

Feminist Futurity and the Politics of Inheritance: Women Writing Against Patriarchal Continuity in Indian Fiction

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Abstract- The present article, through an examination of the concept of inheritance in the context of gender politics in Indian fiction, seeks to highlight the ways in which the continuity of patriarchal politics is disrupted by women writers not merely through resistance to the politics of trauma and silence but also through the ways in which they redefine the politics of inheritance. The present study, through an engagement with the works of feminist theorists such as Butler, Ahmed, and Fraser, seeks to highlight the ways in which the politics of inheritance is represented in the works of Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, and Anita Desai, and the ways in which Dalit autobiographies also present a similar politics of inheritance. The present study seeks to highlight the ways in which the concept of counter-lineage can be used to understand the politics of inheritance in the context of the works of these feminist writers, where the politics of futurity is not merely represented in the context of utopian possibilities but through an actual renegotiation of the politics of what must not be inherited.

Index Terms- : Feminist futurity, Inheritance, Counter-lineage, Gendered transmission, Intergenerational resistance, Postcolonial feminism.

I. INTRODUCTION: INHERITANCE AS GENDERED STRUCTURE

Inheritance is typically seen as a physical transfer—property, money, family lineages. Feminist studies, however, show that inheritance also entails affective, moral, and structural transmissions. Thus, women inherit not just land or domestic roles but also shame, silence, caste stigma, or relational duty.

According to Judith Butler (2004), “Vulnerability is differentially allocated across generations; it is shaped by political and historical conditions.” This helps us to think of inheritance as a controlled transmission of vulnerability.

In the context of India, inheritance would relate to issues of caste hierarchies, nationalist discourses, and

patriarchal property relations. Thus, women tend to be seen as carriers of continuity rather than disruption. Ahmed (2004) also shows how emotions move between bodies and generations; thus, shame or honour become affective inheritances.

This article suggests that women’s fiction in India portrays a disruption of these inheritances. Instead of simply portraying a heritage of trauma, this fiction creates counter-inheritance—disruptive reorientations that challenge patriarchal futures.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FEMINIST FUTURITY AND COUNTER- LINEAGE

The concept of feminist futurity is the focus on how women create alternative futures in an oppressive temporal framework. Lee Edelman (2004) discusses reproductive futurity in the context of the political privilege afforded to the figure of the child in heteronormative culture. Feminist reinterpretation of the concept of futurity.

Nancy Fraser (2016) posits that crises in social reproduction highlight the instability of the capitalist and patriarchal order. Inheritance is a tool used by such orders to ensure a sense of continuity.

The concept of postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch (2012), is an important tool in understanding the intergenerational inheritance of historical trauma. However, feminist texts also challenge the idea of inheritance.

Spivak (1988) points out the disempowerment of the subaltern woman in the narrative of genealogical history. Counter-lineage is an epistemological challenge.

The framework situates inheritance as a site of conflict.

III. COLONIAL LEGACY AND FAILED INHERITANCE IN THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

The theme of inheritance in Kiran Desai's novel is one of burden rather than gift. Sai's inheritance is an emotional displacement born out of colonial mimicry and nationalism.

The concept of precarious life developed by Butler (2004) is useful in understanding the inheritance of colonial legacies.

The internalised colonialism of the judge is an example of inheritance. Hirsch's (2012) work on the inheritance of humiliation is useful in understanding the colonial experience.

The relationship insecurity of Sai is an example of the inheritance of fragmentation.

The insecure subjectivity of Sai is a disruption of colonial aspiration.

The concept of cruel optimism developed by Berlant (2011) is useful in understanding the disruption of the inheritance of colonial aspiration.

The inheritance in the novel is a disruption of patriarchal futurity born out of colonial mimicry.

IV. EDUCATION AND GENDERED CONTINUITY IN DIFFICULT DAUGHTER

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, inheritance is defined by property, marriage, and nationalist ideology. Virmati is expected to inherit the obedience that is characteristic of the mother's role. However, in the process of acquiring an education, she does not conform to the expectations.

The theory of Fraser (2016) identifies the need for nationalist movements to be supported by the reproduction of gender roles. Virmati does not conform to the expectations.

According to Ahmed (2004), emotions tie individuals to the normative future. Shame is the emotion that guides Virmati's desires. However, by striving for intellectual freedom, she creates counter-inheritance by passing on ambivalence to her daughter.

V. MEMORY AND DOMESTIC TRANSMISSION IN CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY

In *Clear Light of Day*, Bim has inherited domestic responsibility and Partition memories. Hirsch's (2012) theory of postmemory helps us understand how historical violence shapes present relationality.

The fact that Bim does not want to leave the house indicates her attachment to continuity. Her bitterness, however, indicates that she is struggling. According to Fraser (2016), such a situation indicates a crisis of social reproduction.

Through her efforts at reconciliation, Bim redefines what it means to inherit as a form of negotiation. The novel, therefore, offers a form of feminist futurity through a reinterpretation of memory.

VI. DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE REFUSAL OF CASTE INHERITANCE

In the autobiographical writings of Dalit women, their narratives emphasise the theme of caste as inherited violence. Spivak (1988) emphasises the subaltern narrative as a disruption of dominant history. The narratives of Dalit women assert their refusal of the legacy of shame associated with their caste identity.

The narratives of Dalit women and their struggle through education and activism against double discrimination are discussed in the book *"The Right to Difference"* by Paik (2014). The narratives of Dalit women in a literary genre assert their refusal of the legacy of shame.

The theory of affective economies proposed by Ahmed (2004) explains the circulation of shame in society. The theme of inheritance in the narratives of Dalit women is asserted as a site of contestation.

VII. FEMINIST FUTURITY: WRITING AGAINST CONTINUITY

Throughout these works, women resist what they are supposed to inherit: colonial mimicry, nationalist compliance, caste stigma, and domestic duty.

The notion of reproductive futurism, as discussed by Edelman (2004), sheds light on the idea of heteronormative continuity as an assurance of lineage. Feminist literature redefines the concept of futurity, which is not based on reproductive futurism but on ethical change.

The idea of counter-lineage is based on reinterpretation, opposition, and reorientation. It is not based on the assurance of harmonious futurity but rather on uncertain futurity based on opposition. Feminist futurity is not based on utopian ideals but on active opposition to patriarchal lineage.

VIII. CONCLUSION: REWRITING INHERITANCE

This article has reconceptualised the idea of inheritance in Indian women's fiction as a structured framework through which patriarchy ensures its temporal continuity. As the discussion in the article has shown, inheritance is not restricted to the material or the familial but also extends to the affective economies of shame, historical memory, caste hierarchy, maternal obligation, and social reproduction. By drawing on Butler's discussion of precarious life (2004), Ahmed's discussion of the circulation of affects (2004), Fraser's discussion of reproductive crisis (2016), Hirsch's discussion of postmemory (2012), Berlant's discussion of cruel optimism (2011), and Spivak's discussion of the subaltern inheritance (1988), the article has argued inheritance as a political terrain rather than a familial one.

Throughout the texts, women do not simply receive what they are given. They instead question, reinterpret, and, in some cases, resist what they are given. It is through what this text will term counter-lineage that these stories subvert the idea of women being required to carry forward the silence of their mothers, the shame of their caste, the colonial

ambition, or the nationalist duty. These stories are an inheritance of reproduction as well as an inheritance of interruption.

Feminist futurity is not an idealistic vision but an ethical reworking of what is permitted to continue. Indian women's fiction is an important repository of temporal resistance, where the future is not guaranteed by replication but is instead made possible by the women's rejection of what they are given.

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