

Internalized Misogyny: A Transnational Exploration of Select Literary Narratives

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Abstract

Patriarchy is a pervasive global phenomenon, that creates social, cultural and political disparities and perpetuates gender inequality, discrimination and bias. It is deeply embedded in various discourses of human civilization, operating through both identifiable and unidentifiable mechanisms. Internalized misogyny, many a time is a subtle apparatus that manifests and maintains patriarchy and gender inequality. Identifying internalized misogyny is a complex task owing to the fact that its practices are often legitimized and internalized by women, thus making it unrecognized. Periodically, when overt structures of patriarchal hegemonies are criticized, the covert means of hegemonic functioning, particularly internalized misogyny remains underrepresented and uncritiqued. Thus, addressing the problem of internalized misogyny is the need of the hour. This study adopts two literary narratives namely, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan and *Idris: Keeper of the Light* by Anita Nair for the ongoing discussion on internalized misogyny. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan inquire into multigenerational reverberations of internalized misogyny, through the traction of mothers and daughters impelling Chinese traditions and gender roles upon themselves and other women around them. *Idris: Keeper of the Light* by Anita Nair clasps the reader's attention towards 17th Century India and how the female characters grapples with societal norms that incarcerate them into subservient roles. Hence, this proposed paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the select works to identify and examine the discourse of internalized misogyny, that perpetuates gender inequality. By scrutinizing both works, this paper divulges into the omnipresent nature of internalized misogyny irrespective of contrasting historical and cultural contexts.

Keywords: patriarchy, internalized misogyny, gender inequality, patriarchal hegemony, multigenerational

1. Introduction

Patriarchy is an antediluvian social system that evolved over time. Theorists and social evolutionists have heterogenous inferences to the origin of patriarchy, with a few arguing that human civilization has initially formed matriarchal systems during their shift from barbarism, J.J. Bachofen postulated the idea that the geneology of human society, morality and religion originates from women or motherhood (Partenheimer, 2005). "Bachofen's original contribution was to claim that women in primitive society developed culture and that there was a stage of 'matriarchy' which led society out of barbarism" (Lerner, 1986, p.26). Overtime matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy in civilizations all over the world and for ages human society has been characterized by patriarchal inequities. As already known, in the patriarchal system the cultural, political, social and economic discourses are determined and operated in favour of men. "Patriarchy's defining elements are its male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered character, but this is just the beginning" (Johnson, 2014, p.37). Patriarchal hegemony creates gender hierarchy through which the idea of gender difference is being asserted in the society. The very concept of gender difference dictates gender roles mediating a lower position to women, ultimately leading to their exploitation. While gender hierarchy privileges men, it negates the identity of women, representing them as docile and sensitive, who are supposed to remain in the margins of home/society. In fact, this promotes misogyny that accentuates female exploitation.

Scholars and academics have long questioned the logic of gender discrimination and misogyny, often criticizing the various discourses of patriarchy. However, despite all these endeavors, gender discrimination, misogyny and female subjugation continue to exist and patriarchy endures to function in various social arenas. "Patriarchal culture is about the core value of control and domination in almost every area of human existence. From the expression of emotion to economics to the natural environment, gaining and exercising control is continuing goal" (Johnson, 2014, p.37). Social inquiry in the field of gender discrimination becomes relevant in this context as recurring problematization through various academic disciplines would trigger female emancipation and social justice. Academic enquiries have represented several aspects of gender issues, often citing patriarchy as a root cause that is practiced, sustained, mediated and legitimized by men alone- "Patriarchy is a social structure, not a conspiracy among men. It is not always intentional; men need not intend to oppress women. Men too are subject to the enormous pressures of a social system that creates paths of least resistance consistent with patriarchy.... Men as well as women are damaged by patriarchy" (Becker, 1999, p.30). However, it would be erroneous to conclude that

gender discrimination and misogyny are solely an androcentric phenomenon. The term 'internalized misogyny' becomes relevant in this context as it expands the discourse of patriarchy and its allied mechanisms beyond androcentrism, focusing on women who instigate and practice patriarchy. An interdisciplinary study of literary narratives that provides insights into the socio-cultural actuality would significantly contribute to the study of 'internalized misogyny'. The proposed study, utilizing the literary narratives endeavor to examine 'internalized misogyny' and its operation through which gender discrimination and patriarchy are being asserted in the contemporary society. This study adopts Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and Anita Nair's *Idris: Keeper of the Light* for the exploration. A comprehensive analysis of both works, irrespective of their geographical and socio-cultural origins would enable an effective understanding of internalized misogyny.

