

Catharsis of Migrant Mother and Daughter in Preethi Nair's *Gypsy Masala*

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ABSTRACT

Catharsis, a concept originally developed by the renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle in his monumental work Poetics, authored in 335 BCE and still influential in contemporary editions, pertains to the audience's purging of fear and pity. Within a transnational framework, the notion of catharsis among migrant mothers and daughters is imbued with the profound release and healing experienced during their shared journeys and challenges, addressing a notable gap in South Asian women's literature. In this article, we aim to delve into the various manifestations of catharsis experienced by migrant mothers and daughters within a transnational setting. To achieve this goal, a textual analysis of Gypsy Masala by Preethi Nair, a British author of Indian origin, will be undertaken. This novel poignantly captures the arduous migration process and the struggles faced by the migrant mother, Sheila, and her adoptive daughter, Evita, as they move from India to London. By employing an Aristotelian reading lens to interpret Gypsy Masala, this paper will investigate Nair's portrayal of the inner conflicts faced by the female characters in an unfamiliar environment, viewed through the prism of catharsis. Four primary aspects of catharsis depicted in Gypsy Masala include fear-induced catharsis, repression-induced catharsis, hostility-induced catharsis, and agony-induced catharsis, all carefully interwoven into the narratives of the novel's migrant mother and daughter.

Keywords: Preethi Nair; Catharsis; migrant mothers; migrant daughters; Diaspora

INTRODUCTION

South Asian feminist voices have gained increasing prominence in the diaspora. These women engage in advocacy, writing, and social discourse to address issues related to gender and cultural identity within South Asian communities abroad. Within a transnational framework, scholars explore these issues in relation to social categories, marginalisation, and empowerment (Ahmed, 2017; Shah, 2020). On the literary front, the literature of South Asian women writers has enjoyed remarkable success over the past forty years, largely due to female novelists' contributions. These authors, residing anywhere in the world in countries like Britain, America, or Canada, have greatly contributed to contemporary diasporic literature by providing unique insights into identity, gender, and cultural displacement in multicultural societies (Ranasinha, 2016). The depictions of female characters in literary works have undergone substantial transformations since the 1980s. These changes have progressed from conventional narratives that emphasise selflessness to more assertive roles that question established notions of matrimony and maternity. Therefore, women are prominently depicted in contemporary diasporic work as advocates for their individuality and

rights (Hussain, 2017). Novels such as Meera Syal's *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2007), and Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India* (2011), among others, provide a diversity of varied representations of women's experiences drawn from various South Asian backgrounds. The authors delve into the diverse experiences of migrant mothers and daughters in these narratives, examining issues such as identity formation, generational strife, and the complexities of adjusting to a foreign nation. They provide insight into the psychological and cultural obstacles that immigrant communities face.

British South Asian women writers have significantly contributed to the debate on women's diasporic experiences, providing insight into the complexities and challenges women face in these contexts. Pioneering British Asian women authors, including Monica Ali, Kamila Shamsie, Meera Syal, Ravinder Randhawa, and Kamala Markanday, have courageously tapped into these experiences to break the silence surrounding their identity struggles. In various literary forms and styles, they address issues of belonging, memory, home loss, nostalgia, and cultural conflict in their writings (Hussain, 2017). They have brought to light key issues such as women's perceived inferiority and weakness, the reality of honour killings, arranged marriages, violence against women, and parenting pressures. Their narratives divulge the experiences of immigrants who are making efforts to maintain their original customs and principles while also attempting to assimilate into a new host nation.

With the publication of her debut novel, *Gypsy Masala*, in 2000, followed by two more novels, Preethi Nair has joined the burgeoning community of British Asian women writers. Her treatment of themes such as identity crises, arranged marriages, nostalgia, and the sense of unbelonging resonates with those addressed by this community of British Asian writers. This shared subject matter exemplifies her connection with these authors. Despite positive reviews, her first novel did not achieve widespread popularity or commercial success in the United Kingdom. While Nair may not be as well-known as other authors, it is essential to recognise that the literary landscape is dynamic and that an author's popularity and reputation can fluctuate. Nevertheless, Nair's presence in the British Asian literary scene provides insights into women migrants' diasporic experiences, particularly through her novel *Gypsy Masala*. Sheila's emotional healing and catharsis through the adoption of Evita after the death of her own child, as well as Evita's catharsis as she challenges her parents' traditions, are notable aspects of this story.

