

Gender Endsemester

WIDE SARGASSO SEA

JEAN RHYS

SUMMARY-

Thus, Jean Rhys through Antoinette, has portrayed how madness can be a result of not only mental illness but also a result of societal norms. She is driven to “madness” by her patriarchal husband Rochester and also the society. The rejection she faced from the people of her island as the daughter of an ex-slave owner and as a French Creole in her childhood along with the cold treatment from her mother made Antoinette very vulnerable. All she wanted was love and acceptance throughout her life. Her dream of having a happy marriage with Rochester was also shattered with the cruel way in which he behaved with her. Mr Rochester uses his patriarchal power to make Antoinette feel falsely protected at the outset of their marriage by appearing to cherish her. As a result of his rejection, she becomes increasingly enraged. Her sense of alienation was perhaps a major factor leading to her "madness". Her habits were seen as savage by Rochester. He was troubled by the way she laughed and drank alcohol, as well as her free-spirited character. As a Victorian man, he

anticipated his wife to be subservient, obedient to her home, less sociable, and devoid of rage or a loud voice, however, Antoinette lacked all of these attributes. He began to regard her as the "other." Rochester perhaps dismisses Antoinette as "mad" based on their cultural differences rather than fact. He was an Englishman, and he was taken aback to witness her rage at him, openly exhibiting her sexuality by wooing him in the case of the love potion. As she behaves outside of Victorian society's conventional bounds, he begins to label her "mad". Rochester's perception of Antoinette as "mad" stems from her failure to meet his Victorian norms of repressed sensuality, and by giving her a new name, he attempts to distance her from her own identity and culture. When Antoinette discovers her husband's adultery, she becomes inebriated and enraged. He took her to England and locked her up in the attic. He added to her inner anguish, which she was experiencing as a result of her husband's adultery and the rejections she had had throughout her life. Rochester, who only cared about her money, shattered her fantasy of sharing a happy and satisfying life with her spouse. He gives her another identity and then attempts to separate her from her native place where she felt happy and secure. As a result she had nothing left. All these incidents definitely created scars in her soul adding to her mental instability. Rochester perhaps also wanted to break Antoinette's connection to her mother by imposing her with a new name and identity. In a way he tried to break their link and also suppress both of them. Antoinette's final culmination into madness occurs when Rochester locks her up in his attic in England. She was in a vulnerable state of mind with all her childhood rejections, loss of identity and all these were brought up in her mind again with the final blow of rejection by her husband. All these emotional factors made her completely passive and vulnerable which made it easier for Rochester to slip her into madness. He keeps her locked up in the attic without any connection with the outside world which finally erodes her sanity. With nothing left by her side, Antoinette slips into insanity. At the end she remembers all the injustice perpetrated to her and realizes that it's time for her to break the shackles of injustice and free herself of all the pain and suffering. As a result she burns down the Thornfield Hall. She chooses death over a confined existence to leave the cruel world behind. It does, however, demonstrate Antoinette's desire not to be dominated and have someone else decide her fate; by committing suicide, she takes control of her own fate.

Theme:

Gender & Madness :

Madness as a response to trauma and patriarchal rejection.

society defines "madness." Women labeled mad for non-conformity.

As she behaves outside of Victorian society's conventional bounds, he begins to label

her "mad". Rochester's perception of Antoinette as "mad"

stems from her failure to meet his Victorian norms of repressed sensuality.

Power & Patriarchy

Marriage as transaction (Rochester = business-like) Control via naming, financial dependency, sexual betrayal. Rochester as the embodiment of Victorian male entitlement.

Rebellion & Resistance

Burning the house = burning her prison. Symbol of reclaiming narrative and voice. She chooses death over silent submission. A tragic assertion of agency.

IMPORTANT THEME RELATED POINTS FROM THIS READING :

- Femininity is seen as being meek, submissive, courteous, emotional, and dependant, whereas masculinity is related with being physically powerful, aggressive, logical, and competitive. Females are confined to the home, where they are responsible for their family's needs
- Women are assigned feminine attributes such as submissiveness, dependence on male family members, non-aggression, emotionality, and selflessness. They are

supposed to be perfect women who never scream or act impatiently. Men, on the other hand, are permitted to have several partner and naturally considered as head.

- The condition of Antoinette's mother, Annette, exemplifies gender oppression in terms of economic disparity. After the death of her husband she became economically poor and had to remarry in order to feel safe both economically and physically. It shows marriage as a means of security which the women felt during the Victorian era.
- In Antoinette's case also, Mr Mason's son Richard inherited the property. He also fixed Antoinette's marriage with Rochester. The rampant gender oppression can be witnessed here as the females were merely treated like objects which were the sole property of their male family members.
- As a Victorian man, he anticipated his wife to be subservient, obedient to her home, less sociable, and devoid of rage or a loud voice, but antoinette lacked all of these attributes. He began to regard her as the "other."
- As a guy in a patriarchal culture, he has the freedom to be disloyal and respond to his sexual desires, but he denies women the same liberty. Despite the fact that he is perfectly aware that his acts may hurt Antoinette, Mr. Rochester obviously leverages his colonial power for his sexual desires. It brings back his patriarchal manliness.
- Rochester expected Antoinette to not react or question him for his infidelity as it was not accepted from a woman to scream or raise voice against any injustice perpetrated against them. He could not accept the fact that she expressed her inner anguish and sadness on his betrayal. He did not want his wife to be so vocal and "unfeminine." Symptoms of madness in Antoinette are seen as she did not confirm herself as a passive woman who he expected and wanted. The rage Antoinette shows in response to her husband's mistreatment is viewed by Rochester as a reaction of her "madness".

