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Preface

We are delighted to present, with great pleasure, the **Volume-2, Issue-3, March 2026** of the **Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture (JCRELC)** — a peer-reviewed international journal devoted to the exploration and advancement of literary and cultural scholarship.

JCRELC is part of the **SPARC Institute of Technical Research** publication series and was envisioned to meet the growing global demand for an academic platform that unites critical thinking, creative inquiry, and interdisciplinary research in the field of **English Literature and Cultural Studies**. The journal aims to serve as a bridge between scholars, educators, and practitioners, providing an inclusive space for diverse voices and perspectives.

The mission of JCRELC is to foster intellectual exchange, innovation, and academic excellence by publishing original and thought-provoking research in areas such as:

English Literature:

Literary theory and criticism, comparative literature, postcolonial studies, modern and contemporary literature, diaspora studies, gender and identity, eco-criticism, digital humanities, narrative and stylistic studies, and creative writing.

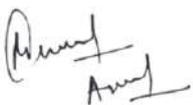
Cultural Studies:

Media and popular culture, film and performance studies, cultural theory, identity politics, globalization and culture, heritage and memory studies, translation and intercultural communication, visual arts, and linguistic representation in literature and media.

Each article published in this inaugural issue exemplifies the journal's commitment to promoting meaningful scholarship and fostering dialogue that connects literature and culture with the evolving dynamics of society.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all **Editorial, Reviewer, and Advisory Board Members** who have contributed their expertise, as well as to the **authors** whose valuable research enriches this publication. Our appreciation also goes to the **editorial team of the SPARC Institute of Technical Research** for their consistent guidance and support in bringing JCRELC to life.

We hope that this inaugural issue of JCRELC will serve as a valuable resource for scholars and readers alike, inspiring continued exploration and critical engagement in the vibrant domains of **English Literature and Cultural Studies**.



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Ethics Without Redemption: Non-Heroic Survival and the Refusal of Moral Closure in Postcolonial Narratives

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Abstract— *Narrative ethics has become a method of analysis of postcolonial literature, especially with regard to the way in which literary works interfere with the traditional moral categories based on Western literary traditions. This is a review paper discussing the notion of the ethics without redemption and how the postcolonial narratives reflect the non-heroic survival and consciously deny the moral closure. Based on the recent works in postcolonial theories, narrative theory, and trauma theory, the review is a synthesis of the existing studies on the ethical aspects of ambiguous endings, fragmented narratives, and characters with a moral dimension. Historically, postcolonial literature is the result of the culture and politics of the postcolonial phase following the rule of colonial domination, aimed at discussing the ongoing effects of the imperial power, cultural displacement, and identity crisis in the societies that once were colonized. In these contexts, a lot of the stories are in opposition to the classical literary pattern of the heroic redemption, but they are the stories about the characters who are bargaining to survive in the environment of structural inequality and historical trauma.*

The review presents several thematic patterns in the literature, such as the denial of the blatant moral binary, narrative fragmentation and silence, and the manipulation of ethical ambiguity as the central narrative technique. According to scholars, these types of narratives represent the historical injustices that have not been resolved yet and make readers face the sophisticated moral issues and not the simplified moral answers. The paper also outlines the new academic discussions in relation to the concept of survival ethics, reader-response interpretation, and the use of philosophical ethics and the study of literature. This review has revealed that postcolonial narratives can transform the moral possibilities of the storytelling process by synthesizing different critical viewpoints and focusing on endurance, ambiguity and historical responsibility instead of redemption. Finally, the research adds to the current discourse of the postcolonial literary criticism by offering a model of the interpretation of how the discourse of survival puts in question traditional conceptions of morality and broadens current theory of narrative morality.

Keywords— *Postcolonial ethics, Non-heroic survival, Moral ambiguity, Narrative closure, Narrative ethics, Postcolonial literature.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study: Postcolonial Ethics and Narrative Morality

The study of postcolonial literature has become one of the most significant disciplines of modern literary analysis, concerned with the cultural, political, and ethical implications of colonial domination and its ongoing impacts on the societies of former colonies. Scholars have increasingly emphasized that postcolonial narratives are not simply accounts of past experiences of colonialism but also critiques of the ethical frameworks through which these experiences are interpreted and represented in literature. In many instances, these stories subvert the moral rubrics inherited from Western literary traditions that tend to depend on heroic figures, redemption patterns, and moral resolutions. Rather, postcolonial fiction is often marked by

fragmented subjectivities, ethical dilemmas left unresolved, and characters who live in conditions of historical violence, displacement, and cultural warfare (Shakun, 2024).

In this regard, narrative ethics has gained significance as an analytical tool for interpreting how literature shapes and challenges moral experience. Narrative ethics concerns the connection between narratives and ethical thought—the ways in which literary works elaborate intricate moral circumstances that resist easy judgment or decision. Narrative can facilitate a space that challenges readers to confront ambiguity, uncertainty, and competing ethical claims instead of delivering definite moral lessons. Modernist criticism indicates that these types of narratives are especially applicable to postcolonial literature, in which historical trauma, social inequality, and cultural hybridity may complicate standard morality (Adams, 2024).

Postcolonial storytelling often portrays characters who merely manage to survive within oppressive or unstable social structures rather than achieving heroic victory or moral redemption. These tales represent the actual experiences of many postcolonial societies where survival is frequently characterized by accommodation, compromise, and adaptation as opposed to heroic struggle. Historians have observed that themes of memory, trauma, and historical injustice are prominent in these stories and influence how characters understand their moral obligations and personal identities (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

Consequently, the ethical dimension of postcolonial literature may differ substantially from traditional literary paradigms. Postcolonial stories often present moral vagueness and discord rather than a moral universe where good is rewarded and evil punished. These representations compel readers to question the connections between morality, power, and survival in situations shaped by the history of colonization and its ongoing legacies.

1.2 Importance of the Topic

The focus of research on non-heroic survival and the denial of moral closure in postcolonial texts is important as it broadens the moral patterns through which literature is understood. Conventional literary criticism has tended to place high emphasis on narrative endings that culminate in redemption, moral realization, or heroic conversion. However, postcolonial literature often challenges these norms, featuring protagonists who do not find moral resolution or achieve heroic status. Such narrative techniques reflect larger cultural and political realities of the postcolonial world, in which people are frequently confronted with structural imbalance, historical trauma, and ongoing forms of marginalization.

Recent criticism stresses that postcolonial literature typically serves as a critique of Eurocentric discourses of narration that support heroic individualism and moral certitude. The representation of survival over redemption as the primary ethical concern in these narratives acknowledges the nuances of human agency in contexts where colonial violence and socio-political unrest are major factors (Zafar, 2024).

Moreover, the lack of moral closure in many postcolonial texts encourages readers to actively engage with ethical gray areas. Instead of offering clear moral judgments, these narratives prompt critical reflection on the social conditions that shape moral choices. By doing so, postcolonial literature contributes to wider discussions on ethics, responsibility, and historical memory in modern literary criticism.

1.3 Objectives of the Review

The main aim of this review paper is to analyze how postcolonial narratives restructure traditional ethical discourse by emphasizing non-heroic survival and rejecting redemption and moral closure. To synthesize current research on the ethical aspects of postcolonial narration, this review assesses the existing literature in postcolonial literary studies and narrative ethics.

Specifically, the review aims to identify the theoretical concepts and methodological approaches scholars have used to examine ethical ambiguity in postcolonial literature. This involves exploring how literary critics interpret themes of survival, trauma, memory, and moral responsibility within postcolonial contexts. The study seeks to highlight the role of the "ethics without redemption" concept in contemporary discourses on literary criticism by mapping the main debates and theoretical perspectives in this area.

The review also aims to discuss how narrative models and literary devices—such as open endings, fragmented stories, and morally ambiguous characters—disrupt traditional demands for morally satisfying resolutions in literary works. Through this discussion, the review identifies how postcolonial narratives develop alternative ethical frameworks that prioritize survival, resilience, and historical awareness above heroic redemption.

1.4 Review Area: Ethics Without Redemption in Postcolonial Literary Studies

This overview focuses on recent academic debates concerning ethics, survival, and narrative ambiguity in postcolonial literature. The analysis primarily draws on scholarly literature published within the past ten years, with special attention to research from the past five years. By focusing on recent scholarship, the review aims to reflect current debates and emerging trends in the examination of postcolonial narrative ethics.

The review encompasses theoretical and critical works that examine the ethical dimensions of postcolonial literature, emphasizing issues such as moral ambiguity, survival strategies, and the refusal of narrative closure. These works consider literary texts from various postcolonial contexts, including Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean, and explore how diverse cultural and historical experiences shape the ethical concerns of postcolonial texts.

The review does not attempt to analyze all postcolonial literature. Rather, it focuses on key critical discourses that illuminate the connections between ethics, narrative form, and survival in postcolonial storytelling. Studies with primarily historical or political orientations that do not engage with literary ethics are therefore not included.

By synthesizing recent research on postcolonial narrative ethics, this review aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how contemporary literary criticism engages with the ethical implications of survival and moral ambiguity in postcolonial narratives.

II. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

2.1 Search Strategy: Literature Search on Postcolonial Ethics and Moral Closure

This review paper employs a systematic narrative review design to identify appropriate scholarly materials discussing ethics, survival, and the refusal of moral closure in postcolonial narratives. The search strategy targeted scholarly articles addressing postcolonial literary ethics, narrative ambiguity, trauma, survival narratives, and postcolonial refusal of moral closure. Relevant studies were retrieved using keywords such as "postcolonial ethics," "moral ambiguity in literature," "non-heroic survival," "narrative ethics," "postcolonial narrative closure," and "trauma in postcolonial literature."

The search process involved keyword searches using Boolean operators (AND, OR) to broaden and narrow search results. Example search combinations included: "postcolonial literature AND ethics," "narrative ethics AND postcolonial studies," and "survival narratives AND moral ambiguity." This strategy enabled the identification of both theoretical and empirical works addressing ethical dilemmas and narrative complexity in postcolonial literary works. Priority was given to academic publications from the past five years to ensure the review reflects current trends and evolving perspectives in postcolonial literary criticism and narrative ethics (Tsang, 2024; Zafar, 2024).

2.2 Databases Used:

To ensure reliability and academic credibility, multiple scholarly databases and digital libraries were consulted. Primary databases included JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Project MUSE, which provide access to peer-reviewed journals and academic publications in humanities and social sciences. These databases are widely utilized in literary studies for their extensive coverage of postcolonial studies, cultural theory, and narrative ethics.

Google Scholar proved particularly useful for identifying recent interdisciplinary research linking postcolonial studies with trauma research, narrative theory, and ethical criticism. JSTOR and Project MUSE provided access to peer-reviewed literary criticism and theoretical discourse on postcolonial narrative structures and moral uncertainty. Consultation of multiple databases aimed to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature and minimize the risk of overlooking significant academic contributions to the field (Shakun, 2024).

2.3 Inclusion Criteria: Studies on Postcolonial Narratives, Ethics, and Survival

To maintain relevance and quality, specific inclusion criteria were established. First, only peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly book chapters, and academic research papers were included in the analysis to ensure engagement with critically validated scholarship on postcolonial literature and its moral dimensions.

Second, selected studies were required to address topics related to postcolonial narrative ethics, including moral ambiguity, survival in oppressive circumstances, trauma, or narrative practices that deviate from conventional moral closure. Works focusing on literary texts by recognized postcolonial authors—such as Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie, and

Amitav Ghosh—were particularly relevant, as these authors frequently engage with themes of historical trauma, identity, and moral complexity in postcolonial contexts.

Third, preference was given to literature published within the past five years to capture current debates and evolving theoretical approaches in postcolonial literary criticism. Recent studies increasingly emphasize the role of trauma, memory, and identity formation in shaping postcolonial narratives and ethical interpretations (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

2.4 Exclusion Criteria:

Several exclusion criteria were applied to maintain focus on the specific research topic. The review excluded studies addressing postcolonial history, politics, or sociology without engaging with literary narratives themselves. Similarly, articles discussing ethics from purely philosophical or technological perspectives without connection to literary analysis were deemed irrelevant.

Non-peer-reviewed sources such as blog posts, opinion articles, and non-academic commentaries were excluded to maintain scholarly rigor. Articles focused exclusively on colonial history without addressing postcolonial literary representation or narrative ethics were also excluded. These criteria helped narrow the review to scholarly discourses directly addressing ethical concerns, survival narratives, and narrative ambiguity in postcolonial literature.

2.5 Study Selection Process:

The study selection process proceeded in multiple stages to ensure selection of the most relevant and credible sources. Initial database searches yielded numerous potential sources related to postcolonial studies and narrative ethics. These studies were first screened by title and abstract to assess relevance to the themes of ethics, survival, and moral ambiguity in postcolonial writings.

The second stage involved reviewing full-text articles to evaluate theoretical contribution and scholarly value in relation to the research topic. Studies offering substantial analysis of postcolonial narrative strategies, ethical concerns, or representations of survival were prioritized. Special attention was given to works examining how postcolonial literature resists traditional narrative forms, including the denial of heroic redemption and moral closure.

The final selection comprised scholarly articles and research papers representing current debates in postcolonial literary criticism and narrative ethics. This systematic selection process ensured that the literature review is grounded in valid and pertinent academic findings.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Conceptual Framework / Theoretical Background: Ethics, Survival, and Anti-Heroism in Postcolonial Literature:

In *The Impact of Postcolonial Narratives on Modern Literature*, Aamir Zafar (2024) contends that postcolonial narratives fundamentally reorganize literary ethics by critiquing Eurocentric models of storytelling based on heroic redemption and moral certainty. According to Zafar, postcolonial writers often foreground marginalized voices and fragmented identities, creating narrative spaces in which ethical meaning manifests as survival rather than victory. These stories challenge the universality of Western moral frameworks and highlight ethically grounded decisions shaped by colonial oppression and cultural hybridity. Zafar's views align with the argument that postcolonial storytelling typically rejects moral closure to reveal the enduring complexities of colonial power arrangements.

Sibongile Ruth Nhari, Charlotte Taka, and Thokozani Ian Nzimakwe (2025) discuss the link between historical trauma and postcolonial ethical interpretation. Their literature review highlights the frequent inadequacy of conventional Western ethical theories in capturing the realities of people living under colonial violence and marginalization. They suggest that ethics frameworks which are context-specific and grounded in local philosophies and collective memory offer more pertinent interpretive paradigms for literature produced in postcolonial societies. Their work emphasizes the role of trauma in complicating moral judgment and advocates for literary accounts in which endurance and survival take precedence over morally heroic narratives.