2. Literature Review

One of patriarchy's cultural element is 'gendering', which promotes stereotypical gender roles for men and women. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1952, p.273) is one of the celebrated quotes about gender by Simone De Beauvoir in her outstanding work *The Second Sex*. A conjecture about gender is that, it is a social construct, "Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it is bred into our genes. Most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Yet gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly "doing gender" (Lorber, 1994, p.13). Gender is acquired as human beings grow, through various agents such as family, peer groups, education and through mass media. Gender differentiates between men and women on the basis of societal terms or rules, rules that determine the behavior, dressing and roles associated with being a man, woman, boy or a girl. These gender signs and signals have become so much ubiquitous in our society that people without any second thoughts follow them blindly. It is culturally believed that there are only two definite and opposite gender: man and woman and this system of power only exists to create conflict and division. According to John Money gender roles are every action or affirmations made by a person that illustrates their identity or status as a boy or man, girl or woman (Money, 1972). Gender is established through performance; women and men perform gender in order to fit into the society. Cultural norms of femininity and masculinity are taught to children from a very young age and thus it becomes embedded in their minds, "Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through a stylized representation of acts" (Butler, 1998, p.519).

One of the major factors contributing to gender inequality is 'sexism'. Sexism naturalizes sex differences, by justifying patriarchal social dispositions as inevitable factors that men and women can never abstain from. Misogyny is a form of sexism where women are always considered inferior to men. It is hatred against a woman or a girl ensued by intolerance and distrust, thereby legitimizing and normalizing the oppression by patriarchal hegemony. "Misogyny means women serve as scapegoats during times of social hardship, such as during the witch trials of the Middle Ages. Misogyny thus underpins gendered power imbalances in patriarchal society, to the detriment of all women. While patriarchy prevails, so will misogyny" (Ussher, 2016, p.2). Misogyny maintains women's position as the second sex and this benefits men socially, financially and politically. During the Salem Witch Trials between 1692 and 1693 in Massachusetts, fourteen women were killed because of ingrained misogyny. They believed that women were inherently sinful and their souls were unprotected from the devil because of their vulnerable and debilitated bodies. According to Kate Manne "Misogyny is primarily a property of individual agents (typically, although not necessarily, men) who are prone to feel hatred, hostility or other similar emotions toward any and every woman, or at least women generally, simply because they are women. That is, a misogynist's attitudes are held to be caused or triggered merely by his representing people as women (either individually or collectively), and on no further basis specific to his targets. Such a representation, together with agent's background attitudes toward women as, for example, disgusting, loathsome, fearsome, or mindless sexual objects is supposed to be enough to trigger his hostility in most, if not all, cases (i.e., admitting of only limited exceptions, such as for those few women who somehow manage to dispel his hostility)" (Manne, 2018, pp.32-33). Misogyny operates within the patriarchal system and it is used to enforce subordination of women, and as long as a culture contains and fosters misogyny, the society would be dominated by misogynists.

Internalized misogyny materializes as a result of women evaluating other women on the basis of their physical appearance, their private lives and behavior. Women label and mock other women and thus tries to decrease their own value as well as the worth of other women. "Internalized misogyny is made up of two main elements: self- objectification and passive acceptance of gender roles" (Dehlin, 2018, p.4). The Internalized Misogyny scale was introduced by Margaret Piggott in 2004 to measure internalized misogyny in lesbian women. She used the term internalized homophobia to state that internalized misogyny existed among lesbian women and "the internalized misogyny scale is reliable for measuring internalized homophobia and internalized misogyny in lesbians. The scale provides a simple means for conducting an initial assessment of the extent to which homophobia and misogyny has been internalized" (Piggott, 2004, p.67). The study of internalized misogyny has also been done in the area of video gaming. The sexist content present in games influences how women see themselves and other women, where video games also tend to depict women unfavorably. Women may internalize misogynistic beliefs, they start to believe that they are less important and valuable than men (McCullough et al., 2020). The term 'I am not like other girls' which is presented through social media platforms like Tik Tok is very much toxic. The Term 'I am not like other girls' is used by women in order to show that 'they are not like other women'. They make that statement so as to become desirable by men, and they put down other women in this process to display how they are different from other women, by subjecting themselves to bygone gender stereotypes. Jessica Rische in her work "*I am not like other Girls*" *The Phenomenology of Affect: How is Female Self Expression affected by Internalized Misogyny?* says, Internalized misogyny affects not only female self -expression but also female self- representation in

