

Women's Voices in the Novels of Namita Gokhale and Githa Hariharan

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Abstract

This study undertakes a comparative postcolonial feminist analysis of four Indian English novels, namely Namita Gokhale's Things to Leave Behind and The Blind Matriarch, and Githa Hariharan's Almost Home: Cities and Other Places and I Have Become the Tide. Drawing on the postcolonial feminist thought of Spivak, Mohanty, Leela Gandhi, Sangari and Tharu, the paper interrogates how each text constructs women's voices, articulates feminist resistance and negotiates the colonial-postcolonial inheritance shaping gendered subjectivity in twenty-first-century India. Adopting a qualitative comparative textual approach, the study reads voice, silence, memory and everyday resistance as intersecting sites through which patriarchal and postcolonial power relations are simultaneously named and contested. The analysis is organised around five intersecting thematic threads: women's voices as narrative agency, feminist resistance in everyday and intergenerational forms, colonial and postcolonial influences on women's identities, the intersection of gender with caste, class, religion and culture, and memory and intergenerational female narration. The findings argue that while Gokhale foregrounds memory, matrilineal voice and household inheritance as principal modes of women's resistance, Hariharan centres urban displacement, caste-religious intersectionality and the ethical claims of marginalised others. Collectively, the four novels stage an archive of contemporary Indian women's experience in which speaking and silence, inheritance and invention are co-constitutive practices of feminist resistance.

Keywords: Indian English novel, postcolonial feminism, women's voices, Namita Gokhale, Githa Hariharan, feminist resistance, everyday resistance, subaltern, intergenerational memory.

I. INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first-century Indian English novel has expanded its preoccupations beyond the diasporic paradigm that once dominated postcolonial literary studies. Within this expanded field, the women's novel has become a generative site through which colonial inheritance, postcolonial anxiety, caste hierarchy, religious plurality and gender oppression are simultaneously named and contested (Jha, 2025; Singh, 2025). Namita Gokhale and Githa Hariharan occupy two of the most intellectually visible positions in this rewriting. Both produce fiction shaped by feminist, anti-caste, and postcolonial commitments; both refuse the binaries of tradition and modernity; and both engage the historical and political conditions that continue to constrain women's lives in contemporary India (Ingale, 2024; Pasha & Putta, 2025).

This study proposes that their recent novels, Gokhale's *Things to Leave Behind* and *The Blind Matriarch*, and Hariharan's *Almost Home: Cities and Other Places* and *I Have Become the Tide*, constitute a comparative archive in which women's voices and feminist resistance emerge in distinct but mutually illuminating ways. The paper advances three interlocking claims. First, the four novels construct women's voices as a constitutive mode of narrative agency that is itself a feminist resistance practice. Second, they register feminist resistance in everyday, intergenerational and relational forms that insist on the political weight of ordinary acts such as memory, naming, refusal, care and inheritance. Third, the postcolonial inheritance of colonial regulation, nationalist woman-as-nation framings, caste stratification and uneven religious structures continues to shape the field within which women's identities are renegotiated (Gandhi, 1998; Kopf et al., 1992). Postcolonial feminism supplies the analytical language for this reading without lapsing into either parochial celebration of female agency or homogenising Western feminism (Mohanty, 1984, 2003).

II. RESEARCH GAP

Recent scholarship on Gokhale has begun to engage *Things to Leave Behind* through memory, space and the colonial politics of nineteenth-century Kumaon (K., 2024a, 2024b; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025), while *The Blind Matriarch* has attracted disability-aware, gendered-pandemic and care-centric readings (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Nupur & Singh, 2024; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). Hariharan's fiction has received sustained engagement with feminist, postmodern and subaltern frameworks across her first three novels (Ohira, 2012; Phate, 2021; Samidha & Kumar, 2024; Strandberg, 2011), with *I Have Become the Tide* opening necessary conversations on caste discrimination in Indian higher education (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). Despite this growth, three gaps remain. First, the comparative pairing of Gokhale and Hariharan has not been read through a unified postcolonial feminist optic. Second, the vocabulary developed by Spivak, Mohanty, Sangari and Tharu has rarely been applied systematically to either writer's recent fiction. Third, the everyday and intergenerational modes of feminist resistance encoded in the four novels have been under-theorised, since most criticism treats resistance as transgression or rebellion.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To comparatively analyse how Gokhale and Hariharan construct women's voices as a mode of narrative agency.
2. To examine the forms of feminist resistance, including everyday, intergenerational and relational forms, that the four novels articulate.
3. To interrogate how colonial histories and postcolonial continuities shape women's identities in the selected texts.
4. To foreground the intersectional workings of caste, class, religion, age, ability and culture.
5. To assess the contemporary relevance of the novels for feminist reading practice in twenty-first-century India.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do Gokhale and Hariharan construct women's voices as a constitutive mode of narrative agency?
2. What forms of feminist resistance, including everyday and intergenerational forms, do the novels register?
3. How do colonial histories and postcolonial structures shape women's identities and the possibilities of resistance?
4. How do the novels represent the intersectional workings of caste, class, religion, and cultural location?
5. What comparative differences and similarities emerge between Gokhale and Hariharan in narrative style, feminist ideology, representation of women and historical consciousness?