Catharsis, first introduced by Aristotle in his monumental work *Poetics* (Aristotle, 2006), refers to the audience's purgation and purification of fear and pity. Catharsis, as envisioned in a transnational framework, embraces the profound releases and healing experienced during the shared journeys and struggles experienced by migrant mothers and daughters, thereby contributing to a new understanding of issues of mothering and daughtering from the perspective of migrant women residing in Britain. *Gypsy Masala* vividly conveys the challenges faced by migrant mothers and daughters as they relocate from India to London, such as the case of Sheila and her adopted daughter Evita. It offers a unique insight into British Asian diasporic women's experiences as Sheila copes with the death of her child and finds solace in adopting Evita, the niece of her husband, in addition to the daughter's unique cathartic experience in challenging traditional parents. The story highlights the significance of emotional catharsis and recuperation within the framework of migration, enriching comprehension of diasporic experiences. This paper is organised around four key aspects of catharsis as represented in *Gypsy Masala*: fear-induced catharsis, repression-induced catharsis, hostility-induced catharsis, and agony-induced catharsis, carefully woven into the narratives of the novel's migrant mothers and daughters. Although we acknowledge the influence of Aristotle's idea of catharsis, the presence of dread, suppression,

anger, and suffering in the novel leads us to develop a new understanding of catharsis that is based on the cultural context of the novel. The tensions between the ideals of the homeland and the host land give rise to a fuller understanding of the diasporic experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTEXTUALISING NAIR

Early settlement of the South Asian diaspora worldwide has been influential in shaping distinct migration narratives of South Asians to these countries. For instance, the British Asian identity and the South Asian diaspora in the United States have developed under different historical environments. Historically, South Asians have had a presence in Britain that goes back to the seventeenth century, when the East India Company was established, which promoted trade and eventually colonial rule in India. A result of this early contact was the growth of subsequent migration flows, which were especially visible after World War II, Indian independence in 1947 and the relaxation of immigration regulations in the 1950s and 1960s (Robinson, 2005; Sharma, 2015). More recent research confirms that diasporisation in Britain is closely associated with the massive displacement of races from around the world. Aside from the trade in slaves from Africa, Britain also witnessed an influx of South Asian immigrants during British imperialism as slaves or as mistresses or wives to Englishmen (Choudhury, 2019). Furthermore, research demonstrates that South Asians had an impact on several aspects of British society between 1870 and 1950, notably minority rights, wars and representation (Ranasinha et al., 2012). Conversely, the South Asian diaspora in the United States is composed of individuals who have ties to the Indian subcontinent. This community, also known as South Asian Americans, has been growing steadily since the mid-20th century due to changes in US immigration policy (Yoo & Azuma, 2016). Ultimately, early large-scale migrations and shared colonial history have contributed to the development of a British Asian identity that is distinct in its long history and perhaps more closely tied to colonialism.

In recent years, British Asian culture has gained considerable attention through publications, television shows, plays, and films about and by British Asians (Sharma, 2015). It is noteworthy that several outstanding British Asian female writers have made significant contributions to literature recently, including Attia Hosain, Kamala Markandaya, Ravinder Randhawa, Monica Ali, Meera Syal, Kamilia Shamsie, Arundhati Roy, and Shelina Zahra Janmohamed. By weaving memories, stories, and histories of the British South Asian diaspora into their narratives, these authors have effectively explored the identity of the British Asian diaspora from the 1950s to the present, offering a unique insight into women's experiences as recently documented (Girishkumar, 2014). In their research, Karim and Nasir (2014) emphasise the trajectory of British South Asian writings. For example, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lover* focus on the manifestations of female subjugation that contribute to their disintegration on psychological, social, cultural, and physical levels. In another study, Rasagam and Pillai (2015) examine a South Asian Diasporic Metropolitan Young Adult text to show how South Asian elements of place, history, and allegory interpolate into the narrative space of *Born Confused* (2002) by Tanuja Desai Hidier. They argue convincingly that South Asian Diasporic Metropolitan Young Adult Literature can interpolate transnational heritage by fostering an awareness of cultural heritage on familiar young adult grounds and decentering Eurocentric narrative discourses. In a recent study of various British Asian novels, Alhaisony (2022) argues

that creating a culturally diverse British South Asian identity may clash with adjusting to and relinquishing aspects of one's culture that are considered incompatible with contemporary society. This tension, he says, arises from the enforcement of prevailing cultural norms via assimilation and the refusal to accept differences. Therefore, the collective voices of diasporic South Asian writers reveal facets of their issues, struggles, and experiences with regard to living in a transnational world.

