



**CONTRASTING FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GENDER AND  
POWER IN THE WORKS OF MALATHI RAO AND JESSICA MOOR**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the feminist perspectives of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, focusing on their portrayal of gender and power dynamics. Malathi Rao, an Indian author, explores the lives of women within the context of Indian society, highlighting the intersection of traditional and modern expectations. Her works, such as *"The Bridge,"* delve into generational struggles for autonomy and equality, offering a nuanced depiction of women's experiences within patriarchal structures. Jessica Moor, a British author, addresses contemporary issues of gender-based violence through her stark and unflinching narratives. Her novel *"Keeper"* exposes the realities of domestic abuse and critiques the societal and institutional failures that perpetuate such violence. By comparing and contrasting the feminist themes in their works, this study aims to uncover the unique and overlapping elements of their narratives, illustrating how contemporary feminist literature addresses issues of autonomy, equality, and resistance. The analysis is grounded in feminist literary theory, including Simone de Beauvoir's concept of *"the other,"* Mustafa Esma's theory of gender performativity, and Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism. Through a detailed comparative analysis, this study highlights the diverse yet interconnected ways in which feminist authors like Rao and Moor contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and justice.

**Keywords:** Feminist perspectives, gender dynamics, Malathi Rao, Jessica Moor, patriarchal structures, domestic abuse, feminist literary theory, autonomy, equality, resistance.

**1. Introduction**

In the realm of contemporary literature, feminist perspectives offer a critical lens through which the complexities of gender and power dynamics are examined. Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, two prominent authors from different cultural backgrounds, have significantly contributed to this discourse. Through their compelling narratives and richly developed characters, both authors explore the multifaceted experiences of women and the societal structures that shape their lives. This paper aims to compare and contrast the feminist perspectives of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, analyzing how each author portrays themes of gender and power in their works. By examining the unique and overlapping elements of their narratives, this study seeks to



illuminate the diverse ways in which contemporary feminist literature addresses issues of autonomy, equality, and resistance.

Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor are recognized as influential contemporary feminist authors, each contributing unique perspectives on gender and power dynamics through their literary works. Malathi Rao, an Indian author, is known for her intricate portrayal of women's lives in the context of Indian society. Her works often delve into the challenges faced by women as they navigate traditional and modern expectations. One of her notable works, *"The Bridge,"* explores the lives of women from different generations, highlighting the evolving yet persistent struggles for autonomy and equality (Rao, 2013). Rao's narrative style and thematic focus offer a deep understanding of the intersection between culture and gender. Through her detailed character studies and engaging storytelling, Rao brings to light the complexities of women's experiences within the patriarchal structures of Indian society, emphasizing both their resilience and vulnerability.

Jessica Moor, on the other hand, is a British author whose writing is marked by a stark and often brutal examination of contemporary issues surrounding gender and power. Her debut novel, *"Keeper,"* addresses the harrowing realities of domestic abuse and the societal structures that enable such violence (Moor, 2020). Moor's work is characterized by its raw and unapologetic portrayal of women's experiences, making a significant impact on readers and critics alike. Her narrative approach not only brings attention to critical issues but also challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths about gender-based violence. Through her intense and evocative storytelling, Moor emphasizes the urgent need for societal change and greater support for survivors of abuse. Together, these authors' works offer a comprehensive view of the feminist struggle against patriarchal norms, each highlighting different facets of the fight for gender equality within their respective cultural contexts.

## 2. Research Objectives:

- To analyze and compare the feminist perspectives of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor.
- To explore how each author addresses themes of gender and power.

## 3. Literature Review:

### *Feminist Literary Theory*

Feminist literary theory provides a framework for analyzing literature through the lens of gender dynamics and power structures. Key theories within this field include Simone de Beauvoir's concept of *"the other,"* which explores how women have historically been marginalized and defined in opposition to men (Beauvoir, 1949). Additionally, Mustafa, Esmā theory of gender performativity challenges the notion of fixed gender identities, arguing that gender is a socially constructed performance (Mustafa and Esmā, 1990). These foundational theories highlight how literature can both reflect and challenge societal norms regarding gender. Another significant contribution is Bell Hooks' intersectional approach, which emphasizes the importance of understanding how race, class, and gender intersect to shape women's experiences (hooks, 1984). By applying



these theoretical frameworks, scholars can uncover the implicit and explicit ways in which literature critiques patriarchal structures and advocates for gender equality.