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 The Contemporary Indian English Women's Novel

Recent criticism has outgrown the diasporic-only frame for the Indian English women's novel. The construct of the New Woman has been mapped across Markandaya, Sahgal, Desai, Deshpande, Hariharan, Lahiri, De and Kapur, demonstrating negotiations of individuality and autonomy in postcolonial Indian fiction (Singh, 2025). Comparative studies of gender representation among male and female Indian English novelists establish that women writers foreground women's interiority, relational agency and everyday resistance, whereas male writers frequently situate gender within broader socio-political frames (Ingale, 2024a, 2024b). General genre surveys trace a movement from silenced mythologised figures to complex contemporary protagonists in a process shaped by colonialism, caste and religion (Jha, 2025a, 2025b; Pasha & Putta, 2025; Tanvi, 2024).

5.2 Scholarship on Gokhale and Hariharan

Recent engagement with Gokhale clusters around two texts. *Things to Leave Behind* has been read for crafting female characters under colonial rule, foregrounding silenced voices and psychological subtlety in the conflict of tradition and identity (K., 2024a, 2024b). A 2025 study extends this through Lefebvre's spatial production, arguing that the novel transposes individual memory into collective memory as female characters move from domestic to liberated spaces (Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Comparative ecocritical readings position *Things to Leave Behind* alongside Roy's *The God of Small Things* to interrogate the intersection of patriarchy with environmental and colonial exploitation (Raju & Chitra, 2025a, 2025b). Gokhale's broader oeuvre has been read for the interplay between dream and reality in mapping women's psychic geographies across colonial Kumaon, urban Delhi, and the Himalayan foothills (Mathew, 2026a, 2026b). *The Blind Matriarch* has been the subject of three substantial 2024 to 2025 readings: a gendered-pandemic analysis (Nupur & Singh, 2024), a disability-studies reading through Waldschmidt's cultural model (Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025), and a vulnerability and care study informed by Butler and Fineman (Dev & Mishra, 2025). Earlier work, particularly *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, has been read for its satiric depiction of Delhi's upper class and its critique of patriarchal double standards (Gobi & Suganthi, 2024; Roychoudhary, 2020; Vinitha & Rani, 2018).

Scholarship on Hariharan has sustained dialogue across her three earliest novels, treating them as a trilogy in which storytelling, gender negotiation, and embedded narrative are mutually constitutive (Ohira, 2012; Strandberg, 2011). When *Dreams Travel* has been read as a postcolonial-feminist rewriting of Scheherazade that challenges male-dominated texts (Samidha & Kumar, 2024), and *Fugitive Histories* through a postmodern framework for the way women reconstruct lives amidst disparity based on religion and gender (Rani, 2023). Cultural identity crisis in her early fiction has been traced in relation to caste, religion, and nation (English, 2026; Phate, 2021). Recent work on *I Have Become the Tide* addresses caste discrimination against Dalit students in Indian higher education and civil rights through three characters from different historical periods (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). *Almost Home* has not yet received comparable depth of scholarly attention, and its comparative pairing with Gokhale's recent novels opens an unexamined field.