Nair's common concerns and subject matter in her literary corpus illustrate the affinity and connection she has with British Asian women authors, as mentioned earlier in the introduction. As the focus of this article is primarily on the analysis of *Gypsy Masala*, it is important to note that Nair has also written two additional novels, *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) and *Beyond Indigo* (2004), and an unpublished work entitled *Sari: The Whole 5 Yards*. While her second novel has received scholarly attention, her other novels, *Gypsy Masala* and *Beyond Indigo*, have not received sufficient academic scrutiny. Regarding studies on Nair's *Gypsy Masala*, Sanjeetha (2018) affirms that Nair holds a unique position among modern women writers in Indian English literature and that her writings are quite inspiring. Her analysis emphasises the fantasy monarch character of Evita Vishavan; she employs the psychological approach of Erik Erikson and James Marcia, who identified four categories of individuals in their pursuit of identity and concluded that Evita belongs to the first group, which is confident, exploratory, and committed. Her analysis, however, concentrates solely on Evita's character from a psychological standpoint and lacks feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Hence, this article diverges from previous research on British Asian women's literature generally and Nair's *Gypsy Masala*, particularly by examining the cathartic experiences of immigrant mothers and daughters as well as considering the impact of catharsis on diasporic individuals' socio-psychological well-being based on the experiences of the main characters in Nair's novel.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

ASPECTS OF CATHARSIS

Etymologically, catharsis is an emotional release that allows one to reach a state of spiritual or moral recovery, as indicated by the original Aristotelian use of the term. Aristotle (2006) asserts that *tragedy* is the purgation of emotions such as pity and fear that defines the concept of catharsis. Several modern scholars emphasise the dramatic function of catharsis, whereas others highlight its psychological and therapeutic roles. From a dramatic perspective, Moreno (1977) proposes that catharsis is the act of releasing strong emotions through plays and other forms of art in order to relieve anger, suffering, or other negative feelings. According to Keesey (1978), the definition of catharsis has fluctuated from one interpretation to another throughout Western literary criticism, as several readings assert that tragedy purges the audience's pity and fear, thereby purifying such feelings. Furthermore, there was a fundamental change in catharsis interpretation in the twentieth century: several scholars argued for the concept of intellectual clarification (Golden, 1962). Catharsis as clarification has been advocated by Post (1951), who contends that "the catharsis of tragedy...results in a clarification of both emotion and of thought, for emotion becomes objective in a work of art, and the mind is elevated so that it contemplates its own emotion and thus achieves imaginative freedom," (267) and Golden (1962), considering chapter 14 of Aristotle's *Poetics* as a tragedy. From a psychological perspective, the theory of catharsis asserts that venting anger

should eliminate it and, thus, reduce future aggression. It is widely believed that venting anger is valuable (Bushman, 2002).

Fear-induced catharsis is one of the defining characteristics of the catharsis theory, which was first introduced by Aristotle (2006), who describes *katharsis* as the purgation of pity and fear. In his view, imitation of dramatic actions invokes pity and fear as a means of releasing those emotions. As to what causes fear, Aristotle (2006) argues that “pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear is aroused by the misfortune of a man like ourselves” (p. 9). It is worth noting that Aristotle regards pity (*pathos*) as an expression of empathy evoked by imaginative depictions of human suffering. Pity disorders have always been dangerous since they can disrupt spectators' minds and cause them to lose their sense of reason. Between these opposing viewpoints, Aristotle emphasises a certain balance. The interaction of pity and fear produces catharsis - a feeling of release, harmony, and peace.

Repression-induced catharsis, through our understanding of repression, is largely celebrated in the theory of catharsis. In psychology, catharsis is defined as releasing repressed effects connected to traumatic events that are brought back into consciousness after being repressed. First and foremost, Freud's work in psychoanalysis, particularly on the unconscious, can be used as an illustration. Freud is credited with the crucial theoretical notions of repression, resistance and defence (Brill, 1938). According to Freudian theory, the repressed thoughts are not left in a passive position in the unconscious; rather, they tend to resurface in consciousness. Hence, this method results in catharsis. According to psychoanalysis, people can undergo catharsis and gain insight into their present state of mind by bringing the substance of the unconscious into consciousness. As a result, an individual can find relief from repressed thoughts, psychological problems and trauma through this method (Brill, 1938).

Theories of hostility catharsis assert that the intensity of aggression is reduced by aggressive actions (Bushman, 2002). It is based on classical Aristotelian and psychoanalytic theories that pent-up emotions can be purged through expression. This catharsis theory has been further developed by popular writers such as Lorenz (1966), who believe that people release their hostile feelings by taking some kind of action. An energy model of motivation is the basis of this theory, as evidenced by research (Bohart, 1980). A person is believed to be constantly generating some form of excitation, either chemical or emotional, that encourages them to act aggressively. If this force is not released by some action, the drive will accumulate until it reaches a point of aggression. In contrast, this view has been challenged by empirical research in psychology (Bandura, 1973; Berkowitz, 1970). These studies have shown that the expression of aggression does not lower aggressive feelings but rather increases them. From a third perspective, other researchers assert that expressing hostility constructively can reduce physical tension, which leads to pleasurable emotional states (Freud, 1957).