cyber spaces (Rische, 2023). In *Lean in Women, Work and the Will to Lead* Sheryl remarks about Internalized misogyny in the workplace. Women face a lot of misogynistic remarks and situations in the workplace, and it happens mostly from men. But when women become competitive, they start to belittle other female colleagues, “Women’s negative views of female coworkers are often seen as an objective assessment – more credible than views of men. When women voice gender bias, they legitimize it. Obviously, a negative attitude cannot be gender based if it come from another woman. Women internalize disparaging cultural attitudes and then echo them back. As a result, women are not just victims of sexism, they can also be perpetrators” (Sandberg, 2013, p.139). In the article *To Explore the Relationship between Internalized Misogyny and Career Choices among Indian Women* the writers delve into the career choices women make and how internalized misogyny among women influence them to take decisions regarding their career. “The study suggests a complex relationship between internalized misogyny and career aspirations of Indian women, emphasizing the negative impact of internalized misogynistic beliefs on their career decisions” (Jha, 2024, p.2820). Internalized misogyny among teenage girls is another area that has been explored by researchers. In *Uplift or Undermine? The manifestation of Internalized misogyny in Teenage girls* the writer emphasizes about how teenage girls actively participate in propagating misogyny by internalizing and policing other girls to perform misogynistic practices. The process of how internalized misogyny is manifested by teenage girls and how they disseminate internalized misogyny through their day-to-day interactions (Wilson, 2021). Internalized misogyny is also explored by researchers in the field of health sciences. In the paper *Is there a relationship between internalized misogyny and premenstrual syndrome and dysmenorrhea in young women? A descriptive-relational study* concluded that internalized misogyny in young women was highly correlated with PMS and dysmenorrhea, and increased internalized misogyny also increased the severity of PMS and dysmenorrhea in young women (Erenoglu et al., 2023). Sue Einhorn’s article *From the woman’s point of view. How Internalized Misogyny affects relationships between women* writes about internalized misogyny from a woman’s perspective, “This paper is a thin slice of the whole as it focuses on how misogyny effects women’s relationship with each other. I propose that women keep renewing the power relations of patriarchy and the contempt of misogyny through policing each other.... I question how the unconscious patriarchal formulation of group analytic theory, erases or disavows, what misogyny does to women in the home, in our relationship to our body and above all, to what it does to mothers and so to our relationship with each other as women” (Einhorn, 2021, p. 482)

Amy Tan’s *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* has been studied from different perspectives like mother daughter relationship, migration literature and works focusing on Chinese culture. Gulden Yuksel in *Ethnic Anxiety and Identity in Amy Tan’s The Bonesetter’s Daughter* says “The mothers are influential characters in the lives of their daughters, since the daughters may take their mothers as role models or they ignore their mothers and follow a different way. The daughters in Tan’s novel construct a relation with their mothers in order to be assimilated and acculturated in Americanized life. In order to have an authentic self, they realize that the past and heritage should not be ignored because they create the present” (Yuksel, 2016, p.71). Amy Tan’s works are also known for the depiction of spirituality, her works are rich in Chinese heritage and culture. Tan’s works are also known for its supernatural elements like ghosts. The Chinese believed that ghosts had the power to control their lives and they also believed in curses. In *Spirituality: A Womanist Reading of Amy Tan’s The Bonesetter’s Daughter* Xiumei Pu says that “The ghost of Liu Xin functions as the spiritual guidance in the quest of the three generations of women. Liu Xin’s spirit is the inner strength for Ruth to deal with dilemma of being both Chinese and American; the lubricant for the mother-daughter tension between Ruth and Lu Ling; the guidance for Lu Ling in hardships; and the medium to have the voice of three generations of women heard and the matrilineal heritage preserved” (Pu, 2006, p.49).

Anita Nair’s works have been interpreted in the pretext of the culture of Kerala in the 17th Century. Scholars have also studied *Idris: Keeper of the Light* as a work about expeditions. This work of fiction is a tale about voyages, the protagonist of the novel – Idris, has an unquenchable thirst for travels, “Travels give meaning to his life; he takes up various occupations in order to satisfy his incessant inner urge to see various places. He does not have any other aspiration than exuberant and unrestrained rambling throughout the world, and he is overwhelmed in wandering in uncharted as well as unmapped lands. He, who is epitomized as a man with an unfathomed spirit of travel in his blood, has even been ready to do anything to explore such unknown and strange lands” (Sasikumar, 2019, p.538), says Sasikumar P in *Mapping Travels of the De-territorialized: A Study of Anita Nair’s Idris: Keeper of the Light*. The novel is set in 1659 AD, the protagonist visits Malabar in Kerala in order to attend the Zamorin’s Mamangam festivities. Her work beautifully depicts the history of Kerala. Sushita Anoop in *New Historicist Reading of Idris: Keeper of the Light* says, “Anita Nair brings about valuable information of Kerala history in her novel. She wrote literary work based on historical context. Here text and context are given equal importance through which a parallel reading is possible. She depicts the spirit of Indian society by showing Indian culture. She also tries to portray seventeenth century Indian society. Veneration of past tradition is seen here” (Anoop, 2016, p.1-2). Internalized misogyny has been explored in various disciplines including, psychology, film studies, queer studies, tik-tok and other social media platforms extending its operation to workplace. Many a time, researchers have adopted a quantitative methodology to analyze internalized misogyny, thus creating a paucity of qualitative studies, particularly in literature.

It is in this context that an academic inquiry into the role of women in accentuating gender differences and hierarchy utilizing literary narratives becomes pertinent. The select works of Amy Tan and Anita Nair depict Internalized Misogyny through their characters. By conducting a comparative analysis of the select American and Indian works, the study anticipates that Internalized Misogyny is a global pervasive phenomenon.