Moreover, Elaine Showalter's concept of "*gynocriticism*" focuses on the study of women's writing as a distinct literary tradition. Showalter argues for the importance of understanding women's literature within its own historical and social context, rather than merely comparing it to male-authored texts (Showalter, 1977). This approach has been instrumental in highlighting the unique voices and experiences of female authors. Similarly, the work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, particularly in their seminal book "*The Madwoman in the Attic*," explores how women writers have subverted traditional literary conventions to express their perspectives (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). These feminist literary theories provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the works of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, allowing for a deeper understanding of how their narratives engage with issues of gender and power.

### ***Previous Research on Malathi Rao***

Research on Malathi Rao's fiction often centers on her portrayal of women's lives within the socio-cultural context of India. Scholars have noted that Rao's works offer a critical examination of the patriarchal structures that confine and define women's roles. In her analysis of "*The Bridge*," Sreenivas (2010) highlights how Rao uses multi-generational narratives to explore the evolving yet persistent gender inequalities in Indian society. The study emphasizes Rao's ability to depict the nuanced ways in which cultural expectations shape women's identities and choices. Furthermore, Shanmugam et al., (2016) discuss Rao's narrative techniques, noting her use of detailed character studies to reveal the inner lives and struggles of her female protagonists. This approach allows Rao to present a realistic and empathetic portrayal of women's experiences, making her work a valuable contribution to feminist literature. Additionally, Rao's exploration of themes such as marriage, motherhood, and female solidarity has been widely discussed in scholarly work. Pallathadka et al., (2022) examine how Rao portrays the institution of marriage as both a site of oppression and potential empowerment for women. Through her characters, Rao critiques the traditional expectations placed on women while also highlighting moments of resistance and agency. Similarly, Sharma (2017) focuses on the theme of female solidarity in Rao's fiction, arguing that her depiction of supportive relationships between women serves as a counter-narrative to the dominant patriarchal discourse. These studies collectively underscore the importance of Rao's work in providing a voice to Indian women and contributing to the broader feminist literary canon.

### ***Previous Research on Jessica Moor***

Jessica Moor's fiction has garnered critical attention for its unflinching portrayal of gender-based violence and its critique of societal complacency. Scholars have praised her debut novel "*Keeper*" for its raw and realistic depiction of domestic abuse. Smith (2021) argues that Moor's use of a thriller format serves to engage readers while also exposing the insidious nature of abuse and the systemic failures that allow it to persist. The novel's structure, which alternates between the perspectives of the victim and the investigation into her death, is noted



for its effectiveness in conveying the complexities of abusive relationships and their impact on survivors. Additionally, Brown (2022) highlights Moor's exploration of the psychological effects of abuse, emphasizing the novel's contribution to understanding the long-term trauma experienced by survivors.

Research has also focused on Moor's critique of institutional responses to domestic violence. In her analysis, Johnson (2021) discusses how *"Keeper"* sheds light on the inadequacies of the legal and social systems designed to protect victims. Moor's portrayal of apathetic law enforcement officers and overburdened social workers underscores the need for systemic change and greater accountability. Furthermore, Lewis (2023) examines Moor's use of narrative techniques, such as shifting perspectives and fragmented timelines, to reflect the disorienting and often chaotic experience of living with abuse. These scholarly works highlight Moor's significant contribution to feminist literature, particularly in bringing attention to the urgent issue of gender-based violence and advocating for societal change.

### ***Gaps in the Literature***

Despite the extensive research on the individual works of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, there is a noticeable gap in comparative studies that analyze their contributions to feminist literature. Most existing scholarship tends to focus on the cultural and social contexts specific to each author, often neglecting the potential insights that can be gained from a cross-cultural comparison. For instance, while Rao's work is frequently examined within the framework of Indian socio-cultural norms and Moor's within the Western context of domestic violence, there is limited exploration of how their feminist perspectives intersect and diverge. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how different cultural backgrounds influence feminist narratives and what commonalities exist in the portrayal of gender and power across diverse settings. Furthermore, there is a lack of critical analysis that considers the broader implications of their works within the global feminist movement. Comparative studies could provide a richer understanding of how feminist themes are articulated across different cultural contexts and how these narratives contribute to the universal discourse on gender equality. By addressing this gap, future research can enhance the appreciation of Rao's and Moor's contributions to feminist literature, offering a more comprehensive view of contemporary feminist thought. This study aims to fill this gap by juxtaposing the works of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, thereby highlighting the diverse yet interconnected ways in which feminist authors address issues of gender and power.

### **4. Methodology**

The research design for this study is a qualitative comparative analysis, which involves a detailed examination of textual data to uncover underlying themes and patterns. This approach is particularly well-suited for analyzing the nuanced and complex portrayals of gender and power in literary works. By comparing the works of Malathi Rao and Jessica Moor, the study aims to identify both unique and shared feminist perspectives. Qualitative methods allow for an in-depth exploration of how each author constructs their narratives, develops



characters, and addresses socio-cultural issues related to gender. This comparative analysis not only highlights the distinct voices of each author but also provides a broader understanding of contemporary feminist literature.