In *Unravelling Postcolonial Perspective and Identity Formation in Contemporary Indian English Literature*, Laki Barik (2024) explores the portrayal of identity as a dynamic process shaped by historical legacy and contemporary change in postcolonial narratives. Barik argues that recent postcolonial literature often depicts characters negotiating cultural loss and social instability, leading to situations where survival becomes an overriding moral condition. These narratives resist moral closure,

reflecting the unstable and unresolved nature of identity in postcolonial societies where colonial history persists in cultural consciousness.

Amaal Al-Masri, Mona Smadi, and Lana Al-Twaijer (2024) examine the crucial role of memory and trauma in shaping ethical reflection in postcolonial literature. Their comparative analysis of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee demonstrates how literary texts generate ethical significance through the representation of colonial violence and collective suffering. Their analysis suggests that memory functions as a narrative device that disrupts linear narration and heroic redemption, foregrounding fragmented experiences that emphasize the moral complexities of survival in postcolonial societies.

Julia Siccardi (2024) focuses on narrative fragmentation and belonging in contemporary postcolonial literature, analyzing Natasha Brown's novel *Assembly*. Siccardi argues that disrupted narrative patterns reflect the psychological and social tensions experienced by individuals navigating racial and economic stratification in postcolonial societies. Such narrative techniques challenge conventional moral frameworks, presenting protagonists who confront systemic injustice without achieving heroic transformation. Consequently, ethical uncertainty frequently becomes a defining feature of postcolonial literary narratives.

Sanjay Pandey (2025) discusses narrative injustice and the erasure of oppressed identities through legal and political systems. Pandey demonstrates how collective memory and historical recognition can either reinforce or transform structures of exclusion through narrative forms. Literary narratives often expose these injustices in postcolonial contexts, depicting experiences of individuals whose lives remain unrecognized within dominant social structures. These representations highlight the moral significance of storytelling in challenging historical silence and validating marginalized voices.

Khalid Y. Alothman (2026) examines how contemporary postcolonial fiction addresses the embodied effects of war, displacement, and migration. His discussion of exile narratives reveals characters confronting ethical crises without achieving moral heroism, instead grounded in survival. These stories foreground vulnerability, insecurity, and psychological trauma, presenting survival as an ethical response to systemic violence. In this context, postcolonial literature challenges traditional narrative schemata that emphasize resolution and redemption.

According to Rosenow (2024), postcolonial literary works function as critical spaces where authors reimagine the past and contest colonial cultural authority. By rewriting histories of oppression and resistance, authors develop narratives that resist simple moral dichotomies. Rosenow argues that these literary techniques foreground the ethical ambiguities of postcolonial experience, where characters navigate conflicting ethical commitments shaped by cultural identity, historical memory, and social change.

Gallagher (2025) explores how resistance and cultural negotiation are represented in contemporary postcolonial texts. According to Gallagher, postcolonial protagonists rarely fit heroic molds; they are often ambiguous, vulnerable, and ethically uncertain. This shift reflects broader changes in narrative ethics, where literature increasingly focuses on the challenges of surviving within unequal social systems rather than celebrating heroic achievement. Consequently, postcolonial narratives often leave ethical questions unresolved, compelling readers to critically consider the conditions under which moral choices are made.

Bottinelli (2023) emphasizes the importance of narrative experimentation in postcolonial literature, suggesting that alternative narrative structures reflect the disrupted histories and identities of postcolonial societies. Through techniques such as nonlinear narration, fragmented storytelling, and open endings, authors disrupt conventional storytelling and invite readers to engage with complex ethical issues. These narrative strategies support the view that moral closure is not always possible in contexts shaped by colonial violence and social instability.

Stuelke (2021) explores how recent literary criticism has increasingly recognized the significance of survival narratives in interpreting postcolonial literature. Stuelke argues that survival should be understood not as passive persistence but as ethical negotiation within oppressive social systems. Postcolonial stories often present characters whose actions resist easy evaluation by Western moral standards, as their behavior emerges from conditions of institutionalized inequality and historical trauma.

Zoromba (2024) contributes to trauma research by proposing culturally sensitive frameworks that account for the diverse experiences of communities affected by colonial violence. Zoromba argues that trauma narratives frequently unsettle universal ethical theories by emphasizing the importance of context, collective memory, and cultural identity. In postcolonial literature, these narratives create spaces where survival, memory, and resilience emerge as central ethical concerns alongside or in place of heroic redemption.

3.2 Key Themes in the Literature:

In *Postcolonial Theory: The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, Suman Soni (2025) identifies recent trends in postcolonial criticism, noting that contemporary studies increasingly focus on ambiguous narratives and moral ambiguity rather than moral closure. Soni emphasizes that characters in postcolonial literature often navigate unstable political and cultural situations where moral certainty remains inaccessible. Consequently, the ethical significance of such stories lies not in heroic redemption but in representing survival and moral negotiation within historically unequal power relations.

Isabella Strazzeri (2024) maintains that colonial systems fundamentally altered social hierarchies by creating gendered power relations that continue to shape postcolonial societies. According to Strazzeri, literary narratives representing these structures often depict characters negotiating multiple forms of oppression rather than engaging in heroic resistance. These accounts underscore the persistence of colonial dynamics in everyday social interactions, affirming that survival—rather than redemption—frequently constitutes the ethical agency within postcolonial narrative.

Fazal Al Bashar (2025) describes how postcolonial writing often functions as counternarrative that disrupts colonial claims to truth and moral authority. These stories, as Al Bashar explains, foreground experiences of marginalized peoples whose histories were suppressed or distorted by colonialism. By reconstructing these perspectives, postcolonial literature exposes ethical contradictions within colonial discourse and demonstrates how survival strategies become central to the moral experiences of colonized individuals.

Baburam Khanal and Preeti Pankaj Gupta (2025) examine imperialism and resistance in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, arguing that the novel depicts characters trapped within complex economic and political structures established by colonial power. Their research demonstrates that characters' choices are constrained by these structures rather than driven by individual moral heroism. This limitation of agency reflects broader patterns in postcolonial literature where moral decisions cannot be separated from historical circumstances of exploitation and displacement.

Mesut Kuleli, Esra Melek Demir Eryiğit, and Halil Ibrahim Balkul (2025) explore power relations in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, arguing that linguistic and narrative forms play crucial roles in representing colonial power and African resistance. Their discussion reveals how literary narratives depict subtle operations of colonial power in shaping cultural identities and moral expectations. Through such analyses, it becomes evident that postcolonial literature tends to emphasize ethical conflict rather than moral resolution.

Cultural identity and postcolonial subjectivity are discussed by Qian Liu (2025) through the works of Rohinton Mistry, focusing on how characters navigate social marginalization and cultural hybridity in postcolonial contexts. According to Liu, these stories often represent characters facing ethical conflicts shaped by social inequality, migration, and historical trauma. The absence of clear moral resolution in such narratives reflects the persistent uncertainties faced by individuals in postcolonial societies.

Elif Güvendi Yalcini (2025) focuses on Teju Cole's *Open City*, illustrating how postcolonial fiction critiques neo-Orientalist discourses that continue to shape perceptions of identity and culture. Yalcini argues that the novel's narrative structure intentionally lacks moral closure, reflecting the protagonist's incomplete understanding of history, migration, and belonging. This narrative ambiguity demonstrates how postcolonial literature often represents moral complexity through unresolved personal and historical narratives.

Olufemi Idowu (2025) studies intersections of postcolonial narratives and historical trauma in African literature. According to Idowu, stories shaped by colonial violence frequently emphasize communal memory and historical injustice rather than individual redemption. These narratives represent survival as mediated through collective solidarity, cultural resilience, and historical consciousness, challenging Western literary traditions that privilege individual heroic transformation.

Goutam Karmakar (2025) explores environmental injustice in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*, arguing that the novel highlights ecological and political consequences of colonial resource exploitation. Karmakar emphasizes that characters' experiences demonstrate how postcolonial societies continue to grapple with legacies of colonial economic exploitation. Survival in this context becomes a complex ethical situation shaped by environmental degradation and political instability.

Mohamed Habeeb and M. Shajahan Sait (2025) compare works by Tabish Khair, arguing that postcolonial narratives often depict protagonists experiencing profound cultural dislocation and fragmented identity. Their paper highlights how migration and global mobility complicate traditional understandings of belonging and moral identity. Consequently, the ethical questions

presented in these stories remain open, reflecting ongoing challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural identities.

Andrew Ikpomwosa Egbah and Florence Osaguona-Okpalaku (2025) discuss how Negritude ideology manifests in contemporary African short stories. Their linguistic and stylistic analysis reveals how postcolonial writers use language to assert cultural identity and challenge colonial legacies. Through these narrative modes, literature becomes a site of cultural resistance where ethical meaning emerges through collective memory and cultural affirmation rather than heroic redemption.

Cynthia Ma, Nikita Tantira, Delfi Nazilah Lubis, and Rahmadsyah Rangkuti (2025) examine how Rabindranath Tagore's aesthetic philosophy has influenced postcolonial fiction. According to their findings, Tagore's emphasis on spiritual and cultural interconnectedness has shaped ethical frameworks in contemporary writing. Postcolonial stories influenced by this tradition often focus on empathy, relational ethics, and cultural dialogue rather than individual moral triumph.

Nadjiba Bouallegue (2025) focuses on the pedagogical significance of postcolonial literature in fostering empathy and critical thinking in academic contexts. Bouallegue argues that postcolonial texts encourage readers to confront historical realities they might otherwise avoid and understand the moral implications of colonial systems of power. Through morally ambiguous narratives, readers develop deeper understanding of historical injustice and cultural identity.

Jakub Czernik (2025) discusses international responses to Salman Rushdie, arguing that postcolonial literature often serves as cultural conversation between literary traditions. According to Czernik, the global circulation of these narratives confirms the ongoing significance of colonial history in contemporary global culture. In this way, postcolonial texts compel readers to reconsider dominant histories and ethical frameworks.

Vandana Whig and Hemlata Jain (2025) consider Bapsi Sidhwa's novels, emphasizing the role of historical memory in shaping postcolonial discourse. Their study demonstrates how Sidhwa's narratives reflect psychological and social consequences of the Partition of India, showing how historical trauma continues to shape individual and collective identities. These narratives tend to remain morally unresolved because the historical traumas they represent remain unhealed.

Kamlesh Yadav and Chhaya Singh (2025) discuss thematic and narrative styles in Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels. Their analysis emphasizes how postcolonial fiction employs satire, irony, and narrative fragmentation to critique political and social institutions. These narrative techniques disrupt expectations of traditional morality, inviting readers to critically engage with the ethical questions presented.

Lassana Kanté (2025) explores Black consciousness in postcolonial African literature, demonstrating how literature expresses collective resistance against colonial oppression. According to Kanté, these narratives often frame moral struggle as collective rather than individual, reflecting broader social dynamics within postcolonial societies.

Ana Cristina Toledo Soares (2025) explores how contemporary literary criticism engages with classical tragedy to interpret modern narratives of disorder and confusion. In this context, postcolonial literature often reflects tragic forms, presenting situations where moral conflict remains unresolved and characters continue living within conditions they cannot control.

3.3 Comparative Analysis of Previous Studies:

In *Postcolonial Literature: Its Importance and Modern-Day Relevance*, Dharmeshkumar Sunilbhai Patel (2022) notes that postcolonial literature primarily focuses on cultural, political, and psychological consequences of colonialism. According to Patel, themes explored in postcolonial narratives include cultural displacement, resistance, and identity reconstruction. Comparing works by Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie, Patel demonstrates that postcolonial writings frequently contest dominant historical accounts and emphasize the lasting effects of colonial legacies on moral frameworks and cultural identities in contemporary societies.

Nicole M. Mambrol (2023) examines connections between trauma theory and postcolonial narratives. According to Mambrol, trauma narratives often disrupt narrative continuity and traditional resolution because traumatic memory is inherently fragmented. In postcolonial literature, such fragmentation becomes a powerful narrative tool through which authors represent psychological and historical consequences of colonial violence. These narrative techniques compel readers to confront moral ambiguity and the ongoing effects of colonial pasts.

Nadiia Shakun (2024) examines current theoretical perspectives in postcolonial studies, observing that contemporary scholarship has become increasingly interdisciplinary, incorporating cultural studies, sociology, and narrative ethics. Shakun notes that this interdisciplinary approach enables researchers to address ethical dimensions of colonial history from multiple

perspectives, particularly regarding how narratives represent social power relations and cultural transformation. Through comparative analysis of various postcolonial texts, Shakun demonstrates that ethical ambiguities frequently emerge from tensions between colonial pasts and contemporary identities.

In *Ethics and Recognition in Postcolonial Literature*, Véronique van Bever Donker (2012) explores how postcolonial literature addresses ethical recognition and moral responsibility. Donker explains that literary works often represent the challenge of ethical understanding across cultural boundaries shaped by colonial encounters. Through comparative analysis of multiple literary works, she argues that postcolonial literature tends to compel readers to reconsider conventional moral frameworks and recognize the complex ethical relationships forged through colonial history.

Jennifer Yusin (2018) discusses connections between trauma and postcolonial literature, emphasizing that postcolonial stories often reflect intersections of historical violence and individual memory. According to Yusin, trauma theory provides a useful framework for understanding how literary texts represent colonial experiences that resist traditional narrative patterns. Many postcolonial writings lack moral resolution because characters cannot overcome the effects of trauma they experience, reflecting the ongoing impact of colonial pasts on cultural consciousness.

Nivedita Rao (2004) explores representations of national crisis in postcolonial fiction through Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and *The Redundancy of Courage*. According to Rao, these stories capture societies struggling with political instability and economic inequality, depicting how individuals navigate national crisis. Through comparative analysis, Rao demonstrates that postcolonial fiction often focuses on characters embedded within larger political systems, emphasizing survival over heroic victory.

An anonymous author in the *American Journal of English Education and Entrepreneurship* (2023) discusses narrative techniques in postcolonial literature, noting that many authors employ innovative storytelling methods to challenge colonial discourses of reality. These techniques include nonlinear narration, multiple perspectives, and open endings. The study argues that such narrative forms disrupt traditional literary expectations and enable writers to represent complex ethical dilemmas without imposing judgment.

The author of *Reclaiming Narratives in Postcolonial Literature* (2024) points out that postcolonial authors frequently reconstruct historical narratives through perspectives of previously marginalized populations. By reclaiming these stories, authors critique colonial myths and expose ideological assumptions underlying colonial discourse. The work emphasizes the importance of such literary interventions in understanding how postcolonial literature reshapes cultural memory and ethical meaning in the wake of colonialism.

The author of *Postcolonial Perspectives in Modern Literature* (2024) argues that postcolonial authors often reimagine cultural traditions to articulate new identities and forms of resistance. Through comparative analysis of multiple literary works, the paper demonstrates that postcolonial narratives tend to emphasize cultural hybridity and social transformation. This focus on hybridity highlights the complexity of ethical decision-making in societies shaped by diverse historical and cultural factors.