3. Methodology

The ongoing discussion contextualizing internalized misogyny rely on select literary narratives written in English, that stems from two

different literary tradition, namely American literature and Indian literature, depicting female actuality. The study attempts to identify the phenomenon of internalized misogyny through the characters depicted in the select works. The study identifies and analyzes the notions of internalized misogyny through mother-daughter relationship and other female characters who maintain patriarchal sensibilities. The works share emphasis in depicting the struggles and hardships of women, highlighting the universality of female plight. The analysis examines how internalized misogyny, manifested through the actions or influence of one female character, contributes to the downfall of another female character, thus supporting the proposed argument. A comprehensive analysis of literary narratives, originating from two different literary traditions validates the actual operation of internalized misogyny in the society, irrespective of geographical boundaries.

4. What Is Internalized Misogyny?

Internalized misogyny is women embodying pessimistic outlook about other women. It drastically affects women themselves. Women inadvertently perpetuate misogynistic and sexist beliefs; by becoming apathetic towards such discrimination and they even try to enlighten other women to live in accordance with prevailing gender-based traditions. The term 'internalized misogyny' was coined by Margaret Piggott in her work *Double Jeopardy: Lesbians and the legacy of multiple stigmatized identities*. Piggott developed the 'Internalized misogyny scale' to quantitatively analyze the effects of internalized misogyny and homophobia among the lesbian community. Internalized misogyny is the unconscious or premeditated aligning with sexist beliefs and stereotypes. It is the result of eons of societal conditioning, where women gradually internalize hatred and objectification and then catechize other women to conform to it. Shirin Ebadi an Iranian Nobel Laureate for Peace in the year 2003, says that women can also propagate and sustain patriarchal culture, she says patriarchal culture is like 'hemophilia', a genetic disorder, that the mother passes on to her son. Women are victims of patriarchy, but men who are considered as 'oppressors' are also raised by these women in the confinement of their homes, education starts at home and men learns about patriarchy from their own household and surroundings. Women directly or indirectly participate in promulgating patriarchy; they reflect these patriarchal rules to their daughters and sons. The term misogyny is always associated with men and patriarchy. It is a general notion that men are patriarchal and from time immemorial they always have tried to be superior to women. Even feminists always speak about patriarchy as something which is propagated by men, but they always fail to care for the fact that women also take an active role in passing on the tenets of patriarchy. "The system of patriarchy can function only with women. This co-operation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining "respectability" and "deviance" according to women's sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to confirming women. For nearly four thousand years women have shaped their lives and acted under the umbrella of patriarchy, specifically a form of patriarchy best described as paternalistic dominance" (Lerner, 1986, p.217).

Internalized misogyny decreases the value of women, when they subconsciously plot sexist and misogynistic ideas into other women and to themselves. Women perform internalized misogyny in the form slut shaming other women, mistrusting other women, favoring men over women and denigrating achievements of other women. It leads women to doubt, undervalue and shame themselves as well as other people who belongs to the same gender- "Women observe, defeat, insult, belittle, and overthrow each other, which is included in the acts of internalized misogyny. Internalized misogyny is a tool used by patriarchy to keep women as subordinate by diverting women's attention from opposing patriarchy to fighting among themselves. Internalized misogyny strengthens the oppression of women in society" (Amelia & Udasmoro, 2023, p.657). It would be erroneous to say that patriarchy is a male centered phenomenon propagated by men, originated and functioned by men as women knowingly or unknowingly propagate male hegemony and it smoothens the function of patriarchy.

4.1 Inherited Chains, Internalized Misogyny in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is rich in Chinese traditions and practices, and like any other culture women were raised in a conservative environment. There are many instances in the novel which portray Internalized Misogyny. The novel limns about mother-daughter relationships and the author has used the technique of self-insertion in her works in order to show that her relationship with her own mother was bitter as well as sweet during her childhood and adolescence. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* exemplifies three generations of mother-daughter connections, the story is about Precious Auntie- the mother, Lu Ling- the daughter and Ruth – the granddaughter. The story begins with Ruth who is settled in America and her strenuous relationship with her mother Lu Ling who is having Alzheimer. Ruth has always struggled with trying to connect with her mother, Lu Ling was strict and always complained about how hard it was to raise Ruth without her father. Lu Ling grew up in China in a very strict household, her real mother was Precious Auntie, but her father's family hid this from her and she grew up thinking that her father's sister – in law was her real mother. Precious Auntie greatly influenced Lu Ling's life and later on after Precious Auntie's death she comes to know about the fact that she is her real mother. Precious Auntie was the daughter of a Bonesetter - a famous healer, she lost her mother and her siblings when she was young and her father, only had her as family. He was scared that he would lose his daughter as well so, he gave her a lot of freedom as she grew up, he turned a blind eye to how a girl should be reared in the Chinese tradition. "Because of grief, Precious Auntie said with her hands, he spoiled me, let me do whatever a son might do. I learned to read and write, to ask questions, to play riddles, to write eight legged poems, to walk alone and admire nature. The old biddies used to warn him that it was dangerous that I was so boldly happy, instead of shy and cowering around strangers. And why didn't he bind my feet, they asked. My Father was used to seeing pain of the worst kinds. But with me, he was helpless. He couldn't bear to see me cry" (Tan, 2001, p.158). The above paragraph mentions about how her father treated her, he spoiled Precious Auntie. She was allowed to do anything, everything that only men were allowed to do during that time. The old women always complained to him about