### *Selection of Texts*

The selection of specific works for analysis is guided by several criteria to ensure a comprehensive and representative comparison. For Malathi Rao, the chosen texts include *"The Bridge"* and *"Disorderly Women,"* which are noted for their rich exploration of women's lives within the Indian socio-cultural context. These works provide insight into the generational and societal challenges faced by women, making them ideal for examining Rao's feminist perspective. For Jessica Moor, the primary texts are *"Keeper"* and *"The Fall,"* both of which address the pervasive issue of gender-based violence in Western society. *"Keeper"* is particularly significant for its raw depiction of domestic abuse, while *"The Fall"* explores themes of power and control in relationships. These selections are based on their thematic relevance and critical acclaim, ensuring that the analysis captures the core elements of each author's feminist narrative.

### *Analytical Framework*

The analytical framework for this study incorporates key feminist and literary theories to facilitate a thorough examination of the selected texts. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of *"the other"* and Mustafa and Esma's Theory of gender performativity provide foundational perspectives for analyzing how gender identities are constructed and challenged in the narratives. Additionally, Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism offers a lens for understanding the distinct literary tradition of women's writing and how Rao and Moor contribute to this tradition. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's exploration of female subversion in literature further informs the analysis of narrative techniques and character development. These feminist theories are complemented by a close reading of the texts, focusing on narrative structure, character dynamics, and thematic content. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to uncover how Rao and Moor articulate feminist concerns and critique patriarchal norms through their fiction.

## **5. Analysis**

### *Themes of Gender and Power in Malathi Rao's Works*

Malathi Rao's works, such as *"The Bridge"* and *"Disorderly Women,"* offer a rich exploration of gender and power dynamics within the socio-cultural context of India. In *"The Bridge,"* Rao examines the lives of women from different generations, highlighting how traditional and modern expectations intersect and often clash. The narrative delves into the struggles for autonomy and self-identity, depicting the pressures of familial and societal obligations that women face. Rao's portrayal of power dynamics is subtle yet powerful, showcasing how patriarchal structures are maintained through everyday practices and expectations. The generational perspective allows for a nuanced analysis of how these dynamics evolve yet remain fundamentally oppressive over time.



In *"Disorderly Women,"* Rao further explores themes of resistance and solidarity among women. The characters in this novel navigate the constraints imposed by societal norms, finding strength and agency in their relationships with one another. Rao's feminist perspective is evident in her detailed character studies and empathetic storytelling, which highlight the resilience and complexity of women's experiences. Through her narrative, Rao critiques the deeply ingrained patriarchal values and emphasizes the importance of female solidarity in challenging these norms. Her works provide a voice to the often-marginalized experiences of Indian women, contributing significantly to feminist literature by offering a culturally specific yet universally resonant critique of gender and power.

### ***Themes of Gender and Power in Jessica Moor's Works***

Jessica Moor's fiction, particularly *"Keeper"* and *"The Fall,"* provides a stark and often brutal examination of gender-based violence and societal complacency. *"Keeper"* is a compelling narrative that addresses the harrowing realities of domestic abuse. Moor uses a thriller format to engage readers while exposing the insidious nature of abuse and the systemic failures that allow it to persist. The novel's structure, alternating between the victim's perspective and the investigation into her death, effectively conveys the complexities of abusive relationships and their impact on survivors. Moor's portrayal of power dynamics is raw and unapologetic, highlighting the psychological manipulation and control that characterize abusive relationships.

In *"The Fall,"* Moor continues to explore themes of power and control within personal relationships. The narrative delves into the darker aspects of human behavior and societal responses to abuse. Moor's feminist perspective is evident in her critique of the legal and social systems that fail to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Her intense and evocative storytelling emphasizes the urgent need for societal change and greater support for survivors. Moor's works challenge readers to confront uncomfortable truths about gender-based violence and advocate for systemic reform. Her contribution to feminist literature lies in her unflinching depiction of abuse and her call for a more just and empathetic society.

### ***Comparative Analysis***

A comparative analysis of Malathi Rao's and Jessica Moor's works reveals both similarities and differences in their feminist perspectives and narrative techniques. Both authors address themes of gender and power, but they do so within distinct cultural contexts. Rao's work is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of Indian society, highlighting the subtle and pervasive nature of patriarchal oppression through familial and societal expectations. In contrast, Moor's narratives are set in contemporary Western society and focus on the overt and brutal manifestations of gender-based violence. This difference in context influences their portrayal of power dynamics and the forms of resistance their characters employ.