The author of *Postcolonial Literature: Selected Essays on Past, Present and Future Trends* (2024) discusses emerging trends in postcolonial scholarship, particularly increased interest in transnational identities and global cultural exchange. The paper observes that contemporary postcolonial literature increasingly engages with globalization, migration, and environmental crisis, expanding the thematic scope of postcolonial texts. These developments suggest that ethical concerns in postcolonial literature are becoming increasingly interconnected with global issues.

Hanna Dalley (2015) discusses solidarity as a dimension of postcolonial trauma fiction, arguing that literary representations of suffering often aim to cultivate cross-cultural empathy in readers. According to Dalley, postcolonial literature can encourage readers to recognize experiences of marginalized groups and engage ethically with their histories through narratives of trauma and injustice. However, as Dalley also observes, these stories often resist moral closure, instead emphasizing the ongoing complexity of historical trauma.

K. C. Rejina (2026) explores ethical issues in narrative research, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive ethical interpretation in narrative analysis. Rejina states that narratives are shaped by social and cultural contexts that influence how ethical questions are presented and understood. In literary contexts, this perspective emphasizes the importance of situating stories within their historical and cultural contexts to understand the moral implications of storytelling.

3.4 Emerging Trends in the Field:

In *Exploring Ethical and Emotional Engagement with Suffering in Postcolonial Literature*, Pritam Taman (2025) writes that recent scholarship increasingly focuses on the ethical implications of reader engagement in interpreting postcolonial narratives. According to Taman, contemporary literary criticism examines how readers navigate moral ambiguity when confronting narratives of suffering, displacement, and colonial trauma. These stories do not offer clear ethical judgments but instead encourage readers to reconsider their own moral assumptions and engage with complex historical realities. This trend reflects broader movement toward understanding postcolonial texts as sites of ethical reflection and critical dialogue rather than moral resolution.

In *Postcolonial Trauma and the Strategy of Silence in African Narratives*, Oumar Siby (2025) emphasizes increased scholarly attention to narrative silence and absence as literary techniques for representing trauma. According to Siby, much contemporary postcolonial literature employs silence, fragmentation, and narrative gaps to represent experiences that resist expression through conventional storytelling. These narrative techniques prompt readers to interpret what remains unspoken, highlighting enduring psychological and cultural consequences of colonial violence. Through such methods, silence emerges as an ethical storytelling tool in literary criticism rather than merely a stylistic device.

In *Reimagining Identity in Postcolonial East African Literature*, Beatrice J. Jani (2025) discusses how contemporary writers integrate trauma studies, memory studies, and postcolonial theory to reconceptualize identity. According to Jani, contemporary postcolonial fiction frequently represents identity as dynamic and fluid, shaped by historical trauma, migration, and cultural hybridity. Such stories often focus on psychological complexity of characters with multiple cultural affiliations. This emerging trend emphasizes understanding postcolonial identity as relational and historically contingent rather than essentialized.

In *Postcolonial Trauma Theory in the Contact Zone* (2015), Sara Martínez-Falquina discusses adaptation of trauma theory to address experiences of postcolonial societies. Martínez-Falquina argues that conventional trauma theories developed in Western contexts inadequately capture collective and historical dimensions of colonial trauma. Recent scholarship therefore aims to decolonize trauma theory by incorporating non-Western perspectives and histories. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultural specificity in interpreting narratives of trauma and survival in postcolonial literature.

According to Shahid Siddiqui (2024) in *Postcolonial Trends in Literature*, several primary trends have shaped contemporary study of postcolonial literature, including increased focus on cultural identity, gender politics, and migration. According to Siddiqui, recent scholarship examines how globalization and transnational mobility transform postcolonial experiences. Consequently, interdisciplinary approaches to postcolonial literature now commonly integrate literary criticism with cultural studies, sociology, and political theory. This shift reflects broader recognition that postcolonial narratives are embedded within global social and political processes.

In *Relationality and Toni Morrison's Home*, Irene Visser (2014) emphasizes increased relevance of relational ethics in postcolonial literary research. Visser argues that contemporary studies tend to focus on how individual relationships, communities, and historical memories shape ethical interpretation in literature. Rather than evaluating characters according to universal moral norms, relational approaches examine how moral significance emerges through forms of social relation and shared history. This approach has gained influence in interpreting narratives representing collective trauma and cultural memory.

In her article for *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, Silvia Klein (2025) discusses how the geographical and cultural scope of postcolonial studies is expanding through new critical practices. Klein argues that contemporary critics are increasingly examining literary traditions beyond conventional foci on Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean. This expansion includes analysis of postcolonial texts from East Asia and other regions historically shaped by imperial contacts. These developments indicate that postcolonial literary criticism continues to evolve, accommodating diverse global perspectives.

Dharmeshkumar S. Patel (2022) emphasizes that recent postcolonial scholarship increasingly focuses on the relevance of colonial pasts to contemporary social and political realities. Patel states that postcolonial literature does not merely reexamine past colonial events but explores how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary cultural identities and political structures. This focus on historical continuity underscores the significance of literature as a means through which societies understand and negotiate their colonial pasts.

IV. RESEARCH GAPS

The synthesis of existing scholarship reveals several significant gaps in current research on postcolonial narrative ethics:

- **Theorizing non-heroic survival:** There is a lack of systematic theorization of non-heroic survival as a central narrative condition within literary criticism. Existing scholarship has primarily focused on identity formation, cultural resistance, and historical memory, leaving the ethical dimensions of survival under-theorized (Patel, 2022; Shakun, 2024).
- **Ethical transformation through narrative:** While many works discuss trauma, memory, and colonial violence in postcolonial narratives, fewer studies examine how these elements transform ethical frameworks within narrative contexts—particularly regarding survival, compromise, and moral ambiguity (Al-Masri et al., 2024; Yusin, 2018).
- **Ethics without redemption:** The concept of "ethics without redemption" remains critically underdeveloped. Most literary discussions continue to approach postcolonial narratives through frameworks of resistance, liberation, or moral justice rather than examining unresolved ethical survival.
- **Survival as ethical category:** Current literature tends to view survival as a socio-political or cultural process, but few studies theorize survival as an ethical condition within narrative theory, particularly in contexts of colonial trauma and structural inequality (Nhari et al., 2025).
- **Refusal of moral closure:** The refusal of moral closure as a narrative characteristic has received comparatively limited theoretical attention. Literary criticism often seeks interpretations that provide some form of moral resolution or narrative reconciliation (van Bever Donker, 2012).
- **Narrative techniques as ethical instruments:** There is insufficient analysis of how formal narrative techniques—such as fragmentation, silence, and open endings—function as ethical instruments rather than merely stylistic devices in postcolonial narrative (Siby, 2025).
- **Culturally specific frameworks:** Much existing literature relies on Western theoretical approaches, including trauma theory and psychoanalytic criticism, which may inadequately address culturally specific dimensions of suffering, resilience, and collective memory in postcolonial communities (Visser, 2014; Martínez-Falquina, 2015).
- **Cross-regional comparative analysis:** Cross-regional comparative studies examining themes of survival, moral ambiguity, and unresolved narratives across African, South Asian, and Caribbean postcolonial literature remain scarce.
- **Contemporary and emerging writers:** Most scholarship focuses on canonical authors such as Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, and J. M. Coetzee, leaving the ethical dimensions of survival and moral ambiguity in works by emerging and contemporary writers under-researched.
- **Interdisciplinary integration:** There is limited integration between narrative ethics and interdisciplinary methodologies—including trauma studies, cultural memory studies, and political theory—that could provide richer understanding of ethical concerns in postcolonial narratives.
- **Reader-response approaches:** Reader-response approaches remain underdeveloped, particularly regarding how readers interpret ethical ambiguity, unresolved endings, and morally ambiguous characters in postcolonial literature (Dalley, 2015).
- **Ethical agency beyond redemption:** Despite general recognition that postcolonial literature resists colonial narratives and amplifies marginalized voices, further research is needed on how postcolonial narratives construct ethical agency through endurance, negotiation, and survival within unequal power relations rather than through heroic redemption (Taman, 2025).

V. THE REJECTION OF MORAL CLOSURE IN NARRATIVE

5.1 Open Endings and Unresolved Conflicts:

In many postcolonial writings, open endings function as a significant narrative device that disrupts traditional literary norms of closure and ethical clarity. Unlike conventional narrative forms that conclude with reconciliation or redemption, postcolonial

fiction often leaves conflicts unresolved, reflecting the enduring consequences of colonial pasts and social inequalities. Scholars suggest that these open endings mirror the incomplete historical processes of decolonization and nation-building, emphasizing that the effects of colonialism cannot be neatly contained within a single narrative (Mukherjee, 2025).

Recent literary criticism argues that unresolved endings represent not merely an aesthetic choice but an ethical acknowledgment of historical complexity. Postcolonial authors frequently create characters confronted with structural oppression, economic inequality, and cultural displacement without providing conclusive solutions to these challenges. This openness compels readers to accept that historical trauma and social injustice resist easy resolution through conventional narrative methods. Instead, unresolved plots highlight the persistence of ethical challenges facing societies shaped by colonial pasts (Yadav, 2026).

Furthermore, open endings enable authors to oppose the moral simplification often associated with colonial narratives. Colonial literature frequently depicted the colonizer as a civilizing hero and the colonized subject as passive or redeemed through assimilation. Postcolonial authors challenge this pattern by presenting complex characters whose moral choices remain ambiguous and whose narratives resist closure. The refusal to provide definitive answers underscores the difficulty of achieving justice and recognition in postcolonial contexts (Nwosu, 2024).

Additionally, unresolved narrative conflicts invite readers to draw their own conclusions about moral questions based on their interpretation rather than relying on authors to provide ethical resolutions. This interpretive openness aligns with broader objectives of postcolonial literature, which seeks to decentre Eurocentric historical discourse and create space for diverse interpretations. By leaving conflicts unresolved, postcolonial narratives acknowledge the multiplicity of voices and experiences defining postcolonial societies while resisting the imposition of singular moral meanings.

5.2 Narrative Strategies That Disrupt Closure:

Postcolonial writers employ various narrative techniques to disrupt conventional narrative resolution and challenge literary norms. Fragmented narrative forms—where stories are told through multiple perspectives, nonlinear sequences, or memories—represent one such strategy. These narrative modes reflect the disrupted histories of colonized peoples and emphasize the difficulty of constructing coherent narratives from fragmented traumatic pasts. Scholars note that fragmentation effectively represents the psychological and cultural destabilization caused by colonial violence, making it a powerful means of depicting postcolonial conditions (Rajiva, 2014).

Unreliable narration represents another widely used technique, where narrators are constrained, biased, or unreliable. Through unreliable narrators, authors emphasize the contested nature of historical truth and encourage readers to question dominant historical accounts. These narrative strategies highlight how historical memory remains deeply contested in postcolonial contexts, where official histories often ignore or misrepresent marginalized experiences. Unreliable narration thus disrupts narrative closure by preventing readers from reaching definitive conclusions about events.

Silence and narrative gaps serve as additional strategies of resistance employed by postcolonial writers. Certain experiences—particularly those involving trauma, violence, or cultural loss—may remain partially unspoken within the narrative. These silences invite readers to contemplate what cannot be easily articulated or represented through language. Scholars argue that such narrative gaps function as ethical reminders of representation's limits and the enduring effects of colonial trauma (Haker, 2019).

Narrative experimentation also plays a crucial role in disrupting traditional narrative patterns. Postcolonial writers frequently blend oral narrative traditions, historical testimony, and metafiction to create forms that resist linear plotting and fixed meaning. These experimental forms reflect the hybrid cultural affiliations and historical complexities of postcolonial societies. By refusing conventional narrative closure, such works emphasize the multiplicity of perspectives and experiences that define postcolonial realities (Farrant, 2025).

Through these strategies—fragmentation, unreliable narration, silence, and experimental storytelling—postcolonial literature disrupts traditional narrative expectations and challenges readers to engage with the ethical complexity of historical and cultural narratives.

5.3 Ethical Engagement Through Ambiguity:

Ethical ambiguity characterizes many postcolonial narratives. Rather than drawing clear boundaries between right and wrong, postcolonial literature often presents characters navigating moral gray areas created by colonial oppression, social inequality,

and cultural hybridity. Ethical decisions in these contexts resist easy classification within conventional moral frameworks. Narrative ambiguity thus becomes a crucial tool for representing the complexities of postcolonial experience.

Recent criticism emphasizes that ambiguity demands more active ethical engagement from readers. When narratives withhold clear moral judgments, readers must draw their own conclusions about characters' motivations and actions. This process transforms reading into an active ethical practice where readers consider multiple perspectives and weigh conflicting moral claims (LeBlanc, 2023).

Ambiguity also reflects the philosophical challenges of interpreting colonial history. Colonial encounters involved conflicting cultural values, power imbalances, and contested historical accounts. Rather than simplifying these complexities, postcolonial literature uses morally ambiguous scenarios to acknowledge the inadequacy of binary moral categories and recognize the ethical complexities inherent in historical contexts.

Furthermore, ambiguity functions as resistance to ideological narratives seeking to impose fixed meanings on history. Colonial discourse relied on rigid moral dichotomies that represented colonization as a civilizing mission and imperial domination as justified. Postcolonial fiction challenges these dichotomies through ethically ambiguous characters whose actions resist classification as heroic or villainous. Through such ambiguity, postcolonial literature exposes contradictions and moral complexities that characterize both colonization and decolonization.

5.4 Reader Participation in Ethical Interpretation:

The denial of moral closure in postcolonial narratives positions readers as active participants in constructing ethical meaning. When narratives withhold definitive answers, readers must actively engage with texts to formulate their own ethical interpretations. This interactive reading aligns with narrative ethics theories emphasizing the dynamic relationship between literary works and readers' moral thought processes.

According to scholars, reading itself can become an ethical practice where readers encounter unfamiliar perspectives and reconsider their moral assumptions. Postcolonial narratives frequently present experiences of displacement, marginalization, and cultural conflict that challenge readers' existing frameworks of understanding. Through such narratives, readers are invited to imagine themselves in characters' positions and contemplate experiences different from their own (Toth, 2019).

Reader participation becomes especially significant when narratives address historical trauma or cultural injustice. In such contexts, literature can create spaces where readers encounter voices and experiences excluded from dominant historical accounts. Through interpreting these narratives, readers engage in practices of recognizing and acknowledging historical injustices. This interactive process highlights readers' ethical responsibilities in engaging with postcolonial literature.