5.3 Theoretical Studies in Postcolonial Feminism

Indian feminist reception of Western categories has documented two landmark interventions. Sangari and Vaid's *Recasting Women* dismantled gender-neutral ideologies and interrogated the patriarchal discourses of the colonial period; its interrogation of Hindu-Aryan identity, widow-immolation discourse and the gendered dimensions of nationalism remain foundational (Kopf et al., 1992). Tharu and Lalita's two-volume *Women Writing in India* retrieved women's literary voices across twenty-six centuries in twelve Indian languages and problematised the politics of translation (Castaing, 2015; Chanda, 1993; Niranjana & Yunis, 2021). Mohanty's *Under Western Eyes* challenged Western feminist universalism and the homogenising construction of Third World women as a singular object (Bahri, 2004; Mohanty, 1984). Leela Gandhi's *Postcolonial Theory* mapped bridges between postcolonial theory and poststructuralism, Marxism and feminism, and recovered Gandhian ethical non-violence as a theoretical resource (Gandhi, 1998, 2020; Kareem, 2026; SINGH, 2008). Spivak's legacy, particularly strategic essentialism and the question of the subaltern's speech, has been extensively discussed (Pande, 2017; Seth, 2013;

Williany & Turuk, 2019). A substantial subliterature treats silence as the seminal motif of female resistance in Indian English writing (D. (Dr L. Varghese, 2025; D. L. Varghese, 2025; Zachariah, 2016). Everyday forms of resistance, drawing on Scott's infrapolitics, have been applied to women's narratives in rural Malaysia, Haryana caste-cross-region marriages, and Middle Eastern women's movements, and extended to Indian regional literatures (Hart, 1991; Kukreja, 2017; "Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East," 2010; Panda, 2022). Sagas and memory-driven women's fiction have been examined for the construction of memory-based female genealogies that resist dominant historiographies (Banu, 2025; Karthikeyeni & Latharani, 2025; Kaur & Bhat, 2025; Ramchandran, 2024; Vinayan & Raj, 2024).

Despite this accumulation, three absences persist: a sustained comparative reading of Gokhale and Hariharan through postcolonial feminism, a systematic reading of everyday and intergenerational resistance in their recent fiction, and an intersectional treatment that takes caste and religion seriously alongside gender in the four novels themselves.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

6.1 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Spivak's contribution to postcolonial feminism lies in three interdependent interventions. Her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak* placed gendered silencing at the centre of postcolonial inquiry by reading the British colonial abolition of sati as an instance in which the coloniser's benevolent speech on behalf of the Hindu widow simultaneously erased her voice (Williany & Turuk, 2019). The essay supplies a lens for moments in the four novels where women's speech, or its absence, registers the violence of representation. Strategic essentialism, defined as the deliberate temporary politically motivated holding of an essentialised collective identity (Pande, 2017), offers a vocabulary through which the four novels' constructions of woman, Indian woman or Dalit woman can be read as strategic rather than ontological. For the present study, Spivak supplies the diagnostic question: who speaks through whom, to whom, on whose behalf, and at what political cost.

6.2 Chandra Talpade Mohanty

Mohanty's *Under Western Eyes* challenged the homogenising tendencies of Western feminist scholarship and the construction of Third World women as a singular undifferentiated object (Mohanty, 1984). She insisted on the analytic distinction between women as material-ideological constructs and women as concrete heterogeneous subjects. The essay cautions against reading the four novels through a universalising feminist optic that flattens their specific intersectional concerns, while legitimising the careful recovery of locally situated women's experiences. *Feminism without Borders* extends the decolonial transnational project and underscores the analytic centrality of race, class and nation as co-constitutive of gender (Bahri, 2004; Mohanty, 2003).

6.3 Leela Gandhi

Leela Gandhi's *Postcolonial Theory* situates postcolonial feminist thought within the broader conversation of poststructuralism, Marxism and feminism, and recovers Gandhian ethical non-violence as a theoretical resource (Gandhi, 1998, 2020; Kareem, 2026). She cautions that postcolonial theory, whenever it announces itself as the sole legitimate mouthpiece of native women, betrays an uneasy complicity with nationalist discourse (SINGH, 2008). The warning is directly relevant here: the four novels must not be read as offering a single nationalist-corrective account of Indian womanhood but as multiple, internally contested narrative acts.

6.4 Kumkum Sangari

Sangari's *Recasting Women* interrogated the historical and ideological production of patriarchal discourses in colonial India, including Hindu-Aryan identity, widow-immolation discourse and the gendered dimensions of nationalism (Kopf et al., 1992). Her materialist-feminist recovery of colonial patriarchy informs the reading of how colonial rule intensified rather than ameliorated the gendered regulation of indigenous women's bodies, speech, labour and inheritance.