his attitude towards his daughter. They told him that she was boldly happy. He raised her like a man who would raise his son. The women were the ones who persistently asked her to follow Chinese traditions and customs. In this context the women in the community is warning the father to keep his daughter in manacles. "Women are frequently reminded not to step outside the limitations set by the social environment and to be aware of their position so they don't rebel. It can be concluded that it is no longer men who consistently warn women, but women themselves who carry out this task as patriarchal wardens. Misogyny always stems from a desire to bring women down, to put women in their place" (Amelia & Udasromo, 2023, p.666).

The Chinese have a custom known as foot binding, in which young girls' feet were tightly bound to shape them into a small, arched form resembling a lotus flower. Lotus feet was considered as a feminine attribute by the Chinese. Precious Auntie's dad was aware of the risks of foot binding, so he never asked his daughter to take part in that custom. But the women in the village always complained to him about this. Foot binding had long term effects on a woman's body, just like how the then society wanted to control women, this practice was one way of restricting women from doing what they wanted and women voluntarily took part in this process. "However, by controlling their bodies, girls not only learned to become women, but also bonded with their female elders. Women transmitted the skills of binding and shoemaking from one generation to the next.... However, despite foot binding's role in defining a girl's future and position within a family, it considerably crippled them, often confining them to their domestic quarters" (Hughes, 2017, pp.3-4). Foot binding partially disabled these women, it drastically affected their lives, but they willingly took part in that tradition and even taught their daughters and granddaughters to take part in this custom, they internalized this type of patriarchal custom that partially mutilated their feet, just as patriarchy constraints women from getting emancipation, these women without any discretion tortured themselves and deprived themselves of mobility and thus they internalized misogyny.

Precious Auntie was known in her community for her life like that of a man and women in her neighborhood envied her for that. Their internalized misogyny was so much deep rooted that they wanted her to follow patriarchal tenets as they follow them. When Baby Uncle wanted Precious Auntie's hand to marry him, he enquired about her in the neighborhood and one of the fortune tellers told him that marrying her would be a disaster as she was uptight and was not like other girls in the community. "The teller confided to Baby Uncle that she knew the girl quite well. She often saw her on market days, walking by herself. That strange girl did calculations in her head and argued with merchants. She was arrogant and headstrong. She was also educated, taught by her father to know the mysteries of the body. The girl was too curious, too questioning, too determined to follow her own mind. Maybe she was possessed. Better find another marriage match, the fortune teller said. This one would lead to a disaster" (Tan, 2001, p.163). The fortune teller criticized Precious aunty for her scintillating life compared to herself and other women in the community. She also believed that women are supposed to live in the confinements of the society, she internalized that belief and tried exert the idea that any women who enjoys freedom doesn't hold any virtuousness.

Precious Auntie lost both her fiancé and father on her wedding day, a tragedy that plunged her into deep grief and led her to attempt suicide. Although she survived, she experienced severe facial burns. Once a beautiful and spirited young woman with big dreams and a promising education, Precious Auntie had a child, Lu Ling, out of wedlock. To conceal this from the public, her fiancé's family insisted that she become the child's caretaker and keep the truth hidden. Precious Auntie called herself ugly because of her burned face, she hid her face from others. The women in the family always made fun of the burns on her face. "I played with her box of treasures. I took out a pretty comb, ivory with a rooster carved at each end. Precious Auntie was born a Rooster. 'You wear this,' I demanded, holding it up. 'Pretty.' I was still young enough to believe that beauty came from things and I wanted mother to favor her more. But Precious Auntie shook her head. She pulled off her scarf and pointed to her face and bunched her brows. What use do I have for prettiness? she was saying." She wiggled her blackened fingertips like hungry flames. 'See what the fire did' (Tan, 2001, p.2). The woman in the family always made fun of her face. Mother- Precious Auntie's sister-in-law, who Lu Ling until her adolescence believed was her own mother, disliked Precious Auntie. She always used to hurt Precious Auntie by insulting her based on her looks. Lu Ling remembers this while thinking of Mother's insults towards Precious Auntie because of her burned face – "I didn't think she was ugly, not in the way others in our family did. 'Ai-ya, seeing her, even a demon would leap out of his skin,' I once heard Mother remark" (Tan, 2001, p.2). "We all called her Bao Mu, Gao Ling went on, 'also lots of bad nicknames because of her face. Burnt Wood, Fried Mouth, that sort of thing. People weren't being mean, the nicknames were a joke... Well, now that I think of this, they were mean, very mean. That was wrong'" (Tan, 2001, p.321). The Chinese women were very particular about beauty, they believed that fair women were innocent and marriage materials, but women who were tanned were not accepted by men. In Chinese classics women with beautiful skin were compared to jade, ice and snow, as it indicates the delicacy, smoothness and whiteness of skin. Throughout the history of China, having fair skin was associated with high class in the society, women who were fair were refined and women who had tanned skin indicated that they belonged to the lower caste (Zhang, 2012). Precious Auntie's face on the other hand was burned and women in her family made ruthless remarks about her face, thus internalizing misogyny. They were trying to perpetrate the patriarchal rule that women are cultural capitals of a man and they would be analyzed and owned based on the acceptable beauty standards of the society.

