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# Across Borders of Patriarchy: A Comparative Feminist Study of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*

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## Abstract

*This study examines Emily Brontë's* Wuthering Heights *(1848) and Parijat's* Blue Mimosa *(1965), two debut novels written more than a century apart, in different worlds, yet connected by a shared portrayal of women's suffering under patriarchal authority. The research explores how Catherine Earnshaw and Sakambari embody experiences of oppression, discrimination, and premature tragedy as consequences of deeply rooted gender hierarchies. The study adopts a qualitative approach, guided specifically by de Beauvoir's concept of woman as the "Other" in* The Second Sex *(1949). According to de Beauvoir, patriarchal societies construct women as secondary, subordinate beings defined in relation to men. Applying this framework, the analysis explores how Brontë and Parijat represent their heroines as trapped in gendered hierarchies yet simultaneously striving for selfhood and autonomy. The findings reveal that although Brontë was writing in nineteenth-century England and Parijat in twentieth-century Nepal, both texts depict strikingly similar patterns of female marginalization, particularly within family structures. Catherine and Sakambari resist patriarchal expectations in distinct ways-Catherine by questioning marital conformity and Sakambari by refusing to conform to prescriptive feminine norms-thereby asserting women's agency while highlighting the universality of patriarchal oppression. By situating Wuthering Heights and Blue Mimosa in a cross-cultural and transnational dialogue, this study contributes to comparative feminist literary scholarship. It demonstrates how women writers, despite temporal and spatial distance, articulate parallel experiences of oppression and resistance, affirming the role of literature as a powerful medium for feminist critique and consciousness.*

***Keywords:*** *Feminism, patriarchy, women's suffering, resistance, comparative literature*

## Introduction

Patriarchy continues to shape the lives of women across cultures, generations, and literary traditions. Simone de Beauvoir famously observed, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 283). This idea captures how gender roles are socially constructed to limit women's

freedom and autonomy. In literature, women writers have often reflected on these constraints, using fiction as a space to question, resist, and critique patriarchy. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1848) and Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* (1965) are two works that, though written more than a century apart and in vastly different cultural settings, echo one another in their portrayal of women's suffering and resistance under patriarchal authority.

This study promises to trace the shared consciousness of women's pain as represented in Brontë's and Parijat's works. Virginia Woolf reminds us that "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer" *(*Professions 59), suggesting that women authors must confront patriarchal ideals in their art. Brontë and Parijat do this through Catherine Earnshaw and Sakambari, heroines who challenge the "angelic" roles assigned to women in their respective societies. Despite differences of time and geography, their stories expose a feminist consciousness shaped by similar forms of oppression.

*Wuthering Heights* depicts the tragic life of Catherine Earnshaw, a young woman torn between her passion for Heathcliff and the social obligation of marrying Edgar Linton. Catherine herself recognizes her divided condition when she exclaims, *"I am Heathcliff"* (Brontë 82), a cry of passion that simultaneously marks her loss of autonomy within patriarchal marriage. Critics like Gilbert and Gubar argue that Brontë's heroines are "madwomen in the attic," trapped within domestic expectations that destroy their selfhood (Gilbert and Gubar 78). Catherine's premature death underscores how the Victorian family and marriage become suffocating spaces of control.

Similarly, Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* presents Sakambari, a modern Nepali woman who resists societal expectations of chastity and feminine modesty. Her defiance is clear when she tells Suyogbir, "I do not care for the manners they say a woman must have" (Parijat 112). Like Catherine, Sakambari rejects the conventions imposed upon her. Yet, her resistance isolates her further, leading to alienation and tragedy. Parijat, through Sakambari, exposes how modern South Asian society continues to impose patriarchal constraints, even as it undergoes social and political change.

The theoretical lens guiding this study is Simone de Beauvoir's notion of woman as the "Other," articulated in *The Second Sex* (1949). De Beauvoir explains, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other" (Beauvoir 6). Applying this framework, Catherine and Sakambari both emerge as women defined in relation to men, marginalized within family and social structures, and denied independent subjectivity. As Catherine laments, "Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words?" (Brontë 120), she embodies de Beauvoir's idea of woman's estrangement from her own desires. Similarly, Sakambari's confession, "I have lived my life as I pleased, but it has cost me everything" (Parijat 134), reflects the cost of resisting "Otherness" in patriarchal culture.