6.5 Susie Tharu

Tharu's *Women Writing in India* performed a textual retrieval of over twenty-six centuries of Indian women's writing across twelve languages and problematised translation politics (Castaing, 2015; Chanda, 1993; Niranjana & Yunis, 2021). For this study, the anthology provides the analytic warrant to read women's narrative voice, in any of the four novels, as an inheritance from, an extension of and a contribution to the recovered archive of Indian women's writing.

6.6 Complementary Conceptual Tools

The paper also draws on Scott's everyday forms of resistance, defined as foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, slander, sabotage and similar discreet acts ("Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East," 2010), refined for gendered analysis by Hart and others (Hart, 1991; Kukreja, 2017; Panda, 2022). Intergenerational female memory is theorised in studies of sagas, rememory and trauma inheritance (Banu, 2025; Karthikeyeni & Latharani, 2025; Kaur & Bhat, 2025; Ramchandran, 2024; Vinayan & Raj, 2024). Silence as feminist resistance is systematically developed in scholarship on Indian women's writing (D. (Dr L. Varghese, 2025; D. L. Varghese, 2025; Zachariah, 2016). Together, these tools allow the four novels to be read as simultaneous texts of voice, resistance, memory, and identity formation under specific colonial and postcolonial conditions.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative and pursues comparative textual analysis of the four novels. The literary text is treated as a structured site of meaning in which voice, narrative, ideology, character and language operate as interdependent modes of feminist intervention. Analysis proceeds through repeated close reading, identifying moments of narrative voice, scenes of speech and silence, instances of everyday resistance and the explicit/implicit interrogation of postcolonial power relations. Findings are organised thematically aligned to the research questions, then comparatively integrated: parallel or contrasting moments across the four novels are juxtaposed to produce comparative claims about voice, resistance, caste, religion and representation.

Novel selection was purposive, guided by three criteria. First, the novels engage substantively with women's experience, voice and resistance. Second, they were published in a roughly contemporary window spanning 2014 to 2021, allowing comparative reading of shared contemporary concerns. Third, the four span a useful generic and thematic range: a historical novel of nineteenth-century Kumaon, a pandemic-era Delhi novel, a city-meditating lyric-fiction collection and a polyphonic novel of caste, religion and historical memory. The methodology has limitations: purposive rather than exhaustive sampling, interpretive latitude of close reading, and absence of audience-reception data mean claims are textual rather than sociological. Page numbers and verbatim quotations for the four primary novels have not been invented; insertion points are marked for verified primary evidence.

VIII. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Women's Voices as Narrative Agency

Across all four novels, women's voices occupy a constitutive rather than ornamental position in the narrative architecture. In *Things to Leave Behind*, multiple female voices share the burden of recollection; the narrative distributes the authority to remember and to evaluate across distinct female witnesses (K., 2024a, 2024b; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). This multivocal structure resists a singular nationalist frame of colonial-era Kumaon and refuses the masculine master-narrative that colonial historiography often privileges. In *The Blind Matriarch*, Gokhale positions Matangi-Ma, an elderly visually impaired matriarch confined to a four-storey house during the pandemic, as the principal perceiver, custodian and narrator of female memory within the household (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Nupur & Singh, 2024; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). Her voice is presented as both limited, since she cannot see, and omniscient in its attunement to that which the household attempts to conceal; the pandemic's constraint intensifies the structural authority of her command of what is audible, what is named and what is remembered.

By contrast, Hariharan's *Almost Home* organises its narrative around place rather than character: voice emerges as the inscription of inhabited geography. Each city or place is given a distinct textual voice, and women move within these spaces as observers, hosts, strangers and refugees. In *I Have Become the Tide*, Hariharan deploys a polyphonic structure, placing Satya, Asha and Ravi in dialogue with the institutionally silenced and historically dispossessed; the three constitute a counter-archive to institutionalised caste practices (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). Their voices are not interchangeable: each enacts a distinct mode of speech that the institution renders illegible.

Spivak's diagnostic question illuminates the differences (Pande, 2017; Williany & Turuk, 2019). Gokhale locates female voice within domestic, genealogical and pastoral settings: the voice speaks through space and time, its authority drawn from inheritance and matrilineal location. Hariharan places female voice within urban, institutional, multi-religious and caste-marked settings: the voice speaks against power. Both writers refuse the easiest resolution: the female voice does not simply win. The four novels insist on the structural costs of speaking and the political work of being heard.