JANE EYRE

CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Summary of Jane Eyre

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* follows the emotional and moral growth of its titular character, an orphaned girl raised by a cruel aunt and later educated. As a young woman, Jane becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she meets the Rochester. They fall in love, but their romance is interrupted when Jane discovers that Rochester is already married to Bertha Mason, a woman kept hidden in the attic due to her mental illness.

Devastated yet principled, Jane leaves Thornfield, struggling to survive independently before being taken in by the Rivers family. She declines a marriage proposal from St. John Rivers, choosing personal integrity over religious duty. Eventually, she returns to Rochester, now blinded and humbled by the fire that destroyed Thornfield — an event caused by Bertha. Jane marries him, not as a subordinate, but as his equal, achieving emotional and social balance on her own terms.

IMPORTANT THEMES

1. The Importance of Education and Self-Reliance

Education plays a transformative role in *Jane Eyre*. From her early days at School, Jane values learning not just for social mobility but as a means of asserting her individuality. Despite the physical and emotional hardships she endures, her intellect and moral clarity help her survive. As a governess — an unusual role for a woman at the time — she occupies a space between the working class and the elite, which gives her both access and insight into the oppressive structures around her. Her education empowers her to stand as an independent figure in a world that often denies women intellectual agency.

2.Marriage as Partnership, Not Submission

One of the most radical elements of *Jane Eyre* is how it redefines the institution of marriage. Jane refuses to marry Rochester when she learns about Bertha, despite her deep love for him — a decision grounded in moral principle and self-respect. Later, she also turns down St. John Rivers, who offers marriage as a missionary duty devoid of affection. Jane only agrees to marry when she and Rochester are equals — both emotionally and economically. Her autonomy in love challenges Victorian norms that expected women to marry for security, not desire or equality.

3. Female Agency and the Right to Speak

Jane's journey is marked by her insistence on being seen and heard as a full human being. Throughout the novel, she repeatedly asserts her right to speak her truth. Her declaration, "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me," is emblematic of her resistance to being controlled. Brontë uses Jane's narrative voice — calm, clear, and reflective — to show that women's inner lives are rich, rational, and deserving of recognition.

4.Representation of Bertha Mason: The Silenced 'Other'

While *Jane Eyre* is empowering in many ways, it also reflects the racial and colonial prejudices of its time, particularly through its portrayal of Bertha Mason. Bertha is marginalized and dehumanized — described as animalistic, violent, and mad. Her presence in the attic serves as an obstacle to Jane and Rochester's union, but she is never given her own voice or story. This problematic representation is what Jean Rhys challenges in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where Bertha (renamed Antoinette) is portrayed as a fully human character oppressed by both colonialism and patriarchy.

Alias Grace

MARGARET ATWOOD

SUMMARY-

Alias Grace is inspired by the true story of **Grace Marks**, a young Irish servant who was convicted of murdering her employer, **Thomas Kinnear**, and his housekeeper-mistress, **Nancy Montgomery**. The novel opens years after the crime, with Grace imprisoned. A group of reformers, believing she may be innocent, recruits **Dr. Simon Jordan**, an emerging expert in the field of mental illness, to interview her and determine whether she was insane at the time of the murders.

Through Grace's storytelling, we are transported into her traumatic past — from her immigration from Ireland, the abuse she suffered in various households, her close friendship with the spirited and rebellious **Mary Whitney**, to her eventual employment at the Kinnear household where the murders occurred. The narrative is ambiguous, raising questions about Grace's guilt and sanity. Was she manipulated by **Jeremiah the peddler** (later revealed to be a hypnotist), traumatized by years of abuse, or calculating? The novel never fully resolves this ambiguity, inviting the reader to reflect on the roles of power, gender, and truth in Grace's story

- Much of "Alias Grace" revolves around how women are trapped and oppressed by the patriarchal society that they live in. From the unreliability of Grace's narration to the ways in which the female characters are treated as expendable by the men around them, the show constantly circles back to how few options these women have and how little power they possess in relation to men.
- The women who die need someone else to help them free their souls by opening a window, while the men's souls automatically pass on because they are already outside upon death. In this way, the female characters are denied agency even in death
- This lack of female agency demonstrates how the 'window' metaphor of "Alias Grace" is representative of the entrapments of womanhood in patriarchal society. Women are forced to stay 'inside' and thus in a passive, domestic space. Men, on the other hand, have better options and the chance for greater mobility and freedom in the world.

Working-Class Women and Social Invisibility

Grace, Mary, Nancy — all are domestic servants, and their labor and personhood are constantly undervalued. As maids, they occupy a space of vulnerability: economically dependent, exposed to abuse, and always under surveillance. Yet they are expected to be loyal, modest, and invisible. Grace's status as a servant makes it easy for people to believe the worst about her, and harder for her to defend herself. Her story is told *about* her far more than *by* her.

The Danger of Female Sexuality

Mary Whitney dies after a failed abortion, her body and voice destroyed by patriarchal silence and class constraints. These women are punished — not legally, but narratively — for asserting sexual agency.

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Grace Marks – the central figure, both subject and object of the story. A symbol of how society criminalizes and eroticizes women it cannot control.

Margaret Atwood's

Alias Grace signals how deeply women's lives are shaped and distorted by patriarchal power, especially when they occupy the lowest rungs of class and gender. The novel challenges the idea of absolute truth, especially when it comes to female experience, showing how women like Grace are interpreted, judged, and silenced by men. Through Grace's ambiguous narration, Atwood critiques the societal urge to label women as either saints or monsters. Ultimately, the novel blurs the line between victim and villain, forcing the reader to confront how justice, memory, and identity are influenced by gendered expectations and systemic inequality.

