and forms, frequently stemming from social, historical, and economic systems. According to Lisa Garcia Bedolla, “economic, social, and political disparities persist in America even after de jure discrimination has ended” (Bedolla, p. 233). Paul Beatty, on the other hand, is a perceptive voice when it comes to examining marginality-related topics, especially in relation to race, identity, and society. His



book *The White Boy Shuffle* explores the intricacies of an outcast's life, not only in the US but also globally as a commentary on marginalization concerns. The unequal power dynamics between the Black and white communities are discussed in the book. The book's main character, Gunnar Kaufman, is a Black man who lives in Santa Monica, a mostly white neighbourhood. Brenda, a Gunnar mother, instructs her kids in developing critical thinking skills on the socio-political authorities. After moving to Hillside culture, Gunnar Kaufman declares his dissatisfaction of the white-imposed system of servitude. He demonstrates his point of view by denying the seventh son any associative abilities; he asserts that he lacks both supernatural insight and the capacity to invoke conventional authority. After expressing his disapproval through marginal space, Gunnar enrolls in a public high school, where he gets an excellent education and goes on to become a professor at Boston University. Additionally, refusal and standpoint are shown when Gunnar marries Yoshiko, a white girl, defying the conventional norms of whites. Scoby, the perfect basketball player, is portrayed as a monstrous black African with supernatural powers. Gunnar, on the other hand, rises to prominence as a result of his outstanding work "Water Melanin" (p. 236) for which he unintentionally establishes himself as a 'Leader of the Black Community' and generates strong standpoint. In contrast, Steve Biko, a prominent figure in the fight against apartheid in South Africa, began his medical studies at the University of Natal in 1966, the same year the UN declared apartheid a crime against humanity. His understanding of colonialism and racism informed his activism and philosophy, leading him to play a crucial role in the Black Consciousness Movement during the 1960s and 1970s. In his influential book *I Write What I Like*, Biko stated, "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed". His untimely death in police custody on September 12, 1977, further solidified his status as a symbol of resistance against oppression (Biko, 2024). By asserting that the oppressor's greatest tool is the internalized oppression of the oppressed, he highlights how psychological manipulation maintain systemic injustice. Biko's activism sought to empower Black South Africans to reclaim their identity and challenge the societal norms imposed by colonialism and racism.

In Paul Beatty's works, class prejudice is a theme that frequently intersects with racial, identity, and social inequality issues. The protagonist Gunnar Kaufman's experiences and interactions with persons from different socioeconomic backgrounds in the book *The White Boy Shuffle* illustrate the class divide. As Gunnar notes, "Santa Monica, like most predominantly white sanctuaries from urban blight, cool black guy is a versatile identifier used to distinguish the harmless black male from the Caucasian juvenile while maintaining



politically correct semiotics” (Beatty, p. 34). Being referred to as the cool black guy implies that there are racial stereotypes and expectations in the community. According to Gunnar, “my early education consisted of two types of multiculturalism: classroom multiculturalism, and schoolyard multiculturalism, where the kids who knew the most Polack, queer, and farmer's daughter jokes ruled” (p. 35), highlighting the clear racial and class divides at the school. Students from racial minorities or lower socioeconomic origins, like Gunnar, believe their identities and experiences are neglected or undervalued, which furthers their marginalization in the educational system. An incident where a student allegedly scratched a racist slur onto another student's breast during an informal meeting on campus earlier this month is being investigated by school administrators at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, according to a recent article (2024). In a similar vein, the book highlights numerous issues that are inherent in institutional multiculturalism in a way that students may comprehend. Sandra Harding asserts that, “we are often as much as ‘Other’, a threat to black people from privileged class backgrounds who do not understand or share our perspectives, as we are to uninformed white folks. Everywhere we go there is pressure to silence our voices, to co-opt and undermine them” (Harding, 1989). This clarifies the complex nature of marginalization and the associated internal and external difficulties.