Lu Ling's character was akin to her mother's personality. She was also opinionated and was against various rules that suppressed women. Lu Ling was curious and courageous just like Precious Auntie, but Mother despised this. She wanted women to be docile and wanted her to subjected to the various canons of the society. The character 'Mother' in this novel is the embodiment of internalized misogyny, she always tried to control and tried to destroy Lu Lings vigor for a better life. "I forgot that Mother and my other aunts were at the dinner table, and I said aloud, 'Do bound feet look like white lilies that the romantic books describe?' Mother and my aunts, who still had bound

feet, gave me a frowning look. How could I talk about a woman's most private parts? So Precious Auntie pretended to scold me with her hands for asking such a question" (Tan, 2001, p.159). Lu Ling married twice and lost both of her husbands, she shifted to America and lived there with her daughter. Her second husband's name was Edwin and after his death his family gave only a small cash gift to her as inheritance, just because she had a daughter with their son - "When the grocer and then his wife died, in the 1960's, most of the inheritance- money, the house, the store, gold and jade, family photos – went to Edmund, with only a small cash gift given to Lu Ling in consideration of her brief marriage to Edwin. 'Only give me this much,' Lu Ling described, pinching her fingers as if holding a flea. 'Just because you not a boy'" (Tan, 2001, p.53). Lu Ling's sister Gao Ling married Edwin's younger brother. Edwin gave Lu Ling the green jade ring which was passed on to him through generations, since he was the eldest son, he received the ring from his mother. After Edwin's death Gao Ling wanted Lu Ling to pass on the ring to her son, since the most important inheritance should be owned by a grandson and not a granddaughter, "And within the purse was a ring Ruth had always coveted, with a thin gold band and two oval pieces of apple- green jade. It had been a gift from Ruth's father, who had received it from his mother to give to his future bride.... Gao Ling had once hinted that the ring should belong to her, so it could be passed along to her son, who was the only grandson" (Tan, 2001, p.138). Gao Ling made this remark out of her internalized belief that men should inherit everything from their ancestors, not women.

Even Ruth had to suffer because of internalized misogyny, she was in a live-in relationship with Art, his parents gave all the inheritance to Art's ex-wife as she bore grandchildren for them- "Ruth had sensed that the Kamens hoped she was only a brief interlude in Art's life.... They were nice to her, certainly. They had given her lovely birthday presents, a silk velvet scarf, Chanel No.5, a lacquered tea tray, but nothing she shared with Art or pass on to his girls- or any future children, for that matter, since she was beyond the possibility of giving the Kamens additional grandchildren. Miriam, on the other hand, was now and forever the mother of the Kamens granddaughters, the keeper of heirlooms for Fia and Dory. Marty and Arlene had already given her the family sterling, china, and the mezuzah kissed by five generations of Kamens since the days that lived in Ukraine" (Tan, 2001, p.80).

These three instances illustrate the concept of inheritance according to societal norms, where the male in the family traditionally inherits everything, and women have historically accepted this arrangement. This acceptance is a form of internalized misogyny, where women unconsciously uphold and perpetuate a system that devalues their rights and contributions. Lu Ling and Ruth's mother in laws without any hesitation supported both their husband's misogyny towards their daughter in laws. This form of internalized misogyny goes on like a circle, it becomes normalized among women, they start to think that it is the ultimate reality and at the end women themselves becomes the perpetrators of patriarchal supremacy.