The theory of catharsis imbues the emotions of pain, grief and sadness as signs of agony. In fact, agony is generally regarded as an intense feeling of pain, either mentally or physically (Brady et al., 2017). Life-changing events can indeed bring a great deal of pain and agony as they disrupt the familiar patterns and expectations of everyday life. These events can question our identity and values as they force us to confront mortality and fragility. The experience of such pain and suffering can be debilitating, bringing feelings of grief, guilt, anger, and fear. When faced with such profound sorrow and pain, finding the strength to handle such a difficult situation can be difficult. Death, leaving one's homeland, and betrayal are all traumatic experiences.

In this article, Aristotle's theory of catharsis is employed to examine migrant mothers' and daughters' experiences in Nair's *Gypsy Masala* for several reasons. We are aware of the concerns

regarding utilising European theories to analyse Asian literature. Nevertheless, the universality and interdisciplinarity of Aristotelian principles of catharsis and purgation can provide valuable insights into British Asian literature's narrative structure and emotional depth. Aristotle's catharsis theory transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. As it relates to the emotional journey and purification experienced by the audience, the phenomenon is not unique to any culture. British Asian writings, renowned for their emotional and philosophical depth, resonate with the concept of catharsis, providing a universal lens for understanding the human experience portrayed in this literature. Taking this angle does not diminish indigenous perspectives; rather, it complements them, allowing a broader and more diverse interpretation.

Due to the transnational setting of the under-researched novel, this theory, based on the idea of emotional purgation, can provide a valuable tool for understanding British Asian literature's complex psychological terrain. Hybrid identities inherent in this literature caught between two or more cultures, evoke Aristotle's tragic heroes, who are frequently involved in conflicts that ultimately lead to catharsis. Through the lens of cathartic theory, diasporic characters' internal and external conflicts can be effectively explored, emphasising the emotional turmoil and ultimately bringing them to a resolution.

In a therapeutic sense, just as Aristotle (2006) contends that tragic plays allow audiences to purge repressed emotions, South Asian diasporic literature can serve as a means of emotional cleansing and healing for the characters. In reimagining the role of catharsis, a useful approach is to examine how literary characters experience profound emotional and psychological changes as they face challenges, make critical decisions, and deal with the consequences of their decisions. It is through the characters' journeys, as demonstrated in the plotline, that the characters can confront their fears, desires, and moral dilemmas, leading ultimately to a catharsis of their own. This process results in a moment of clarity or profound realisation, which represents the culmination of the character's journey. In addition to releasing emotional burdens, this moment can be cathartic by bringing a deeper comprehension of truth and reality. Consequently, an expanded and critical understanding of catharsis in literature emphasises its significance in character development and narrative resolution. In a recent article, Pillai et al. (2023), influenced by David James' concept of critical solace, show how it permeates the narrative style of a contemporary Malaysian text, reshaping inter-ethnic relations. Their research confirms that "critical solace" in literature extends beyond catharsis; it entails the narrative's ability to convey complex emotions and effects. In the same way, we expand on Aristotelian catharsis to explore the emotions that facilitate the process of healing.

The methodology used involves identifying four distinct constituents of catharsis as experienced by migrant mothers and their daughters in the novel. Sheila, the mother, will be analysed first to demonstrate her agony-induced catharsis, followed by her hostility-induced state of purgation. It then addresses Evita's (the daughter's) catharsis spurred on by fear and then repression. This approach reinforces Nair's intention to accentuate mothers' experiences of loss and adoption of a child through catharsis. This offers a space to redefine motherhood in a transnational context. Furthermore, it endeavours to illuminate mothers' and daughters' conflicts and challenges and, finally, how they both achieve closure.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

MOTHER'S CATHARSIS IN *GYPSY MASALA*: SHEILA'S AGONY-INDUCED CATHARSIS

In Nair's *Gypsy Masala*, the loss and adoption of a child are poignant themes. Experiencing this kind of loss during childbirth adds a whole new level of difficulty and anguish to an already devastating situation. Sheila begins *Gypsy Masala*'s second part by describing her painful experience of losing a stillborn child. "Wrapped in a soft, blue blanket, he was handed to me. My baby was lifeless, but he didn't feel limp and floppy" (Nair, 2004, p. 71), Sheila recalls. Sheila describes her grief and suffering here as she receives the lifeless baby. A tragic scene is presented in which Sheila receives her baby, bundled in a blue blanket, only to discover he is dead. Sheila's suffering is emphasised by the contrast between her physical perception and her emotional reality. The statement by Sheila that the baby is not limp and floppy introduces an element of ambiguity. Despite her baby showing no signs of life, Sheila remains hopeful. The first thing she thinks about is how she has failed in her protector role. It intensifies her agony to believe she cannot protect her child, leading to feelings of guilt and self-blame. She wonders if she is worthy of the precious life she has lost. The phrase "he left her there, alone" (Nair, 2004, p. 97) evokes a profound sense of abandonment, in which Sheila is left to deal with her grief alone in a foreign land. Therefore, Sheila's emotional response emphasises the profound agony she experiences in the aftermath of her stillborn child.