SULTANA DREAM

Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* is a pioneering piece of feminist science fiction. The story follows a woman named **Sultana**, who falls asleep and dreams of a land called **Ladyland**, where traditional gender roles are reversed: **women are in charge**, and **men are secluded in the "Mardana"**, the male version of the zenana (women's quarters). In this utopian society, **women are educated, independent, and scientifically advanced**. They have eliminated war and crime, and created a peaceful, green, and technologically developed world. The dream critiques the real-world oppression of women by showing how absurd patriarchal logic appears when the roles are flipped.

1. Gender Role Reversal as Satire

Hossain uses **satire** and **role reversal** to expose the hypocrisy of patriarchal norms. Men are shown as weak, emotional, and dangerous — traits that were traditionally ascribed to women in her time. By locking men away in the Mardana, she highlights the ridiculousness and cruelty of gender segregation. The story flips the logic of patriarchy on its head to say: *What if it were you?*

2. Feminist Utopia and Female Empowerment

Ladyland is a **feminist utopia**. Women govern, teach, innovate, and maintain peace. Science is run by women, and warfare has been abolished by intellect, not violence. Education is central — the Queen mandates it for all girls, shuts down child marriage, and builds women's universities. This directly critiques the condition of women in colonial India, especially in Bengal, where education for women was rare.

3. Critique of Patriarchy in Colonial India

Sultana reflects on how, in her real society, men hold all power and women are confined. She says, *"In India man is lord and master, he has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the zenana."* Hossain critiques the unjust **power structure** where women have "no hand or voice in social affairs" — showing how restricting women's roles is a loss not just to them, but to the entire society.

4. Sustainability and Science

Ladyland is not only peaceful — it's **green and sustainable**. Women have advanced solar technology and maintain gardens and forests. It's a society of harmony with nature, in contrast to the industrial, war-driven world of men. This is radical for the time — it links women with progress and modernity, rather than tradition or domesticity

5. Smart Critique through Dialogue

There are many clever, **quotable lines** you can use in your answers. For example:

"An elephant also has got a bigger and heavier brain than a man has. Yet man can enchain elephants and employ them."

This mocks the male belief in "brain size = superiority" and flips it to show that

intelligence is more than biology

Sultana's Dream is a **visionary feminist critique** that imagines what society could be if women were freed from patriarchal control. It challenges the status quo by imagining a world where women thrive not in spite of men's absence, but **because of it**. Hossain's story shows that **power, peace, intellect, and empathy** can coexist — and that these values are not the exclusive domain of men. It's not just a fantasy — it's a political argument disguised as a dream.

DANCE LIKE A MAN

Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* is a layered play that explores **gender roles, generational conflict, and identity** through the lens of classical dance. The story revolves around **Jairaj**, a man passionate about Bharatanatyam — a traditionally female-dominated art form. As a young man, he struggles against the rigid expectations of his conservative father, **Amritlal**, who views dance as effeminate and unmanly. Jairaj's wife, **Ratna**, is also a dancer, but her ambition often overshadows his, both emotionally and professionally. The couple's tragic past — especially the death of their son Shankar — haunts them, as does the tension between artistic passion and social conformity. The play weaves through time and relationships, ultimately asking: *What does it mean to "dance like a man" in a society where masculinity is narrowly defined?*

1. Toxic Masculinity and Patriarchal Expectations

The play powerfully critiques how **masculinity is policed and enforced**. Amritlal, Jairaj's father, is a "pseudo-liberal" — he pretends to be modern (e.g., allowing an inter-community marriage), but clings to deeply traditional notions of what a man should be: dominant, financially stable, and emotionally restrained. His rejection of dance as a suitable path for his son shows how **art is feminized**, and thus unacceptable for men. The iconic line,

"A man in a woman's world is pathetic." summarizes this regressive thinking.

2. Jairaj and the Struggle for Identity

Jairaj's passion for Bharatanatyam pits him against a society that **equates masculinity with power, income, and control**. He fails to fulfill these expectations, leading to both his father and wife undermining his manhood. Ratna tells him,

"You stopped being a man for me the day you came back to this house."

This shows how even those closest to him internalize patriarchal norms and judge his worth by financial and emotional dominance.

3. Art vs. Ambition: Ratna's Complicity

Ratna, while progressive in pursuing her own career, is **not innocent of patriarchal manipulation**. She leverages her relationship with Amritlal to further her ambitions, at times sidelining Jairaj. For example, she **literally arranges the stage lighting to keep him in the shadows**, both symbolically and literally diminishing his presence. Worse, she drugged their son Shankar with opium to attend a performance — indirectly causing his death — putting **career above motherhood**, a move that would be judged far more harshly in a woman, but here complicates the idea of **gender and moral roles**.

4. Dance as a Metaphor for Liberation

Dance in the play is more than a profession — it is a metaphor for **freedom, expression, and rebellion**. But for Jairaj, dancing “like a man” is an impossibility, because **dance is seen as incompatible with masculinity**. Dattani is asking: *Can a man be graceful, expressive, and artistic — and still be seen as “manly” in our society?* Jairaj’s failure is not just personal — it is systemic.

Through its intricate characters and emotional storytelling, *Dance Like a Man* lays bare the **unseen violence of gender expectations**. It expands feminist discourse by showing that **patriarchy harms men too** — especially those who defy the norms. Jairaj’s journey is both tragic and revealing: a portrait of a man who could not fully live, love, or express himself because he didn’t “fit the mold.” Dattani does not just ask us to empathize with him — he urges us to **rethink what makes a man, a woman, or a family whole**.

BAYEN

Mahasweta Devi

Mahasweta Devi's *Bayen* tells the story of **Chandidasi Gangaputta**, a woman from the *dom* caste, traditionally tasked with dealing with death — cremations, corpse-handling, and ritual duties. Despite her loyalty and commitment to these socially essential but “impure” roles, Chandidasi is later accused of being a “**bayen**” — a witch. Her own husband, **Malindar**, initially supportive and proud of her, ends up **publicly rejecting her** and affirming the accusation, aligning with the very society that marginalizes them both. She is ostracized, feared, and humiliated.