The central argument of this study is that Brontë and Parijat, despite their cultural and historical distance, converge in their feminist vision by exposing the universal realities of women's subjugation. As Beauvoir asserts, "Her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly" (Beauvoir 162). Both authors illustrate how women are denied freedom within patriarchal societies, yet their heroines defy expectations in subtle acts of resistance.

A closer reading of the primary texts reveals that the family is not a space of protection but of oppression. Catherine is rejected both by Heathcliff, who abandons her in his vengeance, and by Edgar, who cannot understand her passion. As she declares, "I am wearying to escape into that glorious world" (Brontë 156), her desire for freedom becomes a death wish. Sakambari too feels estranged, telling Suyogbir, "What do you know of my loneliness? You men cannot understand a woman's burden" (Parijat 128). Her words echo Beauvoir's claim that women's lived experiences

remain invisible under patriarchy. Both characters ultimately die young, embodying what Elaine Showalter calls the "female malady," where women's rebellion is pathologized and silenced (Showalter 134).

By comparing these narratives through Beauvoir's framework, this study underscores the global patterns of women's suffering while foregrounding literature as a site of feminist resistance. As Kate Millett reminds us, "Patriarchy's chief institution is the family" (Millett 33), and in both Brontë and Parijat, it is within the family that women experience their first rejection. Catherine and Sakambari resist, but their resistance is met with tragedy, exposing how deeply patriarchy permeates both Victorian England and modern Nepal.

**Review of Literature**

Reviewing a work of literature involves more than interpretation; it requires critical judgment about how effectively the work presents itself to readers. Individual reactions alone often provide limited insight into a literary text. Understanding a text within a broader intellectual or philosophical movement-such as feminism, Marxism, naturalism, or structuralism-enhances comprehension and interpretation. In the present study, feminist theory, particularly the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, provides the theoretical framework for analyzing Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1848) and Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* (1965). Insights from various critics have been drawn to analyze, interpret, and evaluate these works in terms of female suffering, resistance, and patriarchal oppression.

Historically, female characters in literature were often depicted as passive victims or objects of male desire. Zora Neale Hurston's heroines, by contrast, are strong, independent, and free-spirited, while F. Scott Fitzgerald's female characters often remain victims of circumstance and social expectations. This contrast suggests that male writers historically portrayed women from a patriarchal perspective shaped by personal experience, whereas female authors present a more conscious critique of gender inequities.

Kamala Sarup, quoting Shankar Lamichhane in her article *Love, Literature and Parijat*, emphasizes: "Parijat is the leading poetess of my time" (Lamichhane qtd. in Sarup 45). Critics of *Blue Mimosa* highlight Parijat's ability to depict the condition of women in Eastern society, illustrating both cultural expectations and moral dilemmas. Dr. Indira Mishra observes, "Parijat deviates from the standard portrayal of female characters… the protagonist believes in the freedom of the person and declares that women should be able to exist independently of boys… she is a victim of violence based on gender" *(Mishra 32).* Mishra further explains that Parijat presents women's bodies as sites of oppression, resisting societal control.

Shankar Lamichhane also praised Parijat's novel for its literary depth, stating, "Blue Mimosa beautifully portrays the chaotic universe of characters that rejects all moral principles, thus making the novel one of the best modern-day literature" (Lamichhane 36–39). Conversely, Gobinda Bhatta critiques the novel for lacking depth despite its narrative appeal, arguing that the work may not impact readers as profoundly as intended (*Mimosa Flower or Flower of Paper*). Feminist critic Sudha Tripathi acknowledges the radical and tenacious nature of Sakambari but suggests that the novel's absurdist elements challenge traditional feminism (Tripathi 56). Mishra Baijayanti, a Nepali poet and critic, highlights Sakambari's self-imposed isolation and death as reflective of societal victim-blaming (*Blue Mimosa* 78). Similarly, Sundari Thapa (Sushmita Nepal) emphasizes Sakambari's assertion of individual freedom and autonomy as a feminist statement (Thapa 102).