Sheila feels overwhelmed by emptiness and despair. In the aftermath of the birth of her dead child and the subsequent operation in the hospital, she becomes wounded, and she experiences an inner decay. During this ordeal, Bali, Sheila's husband, silently observes her without offering any support or comfort. In neither of these instances does he alleviate Sheila's pain, nor does he express his grief or sorrow. After leaving Sheila at the hospital, Bali goes home to remove all traces of their child from their house, throws away all belongings and repaints everything. Neither of them speaks about the traumatic event, and Bali is unaware of the name Sheila gives to their son, Daniel. The situation demonstrates Sheila's deep agony over losing her child, as well as Bali's negative reaction. Vivid imagery emphasises Sheila's suffering, showing her distress as "desolation" (Nair, 2004, p. 72) and the decay that ensues. By using the word "putrefy," Sheila implies that Bali leaves her to deal with her pain alone, leaving her to deal with it alone.

Catharsis is the psychological process of releasing negative emotions, and agony is an unpleasant emotion that also needs to be released. An overwhelming feeling of uncertainty, anguish, pain, frustration, or another emotion threatens to overwhelm us. In essence, it is a state of helplessness accompanied by strong emotions that require control to be restored. It is beneficial to provide logical rationales and make sense of feelings to speed up the healing journey (Shear et al., 2005). Amid her agony, Sheila achieves a state of resolution. To cope with her grief over her son's death, Sheila adopts Evita, Bali's niece. Evita moved from India to London when she was four years old after her parents died. "Molu came and occupied that void and made me feel again. She came and took that empty white space upstairs, filling it with her laughter, her moods, her temper, and her spirit" (Nair, 2004, p. 99), Sheila announces. Molu's arrival fills this void, showing how her presence provides new meaning and purpose to Sheila's life. The presence of Molu allows Sheila to experience a variety of emotional releases that assist in her healing. Moreover, Molu's existence and companionship facilitate her emotional recovery. A sense of joy, love, and other positive feelings will again be available to her. The phrase "empty white space" signifies a blank

or empty state in Sheila's emotional world. By taking this space "upstairs," Molu introduces her lively personality and energy into Sheila's life, providing a lively and enriching atmosphere. Additionally, Molu's presence aspires to influence Sheila in a transformative way. Sheila finds joy and happiness in the girl's laughter. Molu's moods and temperament provide an opportunity to empathise and engage with a range of emotions. The young girl's spirit inspires Sheila to embrace life more fully. Accordingly, Sheila asserts that the adoption of Molu helps her find catharsis by filling the void left by her son's death. In this way, she experiences renewed purpose and vitality when reconnecting with her emotions. Through Molu's presence, Sheila experiences a range of emotional experiences that allow her to heal.

Adoption in Sheila's narrative is viewed through the prism of catharsis in an unfamiliar environment in London. Taking advantage of the diasporic setting, *Gypsy Masala* explores and redefines motherhood through Sheila's experiences with loss, adoption, and the creation of new familial relationships. This challenges the traditional view of motherhood, which is biologically determined. It also highlights how mothering extends beyond biological ties and incorporates emotional and caring aspects of raising a child. Accordingly, Nair's *Gypsy Masala* presents a nuanced understanding of mothering in the context of South Asian diasporic feminist literature through Sheila's loss of her child and the adoption of Evita as her daughter. In this way, catharsis generated by agony offers an alternate path to attaining deep comprehension.

MOTHER'S CATHARSIS IN *GYPSY MASALA*: SHEILA'S HOSTILITY-INDUCED CATHARSIS

Hostility is often seen as a complex characteristic marked by self-centeredness, suspicion, or the conviction that others will do damage or mistreat you (Bushman, 2002). In a transnational context, hostility underscores the unique challenges and barriers migrant mothers face due to their status as migrants, cultural differences, linguistic barriers, and social prejudices. A hostile environment has a profound effect on migrant mothers' well-being, negatively affecting their self-esteem, mental health, and social participation. It also shapes the relationships migrant mothers have with the people around them. Upon leaving their countries of origin and settling in new communities, migrant mothers experience a range of emotions and challenges. Case of Sheila as she says, "To my absolute shock, we took a plane and flew to London" (Nair, 2004, p. 92). Sheila recalls after marrying Dr Bali. As a first-time traveller, Sheila is overwhelmed by the thought of leaving her family behind. Getting ready for her new life in a completely unfamiliar place fills her with excitement and anxiety. London's busy streets, sounds, and culture astonish her since she has never seen anything like them before. The process of uprooting her life and starting over in a foreign country initially brings feelings of apprehension, anxiety, and even hostility. In this respect, leaving behind her support system and stepping into an unfamiliar cultural and social environment can be overwhelming. A description of the cold weather adds to Sheila's feeling of being in an unfamiliar place. Chills seep into bones and dampen spirits. Cold weather is not just uncomfortable but also contributes to her feeling of unfamiliarity and unease, as she describes it. She continues to say, "Bali had bought me woollen cardigans to wrap around my sari blouse. I refused to wear them, and even if I had put them on, it still would not have prepared me for the cold I was to encounter" (p. 92). Nevertheless, Sheila's refusal to wear the cardigans implies her resistance or reluctance to accept the new environment or adapt to change.