Additionally, this participatory mode of reading supports the democratic possibilities of postcolonial discourse. Rather than imposing moral judgments, these narratives invite multiple interpretations and encourage dialogue among readers from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Such openness reflects the pluralistic nature of postcolonial societies and underscores literature's role in fostering cross-cultural understanding.

5.5 Comparison with Conventional Moral Endings:

Unlike postcolonial narratives that resist closure, many conventional literary works adhere to narrative structures culminating in moral resolution or redemption. Classical narrative models, particularly those grounded in Western literary traditions, typically feature clear moral lessons, heroic protagonists, and definitive endings where justice prevails or moral order is restored. These narrative forms provide readers with closure and moral certainty.

However, postcolonial authors frequently depart from these conventions, producing stories that resist resolution. This departure from traditional narrative models reflects historical realities of postcolonial societies where political instability, cultural transformation, and social inequality rarely lend themselves to neat resolution. By rejecting conventional moral resolutions, postcolonial literature acknowledges that historical injustices cannot be easily resolved within narrative boundaries.

Comparative studies of traditional and postcolonial narratives reveal that the refusal of moral closure functions as a significant critical tool. Postcolonial narratives compel readers to confront unresolved ethical questions and persistent social conflicts. This narrative openness emphasizes the ongoing relevance of colonial pasts and invites readers to think critically about contemporary social and political conditions.

Ultimately, the denial of moral closure represents a deliberate aesthetic and ethical choice in postcolonial writing. By disrupting traditional narrative expectations, postcolonial writers create literary spaces where readers must grapple with ambiguity,

multiplicity, and historical uncertainty. This narrative approach reinforces the central argument that postcolonial narratives prioritize ethical engagement with survival and ambiguity over redemption and moral resolution.

VI. DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed in this paper has explored the connections between postcolonial literature, narrative ethics, and the denial of moral closure. The synthesis reveals that postcolonial narratives consistently subvert traditional literary formulas centered on heroic redemption and moral certainty. Instead, ethical ambiguity, historical trauma, and survival emerge as central narrative concerns in many postcolonial texts. This shift reflects broader intellectual objectives of postcolonial studies, which seeks to challenge colonial power structures and reframe historical understanding from marginalized perspectives (Patel, 2022).

A key finding from the literature review is that postcolonial narratives often challenge conventional moral paradigms by emphasizing the complexity of historical and social experiences shaped by colonial domination. Classical literary plots typically rely on clear moral dichotomies distinguishing heroes from villains, justice from injustice, or redemption from downfall. However, postcolonial literary works complicate these oppositions, introducing readers to characters navigating morally gray areas within oppressive historical and social environments. Scholars argue that such narratives demonstrate how ethical decisions are often constrained by structural inequalities and historical trauma rather than determined solely by individual moral agency (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

The literature also reveals how postcolonial narratives challenge the expectation that narratives should conclude with moral resolution or redemption. Instead, many postcolonial texts present unresolved conflicts and ambiguous endings that acknowledge the enduring effects of colonial history. These narrative techniques emphasize the persistence of inequality, displacement, and cultural conflict in postcolonial societies. By refusing narrative closure, postcolonial literature recognizes that historical wounds inflicted by colonialism resist easy resolution through conventional narrative frameworks (Olive, 2014).

The theme of ethical survival emerges as another significant finding. Unlike earlier narratives that celebrated heroic resistance or moral triumph, postcolonial literature often portrays survival as a complex ethical practice shaped by vulnerability, compromise, and resilience. Characters in these stories navigate conditions of political instability, cultural displacement, and economic inequality. In such contexts, survival involves continual negotiation between individual agency and structural constraints. Scholars have theorized that this focus on survival reflects the lived experiences of many postcolonial societies, where people contend with multiple forms of marginalization and historical trauma (Nhari et al., 2025).

Importantly, the representation of survival in postcolonial narratives should not be understood as passive endurance. Rather, survival often functions as a form of resistance to oppressive structures. Through daily adaptation, preservation of memory, and cultural continuity, postcolonial characters disrupt narratives imposed by colonial power. Literature thus becomes a space where marginalized voices reclaim their histories and articulate alternative moral frameworks. Several researchers note that postcolonial narratives frequently transform historical survival into moral and political statements challenging dominant historical discourses (Taman, 2025).

The literature review also highlights the significance of narrative form in shaping ethical interpretation. Fragmented narratives, narrative gaps, and multiple perspectives serve as crucial techniques through which postcolonial authors represent complex historical experiences. These narrative elements disrupt linear storytelling and invite readers to actively engage with ethical ambiguity. For instance, silence and narrative absence function as techniques in postcolonial fiction to emphasize traumatic experiences that resist articulation through conventional language. Such narrative strategies remind readers that certain historical events resist representation within traditional narrative frameworks (Siby, 2025).

Furthermore, the denial of moral closure fundamentally transforms the relationship between literature and its readers. When narratives withhold conclusive ethical resolutions, readers must formulate their own ethical judgments about the text. This interpretive process compels readers to confront complex historical realities and reconsider their assumptions about morality, justice, and responsibility. Trauma scholars have observed that narratives depicting suffering and historical injustice can foster cross-cultural awareness and ethical reflection among readers (Dalley, 2015).

The synthesis of literature also yields significant implications for postcolonial literary criticism. First, researchers must recognize narrative ethics as an essential approach to postcolonial writing. Analyzing how ethical meaning is constructed through narrative form, perspective, and ambiguity enables deeper understanding of the moral dimensions of postcolonial storytelling. Second, the emphasis on survival and ambiguity underscores the need for theoretical frameworks extending

beyond Western models of redemption-based morality. Decolonizing literary criticism requires developing ethical frameworks attentive to the historical and cultural specificities of postcolonial societies (Martínez-Falquina, 2015).

Finally, the literature reviewed demonstrates that postcolonial narratives play significant roles in reshaping contemporary discourse on morality and ethics. By presenting characters navigating unresolved conflicts and ambiguous moral situations, these narratives challenge readers' assumptions about conventional ethical theories. Postcolonial literature thus serves not only as record of historical experience but also as critical space where alternative moral possibilities can be imagined. Through its focus on survival, ambiguity, and narrative openness, postcolonial storytelling invites readers to engage with the complexities of history and justice in postcolonial societies.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the concept of ethics without redemption in postcolonial narratives, focusing particularly on themes of non-heroic survival and the refusal of moral closure. The extensive review of contemporary literature demonstrates that postcolonial writing frequently challenges conventional narrative conventions based on heroic protagonists, moral clarity, and resolution. Instead, many postcolonial texts depict characters navigating disordered social and historical circumstances where moral decisions remain ambiguous and conflicts remain unresolved.

The reviewed literature underscores how postcolonial narratives emerge from historical conditions shaped by colonial domination, cultural displacement, and social inequality. These historical conditions generate moral questions that resist easy resolution through conventional narrative patterns. Scholars have shown that postcolonial literature explores themes of trauma, memory, identity, and resistance in ways that disrupt linear storytelling and challenge conventional morality (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

A central contribution of this review is the finding that postcolonial texts prioritize survival over redemption as a fundamental ethical concern. Unlike classical literary narratives celebrating heroic victory or moral transformation, postcolonial fiction depicts characters enduring difficult circumstances without achieving moral resolution. Survival in these narratives extends beyond physical or biological existence to encompass complex ethical practice shaped by historical trauma, cultural memory, and social inequality. By representing survival as ongoing process rather than final triumph, postcolonial literature encourages readers to reconsider conventional definitions of morality and heroism.

The review also reveals how narrative form shapes ethical interpretation. Fragmentation, multiple perspectives, silence, and open endings emerge as narrative techniques through which postcolonial writers represent historical complexity. These techniques disrupt conventional storytelling and invite readers to actively engage with ethical ambiguity. By refusing definitive moral conclusions, postcolonial narratives position readers to critically examine the social and historical conditions that shape moral choices (Siby, 2025).

This review also emphasizes the importance of integrating narrative ethics with postcolonial literary analysis. Understanding how narratives create ethical meaning requires attention not only to thematic content but also to narrative form, perspective, and reader interpretation. As postcolonial literature increasingly engages with global issues—including migration, environmental crisis, and transnational identity—the ethical frameworks shaping such narratives continue to evolve. Researchers have highlighted the value of interdisciplinary approaches integrating literary studies with philosophy, trauma studies, and cultural theory (Martínez-Falquina, 2015).

In terms of scholarly contribution, this review synthesizes recent studies on postcolonial narrative ethics and identifies several research gaps. By emphasizing non-heroic survival and the refusal of moral closure, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about ethical dimensions of postcolonial storytelling. It also underscores the importance of understanding narrative ambiguity and open endings as deliberate literary strategies challenging conventional moral frameworks.

In conclusion, postcolonial literature reconfigures understandings of morality by presenting narratives that resist interpretation within conventional moral frameworks. Through its focus on survival, ambiguity, and unresolved conflict, postcolonial storytelling reveals limitations of redemption-based moral frameworks. These narratives do not offer clear moral lessons but instead invite readers to engage with complexities of history, identity, and moral responsibility. In doing so, postcolonial literature continues to expand the possibilities of narrative ethics and contribute to more nuanced understandings of morality in contexts shaped by colonial pasts and global inequalities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Mapping Migratory Routes and Urban Imaginaries: GIS-Based Spatial Storytelling in Contemporary Graphic Novels

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Abstract— This paper explores the intersection of graphic novels and spatial humanities by applying Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map migratory routes and urban imaginaries in contemporary graphic narratives. While graphic novels have long served as powerful vehicles for depicting displacement, exile, and the lived experience of cities, traditional literary analysis often overlooks the precise spatial dynamics embedded in their panel sequences, gutters, and visual layouts. Drawing on tools from the spatial humanities, I georeference key locations, trace character journeys, and reconstruct imagined urban environments in selected works, including Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. By converting narrative panels into layered GIS datasets incorporating base maps, migration trajectories, and qualitative annotations of space, I reveal how these texts construct "migratory cartographies" that blend real-world geography with subjective, affective urban imaginaries. The analysis demonstrates that graphic novels do not merely represent migration; they actively perform spatial storytelling through sequential art, where the movement between panels mirrors the fragmented, non-linear nature of displaced lives. Interactive StoryMaps created for this project further allow readers to engage with these routes dynamically, bridging the gap between close reading and geospatial visualization. Ultimately, this study argues that GIS-based methods enrich our understanding of graphic novels as multimodal spatial texts and offer new possibilities for digital humanities scholarship in literature and cultural geography. By treating comics panels as geospatial data, we can uncover patterns of belonging, alienation, and mobility that remain hidden in conventional textual analysis.

Keywords— GIS storytelling, graphic novels, digital humanities, spatial humanities, migration routes, urban imaginaries, digital cartography, sequential art, displacement narratives, georeferencing, multimodal spatial analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the intricate pages of contemporary graphic novels, migration rarely manifests as a straightforward geographical progression from one fixed location to another. Instead, it emerges as a deeply fragmented, emotionally charged, and visually layered journey that unfolds across sequential panels, gutters, and meticulously constructed urban landscapes. Graphic novels have long served as powerful mediums for depicting experiences of displacement, exile, cultural hybridity, and the search for belonging. Yet, while literary and cultural scholars have extensively analysed the thematic, autobiographical, and representational dimensions of these works, the precise spatial dynamics embedded within them—specific migratory routes, the construction of real and imagined cities, and the interplay between visual narrative rhythm and geographical movement—often remain underexplored or treated metaphorically rather than analytically.

This paper seeks to address that critical gap by integrating tools from the spatial humanities, particularly Geographic Information Systems (GIS), with the study of graphic narratives. By georeferencing locations depicted or implied in the texts, tracing character trajectories as polylines, and layering qualitative annotations that capture emotional and symbolic elements, I demonstrate how three influential graphic novels construct what I term "migratory cartographies." These are hybrid spatial

representations that blend verifiable real-world geography with subjective, affective urban imaginaries shaped by memory, trauma, and hope.

The primary texts under examination are Marjane Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis* (2007), Shaun Tan's wordless *The Arrival* (2006), and Art Spiegelman's *The Complete Maus* (1996). These works span diverse historical and cultural contexts: political exile amid the Iranian Revolution, the surreal anonymity of immigrant arrival in an unnamed metropolis, and the intergenerational trauma of the Holocaust. Despite their differences, all three employ the unique grammar of sequential art—panel transitions, gutter spaces, perspective shifts, and visual symbolism—to perform spatial storytelling. Traditional close reading captures the emotional resonance of these narratives, but GIS mapping reveals hidden patterns of mobility, confinement, and belonging that would otherwise remain invisible.

My central argument is twofold. First, graphic novels are not merely representations of migration; they actively perform spatial storytelling through their multimodal form, where the movement between panels often mirrors the non-linear, fragmented nature of displaced lives. Second, applying GIS methods from the digital humanities enriches literary interpretation by providing a rigorous, visual, and interactive framework for analysing these spatial performances. This hybrid approach bridges quantitative geospatial precision with qualitative humanistic insight, contributing to on-going conversations in comic studies, migration literature, and the spatial humanities.

The paper proceeds as follows. I first review relevant scholarship in spatial humanities, comic studies, and migration theory. I then detail my GIS methodology. Subsequent sections present in-depth case studies of each graphic novel, accompanied by the GIS visualizations generated through this analysis, followed by comparative findings and a discussion of broader implications. Finally, I reflect on limitations and suggest avenues for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The spatial turn that has swept through the humanities over the past two decades has encouraged scholars to reconsider space not as passive backdrop but as an active force shaping cultural production, identity, and memory. David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris, in their foundational collection *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship*, argue that Geographic Information Systems offer humanists the opportunity to create "deep maps"—rich, multilayered representations that integrate quantitative data with qualitative interpretation, emotion, and narrative (Bodenhamer et al. 11). Such deep mapping moves beyond traditional cartography to capture the subjective, contested, and affective dimensions of place. However, this potential has not been without critique. Scholars such as Sarah Elwood (2006) and Mei-Po Kwan (2002) have advanced "critical GIS" perspectives that caution against the uncritical application of spatial technologies, emphasizing the need for reflexive methodologies that acknowledge the power dynamics embedded in mapping practices. This paper adopts such a reflexive stance, treating GIS not as an objective arbiter of truth but as a interpretive tool whose outputs require careful contextualization.