4.2 Episodes of Internalized Misogyny in Anita Nair's *Idris: Keeper of the Light*

Anita Nair's *Idris: Keeper of The Light* renders mother daughter relationships, caste system in Kerala during the 17th Century and problems faced by women during that period. It is also a novel about voyages and the main protagonist is a Somalian trader called Idris, he travels around various parts of the world for trading and in the novel the author etches his travel to the southern region of India and the journey stretches from Kerala to Golkonda in Andhra Pradesh. Even though the main torchbearer in the novel is a man, his travel through various parts of India takes the reader to the lives of women in his life. In Kerala he meets a Nair woman called Kuttimalu and they have a son together. They were passionate about each other, but Kuttimalu belonged to the Nair caste and they had stringent rules that women had to comply with. Therefore, for her and their son's sake Idris leaves her for good and goes to Golkonda to collect diamonds for trade and there he meets the strong-headed Thilothamma. Thilothama was a peasant girl and the land that merchants searched for diamonds belonged to her grandfather and after his death she inherited it. Among these two women in this tale of expeditions the author also illustrates the life of a 15-year-old prostitute named Margarida. Her parents died when she was young and her nanny looked after her and later on at the age of fourteen the nanny sold her to a man named Goncalo.

Kuttimalu was a vivacious girl, who yearned for education and wanted to learn Sanskrit and other subjects along with her brothers. A Brahmin taught the boys and Kuttimalu secretly listened to these classes. The teacher was fine with it and this instance is about when she got caught in the act- "When Kuttimalu was discovered everyone expected Ammavan to erupt. Nani Amma had boxed her ears and hissed, 'Why do you do things to annoy my brother? Why can't you be like other girls? Why do you always have to be different'" (Nair, 2014, pp.28-29)? It was Kuttimalu's mother who actively took part in instigating misogyny, when Nani Amma found that Kuttimalu was sneaking into classes the only question she asked Kuttimalu was why she can't perform like other girls, she was not submissive like other girls in her community- "Because women were educated only to be attractive mates for men, their mental contents were conflated with rudimentary sensory experiences of their bodies. Exacerbating the problem, society valued women's bodies primarily in terms of their sexual functions. Exercising their reason within the constraints set by patriarchy, women perceived their only route to power as manipulation of men through their sexuality and fertility" (Botting, 2016, p 163).

The Nair community was known for their system called Sambadham, a man from the Nambodiri community would initiate a relation or 'sambandham' with a Nair girl or any other women from the lower caste. Nair community was also known for their Matrilineal system, the women in the household inherited everything. The courtiers or sambandhakaran should stay at the woman's house. The power vested on the eldest woman in the family as she inherited the wealth, however, the decisions were made by the eldest male member or karanavar of the family. Although it was hailed as matriarchy, its roots were deeply enrooted in patriarchy. Kuttimalu started following this ritual at a very young age. Her mother sculpted her behavior and thoughts, she was also a victim of this custom, but Nani Amma never realized it. This internalization of patriarchal systems happens over the time and women starts to think that its normal. Kuttimalu despised this custom, but if she does anything against this ritual she would be killed or sold as a slave by her own family. Kuttimalu says that her life is

strange - "Our husbands are not really husbands; they are merely sambandhakarans- consorts with whom we share some nights and call of the flesh; they fill our wombs but seldom our hearts; they come and go while we wait; when one leaves another takes his place. For a piece of cloth, he will buy the tenure to my body" (Nair,2014, p.31).

"This is how her first 'Sambandhakaran formed ties with her- "He had spotted her when she had gone to worship at Thirumandhamkundu temple and decided he wanted her. Just like that. As though she were one of those countless cattle bought and sold at the Vaniamkulam chanda every week. A brief ceremony had followed. A lamp lit. A cloth exchanged. In the privacy of their room, he had seized her, his new bride, as he would a cow, he had just acquired" (Nair, 2014, pp.30. Kuttimalu was not able to connect with her mother as well, because she was already indoctrinated by the patriarchal system, "Women have for millennia participated in the process of their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped as to internalize the idea of their own inferiority" (Lerner, 1986, p.218). Whenever Kuttimalu struggled to understand her situation, she would recall the poignant slogan that her mother and other Nair women had chanted in the past, a chant that had helped them internalize misogyny. "Her mother used to tell her "Still your tongue and desires, girl, we Nair women keep our names and homes, isn't that enough? Shouldn't that do? Your destiny is not hitched to that of a man's.... Learn to accept what you receive and no more. The Nair woman's heart should never ache with expectation. Leave that to others in whom the warrior spirit has no place" (Nair, 2014, p. 31). So, Kuttimalu who had a lot of zest and enthusiasm in life, gave up her dreams due to the caste system and becomes complacent to the patriarchal rules by internalizing misogyny. Thus, it is rightly asserted that "Women and girls may learn to have low expectations of their capabilities, may be subtly channeled by teachers or parents into gender normative fields and may paradoxically be expected to be caretakers, to serve men, and put the needs of others before their own, maybe criticized or ostracized for being assertive, visible, or outspoken...." (Bearman et al.,2009, p.11).