The other manifestation of hostility tackled in this paper is migrant women's hostility toward arranged marriages. It is a complex issue that requires an understanding of cultural traditions, gender dynamics, and individual agency. Sheila's marriage to Dr Bali illustrates her

distaste for arranged marriages. Sheila is denied the opportunity to complete her scholastic career when she is presented to Dr Bali, who is ten years older than her. In this context, family environments that are difficult and hostile can add additional stress to an individual's life (Rice et al., 2020). Sheila explains, "Nobody really knew much about Dr Bali, who he was or where he came from. The investigative stage of the whole marriage process was bypassed due to the fact that my father required money and quickly" (Nair, 2004, p. 87). Her father's request for money shows that he prioritises financial gain over his daughter's well-being or a thorough assessment of her partner. In addition to Sheila's inability to participate in the decision-making process and the rushed nature of the arrangement, the marriage negatively affects her.

Sheila manifests her catharsis of hostile feelings in several ways. She demonstrates, "I immersed myself in reading books from the library and escaping through other people's imaginary worlds, but then after I finished them, the starkness of where and whom I became even more acute" (Nair, 2004, p. 94). By involving herself in books borrowed from the library, Sheila finds comfort and release from the unfamiliar environment and oppressive arranged marriage that surrounds her. Through reading, she escapes into imaginary worlds created by other authors. Reading provides Sheila with a means of escape from her hostility and a temporary respite. Through books, she explores different perspectives, experiments with different emotions, and imagines alternative worlds. These stories give her a temporary escape from the constraints and pressures of her own existence. After finishing a book, however, she is faced with the harsh reality of her own life and its limitations. It becomes increasingly apparent that the fictional world she temporarily inhabits is in stark contrast to her own harsh reality. Sheila's catharsis, therefore, is a result of the cycle of immersion and return. This highlights the contrast between books' escapist nature and reality's unforgiving nature. Her awareness of her surroundings and identity is enhanced by this experience. Furthermore, Sheila expresses her excitement about adopting Evita and raising her as her own child. The process is cathartic for her. Despite the conflict in their relationship, Sheila finally accepts Evita's ideas and dreams after she returns from India, even though she wants her to conform to the world of responsibility and abandon the world of dreams. Astonishingly, Bali notes that Sheila abandons him after this event. "Two days after that, Sheila left me. I read the note left on the telephone and went back to work the following day" (Nair, 2004, p. 170) Bali states. Hence, setting up a supportive environment where Sheila feels heard and respected could help her let go of her hostility. This could help her develop a more positive outlook on her new home. As a result of this comprehension, hostility-induced catharsis offers an additional path of insight.

DAUGHTER'S CATHARSIS IN *GYPSY MASALA*: EVITA'S FEAR-INDUCED CATHARSIS

Gypsy Masala begins with Evita narrating her own story from her first-person point of view. It begins with Evita as a young woman, 27 years old, stuck in a monotonous 9 to 5 job with a traditional family. Throughout the narrative, she alternates between the past and present, emphasising the challenges she faces while pursuing her dream to become an actress in London. The migrant daughter Evita, with a real name Molu in *Gypsy Masala*, who leaves India at four and now lives in London with her adoptive parents Sheila and Bali, struggles with similar anxieties. This portion stresses Evita's apprehensions about family disapproval and her reluctance to pursue ambitious dreams, which hinder her from showcasing her artistic talents. It demonstrates Evita's efforts to overcome such fears under the umbrella of catharsis.