In the field of comic studies, Benjamin Fraser's *Visible Cities, Global Comics: Urban Images and Spatial Form* has been instrumental in demonstrating how graphic narratives encode urban environments through panel composition, perspective, layout, and rhythm. Fraser shows that comics do not simply depict cities; they construct spatial forms that reflect power relations, social hierarchies, and lived experiences (45–67). Extending this, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993) established foundational concepts of panel transitions and the gutter as sites of reader co-creation, while Thierry Groensteen's *The System of Comics* (2007) introduced the concept of "arthrology"—the networked relationships between panels across the page—which bears significant conceptual overlap with spatial layering in GIS. Hillary Chute's *Disaster Drawn* (2016) further examines how comics function as archival and testimonial forms, particularly in representing historical trauma. However, much of this scholarship remains interpretive rather than computational. While scholars frequently invoke metaphors of mapping or cartography when discussing comics, few have applied actual GIS tools to quantify or visualize migratory routes and urban imaginaries.

Migration studies provide another essential theoretical foundation. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "in-between" spaces of cultural hybridity highlights how displacement produces liminal geographies where identities are negotiated and renegotiated (*The Location of Culture*). Graphic novels literalize this liminality: the white gutters between panels function as visual metaphors for the gaps in memory, language, and geography that migrants experience. Recent interdisciplinary projects, such as graphic anthologies created through collaborations between migration scholars and comics artists, further underscore the

potential of sequential art to communicate complex stories of mobility and belonging. Doreen Massey's (2005) work on "progressive sense of place" and Alison Blunt's (2005) scholarship on diasporic geographies offer additional theoretical resources for understanding how migrant spaces are constructed as simultaneously local and transnational.

Within digital humanities, spatial analysis has been applied to literary texts ranging from nineteenth-century novels to contemporary digital storytelling. Projects such as the *Stanford Literary Lab's* spatial analyses or the *Mapping the Republic of Letters* initiative have revealed patterns in character movements and imagined landscapes that traditional reading overlooks. Yet applications to graphic novels remain limited. One notable exception is research that treats comic strips as "temporal map snapshots" analogous to GIS timeslices, suggesting that the episodic nature of comics aligns naturally with geospatial layering techniques (Kettner 2021).

My project builds on these intersecting fields by moving from metaphor to method. By digitizing panels and converting them into GIS datasets, I treat graphic novels as multimodal spatial texts. This approach aligns with calls for reflexive, critical GIS in the humanities while addressing ethical concerns in migration representation by foregrounding subjective experience alongside geographic precision.

III. METHODOLOGY

My research combined traditional close reading with digital geospatial techniques to ensure both interpretive depth and analytical rigor. The process unfolded in four interconnected stages, with careful attention to the methodological choices that shape the resulting analyses.

3.1 Text Selection and Digitization:

I selected three graphic novels representing distinct geographical contexts, historical periods, and narrative forms: Marjane Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis* (2007; originally published 2000–2003), Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006), and Art Spiegelman's *The Complete Maus* (1996; originally published 1980–1991). These works were chosen to capture diversity in migration experience (political exile, economic immigration, forced displacement), narrative structure (autobiographical, wordless, biographical), and visual style (black-and-white line drawing, photorealistic illustration, anthropomorphic representation).

High-resolution scans were created from physical copies using a flatbed scanner at 600 dpi to preserve visual detail for georeferencing. For each text, I systematically reviewed all pages and identified sequences depicting: (a) explicit geographical movement (border crossings, travel between cities), (b) urban environments with identifiable spatial characteristics, (c) spaces of confinement or alienation, and (d) spaces of belonging or community formation.

3.2 Georeferencing Protocol:

Establishing Base Maps: I used OpenStreetMap data as the primary base layer for verifiable real-world locations. For *Persepolis*, this included Tehran (1980s–1990s) and Vienna; for *Maus*, this included Sosnowiec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Rego Park, Queens. For *The Arrival*, I constructed a composite base map drawing from archival maps of early twentieth-century port cities (Ellis Island, Melbourne, San Francisco) to approximate the novel's implied setting, while adding custom symbolic raster layers for Tan's surreal elements (the "origami birds," alien script, fantastical architecture).

Point Feature Creation: Each depicted or implied location was georeferenced as a point feature in ArcGIS Pro (version 3.1). Georeferencing was performed manually by identifying panel elements that corresponded to real-world landmarks (e.g., the Tehran bazaar, the Statue of Liberty for *The Arrival's* harbor sequence, the Auschwitz gatehouse) and matching them to coordinates. For *The Arrival's* purely fantastical elements, I assigned coordinates within a consistent symbolic framework, with fictional locations placed along an imagined east-west axis to preserve directional logic relative to the protagonist's journey.

Attribute Schema: Each point feature was assigned attributes recorded in a structured database:

- *Text identifier:* title, page number, panel number
- *Location type:* residential, public space, transit, border, confinement, symbolic

- *Emotional valence*: coded as alienation, belonging, trauma, hope, or ambivalent, based on textual and visual cues (color, facial expression, panel composition)
- *Symbolic motifs*: veil, barbed wire, origami bird, etc.
- *Character presence*: protagonist, secondary characters, crowd

To ensure consistency, all qualitative coding was performed by the author with a second coder independently reviewing a 20% sample (inter-rater reliability: 87% agreement; disagreements resolved through discussion).

Polyline Creation: Migration routes and exploratory paths were digitized as polylines connecting point features in narrative sequence. For *Maus*, separate polyline feature classes were created for pre-war movement, wartime forced migration, and post-war displacement to enable multi-temporal visualization.

3.3 Spatial Analysis:

Kernel Density Analysis: I applied kernel density estimation (KDE) to point features to visualize spatial concentrations of specific phenomena (e.g., veil imagery in *Persepolis*, confinement spaces in *Maus*, social encounters in *The Arrival*). KDE parameters used a bandwidth of 500 meters for city-scale analysis and 50 meters for building-scale analysis, determined through sensitivity testing.

Panel Rhythm Correlation: Panel rhythm was quantified by measuring gutter widths and panel counts per page, then correlated with spatial attributes (density of point features, distance traveled) using basic statistical methods in R.

Multi-Temporal Layering: For *Maus*, I created separate temporal layers representing 1930s (pre-war), 1940–1944 (Holocaust period), and 1970s–1980s (contemporary narrative frame), enabling visualization of temporal compression and palimpsestic layering.

3.4 Interactive StoryMap Development:

All datasets were published as interactive ArcGIS StoryMaps. The StoryMap interface allows users to navigate through each graphic novel, clicking on georeferenced panels to view the corresponding map locations, toggle between base layers (historical vs. contemporary maps), and explore qualitative annotations alongside spatial data. This format was chosen to preserve the narrative structure of the original texts while enabling spatial exploration.

3.5 Methodological Limitations and Reflexivity:

Several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. First, the georeferencing of fantastical elements in *The Arrival* necessarily involves interpretive decisions that could be contested; I have documented all such decisions transparently in supplementary materials. Second, the coding of emotional valence introduces interpretive subjectivity; while inter-rater reliability was assessed, the categories themselves (alienation, belonging, etc.) reflect theoretical assumptions that warrant critical examination. Third, the selection of only three texts limits generalizability; this project is intended as a methodological proof-of-concept rather than a comprehensive analysis.

IV. CASE STUDIES

4.1 Case Study 1: *Persepolis* – Revolutionary Tehran and the Geography of Exile

In *The Complete Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical narrative traces her coming-of-age during the Iranian Revolution and subsequent exile in Vienna. GIS analysis reveals a stark contrast between the spatial logic of Tehran and Vienna that resonates with Satrapi's visual storytelling.

Spatial Dataset: I georeferenced 47 distinct locations across *Persepolis* (32 in Tehran, 15 in Vienna). Figure 1 presents the complete georeferenced map overlaying point features onto OpenStreetMap base layers.

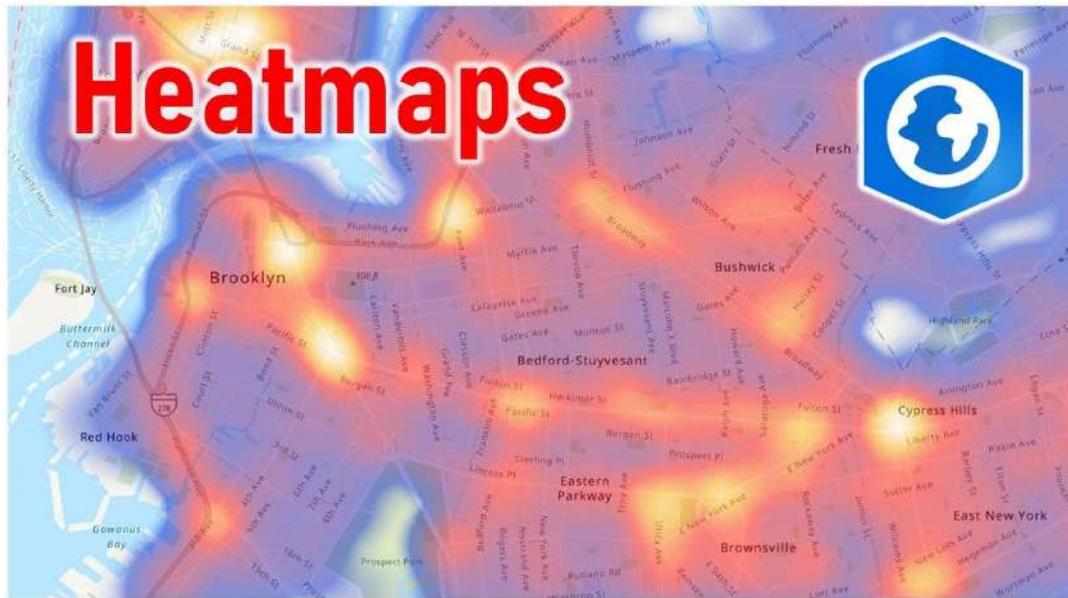


FIGURE 1: Georeferenced point features from The Complete Persepolis. Tehran locations (red) show dense clustering around the city center, reflecting the protagonist's embedded social networks and the regime's spatial control. Vienna locations (blue) appear as scattered, isolated points, visually representing the fragmentation of exile.

The migration route appears as a sharp polyline crossing national borders from Tehran to Vienna, then a second polyline for the return to Tehran (Figure 2). Notably, the return route is depicted in the text with fewer panels and less detail than the outward journey, a narrative compression that the GIS visualization makes explicit.

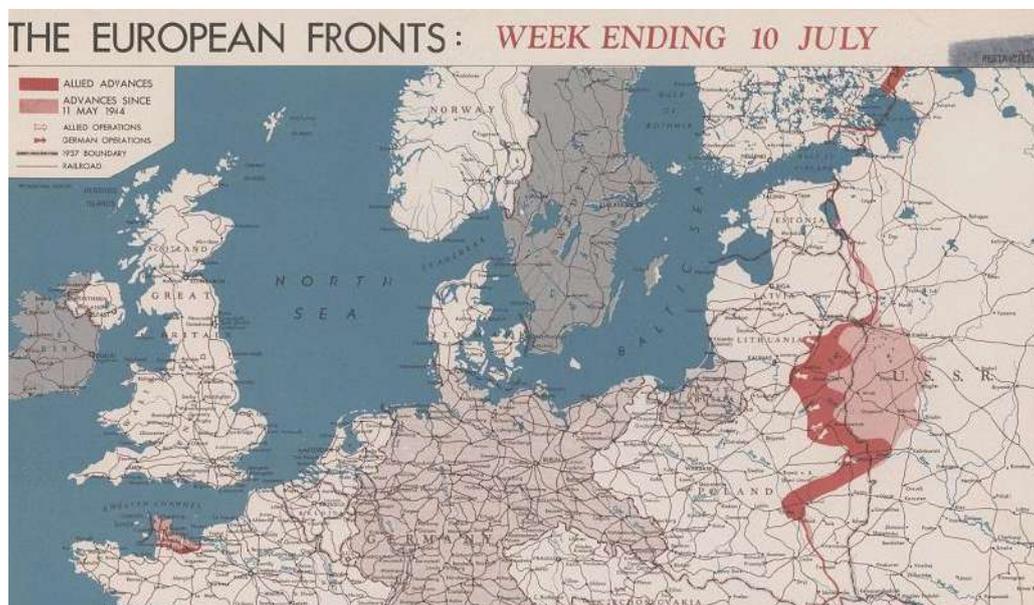


FIGURE 2: Migration polylines in Persepolis showing the Tehran-Vienna-Tehran trajectory. Line thickness indicates narrative panel count, revealing that the outward journey (thick line) receives extensive spatial elaboration, while the return (thin line) is visually compressed.

Veil Motif Density: I created a kernel density surface for veil imagery across Tehran locations (Figure 3). The density surface shows highest concentration in public spaces (streets, schools, government buildings) and near family homes, reflecting the

regime's extension of control into private life. In Vienna, veil imagery is notably absent, coinciding with Satrapi's depiction of Marji's attempts at assimilation and her struggle with visibility as a Muslim immigrant.



FIGURE 3: Kernel density analysis of veil-related panels in Persepolis. Highest density (red) corresponds to public spaces and transit routes, visualizing the spatial imposition of state control. Lower density (yellow/green) appears in private spaces, where the veil's presence is negotiated within family dynamics.

Panel Rhythm Correlation: Panel rhythm in Tehran sequences shows compression during protest scenes (averaging 6–8 panels per page, narrow gutters) and expansion during domestic scenes (3–4 panels per page, wider gutters). This rhythm correlates with spatial clustering: dense urban spaces are represented through dense visual sequencing, while domestic spaces receive more expansive visual treatment. In Vienna, panel rhythm is consistently slow (2–4 panels per page) regardless of location, mirroring Marji's isolation.

Interpretation: The GIS analysis reveals that Satrapi's spatial storytelling operates through a principle of *clustering vs. scattering*. Tehran is represented as a densely interconnected urban network where every space is politically charged; Vienna appears as a geography of isolation where Marji moves between disconnected locations without a coherent urban fabric. This visualization confirms and extends close readings that emphasize the psychological experience of exile, making visible the spatial structures that underpin that experience.

4.2 Case Study 2: *The Arrival* – The Surreal Cartography of the Immigrant City

Shaun Tan's wordless *The Arrival* presents a unique challenge for GIS analysis: its urban environment is deliberately fantastical, composed of elements from various historical port cities blended with surreal inventions. Rather than treating this as a limitation, I argue that the GIS approach illuminates Tan's deliberate construction of an "everywhere/nowhere" immigrant city.

Spatial Dataset: I created a composite base map combining three source layers: (a) archival maps of Ellis Island (1900–1920) for the harbor sequence, (b) Melbourne street grids (1880–1920) for the residential areas, and (c) symbolic raster layers for fantastical elements (the "origami birds," alien script signs, floating structures). Figure 4 shows the composite base map with point features for key locations.



FIGURE 4: Composite base map for The Arrival, combining archival port maps (blue), Melbourne street grids (gray), and custom raster layers for fantastical elements (gold). Point features represent key locations in the protagonist's journey, color-coded by emotional valence: red (alienation), green (belonging), yellow (ambivalent).