But in a climactic act of **self-sacrifice and courage**, Chandidasi tried to save innocent people. Her death in this moment is not tragic but transformative — she reclaims her dignity and proves her worth not as a witch or outcast, but as a **brave, selfless human being**. Her act rewrites the narrative imposed upon her by caste, gender, and community.

1. Stigma and the Gendered Body

Chandidasi's body is **marked by gender, caste, and labor** — she's not just a woman, but a woman of a lower caste, performing “impure” duties. This triple burden makes her highly vulnerable to **social condemnation**. Her branding as a “bayen” isn't about supernatural belief — it's a **social punishment** for being a woman who transgresses boundaries of caste, work, and independence.

2. Patriarchy and Conditional Masculinity

Malindar initially acts as the **protective husband**, expressing violent anger when Chandi is attacked. But his masculinity is **conditional** — once his status in the community is threatened, he conforms to patriarchal expectations to protect his reputation. He **publicly declares Chandi a witch**, which is a betrayal not just of her, but of their shared resistance. His role shows how **men often uphold patriarchy even when they are also its victims**.

3. Subaltern Agency and Resistance

Chandidasi might be marginalized, but she is **not passive**. Her final act — saving the children — is **heroic and political**. It's a radical act that redefines her identity. She **dies not as a bayen, but as Chandidasi**, a figure of strength. This

moment **resists victimhood** and creates space for imagining power and humanity beyond caste/gender constraints

4.Critique of Social Structures

Mahasweta Devi critiques **how social roles are weaponized**. Once a respected ritual worker, Chandidasi is declared a witch simply because she no longer fits society's mold. The story shows how **cultural binaries — pure/impure, man/woman, sacred/witch — are socially constructed** to control bodies and labor, especially of women in lower castes.

The story is not about superstition, but about **how patriarchy and caste systematically dehumanize**, and how even the most marginalized can **rewrite their own narrative through action**.

This story talks about the oppression of women in society. The concept of gender subalternity is also emphasized in the patriarchal culture. In rural areas, people tend to believe in superstitions. Chandidasi Gangadasi is a woman who was separated from her family due to the caste system. According to the villagers, Bayen is a woman who can be killed to bring bad fortune to them. Since she is considered a witch, the villagers have displaced her from society and live in a hovel.

Unfortunately, she is also blamed for the death of her relative's daughter due to the superstitions surrounding her. Society rewarded her after her death.

Final Solution

Mahesh Dattani

Final Solutions by **Mahesh Dattani** is a powerful play about **Hindu-Muslim tensions** in India. It tells the story of **Hardika (Daksha)**, an old woman haunted by her past, and how her family's home becomes a shelter for two young Muslim boys, **Javed and Bobby**, during a riot. The story shifts between the **past (1948)** and **present**, showing how **communal hatred is passed down** through

generations. The play explores how people carry prejudices, how fear spreads, and whether we can overcome hate through understanding.

Communalism – Hindu vs Muslim tension

Shows how

people are judged by religion, not character. Even educated or modern people have **hidden prejudices**. The **mob or "chorus"** in the play represents society's blind hate.

Gender and Patriarchy

Hardika (when she was young Daksha) was

not allowed to sing her favorite songs just because they were Muslim songs. Her **dreams were crushed** by society and family. The play shows how **women are controlled** — expected to obey, stay silent, and adjust.

Identity Crisis

Javed and Bobby feel

targeted for being Muslim, even when they try to live peacefully. Javed is angry, but we learn his anger comes from **pain and being misunderstood**. The play asks: *Are we more than just our religion or name?*

History and Memory

Hardika keeps

reliving her past pain and spreads it to her family. The play shows how **old wounds affect the present**. It teaches us: if we don't heal or question what we're taught, we **pass down hate**.

Sigmund Freud: Relevance to Gender & Power-

Freud's idea of **psychosexual development** suggests that gender identity forms through stages, not birth.

The "Unconscious" Shapes Social Behavior-

Freud believed we have **deep internal fears, desires, and guilt** that society forces us to hide — especially around **sexuality and gender**.

Repression Leads to Conflict -

Freud said **suppressing natural desires** causes anxiety and neurosis.

BEFOREEEEE MIDSEMMM

LAUGH OF MEDUSA

Laugh of Medusa - Helene Cixous

Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa* is a radical feminist manifesto urging women to reclaim their voices, bodies, and identities through writing. She challenges

the **phallocentric (male-centered) language and culture** that have suppressed women, encouraging them to break free from male-dominated structures and embrace their own creativity.

- Women have historically been **excluded from writing and representation**. To reclaim power, they must **write from their experiences, bodies, and emotions**, rather than conforming to male-dominated literary traditions.
- Male sexuality is centralized around the phallus, while **women's sexuality is fluid, limitless, and not confined to one part of the body**. Women should **embrace their physicality as a source of strength**, rather than a site of shame or subjugation.
- Language has been controlled by men to reinforce their dominance. Women must **invent a new language**, free from hierarchical structures
- Society has **indoctrinated women into feeling lesser**, teaching them to hate their own bodies and desires. **Female sexuality and creativity are powerful forces** that men have historically feared and tried to suppress.
- The myth of **Medusa as a terrifying figure** is a male construction to instill fear of female strength. Cixous reclaims Medusa, stating **she is not monstrous—she is beautiful, and she is laughing**, symbolizing **women's joy, liberation, and power** when freed from male oppression.