Fear, in a transnational context, is associated with insecurity, displacement, and social exclusion. It can be caused by both internal and external threats within a community, country, or region. Fear of the unfamiliar and unknown and fear of what is perceived as the “other” can lead to distrust and prejudice (Taylor, 2019). Fear of parental disapproval is a psychological condition that stems from a fear of rejection or disapproval by parents. This type of fear can profoundly affect an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, whether it develops during childhood or continues into adulthood (Fisher, 2012). Through Evita's character, Nair effectively illustrates parental disapproval-induced fear. Evita says: "It was my Auntie Sheila and my Uncle Bali who brought me up. They were a very practical couple, and veering away from the realms of reality into flights of imagination was strictly prohibited" (Nair, 2004, p. 4). It is clear from Evita's words that parental disapproval plays a crucial role in her upbringing. Auntie Sheila and Uncle Bali, who have raised her, are characterised as "practical," prioritising rationality over creativity. Evita's expectations to conform to reality and ignore imaginative pursuits created a restrictive and oppressive environment. In essence, Evita's words reveal that her parents set boundaries for appropriate behaviour. This restricts her liberty and hinders her ability to express herself freely. Evita's environment depicts a society that imposes societal expectations on women to gain acceptance and respect.

In response to her fear of parental disapproval, Evita cites some repercussions: "The consequences were dire: at best there would be stern looks of disapproval from my Auntie Sheila, and at worst the fear of further abandonment forever loomed around me" (Nair, 2004, p. 4). Evita asserts that the ramifications vary from "stern looks" to the constant threat of "further abandonment". Evita's fear is a result of her emotional dependence on Auntie Sheila and Uncle Bali. To prevent being abandoned, she represses her artistic talents and adheres to the expectations of her guardians. Moreover, as she narrates her story alternating between the past and present, Evita repeatedly alludes to "the complex web of emotions that makes us a prisoner of our own fear" (Nair, 2004, p. 31). This leads to a vicious cycle of anxiety that is difficult to break. Therefore, living a healthy, fulfilling life requires facing and overcoming our fears.

As a daughter of migrants in a British-Indian society, Evita navigates her own unique journey in pursuit of realising her dreams. Her experiences, influenced by her unique cultural and family background, illuminate the diverse paths migrants can follow in their new homeland. Throughout the novel, the fear of dreaming big dominates. Evita speaks clearly about her lifelong dream of becoming an actress and describes how her mother, Sheila, reacts to this revelation. Sheila's perception of actresses is marked by stereotypical representations of Indian women in Bollywood films that she finds trivial and over-sexualised. This stereotypical image of actresses as unreliable and morally questionable women plays a large role in Evita's mother's rejection of her dream of becoming an actress. Her mother's description of a "filthy love scene" (Nair, 2004, p. 12) illustrates this. The reaction of Evita's mother illustrates the social and cultural barriers that women encounter when pursuing their dreams. Ultimately, Evita highlights the difficulties she encounters in following her dreams due to cultural and societal limitations.

Evita's catharsis journey begins when she embarks on an adventure aimed at escaping reality. Following the African dancer symbolising her own dreams, she travels nine days back to India. During her journey, she encounters several people who provide her with guidance and emotional release. A significant catalyst for her journey is a Gypsy woman. She represents Evita's inner voice of courage. As Evita enjoys the serene, beautiful landscape of her home country, she recalls what the Gypsy woman tells her, "as you walk, tread firmly on fear, clear the path, and let the African dancer dance his way into reality" (Nair, 2004, p. 16). Using this quote as a metaphor,

Evita is advised to face her fears and pursue her passions. As Evita is instructed to "tread firmly on fear," she should not let her fears hinder her progress or hold her back. In contrast, she should face her fears with confidence and move forward. It is her cathartic journey that shows fruitfulness when she treads through her fears and faces her parents with the fact that she is following her own dreams. Evita concludes by saying, "I had seen the African dancer" (p. 64). It symbolises Evita's victory over her fears and the attainment of her dream. In this context, "seeing" involves recognising and understanding the true nature of her fears and pain and then moving beyond them. Evita's declaration that her fears vanish as soon as she says she believes indicates that she is able to overcome her fears because of her beliefs and convictions. She gains a sense of empowerment and confidence in herself because of this experience. In Evita's narration, she shows how confronting her fears and believing in something leads to catharsis or emotional release. This enables her to move forward with greater confidence and perseverance.

DAUGHTER'S CATHARSIS IN *GYPSY MASALA*:
EVITA'S REPRESSION-INDUCED CATHARSIS

Memory plays an essential role in relation to repression. A repressed memory is one we unconsciously refrain from thinking about because of a traumatic experience. Freud (1957) asserts that individuals unconsciously suppress these memories for an extended period before they are triggered, enabling retrieval and recovery. Experts recommend helping victims of traumatic exposures express themselves and speak out about their past repressed, painful experiences to facilitate acceptance of a healthier way of living (Van der Kolk, 2014).

Repression-induced catharsis is a psychological process that refers to the release or alleviation of tension caused by repressed thoughts, memories, or emotions. When repressed material comes to consciousness through therapeutic interventions or personal exploration, individuals can experience cathartic release. This section demonstrates Evita's manifestation of repression because of her struggle with family expectations and a routine 9 to 5 job.