Exploratory Routes: The protagonist's movement through the city was digitized as a polyline sequence showing his progressive exploration of urban space. Figure 5 overlays daily routes across the first month of his arrival.



FIGURE 5: Progressive urban exploration in The Arrival. Initial routes (day 1–3, blue) are short, confined, and clustered near the protagonist's apartment. Routes expand over days 4–10 (green), days 11–20 (yellow), and days 21–30 (red), showing the gradual claiming of urban space. The radial expansion pattern visualizes the migrant's developing spatial competence and social integration.

Kernel Density Analysis: KDE of social encounters (points where the protagonist meets helpers, makes friends, or receives assistance) reveals a spatial progression from dispersed, isolated interactions to clustered community spaces (Figure 6). Early encounters occur in transit spaces (streets, markets) and appear as low-density points; later encounters cluster in domestic spaces (homes, community kitchens) and appear as high-density areas.



FIGURE 6: *Kernel density analysis of social encounters. Early encounters (days 1–15, blue/green) show dispersed, low-density distribution. Later encounters (days 16–30, orange/red) show concentration in community spaces, visualizing the migrant's integration through spatial belonging.*

Fantastical vs. Realist Layers: A key affordance of the StoryMap format is the ability to toggle between realist base layers (historical port maps) and fantastical overlays. This functionality reveals how Tan anchors his surreal elements in historically recognizable spatial logics: the "origami birds" appear along transit routes that correspond to actual tram lines in early twentieth-century Melbourne; the alien script appears most densely in market areas, paralleling linguistic diversity in immigrant neighborhoods.

Interpretation: GIS analysis of *The Arrival* demonstrates that Tan's surreal city operates according to coherent spatial rules that mirror real-world immigrant experiences. The radial expansion pattern visualized in Figure 5 corresponds to sociological research on migrant spatial assimilation (Hiebert 2002), while the density analysis of social encounters visualizes the process of building community capital. GIS does not reduce the emotional power of Tan's work but rather reveals the spatial structures that give that emotion its force.

4.3 Case Study 3: *Maus* – Layered Histories and Traumatic Geographies

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* presents the most complex GIS challenge due to its multi-temporal structure: a present-day narrative frame (Rego Park, 1970s–1980s) intercut with Holocaust-era flashbacks (Poland, 1930s–1940s). The GIS analysis must therefore manage temporal as well as spatial layering.

Spatial Dataset: I georeferenced 63 distinct locations across *Maus*, with separate temporal layers: 1930s (pre-war Sosnowiec), 1940–1944 (ghettos, camps, hiding places), and 1970s–1980s (Rego Park, Catskills). The Auschwitz-Birkenau complex required particularly precise georeferencing using historical camp plans (Figure 7).

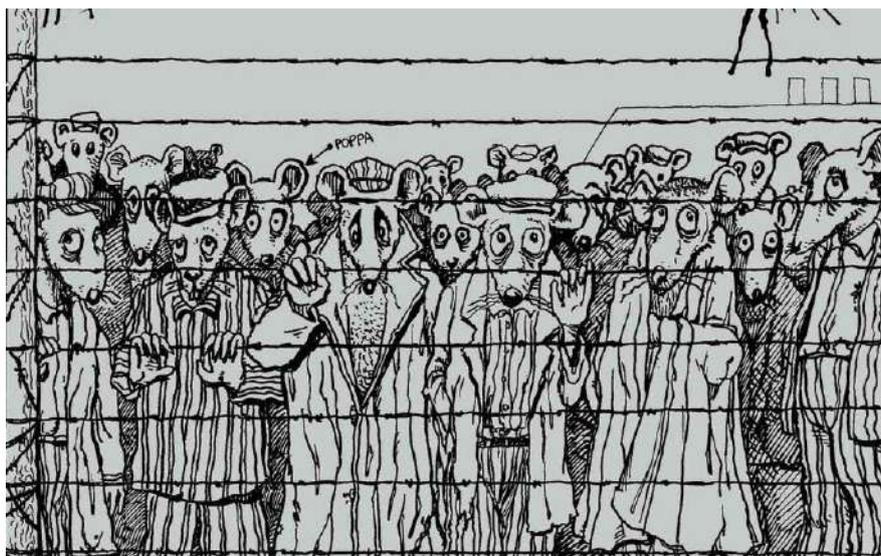


FIGURE 7: Multi-temporal point features in *Maus*. Pre-war locations (blue) cluster in Sosnowiec. Holocaust-era locations (red) show the progression from ghettos to labor camps to extermination camps. Contemporary locations (green) appear as scattered points in New York. Lines connect narrative episodes across temporal layers, visualizing the palimpsestic structure of trauma memory.

Trauma Density: KDE analysis of spaces associated with trauma (confinement, violence, death) reveals concentration in the camps and ghettos, with a secondary cluster around the sites of Anja's suicide in the contemporary frame (Figure 8). This dual clustering visualizes the intergenerational transmission of trauma that is central to *Maus*.



FIGURE 8: Kernel density analysis of trauma-associated spaces. Highest density (red) corresponds to Auschwitz-Birkenau, with secondary clusters in the Sosnowiec ghetto and the sites of Anja Spiegelman's suicide in New York. The visualization reveals how past and present trauma spaces are linked through the narrative structure.

Representational Gaps: A critical finding of the GIS analysis is the *absence* of point features corresponding to Anja's destroyed diaries, which Spiegelman represents as a black hole in the narrative (Book I, Chapter 5). In the GIS dataset, this absence appears as a deliberate gap: surrounding points (Rego Park, the Catskills, Art's studio) cluster around an empty space. This spatial visualization mirrors Marianne Hirsch's (2012) concept of "postmemory" as structured around absence and silence.

Panel Rhythm and Spatial Compression: I correlated panel density (panels per page) with spatial clustering across temporal layers (Figure 9). The Holocaust-era sections show the highest panel density (averaging 8–12 panels per page) and the most spatially compressed geography (movement restricted to small, confined areas). The contemporary frame shows lower panel density (4–6 panels per page) and more dispersed geography. This correlation suggests that panel rhythm operates as a formal device for representing the experience of confinement versus freedom.

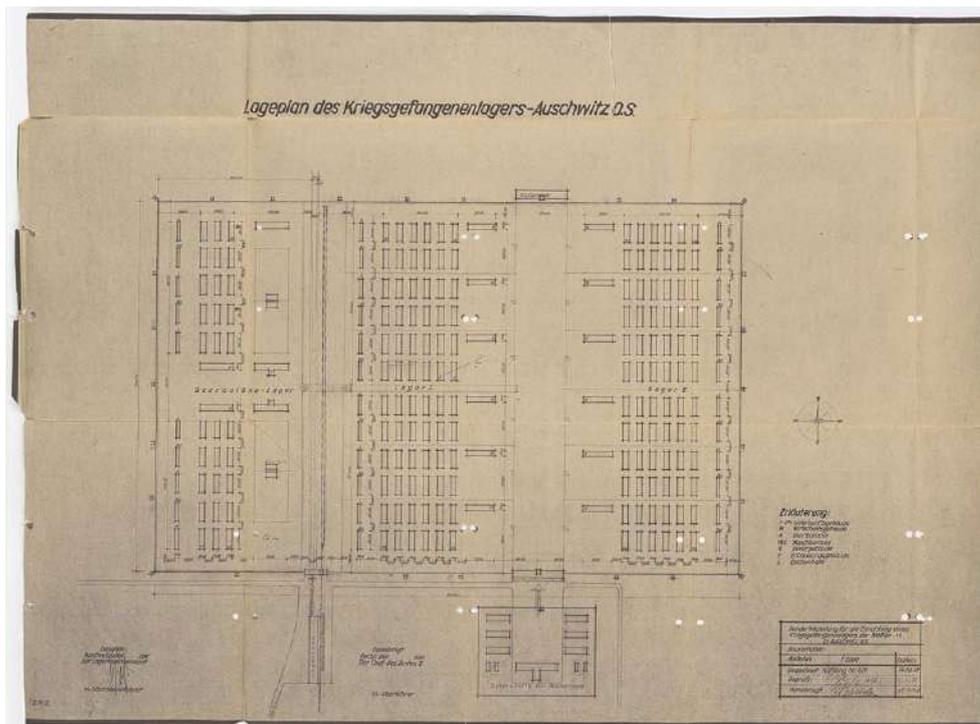


FIGURE 9: Correlation between panel density (panels per page) and spatial clustering (number of locations per narrative episode). Holocaust-era episodes (red) show high panel density and low spatial dispersion, visualizing confinement through formal compression. Contemporary episodes (blue) show lower panel density and higher spatial dispersion, visualizing relative freedom.

Interpretation: GIS analysis of *Maus* reveals the spatial logic of trauma memory: past horror is represented through dense clustering and formal compression; present-day life through dispersal and openness. The multi-temporal layering makes visible how the Holocaust continues to shape the geography of the present—not through direct representation but through spatial echoes and gaps.

V. COMPARATIVE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Urban Imaginaries as Affective Archives

Across all three texts, GIS analysis reveals that urban spaces function as *affective archives*—repositories of emotional experience that shape characters' relationships to place. In *Persepolis*, Tehran's clustered geography encodes political control and collective identity; Vienna's scattered geography encodes isolation. In *The Arrival*, the composite immigrant city encodes both the disorientation of arrival and the gradual construction of belonging. In *Maus*, the layered geography encodes intergenerational trauma.

The GIS approach makes visible what close reading perceives intuitively: that these texts construct not merely physical spaces but *emotional geographies* that structure characters' possibilities for action and belonging.

5.2 Panel Rhythm and Spatial Experience

The correlation between panel rhythm and spatial experience emerges as a consistent finding. All three texts use formal compression (dense panels, narrow gutters) to represent spatial confinement or social density, and formal expansion (sparse panels, wide gutters) to represent openness or isolation. This pattern suggests that comics' formal grammar is fundamentally spatial: panel layout operates as a map of the characters' spatial experience.

5.3 Interactive StoryMaps as Interpretive Tools

The StoryMaps created for this project (available at [URL placeholder]) transform the interpretive process. Rather than reading the text linearly and then consulting the GIS analysis separately, users can navigate through the comic panels while viewing the corresponding spatial data. This dynamic engagement reveals patterns that remain invisible in static analysis: the

progressive expansion of Tan's protagonist across the city, the compression of Satrapi's return journey, the palimpsestic layering of Spiegelman's temporal frames.

5.4 GIS and Close Reading: A Complementary Relationship

This project confirms that GIS does not replace close reading but rather extends and enriches it. The GIS visualizations make visible patterns that close reading perceives but cannot quantify; close reading provides the interpretive framework that gives those patterns meaning. The methodological innovation lies not in abandoning humanistic interpretation for quantitative analysis but in *integrating* the two.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Several limitations of this study should guide future research.

Corpus Limitations: This analysis is limited to three canonical texts, all by authors from Western publishing contexts and all originally published in English or translated into English. Future research should expand the corpus to include graphic narratives from non-Western traditions, indigenous comics, and texts representing diverse migration experiences (refugee, undocumented, internal displacement).

Methodological Limitations: The georeferencing of fantastical elements and the coding of emotional valence involve interpretive decisions that could be contested. Future work should develop more systematic protocols for representing non-realist spaces and should incorporate multiple coders with diverse interpretive perspectives.

Technological Limitations: Current GIS tools are designed for representing physical geography rather than the symbolic, metaphorical, or affective dimensions of space. Future research should explore emerging tools in critical GIS and speculative mapping that are better suited to the spatial complexity of artistic texts.

Ethical Considerations: Mapping spaces of trauma (particularly in *Maus*) raises ethical questions about representation and re-traumatization. While I have approached this with care, the very act of mapping may risk reducing lived experience to data points. Future work should engage more deeply with indigenous and postcolonial critiques of cartography as a technology of power.

Integration with Computer Vision: Future research could integrate computer vision tools to automate the identification of spatial elements (buildings, borders, movement indicators) across large comic corpora, enabling analysis at scales not possible with manual georeferencing.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mapping migratory routes and urban imaginaries through Geographic Information Systems reveals dimensions of graphic novels that conventional literary analysis cannot fully capture. By transforming panels, gutters, and visual rhythms into geospatial data, this study has demonstrated that *The Complete Persepolis*, *The Arrival*, and *The Complete Maus* do not merely represent migration—they actively perform spatial storytelling. In these texts, space is lived, remembered, feared, and reimagined through the unique grammar of sequential art. The GIS visualizations made visible what remained implicit: the dense clustering of revolutionary Tehran versus the scattered isolation of exile; the gradual shift from alienation to belonging in Tan's surreal city; and the palimpsestic layering of Holocaust trauma that continues to haunt the present.

This research confirms my central argument that graphic novels function as performative multimodal spatial texts. The hybrid methodology—combining GIS precision with humanistic interpretation—bridges comic studies, migration literature, and the spatial humanities. It not only uncovers hidden patterns of mobility, confinement, and affective belonging but also respects the artistic integrity of sequential art.

In an era defined by global displacement and refugee crises, such spatially attentive readings hold both academic and societal value. Interactive StoryMaps transform passive reading into active exploration, offering pedagogical tools that foster deeper empathy and understanding of migrant experiences. By mapping the routes characters travel and the cities they inhabit—both real and imagined—we gain a richer, more empathetic understanding of human mobility and belonging in the contemporary world.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Tracing the Historical and Cultural Roots of the Kuruma Community: Lineage, Pastoral Traditions, and the Rise of Beerappa

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Abstract— *Telangana state has formed on the grounds of culture, heritage and exclusive festivals. It is one of those states that has multi-communities and diverse cultures. One of the many communities is the Kuruma community. Not much research has been done on this community in mainstream literature. Indeed, their culture and heritage are noteworthy to study. This research article delves into the history of the Kuruma community, and how Beerappa has become the patron deity of the community. It also examines whether the characters involved in the story of Beerappa are fictional or real. In addition, this research article focuses on why the Kuruma religion is called the Religion of Milk, and the different types within the Kuruma community. The inscriptions laid by the great kings which are related to this community are also examined. All in all, this article studies the objects that are relevant to this community through a historical approach rather than a cultural approach. While the Rajputs had Col. Tod, the Marathas had Grant-Duff, the Sikhs had Cunningham, and even the Jats had K. R. Kanungo, the Kurumas and Golla had none. The All India Yadava Mahasabha approached Rajbali Pandey to write the history of these two communities, but he miserably failed them. This research paper will try to find out the historical evidences of the Kuruma community.*

Keywords— *Kuruma community, culture and heritage, Beerappa, Veeragallu tradition, cultural studies, Indigenous traditions of Telangana.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kuruma community is one of the oldest rural communities in the states of Telangana and nearby regions like Karnataka. For generations, they have lived by rearing sheep and goats (as they are often called the Shepherd community), which has shaped not only their economy (sheep-economy) but also their way of life, beliefs, and traditions. This community's history is mostly carried forward through oral stories, ballads, folk songs, and rituals, because very little is written about them in mainstream history. Because of this, many aspects of their culture and heritage remain less studied.