She urges women to **reject societal constraints, embrace their identities, and write without fear**. The future belongs to women who **dare to break free, create, and redefine the world on their own terms**

Myth of Ahalya

The story of **Ahalya, Indra, and Gautama** is one of the most intriguing narratives from Hindu mythology, deeply embedded with themes of gender, morality, power, and punishment. It also holds strong cultural and gendered interpretations, particularly in how **women's agency, male desire, and societal punishment** are framed

Narrative Summary

Ahalya, often described as the most beautiful woman, was the wife of Sage Gautama. Indra, the king of the gods, was infatuated with her and **disguised himself as Gautama** to deceive Ahalya. Ahalya is tricked gives in to his advances. When Sage Gautama discovers the act, he curses Ahalya to turn into stone. Indra, too, is cursed **a thousand vulvas**. Ahalya is later redeemed when **Rama's touch** restores her.

Gender Themes :

- AHALYA PERSPECTIVE -
 1. Ahalya is shown victim of deceit where lord indira robs her off the consent
 2. Her punishment is **far harsher** than Indra's, reflecting patriarchal structures that hold women responsible for men's desires and actions.
 3. The transformation into stone could symbolize how **women, when shamed, are silenced or erased from society** .
 4. The idea of **purity and redemption** is central—she is only freed when Rama (a male savior) intervenes, reinforcing the notion that a woman's fate is dictated by men.
- INDRA PERSPECTIVE -
 1. Indra, a **powerful deity**, represents unchecked male desire and **privilege to act without consequences**.
 2. Despite being the initiator, his punishment is **milder and reversible**, unlike Ahalya's long penance.
 3. His deception speaks to the **theme of male entitlement**, where a man's status (even divine) can be used to manipulate women.
- SAGE GAUTAMA PERSPECTIVE -

1. Gautama's **curse on Ahalya** aligns with the idea that a woman must maintain chastity at all costs, even when deceived.
2. His authority as a husband and sage places him in a **moral judge's role**, deciding Ahalya's fate without hearing her side.
3. The idea that **a man's honor is linked to a woman's chastity** is reinforced—her supposed transgression becomes a stain on his reputation.
4. His anger is directed at both Indra and Ahalya, but he **focuses more on punishing Ahalya**, demonstrating how women bear the brunt of patriarchal justice.

Some More Points that can be used are :

- The imbalance in **how male and female figures are punished**
- **how men in positions of power often exploit women**
- **idea that a woman needs a man (Rama) to be redeemed**

MOVIE PROSPECTIVE

Suspenseful thriller where **gender roles, power, and agency** are reversed. Instead of Ahalya being the victim, **she is in control**, and it's the men who become prey.

In the original story, Ahalya is either a **victim of Indra's deception**. Here, Ahalya (played by Radhika Apte) is confident, playful, and **completely aware of what she's doing**—she seduces men into their doom, just as Indra once deceived her. This **subverts the classic male-female power dynamic**, where traditionally, women are seen as objects of desire but not as controllers of fate.

This version reclaims **female agency**, showing Ahalya as an active participant rather than a passive sufferer.

- The police officer in the film (representing male authority) **falls into the same trap Indra once set**—except this time, he is the one deceived.
- **Men are literally turned into stone**, just as Ahalya was in the original story.

- This **shifts the weight of punishment onto men**, asking: *What if men were held accountable in the same way women have historically been?*

In the **original myth**, desire is a male force (Indra's lust, Gautama's anger).

- In the **film**, Ahalya owns desire—she is the one seducing and controlling the outcome.

The short film asks: *If the roles were reversed, would we still justify the punishments?*

- It exposes the **hypocrisy of societal justice**, which often changes based on **who holds power**.

Some Points for Intercomparison of both movie and the actual scenario:

- *Ahalya's original story reflects patriarchal justice, where women bear the greater burden of morality.*
- *Sujoy Ghosh's retelling reverses the power structures, showing what happens when women take control instead of being passive victims.*
- *The film challenges gender norms by making men experience the punishment that women historically suffered.*

OLD PLAYHOUSE (Kamala Das)

SUMMARY -

The poem begins with the word **"You,"** which is a direct attack on **man and patriarchy**. According to the poet, her husband has planned to **domesticate a bird** (the poet) by holding it in **fake love** so that she may forget the **seasons**(spring, summer, autumn, or in other words, the **joys of her life and her home**, which she left behind for him).

Not only this, but he has also made her forget **her nature, her desire to fly, or her freedom**, and her opportunity to **explore life was also crushed**.

The poet says that after marriage, she wanted to **learn about herself** and **explore her dreams and desires**. However, what her husband taught her was **only about himself**. He, i.e., **male dominance**, was the **center of all education**. In the next

line, the poet says, **"You were pleased with my body's response,"** meaning her husband wanted to **quench his lust by exploiting her body.**

He never tried to **understand her soul** or **truly love her.** Though he succeeded in **penetrating every part of her body,** he **failed to satisfy her soul.** He kissed her lips **so hard** that his saliva would fill her mouth, but still, he **failed to provide emotional fulfillment.**

Her Job as a Wife

According to the poet, he called her **his wife or better half.** However, she was **nothing more than a slave** to him. She was forced to **serve him tea and take care of his medicine.** The **breezes of fall and the smoke from burning leaves** symbolize her **dreams, desires, quest, and zeal dying,** much like the **smoke rising from burning leaves.**

The Metaphor of Narcissus

The poet **compares the love** between her and her husband to **Narcissus at the water's edge.**

Narcissus was a **young boy who fell in love with his own reflection** and **eventually suffered a downfall.** Similarly, the husband's **self-obsessed love** will also suffer **destruction.** To survive, it must **break the mirrors and bring the night.** In other words, it will **destroy both the poet and itself in the process.**

The **"old playhouse"** in the poem symbolizes the poet's mind and inner self, which once held **dreams, passion, and individuality** but has now been darkened and suppressed by patriarchy and an unfulfilling marriage. Just as an abandoned playhouse loses its vibrancy and purpose, the poet's mind has become lifeless due to her husband's dominance, leaving her without freedom, joy, or identity.