Traditional parents focusing on duty and responsibility can indeed create an environment that represses and suppresses migrant daughters' desires and dreams. According to Evita, she has suppressed her true self and dreams to conform to others' expectations. She says: "I have managed to make myself fit into a bottle and have bobbed up and down for a long time now on the crest of other people's expectations" (Nair, 2004, p. 5). She has figuratively "fit herself into a bottle," symbolising her confinement within societal norms and the roles she has been assigned. Her bobbing up and down indicates that she is riding the waves of other people's expectations in search of their acceptance and validation. Despite conforming to these expectations, Evita still feels dissatisfied and longing. "Desperately yearning for the bottle to break but not quite sure what I'll do if it does" (p. 5), she continues. She desires the bottle to break, which represents freedom from the constraints and restraints she imposes on herself. Meanwhile, Evita is unsure what will happen if the bottle breaks. It reveals the fear and uncertainty she feels about going beyond the boundaries she has set for herself. To escape this prison, she must face her own desires, make her own choices and take responsibility for herself.

Work-related pressure can trigger numerous emotions and thoughts, including frustration, anxiety, and fear of failure. To maintain control and composure, individuals may repress these emotions. In the case of Evita, she declares: "My job is the most uninspiring, monotonous work in the history of economic periodicals. I work as a researcher for the publishers of one" (Nair, 2004, p. 11). This scenario depicts Evita's dreary and uninteresting job as a researcher for an economic periodical. As a financial analyst, she spends her days contacting heads of Fortune 500 companies,

requesting their investment strategies, and analysing financial records. Her work rarely fulfils her creatively, and she often fantasises about doing something more meaningful. Thus, she attempts to deny her true aspirations and settle for a mundane existence to cope with her current state of dissatisfaction.

Evita struggles with repressed emotions due to her parents' practical lifestyle and work pressures in London. Changing her current work environment or exploring alternative paths would be required. The key to achieving this would be for her to become aware of her suppressed desires and pursuits and act accordingly. To break free from these confinements, Evita bravely quits her job and embarks on a journey to India. Evita asserts: "The tension which had knotted in my throat during the last three years diffused into the air as the letter landed on his desk. An enormous smile spread across my face" (Nair, 2004, p. 15). Evita expresses a deep sense of relief and liberation as she breaks free from her parent's expectations and her boring job. Her three-year tension is metaphorically referred to as a knot in her throat. This heightens the crippling effect it has had on the way she expresses herself and pursues her own interests. When Evita quits her job and writes a resignation letter, she takes a decisive step toward establishing her independence. Seeing how much control she has over her life, she experiences an emotional release. Through letting go of expectations and limitations, she gains freedom.

CONCLUSION

This article delves deeply into the diasporic experiences portrayed in *Gypsy Masala*, highlighting the intricate emotional and therapeutic journeys undertaken by its characters. Through the protagonists' diasporic backgrounds, the narrative closely examines their cathartic voyages, emphasising the profound emotional and psychological transformations occurring as they navigate between different cultural contexts. This journey entails a complex interplay of loss, identity crises, adaptation, and, ultimately, a form of personal and communal healing. The diasporic condition prompts individuals to reevaluate their sense of self and identity within new cultural landscapes after being uprooted from their familiar cultural milieu. This process of catharsis encompasses both individual healing and the reconfiguration of cultural identities and connections. The renegotiation of these identities is pivotal to the characters' growth, enabling them to reconcile past traumas, embrace their dual identities, and forge meaningful relationships in their adopted environments.

The narrative also explores how the cathartic process aids in resolving communication barriers commonly encountered between migrant mothers and daughters stemming from cultural disparities and generational gaps. By directly addressing underlying concerns and unspoken resentments, families can cultivate stronger and more profound bonds, fostering a sense of belonging and interconnectedness. Furthermore, catharsis empowers mothers and daughters to confront and overcome unresolved traumas, enabling them to release repressed emotions and adopt healthier coping mechanisms, thus enhancing their overall well-being and mental health. This transformative journey deepens their mutual understanding of each other's struggles and triumphs, fostering greater comfort and solidarity within the familial unit. Together, they navigate the challenges of migration and assimilation, facilitating their personal growth and communal progress.

This article underscores recurring themes explored by South Asian female authors residing in Britain, including the complexities of dual identities, cultural conflicts, and the juxtaposition of traditional values with the realities of assimilation into a new society. These enduring motifs will continue to feature prominently in the works of diasporic writers, offering valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by migrant communities. Further exploration of literary works produced by emerging South Asian writers in Britain promises to provide additional perspectives on the dynamics of diaspora and its impact on individuals and communities.

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