8.2 Feminist Resistance in Everyday and Intergenerational Forms

Resistance in the four novels is overwhelmingly everyday rather than spectacular. In *Things to Leave Behind*, Gokhale's female characters resist not by revolt but by reformation of interior sensibilities: the slow acquisition of independent judgment, quiet refusal of inherited domestic obligation, acts of reading, working and remembering that re-author relations between women and colonial modernity (K., 2024; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). In *The Blind Matriarch*, resistance takes a tightly domestic form: a partially blind elderly woman exercises micro-judgments, including who may enter, which conversations may be overheard, and how the household's lockdown economy must be distributed, that in aggregate constitute quiet authority over an entire domestic-political system (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Nupur & Singh, 2024; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). The pandemic intensifies this micro-politics because the household becomes the principal site where state policy, gender relations, and intergenerational care collide.

In Hariharan's texts, everyday resistance is more visibly confrontational but still not spectacular. *Almost Home* registers resistances implicit in the female narrator's repeated refusal to belong to any city fully, the move from guest to refugee, from host to stranger. *I Have Become the Tide* sharpens the everyday register: the three protagonists struggle against caste discrimination not by mobilising into formal political opposition but by persisting, naming the discrimination in their own languages and refusing the silent resignation the institution demands (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). Scott's vocabulary of everyday resistance, refined for gender by Hart and others (Hart, 1991; Kukreja, 2017; "Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East," 2010; Panda, 2022), illuminates these texts precisely because the resistance is not always legible as resistance within the dominant order. It is sedimented in relations, refusals, techniques of movement and naming.

Both writers share a comparative interest in silence as female resistance. Scholarship on the rhetoric of silence in Indian English literature establishes that silence can function as a seminal counter-discourse, generating dissents that do not require open speech (D. (Dr L. Varghese, 2025; D. L. Varghese, 2025; Zachariah, 2016). In *Things to Leave Behind*, the silence of specific female characters is not absence but preserved refusal (K., 2024). In *The Blind Matriarch*, Matangi-Ma's visual impairment intensifies the politics of silence: she relies on audible speech and on the silences of others, and the novel's attention to what she can and cannot hear establishes silence as a register of relational power (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). Hariharan's texts extend this: the unspoken, the inaudible, and the silenced-around recur in both novels. Across the four, silence functions not as absence of speech but as a structured repertoire of refusal in which female agency operates through what is deliberately not articulated.

The intergenerational register adds further dimension. In *Things to Leave Behind*, female resistance is transmitted through domestic-formal memory as grandmothers, mothers, aunts, and unmarried women carry the repository of Kumaoni women's experience (K., 2024a, 2024b). In *The Blind Matriarch*, resistance is concentrated in Matangi-Ma's custodianship of household memory that must outlast her own disablement (Dev & Mishra, 2025;

Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). In *Almost Home*, intergenerational resistance is diffuse but is supplied by the city's collective female memory. In *I Have Become the Tide*, it is explicit in historical layers that the polyphonic structure exposes (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025; Ramchandran, 2024).

8.3 Colonial and Postcolonial Influences on Women's Identities

Recent scholarship reads *Things to Leave Behind* as an account of nineteenth-century Kumaon where history is always in liaison with memory and where native and British perspectives are juxtaposed to expose how space carries disparate meanings for coloniser and colonised (Raju & Chitra, 2025; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Mohanty's caution against universalising categories is operative: Kumaoni women's experiences of colonial modernity differ structurally from those of British women within the same textual frame, and the novel refuses to collapse them (Mohanty, 1984). Sangari's materialist-feminist recovery of colonial patriarchy allows reading how colonial rule intensified rather than ameliorated the gendered regulation of women's bodies, speech, labour and inheritance (Kopf et al., 1992). Gokhale's earlier *Paro* had satirised this irony through its depiction of metropolitan Delhi society in the 1980s (Gobi & Suganthi, 2024; Roychoudhary, 2020; Vinitha & Rani, 2018), and *Things to Leave Behind* historicises that irony.

The Blind Matriarch marks a shift into the postcolonial pandemic moment. Set in contemporary Delhi, the novel's preoccupation with the household's gendered lockdown economy and with the state's encroachment on intimate space relocates the colonial gaze into postcolonial technics of governance (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Nupur & Singh, 2024; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). Matangi-Ma's authority over the household is a domestic sovereignty under pressure from a state whose pandemic directives apply unevenly along lines of class and gender: this is postcolonial resistance without anti-colonial revolt.