IMPORTANT PHRASES :

- *"You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her / In the long summer of your love so that she would forget / Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but / Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless / Pathways of the sky."*

Swallow = Woman, Captor = Husband → Women are forced into **domesticated roles** and expected to **forget their personal ambitions**.

- *"It was not to gather knowledge of yet another man that I came to you but to learn / What I was, and by learning, to learn to grow, but every / Lesson you gave was about yourself."*

Marriage Suppresses Women's Growth → She enters marriage **to discover herself**, but instead, **her husband forces his own identity onto her**.

- *"You were pleased with my body's response, its weather, its usual shallow convulsions. You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured / Yourself into every nook and cranny, you embalmed / My poor lust with your bitter-sweet juices."*

Sex is Mechanical, Not Emotional → Her husband is **only concerned with physical pleasure**, while her **emotional needs remain ignored**.

- *"You called me wife, I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and / To offer at the right moment the vitamins."*

Wife = Servant, Not an Equal Partner → She is **expected to care for her husband**, but **he does not reciprocate emotional or intellectual companionship**.

- *"There is / No more singing, no more dance, my mind is an old / Playhouse with all its lights put out."*

he lights being put out symbolize lost passion, joy, and self-expression.

- *For, love is Narcissus at the water's edge, haunted / By its own lonely face."*

Her husband's **love is like Narcissus—self-absorbed and one-sided**.

✓ **Marriage as a tool of oppression** → *"You planned to tame a swallow..."*

✓ **Sex as control, not love** → *"You were pleased with my body's response..."*

✓ **Loss of female identity** → *"I became a dwarf..."*

✓ **Love as male narcissism** → *"Love is Narcissus at the water's edge..."*

✓ **Desire for freedom** → *"It must will the mirrors to shatter..."*

INTRODUCTION (Kamala Das)

SUMMARY -

In *An Introduction*, Kamala Das asserts her individuality and challenges societal expectations, particularly regarding language, identity, and gender roles. She begins by acknowledging her awareness of politics despite not actively engaging in it, symbolizing the larger theme of imposed knowledge versus personal experience. Her claim, *"I speak three languages, write in two, dream in one,"* reflects her rejection of linguistic conformity, emphasizing her right to express herself in English despite societal pressure to adhere to her mother tongue.

The poem further explores the oppressive roles imposed on women. The poet critiques how society dictates a woman's life—from childhood innocence to the burdens of femininity and marriage. She conveys the suffocating experience of being forced into traditional roles, stating that her *"sad woman-body felt so beaten."* In response, she attempts to reject these expectations, dressing in masculine clothes, symbolizing her struggle against rigid gender norms.

Das also reflects on love and relationships, portraying the universal longing for emotional connection. Her lines *"Call him not by any name, he is every man who wants a woman, just as I am every woman who seeks love,"* highlight the repetitive and often disappointing nature of relationships shaped by societal constructs. The poem culminates in an assertion of shared human experience, as she claims both sinner and saint identities, rejecting rigid moral labels.

Ultimately, *An Introduction* is a powerful statement on self-identity, female agency, and resistance to societal norms. The poet embraces her individuality, language, desires, and emotions, refusing to be confined by societal expectations.

SOME PHRASES

- *"I don't know politics but I know the names of those in power, and can repeat them like days of the week."*

Women are **kept out of political spaces** but are expected to be aware of male-dominated power structures.

- *"I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar."*
- *"The language I speak becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses, all mine, mine alone."*

Women, like colonized subjects, are **expected to conform**, but she **asserts ownership over her voice and expression**.

"Why not let me speak in any language I like?" → **Symbolizes women's fight for self-expression and agency.**

- *"It is as human as I am human... it voices my joys, my longings, my hopes."*

Women's voices, **often dismissed as unimportant, are as natural and valid as any other form of expression.**

- *"When I asked for love... he drew a youth of sixteen into the bedroom and closed the door."*

The absence of consent and **lack of emotional fulfillment** show how marriage and sex are often **forced upon women** without agency.

- *"I wore a shirt and my brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored my womanliness."*

Dressing androgynously symbolizes defiance—rejecting the societal expectations of femininity and domesticity.

- *"Dress in sarees, be girl, be wife, they said." "Fit in. Oh, belong, cried the categorizers."*

Women are **reduced to predefined roles** (wife, homemaker, caregiver) rather than being allowed individuality. **Society polices women's behavior**, demanding they conform rather than carve their own identities.

- *"Don't play at schizophrenia or be a nympho."*

Women who **reject societal expectations** are often labeled as **mentally unstable ("schizophrenia") or overly sexual ("nympho")**—common ways to dismiss female autonomy.

- *“Call him not by any name, he is every man who wants a woman, just as I am every woman who seeks love.”*

Men are driven by desire, women by emotional longing—highlighting the gendered nature of relationships. **Men are impatient and aggressive (“rivers”), while women endure and wait (“ocean”).** This waiting symbolizes pregnancy, desire, societal patience, and unfulfilled longing.

“In him... the hungry haste of rivers, in me... the ocean’s tireless waiting.”

It is I who drink lonely drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns.”

👉 Engaging in **male-associated behaviors (drinking, traveling alone) disrupts gender norms**, showing female independence.

“I too call myself I.”

👉 The **repetition of ‘I’ is a powerful assertion of agency**—women’s voices and identities are just as valid as men’s.

- **Hegemonic masculinity & control** → *“He is tightly packed like the sword in its sheath.”*

“It is I who make love and then, feel shame.”

👉 **Women are conditioned to feel guilt for expressing desire**, while men are celebrated for it.

WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS - chimamanda ngoni adichie

Here directly we draw the knowledge from the phrases and contexts

1. "Okoloma looked at me and said, ‘You know, you’re a feminist.’ It was not a compliment. I could tell from his tone – the same tone with which a person would say, ‘You’re a supporter of terrorism’"

Conclusion - Even as a young girl, Adichie senses that being called a feminist carries negative connotations, reflecting how society discourages women from questioning gender norms.

2. " I wrote a novel called Purple Hibiscus, about a man who, among other things, beats his wife, and whose story doesn't end too well. While I was promoting the novel in Nigeria, a journalist, a nice, well-meaning man, told me he wanted to advise me. (Nigerians, as you might know, are very quick to give unsolicited advice.) He told me that people were saying my novel was feminist"

feminist is so heavy with baggage, negative baggage: you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you're always angry, you don't have a sense of humour, you don't use deodorant.

3. " Then, to my surprise, my teacher said the monitor had to be a boy. She had forgotten to make that clear earlier; she assumed it was obvious. A boy had the second-highest score on the test. And he would be monitor. What was even more interesting is that this boy was a sweet, gentle soul who had no interest in patrolling the class with a stick. While I was full of ambition to do so."

Despite merit, leadership roles are assigned based on gender, reinforcing male dominance in authority from a young age. Just as boys being monitors becomes "normal", the same logic applies to men dominating politics, business, and other power structure . The boy was uninterested in the role, while Adichie was ambitious, showing how gendered expectations suppress individual capabilities.

4. "Louis, who is a brilliant, progressive man. We would have conversations and he would tell me
'I don't see what you mean by things being different and harder for women. Maybe it was so in the past, but not now. Everything is fine now for women. ' I didn't understand how Louis could not see what seemed so evident"

Louis's initial ignorance about women's struggles shows how men often do not perceive gender bias because they are not directly affected by it.

5. "And he, this man who was happy and grateful, took the money from me, and then looked across at Louis and said, 'Thank you, sah!' Louis looked at me, surprised, and asked,
'Why is he thanking me? I didn't give him the money."

The assumption that money from a woman must come from a man highlights how society undermines women's financial independence. Men are taken to be default providers

6. "52 per cent of the world's population is female but most of the positions of power and prestige are occupied by men. Novelist once said, 'The higher you go, the fewer women there are.' - Women with equal abilities are just not given the opportunity in the male dominated society . Men and women working at same level with equal same classifications man i paid more because he is a man
7. "So in a literal way, men rule the world. This made sense – a thousand years ago. Because human beings lived then in a world in which physical strength was the most important attribute for survival; the physically stronger person was more likely to lead. And men in general are physically stronger. (There are of course many exceptions.) Today, we live in a vastly different world. The person more qualified to lead is not the physically stronger person. It is the more intelligent, the more knowledgeable, the more creative, more innovative. And there are no hormones for those attributes. A man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent, innovative, creative. We have evolved. But our ideas of gender have not evolved very much."
8. "Nigerian female walking into a hotel alone is a sex worker. Because a Nigerian female alone cannot possibly be a guest paying for her own room. A man who walks into the same hotel is not harassed"

Women's independence is questioned, while men's legitimacy is assumed

9. "You must be accompanied by a man. And so I have male friends who arrive at clubs and end up going in with their arms linked with those of a complete stranger, because that complete stranger, a woman out on her own, had no choice but to ask for 'help' to get into the club."

Women's presence in social spaces is policed, reinforcing male control over their mobility and choices.

10. "Each time I walk into a Nigerian restaurant with a man, the waiter greets the man and ignores me. The waiters are products of a society that has taught them that men are more important than women"

11. " Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice. I am angry. Anger, the tone said, is particularly not good for a woman. If you are a woman, you are not supposed to express anger, because it is threatening.
12. "Only weeks into her new job, she disciplined an employee about a forgery on a time sheet, just as her predecessor would have done. The employee then complained to top management about her style. She was aggressive and difficult to work with, the employee said. Other employees agreed. One said they had expected that she would bring a 'woman's touch' to her job, but she hadn't"

Men are praised for assertiveness, while women are penalized for the same traits in leadership.
13. "She didn't want to speak up because she didn't want to seem aggressive. She let her resentments simmer."

Women are socialized to seek male validation, while men are taught independence and self-importance.
14. "All over the world, there are so many magazine articles and books telling women what to do, how to be and not to be, in order to attract or please men. There are far fewer guides for men about pleasing women."
15. "Masculinity is a hard, small cage, and we put boys inside this cage. We teach boys to be afraid of fear, of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their trueselves, because they have to be, in Nigerian-speak, a hard man."

Boys are taught to hide vulnerability, reinforcing rigid, unhealthy definitions of manhood.
16. "Yet the boy is expected to pay the bills, always, to prove his masculinity

Masculinity is linked to financial dominance, creating pressure and reinforcing economic power imbalances
17. "You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the

breadwinner in your
relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public,
otherwise you will emasculate him." , "
""Nigerian woman who decided to sell her house because she didn't want to
intimidate a
man who might want to marry her"

Women are pressured to appear less successful to be considered
"marriageable." Women are conditioned to see marriage as their ultimate goal,
while men have the freedom to choose.

18 "know an unmarried woman in Nigeria who, when she goes to conferences,
wears a wedding ring because she wants her colleagues to – according to her –
give her respect'

The sadness in this is that a wedding ring will indeed automatically make her seem
worthy of
respect, while not wearing a wedding ring would make her easily dismissible.

We internalize ideas from our socialization. Even the language we use illustrates
this. The language of marriage is often a language of ownership, not a language of
partnership.

19 - "Oh, my wife said I can't go to clubs every night, so now, for peace in my
marriage, I
go only on weekends. job, a career goal, a dream"

Men's compromises are minimal, while women's sacrifices often involve career
and personal dreams.