An individual's perception, interpersonal relationships, and general well-being are all significantly impacted by identity crises. Gunnar Kaufman, the main character in the book *The White Boy Shuffle*, endures suffering due to both dual identities and racial persecution. He first aspires to live in Santa Monica, where he is surrounded by white kids and attempts to fit in with their lifestyle, but he struggles with humility because of his colour. White people describe him as a “funny cool black guy” (Beatty p. 34). Following a class discussion on race, Gunnar experiences an identity problem when he refers to himself as both White and Black. “White Gunnar was a broken stringed kite leaning into the sea breeze.... Black was an unwanted dog abandoned in the forest” (p. 43). After the government seizes his land and forces him and his family to relocate from Santa Monica to the Hillside ghetto in West Los Angeles, Gunnar Kaufman experiences yet another identity crisis. In a similar vein, California Governor Gavin Newsom recently vetoed a bill that would have assisted Black families in recovering or getting paid for land that the government had wrongfully stolen through eminent domain. “If families feel the government took their property through eminent domain for discriminatory reasons and without giving them just compensation, the bill would have established a procedure for



them to file a claim with the state” (Newsom, 2024). This emphasizes how difficult it is to put measures meant to right historical wrongs into practice.

When his scrimmage coach splits the team into two squads based on their appearance during practice, Gunnar feels even more underappreciated and experience’s identity issues: “White sneakers vs. black sneakers, kids who’d never been to the dentist vs. those who had... It was strange playing for both teams, scoring for one squad, then reversing my jersey and doing the same thing with the other” (Beatty, p. 144). Darryl George claims that, “a black high school student in Texas who was punished for nearly all of his junior year over his hairstyle has left his school district rather than spend another year of in-school suspension, according to his attorney” (George, 2024). This case brings to light issues of racial discrimination and the unjust targeting of particular hairstyles, especially those linked with Black culture, which are still prevalent in modern society. Sandra Harding argues that, “Knowledge is shaped by social context and is often influenced by the experiences of those in power. The social context shapes what is known and how it is known.” (Harding, p. 56). This observation illustrates how Gunnar’s experiences impact his understanding of reality and ties up with Harding’s criticism of objectivity by showing how knowledge is shaped by one’s social surroundings. In a similar vein, critic D. Abinaya claims that, “Gunnar illustrates how Black people’s lives are impacted by prevailing facets of race, identity, class, and colour. When Black people attempt to live up to the ideals established by white people, it reveals the destructive impact of racism” (Abinaya 5). By highlighting the hardships imposed by a racist society and the consequences of attempting to fit in with the expectations of a dominant culture, Abinaya’s critique illuminates the ways in which Gunnar’s experiences mirror more general societal challenges pertaining to race and identity.

Gender inequality in the novel *The White Boy Shuffle* is depicted through reflection on the absence of prominent or celebrated Black women within the Kaufman lore or the narrative surrounding a specific group or community referred to as the Kaufman legacy. The lack of recognition and visibility given to Black women is illustrated through lines:

Kaufman lore plays out like an autogenous self-pollinating men’s club. There are no comely Kaufman superwomen. No poetic heroines caped in Kinte cloth stretching welfare checks from here to the moon... The women who allied themselves to the Kaufman legacy are invisible. Their existence and contributions cut off like the Sphinx’s broad nose.... (p. 29)



The lack of “poetic heroines” or “comely Kaufman superwomen” (Beatty, p. 29) points to a narrative that is largely about men, with women either marginalized or completely disregarded. By comparing it to the removal of the Sphinx's nose, the narrator highlights how the existence and accomplishments of the women associated with the Kaufman heritage are “cut off” or disregarded. Laila Baker, a regional director for the United Nations Population Fund, discusses the extreme struggles that women in Sudan confront in the midst of the continuous conflict in the most recent UN news. She contends that “the atmosphere of desperation and trauma, with half the population in need of assistance” (Baker, 2024). This circumstance highlights the difficulties women encounter, such as inadequate access to healthcare and the risk of violence, while also demonstrating the tenacity of those who remain supportive of them. Sandra Harding asserts, “This situation is similar to that of African-American women who have long worked in white homes and workplaces where they are still marginalized in low-paid jobs” (Harding, p. 19). Because marginalized people frequently acquire distinct perspectives and modes of agency, marginality functions as a location of resistance. They are able to construct their own viewpoint and confront repressive systems because of this perspective.