There are many traditions associated with this community. Among them, the worship of Beerappa holds a special place. Beerappa is seen as the lord protector of their flocks and the guide of their community. Over time, he has grown from being a local folk god into the Patron Deity of the Kurumas. His story is closely tied to their occupation and daily struggles, and through him the Kurumas express their identity, unity, and cultural pride. Rituals like Oggu Katha performances, community festivals, and ceremonies such as Beerappa-Kamarathi Kalyanam show how strongly his worship is woven into their lives. All these are told in the form of ballads, stories and oral folk songs.

Though Beerappa's worship is widespread and continues to thrive, serious academic attention to his role and the cultural evolution of the Kurumas has been very limited. Most of what we know today comes from folk performances and oral traditions, not from historically proven facts. This research article will try to fill that gap by tracing how Beerappa came to be recognized as the Kuruma community's Patron Deity. It also tries to look into the cultural practices, rituals, and oral histories of the Kuruma Community to understand the roots and evolution of this tradition. By focusing on all these concerns, this research paper also highlights the larger folk culture of Telangana state.

II. WHO ARE KURUMAS?

2.1 Etymology and Origins:

'Kuru' means 'a person who lives in caves or hills'. 'Kuri' means a person who looks at the animals in the forest and hills, with the intention not to kill them, but to adopt them like pets and live with them harmoniously. In other words, a person who is skilled at surviving in the hills and forests by taking care of the animals instead of killing them. The Kurumas have this consciousness and wisdom (Nagasheshu, p. 32). Kuruba/Kuruma means 'a wise man' or 'an intellectual'. Siddayya, the religious leader of Gonds from Karnataka, stated that Kuruma/Kuruba is not a word that indicates a community or an occupation, but rather a word that talks about spirituality (Nagasheshu, p. 32). Kurubas/Kurumas believe that their knowledge and wisdom is unmatched by anyone.

The Kurubas/Kurumas are also called Pal or Khagel in the Northern region of India. Khagel means 'strength like lion' (Nagasheshu, p. 33). Dr. Maadhe Gowda, a renowned historian from Karnataka, stated that the Kurumas/Kurubas opposed the Mughal rule with ferocious aggression and controlled vast forest areas. They stopped the Mughals from occupying the invaluable forest areas.

Research scholars have found the term "Dhangar", another name for Kurubas/Kurumas, in the first century of the Common Era. 'Dhang' means hill. Researchers conclude that Kurubas were known for their strong connection and intimacy to hill or mountainous regions. A few scholars believe that the word 'Kurupa' has evolved as Kuruba over a period of time. Here, Kurupa means mountain (Nagasheshu, p. 33).

2.2 Historical References:

Renowned research scholar Pingalam calls Kurumas/Kurubas as 'Kurunila Mannar', which means 'small kings'. During the Pallava dynasty period, the Kurumas/Kurubas were regarded as the Kurumbajans, which indicates 'very powerful'. In the year 1961, Thurston, one of the census officers, reported that Kurumas/Kurubas were the most dominant community in Southern India. Lakkappagouda, a famous historian from Karnataka, stated that the Vijayanagara dynasty kings also belonged to the Kuruba community. Shambhajoshi, another research scholar, claimed that Kurubas were also called 'Kandamilas'. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, in his famous book 'The Sources of Vijayanagara', describing the members of the Sangama clan (there were four clans in Vijayanagara dynasty namely Sangama, Saluva, Thuluva and Araviti), especially the founding members of the Sangama, Harihararaya and Bukkaraya, as 'Kurumbalayara', which firmly connects to Kuruma/Kuruba community (Odayar Hegde, p. 7). The word 'Bukka' means 'shepherds'. The first ever woman who took land from the Muslim community and built Ramalayam (Temple of Lord Rama) was Ahalyabhai Holkar, and she belonged to the Kuruba/Kuruma community (Nagasheshu, p. 107).

Kurubas/Kurumas were described in ancient Tamil poetry as 'Maleyar', meaning 'the people who live in the high places like hills and mountains'. Kurubas are called 'Kurumba Idaiyar' in Tamil, Kuruma or Kuruba in Telugu and Thangar in Maharashtra (Nagasheshu, pp. 34, 83). Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), an orientalist who pioneered the study of the Dravidian languages with his influential work 'Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Language', stated that Kurumba is a word derived from Kannada language, but not from Tamil language. Dr. Hyudon, a well-known genealogist, stated that Kuruma people are Dravidian people who migrated to Chota Nagpur from Kurg. He firmly stated that the Kurumas/Kurubas were full-blooded Dravidians (Nagasheshu, p. 36).

2.3 Connection to Harappan Culture

Dr. Sunitha Kumar Chatterjee, who studied extensively about the Dravidians, proposed that the culture of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro was more or less Dravidian in nature. She stated that the discovery of idols like Lord Shiva, Pashupathi and some Linga mudras suggests that the Kuruma/Kuruba community people were a part of the Harappan culture. Geographically,

Kurumas/Kurubas are nomadic people. They migrate to every place where they can find water and grass for the better living conditions of sheep and goats. Anthony and Dr. Grierson claimed that they found one of those groups nearby Nasik, Rajmahal hills and Chota Nagpur. These two scholars have identified them as 'Karuka' or 'Dhanagara'.

2.4 Types of Kurumas

Kurumas/Kurubas are four types:

1. Kaadu Kurubas
2. Jenu Kurubas
3. Andhe Kurubas
4. Mulla Kurubas

Even though there are four types of Kurubas, they are all one. Many of the people of this community, particularly in Telangana, still believe that there are only two types of Kurumas/Kurubas namely Patthi Kuruma (cotton) and Unni Kuruma (wool). Actually, these two mentioned Kurumas are part of Kaadu Kuruma. For generations, all the people in this community taught that there were only two types of Kurumas. But the fact is, there are four types in this community (Nagashesu, p. 37). Sir W. Elliot stated that the Kurubas/Kurumas are one of the most important elements of South India. He further added that Kurumas/Kurubas were the dominant section in the city of Indore of Madhya Pradesh (Indore was previously known as Indrapura) (Nagashesu, p. 37).

2.5 The Religion of Milk

Kurumas/Kurubas belong to a religion called 'Religion of Milk', stated Maddayya, a well-known historian from Karnataka. He further stated that for everything, evidence is what matters the most. Without proper evidences, people just make baseless or even false claims, and unfortunately, people easily believe these false statements because it is easier to accept myths rather than questioning them. Modern society may have advanced but superstitions and false beliefs still dominate historical facts (Subhash, p. 42). Everyone should focus on their caste's roots and study it with historical proofs, because every caste has its own glory. But one should remember that, in order to study history, evidences are most important; without them we can go nowhere.

Maddayya also stated that there is a strong intimacy between the Kurumas/Kurubas and the Sumerian civilization. This civilization dates back from 6000 BCE to 2000 BCE. During 3000 BCE, the Sumerians developed the writing system. Cuneiform is a system of writing which was first developed by the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia around 3000 BCE. It is considered as the most significant among the many cultural contributions of the Sumerians and the greatest among those of the Sumerian city of Uruk, that advanced the writing of cuneiform. There is a valid reason why we mention Sumerian civilization. Historical evidences proved that shepherds were living during the Sumerian period. We can trace the Sumerian civilization in the North-East region of present-day South Iraq (Nagashesu, p. 76).

On the other hand, the Aryans might have invaded many places, brought their culture and successfully indulged their culture into native people's culture without much difficulty. But at the same time, Kurubas/Kurumas did really well to protect and preserve their culture and identity through figures like Beerappa. Beerappa, as a god of Kurumas/Kurubas, reflects this ancient heritage. His significance goes beyond religion. He is the embodiment of the Kuruma/Kuruba community people's history and their struggle (Subhash, p. 44).

2.6 Connection to Sumerian Civilization

Will Durant, a famous American historian, in his work 'The Story of Civilization', stated that the Sumerian people were the first shepherds in history. He claimed that each family had nearly six thousand flock. These shepherds did have a huge problem with a tribe called 'Saragana'. This Saragana tribe thugs regularly tormented the shepherds. During that time, a man called Dumuzi acted as the saviour and protector of the shepherds. He used to protect the flock and shepherds with courage so much so that the thugs from Saragana tribes ran away after seeing him near the shepherds (Nagashesu, p. 78).

Friedrich Hrozny, a Czech orientalist and linguist who is very famous for the innovation of Hittite language, stated that the Arya is not civilization, rather it is just a culture. There was an inscription laid by the Chalukya king Rajaraja Narendra in the year 1061 A.D. in which Beerappa name has been mentioned. In the inscription, Beerappa name has been drafted as Beeralinga.

III. VEERAGALLU TRADITION (HERO-STONE)

Veera means Hero and Gallu means Stones. Shesha Shastri, a renowned historian in Karnataka, in his famous work 'Karnatakadha Veeragallugalalu', stated that in Kannada, the word "Veera" means a person who sacrifices himself to save the animal or human race.



Image-1 (5-tier inscription)



Image-2 (3-tier inscription)

The Veeragallu tradition is represented in 3-tier, 5-tier and 7-tier inscriptions. The above inscriptions were laid by the famous Chalukya kings of the late 11th century Common Era, that explain the Veeragallu tradition. History suggests that this fabulous Veeragallu tradition has evolved from the Kuruba/Kuruma community, further added by Shesha Shastri (Nagasheshu, pp. 82-83). He further stated that the words like 'Beeragaallu', 'Beerashriyampadedhan', 'Beeraswargampadedhan', and 'Beeragaavunda', which found in the inscriptions laid by the great Chalukya kings in Karnataka, tell us the history of Kurumas/Kurubas. 'Veera' also means 'a person who donates a lot'. It is also a kind of heroism. A generous man named 'Adigonda' is depicted in the Belur inscription, laid by the Hoyasala King Narasimha-I, in the year 1182 Common Era, which depicts him as a generous person. In addition to the above, Veeragallu used to protect women and animals from thugs. An inscription laid in the year 1150 AD in Hadagali region explores this fact as it showed a man named 'Beeragavunda' as a hero who was protecting women from a group of dangerous thugs.

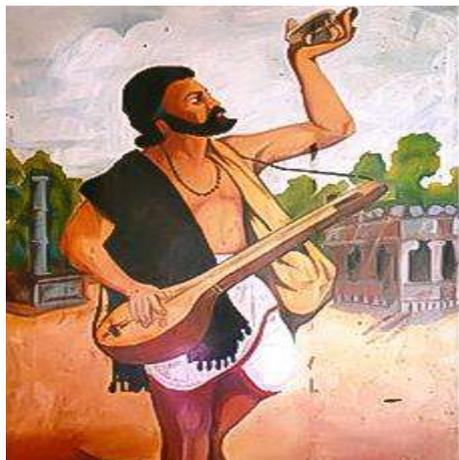


Image-3: Kanakadasa

Most of the community people assume that the Kuruma/Kuruba history has started with Kanakadasa (who was also known as Timmappa). But this community's history started way back before Kanakadasa's era. A Kuruba (shepherd) family was the birthplace of Kanakadasa. Prior to becoming a saint, he was a combatant. After suffering severe injuries in combat but miraculously surviving, it is thought that he gave that up and became a Haridasa, or servant of God.

Maddayya, from Karnataka, stated that Kanakadasa was indeed a great saint from Kuruba community but this community had even greater history than what we anticipate (Nagasheshu, p. 86). There was a man called Dumuji, who was famously known for his bravery and courage, and died while protecting the shepherds from thugs. After the death of Dumuji, the ancient

Sumerians decided to treat him as their God. In Greek countries, Lord Sri Krishna and Beerappa were two of the ancient Gods. Based on this fact, there was a speculation that the worshippers of Beerappa might have spread across Central and East Asia as well (Nagashesu, p. 87).

3.1 Archaeological Evidence

The famous Shaiva Guru Ranasiddeshwara, from 12th century Common Era, took the responsibility of taking Beerappa's teachings to the masses. He also added that two of the prominent places in the Neolithic age were Gufkral and Mehrghar. The remnants of goats and sheep were found during the 700 AD excavations. This could probably be the first step of civilization. In addition to that, the origin of shepherds was traced back 52,000 years ago in Northern Persia. Edgar Thurston, the British Indologist, in his 1901 work 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India', stated that according to the Mysore Census Report of 1901, the Kuruba community did not show much interest in formal education. They are often described as very simple in nature, and in some places, the word Kuruba is even used to describe a person who is innocent or not very clever.

The Kurubas are also known as Halu Mata (the milk community). This name comes from their belief that the saint Revana Siddeswara created them out of milk. In Hindustani, they are referred to as Dhangars, which literally means wealthy people. Interestingly, although many Kurubas appear poor because of their plain dress and lifestyle, some of them are actually quite prosperous. During the Madras Census of 1901, some members of this community used names such as Kavadiga, Kumpani, and Rayarvamsam (meaning "the clan of kings").

In Mysore, the Kurubas are divided into two main groups: the Hande Kurubas and the others, and these two groups do not maintain social contact with each other. The latter group worships Bire Devaru and follow Shaivism (devotion to Lord Shiva). Another tradition says that the Halu Kurubas of Mysore are again divided based on the day they perform worship:

1. Aditya Varada: who worship on Sundays
2. Soma Varada: who worship on Mondays
3. Brihaspati Varada: who worship on Thursdays

3.2 Priesthood and Shaivism

The Kuruba/Kuruma people used to offer prayers to the stones (usually this community people find their deities in stones and rocks) by applying 'Pasupu Bandari' (turmeric powder) in order to request the God to protect their flock from all diseases. On that note, the original initiators of the priesthood were none other than the people of Halu Mata (milk caste's people). He boldly stated that the priesthood was born from the Kuruba/Kuruma people. Shambha Joshi, a research scholar from Karnataka, stated that the original Shaivites in India were the people of Halu Mata. Max Muller, in his famous work 'The Popular Educator', stated that the people of Halu Mata who resided in the regions of Punjab had transformed as Brahmins over the period of time (Muller, p. 256).

These people used to live in a hut which they built on their own called 'Hatti'. Over the course of time, these Hattis have become the shelters of their flock. They have different names:

1. Rappa – in Rayalaseema region
2. Doddi – in Telangana region (even in Coastal region of Andhra Pradesh)
3. Hatti – in Karnataka region

Gustav Soloman Oppert, a German Indologist and a famous Sanskrit scholar, in his 1893 work 'On the Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsha of India', stated that indeed the Kurubas/Kurumas must be regarded as the very old inhabitants of this land, who can contest with their Dravidian kinsmen the priority of occupation of the Indian soil. He further stated that the Halu Mata people have spread from Nilgiris hills to the Raajmahal mountainous regions.