20 . "Recently a young woman was gang-raped in a university in Nigeria, and the
response of many young Nigerians, both male and female, was something like
this: 'Yes, rape is wrong, but what is a girl doing in a room with four boys?'

Women are held responsible for their own assault, while men's actions are
excused.

21. ""know a woman who hates domestic work, but she pretends that she likes it,
because she has
been taught that to be 'good wife material'

Women feel forced to adopt artificial behaviors to fit societal expectations

22. "We teach girls shame. Close your legs. Cover yourself. We make them feel as though by being born female, they are already guilty of something"

23. "Today, women in general are more likely to do housework than men – cooking and cleaning. But why is that? Is it because women are born with a cooking gene or because over the years they have been socialized to see cooking as their role? I was going to say that perhaps women are born with a cooking gene until I remembered that the majority of famous cooks in the world – who are given the fancy title of 'chef' – are men."

Breaking gender stereotypes starts with parenting—children should be encouraged based on skills and interests, not societal expectations.

24 "Go and cook Indomie noodles for your brother.

' The girl doesn't like to cook Indomie noodles, but she is a girl and she has to.

What if the parents, from the beginning, taught both children to cook them?

Cooking, by the way, is a useful and practical life skill or a boy to have. I've never thought it made much sense to leave such a crucial thing – the ability to nourish oneself – in the hands of others"

Girls are conditioned to be caregivers, while boys are not taught self-sufficiency,

25. "hat whenever he changed the baby's nappy, she said thank you to him. What if she saw it as something normal and natural, that he should help care for his child?

Even when equally qualified, women carry the heavier burden of unpaid domestic labor.

Men are applauded for doing minimal caregiving, while women's contributions are expected and unnoticed.

26. " Instead I was worried about what to wear. I wanted to be taken seriously. I knew that because I was female, I would automatically have to prove my worth. And I was worried that if I looked too feminine, I would not be taken seriously. I really

wanted to wear my
shiny lip gloss and my girly skirt, but I decided not to. I wore a very serious,
very manly and very ugly suit"

Women must navigate a double standard—too feminine, and they aren't
respected; too masculine, and they lose authenticity. men's authority is assumed,
while women must prove theirs, often by downplaying femininity

27-

I am happily girly. I like high heels and trying on lipsticks. It's nice
to be complimented by both men and women - "True empowerment comes when
women prioritize their own preferences over societal or male expectations.

28- "Why the word feminist? Why not just say you are a believer in human rights,"
-

Feminism explicitly addresses gender inequality, while "human rights" generalizes
and erases women's specific struggles.

"

If you are a man and you walk
into a restaurant and the waiter greets just you, does it occur to you to ask the
waiter,
'Why have you
not greeted her?' Men need to speak out in all of these ostensibly small situations.

Culture evolves, so oppressive gender norms should be challenged, not blindly
accepted

If they had been born a hundred
years ago, they would have been taken away and killed. Because a hundred years
ago, Igbo culture
considered the birth of twins to be an evil omen. Today that practice is
unimaginable to all Igbo
people.

What is the point of culture? Culture functions ultimately to ensure the

preservation and continuity
of a people.

Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture.

Feminism is about action, not labels—many women throughout history fought for equality unknowingly.

YELLOW WALLPAPER - charlotte perkin stetson

Charlotte Perkins Stetson's *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a powerful feminist critique of the patriarchal oppression of women, particularly in the realm of mental health and autonomy. The story follows a nameless female narrator who is subjected to the "rest cure" by her husband, John, a physician, who dismisses her condition as mere nervous depression. His control over her is absolute—he dictates what she does, where she stays, and even what she thinks, reinforcing the gendered power dynamic where men hold authority over women's bodies and minds.

John's insistence that she refrain from work or intellectual activity, especially writing, reflects the broader societal belief that women should remain passive and submissive. He infantilizes her, calling her diminutive names like "blessed little goose," further stripping her of independence. Even the physical space she occupies—a former nursery with barred windows—symbolizes her entrapment. She is confined, both literally and metaphorically, to a domestic sphere that suffocates her individuality and creativity.

The yellow wallpaper itself becomes a metaphor for female oppression. Initially, the narrator finds the pattern chaotic and unsettling, but as her mental state deteriorates, she begins to see a trapped woman behind it. This symbolizes the collective condition of women in patriarchal society—silenced, imprisoned, and struggling for liberation. As she obsesses over the wallpaper, she undergoes a psychological transformation, projecting her own suppressed emotions onto the woman behind the pattern.

By the climax, she fully identifies with the woman in the wallpaper and tears it down in an act of symbolic liberation. However, this "freedom" comes at the cost of her sanity. When John finally sees her crawling around the room, he faints—an

ironic reversal of power, as his rational, authoritative male self is overwhelmed by the very oppression he imposed. This final scene suggests that the only way for a woman to break free from patriarchal control is through madness, a tragic commentary on the lack of viable alternatives for female autonomy.

Ultimately, *The Yellow Wallpaper* critiques the societal norms that restrict women's self-expression and agency. The narrator's descent into madness is not just personal but symbolic of the broader struggle women face when denied independence. Her final act of tearing down the wallpaper represents both liberation and destruction, highlighting the devastating consequences of patriarchal control over women's minds and bodies.

SOME PHRASES :

- So I take phosphates or phosphites whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again
- John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.
- then he took me in his arms and, icalled me a blessed little goose,
- I meant to be such a help to John, a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!
- i cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.
Of course I don't when John is here,
- What can one do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing. - Male voices override female experience—her own thoughts on her health are deemed irrelevant.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while spite of

them; but it *does* exhaust me a good
deal-having to be so sly about it, or
else meet with heavy opposition. - She writes "in spite of them", but must do it
secretly, showing how intellectual expression was restricted for women.