Gunnar Kaufman in the novel, *The White Boy Shuffle* exhibits resistance and creates his standpoint by marrying white girl, Yoshiko, which is represented through lines as,

I like Yoshiko. She'll make an excellent Kaufman. She got spirit, escaping from a repressive society to seek her fortune in a strange world.” “Ma, Japan ain't some feudalistic country. they got travel agents”. “Don't matter, I approve” ...never approve of me marrying a woman who isn't black”. “Yes, but Yoshiko is black at heart.... (p. 198-99)

The concept that romantic relationships should rigidly follow racial or cultural norms is challenged by the mother's acceptance of Yoshiko, despite the fact that she comes from a different ethnic and cultural background. It implies that Yoshiko's spirit and traits are in line with the mother's ideals and that cultural and personal traits cut over racial borders. By recognizing the diversity and flexibility of cultural assimilation and personal identity, this viewpoint rejects a limited, racially based understanding of identity. In contrast, P. Robert Raj avers that, “Gunnar marries a Japanese Yoshika and waiting for his first baby. Though Gunnar is happy with his marriage sometime he realized Yoshika married him for the American citizenship” (Raj, p. 149). Gunnar's predicament serves as an example of how interpersonal ties are entwined with larger power dynamics. Mehak Bakshi claims that, “resistance, is not a



straightforward opposition to power but rather a complex phenomenon that emerges from the interactions between different forces, agents, and structures” (Bakshi, p. 23). According to Bakshi's perspective, comprehending resistance necessitates a more thorough investigation of how power operates in society, how institutions and knowledge uphold it, and how these intricate relationships form resistance itself. In contrast, bell hooks assert that, “This space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a “safe” place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (hooks, p. 19). Bell Hooks stresses the value of establishing areas where individuals may examine other viewpoints and exercise critical thought. She describes the edges as epicentre's of “radical openness”, where unorthodox ideas thrive (p. 19). In order to promote cultural change and challenge prevailing myths, this openness is crucial.

Gunnar Kaufman's resistance perspective and complex identity are highlighted by his introduction as a “black man extraordinaire,” “star athlete”, and “accomplished poet” (Beatty, p. 234). The limited and frequently reductive ways that Gunnar is usually portrayed in popular culture are challenged by this embrace of varied abilities and roles. It opposes the idea that Black people only have one story or function. Gunnar is elevated to a symbolic status when he is referred to be the “voice of a nation” (p. 234), implying that his accomplishments and identity stand for something more than himself. By portraying Gunnar as a person of great cultural and societal impact, these framings challenge the frequently constrained and stereotyped depictions of Black people. Brian Grosenbaugh claims about the resistance that, “Gunnar presents himself as a messiah figure, as one who can speak for and lead black America, but in doing so he implicitly acknowledges that only a person with messianic capabilities could assume such a role” (Grosenbaugh, p. 2). Sandra Harding emphasizes the importance of collective identities in resistance. She avers that, “Marginalized groups often create collective identities that enable them to resist and challenge systemic oppression.” (Harding, p. 45). America's marginalized communities leverage unique conditions to fight for their rights, upend established power systems, and advance social justice. Their resistance is a deliberate attempt to change social norms and regulations and to develop a perspective of oppressed people in addition to being a reaction to oppression.

Comparative analyses:

To find similarities, contrasts, and connections between two or more entities—such as texts, civilizations, theories, or phenomena—the comparative analysis method is employed. It



includes comparing different works of literature and connecting them to other forms of human expression. According to Remak, “Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the life of the particular country, and the study of the relationship between literature on one hand and other areas of facts and belief such as painting, sculpture... (p. 1). The connections between Indian and African-American literature are demonstrated in this study. The social, cultural, political, religious, and economic beliefs and truths of Indian and African-American literature are examined through comparative analysis. Despite coming from very different historical and cultural backgrounds, Paul Beatty and Premchand both address social and political turmoil in their works. Through their unique literary works, Paul Beatty, a modern African-American author, and Premchand, a renowned writer from early 20th-century India, offer perceptive commentary on issues of caste/race, gender, class, alienation, and identity.