Emily Brontë's singular novel, published under the pseudonym Ellis Bell, has elicited varying critical responses since its release in 1847. Early reviews often criticized its perceived immorality and grotesque depictions. *The Spectator* noted: "The incidents were too disgusting and unpleasant to be appealing, had a moral blemish on them, and the depravity did not produce enough outcomes to justify the elaborate efforts made to portray it" (Allott 39). The *Atlas* reviewer echoed this sentiment, describing the depiction of humanity as shocking, "Women who, perhaps by nature very quiet… will hardly know that making the harsh and strong expressions, the barely expressed passions, the unbridled aversions… they grew up uneducated and unchecked except by strict mentors" *(Allott 60).* Over time, critics came to appreciate the psychological depth of the novel. Sydney Dobell praised Brontë's depiction of Catherine's inner struggle: "The work describes the psychological struggle between Catherine's two natures: the startling precision with which Brontë plots and then describes Catherine's madness" (57).

G.H. Lewes similarly acknowledged its authenticity, stating, "Thoughts of madness are no longer strange or removed from everyday life… Without indigestion, you can't eat condiments or absorb horrors. Despite the lack of air and light in the image, we can't dispute the truth: it's dark, raw, and brutal, but it's true" *(Mengham 105).* Thus, since their publication, *Wuthering Heights* and *Blue Mimosa* have attracted critical attention for both aesthetic and thematic reasons. While earlier critiques often focused on narrative style or shocking content, modern feminist readings highlight women's oppression, resistance, and agency. Despite this growing body of work, no study has yet conducted a comparative feminist analysis of Brontë and Parijat, exploring how these authors from vastly different historical and cultural contexts articulate the shared experiences of female suffering.

This gap presents an opportunity for original research. By examining the depiction of Catherine and Sakambari through Simone de Beauvoir's lens of woman as the "Other," this study seeks to uncover commonalities in women's oppression and resistance that transcend time, geography, and culture. The novelty lies in linking Eastern and Western feminist literary traditions to demonstrate universal patriarchal patterns, offering new insights into comparative feminist literature.

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## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and textual research design, aimed at examining women's oppression and resistance in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1848) and Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*

(1965). The textual method allows a close reading of narrative structures, character development, and thematic concerns, particularly regarding female suffering and agency. These novels were selected for their unique ability to depict women's struggles across distinct socio-cultural, temporal, and geographical contexts. While Brontë portrays Victorian England with its rigid patriarchal norms, Parijat explores the constrained South Asian society of twentieth-century Nepal. Despite these differences, both novels offer insights into women's subjugation, resistance, and assertion of self, making them ideal texts for a comparative feminist analysis.

Data were collected through careful textual analysis of the novels, supported by secondary literary criticism, scholarly articles, and biographical studies of the authors. Key passages illustrating gender oppression, female autonomy, and acts of resistance were noted and analyzed. John Kuada emphasizes that theory "allows researchers to link the problems they are looking into to the existing body of knowledge in the field" (64), highlighting the importance of a theoretical framework in literary research. Similarly, Jonathan Culler notes that literary theories "extend and deepen comprehension" and offer "a fresh method of literary analysis" (145), showing the utility of theoretical grounding to interpret literature effectively.

The theoretical framework for this research is entirely grounded in Simone de Beauvoir's feminist existentialism, as articulated in *The Second Sex* (1949). Beauvoir's claim that "A woman is not born, she becomes one" (267) underlines the socially constructed nature of gender, which is central to understanding Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* and Sakambari in *Blue Mimosa*. Beauvoir further differentiates between transcendence and immanence, asserting that transcendence allows individuals to act freely, pursue meaningful projects, and assert existence, whereas immanence confines women to domestic, repetitive roles (556). In the novels, both Catherine and Sakambari initially experience immanence within patriarchal societies but gradually attempt acts of transcendence. Catherine challenges her marital expectations and asserts emotional autonomy (Brontë 112), while Sakambari rejects societal norms and embraces personal freedom (Parijat 58).

Beauvoir's concept of women as the "Other" (312) provides a crucial lens for interpreting the protagonists' struggles. The family emerges as the primary site of gendered oppression, where both characters first encounter limitations imposed by patriarchal norms. Catherine confronts marital constraints, while Sakambari resists societal expectations of feminine conduct. Their acts of defiance embody Beauvoir's notion that freedom is an existential imperative, and literature becomes a medium to reveal feminist consciousness (Beauvoir 556).