The girl Margarida was just 14 years old when she became a prostitute, she was an outcaste as her mother, an Armenian Muslim woman converted to Christianity. After her parent's death, her Nanny took her to her home. They lived in poverty. When Goncalo a Portuguese man asked Nanny to take Margarida into his custody she resisted, but later on during the famine she allowed Goncalo to take the girl under his charge. "Nanny who had at first spat in his face, succumbed in the famine years. Nothing was important when hunger gnawed your insides as you slept.... Honor is for those who can afford it; the rest of us have to do what we can eat. She eyes Margarida as if she were a fowl" (Nair, 2014, p.191). Since, the girl was an outcaste Nanny believed that Margarida can only live as a prostitute, as no one would marry her. It is a misogynistic belief that a woman's ultimate dream or purpose is marriage, the Nanny passed over that misogynistic belief to Margarida, a fourteen-year-old girl, who had a lot of things to do in her life. She internalized that kind of bias against women, that a woman's true purpose in life is marriage and she can only live safely under the shade of a man. Margarida started to think that it is her destiny, she says "this is my home, this is where I belong" (Nair, 2014, p.197). The Nanny asked Margarida to do this in the pretext that after earning money they would leave the city, but the reality was that it would never happen.

The author also introduces Thiloamma, an intractable woman. She owns her own land which she inherited from her grandfather and she earns her living with her hard work. Her Grandfather Ranga Reddy had a field near Golconda and there he finds a diamond while farming. This discovery turns all of their lives upside down. Thiloamma's father wanted the diamond as he wanted to build a fortune out of it, but his father a simple farmer was against it, in rage he kills his father and abandons Thiloamma and her mother. A diamond merchant who had connections with her grandfather made use of that situation and raided the house, Thiloamma was alone at the house at that time and people started spreading rumors that she was molested by the group. Thiloamma thus became unclean in the eyes of everyone, and no one asked her hand for marriage. These incidents made Thiloamma much stronger, she looked after the farm by herself and she took up all the responsibilities of the household. Her mother on the other hand only wanted her daughter to get married, she lamented about it all the time- "she may have become a woman of means, but no man would marry her daughter and bring her under his protection" (Nair, 2014, p.317). Thiloamma's mother also represents women who believe that only a man can give purpose to a woman's life. Thiloamma was an affluent woman in that area, everyone revered her and she was independent. But her mother was not pleased about her daughter's disposition and how she carried out her duties, rather she believed that woman should live in the sanctuary of a man and that should be a woman's holy grail. She always deplored - "What was to become of her daughter? Thiloamma saw the expression on her mother's face. It was as if her mother had given up on her. Ever since the day the circumstances changed her life irrevocably, her mother had waited for a miracle to happen. She had hoped that her daughter would eventually be blessed with a home and a husband" (Nair, 2014, p.319). Thiloamma was the embodiment of a high-octane woman, but her mother's continuous affliction about her not getting married made her despondent, deep inside she also started to internalize misogyny. Stress and coercion lead women to internalize misogyny naturally, but they need to identify it and rectify it, "Internalizing is one mechanism that is implemented to deal with societal stressors" (Rahmani, 2020, p.2).

5. Discussion

The transnational exploration of the works of American author- Amy Tan and Indian author- Anita Nair opines about the omnipresent nature of internalized misogyny. Both authors explore how women, influenced by societal norms and expectations, contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal values. Women actively participate in enacting misogyny by devaluing and mistrusting other women, inadvertently supporting patriarchal system. The 'mother' characters in both the novels passively accept gender roles and compare their stubborn daughters with other girls who comply with misogynistic edicts. In both the works, the 'mother' characters embody the passive acceptance of traditional gender roles, often reflecting misogynistic ideas. These mothers, influenced by their own experiences and societal conditioning, often judge their daughters based on adherence to these roles. They tend to compare their daughters—who resist

conforming to traditional norms—with other girls who accept and embody these misogynistic expectations, thereby reinforcing the patriarchal standards they themselves have internalized. Thus, women internalize misogyny by speaking, operating and modelling their behavior according to the needs of patriarchy. Tan's and Nair's works thus offer a critical lens on how internalized misogyny affects women's interactions and self-perceptions, illustrating the complex ways in which societal norms and personal experiences intertwine to sustain gender inequality.

6. Conclusion

A close examination of the selected narratives enables an understanding of internalized misogyny, thus revealing the actuality of female subjugation. This work shows that internalized misogyny is a pervasive social obstacle that controls women. Society expects women to perform specified roles that are internalized by women and ultimately put in practice. The writers through the exposition of mother-daughter relationship and representations of women maintaining gender bias, attempts to problematize the patriarchal dogmas instigating internalized misogyny. Identifying the discourse of internalized misogyny is many a time a challenge to women, as it is normalized and internalized by women themselves. It operates in discrete ways, which often makes it difficult to address it as a social issue. Introspection and self-reflection among women are crucial in addressing and solving the issue of internalized misogyny. Regular examination of their own beliefs, values and stereotypes, would enable women to identify the multifarious articulations of internalized misogyny, thus minimizing it. Active and continuous theoretical deliberations and efforts to practice the same would undoubtedly create a change in the fate of multiple lives shackled by the fetters of patriarchy.

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