Similarities:

Both books provide a scathing indictment of social systems and conventions. With a special emphasis on topics like caste, feudalism, and the fight for social reform, *Karambhoomi* tackles the political and social injustices that existed in colonial India. *The White Boy Shuffle* examines topics of identity, ethnicity, and societal expectations while criticizing racial and socioeconomic inequalities in modern-day America. Both works' characters have a strong interest in the sociopolitical concerns of their eras. Amarkant, the main character in *Karambhoomi*, is active in social change and participates in the larger fight against the repressive social order. Gunnar, the main character of *The White Boy Shuffle*, deals with the intricacies of ethnic identity and societal expectations, which affects how he interacts with the sociopolitical environment. The suffering of underprivileged groups is emphasized in both books. The battles of the lower castes against long-standing societal hierarchies are illuminated by *Karambhoomi*. In other way, *The White Boy Shuffle* examines African American lives, emphasizing the difficulties faced by those who are torn between socioeconomic inequalities and racial stereotypes.

Differences:

Set in colonial India in the early 20th century, *Karambhoomi* captures the sociopolitical concerns of the time, including feudal systems, colonial oppression, and the struggle for social justice. It has strong roots in India's historical and cultural background during British



domination. On the other hand, novel *The White Boy Shuffle* is set in contemporary America and deals with issues like racial identity and socio-economic status in a modern context. It addresses the complexities of race and identity in a post-civil rights era America. Premchand's *Karambhoomi* adopts a realist style, focusing on comprehensive and nuanced representations of social situations and personalities. The narrative is clear and more aimed for social reality and moral reflection. *The White Boy Shuffle* by Paul Beatty critiques racial and socioeconomic issues through satire and dark humour. The book uses a more modern and unusual narrative voice and is renowned for its experimental and satirical style.

Social Relevance: The current research paper holds significant social relevance due to its exploration of how human existence is shaped and often challenged by the socio-political and cultural structures of society. By comparing the works of Munshi Premchand and Paul Beatty, the research examines the universal themes of identity, marginalization, and the struggle for justice in societies marked by systemic inequalities. While Premchand wrote in a colonial context and Beatty addresses the post-racial struggles in modern America, both authors engage with the universal themes of human suffering, inequality, and the search for dignity. The comparative study demonstrates how these concerns transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. The examination of the human condition in these distinct but interconnected contexts encourages reflection on global social issues such as economic disparity, racial injustice, and the alienation faced by marginalized communities worldwide. Further, Both Premchand and Beatty reflect on the changing social landscapes of their respective times. Premchand critiques the effects of British colonialism and the stagnation of traditional Indian society, while Beatty critiques contemporary American culture, with a particular focus on racialized identities and the intersections of class and race. This comparative study underscores the role of literature as a mirror to society, prompting readers to reflect on the current crises of human existence in their own contexts and potentially inspiring social change. The social relevance of this research lies in its exploration of the continuing struggles of marginalized individuals from Premchand's colonial India to Beatty's contemporary America.

Conclusion:

In their respective oeuvres, Munshi Premchand and Paul Beatty adeptly dissect the sociopolitical crises of their times, offering nuanced critiques of systemic oppression. Premchand's narratives, such as *Karmabhoomi*, illuminate the entrenched caste, class



hierarchies and the resultant subjugation of Dalits in colonial India. As noted by M. Asaduddin, these stories reveal how “Dalit inferiority had become embedded in the psyche of the members of the Hindu upper castes,” (2019) leading to pervasive verbal and physical denigration. Conversely, Beatty's *The White Boy Shuffle* employs sardonic humor and irony to subvert cultural standards and racial stereotypes, providing a scathing critique of systemic racism in modern America. Suman Lamsal emphasizes, “Beatty's use of sardonic humor and irony serves to challenge and dismantle entrenched racial norms” (2024). Both authors delve into the complexities of identity formation within oppressive frameworks, illustrating how individual and collective identities are moulded by resistance movements. Premchand's characters evoke empathy through their realistic portrayals and emotional depth, while Beatty's strategic use of satire renders complex subjects more accessible and thought-provoking. Their works continue to resonate, urging contemporary readers to reflect on ongoing struggles for equality and justice, and to challenge repressive structures. Collectively, their literary contributions underscore the enduring importance of activism, empathy, and solidarity in addressing societal challenges.

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