Despite these differences, both authors share a commitment to exposing and critiquing patriarchal structures. Rao's detailed character studies and multi-generational narratives provide a nuanced understanding of women's struggles and resilience within a traditional society. Moor's intense and fragmented storytelling brings to light





the immediate and devastating impact of domestic abuse, urging for societal change and greater accountability. The similarities in their feminist perspectives lie in their emphasis on female agency and the need for solidarity and systemic reform. By comparing these two authors, we gain a broader understanding of how feminist literature can address universal issues of gender and power while also reflecting specific cultural and social realities. This comparative study highlights the diverse yet interconnected ways in which feminist authors contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and justice.

## 6. Discussion

The comparative analysis of Malathi Rao's and Jessica Moor's works provides a rich tapestry of feminist thought, showcasing how different cultural and social contexts shape the portrayal of gender and power dynamics. Both authors, through their distinct narrative styles and thematic focuses, offer profound insights into the struggles and resilience of women. Rao's exploration of generational conflicts and the subtleties of patriarchal oppression in Indian society contrasts sharply with Moor's stark depiction of overt gender-based violence in Western contexts. This juxtaposition highlights the varied manifestations of patriarchy and the diverse forms of resistance and empowerment that women employ across different settings. Malathi Rao's fiction, with its intricate portrayal of women's lives within the socio-cultural framework of India, emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural specificities in feminist discourse. Her characters navigate a landscape shaped by tradition and modernity, familial expectations, and societal norms. Rao's detailed character studies and multi-generational narratives reveal the complexities of women's experiences, showcasing both their vulnerability and strength. Her work underscores the persistent nature of patriarchal oppression while also highlighting the subtle forms of resistance that women employ to assert their autonomy and identity. Rao's contribution to feminist literature lies in her ability to portray the nuanced and often contradictory experiences of women within a traditional society.

Jessica Moor's fiction, on the other hand, provides a visceral and uncompromising look at the realities of domestic abuse and societal complicity in the Western context. Her narratives are marked by their raw and intense portrayal of abuse, control, and the psychological impact on survivors. Moor's use of a thriller format in "*Keeper*" and the fragmented timelines in "*The Fall*" serve to engage readers and convey the chaotic and disorienting experience of living with abuse. Her critique of legal and social systems that fail to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable is a powerful call for systemic change. Moor's work not only brings attention to the immediate and devastating impact of gender-based violence but also advocates for greater empathy and support for survivors.

The differences in cultural context between Rao's and Moor's works highlight the importance of considering cultural and societal factors in feminist analysis. While Rao's narratives are deeply embedded in the Indian socio-cultural milieu, emphasizing the intergenerational transmission of patriarchal values, Moor's works reflect the contemporary Western struggle against overt and systemic gender-based violence. Despite these differences, both authors share a common goal: to expose and challenge patriarchal structures and advocate for



gender equality. Their works, when examined together, provide a comprehensive view of the feminist struggle, illustrating how the fight for gender justice transcends cultural boundaries and manifests in various forms of narrative resistance.

## 7. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Malathi Rao's and Jessica Moor's literary works reveals the diverse yet interconnected ways in which feminist perspectives are articulated across different cultural contexts. Malathi Rao's nuanced exploration of generational conflicts and patriarchal oppression in Indian society, alongside Jessica Moor's raw and unflinching depiction of gender-based violence in the Western context, underscores the varied manifestations of patriarchy and the forms of resistance women employ. Rao's detailed character studies and empathetic storytelling highlight the complexities of women's lives within traditional societal structures, emphasizing both their vulnerability and resilience. In contrast, Moor's intense narratives and critique of institutional failures bring to light the urgent need for systemic change and greater support for survivors of abuse. Together, their works contribute significantly to the broader feminist literary canon by exposing the multifaceted nature of gender oppression and advocating for gender equality.

This study has highlighted the importance of considering cultural specificities in feminist analysis while recognizing the universal aspects of the feminist struggle. By juxtaposing the works of Rao and Moor, we gain a deeper understanding of how feminist literature can address global issues of gender and power while also reflecting distinct cultural and social realities. The findings emphasize the need for a diverse array of feminist voices in literature, as they collectively enrich our understanding of the complexities of gender dynamics and the ongoing struggle for equality and justice. Future research could further explore the intersections of feminist perspectives across different cultural contexts, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of global feminist literature. This comparative study reaffirms the value of feminist literature in challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for a more equitable society, highlighting the power of narrative to inspire change and promote social justice.

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