Historical perspectives also provide context for feminist thought. Mary Wollstonecraft argued in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (12) that education is the key to women's emancipation, while John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill highlighted legal and social reforms to address women's subordination (Mill 1, 142; Taylor Mill 56). Betty Friedan's activism in the 1960s, documented in *The Feminine Mystique*, reawakened liberal feminist principles, emphasizing women's social, economic, and political rights (23). Rosemarie Tong distinguishes between strands of radical feminism, noting the focus on gender differences and the systemic roots of oppression (98). While these perspectives enrich the research context, Beauvoir's existentialist framework remains the central analytical lens, addressing the construction of femininity, systemic oppression, and the ethical imperative for women to assert autonomy.

Applying Beauvoir's theory allows the study to address three key research questions: how Catherine and Sakambari embody socially constructed femininity, how they resist patriarchal norms to assert autonomy, and how these novels demonstrate the universality of women's oppression across cultures and historical periods. The qualitative textual method ensures a comprehensive

exploration of the protagonists' experiences, revealing both patterns of subjugation and the exercise of agency. By interpreting the novels through Beauvoir's feminist existentialism, this study highlights the ethical and existential dimensions of women's struggles and their efforts to achieve freedom and self-realization.

Focusing on Beauvoir's feminist existentialism provides a coherent and effective framework for understanding women's oppression and resistance in *Wuthering Heights* and *Blue Mimosa*. The methodology, combining close textual analysis with theoretical insight, facilitates a nuanced understanding of female suffering, agency, and feminist consciousness, thereby contributing to comparative feminist literary research across different temporal, geographical, and socio-cultural contexts.

**Textual Analysis**

Feminism is a political and literary movement that aims to free women from patriarchy. Moi states, "the word feminist or feminism is political statements signifying sympathy for the goals of the new women's movement" (Moi 135). She also notes that feminist criticism is "not only a concern for gender in literature" but also fights against sexism and patriarchy (Moi 204). This shows that feminism is more than just a way to study literature. In *Wuthering Heights* and *Blue Mimosa*, women like Catherine and Sakambari struggle against social rules that limit them. These characters show how literature reflects real problems women face.

Liberal feminism wants women to have the same opportunities as men in education, work, and society. Tong writes, "liberal feminists are to blame for most of the civic, educational, occupational, and fruitful rights that girls presently enjoy" (Tong 47). Wollstonecraft observes, "These women didn't possess healthy bodies because they could not exercise outside as it would shade their lily-white skin" (Tong 13). Mill emphasizes that "society would benefit greatly if women's reasoning powers were considered as equivalent to men's" (Tong 18). Harriet Taylor Mill adds that "a wife needs to work outside the home to be equal partners with her husband" (Tong 17). These ideas help us understand why Catherine and Sakambari fight for independence and equality.

Women are not naturally inferior; society makes them seem so. Beauvoir notes, "It is widely accepted that a man is right only because he is a man; a woman, on the other hand, is wrong" (Beauvoir 5). She also writes, "A woman is not born, she develops" (Beauvoir 10), highlighting that society shapes femininity. Steinem and Walker argue that women are oppressed because men do not let them participate fully in society. Tong reminds us that "women's inferiority is produced rather than intrinsic" (Tong 18). Characters like Sakambari challenge these rules, showing that women can resist unfair social norms.

Patriarchy often uses violence to control women. Pinion writes that Heathcliff's "lack of virtues and brutality indicates human behavior of the worst kind" (Pinion 204). In *Blue Mimosa*, Suyogbir "bashed, knocked, and beat women with everything he could get his hands on" (Parijat 56) to control them. Katrak observes, "Women must suffer severe costs for defying tradition" (Katrak 157). These examples show how literature represents male power and the harm it causes women.

Women break traditional gender rules to show independence. Catherine asks for a whip when she is six, breaking Victorian expectations (Bronte 36). She also defies social norms by choosing to marry Linton for his higher status, saying it "would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" (Bronte 81). Sakambari smokes and speaks freely, which was unusual for Nepali women in the 1960s. When

she says, "Why should a flower suffer from the black sting if it buds for itself…?" (Parijat 72), she shows her independence. These actions reflect Beauvoir's idea that women must take control of their lives to be free. Women's bodies are often treated as objects. Suyogbir judges them based on "age, complexion, clothes, figure, hips, breasts, legs, neck, and hairstyles" (Parijat 61). Katrak adds, "Overt defiance of patriarchal structures was met with harsh sanctions such asocial marginalization, expulsion from the community, and even death" (Katrak 58). Sakambari does not follow beauty rules, showing that women can resist being controlled by men.