Hariharan's *Almost Home* works at the register of urban belonging in contemporary India and the diaspora. The narrator's movement between cities and refusal of stable belonging stage the postcolonial condition as the impossibility of homecoming; the city as both refuge and threat reveals a specifically postcolonial female consciousness that cannot be parsed through older diasporic nostalgia. *I Have Become the Tide* historicises caste, religion and nation in a longer arc, organising its narrative so that caste discrimination in higher education reads as the persistence of an older logic in postcolonial institutions (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). Spivak's reading of structural silencing, in which institutional speech of postcolonial modernity continues colonial logics, is most directly relevant here; the novel's universities reproduce the hierarchies the postcolonial state formally repudiated.

8.4 Intersectional Identity: Gender, Caste, Class, Religion and Culture

The intersectional structure of the four novels is their most demanding feature. In *Things to Leave Behind*, the rural-urban, caste-marked and religiously plural Kumaon of the nineteenth century is presented as a site in which colonial administrators, missionaries and indigenous landed power are all implicated in gendered regulation (K., 2024a, 2024b; Raju & Chitra, 2025). The novel demonstrates that the same historical moment produces multiple, structurally distinct experiences of femininity that cannot be flattened.

In *The Blind Matriarch*, intersectional axes are gender, age, ability, and class. Matangi-Ma is elderly, visually impaired, and the matriarch of an upper-middle-class joint household in Delhi; her authority is exercised within class privilege while being gender-constrained and age-limited (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025). The pandemic reveals how class resources cannot fully insulate her from vulnerability; disability intersects with gender and age in ways conventional feminist criticism has not always registered (Nupur & Singh, 2024).

In *Almost Home*, intersectional identity emerges through the polygonal encounter of gender with urban displacement, religion, language, and class. In *I Have Become the Tide*, intersectionality is explicitly caste-based: the three characters' specific intersectional experiences are starkly distinct (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). Across all four novels, Sangari and Tharu's scholarship on the historical-cultural specificity of women's experience is operative (Castaing, 2015; Chanda, 1993; Kopf et al., 1992); the intersectional grids are not theoretical

equivalences, but historically specific configurations, and Mohanty's analytic distinction governs how they are read (Mohanty, 1984, 2003).

8.5 Memory and Intergenerational Female Narratives

Memory in the four novels is the principal mechanism through which female inheritance is transmitted. *Things to Leave Behind* organises itself around the layered memory of Kumaon's colonial past (K., 2024; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025); *The Blind Matriarch* renders Matangi-Ma's recollection as a multi-generational household archive (Dev & Mishra, 2025; Vairamanickam & Kuppusamy, 2025); *Almost Home* treats each remembered city as a deposited layer of female experience; and *I Have Become the Tide* brings caste memory into narrative logic as a temporally extended inheritance (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025; Ramchandran, 2024). Memory is not exoticised in these texts but operationalised: female memory becomes the structure through which otherwise unspeakable knowledge of caste, region, household, religion and grief is preserved.

The intergenerational dimension distinguishes these four novels from single-protagonist feminist fiction. Each text is, in its own way, a woman's inheritance, both received and retransmitted. Both writers insist that the recovery of female memory is itself an act of postcolonial feminist resistance. This insistence productively extends the work of the Sangari-Vaid and Tharu-Lalita anthologies, which recovered women's voices as material and as inheritance (Castaing, 2015; Chanda, 1993; Kopf et al., 1992).

IX. COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

9.1 On Narrative Style

Gokhale organises narrative voice through matrilineal, intergenerational and place-anchored structures, built principally around inherited voice and the household (K., 2024a, 2024b; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Hariharan's style is polyphonic, place-distributed, and structurally braided across class, caste, religion, and historical period (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). Both writers refuse the simply autobiographical or confessional mode that remains common in Indian English women's writing (Ingale, 2024; Singh, 2025).

9.2 On Feminist Ideology

Both writers share an intersectional position: gender is treated as a node of intersecting social forces rather than a freestanding category (Mohanty, 1984, 2003). Hariharan's ideology is more overtly anti-caste and frequently aligned with subaltern studies (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025; Panda, 2022); Gokhale's is more genealogical and pastoral, working through slow accumulation of memory and matrilineal inheritance of judgment (Dev & Mishra, 2025; K., 2024a, 2024b).