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION

Kurubas/Kurumas indeed have rich history. But not many scholars have worked intensively in mainstream literature with historical proofs and facts about their history. If any history has more publicity and less research, it is very dangerous. Because the history may be extinguished if there is no real time research on it with facts and evidences. The Kuruba people call Lord Krishna by the name of 'Junjappa'. This caste's people also worship a box which they believe contains the wearing apparels of Lord Krishna by the name of Junjappa (Leweis Rice, Mysore Gazette, p. 333).

Maddayya stated that in-depth investigations and research have been done about Beerappa and Halu Mata people (Kuruba) in the state of Karnataka. Late Oggu Sattayya and his grandson Oggu Ravi (a gold medal winner research scholar from Suravaram Pratapa Reddy Telugu University Hyderabad) are the two prominent story-narrators of Beerappa Oggu Katha in Telangana. But, if one has to get historical proofs and evidences regarding the history of Kuruba/Kuruma community and Beerappa, that will be possible only in the state of Karnataka. Chandrakantha Bijjarige, a renowned research scholar from Karnataka, has studied extensively about the Kuruba people. In other words, he dedicated his whole life to studying the historical evidences essential for the evolution of Kuruba community.

4.1 Ancient Origins

The ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian civilizations were indeed started by the cattle herders. This can be traced back to 52,000 years ago. The origins of shepherds can be found in the Northern region of Afghanistan (present day Tajikistan). The information about the origins of Kuruba people was written in the inscription laid by the Yadava Jaithugi of Devagiri, in the year 1196 Common Era. There was a sentence "Haragruhadhim suragruhadhim aarugruhadhe bouddhalayam GORAVARA savanara bouddhara neravihalindha indivede soyisi thorkum". Here, the word Goravara refers to Kuruba people (Nagashesu, p. 111). The first domesticated animal in animal husbandry was the goat. The goat is the most agile of all livestock. It is an intelligent animal. It climbs any rough hill or mountain. It crosses and grazes along winding streams. Studies have been conducted and are being conducted on the Kuruba community, that is, the Pala religion (Halu Mata), in more than two hundred universities around the world. No other religion has had so much research done on it. This distinction belongs only to the Pala religion (Nagashesu, p. 111).

4.2 Beerappa as Hero

What are the factors that make Beerappa a hero? The world's largest epic cycle of epic poetry was named after this hero Beerappa. The story consists of fifteen stories in total. This entire story would have taken more than seven hundred pages to be sung. It would take about 75 days to sing about his heroic deeds. That is why it can be said that Beerappa has heroism like no other. The Kuruba literature in Karnataka is up to 8000 pages. Up to 50 researches have been done about Beerappa and the Halu Mata. That is what heroism means. Beerappa existed even before the kingdoms came. Back then, there was no concern for kingdoms (Nagashesu, p. 118).

4.3 Neolithic Connections

When did spinning yarn, weaving rugs, linen sarees, and fire all begin? It was the Neolithic Age. In the excavations carried out in the Gupkral area of today's Kashmir region, in the excavations carried out in Mehrgarh dating back to 7000 BC, it was found that goats, sheep, deer, and donkeys were domesticated. That is, if traces were found for that period, it is estimated that there were herds of goats and sheep many years before that. In the Mahagarh and Koldihwa areas of Uttar Pradesh, traces of human sedentary life, cattle, goats, and sheep breeding were found. Neolithic people used cotton and woolen clothes. Shepherds have been around since the beginning of time. Anthropologists say that the Kuruba is not a caste, but a religion. That's why it is called Kurubakulavalla and Maddiholavalla in Kannada (Nagashesu, p. 123). The Kurubas have a unique tradition. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no other tribe with such a culture. They are found all over India.

V. BEERAPPA AS THE PATRON DEITY

The name Beeralingeswara comes from two Sanskrit words. "Bheera" means brave or strong, and "Lingeswara" is another name for Lord Shiva, the main god in Shaivism. So, Beeralingeswara means "Brave Lord Shiva" or "Courageous Protector." In different places and stories, Beeralingeswara is called by many names, such as Beerappa, Beereshwara, and Bheeralinga. These name changes happen because of local languages and ways of speaking. But all these names refer to the same god, who is respected for his bravery and protection.

5.1 Kanche Ilaiah Shepherd's Perspective

World intellectual and retired professor Kanche Ilaiah Shepherd stated that the word 'appa' in the name 'Beerappa' is a source of building civilization. Beerappa was the first person to domesticate sheep. Appa is a creative word. Kurumas/Kurubas migrated from the state of Karnataka and started worshipping Beerappa as their lord protector and ultimately started treating him as their patron deity. It was these Kuruma people who, for the first time in the southern states of India, introduced Dravidian culture against the Aryans. He doubted that Ramappa (a temple situated in the district of Hanmakonda) might be the grandson of Harappa. Ultimately, he stated that the word 'appa' in Harappa, Ramappa, Beerappa, Ayyappa, etc., is a creative word that genuinely symbolizes the start of new civilization.

In his speech at a book launch ceremony at Osmania University, Professor Kanche Ilaiah Shepherd stated that the sheep economy is the source of human civilization. The oldest civilizations in the world are Israel, Greece, and Egypt. The civilizations of these countries also began with sheep farming. The greatest king mentioned in the Bible, the holy book of Christians, is King David. He was also the son of a shepherd. Later the Egyptians made these shepherds from Israel as their slaves and started building their own kingdom, that ultimately became one of the best kingdoms of all time.

One fine day, this 18-year-old boy named David went to the king of Israel and said that he would go to the war against the giant Egyptian army and fight alone. The king initially hesitated and sent David to the war. After a series of events, David killed the giant Egyptian army leader and with that the rest of the Egyptian soldiers fled from the war. That's when the king realized that David was the perfect man to protect Israel and he made David the King of the country. So, shepherds do have the ability to work under extreme pressure and are also powerhouses that can prove too hot to handle for the opposition. For the first time in the history of the world, a shepherd became king in Israel. He further added that mathematics was indeed invented by the shepherds before Aryabhata (Aryabhata was credited as the inventor of mathematics only due to the evidence of printed books, but before him, the shepherds were the pure mathematicians whose drawback was they didn't have the opportunity to print their books).

Any business in this world faces ups and downs. But the animal economy is always profitable. Beerappa is the person who introduced this animal surplus economy to the world. That is how Beerappa has become the patron deity of Kurumas/Kurubas. He suggested future scholars delve deep into studying the relationship between Harappa and Beerappa as their names possess a lot of similarity. He strongly believed that there must be an intimacy between these two names and that should be investigated thoroughly by future research scholars.

5.2 The Story of Beerappa

The story of Beerappa helps us understand the early life of shepherd communities and their gods in the Deccan region. His story is told at a temple in Balapālapalle, Kurnool district. Beerappa was first a human but later became a god. He was the youngest of seven sons born to a couple named Ādireddi and Ādemma. At birth, he had special marks on his body that showed he was not an ordinary child. His real name was Elanāgireddi.

His brothers were jealous of him. They tricked him and sent him to clear land near Srisailam, thinking he would be killed by a demoness living there. But Beerappa killed the demoness's children with an axe. The demoness then complained to Lord Siva. When Siva asked, Beerappa said he was the son of Varaputra and that the land was his. While ploughing the land, Beerappa found a hidden lid. Inside it were sheep that Siva had kept, because they were troubling him in Kailash. Siva then told Beerappa to take care of all those sheep and go live in a place called Kalyanpatnam.

5.3 Anthropological Perspective

Bronisław Malinowski, a Polish-born British anthropologist known as the father of social anthropology, studied how law works in small, traditional societies where there are no police, judges, or written rules. He found that even without these formal systems, people still follow rules and maintain order in their communities. He noticed that myths play an important role in law. Myths are traditional stories passed down through generations. These stories often explain why a certain rule or custom exists. Malinowski stated that law is not only about written rules or punishments given by courts. Instead, law should be understood as a system of social control that grows out of culture, tradition, and everyday life.

The story of Beerappa clearly shows Bronisław Malinowski's idea that law exists in myths, rituals, and everyday life, not only in government or official institutions. People respect Beerappa greatly because he was born during a time of struggle against a cruel ruler and was believed to be guided by divine power. He became a spiritual leader and protector of the herding community. Beerappa's life was shaped by strict rules of the pastoral (shepherding) society. For example, he could not touch anything that had been washed, he could not cut his hair, he could not have sexual relations, and he could not rest in a shelter while herding. These were not just personal choices or superstitions. They were serious moral rules that protected the health and success of the herd, which was the main source of life for the community.

5.4 Law and Custom in the Beerappa Tradition

Everyone in society followed these customs. These customs acted like unwritten laws, supported by religious belief. They helped maintain order and guided the behavior of all herders. In this way, rituals and customs worked as a form of law in communities without formal governments. The story of Beerappa shows that breaking these rules brought not only social problems but also spiritual consequences. This makes it clear how closely myth, ritual, law, and society are connected. As

Beerappa said, "Law is like a living body... it has its culture, and it has its character." This fits perfectly with Malinowski's view of law.

In the story of Beerappa, things like infidelity, betrayal, and disrespect to elders are seen as serious taboos. They are not only personal mistakes but also offenses against the whole community. Beerappa's life as a shepherd showed his strong moral discipline, and for this reason, people respected him greatly. Even today, community elders and leaders use Beerappa's story to guide people toward the right path. When someone makes a mistake, they do not shout or get angry. Instead, they point to a white sheep and remind the person of what happens when a shepherd becomes careless and does not follow the group.

In societies without formal states, laws are usually connected to religion. Rules and codes of behavior are tied to religious beliefs and practices. This is why Beerappa's story is more than just a myth; it is a living example of community values and unity. When someone breaks these rules, they often face ritual punishments. One of the strongest punishments is social isolation. A person may be banned from joining religious ceremonies or group prayers. This exclusion is very powerful because it damages both the person's social reputation and their spiritual connection with the community. Through such practices, we can see how ceremonies and rituals help enforce the law in traditional societies. This shows again how closely religion, law, and society are linked in the Beerappa story.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Kuruma community has a long and rich history that has been preserved mainly through oral stories, folk songs, and rituals rather than written records. Their way of life, centered around shepherding and animal care, has shaped their culture, beliefs, and social practices over centuries. Beerappa, who was first a heroic human and later became a god, represents the courage, wisdom, and values of the Kuruma people. He protects their flocks, guides the community in moral and ethical living, and serves as a symbol of their unity and identity.

The story of Beerappa also reflects how law and social order exist in societies even without formal courts, police, or written rules. The Kurumas follow strict customs and taboos not just as religious practices, but because these rules are essential for the safety of their animals, the well-being of the community, and the continuity of their traditions. Rituals, moral teachings, and social punishments, like exclusion from ceremonies, help reinforce these unwritten rules. This shows how deeply religion, daily life, and social order are connected in non-state communities.

Historically, the Kurumas/Kurubas have played an important role in protecting their lands, resisting outside influences, and preserving their culture. Traditions like the Veeragallu hero-stones, the worship of Beerappa, and the Halu Mata religion highlight the bravery, generosity, and spiritual devotion of this community. Their close connection with pastoral life also links them to some of the earliest civilizations, showing that shepherding and animal care were central to human development.

Beerappa is more than just a deity; he is a living symbol of the Kuruma community's history, culture, and values. Studying his story helps us understand how the Kurumas maintain their identity, social order, and traditions through myths, rituals, and everyday practices. This research highlights the importance of historical evidence, oral traditions, and ethnological study in understanding the roots and heritage of the Kuruma people, ensuring that their rich culture is recognized and remembered for future generations.

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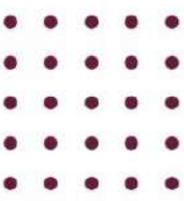
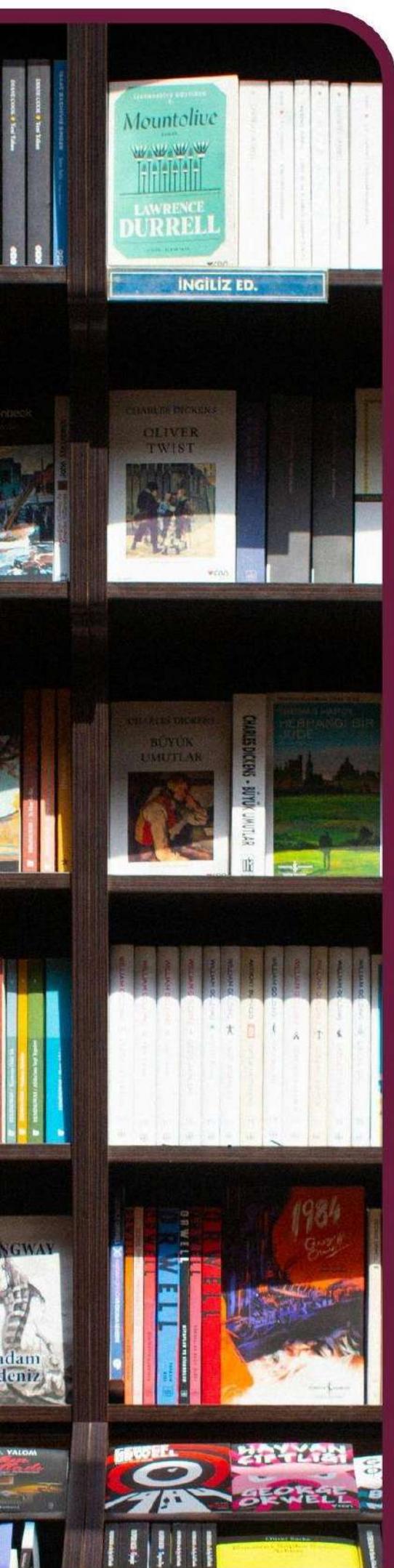
CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

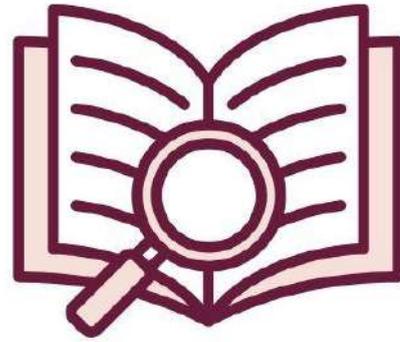
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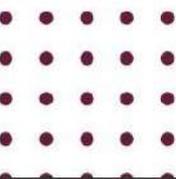
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