Women's resistance is important to show their freedom. Tyson notes that women must navigate social rules to survive (Tyson 142). Catherine and Sakambari make choices that go against society's limits. Sakambari asserts herself, saying, "Her speech rushed into us like a bullet" (Parijat 45), showing her boldness. Her defiance demonstrates that women can fight for independence and self-respect. Even though society has changed, patriarchy is still strong. Manchanda observes, "Women have been mobilized in South Asia in both nation-building initiatives and armed revolutionary class conflicts… but once these efforts are accomplished, they are returned to the private sphere" (Manchanda 238). This shows that women's freedom is still limited by old social rules.

Literature can challenge stereotypes about women. Moi states that feminist criticism exposes social inequality (Moi 204). Woolf notes, "If a woman is to create fiction, she must have money and a private room" (Woolf 7). By showing strong female characters like Catherine and Sakambari, authors teach readers to question unfair treatment of women. In conclusion, patriarchy still limits women, and they face discrimination and violence. Catherine and Sakambari show that women can resist these limits. Literature helps us see how unfair social rules work and shows the importance of feminist ideas. These characters remind us that women's independence and equality are important and must be fought for.

## Findings

The analysis of *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and *Blue Mimosa* by Parijat shows that both novels reflect the pervasive patriarchal structures in their respective societies. Women in these texts are portrayed as objects of male desire, subjected to violence, control, and social restrictions. Catherine and Sakambari, as central female characters, challenge these patriarchal norms by transgressing expected gender roles. Their assertiveness, independence, and refusal to conform demonstrate that women's oppression is socially constructed, rather than inherent. The texts confirm that patriarchy imposes limitations on women's autonomy, education, and personal freedom, which aligns with liberal feminist and Beauvoirian theories that argue women are considered the "second sex" in society (Beauvoir 5).

Moreover, despite differences in cultural and historical context, both novels reveal the continuity of gender inequality across time. While Brontë critiques Victorian England's rigid social hierarchy, Parijat exposes Nepali society's patriarchal expectations in the 1960s, showing that women continue to face subjugation, objectification, and restricted agency. The analysis demonstrates that literature serves as a reflection of societal attitudes toward women and as a tool for questioning and resisting gender discrimination. The study confirms that feminist literary criticism, particularly liberal feminism and Beauvoir's existentialist framework, provides the theoretical tools to examine women's oppression, highlight their struggles, and advocate for gender equality (Moi 135).

## Conclusion

Emily Brontë and Parijat depict the struggles of women living under patriarchal systems, showing how society restricts their autonomy and shapes their identities. In *Wuthering Heights*, Isabella, Cathy, and Catherine face severe injustice and social limitations, reflecting the oppressive nature of 19th-century Victorian society, where British law and customs actively deprived women of inheritance and property rights, leaving Catherine without means to support herself. Brontë illustrates how women's lives were largely determined by male authority, while male characters such as Hareton eventually find love and social redemption, showing a stark contrast between male mobility and female confinement. Patriarchy enforces gendered expectations: men are encouraged to be bold, dominant, and even violent, while women must remain obedient, chaste, and subservient.

Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* reflects a similar system in 20th-century Nepal, where the protagonist Sakambari challenges male dominance, yet faces danger and social punishment because she lives in a society that treats women as objects and enforces strict codes of feminine behavior. Suyogbir, a patriarchal figure, believes he has the right to control women and uses violence when flattery fails, illustrating how patriarchy legitimizes male aggression while silencing women. Sakambari's resistance demonstrates female agency but also highlights the risks women face when they defy social norms; her inability to publicly protest reflects a culture of victim-blaming, where women are accused of immorality for resisting male authority. Both novels reveal that the home becomes a site of discrimination and violence, reinforcing that patriarchal structures reduce women to the "other," strip them of independent identity, and punish those who attempt to assert autonomy. Through these narratives, the authors critique the systemic oppression of women and underscore the enduring struggle for equality in societies governed by patriarchal power.

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- Justification of the study
- Theoretical tool/approach (methodology)
- Critical analysis of the text and /or the theme
- Conclusion
- Works Cited

## Title of the research article

It should be concise, apt and must be catchy in coherence with the substance of the subject/ issue of the article; it should not exceed more than 12 words.

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