9.3 On the Representation of Women

Both refuse the New Woman as a singular individualist figure (Singh, 2025). Hariharan's women are typically constrained by caste, religion, or institutional exclusion (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025; Phate, 2021); Gokhale's are typically constrained by household, inheritance, and colonial-historical pressure (Dev & Mishra, 2025; K., 2024a, 2024b; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Hariharan's women confront external institutional power; Gokhale's women navigate internal relational and colonial-historical power.

9.4 On Forms of Resistance

Both privilege everyday and intergenerational resistance over spectacular revolt. Gokhale's resistances are quieter, enacted within domestic, matrilineal and pastoral registers (Dev & Mishra, 2025; K., 2024; Nupur & Singh, 2024); Hariharan's are more visibly confrontational, animating institutional and caste-religious settings (Devi, 2024; "Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East," 2010; Nath & Alexander, 2025). In both, silence constitutes a structured resistance repertoire (D. (Dr L. Varghese, 2025; D. L. Varghese, 2025; Zachariah, 2016).

9.5 On Socio-Political Concerns

Gokhale's two novels attend principally to colonial-historical inheritance and the postcolonial pandemic conjuncture (K., 2024; Nupur & Singh, 2024; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Hariharan attends principally to urban displacement and caste-religious institutional discrimination, especially in *I Have Become the Tide* (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025). The concerns together map substantial contemporary Indian women's experience.

9.6 On Historical Consciousness

Gokhale's historical consciousness is genealogical and pastoral: long, layered, matrilineally transmitted (K., 2024; Mathew, 2026; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Hariharan's is broader and more plural: temporally multi-period, caste-class mobilised, religiously plural (Devi, 2024; Nath & Alexander, 2025; Phate, 2021). Gokhale's women inherit history; Hariharan's women inhabit its structures. Both refuse the homogenising tendency in Western feminist accounts of Third World women's experience and situate women's experience in specific colonial and postcolonial conditions (Kopf et al., 1992; Mohanty, 1984).

X. CONCLUSION

This comparative study has argued that the four selected Indian English novels by Gokhale and Hariharan, namely *Things to Leave Behind*, *The Blind Matriarch*, *Almost Home* and *I Have Become the Tide*, constitute a comparative postcolonial feminist archive in which women's voices and feminist resistance are articulated through everyday, intergenerational and often relational forms. The argument has unfolded in five analytic movements: women's voices operate as constitutive modes of narrative agency; feminist resistance is overwhelmingly everyday, sedimented in memory, naming, inheritance, silence and micro-judgments; colonial and postcolonial structures continue to regulate women's identities; intersectionality is the operative analytic; and memory and intergenerational female narration supply the temporal glue through which resistance persists. The comparative differences between the writers are pronounced but mutually illuminating. Gokhale's matrilineal genealogical voice foregrounds inheritance in pastoral and domestic settings; Hariharan's polyphonic place-distributed voice foregrounds contestatory politics of caste, religion and urban displacement. Together, the four novels map the diversity of contemporary Indian women's literary responses to the colonial inheritance and postcolonial condition. The study's contribution is to demonstrate that feminist resistance in the contemporary Indian English novel is plural, intersectional and often quiet. Postcolonial feminism, in the lineage of Spivak, Mohanty, Leela Gandhi, Sangari and Tharu, supplies the analytic vocabulary adequate to its reading. The paper argues against consolidating feminist resistance into explicit single-event revolt and for its recognition as a continuous, intergenerational, often silent and relational practice. Limitations include the purposive nature of the corpus, interpretive latitude of close reading, absence of audience-reception data and the marking of insertion points for verified primary quotations.

XI. FUTURE SCOPE

Systematic extension of this comparative reading to other contemporary Indian English women novelists, including Sahgal, Desai, Deshpande, Roy and Kiran Desai, to historicise the comparative difference begun here (Ingale, 2024; Singh, 2025).

Integration of reception studies: audience and reader-response research would illuminate how the everyday and intergenerational forms of resistance identified here are received in India and the diaspora (Hart, 1991; "Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East," 2010).

Cross-linguistic extension to Indian women's fiction in Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam and Urdu to test whether the comparative observations hold across linguistic location (Castaing, 2015; Chanda, 1993).

Additionally, the OTT and literary-digital sphere offers opportunities to extend this framework to emerging forms of voice and the contemporary post-pandemic crop of women's novels.

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